Welfare Reform: The Politics of Redistributive Policy

Carolyn Winfrey Holcomb
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Welfare Reform: The Politics of Redistributive Policy

By

Carolyn Winfrey Holcomb

B.A., Governors State University, 2010

THESIS

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For the Degree of Master of Arts,

With a Major in Political and Justice Studies

Governors State University

University Park, IL 60466

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Also, I will forever be grateful for Dr. Kostarelos excellence in her abilities to make the subject of people in poverty relevant to our lives. I took an elective course that she taught; and with that elective course she was such a great instructor that I changed my major to continue studying within the Social Sciences. Her teaching style was demanding for my schedule; but I found my passion.

I would also like to acknowledge my parents and close friends in their patience with my absence from social functions. I feel that I am a better person for my mother’s love and understanding. She read everything to her children from non-fiction and fiction books, periodicals, and she patiently taught her children to read.
Abstract

My analysis will focus on whether the goals of Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reauthorization Act (PRWORA) of 1996 was self-sufficiency or was it designed to eliminate redistributive public policies and the implementation of morality policies. The purpose of this research was to analyze the barriers or impediments that the single mothers living in poverty encounter in society and whether PRWORA adequately addressed the barriers facing single mothers living in poverty. Specifically, my research analyzed the barriers of the family structure, culture of poverty, residential mobility, inadequate education, and the lack of social capital that may or may not have been a factor in hindering women from leaving the welfare system. My interest in this topic came from Dr. Kostarelos seminar in the Capstone Course which was entitled “Poverty in our Midst in Cook County, Illinois.”
In 1996, a bipartisan congress passed and President William J. Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reauthorization Act (PRWORA) on August 22, 1996. PRWORA is the most transformative welfare legislation since the New Deal Era of President Roosevelt’s Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) later renamed Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Section IV, of the Social Security Act of 1935. PRWORA was transformative in that it was a drastic departure from the entitlement of cash benefits for the low income single parent and couple households living in poverty. PRWORA replaced AFDC with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) which mandated the recipients to join the workforce within two years to remain eligible for welfare assistance with benefits time limited to a maximum of 60 months. In essence, entitlements of cash benefits were exchanged for mandatory work.

After implementation of TANF in 1997, caseloads dropped by 50% (US Census, 1998); but the data revealed that the poverty rate did not decrease for the single mother households, White nor African-American. However, the poverty rate for couple’s pre-PRWORA had decreased from 11% in 1996 to 10% in 1998 (US Census Data, 1999).

Another significant change from AFDC to TANF was the federal government funded block grants to the individual states for the implementation of the newly passed welfare policy. The individual states were rewarded by the federal government on the basis of the individual state’s success in mandating the exit of their citizens from welfare and into the workforce. The individual state had
the authority to implement their welfare system independent of the federal
government as long as it met the overriding goals and benchmarks set by the
Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunities and Reconciliation Act,

During the 1960 through the 1990s the changes in the geo-political and the
political debate have reinforced the narrative that the cause of poverty was within
the individual. The debate has reinforced the narrative that the welfare mother
was amoral, lazy, had limited aspirations, negative attitude toward work and
depended on the federal government for her livelihood. The conservative
ideology believes in personal responsibility, support the free market system, and
that an individual will rise and fall on their merit and on the other hand, the liberal
ideology believes in government’s action to bring equality into the political
system where women, minorities, and the disabled have been kept outside of the
system and requires governmental support to ensure that there is equality in the
political system.

With the increasing number of single women chronically dependent on
welfare, the debate had shifted to the right and thus a political realignment had
taken hold within both political parties. Democrats and Republicans respected and
did not challenge the notion of the change within the culture that accepted single
mother households. Neither Democrats nor Republicans understood or articulated
the geographic and historical nature of poverty which could have been useful in
framing and elevating the debate that has split the ideological divide within the political class, races, and the mainstream taxpayer.

The importance or my rational for this research project was to analyze and synthesize the current scholarly research on the barriers, impediments and the impact of contemporary welfare reform (such as the PRWORA) on single mother households living in poverty; and if the goals of the policy were to elevate the single mother households to self-sufficiency after leaving the welfare system.

My research will analyze whether the goals were of PRWORA to eliminate redistributive tax dollars from the middle class to the “undeserving” single mother households. The definition of redistributive public policy is the transfer of taxes from the rich to the poor; but in some instances the redistributive benefits comes from the middle class to the upper class in the form of regressive taxes. However, redistributive public policies that involves social welfare policy that taxes the upper and middle classes to fund programs for the lower class. Distributive public policy is when the government deems it is necessary to benefit a certain segment of society such as farmers or a community after a disaster without raises taxes on the public. Distributive public policies are not controversial because the taxpayers are not being asked to fund another segment of society’s lifestyle. Redistributive public policy has been an ongoing debate since the 1960s with the increase in single mother household that were chronically dependent on government for their income. Redistributive tax policies have a racial undertone that intimates that single mothers, specifically African-American single mothers are not productive and are dependent on the governmental support
for themselves and their children. The perception by many in the public is that the single mother households are not deserving of ongoing support of the taxpayers. The conservative ideology is defined as valuing tradition, religion, and institutions. The people holding conservatives values and ideology are usually the wealthy and the fundamentalist Christians and other conservative religious groups.

