

SOCIAL MOVEMENT ABEYANCE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN
THE WELFARE RIGHTS MOVEMENT

By

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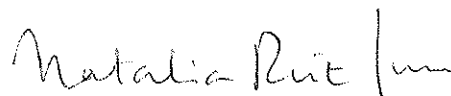
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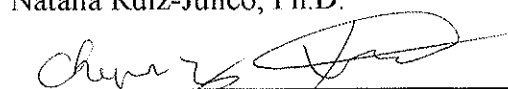
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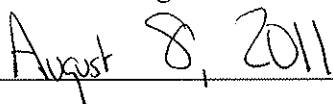
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DEDICATION

I I dedicate this to my family specifically my parents, grandparents
siblings, children and grandchildren.

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ABSTRACT

Movement fragmentation in a movement under abeyance makes the recruitment of committed supporters all the more important if the movement is to survive from one mobilization cycle to another. Activists' identity construction can be complicated by movement fragmentation in periods of abeyance but a sense of hopeful activism keeps participants attached to such movements in spite of movement abeyance. I conducted twenty-five semi-structured interviews with welfare rights activists in a mid-western city and analyzed their identity construction processes. An analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that the idea of the right to welfare remains firm for all activists. However, the stigma attached to the label "welfare" has divided activists on whether to retain or abandon the label as a descriptor of the collective identity of the movement.

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I thank my parents, siblings and children for shaping my worldview. I am especially grateful to Cynthia McClure-Richards and Geoffrey Jacques for being readers and discussants with me of this thesis. I take full responsibility however for the final version herein, the flaws and errors are all mine.

Lastly, I thank the Creator for the inspiration and energy to follow my dreams.

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CHAPTER 1

In this research, I am interested in understanding how identity construction explains social movement participation during movement abeyance and in periods of political and cultural hostility towards a movement. In this thesis, I used a theoretical framework based on the ideas of social movement abeyance (Sawyers and Meyer 1999, Taylor 1989) and identity construction (Snow and McAdam 2000) to describe the persistence of participation by activists in the welfare rights movement, a movement described by Shaw (2002) as persisting in spite of periods of abeyance and the stigmatization of the movement's collective identity (p. 179).

The rise, decline and abeyance of the welfare rights movement in the United States is in part a history of the nation's efforts at poverty relief. Through the advocacy of early anti-poverty activists, by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the 20th century a new understanding of the social causes of poverty and new approaches to poverty relief emerged (Katz 1986). However, the case for a more progressive poor relief system continued to be met with resistance in the United States (Bhuyan 2010; Guetzkow 2010; Nadasen et al. 2009; Hudson and Coukos 2005; Somers and Block 2005; Abramovitz 2001, 1996a:137, 1985; Fothergill 2003; Gilens 1999; Mink 1998a:44; Katz 2000, 1986).

This historical resistance to progressive poverty relief policies lead to the

founding of the contemporary welfare rights movement to counter that resistance. The welfare rights movement was founded in the 1950s and 1960s by women on welfare organizing against what they believed were repressive and oppressive welfare policies (Nadasen et al. 2009: Nadasen 2005:15; Kornbluh 2007). In the social movement spirit of the 1950s and 1960s “[w]omen in the welfare rights movement drew on the example, language, and tactic of other social movements to assess their situation, develop a collective identity, and come together politically” (Nadasen (2005:23); and in doing so, these women formed the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) in 1967. NWRO is the social movement organization (SMO) of the welfare rights movement.

NWRO enjoyed a number of years of successfully organizing the welfare rights movement. A number of conspiring forces caused the NWRO collapsed in 1975. With the national organization gone, the movement entered into abeyance. Abeyance is holding process that movements undergo as they move from one stage of mobilization to another and it usually occurs during times of political hostility to the movement (Taylor, 1989).

Today, the contemporary welfare rights movement is comprised of abeyance structures that are in large part small welfare rights organizations lead by persons formerly and currently receiving welfare assistance. Supporting the welfare rights organizations movement’s abeyance structures are legal service agencies, low-income affordable housing advocacy groups, homeless shelters, emergency food providers, low cost health care programs, religious organizations and congregations, welfare policy groups and many others.

During the abeyance of the welfare rights movement activists have relied less on mass mobilization and more on crafting public policy skills and developing key relationships with politicians and policy makers to push forward the movement's anti-poverty agenda. The Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) of 1996 is widely perceived by activists as having reversed the gains of the welfare rights movement. Activists feel this way because the Act ended entitlement status for public assistance. Ending entitlement status ends the "right" to welfare and the right to welfare is the calling cry of the movement. This thesis seeks to understand how activists construct identities which allow them to continue to remain active in the welfare rights movement under conditions of movement abeyance, stigmatization of welfare recipients through imagery such as the "welfare queen" and the strong anti-welfare sentiment codified in PRWORA.

Research Question

How do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance?

To address this research question, I analyzed the identity construction (Snow and McAdam 2000) processes of movement activists as a way of understanding social movement continuity and collective identity during movement abeyance. The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. Chapter two is a review of the literature on the origins of the welfare rights movement, its decline and its state post the passage of PRWORA. Theories of social constructionism (Burr 1995), identity construction (Snow and McAdam 2000) and collective identity (Fominaya 2010; Melucci

1995) as applied to social movements are discussed in chapter three's theoretical framework.

Data and methods used in the thesis are outlined in chapter four. I conducted twenty-seven semi-structure interviews with activists in a local urban welfare rights movement. To help contextualize and focus this thesis, I limited the research to activists of a city with a high level of welfare program usage by city residents. I also selected this city because it is where several long-time welfare rights activists have remained involved before, during and after the passage of PRWORA.

In chapter five, I analyze how during movement abeyance activists engage in personal identity construction processes to link personal identities to movement collective identity. Conclusions, limitations of the study and future research needs are discussed in chapter six. The appendices contain a profile of activists, the interview guidebook, and copies of the instruments used for data collection. The references are after the appendices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature pertaining to the rise of and shaping of the modern welfare rights movement in the United States. In section one, I present a general overview the welfare state in the United States (U.S) from the period of the industrial revolution through to the Social Security Act of 1935. In section two, is a discussion of the rise and decline of the welfare rights movement in the period between 1960 and 2010. Included in the discussion is the story of the 1975 collapse of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). A review of the political, cultural and social events preceding the passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) or “welfare reform” is included in section two. Section three is a discussion of the connection between the immigrant rights and welfare rights movement during the campaign to prevent passage PRWORA. The concluding section summarizes the chapter by linking the importance of abeyance in the welfare rights movement to Taylor’s (2000) future utopian social movement society.

Making of the Welfare State in the United States

The story of poverty relief in the United States has its history in two important American values, the work ethic and the religious ethic (Katz 1986; (Abramowitz 1996a:144; [Weber] Gerth and Mills 1946). The work ethic trains us to believe that working hard for money creates personal wealth. The religious ethic trains us to accept

as true, that hard work for the Lord creates heavenly rewards. Disobedience to the rules of the religious ethic is seen by religious authorities as the cause of moral breakdown leading to the “punishment” of social ills such as poverty. Disobedience to the rules of the work ethic occurs when individuals or groups shun hard and meaningful work. The avoidance of work also leads to social ill of poverty. In this scenario, the rewards of religiosity and hard work are the avoidance of poverty (Katz 1986).

This cultural rendering of poverty as being embedded in both a religious and work ethic stems from a view of religion as having a “continuing and decisive influence on contemporary attitudes toward work and economic behavior, long after the influence of religiously sanctioned ideas has lost its credibility” (Hudson and Coukos 2005:4). Religion and work share a system of rewarding for good works and punishment for bad works. Good work brings respectability and prosperity and laziness brings the shame and stigmatization of poverty (Weber [1904] 1958; Katz 1986).

The conversation of poverty is further complicated by social contradictions contained in the work ethic. For instance, what is the sociological explanation for poverty in a society that produces massive amounts of material wealth, extols everyone to pay homage to the work ethic, but sees no contradiction in the existence a whole class of people who work, yet remain in poverty (Hudson and Coukos 2005:6; Abramovitz 1999a; Jennings 1999; Kern 1998; Katz 1986:4)?

Writing at the time, nineteenth century economist Henry George believed that “association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times” (Jennings 1999). The progress to which George wrote was the great progress in manufacturing of goods and the wealth created as the nation transitioned into the industrial age. It was not so

much that poverty had not existed, the enigma was that so many people, worker and industrialist believe poverty would abate with wage work. Poverty did not abate because the transition into a manufacturing economy did not occur smoothly. Depressions were common, long and severe. So along with the newly formed masses of wage earners were the newly formed masses of unemployed wage earners. A new kind of mass poverty resulted. It was at this point of mass poverty, created as an externality of progress and wealth that the contradiction of hard work leading to prosperity ethic is most apparent to Jennings (Katz 1986).

Nineteenth century social elites, politicians and policy makers did believe it was important to assist families living in poverty (Katz 1986). It was however the nature of the poverty that matters. Was the poverty of a personal causation or was it out of the control of the individual? The available charity was distributed based upon the answer to these two questions. Nineteenth century social planners who controlled charitable institutions in large part believed poverty to be an “unavoidable evil” caused by circumstances beyond the control of the individual and that in many cases the cause of the poverty was laid at the feet of God (Katz 1986:19). Giving aid to these worthy poor persons was an admirable act of charity and religiosity. The worthy poor would include widows with children and others with disabilities that prevented them from working any job.

Pauperism was defined by nineteenth century social planners as a type of poverty that was self-imposed and was “the consequence of willful error” (Katz 1986:19). Paupers according to charity providers were folks who could but would not work. Paupers were able bodied persons, be they men, women or children who refused to work

or to work under conditions or hours as expected in the factories and shops. Paupers were also seen as women who had children out of wedlock. Sometimes married women whose husbands were negligent of the family were considered to be paupers, rather than among the worthy poor (Katz 1986). Alcoholism and vagrancy on part of the husband were common reasons to deny such families assistance.

Before the Social Security Act of 1935 assistance to the poor or poor relief was provided by private associations often in cooperation with local governments or town councils (Katz 1986). In all cases paupers were barred from receiving poor relief (Gilens 1999; Abramovitz 1989b; Katz 1986:19). Poor relief was administered in two forms. The first form of relief, indoor relief was provided to homeless individuals or families and required them to live in poorhouses. Once they became residents of the poorhouse, whole families including children worked as contract laborers to pay off the rent, food and other services provided to them by the poorhouse (Katz 1986:58).

The second form of relief, outdoor relief was provided to families who did not reside in the poorhouse; often times these families were still living independently or with others. The relief was provided with the aim of keeping the families from becoming residents of the poorhouse. The head of household had to become a contract laborer in order for the family to receive outdoor relief (Katz 1986).

In the giving of poor relief, whether indoor or outdoor relief, social planners made clear that the help received did not establish an *entitlement* to poor relief.

According to Katz (1986), the Quincy Report of 1821 chronicled the dangers in providing a too generous and too available charity to the poor:

When the poor started to think of relief “as a right,” they also began to count on it “as an income.” All “stimulus to industry and economy” was “annihilated, or weakened” while “temptations to extravagance and dissipation . . . increased.” As a consequence, “The just pride of independence, so honorable to a man, in every condition” was “corrupted by the certainty of public provision.” (P. 17)

Charity providers feared that if indigent persons grew accustomed to counting poor relief as income, the work ethic would be undermined. The fear was that if people could obtain the necessities of life by not working, there would be little incentive for people to take the dirty, dangerous, low wages employment that existed at the time (Abramowitz 1996a:139; Katz 1986). However, by the end of the nineteenth century the social evil of poverty was being understood as resulting from “circumstances outside and beyond the control of the individual,” and calls for a “democratic people” to “eliminate elements of unfairness” and “remove handicaps for which society is responsible” were made in Annie McLean’s 1910 study of wage earning women (Abramovitz [1988]1996:183). Progressives like McLean were concerned to make the case that poverty in the industrial age was not just a measure of one’s willingness or unwillingness to work. If work was now to be understood as being socially created and controlled, then the poverty resulting from unemployment or underemployment was indeed out of the control of individual workers. Perhaps then poverty itself was socially created under some circumstance.

With this new conceptualization of work and poverty, progressive advocates began to argue that workers had a greater claim for poverty relief based upon need rather than moral judgment. The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the 20th century lead to a new understanding of the social causes of poverty and thus new approaches to poverty relief. The move toward a progressive anti-poverty culture however has not been

smooth and continues to be contested in the United States (Nadasen et al. 2009, Katz 1986). The case for a more progressive poor relief system continues to be met with resistance in the United States because the issue of how to provide poor relief without destroying the incentive to work continues to complicate efforts to combat poverty (Bhuyan 2010; Guetzkow 2010; Nadasen et al. 2009; Hudson and Coukos 2005; Somers and Block 2005; Abramovitz 2001, 1996a:137, 1985; Fothergill 2003; Gilens 1999; Mink 1998a:44; Katz 2000, 1986).

Racialization in the United States’ Social Welfare Policy

Like anti-pauperism rhetoric of the nineteenth century, anti-welfare rhetoric of the nineteenth century carried racialized undertones. According to Katz (1986), racialized undertones in the nineteenth century took on a decidedly white supremacist message. Reflecting the racial climate of the times providers of poor relief summarily denied poor relief to black people. The general idea overall according to Katz (1986) was to ensure that poor whites lived better than blacks whether enslaved or free (Katz 1986). Thus the poor relief that was offered, “was supposed to shore up white supremacy by assuring even needy whites a standard of living and work superior to blacks” (Katz 1986:19).

Racialized responses to poverty and the poor were reflected with the establishment of the 1935 Social Security Act. The visible form of racialization of federal social welfare policy were reflected in policy and political debates during the crafting of the Social Security Act of 1935. A powerful block of southern law makers objected to the inclusion of domestic and farm workers in relief and welfare programs because of fears that the racial hierarchy and social structure of the south would be

dismantled. Excluding black and immigrant laborers who formed the majority of household domestic as well as farm workers in the southern United States would continue to ensure that the social, domestic and economic system maintained its caste and racialized structures (Gilen 1999; Lieberman 1998:64-66; Abramovitz 1996a:233).

The current racialized discourse of the contemporary debate on welfare reform developed from this long standing history of denying poor relief to people of color in order to maintain the nation's racial caste system; a system dependent upon readily available low wage black labor in service to white citizenry (Abramovitz 1996b:355-367). I argue in part that current welfare reform efforts are constructed to rebuild the system of low wage black labor in service to more affluent, largely white citizens. It is for this reason that the contemporary targets of welfare reform are unwed and unemployed women of color with children and this would include immigrant women of color. These targets of welfare reform are uniquely racialized by the countermovement as "welfare queens" (Nadasen et al. 2009:68; Reese 2005:172; Davis 2004:275; Sparks 2003; Nuebeck and Cazenave 2001; Gilens 1999). According to Omi and Winant (1986) racialization assigns deviance to ordinary human interaction and behavior when the behavior or interaction is performed by groups who are oppressed and stigmatized by conventions of historical practices and ideologies rooted in stereotypes, prejudice and racial animus (p. 64).

For instance, African-American mothers are stigmatized for and stereotyped as having large numbers of fatherless children. These same women are also propagandized as preferring a government check instead of matrimony and a husband to support them and their children (Mead 1986; Murray 1984). The use of the "welfare queen" (Hancock

2003) typified the racialization of poverty by connecting the reform of welfare to a so-called need to reform black (and poor) women's sexual behavior (Davis 2004; Nadasen 2005; Hancock 2003; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Elise 1995:59; Quadango 1994; Murray 1984).

The welfare "queen" served as an effective counterweight to the welfare rights image of welfare mothers as being nurturing and protective parents doing their best with limited resources to raise and nurture their children (Ernst 2009:187; Hancock 2003; Schram 2003:210; Soss et al 2003:244; Sparks 2003:177). By turning welfare moms into racialized "welfare queens" (Davis 2004:276), the countermovement complicated the welfare rights demands for economic rights and justice as the way to end poverty (Gustafson 2009:657; Sparks 2003; Hancock 2003; Mink 1998b). Public opinion survey data showed that: "Americans . . . [were] hesitant about supporting government spending on welfare because they think this spending will benefit the Welfare Queen" (Foster 2008:8).

The shift in public opinion against black women and welfare usage occurred over time (Gilens 1999) and helped to shape the 1996 reforms of welfare contained in PRWORA (Foster 2008; Nadasen 2005, 2002; Hancock 2003; Soss et al. 2003:236). I argue that the enduring legacy of the racialized "welfare queen" has been to ensure that black women living in poverty will be summarily defined as the unworthy poor. As long as black women are characterized and typified as welfare queens, the case against a liberal welfare state in the United States will remain strong. The long standing and enduring history of racial animus against women of color has the effect of racializing poor relief to the detriment of public support for a liberal welfare state.

The Welfare Rights Movement 1962-2010

I...do hereby promise and agree that until such time as the following agreement is rescinded, I will not have any male callers coming to my home nor meeting me elsewhere under improper conditions. I also agree to raise my children to the best of my ability and will not knowingly contribute or be a contributing factor to their being shamed by my conduct. I understand that should I violate this agreement, the children will be taken from me. (Patterson 2000:85-86, cited in Nadasen 2009:29).

The welfare rights movement was founded in the 1950s and 1960s by women on welfare organizing against what they believed were repressive and oppressive welfare policies (Nadasen et al. 2009; Nadasen 2005:15; Kornbluh 2007). Welfare grants levels were kept below subsistence levels making it difficult for mothers to provide care for their children. Early welfare policies policed their sexual behaviors. If evidence of male companionship was found such as men's clothing or the presence of a man living or visiting the home, the family was summarily terminated from public assistance (Nadasen 2005:19).

The social movement spirit of the 1950s and 1960s was felt by welfare moms. According to Nadasen (2005), "[w]omen in the welfare rights movement drew on the example, language, and tactic of other social movements to assess their situation, develop a collective identity, and come together politically" (p. 23). Recipients began meet in

each other's homes for "kitchen-table discussion" (Nadasen 2005:22) in local communities throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s (Nadasen 2005; Kornbluh 2007).

These kitchen table discussions were precursors to the founding of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) in 1967. NWRO is considered a social movement organization (SMO). SMOs serve as the administrative apparatus of a movement. SMOs don't so much represent the movement as they serve centralize the movement, pulling together local networks or groups under a single movement umbrella, leadership and often organizing strategy (Della Porta and Diani 2006:140). The groundwork for the formation of the NWRO was laid during a Chicago meeting for the national guaranteed income campaign in 1966 (Nadasen 2005:40). This 1996 meeting was the first time that leaders of the movement meet on a national level.

Leaders attending the conference from Los Angeles included welfare rights activists Johnnie Tillmon and Dorothy Moore. Attending the conference from New York city were Beulah Sanders, Jennette Washington, and Frank Espada. Sanders, Washington and Espada were the founders of New York's Welfare Recipients League in 1964 (Nadasen 2005). Local groups of welfare mothers from places such as Cleveland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Chicago and Philadelphia attended the meetings as well.

At about the same time, the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) had become deeply involved in the issues of poverty and welfare, helping in some cases local welfare rights groups to organize themselves into welfare rights organizations (Piven and Cloward [1974]1979). In 1966 CORE hired George Wiley a professor at Syracuse University to organize a national welfare rights organization (Kornbluh 2007; Nadasen 2005; Piven and Cloward 1979). It didn't take long for Wiley to quit his position as a

professor at Syracuse University to build the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). Wiley took advantage of the Chicago meeting to gather together the leaders at for a discussion on the need to organize for welfare rights on a national level. The local leaders in attendance at the Chicago meeting became the first members of the NWRO (Nadasen et al. 2009; Piven and Cloward [1974] 1970). Many of the leaders also staffed the NWRO as well.

The first campaign of the NWRO was designed to address the issue of denial of welfare assistance to eligible applicants. Evidence of the denial rate was presented in a 1965 study conducted by Piven and Cloward ([1974] 1979). Their study reported that for every family receiving assistance there was another eligible family being denied (Piven and Cloward ([1974] 1979):275). Based upon this information, George Wiley and activists in the welfare rights movement organized a “welfare crisis.” The “welfare crisis” was created by having eligible persons apply *en masse* for welfare benefits at their local welfare offices (Nadasen et al. 2009:42; Piven and Cloward [1974] 1979). In creating the crisis welfare organizers felt that attention to the real issue, the crisis in poverty would be exposed and then addressed through the expansion of the welfare state (Piven and Cloward [1974] 1979: 276).