What part did morality public policy play in mandating abstinence only policies, and requiring unmarried teenage mothers to have genetic testing to establish the paternity of the father? TANF policies have the appearance of being punitive toward the single mothers especially to the single mothers that aspired to attain a two or four year degree. Also, a single mother on TANF is required to report the earning of her teenage children’s at or below the age of 18 because the state is required to evaluate the family income based on the aggregate household income (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.1996. Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunities and Reconciliation Act, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/1996/news/prwora.htm.)

Pre-PRWORA, a single mother could attend a two or four year college as part of her workfare that substituted attending college for work. This provision for higher education was not provided for in the welfare reform, TANF. The AFDC policies provided the single mother that aspired to get a college degree an option of going to a college or university in lieu of participating in “Workfare.” The administrators of AFDC policies deemed the investment in a single mother’s education a good investment for the individual, her family, and society. However,
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with the structure of TANF policies and programs are punitive toward the women which is weighted toward emphasis on getting single mothers into the workforce which precluded the single mothers from attending a two or four year institution because there was an incentives for the individual state to push the single mothers into the workforce.

The official definition of poverty is based on the net income of a household (e.g. for a family of four the poverty rate in 2011 is $22,350.) According to the US Census data (March, 2011), the official poverty rate for “all families” is 11.7%. However, the “married couple” poverty rate is 6.2%, for the “white single mother” households’ poverty rate is 15.8%, and the poverty rate for an “African-American” single mother households’ is 31.6%. There is quite a difference between the 11.7% (all families) and the 31.6% (African-American single mother households). The rationale for this research is to understand whether the obstacles, barriers and impediments that have kept or prevented the single mother households from becoming independent from governmental assistance which is being debated and addressed with the growing diversity of this country.

This research project is personal for me as an African-American citizen living in a society where there is a perception that the US is now a post-racial society in which all citizens have equal opportunities to become self-sufficient; and there are no legitimate excuses for people living in poverty and requiring governmental assistance. When the politicians and the scholars debate the crises in morality and values within the culture, the debate does not acknowledge the
failure of the political system to include input from the perspective of the people living in poverty and their barriers and challenges in their day to day lives. The divorced and single never married mother households are depicted as lacking morals, ambitions and aspire to have additional children for the increase in revenue from the taxpaying public. My research project will shed light on whether or not the divorced or single never married mother households have or have not been successful in overcoming the obstacles that have left them and their children living in poverty.

Kondras (1997) argues that understanding the geographic and historical nature of poverty can and should have driven the debate and the public policy when fashioning legislation such as PRWORA of 1996. Kondras explains that the deindustrialization of the Midwest has devastated the manufacturing economy of the Rust Belt and has left the former employees of the major industries without the skill level to demand comparable wages compared to their former employment. The industries such as the automobile and steel producers were low skilled workers but had high paying union positions that provided for a family and sometimes the extended family with a middle class lifestyle. However, after the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was passed in 1993 and implemented in 1994, the transnational corporate entities found it advantageous for their business plan to move their products from the Midwest to right-to-work states or in some cases outside of the US. The manufacturing employees became expendable and were left with applying and competing for service sector jobs that could not support a family and thus found themselves living in poverty or near
poverty. Whereas in the South, mechanization led to the demise of the small family farm and the practice of share cropping left an entire generation without meaningful work. The machinery replaced the repetitive task that kept the people with work, dignity and their livelihood intact. Industrial type farms such as Archer Daniel Midland and Monsanto have displaced the labor intensive work and diligence of the small farmer and the share cropper. According to Kondras (1997) research, the mechanization of farming led to the migration of a large segment of the population, but those who stayed put in the rural south have become increasingly poor.

The focus of this research project will be on the intent of PRWORA and the conservative ideology especially when it relates to divorce or never married single mothers. Was the legislation focused on self-sufficiency for mothers or decreasing the number of mothers dependent on governmental services for their income?

However, I would never have developed an academic interest in this topic if Dr. Kostarelos had never introduced the concepts of poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, public housing, North Atlantic Free Trade Agree (NAFTA) to our Capstone Course. Individually, we were assigned to read twenty-five scholarly articles and for me the reading of the article were instrumental in my quest for answers for why the divorced and single never married mother households were chronically dependent on governmental assistance.

Another reason this research project is important to me is to understand and synthesize the choices and consequences that women sometimes make that
lead them to accept a lifestyle that will continue to perpetuate the stereotype of poor women, White and African-American women as amoral and lacking a desire for self-sufficiency. My extended family has a very diverse socio-economic background; but we all come together to celebrate wedding, major holidays, and funerals. However, there is an obvious socio-economic difference within the extended family. There are two groups: one group is productive, successful and has traditional values; the other group consists of extroverts that are fun loving, social, and content with values that focus on social aspects of life and not pursuing a high skilled occupation or a formal education.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of contemporary welfare reform, PRWORA of 1996 on women living in poverty that depends on governmental support for their income. Consistent with this objective, this research set out to examine what were the primary goals implicit and explicit in the legislation that ended entitlements to cash benefits for people living in poverty and exchanged the entitlements to cash benefits for the emphasis on women joining the workplace. For instance, was self-sufficiency of women in poverty the primary goal of PRWORA or was it a tool of the fundamentalist Christian agenda that did not approve of their perception of a decline in morality and values in the culture which was indicative of the increase in the divorce and never married single mother households dependent on governmental assistance for their livelihood? For the purposes of this research, self-sufficiency has been defined as being totally removed from dependency on governmental support for cash
assistance, food stamps, housing vouchers, child care and transportation subsidies (Min & Pandey, 2004).

The research question is whether the goals were to eliminate redistributive public policy by eliminating or decreasing the caseloads in the bureaucracies of state and federal government and thus making the middle and upper class taxpayers free from the burden of paying for the lower class dependency. Some critics contend that this legislation was little more than a political agenda designed to reinforce to the public that with the growing number of never married households in the country dependent on government for their income, liberalism amounted to little more than an utter failure. At any rate, PRWORA eliminated entitlement assistance of the earlier programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that guaranteed benefits for impoverished families (sic: women and children). According to conservatives, programs such as AFDC did little more than enable non-deserving single mothers to continue to expand their families despite the lack of participation of the father; albeit at unfair expense to mainstream taxpayers.

CHAPTER 2

Significance of the Research - Historical Background

The English Poor Law influenced the United States’ social welfare policies for the poor, their children and the unemployed. England’s Elizabethan Poor Law which was established in 1601 recognized that the government was responsible for providing funds for the poor, children, and the sick and mentally unstable. The aid came from a fund that was collected by the local parish leaders
and the cash benefits were doled out from an emergency fund for their fellow citizens that lived in the local parish and were temporarily out of work because of the seasonal nature of their outdoor work. This law not only provided for the outdoor workers but also provided funds for the sick, and provided a home for the children who were without parents. Overtime the Elizabethan Poor Law was changed and became Poor Law Amendment (PLAA) in 1834. According to Birtles’ research, with the Elizabethan Poor Law there was no single procedure that managed the relief system and each small parish, the local government, was on their own to decide if an individual qualified for help and the amount of the dole. The law had very little structure to determine whether a citizen was out of work due to a lack of work but because of his own making. The chronically poor were housed in almshouses and “poor” houses. The poor houses were deemed unsanitary for the poor and were eventually closed. This inconsistency in treatment of the citizens led to the changes in the social welfare policy and the adoption of the Poor Law Amendment (PLAA) in 1834. The new law PLAA was a parish based system where each parish, which is the local government, was responsible to the people within their district (Birtles, 1999.)

Article I, Section III. Line 1: The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States (US Constitution).

With the adoption of the constitution the government set forth in Article I, Section III. Line 1 states that the government shall collect taxes for the general welfare of
the United States. However, the extent of the welfare system in early colonial America was the almshouses throughout the country that provided support for the poor, sick, and infirmed. The almshouses were the only public social welfare programs for many years.

In 1798, the US Congress passed legislation that established a pension for sailors and marine who had survived the Revolutionary War. In that same year, 1798, Congress passed legislation that granted the sailors and marines’ health insurance which the premiums were deducted from the sailors’ wages and was used to maintain and staff the military hospitals. Disabled sailors and marines were given disability pay for a short time depending on the injury until they were productive either in the military or back in the civilian workforce.

In 1820, the collective American spirit decided that formal custodial institutions should be available to comfort and serve the poor, minor criminals, the sick and mentally unstable. Before the decade of the 1820, people believed that each person should take care of their own idiosyncratic behavior and the government should be left out of it. However, the people of the 1820s surmised that for the greater good of the people, custodial institutions should be provided by the government to ease the suffering of the individual and the family.

**The Industrialization and Urbanization Era**

After the Civil War had been settled, the US was one of the major industrial powers and with the industrialization of America, millions of people in rural areas migrated to the urban areas which did not have suitable housing, health and safety standards, health care professionals, institutions, and processes
in place to prevent contagious diseases from spreading. Thus far in the early 20th century, charitable agencies had resources to help the poor, the sick and destitute. However, with the ever increasing population in the urban areas the citizens lobbied for governmental agencies to help the poor. However, the charitable agencies thought it was their mission to provide for the poor and if the government established policy for helping the poor it would become the pauperization of the poor. The philanthropic organizations perception was that a governmental agency would displace their organizations.

In 1910, the Bureau of Public Welfare was established in Kansas City with democratic principles that stated its goals were providing services for the poor citizens of the city. The Kansas City governmental agency took a stand that the government owed its poor citizens a level of income that would not force them to leave their homes and go without adequate food. The Kansas City governmental agency took issue with the charitable agencies that thought that governmental agencies would compete with them for philanthropic dollars. The Bureau of Public Welfare contention was that the religious charities are judgmental and did not understand inequality that certain citizens were subjected to.

In 1920, 43 states adopted workmen compensation laws that compensated individuals that were injured on the job. These state level laws had been proposed in Illinois and New York in 1905; but the industry lobbied against passing the legislation. These laws were passed to protect the worker who was injured on the job. In the past the producer class would lobby the politicians for not acting on the bill; but finally with an increasing number of injuries in plants and the mines,
the politicians stood with the workers and passed the Workmen’s Compensation Act which 43 states adopted.

In 1920, Mother’s Aid Programs were initiated by the states during the Great Depression to provide temporary cash assistance to widows and wives of disabled workers which allowed the family to stay together in their homes. The focus of the programs was to encourage women to stay with their families despite the financial burden the family was encountering. The temporary cash benefit for women was based on the assumption that a woman’s place was in the nuclear family and a husband and wife relationship was the normative standard and preferred. The nuclear family was not only preferred but supported by the political system and reward those who did not go outside of the sanctioned paradigm (Moller, 2002).