The strategy was a success for a while (Nadasen, Mittelstadt, and Edmonds-Cady 2009; Chappell 2009; Kornbluh 2007; Piven and Cloward [1974] 1979). The organizing strategy worked to increase NWRO’s membership and the welfare rolls (Piven and Cloward [1974] 1979). So many people applied for welfare (and a large number of those applying were single black mothers) that the welfare rolls increased sharply from about 3.1 million in 1960 to about 6.1 million by 1969 (Nadasen et al. 2009:42). The sharp

increase in the welfare rolls resulted in a sharp increase in federal allocations for welfare programs. The increases in federal outlays, combined with the rising number of black women receiving assistance, reignited the anti-welfare movement (Nadasen et al. 2009:47).

Conservatives organized a counter, anti-welfare movement purposed to both cut welfare rolls and spending. The anti-welfare coalition lead by right wing anti-feminists and other social conservatives, actively pursued socially conservative reforms of the welfare system (Howard and Tarrant 1997; Bashevkin 1994; Mead 1986; Murray 1985). At the top of list of countermovement complaints against the welfare system was the idea of welfare and feminism working in tandem to destabilize the values enshrined in the traditional two-parent nuclear family. Early countermovement activists such as Phyllis Schafley, Pat Roberson, Jerry Falwell and Marabel Morgan argued throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that welfare was counter to both the work ethic and to the family values embedded religious ethic (Foster 2008; Howard and Tarrant 1997; Bashevkin, 1994; Klatch 1987).

The countermovement framed their opposition to welfare as a desire to end welfare dependency. Welfare dependency the countermovement argued, forced tax payers to take care of otherwise able bodied persons (or paupers in nineteenth century nomenclature). Welfare dependency and not poverty, social conservatives argued was the problem that welfare reform had to address (Klatch 2001, 1987; Howard and Tarrant 1997; Bashevkin 1994; Dorrien 1993; Mead 1986; Sapiro 1986; Murray 1985; Conover and Gray 1983; Dworkin 1983). Welfare according to the countermovement destroyed family values by sanctioning welfare dependency among poor single mothers. The

availability of welfare benefits made these women the countermovement argued more likely to depend upon on a government check than upon husbands who could take care of them and their children (Mead 1986; Murray 1984).

Welfare it was further argued by the countermovement, removed the incentive for single mothers to marry and encouraged out of wedlock births as a means to gain government support and welfare payments (Mead 1986; Murray 1984). The use of the “welfare queen” stereotype (Hancock 2003) typified the countermovement’s racialization of poverty as well, by connecting the reform of welfare to a so-called need to reform black women’s reproductive choices and behaviors (Rousseau 2009:142; Nadasen 2005; Reese 2005; Hancock 2003; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Quadango 1994; Murray 1984). By painting most welfare recipients as poor and welfare dependent black “welfare queens” in a still highly racialized and family values oriented America, the countermovement’s argument to dismantle the welfare state met little sustain resistance from the general public (Mink 1998a, 1995).

National Welfare Rights Organization and the National Organization for Women

Welfare's like a traffic accident. It can happen to anybody, but especially it happens to women. And that's why welfare is a women's issue. For a lot of middle-class women in this country, Women's Liberation is a matter of concern. For women on welfare it's a matter of survival. Survival. That's why we had to go on welfare. And that's why we can't get off welfare now. Not us women. Not until we do something about liberating poor women in this country. . . . As far as I'm concerned, the ladies of N.W.R.O. are the front-line troops of women's freedom. Both because we have so few illusions and because our issues are so important to all women-the right to a living wage for women's work, the right to life itself. (Tillmon 1972)

Johnnie Tillmon's statement in the 1972 Spring issue of *Ms. Magazine* highlighted a very important phase in the welfare rights movement, the coalition formed between the NWRO and the National Organization for Women (NOW). The conditions for the right to welfare to become a women's rights issue in the 1960s United States grew out of welfare rights and women's rights advocacy and activism. Activists in both movements called for the right for mothers to work for wages or when they choose to do so, stay at home mothers *with* state support if necessary (Nadasen 2005, 2002; Abramovitz 2001, 1995a; Kornbluh 1998; Mink 1998a, 1998b, 1995; Davis 1996; Lord 1993; Gordon 1991).

The 1970 statement of solidarity by NOW with NWRO formalized the coalition between the two movements. NOW chapters and the national organization committed to support and jointly mobilize with NWRO on campaigns calling for liberalizing national and local welfare policies (Davis 1996). At the urging of their respective members, NOW and NWRO adopted the slogan that "welfare rights are women's rights" to frame their joint campaigns (Davis 1996).

The collaboration between the NWRO and NOW was not without problems. Cultural, social and ideological differences and disputes between the largely middle-class and white women of NOW and the poorer and mostly, black women of NWRO (Nadasen 2002; Ernst 2009; Davis 1996) presented challenges, but overall the coalition between the two organizations exercised almost twenty years of political influence over the direction of the United State's social welfare policy (Reese and Newcombe 2003; Mink 1998a, 1998b; Abramovitz 1996a, 1996b). The coalition between the two movements completely fractured with the dissolution of the NWRO in 1975 (Kornbluh 2007; Shaw

2002; Davis 1996). With the demise of the NWRO, the welfare rights movement devolved to small local advocacy groups and coalitions for welfare rights. The dissolution of the NWRO caused the welfare rights movement to enter into abeyance (Reese and Newcombe 2003:299; Kornbluh 2007:177). While national coalition between NWRO and NOW dissolved in 1975, the ties between local welfare rights groups and local women's rights groups such as NOW have survived the abeyance period and were renewed during the fight against the passage of PRWORA (Mink 1998a, b; Abramovitz 1996b).

Abeyance and Welfare Rights Organizing 1975-1995

Between 1975 and 1995, welfare rights activists did not completely abandon the effort to organize a national welfare rights movement (Nadasen 2005:241). It took twelve years after the collapse of the NWRO for the National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) to form. According to Marion Kramer (1996), the NWRU was founded by activists in 1987 at a national welfare rights conference convened to address welfare reform proposals for that year. She described what inspired the formation of the NWRU:

[a]t the National Welfare Rights Conference . . . in Washington DC in 1987. . . [w]e discussed how things had changed since the NWRO's demise. We realized that now we have homelessness, death in the streets, and rising unemployment as technology replaces workers. To implement welfare reform, governors are requesting numerous waivers to the federal laws, and our input is not being sought, even when we asked. . . [w]e knew we needed to build unity among the unemployed, the low-income workers, and the homeless. . . [w]e decided to model ourselves after unions because we wanted to build solidarity . . . (P. 362)

The post NWRO period, between 1976 and NWRU's 1987 founding, saw the establishment of a network of several welfare rights groups throughout the nation (Shaw

2002). Among the local groups joining NWRU was the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, the National Coalition for the Homeless, public housing resident groups and other advocates for low rent housing, immigrant rights organizations, and anti-poverty groups such as Up and Out of Poverty NOW and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) (Shaw 2002). NWRU sought to bring those groups under one national umbrella.

Unlike 1966 founding of the NWRO, the 1987 founding of the NWRU did not translate into a mass welfare rights movement able to push back against cycle of reforms nor was NWRU able to effectively counter the racialization of welfare recipients now entrenched in welfare policy (Nadasen et al 2009). However the fight against PRWORA did ignite a mass movement in the brief period between 1994 and PRWORA passage. NWRU jointly, with welfare rights activists across the nation, organized during this pre-PRWORA period against welfare reforms introduced by conservative governors in California, Philadelphia, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin as well as other states throughout the nation (Abramovitz 2001, 1996a; Baptist and Jenkins 2001).

Some of the protest actions taken by local activists in the welfare rights movement included the construction of tent cities in state capitols or at city halls. Activists staged sit-ins at welfare offices and state welfare agencies demanding that no cuts be made in welfare programs (Nadasen et al. 2009:74; Shaw 2002:190; Abramovitz 1996:395). To force media attention to the problematic aspects of welfare reforms, state level activists staged protests and sit-ins at local television, radio and print media offices (personal experience).

A number of state level fair budget organizations were established this local pre-PRWORA organizing campaign. Fair Budget organizations could be found in California, Michigan, New York, Philadelphia, and the District of Columbia. The importance of the fair budget organizations was in their ability to provide analysis of state budgets showing how budget savings could be found without cuts to services for those living in poverty. These early fair budget organizations were the first to bring attention to what I and other activists believed were efforts to balance state budgets on the “backs of the poor.”

Welfare rights organizing and PRWORA 1996- 2010

The welfare reforms in the pre-PRWORA period caused the reorganization of old alliances within the welfare rights movement; and it was these alliances that eventually lead the protest of PRWORA (Shaw 2002; Abramovitz 1996a:396). I participated in a number of these actions. All was not rosy in the movement and the protest failed to stop PRWORA. Again Marian Kramer (1996) on the welfare rights movement campaign to prevent the passage of PRWORA :

[w]e're weak now because the majority of the people don't understand welfare reform. The media and politicians have convinced people that they are doing what needs to be done, even though forty years of research attests to the fact that these reforms are based on myths.” (P. 363)

Kramer's statement illustrates that a forty year cycle of welfare reforms coupled with the movement's decline into abeyance and loss of mobilization efficacy undermined the ability of welfare rights activists to impact welfare policy. Each cycle of welfare reform resulted in the welfare rights movement having less and less influence over social welfare policy.

By the 1996, PRWORA the welfare rights movement has lost all ability to shape the new welfare law. Welfare reform as conceptualized by the anti-welfare countermovement became the driving force of social welfare policy. The movement suffered its greatest setback when PRWORA eliminated entitlement status in the new law. The welfare rights movement's inability to preserve entitlement status in the new welfare law demonstrated clearly the effect the movement's decline into abeyance and loss of mobilization efficacy had upon social welfare policy. Figure 1, *Social Policy, Welfare Reform and WRM 2010* illustrates this concept, showing that the welfare rights movement is further away from the policy center and is outside of the center of those who are shaping current day welfare reforms.

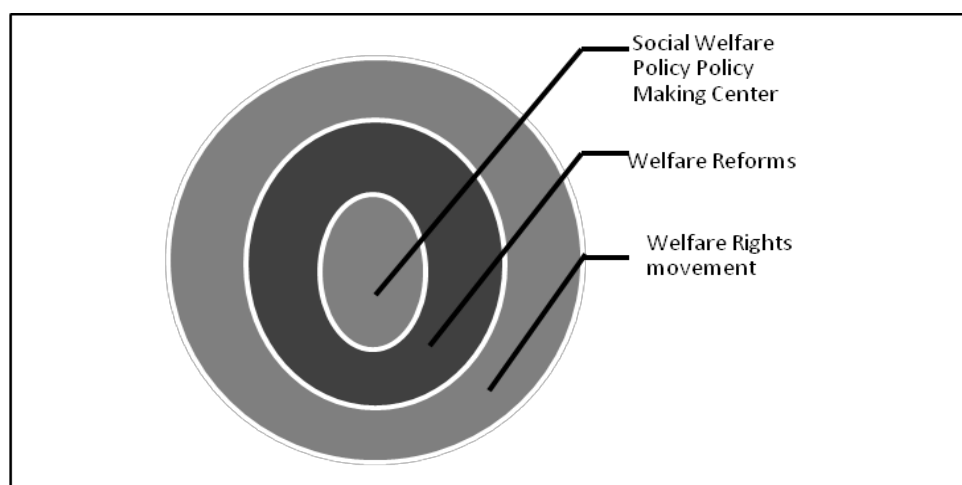


Figure. 1 Social Policy, Welfare Reforms and WRM 2010.

In spite of all the local organizing from 1987 through 1995, the 1996 passage of PRWORA demonstrated to those in the movement as well as outside of the movement that the welfare rights movement had become as Kramer (1996) described it “weak.”

The movement had no ability to shape the new welfare laws. Table 1 *Welfare Rights Timeline 1960-2010* shows that by the time the PRWORA was introduced in 1996, there had been nine welfare reform bills passed by Congress, almost all based upon various reforms of welfare initiated at the state level (Mink 1998a). The table also demonstrates the gap in welfare rights organizing between the dissolution of NWRO in 1975 and the founding of the NWRU in 1987. Those crucial twelve years saw also the rise of a powerful anti-welfare countermovement, the introduction of the “welfare queen” stereotype and the election of the first conservative majority to Congress since the civil rights era.

Table 1

Welfare Rights Time Line 1960 – 2010

Year	Description of Activity
1960	Small groups of welfare mothers establish local self-advocate welfare rights organizations in challenge denials of welfare assistance. About 800,000 families receiving welfare.
1962	Public Welfare Amendment of 1962 required mothers with children over age six to work in order to receive welfare benefits. About one million families receiving cash welfare.
1965	Great Society Programs Established by President Lyndon Johnson
1966	National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) a national organization of local welfare rights groups established.

- 1966 National Organization for Women (NOW) Established. 1967 Johnson/Nixon Welfare Reform Bill putting in work requirements as a part of welfare eligibility.
- 1967 Formal Countermovement advocates for reforms of welfare through the Eagle Forum and its founder Phyllis Schaeffly. The cycle of welfare reforms begin and the countermovement takes ownership of the name and concept of welfare reform.
- 1967 Work Incentive Program (WIN) required all mothers to register for work programs regardless of the age of their children as a condition of welfare eligibility. Estimated 5000 dues paying member in NWRO.
- 1969 NWRO is comprised of 523 local groups, with 22,500 dues paying members.
- 1970 Women Gain Leadership of NWRO, Johnnie Tillmon, becomes Director. Two million families receiving cash welfare.
- 1970 NWRO/NOW Collaboration “Women’s Rights Are Welfare Rights”
- 1971 Nixon Welfare Reform Bill exempting mothers in a two-parent welfare household from work requirements. His welfare reform overall, the annual income bill fails to pass in Congress.
- WIN Act’s Tallmadge Amendments toughen work requirements for single women with children on welfare.
- 1972 Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) a constitutional amendment giving women equality protection beyond that of the constitution’s equal protection clause passes in both houses of Congress and awaits ratification

by the States to become the twenty-seventh amendment. The Congress gives states seven years to ratify the ERA. About 3.2 million families receiving cash welfare.

- 1974 Carter Welfare Reform Bill Fails
- 1975 NWRO folds, local affiliates continue to operate. Movement abeyance cycle begins.
- 1976 “Welfare queen” introduced during 1976 presidential campaign
- 1979 Moral Majority Formed
- 1980 Reagan Presidency End to WRM Influence upon Welfare Policy.
3.9 million families receiving cash welfare.
- 1981 Welfare Reform Bill, The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act cut welfare spending resulting in 500,000 fewer persons receiving welfare benefits.
The Act also established workfare, meaning recipients had to work to receive benefits.
- 1982 ERA ratification fails, falls by short of three States to becoming a constitutional amendment. Efforts to reintroduce the ERA failed in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 1984 Murray’s *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*.
- 1986 Mead’s *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*.
- 1987 The National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) established
- 1988 Family Support Act introduced, precursor to PRWORA. About 3.7 million families on welfare.
- 1989 Moral Majority Disbanded. Welfare rights groups step up protest.

1990	Local welfare rights groups markedly increase state level protest against welfare reform at the state level.
1994	5.1 million families receiving cash welfare.
1995	100 Women Committee, NWRU & others lead efforts to retain welfare as an entitlement program through defeating provisions in new reforms; their efforts failed to reach this goal. Demonstrations and protest held nationally and locally against the PRWORA.
1994-1996	Contract with America Congressional Hearings including hearings on the welfare reforms of the PRWORA.
1996	Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act – replaced Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). PRWORA repeals entitlement to welfare.
1997	Three million families receiving cash welfare.
1999	1.8 million families receiving cash welfare.
2000	The number of families eligible to receive welfare drop by 84 percent between 1995 and 2000. By 2000 only 50 percent of those who are eligible receive welfare assistance a figure reminiscent the welfare denial rate which sparked the founding of the NWRO.
1997 – 2010	Sparse national NWRU organizing and mobilization activities. Local organizing efforts continue throughout the nation through local welfare rights campaigns. A 2009 estimate counts welfare rights organizations in 18 States.

2010 NWRU affiliates with the World Social Forum, “Another World is Possible (2010).

Note. Table data from Congressional Research Service 2010; Nadasen et al. (2009); Ernst 2009; Mink (1998); Dujon and Withorn (1996); Piven and Cloward ([1977] 1979).

As a result of the changes in the political climate, the abeyance and resulting fragmentation of the welfare rights movement proved no match for the growing anti-welfare sentiment driving the nation’s reform of the social welfare state. Working against the regrouped welfare rights movement was the mid-term election in 1994 of a largely conservative majority to Congress (Lehman and Danziger 2004:603). The election of a majority congress more amenable to socially conservative reforms of welfare opened up the opportunity for the pre-PRWORA reforms of welfare at the state level to become the basis for revamping the welfare system of the United States (Nadasen et al. 2009:78).

Movement activists believed PRWORA represented the countermovement’s ideological, social and public policy on welfare, a policy in direct opposition to the vision for the welfare state held by activists. In fact on some level, the reforms of welfare found in PRWORA reflect nineteenth century constructions of dependency upon charity (or welfare) as a social ill (Somers and Block 2000). Conservative governors such as John Engler of Michigan and Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin were convinced that nineteenth century methods of “poverty alleviation” were necessary to stem the rising number of persons receiving welfare (Shaw 2002:196; Polakow 1999:172). Activists countered however that reducing the number of people on welfare is not poverty alleviation. People are not poor because they are on welfare. They are on welfare because they are poor.

According to welfare rights activists the new welfare legislation, PRWORA had little to do with relieving family poverty (Mink 1998a; Kramer 1996). They countered that a nineteenth century solution to poor relief does not reduce the number of people living in poverty or the rate of poverty (Shaw 2002:196; Polakow 1999:172). From their analysis of the proposed reforms of welfare and the scholarly writing on poverty, activists concluded that the program and rule changes proposed in PRWORA would not address the real causes of poverty: gender, race, class inequalities and structural conditions in the economy such as job shortages (Rank 2004; Lehman and Danziger 2004:608). Activists relied upon empirical research to craft messages to inform policy makers and the public that the causes of poverty was not to be addressed by policing the behavior of welfare mothers as proposed in many of PRWORA's provisions, but in addressing those factors in society which create the conditions for poverty to exist (Guetzkow 2010; Reese 2005; Lehman and Danziger 2004; Rank 2004).

Mobilization against PRWORA. With the impending passage of the new reforms to welfare, welfare rights organizing increased at first. The goal of the movement was to try and prevent PRWORA from becoming the new welfare law. To help educate the public on the effects of the proposed changes in the welfare laws, coalitions of welfare rights activists and their allies in the social justice movement began to organize public forums, lobby days, media campaigns and direct action events (Erbaugh 2002; East 2000; Abramovitz 1996a).

Welfare reform impact reports, fact sheets and community panels were held warning of the harm PRWORA would do to the social safety net (Fujiwara 2005:84; Reese and Ramirez 2002:39). Agency directors, working poor mothers and fathers,

elderly and disabled people all participated in the hearings. Between the testimony at the hearings and the alternative budgets produced by state level fair budget coalitions, activists were able to forestall passage of some of the reforms to welfare (Fujiwara 2005:84; Reese and Ramirez 2002:39). As an activist, I participated in many such activities as well.

To arouse public support for a more fair welfare policy, activists created frames such as welfare fairness, welfare justice, not balancing budgets on the backs of the poor as well as frames calling upon the conscious of those more better off to have compassion for the less fortunate (Nadasen et al. 2009: 210; Fujiwara 2005:9, Fujiwara 2005:87; Shaw 2002:190). Like many other activists, I participated in meetings with editors and editorial boards of local newspapers, television and radio news departments and taking calls from listeners of talk radio in an effort to build a public information campaign.

The most vocal and visibly organized effort against the proposed PRWORA at the national level was the Women's Committee of One Hundred (Abramovitz 2001; Boris 1998; Mink 1998a, b). The Women's Committee of One Hundred organized congressional lobbying events and a series of direct action campaigns in Washington, D.C. in 1995 and 1996. Using the traditional organizing methods of the welfare rights movement, local welfare rights organizations, the National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) and the National Organization for Women (NOW) organized rallies, sit-ins, marches and other direct action to try and stop the new welfare agenda (Shaw 2002; Abramovitz 2001; Boris 1998; Mink 1998a, b).