In 1935, Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) was enacted and was a federally regulated program to provide assistance to widowed mothers with dependent children. The policy was deemed distributive policy because the population that it served widows, wives of disabled workers and their children. This program did not include single mother households due to desertion, divorce, and out of wedlock births. ADC was seen as a temporary program that benefitted a targeted group of mothers that were seen as the deserving poor (Moeller 2002). The deserving, according to the literature were the poor and “moral” women that had become poor through no fault of their own, but because of the death of a husband. The undeserving poor were described as African-American women
regardless of their marital status, divorced women without regard to their race or ethnicity, and any woman of questionable character.

Overtime, Aid for Families with Dependent Children (ADC) policy evolved to include all citizens as long as their income level was within the guidelines set by the federal government’s ADC programs, commonly called welfare. With the growing number of women qualifying for funds, budgetary restraints and demands grew beyond expectations. With the ever increasing number of single mothers applying for welfare, politician’s local and federally elected officials became critical of the policies that were asserted enabled single never married mothers to participate in the program. With the numbers increasing, along with the altered demographic composition of the program, attitudes started to change as to the merit of the ADC programs. The single mothers receiving welfare benefits were no longer viewed as victims and were seen as amoral that held values outside of the normative behavior of a moral woman.
## Figure 2.1 Differences between AFDC and TANF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFDC</th>
<th>TANF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cash entitlements – must be income</td>
<td>No social citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Federally implemented program</td>
<td>State block grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No hard in fast rule on “school or</td>
<td>2 years for benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No time limit for benefit</td>
<td>Benefit time limited to 60 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No unmarried teen restrictions</td>
<td>Unmarred &lt;18 live with parent(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No family cap</td>
<td>Family cap enforced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No provision for paternity test</td>
<td>Paternity test required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Average family size = 4</td>
<td>Average family size = 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Legal residents have access to Food</td>
<td>Legal residents – ineligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stamps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. F.S. eligibility did not include</td>
<td>F.S. eligibility includes minor wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minor children’s wages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Political Context of 1996 Welfare Reform

George Lakoff posits in his book, How Liberals and Conservatives Think, (1996) that conservatives and liberals have vastly different conceptual models to define morality politics. Conservatives defines morality as having a strict fatherly morality which gives individuals self-discipline through hard work and self-determination and juxtapose that conceptual model with the liberal definition as being nurturant parental morality toward the individual that requires a hand up (Lakoff, 1996.)

Wilson (2008) defines conservatism as an ideology that support market mechanisms or individual choice over government programs or regulations, and personal responsibility over welfare dependency. Conservatives expect more government to resolve morality issues such as drug abuse, prostitution, abortion, and obscenity (Wilson, 2008.) In general conservatism support cutbacks in government spending for welfare, food stamps, school lunch programs for low-income families, and subsidized housing. However, the conservative ideology supports more funding for police, military, and the appointment of judges that share their political and ideological beliefs. PRWORA of 1996, (Public Law 104-193) mandates the states determine the genetic make-up of a dependent child of a welfare applicant or current recipient so the state can establish paternity and collect child support before an 18 year old or younger unmarried teenager could qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. Again, conservatives and liberals conceptual models differ in their definition of identity politics are quite different. Conservatives conceptual model for identity
politics can be taken from Darwin’s theory that you rise and fall on your own merit; and the system rewards hard work and those that do not conform, society is not responsible for people that are not productive and juxtapose with the liberal’s conceptual model of identity politics recognize the complex society in which groups of Americans: women, Native Americans, and African-American have collective experience of social injustice.

When President Reagan took office in 1981, the country was experiencing stagflation, high unemployment, slow growth and high inflation. He and his fellow neoconservatives adopted supply-side economic policies. President Reagan changed eligibility requirements for people seeking AFDC benefits and increased the age in which citizens became eligible for social security benefits. The supply-siders attacked the Keynesian economic policies for high taxes, excessive regulations on businesses, and the excessive social programs. During the Reagan and Bush Administrations their goals were to reduce the size of government, cut taxes, reduce welfare spending, increase defense spending, and roll back regulations (Wilson, 2008).

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, was a departure from the entitlements of the Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) welfare policy. This legislation changed welfare as we knew it by eliminating the entitlement of cash benefits for welfare recipients (Wilson, 2008.) It also devolved power by shifting responsibility to states through block grants. The block grants are administered for the sole purpose of helping needy families; but with the requirements that the needy family leaves the
welfare system after two years of assistance with a cumulative time limit of 60 months.

The new law was focused on enabling low-income single mothers to find and keep employment. The 50 states were responsible for implementing their block grants which included provisions for single mothers that included: Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, child support enforcement, child care assistance, transportation subsidies, and unemployment benefits (UL).

PRWORA of 1996 was implemented during the economic expansion of the information technology era. The unemployment rate remained below five (5) percent between 1997 and 2001 and with the expansion of the economy validated to the policymakers that jobs were available for the single mother households that were dependent on governmental assistance for their income. This research will also explore what were the expectations for self-sufficiency for the single mother households and did the legislation have provision to address educational, residential mobility, sexism and racism barriers that had been thus far irremovable for the vast majority of the single never married mothers that were dependent on the government for assistance.

The main policy players in PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), were leaders of the conservative movement that promoted welfare reform and personal responsibility. The leaders of the conservative movement: Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, Tom Delay, and Bob Walker. These congressmen campaigned throughout the country on welfare reform and personal responsibility
and within two weeks of the congressional elections of 1996 they released their “Contract with America.” The PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193),” was a fulfillment of a campaign that started with “The Contract with America” which was driven to realign the white middle class vote into the Republican Party. Newt Gingrich’s framed the upcoming GOP initiatives as: shrinking the size of government, elimination of corporate taxes, lowering of individual taxes, tort and welfare reforms. This was a top down elite strategy to win control of the House of Representatives from the failed liberal ideology of the Democratic Party. 