Supporters of the Committee included labor unions, grassroots democratic political organizations, liberal program legal funds and legal services organizations, ERA

successor organizations, civil rights groups, women and men in academia, radical women's groups, left wing political groups and social justice religious groups (Mink (1996a). Even with this wide representation of traditional supporters of a more generous welfare state, the mobilization against PRWORA, the most far-reaching welfare reform proposal, failed to prevent PRWORA from being the new anti-poverty regime in the United States (Mink 1998b).

Immigrant Rights and Welfare Rights Organizing to Stop PRWORA

Activists in the welfare rights movement also understood PRWORA to be an immigration reform bill as well, with features specifically denying benefits based upon citizenship and immigration status (Bhuyan 2010; Fujiwara 2005; Erbaugh 2002; Reese and Ramirez 2002:31; Mink 1998a; Abramovitz 1996b; Abramovitz 2001). PRWORA implemented a number of changes in welfare policy causing most immigrants to become ineligible for assistance. Xenophobic rhetoric targeting immigrant communities resounded across the nation in a manner similar to that of the myth of the welfare queen fueling public support for immigrants to be ineligible obtain welfare.

Extremely harsh provisions in PRWORA initially denied welfare benefits to all non-citizen immigrants including residents (Fujiwara 2005; Katz 2001:42). Immigrants whether documented or undocumented were added to the rhetorical theater of the deserving and undeserving poor. Immigrants were undeserving not because of questions about their poverty status or even work ethic; they were undeserving because they were not "real" Americans (Gilens 1999). They were undeserving regardless of having a

history of working and paying taxes simply because they were not natural born American citizens (Bhuyan 2010; Fujiwara 2005; Reese and Ramirez 2002; Gilens 1999).

The welfare rights movement's weakness was not felt in this arena of the fight against welfare reform. Along with grassroots community organizations and welfare rights groups, immigrant rights activists were able to get some welfare benefits restored that would have been lost in the 1996 law. The extreme nature of the xenophobia expressed in the PRWORA required serious organizing (Reese and Ramirez 2002). Activists framed the consequences of PRWORA as a matter of life and death for persons living in poverty in immigrant communities.

For instance new rules for discontinuing eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income program (SSI) threatened the health and safety of elderly immigrants who were primarily women. Disabled non-citizen children were also under threat of losing welfare benefits. Many of the immigrant elderly women targeted for loss of benefits came to the United States as members of refugee communities who came to the United States seeking asylum. Activists successfully framed the proposed cuts as a broken promise to those for whom support of American intervention was a cause of them arriving in the United States as refugees (Fujiwara 2005).

The suicides of four immigrant women and men who left suicide messages and notes citing the loss of benefits as a cause for taking their own lives demonstrated the deep despair welfare reform created in immigrant communities (Fujiwara 2005:81). Not only was cash assistance being denied under the new welfare law, PRWORA also denied food stamps to immigrants and refugees. Advocates pointed out the inhumanity of such a

law and produced information that evidenced an increase in hunger and food insecurity among immigrants resulting from the law (Fujiwara 2005:87).

Clearly PRWORA's "immigration reforms" as proposed created a crisis in the immigrant community, a crisis to which activist from the immigrant rights and welfare rights movements responded (Fujiwara 2005; Reese 2005; Reese and Ramirez 2002). In the Bay area of Northern California immigrant rights groups formed alliances with welfare rights, civil rights groups, legal services groups, sympathetic politicians and elected officials to fight for the restoration of lost benefits; Fujiwara (2005) highlighted the movement's reliance upon a strategic public awareness and direct action campaign culminating in mass demonstrations in Washington and state capitals throughout the nation (Fujiwara 2005:81, Reese and Ramirez 2002).

Several major demonstrations at state capitols and the national capitol, organized by national immigrant rights coalitions and community-based organizations, pressured Congress and attracted media attention alerting the public to the immigrant rights campaign. On March 18, 1997, over 50 immigrant rights, religious, and labor organizations held "Immigrant Day in Sacramento [California]." Over 4,000 immigrants and activists visited legislators and rallied on the steps of the capitol, protesting welfare cuts and demanding human rights for immigrants and low-income people (NCCIR 1997a:1). According to the NCCIR, this protest was instrumental in making sure that elected officials could see the growing immigrant rights movement. (Fujiwara 2005:89)

As successful as this campaign was in preventing the elimination of welfare benefits for some immigrants, its initial success was extremely limited. Just before the new PRWORA law was to take effect, benefits were restored for immigrants who were deemed worthy, the elderly, legal immigrants who had ten years of work history and certain refugee groups such as those the Hmong and others. However many immigrant groups, including some undocumented children became ineligible for any type of welfare

assistance, though eligibility for undocumented children and pregnant women were restored in reauthorizations of PRWORA.

In all, PRWORA has contributed to a legacy of fear within immigrant communities around issues of public benefits and residency in the United States (Johnson 2003:386). PRWORA had the potential to create a sense of desperation across all communities of persons living in poverty (Lehman and Danziger 2004). Undocumented parents fear arrest and deportation if they seek welfare benefits including food stamps and Medicaid for their American born children. For families living in poverty, both the “old” and the “new” poor the social safety net was no more.

Organizing efforts across all domains of the welfare rights movement are continuous. Activists and solidarity networks remain in place where day to day struggles to end poverty are relentlessly pursued through direct action, service delivery and movement building (Ernst 2009; Shaw 2002). Welfare rights activism continues to the current day with activists continuing to pursue the goal, the dream of creating a world where poverty is no more. Understanding why activists persist in their activism in the welfare rights movement is a topic worthy of attention because to study welfare rights mobilization is a study of poverty, a social problem of immense importance to the future stability and quality of living of the nation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to contextualize the rise and decline of the welfare rights movement. I conclude here that the welfare rights movement is simultaneously rising and falling over time depending upon the political, cultural and social rhetoric for

and against the welfare state intertwined with claims for justice or rights from both the welfare and the anti-welfare movements. A social movement's political, cultural and social visibility and invisibility over time is a function of the movement-counter-movement cycle that exists in societies where the negotiation of meaning and claimsmaking by activists on both sides is constant and occurs in a continuous cycle.

I would even go further and state that we indeed now live and have lived in what Taylor (2000) proposed as a future utopia, the social movement society, and that social movement abeyance is an important feature of this future utopian view of social change activism. If we look at the welfare rights movements as a continuum across time, then abeyance would represent in a future utopian social movement society a period of time where movement participants regenerate their intentions to organize and struggle to realize their dream of ending the structural causes of poverty. I conclude this chapter by describing the cycle of social movements and social movement abeyance as what Marx proclaims is the:

“... history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman- in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes” (McLellan [1977] 2006:246).

I would say that the welfare rights movement is where the history of the class struggle is most sharply demonstrated, and is where even more sharply; utopian ideas about the elimination of poverty are consistent. For welfare rights activists it is a utopia that is worth imagining and striving to achieve. For Taylor states:

The United States is already moving toward becoming a social movement society. Social movements are crucial actors in the democratic process, and they also

produce institutional change on the social and cultural levels (Guigni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999). Building on the three factors necessary for the emergence of social movements, I suggest that the multicultural democratic society of the future might look like Social movements would be routine in that collective actors would be able to identify and effectively translate unjust events and circumstances into opportunities for protest. Social movement networks would serve as sources of community, meaning and identity. And finally, social movements would deploy multiple and overlapping identities that promote multicultural citizenship. (Taylor 2000:223).

Using this conceptualization more fully clarifies the welfare rights abeyance period not as decline in the movement, but rather a march towards the future social movement society that Taylor (2000) does and one which welfare rights activists may envision. The survival of welfare rights activism will depend upon the ability of activists to construct identities as activists, working to collectively, to push the welfare rights movement's agenda forward.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is guided by the social constructivist perspective. I selected this theoretical perspective to explore the personal and collective identity construction processes utilized by activists in the welfare rights movement. Section one is a discussion of social movements as an interactive process between social actors in the construction of the meaning of social problems. Using the theories of Berger and Luckmann (1967), Blumer (1971, 1969) and Burr ([1995] 2008), I provide a conceptualization of personal and movement collective identity construction as a challenge to the social construction of social problems.

Section two is a more specific discussion of how social movement activists construct identities through identity construction (Snow and McAdams 2000) and identity talk (Hunt and Benford 2004) in movement collective identity formation. Collective identity formation in the welfare rights movement is further complicated by the fact that the movement cycles in and out of abeyance. Section three is an overview of social movement abeyance (Taylor 1989) and movement fragmentation (Sawyers and Meyer 1999). I conclude the chapter by connecting identity construction and movement abeyance to processes of collective identity as a method for revealing arrangements of power and legitimacy among social actors jointly constructing the meaning of social problems.

Individual and Collective Identity in Social Movements: Processes of Social Constructionism and Symbolic Interactionism

A social movement according to Melucci (1995) is an action system. Collective identity according to Melucci is then, the process of constructing an action system. Collective identity starts as a process involving “cognitive definitions concerning the ends, means, and field of action . . . involves a network of active relationships between the actors, who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate and make decisions. . . [and] is never entirely negotiable” (Melucci 1995:45). In part what activists are doing through social movement participation can be understood as creating, challenging and changing meaning and thus reality through social action.

Social Construction of Reality and the Symbolic Universe

Social movements fit into these ideas of social interaction and collective identity because movements activists in their activism seek to create opportunities for social change. Combining the concepts of Berger and Luckmann (1967) on the social construction of reality and Blumer’s (1969) conceptualization of symbolic interactionism with Melucci’s (1995) idea of collective identity, I define social change as any social interaction that seeks to alter social relations in an attempt to sustain or change the way in which the collective reality is constructed.

I am seeking first to place this conceptualization of collective identity within two social constructivist frameworks: Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) ideal of the symbolic

universe a method for understanding reality as constructed and Blumer's (1969) concepts of symbolic interactionism as the process in constructing reality.

The symbolic universe is the result of a legitimization process leading to the institutionalization of the social world (Berger and Luckmann 1967:92). The institutionalization of the social world occurs through institutions which transmit values, norms and beliefs, across time and generations. The resulting symbolic universe acts as a frame of reference to which social actors refer back to as they simultaneously construct and deconstruct the institutional world (Berger and Luckmann 1967). While reality is socially defined, it is the collective individual within the social world doing the defining of the collective reality. The symbolic universes is maintained by what Berger and Luckmann (1962) describe as universal experts.

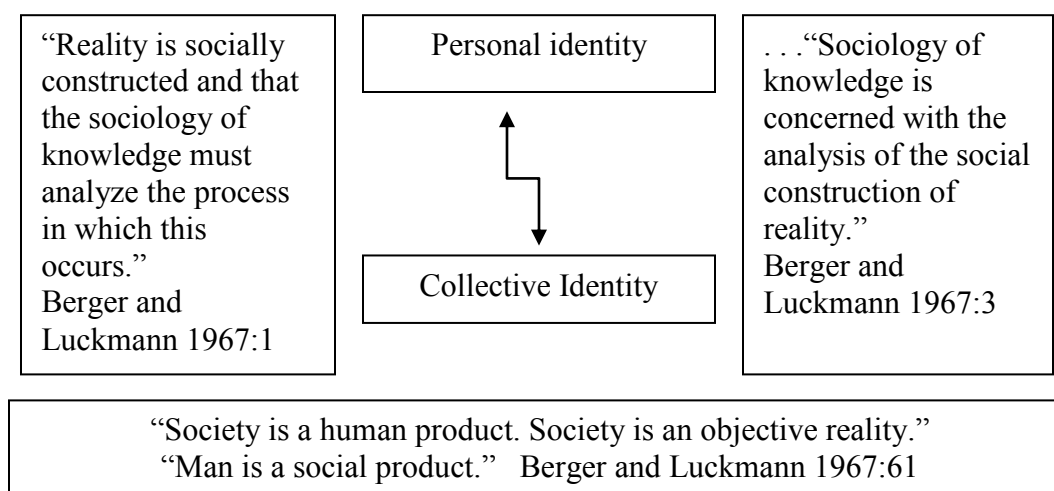


Figure 2. Identity in the symbolic universe Source (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

What Berger and Luckmann (1967) are telling us, is that reality is a system of symbols, interpreted by individuals in such a manner as to produce social stability over time and generations. Social movements then, as defined by Melucci (1995) contributes

to this process by causing society to engage in social actions affecting the state of social stability. The action system (Melucci 1995) constructed by social movements actors legitimize or delegitimize institutions within the symbolic universe and in doing so alter the reality as constructed or as defined by the collective of social actors called society.

Symbolic Interactionism

In making the statement that the symbolic universe acts as a frame of reference to which social actors refer back to as they simultaneously construct and deconstruct the institutional world (Berger and Luckmann 1967), I draw upon Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism. Blumer's (1969) states that:

Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things. . [t]he meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society. . . [t]hese meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters. (P. 2)

In order to construct an action system constitutive of a social movement, social actors must “interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate and make decisions” (Melucci 1995:45). Social actors do this through a process of symbolic interactionism as conceptualized by Blumer (1969). In the specific instance of the welfare rights movement, activists are concerned with frames of references within the symbolic universe referring back to the social construction of poverty as a social problem and poverty relief as an institution for maintaining social stability in the face of the socially destabilizing potential of poverty.

Using the ideas of the social construction of reality, the symbolic universe and the idea of universal experts charged with maintaining social stability (Berger and

Luckmann 1967) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969), I argue that social activists engage in meaning making, identity construction, and collective identity processes to reconstruct the social reality of poverty as a social problem. Blumer (1971) states that the meaning of social problems is constructed through a “process of collective definition determin[ing] the career and fate of social problems, from the initial point of their appearance to whatever may be the terminal point in their course” (p. 301).

Activists in the welfare rights movement redefine the social problem of poverty and in doing so, negotiate with universal experts over what constitutes poverty relief.

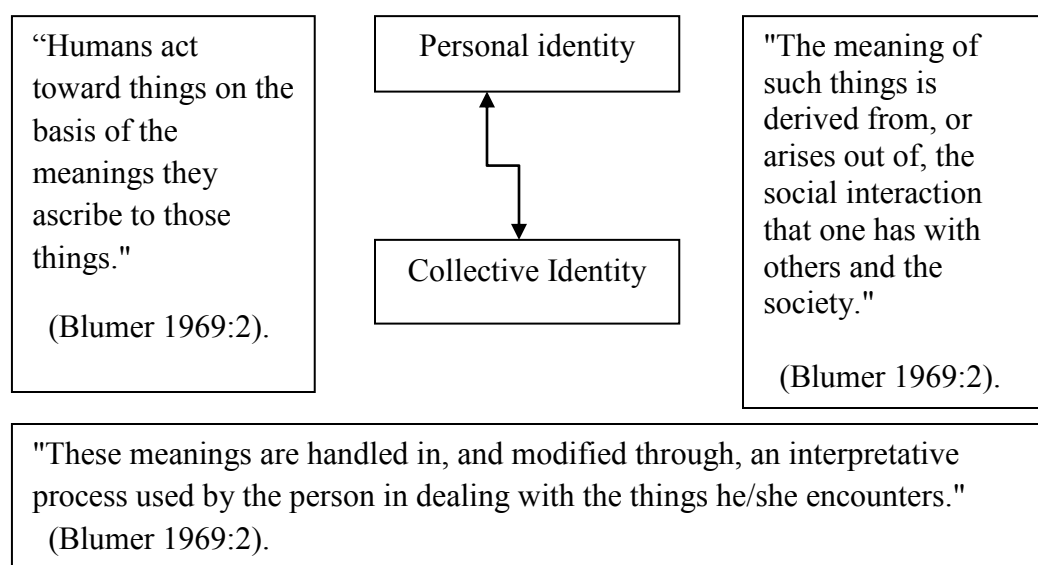


Figure 3. Identity Construction and Symbolic Interactionism

Identity Construction

The personal identity of a social movement activists refers to the unique nature of the activist's self as a member of a social movement. It is the sense of continuity and identification with, integration in, and differentiation from a social movement that is not structured in terms of the individual's cultural and community expectations but rather the individual's subjective experiences as a movement activist. (White and Fraser 2000:325)

Activists in the welfare rights movement are individuals concerned with altering the meaning of both poverty and poverty relief. Activists seek to alter these meanings through social action reflective of jointly defined values around poverty relief and the social action necessary to realize an end to poverty. Identity construction in this sense is “the process through which personal and collective identities are aligned such that individuals regard engagement in movement activity as being consistent with their self-conception and interests” (Snow and McAdam 2000:49).

Identity construction describes cognitive and emotional processes activists undergo when deciding on whether to join or not join a cause. Snow and McAdam (2000:49) have divided these processes into four independent, non-progressive stages: *identity amplification*, *identity consolidation*, *identity extension* and *identity transformation*. Identity amplification is conceptualized as a process wherein the existing personal identity “is congruent with the movement’s collective identity” but is not salient enough to cause movement participation (Snow and McAdam 2000:49). Identity consolidation is conceptualized as the joining of dissimilar identities to form a new identity or the “blending of past or current salient identity with a new but previously foreign identity (Snow and McAdam 2000:50). Identity extension happens with the broadening of personal identity so that “personal identity and movement identity may be indistinguishable” (Snow and McAdam 2000:50). Identity transformation is the process in which the personal identity is replaced by a different personal identity and that new identity is congruent with the collective identity of the movement (Snow and McAdam 2000:50).

I argue that identity construction would require a method for individuals to organize the information both cognitive and emotional, activists receive about a movement. Framing scholars (Benford and Snow 2000:615; Snow and Benford 1998:199) state that the core framing tasks in social movement framing are *diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational* framing. Diagnostic framing assigns blame and responsibility for problems (Benford and Snow 2000:615). Prognostic framing addresses the question of what it to be done (Benford and Snow 2000:616). Motivational framing is the call to arms through the use of vocabularies to construct “appropriate vocabularies of motive” (Benford and Snow 2000:617).

I argue that in linking their personal identity to the movement’s collective identity activists undergo core identity linking tasks as well; this linking is based upon a reciprocal relationship between the movement’s collective identity and the individual’s personal identity. Activists as individuals utilize the identity construction processes to link themselves to the movement through a system or process similar to the core framing task in social movement framing.

As indicated above, the identity linking task is similar to core framing tasks, but instead of applying it to movement framing, the core task are applied to processes linking personal identity to social movement collective identity at the individual activist level. Processes in identity linkage would then be diagnostic as well. Activating the sociological imagination an activist may ask himself or herself, whether the central issue or problem is at the personal level or the societal level (Mills 1959:8). Activists make an emotional and cognitive assessment of the action called by the social movement addressing what I identify as a social problem?

The identity linking process would be prognostic as well. The activists may then ask depending on the answer to the diagnostic linking question, does this issue take a personal or a social response and how important to my sense of self is it for me to become involved in this particular social movement as oppose to other ways to express myself on this issue? And lastly, there would be a similar type of motivational linking task, with the question to be answered; is this place where I can be me? That is, the me, being defined and constructed at both the individual and group level?

I am not suggesting that an affirmative answer to these questions or any one question leads to participation or will cause disengagement from a movement. Ultimately, an individual's decision is linked to other identity processes and social roles. What I am suggesting is that abeyance is particularly challenging for activists. Activists already committed to a movement or those considering joining a movement are more likely to want to engage in processes that not only enlarges their identity but allows them to engage in a process to enlarge the collective identity of the movement in which they are participants. Ultimately when participants link themselves to social movements (such as the welfare rights movement) that are stigmatized, marginalized, and lack political support, those activists tend to act on social values rooted in a desire to undo what they perceive to be injustices. Their attachment to such social movements are roots in identity construction processes resembling the building of faith in the movement. Faith in the sense that part of maintaining participation in the movement rest upon the belief held by activists being in the movement allows activists the freedom to continuously construct and to be themselves.

Social Movement Abeyance

According to Taylor (1989), movement abeyance is conceptualized as “. . . a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another” (p. 761). To overcome the difficulty of movement continuity during hostile phases, social movements develop abeyance structures that serve to link movements through periods of activism, holding processes, and future activism (Taylor 1989). Movements maintain continuity through abeyance structures such as activist networks and social movement organizations that keep activists connected to the movement. The networks allow for the movement to continue doing the work of maintaining a sufficiently cohesive collective identity and identity alignment process to allow activists to remain in the movement even when conditions are less hospitable (Taylor 1989:765).