William J. Clinton as a candidate for President in 1992, campaigned on welfare reform; but his narrative was to “end welfare as we know it.” Clinton’s narrative was that the policies of Roosevelt and Johnson’s Administrations were not meant to compensate a mother and her family’s long term needs or substitute welfare for a career; but policies were enacted to allow an individual to have a time to get training and then become employed and a member of the taxpaying public. Candidate Clinton acknowledge that it was time to make changes to welfare policies that had not been successful in moving citizens from welfare to the workforce.

During the debate leading up to the passage of PRWORA in 1996, the conservative scholars had input in governmental regulation on morality and wanted to diminish the allocation of tax dollars to the redistributive policies of the liberal ideology. Conservative scholars contend that the only way to eliminate childhood poverty is to foster a culture within society where a two-parent household in all communities shall be the normative values of all segments of
society in this country. The Republican Party, Christian Coalition and the organizations aligned with the evangelical community took their message and agenda to the people via the airwaves and challenged the integrity of women dependent on AFDC programs for their income with a racial undertone. Their goal was to persuade middle America that the women dependent on AFDC were amoral, and lazy freeloaders that did not share the values of the middle class and therefore their focus would be to pass legislation that would change their behavior by demanding the end to cash entitlements for individuals that are chronically dependent on welfare to support their families. The crown jewel of their message was a prescribed time limits and mandated work requirements imposed on the individual by the state.

President Clinton’s Executive Branch of government was in an uphill battle for his re-election for a second term. Therefore his focus and his party’s focus in Congress were split on how to counter the strong negative stereotype of the welfare dependent mother who was described by their Republican colleagues as lazy, amoral, and freeloaders looking for a government handout. However, moderate and blue dog Democrats and their constituents were of the same opinion that the burden to the tax payers for AFDC was not sustainable with the increasing number of single never married African-American mothers’ chronic dependency on AFDC programs. The conservative legislation was acceptable to a block of the Democratic members of Congress and thus the progressive members of congress were outnumbered.
The secondary players in the welfare reform movement were Gary Bower with the Christian Coalition Movement and the Heritage Foundation. The Christian Coalition and the Heritage Foundation were a tremendous support and an advantage for the conservative ideology because each was well funded and had top-notch staffs who were dedicated to their ideology. Their philosophy of reducing the poverty level was through the elimination of the redistributive policies of the liberal establishment and forcing the mothers to join the workforce. The Heritage Foundation position on welfare reform was to discourage illegitimacy, encourage marriage, mandatory work requirements, encourage children under the age of 18 to live with their parents or a responsible adult, eliminate AFDC cash payments for mothers under the age of 18, and to eliminate fund increases associated with an additional child of a welfare recipient.

The secondary players’ goals were to raise the awareness of middle class American in hopes of converting people’s liberal leaning toward the conservative ideology. The social movement was not afraid of using race-tinged words to illicit the outrage that some people felt and were uncomfortable with the redistributive policies of the liberal ideology. President Reagan while campaigning spoke about a woman living on the South side of Chicago and characterized her as a “Welfare Queen” that drives a Cadillac, sleeps until noon and has been awarded $150,000 in welfare benefits. The conservative movement politicians’ focus was to mobilize enough support to gain momentum to eliminate or diminish the redistributive policies of the “New Deal” and the “Great Society”
initiatives put in place under Democratic administrations of Presidents Roosevelt and Johnson.

There were many policy differences in Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) which was replaced with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grants. TANF was a program to provide aid temporarily for needy families whereas AFDC for 60-years was an entitlement program with cash benefits which all families could access as long as their household income was within the guidelines set by the federal government. The federal policies of the old AFDC programs had become a part of each individual state’s bureaucracy to manage according to their states plan for achieving self-sufficiency for their citizens living at or near the poverty line. The states were given broad authority to fashion and interpret the federal law as long as they stayed within the guidelines set by the federal government.

In 1997, congress created and funded with 3 billion dollars, Welfare-to-Work Grants to be administered by the Department of Labor and local Private Industry Councils (PIC). Congress funded Welfare –to-Work (WtW) with 1.5 billion dollars for fiscal year 1998 and 1.5 billion dollars for fiscal year 1999 which went to the states for implementation. The funds were used for education and job training for the hard to place welfare recipient. WtW grants were a tacit acknowledgement that there were many obstacles that had impeded many welfare recipients from becoming self-sufficient. The WtW program’s focus was getting women into the workforce. These funds could not be used for education in place
of moving the recipient to the workforce. On-the-job-training could be a part of the program; but a stand along educational program was not allowed.

**Legal Challenges - Federalism**

On Balance of Power, James Madison wrote that the three branches of government “Should not be so separated that they do not have control over each other.” The statement of balance of powers means that each branch: legislative, executive, and the judiciary are separate entities. The selection process of each branch is very different from the other branches of government (Wilson, 2008.) When the PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193) was passed in the House of Representatives, reconciled with the Senate’s version and signed by President Clinton. The legislation became the law of the land. However, PRWORA of 1996 was challenged in the court system in the case of *Aleman v. Glickman* (1999).