Abeyance structures or organizations are not sufficient in themselves; their importance lies in how well they are structured to meet the activists’ task of preserving the movement’s collective identity. It is within the five dimensions of the abeyance process that the work of preserving the movement’s collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992:122). Taylor (1989) describes the five dimensions of abeyance that are essential to the process of movement continuity. The dimensions are *temporality*, *purposive commitment*, *exclusiveness*, *centralization*, and *culture* (p. 765).

The first dimension, temporality is defined by Taylor (1989:765) as the capacity of the movement to hold onto personnel (volunteers, paid staff, supporters) over time. This would be people who managed the day to day affairs of the movement; in fact often times these people would be “the movement.” This was the case for Alice Paul and the

women's movement (Taylor 1989:768). Purposive commitment is the second dimension of abeyance structures and is defined by Taylor (1989) as "the willingness of people to do what must be done . . . [and it] then contributes to the abeyance process by ensuring that individuals continue to do what is necessary to maintain the group and its purpose even when the odds are against success" (p. 766-767).

Exclusiveness is the third dimension of movement abeyance structures and is defined by Taylor (1989) as the degree of expansion or contraction of the membership and is dependent upon the stage of mobilization in which the movement is engaged (p. 767). During peak mobilizations, movements expand their memberships; during abeyance movements tend to "expel or hold constant their membership" (Taylor 767). "Exclusiveness is an important characteristic of abeyance organizations because it ensures a relatively homogenous cadre of activist suited to the limited activism undertaken" (Taylor 1989:768).

Centralization, the fourth dimension of abeyance structures has the "advantage of producing organizational stability, coordination and technical expertise necessary for movement survival" (Taylor 1989:768). Centralization operates with groups that are represented by a single center of power (1989:768), such as that of the women's movement. Taylor (1989) also asserts, "centralization contributes to the abeyance process by ensuring the maintenance of organization and at least minimal activity during periods when conditions do not favor mass mobilization" (p. 769).

Culture, the fifth dimension of abeyance structures embodies the "collective emotions, beliefs, and actions" of the movement (Taylor 1989:769). According to Taylor movements in abeyance develop "alternative cultural frameworks to provide security and

meaning for those who remain in the group.” Personal ties of love and friendship are within the cultural dimension of abeyance (Taylor 1989:769). Sawyers and Meyer (1999) caution that movement abeyance does not occur in a political vacuum. Movement’s abeyance can affect the ability of activists to impact politics and policy (Sawyers and Meyer 1999:1987). They describe social movement abeyance as a condition of movement fragmentation.

For Sawyers and Meyer the broader task is to examine and understand how fragmented movements can take advantage of political opportunities that are present while the movement is going through a period of abeyance.

Movement decline is characterized by fragmentation, even as core activists remain. Both moderate and radical wings modify goals and tactics. Moderates emphasize institutional participation in pursuit of narrower goals, while the more radical wing effectively retreats from the political process—even though its rhetoric or goals may become more radical. Absent a visible link between margins and mainstream, the movement sacrifices legitimacy or visibility, and is less likely to reach a broader audience effectively. Importantly, movement decline is an interactive process with activists making choices in response to changes in political opportunity, and those choices affecting political opportunity. Even in an unfavorable political environment, however, political opportunities may remain. . . . (Sawyer and Meyer 1999:193).

Sawyer and Meyer conclude that social movement abeyance does not necessarily mean that movements become unable to affect policy change. The trick is to maintain some level of movement visibility. That way, movements are more likely to take advantage of a policy opportunity and at the same time mitigate negative consequences stemming from the movement’s state of fragmentation.

Collective Identity and Social Movement Abeyance

It is through abeyance structures during social movement abeyance that activists are able to do the work of maintaining the movement's collective identity. Abeyance structure offers a "sense of mission and moral purpose for participants through the promotion of collective identity (Taylor 1989). The process of collective identity during movement abeyance is conducted through "internally oriented activities" to maintain the identity, ideals and political vision of the movement and its importance lies in its symbolic resource for future movement mobilizations (Taylor 1989).

Collective identities are fundamental in the building of social movements and create for adherents and activists a sense of "one-ness and we-ness" (Snow and McAdam 2000). Collective identity is also conceptualized as a "process of constructing an action system" (Melucci 1995) or "the shared definition of a group that derives from its member's common interest and solidarity" (Taylor 1989). It is commonly understood that collective identity is a process and not a thing and that collective identity is negotiated, meaning it is subject to reinterpretation under different circumstances and movement needs (Snow and McAdam 2000; Melucci 1995; Hunt and Benford 2004; Taylor 1989).

Since it is a process, collective identity is outcome focused. For Melucci (1995:49) the outcome is a social actor called a social movement. To reach this social actor Melucci (1995:48) posits that collective identity "contains an unresolved and unresolvable tension between the definition a movement gives of itself and the recognition granted to it by the rest of society." Melucci (1985) furthers this argument

by having us consider that social movements are systems of action, “connecting plural orientations and meanings” (p.794).

Based on the concepts of collective identity outlined above, collective identity within social movements begins with a sense of belonging together in order to accomplish some ideal or goal as identified by those seeking this sense of belonging or “we-ness” (Snow and McAdam 2000, p. 42). Collective identity in the welfare rights movement could be conceptualized as the process movement activists engage in to develop, actualize and institutionalize concepts and actions around the causes of poverty and what should relieve society of poverty. Most importantly, the collective or shared meaning activists have about poverty is the core impetus to address the everyday needs of the poor. This is done through direct action, service provision and organizing of constituents to agitate for the movement’s goals (Reese 2002).

The process of collective identity entails identity work. Identity work is defined as “all the activities involved in creating and sustaining identity” (Einwohner, Reger, and Meyers 2000:4). Within identity work is the task of aligning the personal identity to the movement’s collective identity. This process is conceptualized as identity construction (Snow and McAdam 2000). I argue that identity construction is an ongoing process characterized by individuals jointly constructing a specific social reality through the negotiation of the meaning and reality. In this sense, social movement actors are constantly engaged in the process of jointly creating reality and the way they do that is through the interpretive process of framing (Benford and Snow 2000; Goffman 1974).

Conclusion

Social movements are generally recognized by most scholars as a form of social interaction, of communication, and identity formation. Beginnings with the earliest theorizing on social movement formation scholars have increasingly studied social change in society as a sociological phenomenon. Social movements are concerned with the social construction of a reality that reveals arrangements of power, legitimacy, and authority over what constitutes both knowledge and knowing (Casa-Cortes, Osterwell and Powell 2008:27).

Social movements do this by breaching the parameters of the symbolic universe that people together have constructed as representing reality, knowledge production and authority. Identity formation involves a process providing “a link among mind, self, behavior, and society . . . as they emerge and transform in interaction and over time” (Vryan, Adler A. and Adler P. 2003:387). Therefore, for social movements and social movement participation to make sense to individuals, identity has to be seen as linking social action to social change through construction of and negotiation of meaning and the symbols representing those meanings within systems of interaction (Snow 2003).

Identity is the process which allows people to be; and by to be, I mean, to synthesize a multiplicity of intersecting reflections (Stryker 2000:21) and by doing so “act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things” (Blumer 1969:2). Identity in this sense would conceptualize social movement participation as an application of a set of ascribed meanings by individuals to social processes they believe will make known the need for social change. Being a social movement participant then would involve a process at the individual identity construction level (Snow and McAdam

2000). Identity can also be conceptualized as the work of interpreting reality. So for activists in the welfare rights movement, identity may not be so much as a need to belong to something, but rather a need to not be oppressed by something.

I have presented a way of conceptualizing how individuals connect to social movements by borrowing from the social movement framing literature (Benford and Snow 2000:615; Snow and Benford 1998:199) and incorporating those concepts into a theory of identity construction as conceptualized by Snow and McAdam (2000). Identity construction as a form of identity work is the process I studied to analyze how activists link themselves to a movement. Chapter 5, the analysis chapter provides a direct application of the ideas presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND METHODS

The research question guiding this thesis is, How do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance? This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one begins with a brief discussion of the methods of data collection. Section two discusses in detail the methods I used for collecting the data needed to address the research question guiding my research inquiry. I describe the empirical data in detail, the method used to collect the data and the procedures by which the data was collected.

Rationale for the Research Method

Semi-Structured Interviews and Social Movement Research

Social research scholars agree that the best way to find out why people engage in social actions, such as participating in social movements, is to ask them. Semi-structured interviewing is a way of asking social movement activists about their participation. Semi-structured interviews serve social movement research in important ways. As a methodological tool, semi-structured interviews can uncover knowledge about how activists give meaning to and interpret a collective reality (Blee and Taylor 2002).

Semi-structured interviews can help researchers arrive at how activists integrate their personal values and beliefs with those of the movements in which they are involved

through identity construction and identity linking. Semi-structured interviews allows for understanding the movement from a broad and diverse group of participant perspectives (Blee and Taylor 2002:93-97). This is important to my research because I wanted to be able to understand the different ways people came into, remain in and disengage from the welfare rights movement. I also wanted to understand how activists talk about the social reality in which they live and seek to change.

I also wanted to be able to uncover how social movement actors give meaning to what they do and why continue to participate during movement abeyance. This would include an understanding of how identity—both personal and collective—is constructed. All in all I also wanted a research method that allowed for as much as possible, the voice of the activists to be present in revealing their everyday world and the everyday reality they jointly construct with other activists, opponents and other relevant parties (Blumer 1996, Berger and Luckmann 1967).

I also selected semi-structured interviews as a research method because I wanted to analyze through the words of activists the identity construction processes they underwent in aligning their personal identities to the collective identity of the welfare rights movement. The welfare rights movement I observed during my research was almost universally identified in the press, among the general public and within many political institutions as highly vilified movement with a stigmatized constituency (Baptist 2001; Gilens 1999).

The interviews uncovered perceptions of the welfare rights movement and people on welfare that were similar as well as different from the press, the general public and political institutions. The interviews also uncovered the different perceptions held by

movement activists among themselves. Unfortunately, the loosely organized coalition had very little written documentary evidence which could be used to analyze the movement. I did review the websites of three member organizations of the welfare rights movement.

In addition to the major organizing campaign information; a great deal of the information on the WebPages was standard service delivery information: as in the case of one organization the information was outdated and included many non-operable links to other welfare rights organizations. The lack of written organizational materials is another reason to use semi-structured interviews in social movement research. Social movements with little documentary evidence lend themselves to a semi-structured interview data gathering method (Blee and Taylor 2002:92).

Feminist and Standpoint

I used standpoint methodologies and feminist (Dill, McLaughlin, and Nieves 2007; Anderson 2005; Collins 2000; Snow and Benford 1988) in the interviewing processes for this thesis. “A standpoint is *not* necessarily how people in a particular location think” (Sprague 2005:6); standpoint “is a specific location in physical and social reality that provides an opening for developing knowledge about how the social world works” (Sprague 2005:68). “*From the perspective of standpoint epistemology, truthfulness or validity is not the property of a particular research project or category of social actor, it is a characteristic of social discourse*” (Sprague 2005:80).

As a former welfare mother and participant in the welfare rights movement, I bring a particular stand-point and interpretation to the research based upon my social

group identity as a woman on welfare, the experience of being a member of that social group, and my reflections about those experiences both as an individual and as a group member. I find standpoint epistemology to be critically important because of the assumption that participants are the experts and are partners with the researcher in constructing knowledge together. In this sense, I see my role as being that of a commentator and translator of the experiences of welfare rights activists rendering as closely and ethically as possible their interpretation of what it means to be an activist.

I selected feminist methods to conduct this research because I wanted to provide as much as possible an opportunity for the articulation of desires for social change on the part of activists (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007). The feminist perspective in social research has as a goal “to understand how oppression works and to provide knowledge that will help to fight injustices” (Sprague 2005:8). Feminist research is research done with the specific purpose of producing knowledge that can be used improve the lives of primarily, though not exclusively women (Casa-Cortes et al. 2008:28; Dill, McLaughlin and Nieves 2007; Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007; Maddison 2007; Hill 2000, Jayaratnte and Stewart 19991).

Feminist research often times deal with subjugated knowledge (and this speaks to the critical importance of standpoint epistemology in research). Subjugated knowledge is the experiences, practices and know-how or knowledge disenfranchised and disempowered communities use to navigate systems (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007; Maddison 2007; Collins 2000). According to Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2007) many traditional research methods may not be flexible enough to reach this level of inquiry for a number of reasons, including researcher bias against this type of knowledge or lack of

awareness of its existence and importance. A lack of reflexivity and an inability to successfully cross boundaries on the part of the researchers may preclude the recognition of this important way of knowing as well (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007; Maddison 2007; Collins 2000).

Empirical Data and Their Collection

I developed a question guide containing questions that would allow activists' experiences to be revealed through their responses (Appendix C). For instance, in order to explore how welfare rights activists maintain continued participation while the movement is in abeyance, I included questions relating to collective identity construction such as: What are welfare rights to you? What makes you believe in the message of welfare rights? During the interviews new questions emerged based on what some activists wanted to talk about. Everyone I interviewed wanted to speak to their everyday experiences as an activist involved in welfare rights as well as other social movements.

Sampling, Access, and Interview Settings

I attended the Institution Review Board (IRB) training on September 5, 2009 and was provided certificate of completion of the training. I submitted my applications for IRB approval to begin research using human subjects on May 21, 2010. I received approval to begin my research on May 24, 2010; the IRB approval ended on May 12, 2011. The initial IRB approval was for 25 interviews. Once I was on the research site, I submitted a request on August 12, 2010 to modify the IRB increasing the number of interviews from 25 to 35. I obtained approval to modify the IRB on August 24, 2010.

I used purposive and snowball sampling in order to obtain my research sample. The people I interviewed were selected based upon my knowledge of the prospective interviewee's experience as a welfare rights movement activist. I also interviewed persons recommended by interviewees. Interviewees were movement activists, supporters, leaders, organizers, and members of welfare rights organizations. The interview sample consisted of 27 persons. There were 21 women in the sample and six men. Three activists were age 40 and younger; the other 23 persons were over the age of 55.

I began scheduling interview appointments on May 24, 2010; the last appointments were scheduled and confirmed on August 25, 2010. I confirmed additional appointments once I arrived in the city. I was at the research site from June 12 through August 31, 2010. All of the persons that I interviewed had been active in the welfare rights movement between the years of 1990 and 2010. There were three interviewees who had played a significant role in the movement but within the last few years for health reasons were no longer active. They did however support movement organizations with donations, attendance at conferences and other similar supportive actions.

In order to gain access to the initial population, I sent email messages and made phone calls to forty-one persons requesting their participation. I spoke to or received an email response from 32 of the 41 persons contacted and 29 interviews were scheduled. Letters of confirmation and telephone confirmations were completed with each interviewee who agreed to participate. Due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts two interviewees' cancelled their appointments. In all twenty-seven interviews were completed.

Of the 27 interviews conducted, one was not transcribed because I inadvertently erased it while transferring the interview from the digital voice recorder to the computer. I did however include in the analysis data from notes I had taken during parts of the interview, so while not transcribed, the interview data was utilized, in a limited manner. One interview was not used at all because of severe distortions in the recording that occurred as a result of transferring the interview from the digital voice recorder to the computer. In all 25 interviews were coded and analyzed.

Analysis of the demographic data reveals several differences in movement involvement among participants. Differences included age of initial recruitment, number of years of involvement and roles taken in the movement. All but four of the interviewees were over the age of 50. The age of initial recruitment ranged from the youngest at 14 years of age to oldest age of recruitment of 48 years. Years involved in the movement ranged from 52 years for the longest term of activism to less than one year. The average number of years of involvement was 27 years. The racial/ethnic spread was almost even between those who identified themselves as White Europeans (12) and those who identified as Black or African American (15). I did not interview any persons of Hispanic or Asian descent.

Of those interviewed, three were no longer active in the day to day business of mobilizing. They continue in their role as support persons assisting with things such as maintaining postal and electronic mailing list and sending out mailings and attending organizational functions. All the other interviewees continued to be involved in day to day movement activities primarily as organizers, director service providers with most being employed by or volunteering in non-profit organizations.

Five persons were working actively in a welfare rights office/organization as paid volunteers. Two of the interviewees were welfare recipients. Four had been on welfare or had received some short term emergency welfare assistance in the past. Except for those who worked for the welfare rights organizations, all of the other interviewees worked professionally in organizations or agencies that received government or private funding targeted to delivery of services to persons living in poverty.

The interviews settings included places of employment, restaurants and private residences. I conducted the respondent interviews in person, with follow up by telephone and email contact. Demographic forms collecting non identifying participant information (see Appendix A) were used to obtain information from interviewees. A question book with a series of questions was used to guide the interview (see Appendix C).

We began the interviews with a greeting and review of the research project and personal introductions. We then reviewed the research project, interview guide and interview protocol. Interviewee's self selected pseudonym for the interview. I answered questions from interviewees before we started the interview. The interviews were more conversational than a strictly questions and answers session. This made it easy for participants to frame and phrase events in their own words and sentiments.

Research Site

My research site was an urban city, with a declining population and welfare usage rates. The welfare rights movement of this city consisted of welfare rights organizations, welfare rights individual and organizational supporters and other activists. The local movement has played a historically significant role in developing social policy

at both the city local and national level. The vibrancy of the movement declined when many of the agencies went out of business or otherwise reduced their commitment to welfare rights as a result of a general decrease in funding and regulatory restrictions contained in legislation such as PRWORA that came out of the Contract with America (Nadasen et al. 2009).

Field notes and observations

I took field observation notes during interviews, unless my interviewees were distracted by me doing so. In most instances, I wrote short quotes when something I felt was particularly salient to the research question. I also wrote more extensive field observation notes after the interviews were completed. I wrote the notes in a permanently bound notebook. Each entry contained the date, time and place of the interview. I also recorded some observations as well with the digital recorder. All information from the demographic forms was added to the field notes as well. The information on the demographic form was non-identifying such as age (expressed as 50+ or under age 50), number of years in movement and roles in movement.

I also recorded field observations in the top margins of each interview transcript, on the data forms and on the digitally recorded field notes and observations. Field notes contained information such as interview start and end time, type of interview setting and the general atmosphere of the interview. I kept a separate computerized research file with a reflections log wherein I recorded my feelings, impressions, ideas for additional research and commentary on the research, and even some poems about the experience.

I wanted participants to see themselves as a part of the research team. I had hoped to provide copies of the full transcripts to each person interviewed; however I discovered that most only wanted to see the final thesis. During and after the session, I asked each interviewee if there was anything they said during the interview that they would like to be eliminated from the transcript. We reviewed those issues and I deleted those parts, so they were not transcribed. I will provide each interviewee requesting it a copy of the transcribed interview along with the completed thesis.

Coding Methods and Procedures

I divided the coding into three separate phases using a mix of first cycle and second cycle coding. Saldana (2009) described first cycle coding as “those processes that happen during the initial coding of data” (p. 45). Saldana describes second cycle coding as being utilized “to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization for your array of first cycle code” (p. 149). I developed codes resulting from the research goals of the thesis on abeyance, identity construction and collective identity (Blee and Taylor 2002:11).

Before I could fully answer the research question: how do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance? I had to analyze the interview transcripts for evidence of movement abeyance structures (Taylor 1989:762). I coded abeyance structures as ABYS. So in the first phase I coded for social movement abeyance structures using the code ABYS as the analytic tool to uncover abeyance structures in the welfare rights movement. Taylor (1989) describes abeyance structures as defining movement

participation through the lens of temporality, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization and culture (p. 765-770). I did not conduct a second cycle coding for abeyance structures, I simply applied the codes to the transcripts.

In the second phase of coding I developed structural codes to describe movement collective identity and activists' personal identity construction processes. Saldana describes structural coding as being a "question-based code that 'acts as a labeling and indexing device, allowing researchers to quickly access data likely to be relevant to a particular analysis from a large data set'"(Saldana 2009:66).

For this thesis I used the research question as the question-based code and selected two structural codes.

Research Question: How do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance?

STRUCTURAL CODE 1: CI for collective identity

STRUCTURAL CODE 2: IC for identity construction processes

I used identity talk to uncover activists' interpretation of the welfare rights collective identity and individual activists' identity construction processes. I selected identity talk because I wanted to use larger selections of the transcribed interviews in the analysis of the identity processes. I also found identity talk a more useful analytic tool because I understood that much of what activists had to say would be very much perception based. Activists' identity talk about movement collective identity and their own attachment the movement would be richer for the purposes of this thesis than the

shorter in vivo codes I had originally proposed to use. Identity talk then is defined by Hunt and Benford (2004)

as a discourse that reflects actors' perception of a social order and is based on interpretations of current situations, themselves, and others. . . and "revolves around four moments of identity construction: *becoming aware, active, committed, and weary* [and the four moment are do not appear linearly or as stages but rather] as themes in identity talk; that is in communicating their personal identities as activists, individuals told stories that included accounts about becoming aware, active, committed, and weary. P. 492

After completing the first cycle of coding of activists talk on movement collective identity and identity construction I then searched for patterns in the text. I developed pattern codes from the data. Pattern codes are "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, or configuration explanation" (Saldana 2009:152). Pattern codes are appropriately used to develop major themes from the data (Saldana 2009:152). To make sense of the coded data it was necessary to organize them into specific categories. From the categories I then developed second the following cycle thematic codes directly from the identity talk of activists and this time I did make the codes in vivo codes to describe the general theme of collective identity and activists' identity construction processes.

Thematic Code 1: ABEYANCE

Thematic Code 2: COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

"The movement is kind of fragmented."

Thematic Code 3: "IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Conclusion

The use of semi-structured interviews provided the type of data I needed to address the research question guiding this thesis. I found that the interview process produced several changes in my research focus. Once in the field, interviewees added to the questions by bringing up issues and topics I had not considered in the research proposal. Feminist methods and standpoint epistemology shaped and guided my data collection methods and processes. I analyzed the transcribed interviews based upon the structural codes and the pattern codes to develop three thematic code addressing abeyance, collective identity and identity construction respectively.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will present the findings from the research. I conducted this research and analysis for the purpose of contributing to the knowledge of how social movement actors go about the work of collective identity processes during periods of abeyance (Taylor 1989). I will present findings on the identity construction processes utilized by social movement activists during social movement abeyance to develop a personal identity that is aligned with the collective identity of the welfare rights movement (Snow and McAdam 2000). I have organized this chapter in four sections. Section one analyzes the movement abeyance structures of the welfare rights movement to reveal activists perception of movement continuity. In section two, I analyze the collective identity processes of the welfare rights movement which lead activists to characterize the movement as fragmented. In section three I analyze the identity construction processes utilized by activists to reflect upon their participation in the movement. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of identity construction and collective identity processes during abeyance as a function of movement continuity.

Dimensions of Abeyance in the Welfare Rights Movement

This thesis is focused on identity construction processes at the individual level of activists in a local welfare rights movement. I relied upon activist identity talk (Hunt and Benford 1994) to analyze how activists construct an understanding of the movement's state of abeyance and the utility of the abeyance structures in place (Taylor 1989).

Through identity talk activists I also analyzed how activists understood movement fragmentation as a condition of social movement abeyance (Sawyers and Meyer 1999).

Identity talk is defined by Hunt and Benford (2004)

as a discourse that reflects actors' perception of a social order and is based on interpretations of current situations, themselves, and others. . . and "revolves around four moments of identity construction: *becoming aware, active, committed, and weary* [and the four moment are do not appear linearly or as stages but rather] as themes in identity talk; that is in communicating their personal identities as activists, individuals told stories that included accounts about becoming aware, active, committed, and weary. P. 492

According to Taylor (1989:762) movement abeyance are essentially abeyance organizations which serve as the holding process for social movements during the abeyance period. So a social movement organization becomes an abeyance structure during the holding period. In the instance of the welfare rights movement, then the welfare rights organizations or any numbers of ally organizations become abeyance structures of the movement. Taylor (1989) explains:

The following factors are relevant to the abeyance process. First, certain factors external to a movement create a pool of marginal potential activists. These include changes in opportunity structures that support and constrain the movement and an absence of status vacancies to absorb dissident and excluded groups. Second, there are internal factors or organizational dimensions of social movement abeyance structures: temporality, commitment, exclusiveness, centralization, and culture. . . . The significance of abeyance lies in its linkages between one upsurge in activism and another. I delineate three ways that social

movement abeyance structures perform this linkage function: through promoting the survival of activist networks, sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics, and promoting a collective identity that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose. (P. 762)

Evidence of Taylor (1989) five dimensions of social movement abeyance is reflected in the interviews with activists. The dimensions of abeyance according to Taylor (1989) give shape and context to the movement's ability to operate, maintain staff and supporters, manage issues of cohesiveness in the movement and concentrate on giving activists space and time to rebuild movement collective identity. The welfare rights movement has been described as having been in abeyance from the time of the collapse of the NWRO in 1975 (Kornbluh 2007); and this abeyance period has continued through many cycles of welfare reform from the 1962 Family Support Amendment to the 1996 entitlement status ending reforms of welfare contained in PRWORA (Ernst 2009:188; Nadasen 2005). Taylor describes the five dimensions of abeyance as *temporality, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization, and culture* (p. 765).

Using Taylor's (1989) dimensions of abeyance I was able to analyze the dimensions of activists' identity construction processes. By listening to how activists express attitudes, understandings, philosophies and analyses of the activist networks, the repertoire of goals and tactics used by the movement and movement's collective identity, I was able to discern how and to what degree or dimension individual activist give meaning to their participation in the welfare rights movement. I was able to discern as Taylor (1989) conceptualizes it, how activists as participants, maintain a sense of mission and moral purpose as a requirement of remaining active. The sense of mission and moral purpose was revealed through listening to how activists promote the collective

identity of the welfare rights movement. So essentially in listening to how activists express their analysis of the state of the movement, I was able to analyze how activists link themselves to the movement. It is through the process of giving meaning to their own participation that identity construction process linking them to or de-linking them away from the welfare rights movement is revealed by activists. An analysis of the dimensions of abeyance provides the setting and context for identity construction at the level of movement abeyance.

Temporality

The first dimension, temporality is defined by Taylor (1989:765) as the capacity of the movement to hold onto personnel (volunteers, paid staff, supporters) over time. This would be people who managed the day to day affairs of the movement. The existence of the welfare rights organization provides evidence of temporality. Pearl began her welfare rights activist career thirty years ago as welfare rights intern. I asked her how she thought the welfare rights coalition managed to stay together in the face of continued opposition to the movement as well as continuous cycles of welfare reform and low participation by welfare recipients. She explained:

[F]ortunate for us, there are a number of long term welfare organizers who were part of the early movement who are still around and still fighting because things haven't improved. If you look around with the leadership locally, here it is seniors and they understand the history, so they understand the importance of the battle.

Pearl is describing the long term volunteer staff of the city's two local welfare rights organizations. The seniors referred to by Pearl are over 50 years of age with a history of involvement going back to before the founding of the NWRO in 1966. The

leaders mentioned by Pearl have been continuously active in the welfare rights movement since the 1960s. The women and men of whom Pearl speaks have been staffing the two welfare rights movement organizations, most of the time as unpaid volunteers since the organizations were established in the mid 1960s.

Purposive commitment

Purposive commitment is the second dimension of abeyance structures and is defined by Taylor (1989) as “the willingness of people to do what must be done . . . [and it] then contributes to the abeyance process by ensuring that individuals continue to do what is necessary to maintain the group and its purpose even when the odds are against success” (p. 766-767). Similar to Pearl, Georgia who is in her early forties, has been organizing since high school. She described the commitment of welfare rights organization members:

I consider them almost like relatives. I’ve known them since I was a girl umm was trained by them in a lot of areas, especially related to welfare rights and organizing, umm and spent time with time with them, like personal time you know what I mean literally like family; spent New Year’s Eve with one of them and their family; you know at their home umm and I love them dearly; and I believe that, I believe that they are umm totally genuine with their passion and what they’re up to. For the most part, I would support everything they do because I know they do it from their hearts because they care about people and they want to succeed and I know for a fact (pause) they have to um take that on for themselves.

Exclusiveness

Exclusiveness is the third dimension of movement abeyance structures and is defined by Taylor (1989) as the level of openness there is to membership in the social movement organization (p. 767). “Exclusiveness is an important characteristic of

abeyance organizations because it ensures a relatively homogenous cadre of activist suited to the limited activism undertaken” (Taylor 1989:768). Speaking to the exclusiveness of the local welfare rights movement, Wade engaged in a self critique of her participation as a leader in the welfare rights movement. Wade is middle-aged and remains a welfare rights advocate but does her work through education and parenting advocacy. For Wade the idea of the vanguard leadership in the welfare rights organization in which she was involved was too much of a burden. Wade expressed her feelings here:

. . . . [T]hese women did great work . . . yes, they did great work. They influenced a lot of policies locally and nationally. They traveled to many, many cities. They traveled internationally. Their stature internationally, with other international groups was well known. People respected their status, people respected what they said, and so while . . . these women were to be revered for the kind of women they were, they also did not share that kind of electricity or that kind of power so that other women could possess it also. The power was very limited to a few. It is not the job of one group of people to take . . . that is a burden. When we did organizing with welfare rights; that was a burden; no one group of people is able to carry the load of thousands of people like this.

The exclusiveness dimension of abeyance however, tells us that if a group of people do not take on the burden described by Wade, the movement may not survive to another cycle of mobilization. So in addition to the idea of exclusivity, we would add the cost of exclusivity as creating what Wade exclaims is a burden upon the group of activists who maintain social movement organizations as abeyance structures during movement abeyance. For some activists like Wade, the burden is too high. For other activists such as Priscilla, it is a worthwhile burden.

Now past 50 years of age, Priscilla sees her continued commitment to welfare rights organizing as necessary to assuring a momentum to rebuild the movement. Priscilla discussed her commitment to remain in the movement:

. . .and as far as I am concerned I am going to work for that [end of poverty]; I guess I will have to be buried with my boots on, kicking . . . as I go out.

Exclusivity presents its own set of challenges. Closing ranks and consolidating power among a few dedicated activists means that the movement's collective identity may simply be that of those who are managing the movement from day to day. In abeyance conditions such as these, the leadership in effect becomes the collective identity of the movement to a large degree, especially where charismatic leadership is present (Weber 1946:295). It can result in what Wade has described as the power being limited to a few.

Consolidation of leadership as a feature of exclusiveness serves the very important task of preserving the movement during abeyance. Exclusiveness does this by maintaining visibility of the movement, even if this visibility is through a type of charismatic leadership as described by Wade (Taylor 1989: 767). The Kensington Welfare Rights Union (Baptist and Jenkins 2001) described the role consolidation plays in building a movement to end poverty, implying that a consolidated core of leaders serves a very strategic purpose. The leadership provides the bridge which preserves the collective identity from one stage of movement mobilization to another and thus allowing new activists the context and linkages need to push the movement across generations and political climates. Baptist and Jenkins (2001) expressed the important function of this dimension of social movement abeyance:

Our organizing experiences have taught us that new conditions require new thinking and tactics, including the formation of a new collective identity and the application of "five main ingredients" (Baptist 1998): teams of indigenous organizers, bases of operation, net-works of mutual support, lines of communication, and consolidated cores of leaders. (P. 152)

Wade is critical of the exclusiveness of the movement's style of leadership.

However movement continuity is more likely when activists close ranks and consolidate decision making on all aspects of the movement (Taylor 1989:767). Social movement organizations as abeyance structures serve as the setting for activists to close ranks and consolidate decision making. According to Taylor (1989) social movement organizations are more likely during abeyance to adopt an exclusiveness leadership and membership recruitment strategy. For activists such as Priscilla closing ranks and consolidating the leadership of the welfare rights organization was necessary if the welfare rights movement were to remain viable in the anti-poverty movement. For Wade the level of exclusiveness was problematic and even burdensome. Wade eventually resigned her leadership position in the welfare rights movement organization in which she had been active. Wade did not end her activism in the welfare rights movement however. She simply redirected her participation other organizations and activities within the solidarity network of the welfare rights movement.

Centralization

Centralization, the fourth dimension of abeyance structures has the "advantage of producing organizational stability, coordination and technical expertise necessary for movement survival" (Taylor 1989:768). Centralization operates with groups that are represented by a single center of power (1989:768), such as the women's movement.

Taylor (1989) also asserts “centralization contributes to the abeyance process by ensuring the maintenance of organization and at least minimal activity during periods when conditions do not favor mass mobilization” (p. 769).

However, the welfare rights movement while having a National Welfare Rights Union, does not operate through strictly centralization process, but rather through movement decentralization where individual welfare rights organizations and local movements act independent of a national organization and in which power is shared equally across the movement (Baptist and Jenkins 2001:152). In a decentralized movement, power is distributed through subunits (Taylor 1989:768). In the interview with Edith Smith I asked if the two major welfare rights groups in the city worked together on joint campaigns. Edith responded, “No. . . . [w]e fight in a different way.”

Edith’s response demonstrates a decentralized power distribution for the local welfare rights movement under study. To further note, decentralization can result in movement fragmentation and movement fragmentation is a feature of social movement abeyance (Sawyers and Meyer 1999). As an abeyance structure, decentralization rather than centralization within the welfare rights movement has served to provide movement continuity. Ernst’s (2009:189) data reports that there are low budget welfare rights organizations in 18 states across the nation, indicating in part, the welfare rights movement’s decentralized organizational structure.

Culture

Culture, the fifth dimension of abeyance structures embodies the “collective emotions, beliefs, and actions” of the movement (Taylor 1989:769). The local welfare rights movement is sustained by a network of organizations that have developed

“alternative cultural frameworks to provide security and meaning for those who remain in the group;” and which have demonstrated personal ties of love and friendship (Taylor 1989:769). Monte a social services provider in his late 50s expressed it best when he described the kind personal security he felt as well as the ties of personal love and friendship he experienced as a housing rights/welfare rights organizer in the early 1990s:

You know when I was organizing . . . with all the crazy stuff going on,. you know I never, I never felt you know, I never felt like my life was in danger or anything like that because I felt like the people I was working with was looking out for me .

Edith Smith expressed her attachment as being emotionally satisfying:

“It just, it gives me pleasure to be able to help somebody get what I know they’re entitled too. We are not asking for favors. And I just thoroughly enjoy doing it.”

To further example her sense of commitment and emotional ties to the movement Edith described being mugged at the welfare rights office (this happened a few weeks before I arrived in the city to conduct the interviews).

“I was mugged a couple of weeks ago and [I] am in terrible pain. And within a few days all I could think of [was that] I got a hearing in a couple of days, how am I going to get there? And I want to, I just, it gives me a kind of satisfaction, you, you can’t be paid for, yeah, yeah.”

This is what happened to Edith. She was not able to provide bus tickets to someone who needed them. The person then pushed her, took her wallet, and ran out of the office. Since that incident, the organization’s church sponsor has provided a volunteer security guard, a community member to be at the office whenever it is open.

When Monte spoke of the sense of security he experienced, his description was of his days in the movement from the early to mid 1990s. Since Monte’s involvement, the cultural shift has been dramatic. Anti-poverty program offices have become more sensitive to their own security needs. When welfare rights organizations are not able to

help certain clients, then the staff of those welfare rights organizations become targets of the frustration felt by some people in need of services.

I asked Amelia, a housing counselor why she thought people receiving welfare do not join the welfare rights movement and support the welfare rights organizations. She replied:

Some people, they don't think they [welfare rights organizations] do nothing; they [the organizations] just you know, go through the motion. [It's like the organization says] "Okay we 'gonna help you with this; we 'gonna help with that but it never happens." But it does [because] it's a lot of work going on in the background that they[potential activists] don't even know about. A lot of protesting and all that is going on A lot of people say welfare [welfare rights organizations] ain't doing nothing for me, but they are, they are, they doing a lot of things for people.

The irony is that PRWORA reforms of welfare have served to shift the target of frustration from the government to the non-profit sector, including welfare rights organizations. There is less of an expectation for the government to help families in need because of the changes implemented by PRWORA. Many people in need of assistance have an expectation that the services provided by welfare rights organizations should resolve their issues with the welfare agency. Since welfare rights organizations cannot resolve so many issues in spite of their best efforts, potential activists shun membership in welfare rights organizations because they see those organizations as being ineffective.

The cultural dimension of abeyance structures can also be the site of frame disputes (Benford and Snow 2000:626). Frame disputes are critical in movement continuity because of the opportunities they create for the renegotiation of meaning and the clarification of values as an identity construction process for members in the movement, their allies and supporters (Benford and Snow 2000:614).

The welfare rights movement 2008 campaign for a moratorium the shutting off of water when customers can't pay their bills provided an opportunity analyze identity construction processes during a frame dispute. The campaign created the opportunity for movement activists to revisit the role values play in a personal sense of self when measured against the limits of what can be achieved politically. The dispute centered on the persistent question faced by anti-poverty movements; that of balancing human services needs that are attached to a direct action campaign against the demand of the movement for a particular change in policy. In the case of the moratorium, it was a question of how far to go in pressing for shut-off prevention protection.

The coalition for the water shut-off moratorium was made of welfare rights organizations, homeless shelters, housing advocacy, legal services, health care services and other non-profit advocacy groups. The campaign began as a result of member organizations through their service work discovering that tens of thousands of city dwellers were living without water because of an inability to pay their water bills. Priscilla described the coalition's first mass meeting with people whose water had been shut-off by the city.

And you see it started with this water campaign. With these people with their water [shut] off. I had met with all these folks and I began to see [it]. The first meeting that we called, there was 270-some people there and we began to see people with utility problems, we had ORGANIZATION and ORGANIZATION. Other services [providers and] other collaborators were there [at the mass meeting] But the problem was just beyond all of us.

The campaign lasted over two years after this initial meeting. Once the campaign got to the stage of negotiation with the City's water department and City Council, a dispute between coalition members over who controlled parameters of compromise

fractured the campaign. As a part of the compromise the city water department offered to restore water services to everyone who was disconnected if the coalition would support the department's request for a water rate hike that the department had before the city council. For some activists, the bottom line was that nothing short of a ban on turning off water service was acceptable and under no circumstances would the coalition support a water rate hike. For others, the offer from the water department seemed reasonable. Tom fifties and has been involved as an advocate for welfare and tenant rights for more than thirty years.

As a leading member of the campaign's coalition, Tom felt that the more militant position calling full restoration and no future shut off of water service was unrealistic and would end up placing the coalition in a negotiating corner from which the coalition would not be able to extricate from.

The negotiating position the coalition adopted represented to Tom a breach in the collective values around caring for others. Tom expressed his frustration as:

I guess you know it sort of comes down to you know maybe do you try to work as much as you can with everybody you can to make life bearable for them; or is there sometimes, losing is winning? If Roosevelt had not been president we would have a socialist government right now because capitalism would have failed you know in a big picture way or did he by making this you know ahh better for all save the day for the capitalist? Ahhhh, I don't know if we will ever know. . .

Priscilla on the other hand saw the campaign's commitment to not settle for anything less than a complete moratorium against water shut-offs as the highest value that the movement could have because, for her access to water, was a basic common human right; and was something to be fought for, for all people regardless of income. Priscilla believed the proposed "water affordability plan," as it was named by the

coalition, should provide universal protection for all persons and not just welfare recipient or other low income persons. This position according to Priscilla was consistent with the values of welfare rights.

“Our simple demand is stop the shut off. . . . Pay on the bill, but keep the water on. That’s where we are now.”

The cultural dimension of abeyance structures embodies the “collective emotions, beliefs and actions” of movement (Taylor 1989:769). Values can be conceptualized as comprising the beliefs in action. For social movements we can say values are collective beliefs in action. Attendant to values in the welfare rights movement is the ethic of caring (Collins 2000:262) and we see it operating in both Tom and Priscilla’s statements.

The ethic of caring perspective found within welfare rights organizing is a holdover from the cultural values of African-American women engaged in social movements from the early welfare rights movement and on through the civil rights and black power movements. Black women’s culture historically has made them uniquely able to sustain movements because social institutions in the black community such as churches and black women’s social groups nurtured and supported their view of the world and in doing so gave those women the moral authority they needed in order to legitimate their demands for group justice (Gordon 1991; Collins 2000:262).

The early welfare rights movement was comprised mainly of African-American women and as such, the ethic of caring became one aspect of the collective identity of the welfare rights movement. To Tom, the campaign’s attempt to force a water shut-off moratorium for all persons belied the movement’s commitment to the serve the interest of

the poorest people first, those whom he believed to be the real constituents of the welfare rights movement. Tom further expressed his sense of frustration:

... [A]nd it was so frustrating because the rate increased was not ...who cared?? ...I mean to a degree ...to a degree..... nobody want to pay more money for anything; but who cared...I mean in the scheme of things if the corporations and those of us who had money had to pay a little more for our water to let folks who don't have water, I don't care...I don't need people advocating for me if I need to pay a little more so somebody else can have water.