The plaintiff, a permanent resident alien, sued the Department of Agriculture because her food stamp benefits had been cut off after she divorced her husband an American citizen. The plaintiff alleged that she was being treated differently because of divorce than a person whose spouse died. The Supreme Court stated that it was the legislative branch and the executive branch that establishes laws. *Aleman v. Glickman* illustrates how morality public policy was instrumental in deciding who was entitled to receive food stamp benefits. The policy makers wanted to reduce the government’s funding for food stamps; and the line was drawn to exclude a group of divorcees that are permanent resident alien.

However, a permanent resident alien who was a widow was not excluded from food stamp benefits. The 8th US Circuit decided: We conclude that, in
determining a permanent resident’s alien’s eligibility for food stamps, the provision at issue, now codified at 8 USC 1612(a)(2)(B) and 1645, does not irrationally differentiate between marriage that end in divorce and those that end in death. We therefore hold that the challenged provision does not violate the equal protection component of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment, and we accordingly affirm. (WARDLAW, Circuit Judge: at 8 USC)

The legislative branch of government that wrote PRWORA favored fostering a 2-parent or a married couple household as the values for all segments of society. With an eye on reducing funding for welfare, the members of the legislative branch charged with writing the legislation chose to exclude a divorcee of a US citizen rights to food stamp benefits; but did not exclude the widow of a US resident from food stamp benefits.

The City of Chicago brought a law suit; City of Chicago, et al. v. Shalala, on behalf of permanent legal residents that challenged the PRWORA of 1996 in the district court, with the elimination of their previously allocated food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The suit challenged the legislation as it violates the equal protection component of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. The City of Chicago, et al. was not successful in that the defendant (Shalala) was successful in her motion to dismiss their complaint. The plaintiffs, City of Chicago, et al. appealed their case to the 7th Circuit Court; but the court affirmed the lower court’s ruling that the PRWORA of 1996 provision has a legitimate purpose of immigrant self-sufficiency.
CHAPTER 3

Literature Review - Poverty and family structure

The following review of the literature focuses on the linkages between poverty and family structure and how these things are treated in social welfare policy. More specifically, this research explores the wording of PRWORA, 1996 which on its face targets the behavior of the unmarried teenage mother, as well as the adult never married single mother. This review also explores the goal(s) of the legislation which was stated as self-sufficiency for the welfare recipients or reduction in the number of people in the system. This study also explores how the family structure has defined many aspects of the single mothers’ lives such as it relates to chronic dependency on welfare, educational achievement, residential mobility, safety, and the education of her children.

This literature review will examine the geo-political and historical framework that the African-American and White females have experienced with inequalities built into the system that has not given them the opportunity to become self-sufficient. The political system to often pick winners and neglect the not so well connected. The literature review will focus on the political context of welfare reform, education, sexism, racism, and residential mobility.

The education section discusses the educational deficit that these women experience and how this educational deficit is not addressed in PRWORA. Instead the legislation rewards the states based on the number of recipients that had gone from welfare to the workforce.
This educational deficit is significant and the leading cause for chronic dependency on welfare programs. In addition, the education section will explain why and how inequalities in the educational system will continue to affect the mother, her children, and society at large.

The PRWORA of 1996, (Public Law 104-193), is an example of cyclical change theory. According to Arthur Schlesinger (1959) policies such as PRWORA are changed in cycles, alternating in periods of liberalism and conservatism. Liberal periods are characterized by expansion of civil rights, welfare and regulatory policies and conversely conservative period is characterized as a contraction of or diminishing or enforcement of civil rights policies, welfare policies and regulatory policies. PRWORA of 1996 was a cyclical change from liberalism to conservatism and was characterized as a shift toward individualism and morality public policies with the goal of ending federal individual entitlements of cash benefits and transferred monies in the form of block grants to the states that mandated the individual to seek employment in a defined amount of time based on the state’s requirements.

PRWORA of 1996 public policy has been the most transformative public policy since the New Deal programs of the Roosevelt Administration and the Great Society Programs of President Johnson. The facts about PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), was gathered from the US Government’s Archives, US Treasury Department – US Census Report, The Moynihan Report, (1965), many scholarly journals, The National Poverty Center of the Gerald R. Ford School of

Bianchi (1999) research analyzed the effects of conservatism on policies affecting the single mother households. Bianchi posits that there was an escalation of the feminization and juvenilization of poverty during the early 1950s through the 1990s. She argues that poverty was becoming a female problem with the women’s movement and the civil rights movement which gave women confidence that they could be successful without a husband. The invention of the birth control pill, which had recently become available to the entire population of women, was significant in the era of new freedoms for women. Bianchi’s research data states that two of three adults in poverty were women and the single never married population had doubled from 1950 and 1974; and the income of the female headed households were losing ground to the intact two parent households with only one parent working. However, the trend as depicted in her Fig. 1 shows a fluctuation in the rate of poverty among single mother households and the married couple household between 1968 and the late 1970s. According to the data, women’s poverty rates were 55% higher than men’s in 1968 and climbed until the rate peaked at 72% higher than men in 1978 (Bianchi, 1999). Bianchi research asserts that female to male poverty ratio had come down from the astronomical rates of the previous decade; but when examining the data there were two groups of women that populated the demographic of women in poverty.