On the other hand, Priscilla summed it up as:

“This system has been terrible to us. And I want a system that prioritizes the people. We have the opportunity to have it.”

Priscilla described the welfare rights movement as reclaiming an anti-poverty strategy as the primary focus of the movement. Priscilla explained that welfare moms are not the only ones living without water. She told me that upon investigation, her organization found out that there were 44000 households without water in the city, the highest number in the state. The meetings revealed that water services had been shut off for more working people and poor people than those persons whose only income was through welfare payments. She explained:

[W]e understand that our campaign over all again has to be to eliminate poverty. Not only to eliminate poverty but to build an assembly of organizations, whose main goal is to eliminate poverty. ... we want to cut thru every line it is around this whole question of poverty and have a plan for the next five years to eliminate poverty in this country. And that's basically where we are now.

Baptist and Jenkins (2001) both of the Kensington Rights Welfare Union, describe this focus upon ending poverty pursuant to the passage of PRWORA as “shifting our organizing focus from civil rights to economic human rights, we are pursuing the goal of ending poverty . . . Nothing less” (p. 145). Like Priscilla they believe that ending poverty has to be the objective of the contemporary welfare rights movement. The movement

they describe is one which “must embrace the majority of Americans but necessarily be rooted in the immediate needs and demands of the 35-60 million people living in poverty in the United States today” (Baptist and Jenkins 2000:145).

The conflict represented in the water affordability campaign including the conflict over banning the disconnection of water services for all customers demonstrated an aspect of the cultural dimensions of abeyance in social movements. Tom and Priscilla (as well as others involved in the dispute) engaged in an internally oriented activity over the interpretation of the limits of militant direct action in the face of concessions that can benefit some but not all constituents and supporters of the movement. The age-old conflict (for activists) between direct action and service delivery represents the most visible site of intramovement conflicts over meaning making and interpretation in the social movement. For social movement scholars, movement abeyance is an appropriate space for activists to work such conflicts out.

The conflict in the water shut-off prevention campaign raised the issue exactly who are the beneficiaries of the welfare rights movement. Approaching the conflict in this manner is parallel method for understanding the tension between service delivery and direct action as vehicles of social change. The Baptist and Jenkins (2004:145) stated that the new collective identity for welfare rights was that of an anti-poverty movement. The anti-poverty movement, unlike the welfare rights movement which had been focused exclusively on welfare recipients, was to be broad based and was to be embraced by the majority of Americans while rooted in the needs of those living in poverty.

According to Shaw (2002) the welfare rights movement has undergone several abeyance periods and each period served to preserve the collective identity of the

movement as serving the advocacy needs of welfare recipients. However the welfare rights movement has moved closer to an anti-poverty collective identity because of the changes in welfare state wrought by PRWORA. As a consequence this abeyance period unlike the period followed by the collapse of NWRO and the pre-PRWORA mobilizations of the late 1980s and early 1990s has lead activists to reframe and reexamine emotional investments around movement goals, constituencies and beneficiaries as they collectively struggle to remobilize a movement.

The welfare rights movement has continuously survived as a movement in and out of abeyance which can be initially traced to the collapse of the NWRO in 1975. Since the demise of the NWRO many local affiliates throughout the nation including the welfare rights organizations anchored by the activists included in this thesis have remained active. Whether activists can successfully rebuild a national welfare rights movement may in large part depend upon how well they continue to navigate through identity construction processes during abeyance. This would include attention to process that drive participation and allow individuals to see them sharing the values of the movement (Bobel 2007:150). To build collective identity, activists not only interact with each other, they interact with each other's values and in doing so jointly construct the movement's collective and their own personal identity.

Collective Identity: the Movement is Fragmented

Sawyers and Meyer (1999) expands Taylor's (1989) conceptualization of abeyance in their discussion of movement fragmentation and social movement decline:

In decline, it is not only that movement activity decreases, but also that connections between the mainstream and margins of a movement atrophy. Taylor's model of abeyance addresses only one wing of a social movement. Meyer (1993a) offers a more comprehensive model, identifying three component parts of movement fragmentation in decline: marginalization; co-optation; and depoliticization. (Sawyers and Meyer 1999:193).

A review of the interview transcripts revealed that a majority of activists either directly stated or implied that the welfare rights movement was from their analysis, fragmented or fractured. When activists speak of the movement being fractured or fragmented, what do they mean? I analyzed the transcripts further, looking for statements and sentiments of activists within the conversational context where talk of movement fragmentation (or fracturing) is appears. I found that within the identity talk of activists, most of the conversations did revolve around their feelings of the movement being *marginalized*, *co-opted* and *depoliticized* (Sawyers and Meyer 1999:1983).

Priscilla's description of the final outcome of the water shut-off moratorium campaign is a description of a welfare rights movement experiencing aspects of movement fragmentation.

That same September [about a year after dismissing our demands] they [water department] began behind our back to implement the program, and [they] renamed it, they renamed it and called it the assistance program. And [they] gutted our program. They didn't let city council know that they was moving to do that.

Priscilla without using the exact terms describes the movement's fragmentation. By describing the water department's action toward the campaign as implementing and renaming the campaign's program, Priscilla is talking about the campaign as being marginalized. The water department was able to claim the project as belonging to the bureaucracy by implementing the program without involving activists (further

marginalization). Once the project was claimed by the bureaucracy, the issue of water affordability was depoliticized because the water department was able to maneuver around the conflictual nature of the issue. The campaign was co-opted because once depoliticized and claimed as belonging to the bureaucracy, to oppose the relief offered by the bureaucracy risked further marginalization of the movement.

The collective action and identity talk by activists also revealed that it is through the welfare rights movement that activists can claim the social spaces in which to self express their values, philosophies and personal beliefs about poverty and poverty relief. Activists accomplish this through the collective action toward what they believe to be progressive anti-poverty work. Activists in the welfare rights movement self identify as individuals who strive to end poverty.

For example, John's process for linking his individual, personal identity as one who strives to end poverty to what he describes as a fractured, movement collective identity is revealed in his response to the question of whether he believes his work is part of a movement to end poverty.

First and foremost you know it's the individual that wakes up in the morning, you know that wakes up and pursue this kind of work. Is it part of a movement? Yes. You know, it's very loose . . . You know it's a lot of opportunist, and things like that, but there are sincere people out here that believe so is it a movement, yeah. I mean, I don't think it's that strong, I wouldn't say it's like the sixties or something like that, but ahh...there are a lot of people out here who do care. It's ahh you know, it's fractured now you know.

John then expressed a great deal of personal frustration with his work. I asked if he could ever see himself leaving the movement because of the frustration he felt as an anti-poverty worker. John replied:

She [his mother] taught me you know...you know...it's...it's nothing bad about looking out for people, looking out for people less fortunate than you. It's a good thing to do. So that's the philosophy that I use you know in the work that I do, it's very frustrating... its very idealistic but . . .it's the right thing you know – as an individual, that's, you know, where the origin of, well, my philosophy on welfare (pause) welfare rights. You know giving a voice to the voiceless that's where it comes from [but] nawh, [the movement] sort of like, sort of like in my blood, it's in my blood. You know, I got to go back to my mother, that's how I was raised you know. There are people here that are less fortunate than you and you know, it doesn't harm you know, to try and assist them in some type of way....ahmmm, it puts you close to God.

For John movement fragmentation as marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization (Sawyers and Meyer 1999:1983) is evident and is expressed at a different operational level of the movement. Marginalization is expressed through his belief that the philosophy he employs to guide his work is idealistic and as a result frustrating. Co-optation is expressed by John as the opportunism he sees in the movement by what he labels as “certain individuals.” And while there is no implicit statement of movement depoliticization in John's statement, a less politicized movement is implied in his statement that the movement is not like the movement of the sixties. For most activists the sixties represents a highly politicized era with active and powerful social movements organized around a myriad of social issues.

Activists returning to movement activism as a result of concerns that movement gains are being eroded, as well as those who maintained involvement in the movement are struck by the fragmentation they encounter in the welfare rights movement. Returning to activism at such a period makes plain to activists, both long term and those returning to activism that movement fragmentation is the end result of long term processes of marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization of social movements.

In the words of Jane, a welfare rights activist in her early fifties, being away from social movement organizing made her acutely aware of how fractured the welfare rights movement had become. Jane is a housing advocate working on mortgage foreclosure issues at one of the partner organizations (again an abeyance structure) within the welfare rights movement. I asked Jane if she personally felt connected to a movement. Jane replied:

I guess I don't feel connected to a movement; I feel connected to community. I know a lot of people doing anti-poverty work and I feel very close to them and ahmmm...and I have a bunch of admiration for people doing that work. I was away from that work for ten years and recently got back into it partly because of a void I felt in my professional life ...so I kind of came back to it ahmm, but always thought it was kind of like, kind of like ..the movement is kind of fragmented and [I] guess the being away and coming back highlights that for me.

Jane has always through that the movement was fractured, so in returning to activism she would be particularly attuned to a movement collective identity shaped by processes of marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization. On the other hand, I asked long term activist, Pearl if she felt there was a movement. Pearl replied:

To me it's seems it's less of a movement than there wasyears...years ago....you know where there was the civil rights movement for example...there was unity in that...and I...and I just see things so fractured now....that it's more difficult to discern a unified movement.

Developing and maintaining an attachment to a fractured movement is just one way in which activists express their commitment to a movement collective identity that is fragmented or fractured. But it is not the only way to experience collective identity in a fractured movement during abeyance, so activist have de-linked from the welfare rights movement because it is fragmented.

For activists like Louise the material consequences of movement fragmentation rendered the welfare rights movement powerless to influence poverty relief policy at the critical moment in welfare reform policy, the PROWRA debate. Louise spent several years of her social movement career as a low-income housing advocate. I asked her why she thought progressives could not prevent or impact the passage of PWOWRA.

Louise's analysis of what happened speaks to the issue of fracturing or fragmentation within the welfare movement:

I also think there was a widely held feeling even among welfare rights, that welfare had to be reform, I mean nobody wanted the system as it was, nobody wanted the status quo. It was very difficult even for me to defend the current system against these reform, because the current system was a piece of crap...I can't, I can't, really defend it. So it took a lot of steam I think out of a lot of people's sailand they I don't think had the capacity to provide a real alternative because the welfare groups have never been highly organized. They've always been small groups of people so for them I think they had very limited capacity to say we think this other alternative is better number one, [to] create a better alternative and then to have the troops to advocate and win. So I think that is why it was such a difficult fight. Because it was waged by a democratic president and the natural constituencies were divided because ahhmm because you were in a position to try and defend the status quo and it was horrible and you did not really have the capacity to provide a real alternative to what Clinton was proposing. Ah. . . welfare did need to be reformed, it was just the way in which they reformed it; you know really, it wasn't right. I mean [the] political timing was –it was just really difficult you know I think to try and win on anything like that.

So while Louise is dedicated to pushing an anti-poverty agenda, she is able to fight against the status quo, while at the same time question the welfare rights movement's capacity to wage the struggle. I find this to be the ultimate expression of the processual nature of movement fragmentation. Louise's conversation speaks to the stagnation experienced by movements as a result of marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization over time and generations of activists. To put it more plainly social

movement fragmentation rendered the welfare rights movement powerless to push forward their anti-poverty agenda.

Yet there are others who view movement fragmentation differently. Service providers Tazz (health and social services) and Luqman (emergency food and housing development) have a different understanding of the movement's fragmentation or fractured state. Tazz, (age 50-plus) is supportive of the welfare rights movement and sees himself as an activist, though as he describes himself as an in background type of person who at times will attend a protest. Tazz described what movement cohesiveness looks like to him by exemplifying the collaborative relationship his organization had built with other organizations and activists groups to provide social services to people in need.

I look at this as one big coalition, collaboration not in lock step because each individual partner does have a specific mission and specific funding and ahmm their own direction, their own directors . . . but [at other times we are] trying to get them to work together sometimes on a targeted specific kind of issue or challenge or something where we know if we do a particular thing it will help a great number of people as opposed to just if one organization does it.

Luqman has been a service provider since the late 1980s. He does not consider himself doing welfare rights work; in fact he considers the term "rights" a strong word. For Luqman it is more about the government's capacity to provide the service rather any group's right to a particular type of government assistance. Luqman does however support the movement in its efforts to help people who are living in poverty to better their situation. Luqman advocates for preservation of the welfare state and does not support cutting services for people in need. I asked Luqman if he felt the movement in which he interacted as a service provider if not an activist was fractured.

[Y]ou know we talk about unity in the sense ahh of everybody doing the same thing, but unity is also, is also different people coming together and creating one

so, so everybody working in their own different areas and you look back on it you see unity as opposed when you look down in the middle you say there is no unity; everybody's divided; so you have to broaden your perspective to say they can work over there and we can claim that as our success and we can work over here and they can claim us as their success. . . .we think that we all have to be doing it together and that's what unity means it's a, it's a big hindrance.

Even more to the point of activists linking to the welfare rights movement as collective actor, I asked organizer Che Joe why he continued to be involved in poor people's movements. Che Joe expressed a less than hopeful position on the feasibility of traditional welfare rights organizing as an adequate anti-poverty movement building strategy in the post PRWORA climate. Che Joe replied that he is mostly focused on leadership development and creating organizations in which constituent groups such as people who are on welfare or who ought to be on welfare are empowered to lead broad based coalitions for social change. His response is connected to the work he does with low income parents on education reform:

It's sort of like the relational thing; it's just a privilege to know these human beings. It's also I feel my vocation. The way poor people get treated in this country, in this world, in this city is abysmal. It's not supposed to be that way. So, and part of that I suppose comes from my own religious background, reading of the gospels, which you can read the gospels as rich folks, as a corporate as somebody . . . and if you read it from the point of view of poor... the oppressed. If you read it from the point of the oppressed, it's sort of a religious obligation. So I feel it's sort of like a vocation. I feel like kind of a call, I feel like it's. . . I. . . I would be depressed. If I weren't doing this I wouldn't. . What would I do? What would I do? I wouldn't be a human being. That's how I feel. (pause). And then I am inspired by people too. I want to be like them. I want to be with them.

I asked Che Joe if as a result of the change in political opportunities for anti-poverty organizing, if he thought welfare rights organizing was "dead." Che Joe thought for a minute, then somberly replied with more of a tone of inquiry than fact:

I wouldn't say a welfare right is dead. I haven't heard much. I know *we* are organizing, we don't call it welfare rights, we are organizing people, our interns

and others are organizing people of the ORGANIZATION and for a lot of [young] people, [it's] "oh. . . oh" what a novel ideal, well but they were not around for the welfare rights movement, so they see this as a brand new: "What a novel idea that people at the bottom can organize themselves."

It is clear from activists talk that they perceive that the welfare rights movement is in a state of fragmented. While, activists perceive this fragmentation differently and have varying degree of attachment to the movement, none of those interviewed have abandoned anti-poverty advocacy and organizing. I argue that the activists are able to stay connected to the movement under conditions of fragmentation because their identity construction processes create for them a sense of self entrenched in the following social realities:

1. The identity processes are rooted in historically, ideologically, and politically connected long term struggles based on claims for racial, ethnic, economic and ultimately, social justice and in a change of the collective identity of society;

2. The identity processes have enabled activists to maintained abeyance structures during periods of movement decline, hibernation or stagnation and as a result activists have developed personal resilience and movement coping mechanisms which enable them to deal with processes of fragmentation – marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization;

3. The identity processes allow activists through those abeyance structures to maintain a collective identity salient enough to respond to perceived reversal of gains made during previous generations or periods of activism; and

4. The identity processes are not dependent upon mass appeal alone to make real the social change which they seek.

Movement fragmentation in this sense serves to demonstrate the vicious cycle fragmentation can impose upon a movement by ensuring the movement stagnates at the abeyance, holding process level. Stagnation at the abeyance or holding process level is more likely to delay movement building. Marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization (Sawyers and Meyer 1999:1983) are powerful deterrents to social movement building and gives a fuller meaning to what movement fragmentation means at both the individual identity and movement collective identity levels.

To review, the construction of the collective identity of the welfare rights movement as fragmented results from the joint construction of symbols and meaning through identity talk around or about the interaction between activists, opponents and others. This same identity talk is reflected back upon and influences how individual activists identified or gave meaning to their attachment to and participation in what they labeled and in labeling further believed to be a fragmented welfare rights movement. Hunt and Benford (2004:445) state that collective identity is “*ta/k* into existence [and] . . . that personal and collective identities shape and are shaped by collective action and the subsequent identity talk” (Hunt and Benford (2004:445).

I argue that for activists, the construction through identity talk of a movement identity as being fragmented operates as an ideological device by the movement to heighten the call for social action. Movement fragmentation under the specific conditions studied here may serve to strengthen the resolve of activists to remain attached to the movement signaling the need to shore up hope for achieving the change they seek. Hope is a critical identity trait of activists. In the next section, I will explain the identity construction processes utilized by activists that keep them connected to the welfare rights

movement. I argue that in every case the glue linking people to the movement in spite of its fragmented state is hope.

Collective Identity: Hopeful Activism

How do welfare rights activists maintain a sense of hope post during movement abeyance and movement fragmentation and post PRWORA? How does the welfare rights movement serve as a beacon of hope for activists that the movement while stagnant is not dead. Reviews of the interview transcripts revealed what I termed a sense of hopeful activism. Hopeful activism can be seen as the catch all phrase for why activists remain involved in the welfare rights movement.

For instance, Mary is a fifty-something social worker and is one of three full time welfare rights organization volunteers. When I asked Mary what kept her involved in the welfare rights movement for over thirty year she expressed a most interesting perspective, one filled with hopeful activism.

[W]ell I have been state chair for a number of years and, and I stay involved because this is the most fascinating time to be alive. Since 1996 I have been able to witness a steady attack on the standard of living on poor and welfare recipients and it's just an education to see under what guise something else is gone be removed from that group of people... I stay involved in it 'cause this is the worst of times and this is the best of times.

For Mary the question of collective identity is one of not just participating but of witnessing as well. Thus again, collective identity process within a fractured movement takes on the function allowing for self-expression in this case the hope of being part of a greater social change. Mary's hopeful activism results from her ability to observe, analyze and manage her participation in the welfare rights movement not just as welfare

rights activist, but as a participant in a greater movement for social change. Thus Mary is not viewing this as a passive observer. Mary continued:

We're going in a direction and this part is turning more violent, frightening, unorganized and I get a chance to live during this period of time and watch this turmoil and see if we can, see if we can manage to push our troops in the right direction.

Hopeful activism can be conceptualized as an antidote to movement fragmentation. Hopeful activism serves to keep activists attached to movements that experience long term fragmentation and periods of abeyance. Pearl expressed this type of hopeful activism in another way. I asked Pearl why she continued to be involved in the welfare rights movement considering the changes imposed upon social welfare policy since PRWORA. She answered:

I guess it kind of the ever present, that seems to be vanishing *hope*, that we can have an impact and change the policy . . . so that . . . persons can get some help.

How do we explain hopeful activism in shaping a post PRWORA collective identity in the welfare rights movement? Here I want to borrow from Flesher Fominaya's (2010b) conceptualization of collective identity formation in autonomous movements. I acknowledge that the welfare rights movement is not an autonomous movement because unlike autonomous movements, the welfare rights movement has common ideologies which "provide a sense of shared purpose and belonging" (Flesher Fominaya 2010b:379).

However the overall movement to end poverty of which the welfare rights movement is a part, does represent a multiplicity of identities, ideologies, issues, frames, collective action repertoires (Flesher Fominaya 2010b:377) characteristics of autonomous movements as conceptualized by Flesher Fominaya (2010b); and in a different article, Flesher Fominaya (2010a:400) does acknowledge that conceptualizations of collective

identity processes in autonomous movements have applicability to non-autonomous movements. Activists in the welfare rights movement and the general anti-poverty movement have multiple identities and not all of the activists are living in poverty, in fact many activists are professionals and live middle class lives. Ideologies are different as well and the activists' interview transcripts evidence this characteristic of the welfare rights movement.

I argue that during movement abeyance activists are more likely to engage in an autonomous-like social movement collective identity construction process as the movement transitions of the stagnation imposed by movement fragmentation or marginalization, co-optation and depoliticization. Hopeful activism contributes to the building of a new collective identity that can accommodate a multiplicity of identities, ideologies, issues, frames, collective action repertoires (Flesher Fominaya 2010b:377).

Hopeful activism is a useful identity formation tool to activists as they move into new ways of organizing the anti-poverty movement. Hopeful activism as employed by activists is useful in movements which are highly stigmatized making recruitment and movement out the abeyance phase highly unlikely. To overcome this impediment, activists begin by deconstructing the image imposed upon it by the countermovement (Melucci 1995).

For instance, on the issue of organizing the poor, CheJoe, a long term welfare anti-poverty activist, explains why he no longer organizes under the welfare rights banner. He has not been active in welfare rights organizing through a welfare rights organization for many years. His anti-poverty work does include working in coalitions in which welfare rights organizations are members. Che Joe explained why campaigns that

concentrated on organizing poor people exclusively are for him problematic. His philosophy can be summed up as hopeful activism and as a collective identity formation tool, its usefulness is recognized.

I feel like it's important for us not only to organize at that level [of] people that are on welfare, but to organize at the level of institutions that can over time be a united front. I just think, people. . . people on welfare – nobody is going to support them – *nobody* is going to listen to them. They ought to have warriors you know there's got to be other people fighting with them. . . . schools, churches, agencies.

I then asked him why he said that nobody is going to listen to people on welfare.

He replied:

Why won't people [in power] listen to people on welfare –well they will they will listen to people on welfare if there were enough of them putting pressure on them at the right places. But I don't see anybody right now organizing people on welfare, I see very few. I see spokespersons for the masses, but I don't see the actual recipients themselves actually. I just haven't heard of anything lately. Whether they are actually doing actions, breaking into board room, you know really mobilizing to make change.

Second, movement activists must recognize as part of the deconstruction process that new recruits are needed and in doing so activists acknowledge that the collective identity of the movement will have to expand in order to attract new adherents. Louise spoke to the specific challenge of organizing poor people exclusively.

. . . if you just organize poor people– I know in my nine years of organizing tenants you talk about people in survival mode everyday and to get them to look beyond those basic needs is really difficult, plus people move they just...the nature of their living situation a lot of times is when things get tough they just leave, you move to a different house different apartment or different place altogether or you move in with family and so I just think you have to have other people who are more stable, you have to have a mix of people, you have to have like religious and other people of faith who will help champion your cause. If you just try to organize poor people there always will be... its always going to be hugely challenging because of the instability of people's lives at that level.

Movement activists see that expanding the collective identity of the movement is necessary because conditions in the social reality that used to only affect their constituency is spreading outward as evidenced by the rising poverty levels and the public discourse over the disappearance of the middle class. As part of the process of the cultural dimensions of abeyance, expansion of the movement's collective identity will involve taking on adherents sufficiently different from the stigmatized group that deconstruction processes imposed by the countermovement becomes less burdensome.

Third, the new adherents will impact the collective identity process and in doing so, cause the movement collective identity change in some way. To do this successfully the movement would have to engage in collective identity processes that are by definition constructed in a "very elastic, pluralistic manner, both on principle and for strategic reasons" (Fominaya 2010:379).

Hopeful activism makes processes for building a post PRWORA welfare rights collective identity which can overcome the stagnation imposed by movement fragmentation more likely. The welfare rights movement's attachment to the United States Social Forum (USSF) further evidences that welfare rights activism is being shaped in new ways. Activists in the movement are aware of and working towards overcoming movement stagnation.

For example, members and leaders of the welfare rights organization traveled to the USSF from their home city. Sha'quan a member of the welfare rights movement explained how participating in the USSF influenced the welfare rights organization's plan for retaining members and recruiting new adherents to the movement. Sa'quan had this to say and it clearly reflects a sense of hopeful activism:

[after returning from the forum] We [welfare rights organization] are redesigning and changing. You can't stay doing the same thing all the time, can't stay in the dark ages, technology is moving on. We are taking a whole different view [to] promote this concept of welfare rights . . . I have to say I am excited but I'm nervous.

Priscilla talked about how members of the welfare rights movement impacted the USSF's agenda on the issue of poverty relief. Hopeful activism is evident in Priscilla's description of her participation as a welfare rights advocate in the USSF.

We got a poverty working group as one of the standing committee of the USSF [United States Social Forum]. There was a lot of folks who came on the caravan. And a lot of low income people participated; you know that section of the working class that's just been thrown to the wayside because of technology. And those are the section of folks coming here too [to welfare rights organization for help]. That's the section of people we are working with a lot. And as a result of working with the USSF, we understand that our campaign over all again has to be to eliminate poverty. Not only to eliminate poverty but to build an assembly of organizations with the main goal to eliminate poverty.

Identity Construction

I adopted Snow and McAdam's (2000) identity construction concept to analyze how activist negotiate their participation in the welfare rights movement. Identity construction according to Snow and McAdam (2000) is that identity construction in which activists engage to remain aligned with or become aligned with a social movement collective identity. The identity construction processes are described by Snow and McAdam (2000) as *identity amplification*, *identity consolidation*, *identity extension*, and *identity transformation*. This thesis will concentrate on activists' identity amplification, identity extension and identity transformation processes.

The years of participation in the welfare rights movement as advocates and activists engaging in direct action ranges from more than fifty to a year or less. Some of

activists have been involved since the founding of the welfare rights movement in the early 1960s. Others began their careers in the mid to late 1980s coinciding with the rise of the anti-welfare rights movement. A few did not begin their career until the 1990s when the first round of welfare reform cuts began at the state level or in the year since PRWORA's passage.

Regardless of their years of involvement in the welfare rights movement, activists' align themselves to the movement through identity construction. Most of the activists I interviewed used identity extension and identity transformation processes in connecting to the welfare rights collective identity. Identity extension happens with the broadening of personal identity so that "personal identity and movement identity may be indistinguishable. . . . and movement adherents are expected to utilize or invoke their movement role identities in virtually all encounters with others relevant to the movement, such that the movement identity come to function in a fashion akin to a 'master status' or 'representative role'" (Snow and McAdam 2000: 50). Identity transformation in social movement activism happens when a person sheds an old identity for a completely new one. Identity transformation is a "biographic reconstruction [which is] not only a change in perspective and thus how things are seen but also a change in how one sees oneself and thus a change in identity" (Snow and McAdam 2000:52).

Activists Engaged in Identity Amplification

Identity amplification is conceptualized as a process wherein the existing personal identity "is congruent with the movement's collective identity" but is not salient

enough in the beginning of the process to cause movement participation (Snow and McAdam 2000:49). I analyzed the failure of identity amplification processes as a way of understanding why welfare recipients and other people living in poverty, including the new poor have not joined the welfare rights movement. To help contextualize the discussion on identity amplification and participation in the welfare rights movement, I return the conversation with Jane. I asked her what needed to be done to get people living in poverty including the new poor to join the welfare rights movement. Jane replied

the thing that comes to mind is [that] most people have brought into the victim mentality...they're very ashamed about what's happened to them even though most times it's because they lost a job or they were a victim of predatory lending or something that was out of their control but they feel very ashamed, and so the idea of creating a movement out of people who already feel ashamed...is really ...I...I don't know how to work on that obstacle...I don't see that unless there are people who are not ashamed and not victimized... not feeling victimized and are feeling angry how you turn the energy around so that there is a movement?

The challenge is as Jane described it. Snow and McAdam (2002) elaborate.

Metaphorically the individual moves from the sidelines to the playing field via the restoration of an existing but previously nonsalient identity. In the language of role-identity theory, a change in the individual's identity salience hierarchy is affected, such that a previously lower-order identity now becomes sufficiently salient to motivate association with and action on behalf of the movement. Note that the identity that has now moved center state was not foreign to the person's biography. (P. 49).

I used the conversation with Ashley to elaborate how the identity amplification process operates under a stigmatized social movement collective identity. Ashley is a single mom and currently receives food stamps and medical assistance. During the interview, she was very clear in her expression of an implied shame at being a welfare mom and this shame precluded her from becoming involved in the welfare rights

movement beyond seeking assistance. In discussing why she thought people opposed welfare, Ashley explained:

Because ahmm, like the news, the media makes people feel like its sapping out the budget for everybody else and that it draining so much money from . . . the state . . . and they're just, they're . . . they're just quote-unquote sucking all the money up. And it makes people feel like, don't give it to them, you know what I'm saying. "Stop giving it to them tell them go 'git a job.'" That's how it is. I remember listening to them on the radio when I was younger you know what I mean...and they made it seem like people were just sucking up all the money.

I asked Ashley about her experience with food stamps, how she felt using food stamps to purchase groceries for family. Ashley stated that she shopped in the suburbs because the quality of food was much higher in suburban supermarkets. She experienced how other shoppers would stare at her and her children as she placed food items in her shopping cart. Ashley expressed that she was extremely uncomfortable and ashamed with having to pay for food using the Bridge Food Stamp card. Ashley in an animated manner described the shopping experience:

When I go to the grocery store . . . I always shop at like out in the suburbs, the prices are better and use the whole thing at once pretty much and my buggy is like full and I'm thinking like they saying, you know "we know where she got that from...we know she got a bridge card." And I got my son tagging along, so you know. I don't know, but I've seen just about everybody pull out one now, but it's always us, it's always us using it . . .

Ashley has some familiarity with the welfare rights movement. She agreed with the philosophy and believed that advocating for welfare rights is a worthwhile cause. She however is hesitant to volunteer beyond what is needed for assistance. "Maybe I will volunteer more someday," she remarked. This hesitancy reflects what Georgia described as a generation shift in the way welfare mothers see themselves (Nadasen 2005:46). The

stigma according to Georgia is a significant deterrent to women identifying as member of the contemporary welfare rights movement.

I mean there was a time when the welfare rights organizations had fairly large numbers of welfare recipients active. And the recipients, I think the welfare recipients have changed; you know the demographics have changed. And I think their wanting to see themselves as those advocates is not necessarily the same, the same as it used to be. You know when welfare rights advocates were people who saw themselves as mothers first, you know what I mean, caring for children. They saw that as who they were first, it was a different organization than now, where you have young mothers who may be on welfare but they don't necessarily see themselves as mothers first, not like, I'm not putting them down. I'm just saying ... it's a different time and they see themselves a little differently ... I think that is part of why you know, there is not as large as numbers maybe, you know organizing, active in the organizing ... young women who are on public assistance umm see a certain amount of negativity around that and not like women before who like embraced it because it was ... there was negativity around it then, especially related to race and you know. ... you know. ... if you were white and you were on public assistance you didn't want nobody to know and if you were black and you were public assistance, but you assumed everybody knew anyway (laughter). ... you know it was that kind of thing.

Jane, Ashley, Georgia and Sha'Quan all confirm observations of forty-four years of research has shown, that some welfare recipients, as a coping mechanism, distance themselves and thus their identity from being a welfare recipient (Secombe, James, and Walters 1998; Davis and Hagen 1996:334). Sha'Quan puts it this way when I also asked her why the movement had so much difficulty in recruiting people to join:

Ahmm, it's just It's a barrier, sometimes it's very hard to overcome. Like I say, people don't want to be associated with because it's such a negative image, idea that comes into people's mind when they think about welfare recipients [being], associated with welfare you know. Cause people don't want to be like Reagan said back in the day, lazy welfare queens you know and that's what, you know that's what people associate it with. They think of ahmm, generational mothers, grandmommies on it, daughters on it, all the kids they not working. All they want to do is you know. ... So people you know don't want to be associated with that. So they shy away from it cause they don't want to be identified with it. It's kind of hard when you want to protest.

Fothergill's (2003) study on disaster relief and the attitudes of people who find themselves impoverished as a result of a natural disaster (the worthy poor) concludes that all people will tend to internalize the stigma associated with becoming poor. Fothergill (2003) reported that the stigma was reinforced by cues in society that over time treat disaster victims as if they were responsible for their poverty leading these worthy poor persons to increased feeling of shame and stigmatization (p. 659). As a coping mechanism some disaster victims (Fothergill 2003) and some welfare recipients project society's stigmatization onto other recipients but not themselves (Seccombe et al. 1998:855; Davis and Hagen 1996; Briar 1966:332). In both groups however there are recipients who do not internalize those stigmas at all nor do they see themselves as undeserving of assistance (Fothergill 2003; Seccombe et al. 1998:855; Davis and Hagen 1996; Briar 1966:332).

The contemporary welfare rights movement is seeking to organize a constituency of women whose only image of women on welfare is that of the welfare queen, welfare cheats and people Ashley described as "sucking all the money up." This new constituency does not want to identify with that image and thus this identity construction process may fail to take place.

Activists Engaged in Identity Extension

Both Edith and Priscilla entered into welfare rights activism through the door of the civil rights movement. Both were organizers for a national civil rights organization and were assigned to welfare rights organizing. Priscilla was a national organizer and traveled from state to state organizing and providing technical assistance to local groups.

Edith's career was with the local welfare rights group and she is credited with institutionalizing the organizational structure of the local welfare rights movement. When NWRO disbanded in 1975, both Edit and Priscilla continued working with local groups across the nation for a while, but eventually focused their attention to local welfare rights organizing efforts.

Edith and Priscilla had different introductions to the movement. Edith began her work in her mid-forties. Edith is white and has lived in the suburbs. Edith as a member of a national civil rights organization was assigned by that organization to organize a local welfare rights organization. She described her experiences in the following manner. I asked her how she became involved in welfare rights.

We heard that in the neighborhood, ahmm, that, ahmmmm, some ministers had got together and they were charging women on AID/ADC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) a dollar to come to a meeting. Anyway they told me I was so-called research person and I was told to find out what the ministers were doing. So I had one of the members to ah find me an ADC welfare mom who would be willing to talk to a white suburban women, you know. . . a lot a people wouldn't. She found me someone who ended up telling me all the. . . many of the problems of being on aid. You know, she kept telling me about all the problems. And finally I said, it makes sense to me for people on AID (AFDC) to get together. . . and if we talk with other people I am sure we can share ideas.

To determine Edith's alignment process through identity extension, I asked her what welfare rights meant to her. Edith explained:

We live in a democracy and in a democracy we do thing together to help on different levels, whether we pay taxes to fix the road, umm make sure that our food is edible, you know different things like that. We also take care of people who are not employed. Either because they don't have training, they're too young, too old or there simply is that there is no employment available. When it comes to welfare rights. . . I feel very strongly that just the way we have a right to expect our water to be ahhm safe to drink that when we're in desperate need there is ahmm, help from the society at large.

Edith's involvement in the welfare rights movement can be expressed as a kind of identity extension process. The situational relevance (Snow and McAdam 2000:50) of living in a democracy created for Edith an expectation that we should "do things to help on different levels." For Edith welfare rights are as normative in a democracy as the right to have safe water to drink and to have the government ensures that the water is safe to drink. The welfare rights movement has a dimension representing an ethics of caring (Collins 2000:262) frame. This frame is expressed by Amina as "we are responsible for each other" and is congruent with Edith's own personal sense of caring, which to her is a characteristic of a democracy and of her own values; as she puts it "I feel very strongly," when describing protection from want as a welfare right.

Priscilla began her career as social activists at a much younger age. She described the first movement in which she was involved:

You know when I first started out in the movement. . . I was like four or five years old. Dad had this concept that he always used, 'cause he loved baseball. Three strikes and you're out. And he had told this young [white] man, if this young man slapped him again, treating him as his own property, [he would retaliate] But you don't retaliate, not in the south, particularly at that time, you know. So there was a meeting called . . . you could see the collaboration, both sections of the family. . . and the thing was to save my grandfather and get him out of town, cause they knew what was going to happen. They packed the house in the truck that night [and left town]. . . it took a movement. When I say a movement -- of the family and the plans to protect us to get there, you know. But I'll never forget that. That stuck in my mind.

Priscilla's identity construction process can be understood within Collins (2000:202) discussion on black women's activism. Priscilla has a long history in anti-racism work and is greatly respected by women across racial, ethnicity and class lines. Yet, Priscilla's identity as an activist has been shaped and continues to be shaped by the resistance culture developed as a consequence of the struggle against enslavement, caste

discrimination and historical and generational racism experienced by Black women.

Black women engage in social justice work to facilitate group survival and to struggle for institutional transformation (Collins 2000:204). For Priscilla I argue that in part what connects her to the welfare rights movement can be analyzed using Collin's conceptualization as a method to analyze her identity construction.

As a child of the south, Priscilla adapted at an early age the resistance identity that is embedded in the world view of African-American women (but not exclusively African-American women) as a way of life. Collins (2000) states that black women in their activism "embrace a form of identity politics, a worldview that sees lived Black experience as important to creating a critical black consciousness and crafting political strategies (p. 205)."

Taken from this view we can now say that Priscilla's identity construction process linking her activism to the welfare rights movement occurs through identity extension connecting her activism across movements and time. She explains more of her history as an activist:

The church we attended which was down the street from us, [was] a Baptist church. I *grew up* in there. And that church became very movement oriented. The church supported my art teacher and others who took a stand when ahmm when the superintendent of school, white, said that "no black teacher or anyone in the school system could move into Skylight Heights." Lord my teacher, I think I was in about the seventh or eighth grade, became a hero to us, and her husband a hero [too]. And they moved into the Heights and bought a house there. Then a movement started all about that. My minister was one of the people in the pulpit, was in the forefront of that [movement]. Our whole church was involved and everything, ahh to support her. Now she wasn't a member of our church, but you know just the idea and you know and ah people really got into motion around their support. And it broke that decision and gave folks the opportunity to move wherever in the hell they wanted to. And that was the beginning of a new movement taking place.

Priscilla continued to explain her development into a social movement activist. After graduating from high school she went to college. She dropped out after one year to join the civil rights movement. For her the situational relevance is resistance and institutional change based upon a cultural affinity for liberation, fairness and justice. Her history in the movement or struggle is long and has been significant. She left the south shortly after leaving college, moved to the urban north and began her social movement career. She summed up her identity as being, “[T]he main thing I wanted to do was organize.”

Tazz’s connection to the welfare rights movement can be analyzed as both a form of identity extension with elements of identity transformation. When I asked him what caused him to become active in the movement to end poverty and to support the welfare rights movement he stated:

At some point I realized, looking back at how I was raised, that I always had supported, at least tacitly supported the right of people to kind of self determine what they would be or become and somebody ought to help them to do that cause that’s what I saw my parents do at that time and time and time again with other people.

In talking about his activism over the years, Tazz stated:

It was just an awakening for me that I think in this journey that I have had in terms of seeing all the things that go into making us as individuals, as a collective society that we need to try and understand about somebody else and see how we can help them or least try to understand their story, their journey and what they’re doing and see how we can be supportive of it.

Activists Engaged in Identity Transformation

I asked several interviewees about their transforming experience in relation to their participation in the welfare rights movement (although I did not use the term

transformation directly). I wanted to find out if there was an *ahh-haa* moment that helped to solidify or dissolve their ties to the welfare rights movements. I was particularly interested in the relationship between welfare rights activism and women's rights activism. Ruby has been a social justice advocate for more than twenty and as such her work has involved working for immigrant right and welfare rights. I asked her to describe her experience with the movement. I asked Ruby if she considered herself a feminist.

Okay, I have to admit I came to the title [feminist] slowly. Ahm and I'm just now beginning to be real strong about it (laugh) because of things that are happening to me and my religious congregation within my church setting. Ahmm, a lot of clarification is occurring, but ahmm, I'm a feminist because I look at the world with a critical eye, of howhow everything is impacting women and so often. And, and I'm looking for the voices and experiences of women to be a part of...of significant conversations and decisions, and, and my flag goes up right away when there is an omission or when there is a distortion even by those who are of the female gender who may be misrepresenting ahh, the women that I know. . . and ahh...so ahmm, I'm and I've particularly picked up on this ahmm, term which I read about, ahh, that, the statement that I read about by a woman name Margaret Songbird that said ahmm the San Andreas fault of Christianity and Western civilization is the denial of the feminine. ["The 'San Andreas Fault' of institutional Christianity is the systematic denial and denigration of the 'Sacred Feminine' over a period of nearly 2000 years," is Songbirds' actual quote].