According to Bianchi’s research young women under the age of 25 was the larger group in poverty and the second group was the elderly over 65 group.
However, the group that consisted of women in their prime working years their ratio of women to men in poverty was decreasing. Bianchi’s research asserts that after 1980, the growth of the single never married mother-child households slowed, but the likelihood of poverty increased somewhat for mother and child households whereas in the 1960s and the 1970s growth had been primarily an increase in divorced or separated mothers (Bianchi 1995). The other group of increased poverty rate between 1968 and the late 1970s, were the 65 and older demographic.

Bianchi’s economic profile of the never-married mothers shows them to be very distinct from divorced mothers. Never-married mothers are much younger and less well educated than divorced mothers. Consequently, only 39% of children with a never-married mother live with a parent that is employed, compared with 69% of those with a divorced mother in the work force (Bianchi, 1995). Bianchi’s asserts that her research has established that trends in absolute poverty levels and relative poverty risks of women and men, mother-child versus two-parent families, and children compared with the elderly, poverty was occurring for three reasons: 1) Women could not earn enough to be self-sufficient because of occupational segregation and low wages. 2) The private transfer system for supporting children was seriously flawed—men failed to pay child support. 3) The public transfer system/safety net was too meager to help. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the major public transfer program for women raising children alone, had multiple problems, and women did not have access to better alternatives (Bianchi 1999).
Wilson’s and Aponte’s (1985) assert that with the great migration from the South to the North much research has been done on urban life including poverty. According to Wilson’s and Aponte’s research (1985) poverty is an extension of education, health, housing, and law and welfare public policy. On the basis of the official definition of poverty, the number of poor individuals in the United States decreased from 39.5 million in 1959 to 25.4 million in 1968, a reduction of 36%. During this same period the proportion of persons living in poverty dropped from 22% in 1959 to 12.8% in 1968. This decrease in persons living in poverty was substantial because the United States was experiencing a growth in its population. Records levels of economic prosperity in the 1960s combined with a number of public policies to combat poverty effectively reduced the number of poor persons both in and outside of the metropolitan areas (Wilson & Aponte (1985, 238).

Wilson & Aponte (1995) asserts that metropolitan poverty rate was increasing as the nonmetropolitan poverty rate was decreasing. The poverty rate in metropolitan areas during the period of 1969 to 1979 had increased from 24.1 million to 34.1 million; but in the non-metropolitan areas the poverty rate continued to decline from 11 million to 9.9 million but the decline was short lived and increased to 13.2 million with a substantial part of this increase occurring between 1979 and 1982 (Wilson & Aponte, 1985). Wilson & Aponte assert that within a decade, poverty had become urbanized with the aggregate population at 8 million in 1969 to 12.7 million in 1982 and increase of more than 50%. Their research detailed the significant difference in the rate of poverty among the different racial groups: statistics for central-city blacks increased by 74% (from
3.1 million in 1969 to 5.4 million in 1982), the number of central city whites increased by 42% (from 4.8 to 6.8 million). Wilson & Aponte assert that these figures do not comprehend the transformation in the makeup and characteristics of the urban poverty population where central-city whites outnumbered central city blacks.

Wilson & Aponte (1995) analyzed the family structure of central-city blacks and central-city whites and asserts that there was a significant difference in the family structure of the central-city populations. The central-city black population was inherent to the social dislocation related to poverty such as crime, single mother households, and welfare dependency. These researchers referenced Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s (1965) report on the Negro family. Moynihan (1965:5-6) argued that “the Negro community is dividing between a stable middle –class group that is steadily growing stronger and more successful and an increasingly disorganized and disadvantaged lower-class group.” Moynihan stressed that the black family with increasing rates of divorces which led to divorced mother households, single never married households, and the continued long term welfare dependency among urban blacks were the central issues of urban central-city black residents.

The Moynihan (1965) reports explains that the central-city lower class blacks were impeding the black movement’s quest for equality in which the entire race had been subjected to racial oppression that began in the 19th century and had prevailed within the institutions that were controlled by the majority. In the Moynihan Report (1965), it specifically addressed the government’s role in
providing a hand up for women and their children to learn a skill or acquire a formal education which would be a spring board for future generations to build on. This was an investment that three centuries of exploitation would help the African-American lower class community get on track to become self-sufficient (Moynihan, 1965.) Moynihan also recommended a shift in the civil rights movement “bring the Negro American to full and equal sharing in responsibilities and rewards of citizenship” thereby to increase the “stability and resources of the Negro American family” (1965:48) The employment status of the breadwinners of the family can destabilized the family structure and has changed the structure of the African-American family (Moynihan, 1965).

The Moynihan Report detailed the role in which a family plays in shaping character:

The Negro situation is commonly perceived by whites in terms of visible manifestation of discrimination and poverty, in part because Negro protest is directed against such obstacles, and in part, no doubt, because these are facts which involve the actions and attitudes of the white community as well. It is more difficult, however, for whites to perceive the effect that three centuries of exploitation have had on the fabric of Negro society itself. Here the consequences of the historic injustices done to Negro Americans are silent and hidden from view. But here is where the true injury has occurred: unless this damage is repaired, all the effort to end discrimination and poverty and injustice will come too little.

“The role of the family in shaping character and ability is so pervasive as to be easily overlooked. The family is the basic social unit of American life; it is the basic socializing unit. By and large, adult conduct in society is learned as a child” (Moynihan, 1965:30.)