I asked Ruby how important is it for her to be involved in welfare rights activism and women's rights activism? She replied:

I prioritized welfare rights, when I worked with ORGANIZATION ... I was the [women's justice coordinator and] my focus was on welfare rights essentially. Though I was open to other kinds, but that was where I prioritized my time and energy and ahmm like I mentioned earlier, I am becoming more and more aware of the importance of the other ahh, the other pieces of that they really all go together...ahmm, but for me, women having their basic essential human needs is kind of the Maslow bottom line (laughter) , you got to have that first, before you can talk about having a voice...a greater voice in various other kind of things. You need to have food, you know, you need to have shelter. So ahh, so it all works together and its all important. But that's my prioritization personally.

Ruby's identity construction can be analyzed as identity transformation. Klatch 20010 conceptualizes the stages of feminist consciousness as *recognition of inequality, framing, and constructing a collective identity* (p.795). In undergoing a process of developing a feminist consciousness Ruby experienced a "dramatic change in [her] identity (Snow and McAdam 2000:52)." Ruby sees herself as a "strikingly different than before (Snow and McAdam 2000:52) as she constructs combines her welfare rights and feminist identity.

Jane had developed a feminist identity while in high school. Jane's mother's feminist awakening occurred during Jane's high school years. It was during the second wave feminist movement. Jane read Friedan's *The Feminist Mystic* (1963) at her mother urging. She also completed school projects on media portrayals of women. Jane was also involved in the abortion rights movement and like other feminists at the time celebrated the 1973 Supreme Court's Roe v Wade decision giving women access to legal abortions in the United States.

A common theme in the abortion rights movement was the issue of fairness. Gaining access to safe and affordable abortions for poor women was an issue of fairness in the abortion rights debates. Higher income women could access safe abortions while many poor women had no such access. As a feminist, the issue of poor women's access to abortion was the extent of the connection to gender and poverty for Jane. In explaining why poverty issues had such a low priority Jane exclaimed:

a lot of the conversation had to do with privileged...I hung out with kids whose parents made more than my parents. So the poverty piece of it wasn't a real big piece of the conversation.

Jane described her experience of joining the welfare rights struggle through a process of identity transformation as occurring through linking the struggle for housing preservation to the struggle of real people for basic economic rights. Jane began her career in non-profit work in architecture and historic preservation. She described her experience as:

I was very interested in urban planning and how things happen...so I think as I started to understanding more I went from looking at life through the lens of a art history major and of someone who was very interested in historic. . . And so I think as I understood more about the history, I understand more about the dynamics and I understood that for preservation to work, you had to be more inclusive and ...until you addressed the issue that ahmm keep poor people isolated in the ghettos of...I mean the metaphorical ghettos from the lack access to good jobs, lack of access to housing, lack of good education ahmmm none of the other problems were going to be addressed. . .eventually it became a transformation where I realized, life is short, it's not happening in my lifetime so I need to focus where I think it's most important; that it's more about people than it was about historical space or architecture.

John began his social movement career as welfare rights advocates after the passage of PRWORA. In discussing his growth as a social movement activist, John had this to say about his pre-movement days:

. . . of course I was unconscious because I . . . I was all part of the lumpen proletariat [both laughing loud, like a high five type of laugh] know what I'm saying, unconscious,...no...no type of ahmm class identity... no class consciousness, no political consciousness...no you know racial consciousness or anything like that the whole kit and kabuttel, I was running around here unconscious like everybody else.

John's identity construction can be analyzed as identity transformation. His political education led to experiencing a "dramatic change in identity (Snow and McAdam 2000:52)." John sees himself as a "strikingly different than before (Snow and McAdam 2000:52) in going from identity stage of lumpen proletariat to advocate. His identity transformation was anchored by this incident in his early childhood. John

explained that he as a young child in the late 1960s he was out shopping with his mother and a man was standing outside the store with a can asking for money. He walked pass the man and his mother called him back and gave him a quarter to put in the man's can.

You see, I learned a lesson [from his mother] you just don't walk pass people. You just don't walk pass them you know. And like I say, I done, done a bunch of nonsense in my life and stuff like that you know but you know, through her guidance, you know through the guidance of people like you and NAME and the all the rest of y'all you know. . .ahmm we getting closer to God, we closer to God when we do that [anti-poverty work]. If we leave them behind, if we act like we don't care then we like the majority of people out here. 'Cause people don't really identify with the plight of other people, the less fortunate you know until it affects them. . .

In constructing an identity as an activist, John added to this philosophical mix:

"I am a believer you know, in the philosophy of George Jackson and George Jackson who was a Soledad brother and stuff like that...you know his philosophy was you know you can't you know you can't elevate ahh the individual above you know the group, the collective, you know. . . ."

I asked him what did he mean by the collective, he replied,

The people you know and then you know what Che Guevara was you know saying, you know in order to be a revolutionary you have to love the people . . . you know, you have to love the people you know, so that means you know what I'm saying, you not subordinating their interest to your interest . . .

I asked John if he considered himself a revolutionary. He replied with a bit of quite introspection mixed with enthusiasm, "Oh yeah, oh yeah" John's attachment to the welfare rights movement gives him the space and opportunity to be a revolutionary, to love the people and to be a part of a collective that shares and accommodates his identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed the identity construction processes of movement activists to discover how they are able to maintain involvement in the welfare rights movement during abeyance. I analyzed the transcribed interviews for patterns in activists' attitudes of movement collective identity. I analyzed the transcripts for activists' identity construction processes.

Activists' identity talk revealed a sense that the movement was fragmented as a result of the movement's long term abeyance period. Some activists believe that the welfare rights movement does not appear to be organizing actual welfare recipients. Other activists remarked that a lot of work by welfare rights activists goes on in the background. The overall pattern in the attitudes of activists on what keeps them participating in the welfare rights movement, regardless of its fragmentation or status of abeyance is that the movement gives them the space to be themselves; the movement is a validating experience for activists and it promotes within in them a sense of hopeful activism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with the research question, How do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance? Through activists interviews I sought to explicate the role of identity construction processes during periods of movement abeyance. From the interviews I conclude that successful identity work make it more likely that activists and constituents will be motivated to join social movements. A failure in identity work makes it less likely that activists and constituents will be motivated to join or support a social movement.

I have analyzed the identity construction processes within a local welfare rights movement. While the analysis has discussed what linkages people have used to link their personal identities to the movement's collective identity, it is important to note that the collective identity of the welfare rights movement is understood as having been generated from movement framing undertaken by activists. I work from this perspective, thus preserving the agency of activists in constructing the movement collective identity. I offer the following two conclusions.

First, an analysis of the transcripts implies that the collective identity of the welfare rights movement during abeyance reveals the stress the activists and movement are undergoing since passage of PRWORA in 1996. The identity construction process

reveals that movement activists are faced with what I term the identity dichotomy. First activists are struggling to rebuild the welfare rights. The welfare rights movement faces the difficult circumstance of rebuilding or rebranding a movement sharing the highly stigmatized moniker of the welfare queen. The movement carries the stigma of key constituents long after the naming itself, welfare queen, has disappeared from polite political conversations.

So the movement is clearly engaged in a collective identity process through identity construction containing an “unresolved and unresolvable tension between the definition a movement gives of itself and the recognition granted to it by the rest of society” (Melucci 1995:48). Social movement actors in the welfare rights movement continuously face the identity dichotomy clearly expressed through the societal beliefs about the worthy and unworthy poor. The strain caused by this dichotomy is most reflected in the frustration welfare rights activists and organizers feel over the lack of participation of low income people in the anti-poverty movement.

Second, movement activists in an effort to rebuild the mass movement are left with the dilemma of how to recruit people living on welfare along with those who are not on welfare in the face of the identity dichotomy I just described. The problem can be understood as thus:

1) Welfare is the site of social stratification and stigma and the failure of identity amplification may preclude welfare mothers and mothers or persons not on welfare from identifying with or joining the movement. The welfare queen while unspoken and invisible in the contemporary conversation of the countermovement, still resonates with the general public. Contemporary debates regarding the loss in the standard of living in

the United States are focused on the disappearing middle class and not the disappeared welfare class. What will be the collective identity of the movement to address this new poverty?

2) The welfare rights movement is represented by two ideas. First there is the idea that the welfare rights movement is organizing welfare rights recipients and their allies and supporters to expand the welfare state. Second there is the idea is that the welfare rights movement is organizing not for welfare programs but to fight poverty by building the capacity of a broad cross section of the population to push for institutional change.

On the first idea, the countermovement with strong advocates in government, business class, the media and its allies in highly organized social institutions successfully created within the general population a powerful constituency less supportive of entitlement based welfare programs. Potential adherents to an anti-poverty effort may well be motivated to join a movement with *rights* and *justice* movement frames. The question is how likely are they to join an anti-poverty movement when *rights* and *justice* are preceded by the word welfare? The outcome of identity construction processes will be reflective of this question.

On the second idea, the issue of the welfare queen and other stigmas and negative imaging of poor women and their children and families is difficult to overcome because of the United States' long standing history of race, class and social management of women's behaviors and bodies. However social movements have been successful as evinced by the welfare rights movement causing expansions of the welfare state in the 1960s when the rhetoric against welfare was just as highly racialized and more vitriolic in its anti-welfare sentiments. The movement accomplished expansions of the welfare

state through the formation of coalition between welfare rights, civil rights and women's rights organizations. The contemporary challenge for the welfare rights movement is to discover how to marry the work and religious ethic to the *right* to poverty relief.

I have attempted to add to the study of identity construction in social movements where the movement's primary constituency is highly stigmatized and the movement carries the moniker of that constituency. This would be the case of the welfare rights movement created to advocate for the rights of those living on welfare to receive benefits which they are entitled by law or of which they have an established eligibility. I have attempted to demonstrate that identity linking processes based upon the frame alignment process in framing literature are useful in understanding identity construction within the welfare rights movement.

As part of the welfare rights identity construction process is the conversation about poverty and the poor as colored by the worthy/unworthy paradigm and this paradigm is clothed concepts of race, gender and place. To its credit the welfare rights movement has served to expand the meaning of poverty relief. Activists in the movement have expanded the meaning of poverty relief by directly challenging the anti-welfare rhetoric that uses both race and gender to turn public sentiment against a progressive system of poverty relief. For this reason the welfare rights movement is charged with a more challenging identity construction process than other progressive movements.

Study Limitation

I encountered some limitations in the study. First and foremost, I was not able to find many young mothers to interview. A few were to be scheduled but only one materialized, primarily due to the short time frame I had to gather the data for this thesis. Access to this population would have been desirable for the purpose of ascertaining their reasons for participation.

I also did not interview many people outside of the leadership cadre of the movement; so much of what is presented in this thesis is based upon what some consider to be the elite level of the movement, though about a third of them do not hold elite positions in the movement any longer. These non-elite participants do not consider themselves movement drop-outs but rather what I would call movement sit-outs. They support the concept of welfare being a right, but work on issues not associated directly with the demanding of state welfare benefits. The movement sit-out activists tended to focus on issues such as the impact poverty and welfare reform has upon issues such as education, housing or health care.

This thesis would have benefitted from interviewing more welfare mothers who were not involved in the movement for the purpose of attaining a greater conceptual handle on the applicability of identity amplification in the analysis of welfare rights movement participation and stigmatization.

Future Research

Abeyance remains an open and exciting focus of research into the welfare rights movement. More research is needed into the welfare rights movement's role in the new

era of welfare brought on by the PRWORA. Specifically research on movement collective action frames and processes are needed to uncover how deeply the stigmatization of the movement's identity corrupted the idea of a right to welfare. Interviews with young women with children living in poverty that may or may not be on welfare are needed in order to know why they do or do not join welfare rights organizations.

I believe research into the attitudes of young mothers living in poverty about organizing for welfare is important for a number of reasons. First, when looking at urban culture from the music, films and comedy strong anti-welfare message abounds. How much of an effect do these media messages have upon women living in poverty and their motivation to become welfare rights activists? It would be interesting to address Georgia's observation that poverty is lived differently today and that difference is reflected in a lack of participation in welfare rights organizing.

The outcomes of debates about welfare and the social welfare state are directly linked to and have an impact upon the material lives of women, men and children living in poverty. Knowing whether and how the current framing of welfare reform affects the identity development of disadvantaged children as they negotiate through lives of poverty would be important to expanding our understanding of child well being as well.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

My name is Annie Sumareh and I am a Master of Arts (M.A.) candidate at American University. As part of my graduate studies requirements I am conducting research study to examine some of the factors that influence people to continue to participate in the welfare rights movement after passage of the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

This demographic form will collect general information about this project's research subjects as a group. Providing demographic information is strictly voluntary. Only alias will be associated with the information on this form. The information collected will be used to describe age, ethnicity/race, gender, roles and years of involvement in the movement.

If you have questions regarding the research please feel free to contact me at 202-344-0568 or by email at as9313a@student.american.edu. You can also contact American University's Institutional Review Board at Office of Sponsored Programs at 4400 Massachusetts Avenue NW Washington, DC 20016, or by e-mail at irb@american.edu.
Thank You for Participating in the Research

Age: _____ Ethnicity/Race: _____ Gender: _____
Length of time involved in movement _____ years
Participation Role/s taken in movement (e.g. Leader, member, supporter, activist, demonstrator)
____ Leader ____ Member ____ Supporter ____ Activist ____ Demonstrator
____ Other (how would you describe your participation _____

(This form will be completed with each research subject before the interviewing begins. The completed form will be attached the interview notes and to the final transcript when it is completed. A copy of the form will be provided to each research subject.).

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

Ajayla: Age 50+, Female, African American. Twenty-five years in movement.
Organizer/volunteer/supporter.

Ala: Age 50+, Female, African-American. Seven years in movement.
Organizer/volunteer/supporter.

Amila: Age 50+, Female, African American. Ten years in movement.
Volunteer/supporter.

Amina: Age 50+, Female, African-American. Fifty years in movement.
Organizer/volunteer/supporter. Former activist.

Ashley: Age Under 25, Female. African-American. Movement supporter.

Barbara: Age 50+, Female, African-American. Five years in movement.
Organizer/volunteer/supporter.

Branwynn: Age 50+, Female, Celtic-American. Thirty years in movement. Supporter/
former activist.

CheJoe: Age 50+, Male, Irish-American. Forty years in movement.
Supporter/former activist.

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- Deseree: Age 50+, Female, African-American. In movement less than a year.
Supporter/potential activist.
- Edith: Age 50+, Female, White. Forty-six years in movement. Movement
activist/ leader.
- Emma: Age 50+, Female, White. Thirty years in movement.
Supporter/volunteer/former organizer/activist.
- Georgia: Age under 50, Female, African-American, Thirty-two years in movement.
Supporter/former organizer/activist.
- Iris: Age 50+, Female, Caucasian. Twenty-three years in movement.
Organizer/activist/supporter.
- Jane: Age 50+, Female, Caucasian. More than ten years in movement.
Supporter/volunteer.
- John: Age 50+, Male, Black. More than ten years in movement.
Supporter/volunteer.
- Louise: Age 50+, Female, European-American. Forty years in movement.
Supporter/advocate.
- Luqman: Age 50+, Male, African-American. Twenty years in movement. Supporter.
- Mary: Age 50+, Female, African American. More than thirty years in
movement. Leader/Organizer/Volunteer.
- Monty: Age 50+, Male, White. Forty years in movement. Supporter/former
organizer/activist.
- Nikita: Age under 50, Female, White. In movement a few years in the 1990s,
Supporter, but is no longer an active volunteer.

- Pearl: Age 50+, Female, White. More than 20 years in movement.
Organizer/supporter/activist.
- Priscilla: Age 50+, Female, Black, fifty-two years in movement.
Leader/organizer/activists.
- Ruby: Age 50+, Female, Euro (sic). Thirty years in movement.
Leader/supporter/activist/organizer.
- Sha'Quan: Under 50, Female, African-American. One year in movement.
Volunteer/supporter/organizer.
- Tazz: Age 50+, Male, African-American. Forty years in movement. Supporter.
- Tom: Age 50+, Male, White. Thirty years in movement.
Organizer/supporter/volunteer.
- Wade: Age 50+, Female. Twenty years in movement. Supporter/former
leader/activist.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDEBOOK

Research Question: How do activists use identity construction processes to sustain movement

continuity and collective identity during periods of movement abeyance?

ORIGINAL RESERCH QUESTIONS WITH QUESTION BOOK

RQ-1 HOW DOES THE WWRC MAINTAIN CONTINUED PARTICIPATION DURING PHASES OF MOVEMENT ABEYANCE?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Identity Construction Processes:

- 1(a) what are welfare rights to you?
- 1 (b) what makes you believe in the message of welfare rights?
- 1(c) what motivates you to remain involved welfare rights activism?
- 1(d) why is it important to you to be involved in the welfare rights activism?
- 1(e) in women's rights activism?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Action And Framing Processes:

- 1(f) what are the day to day activities of the WWRC?
- 1(g) why do you think people support and join the WWRC?
- 1 (h) who participates and how?
- 1(i) how does WWRC communicate the message of welfare rights?
- 1(j) what does the WWRC do to stay organized?
- 1(k) what are some of the barriers to organizing for welfare rights?

RQ-2 HOW ARE FRAME DISPUTES USED BY MOVEMENT ACTORS TO REALIZE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES IN PHASES OF HOSTILE POLITICAL CLIMATES?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Identity Construction Processes:

- 2(a) describe how you participate in the WWRC.
- 2(b) what do you do?
- 2(c) what are the barriers to your participation?
- 2(d) what are you not doing or wish you could do more of?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Action And Framing Processes:

- 2(e) describe the WWRC: what is the WWRC?
- 2(f) how are decisions made?
- 2(g) who participates and how?
- 2(h) how are campaigns selected?
- 2(i) what campaigns are in process now?
- 2(j) how well is issues of welfare rights understood by media, politicians and policy makers?
- 2(k) how well are issues of welfare rights understood by the public and those living with welfare?
- 2(l) why do you think people oppose welfare programs and activism?
- 2(m) how do you convince people to support or join WWRC?

RQ-3 HOW ARE STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL PROCESSES IDENTIFIED, CONSTRUCTED AND UTILIZED TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN MOVEMENT RELEVANCE TO ACTIVISTS AND ADHERENTS?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Identity Construction Processes:

- 3(a) what are some of the messages about welfare rights that affect you personally?
- 3(b) what are some of the common images that you know of families living on welfare?
- 3(c) do these images reflect what you believe or know to be true about living on welfare?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Action And Framing Processes:

- 3(d) how would you describe the relationship between the welfare rights and women's rights movement today?
- 3(e) in what ways are women's rights welfare rights? has this concept changed since the 1996 ending of "welfare as we know it?"
- 3(f) what are some of the ways the WWRC works to maintain its image and membership?
- 3(g) how does the WWRC resolve disputes or negotiate differences about issues and movement activities.

RQ-4 HOW ARE FRAME DISPUTES USED TO RECRUIT, ENGAGE AND MOBILIZE CONSTITUENTS AND ALLIES?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Identity Construction Processes:

- 4(a) what do you like most about being involved?
- 4(b) what do you like least about being involved? Why?

Interview Guide Questions: Collective Action And Framing Processes:

- 4(c) how does the WWRC select messages from those opposing welfare rights to which the WWRC will respond?
- 4(d) how are the responses communicated?
- 4(e) which messages in particular do you think have or had the most impact on welfare rights in general, in the coalition between welfare right and women rights activists, and welfare rights organizing?
- 4(f) how has welfare rights organizing changed since the 1996 end of “welfare as we know it?”

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Annie Sumareh from American University. The purpose of this study is to add to the knowledge of how social movement actors in the welfare and women's rights coalition engage in collective identity and collective action framing processes during periods of movement abeyance.. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her master's thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a interview that will be administered to individual participants in a location of your choosing. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to of how social movement actors in the welfare and women's rights coalition engage in collective identity and collective action framing processes during periods of movement abeyance..

Time Required

Participation in this study will require one – two hours of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits of the research to science and/or society which may accrue as a result of this research include adding to the knowledge of how movement participants conduct collective identity and collective action framing processes in the furtherance of the movement's agenda during times of movement abeyance or diminishing public support of the goals of the movement. There are no direct benefits to participant.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at conferences. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers including audio tapes, if applicable will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name
Department
American University
Email Address

Advisor's Name
Department
American University
Telephone: (212)885-....
Email Address

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Haaga
Chair, Institutional Review Board
American University
(202)885-1718
dhaaga@american.edu

Matt Zembrzusi
IRB Coordinator
American University
(202)885-3447
irb@american.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be audio taped during my interview. _____ (initials)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

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