“A fundamental insight of psychoanalytic theory, for example, is that the child learns a way of looking at life in his early years through which all later experience is viewed and which profoundly shapes his adult conduct” (Moynihan, 1965:31.)
The Moynihan report goes on to discuss that there is no template for how an American family maintains itself. The white American family has achieved stability; however the urban lower class African-American family is still in transition. This instability of the lower class African-American family is a function of the rate of divorce and the economic conditions of the communities that they reside. Moynihan stressed that the social pathology was an accumulation of three centuries of exploitation of the African-American family; and was not because of genetics or lack of socialization skills it was because of how the African-American had grown up in a society that instilled individualism.; however the African American family was segregated, discriminated against and was disliked based on the color of his skin. The African-American family was subjected to red lining in which the family could only purchase a house in segregated communities of African-American citizens.

The goal of Wilson’s & Aponte’s (1995) research was to review the research and scholarly articles that dealt with urban poverty and how the family structure had changed after the civil war and how the New Deal and Great Society programs had effected the family structure. However, the research did ask a fundamental question as to whether the liberal welfare policies have enabled or crippled a large segment of the urban population in the norms and aspirations of that have impeded their incentive to work and or maintain a stable family which is the reason why the welfare caseloads continued to increase prior to PRWORA of 1996.
According to the research of Min and Pandey (2004), young single African-American never married mother households face chronic economic hardship that is very hard to overcome without public policy that addresses the barriers that the single never married mother and their children encounter in society. Their research outlined public policy initiatives to help alleviate the barriers that the single never married mother households, her children and society could benefit from in their quest for self-sufficiency. The public policy outlined in their research includes high quality child care for pre-school age children that would include activities and real learning experiences. The high quality child care would increase their verbal skills comparable with their peers before entering kindergarten and primary grades.

Min and Pandey (2004) research asserts that if the goals of the PRWORA is self-sufficiency the divorced and/or the single never married mother must be giving an opportunity to become a full participant in the American dream. She must be provided an opportunity to become independent of all governmental support which would require an initial investment of grants to enable the divorced or single never married mother to enter a structured adult education program to acquire adult level reading comprehension, communications, and critical thinking skills. According to Min and Pandey (2004), the adult education program within the state’s community college system must be utilized to equip the single never married mother with a compliment of training and coupled with a diverse environment that will enable her to overcome the barriers that have eliminated her from becoming self-sufficient.
According to Min and Pandey (2004), reading skills along with a comprehensive curriculum at the junior college level will be transformative in the lives of the divorced or never married single mother and for her children. The junior college experience must become a building block for her in mandating the divorced or the single never married mother attending and securing a postsecondary education (Min and Pandey 2004.)

According to Min and Pandey (2004) research, postsecondary educational opportunities are necessary to elevate the single never married mother’s qualifications for employment, option in residential mobility and making informed choices in her children’s lives, and their social interactions within the culture (Min and Pandey 2004). Without the postsecondary education, the single never married mother does not have many options in finding housing that meets her budget, safe environment for her children, and in a school district that will provide her children with challenging school work that will enable them to become self-sufficient productive members of society.

Seccombe’s (2000) research explains that when President Kennedy was elected to office in 1960 there were 22% of the households living below the poverty line; and 27% of the children in America were living below the poverty line. The newly elected president had witnessed pockets of poverty within the United States during his campaign and promised the voters that if he were elected he and his administration would focus on public policies that could potentially alleviate the chronic and cultural poverty that was evident during his campaign stops. After his election, he challenged his staff and cabinet members on what
were the public policies that could be enacted to alleviate the pockets of rural and urban poverty that he had witnessed in the South and in the Appalachian countryside of rural America. After President Kennedy’s assassination, his Vice President Lyndon Johnson assumed the former president’s initiatives to alleviate or decrease the number of people especially children living in poverty. President Johnson’s Great Society program, Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was funded to provide resources for poor rural and urban schools for programs and initiatives that were inadequately sourced to meet the needs of poor children. President Johnson’s Great Society achievements were: Civil Rights Acts of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 were seen as a great equalizer in bringing African-Americans into the mainstream as equal employment, housing and educational opportunities, and equal access to the voting booth and political participation. The “Great Society” programs which focused on initiatives for people living in poverty included: Medicaid, Medicare, Head Start, Job Corps, and food stamps. According to the US Census report of (1970), with the Great Society Programs and a strong economy the overall poverty rate had been reduced from 22% to an overall poverty rate of 12.6% and the childhood poverty rate from 27% to 14.6%. Unfortunately, overtime the childhood poverty rate and the household poverty rate have increased since the programs of the Great Society have been replaced by the conservative ideology which was instrumental in the legislation that produced PRWORA of 1996.
Seccombe’s (2000) research asserts that poverty is not randomly distributed: race, gender, family structure, and parental education all have a significant effect on the likelihood of an individual experiencing poverty in their lifetime. Seccombe’s research documents the state of poverty during the 1990s which included pre-welfare reform and post PRWORA of 1996. Childhood poverty rate was 24% during the booming decade of the information technology era of the 1990s. Her research asserts that families in poverty’s income or governmental supplements did not increase in fact they decreased during the information technology decade. She argues that globalization and the transnational corporations have decreased the number of blue collar jobs available for low skill workers and the displaced workers have seen their options limited to service type jobs which are typically minimum wage positions. With the transition from a manufacturing based society to a service oriented society, the cost of living has exceeded the service worker’s ability to provide for their family. The family’s safety net has been eroded by policymakers that perpetuate the folklore suggesting that welfare recipients enjoy a “free ride” that they receive at the expense of the tax payers. Her research proposes that the divorced or single never married mother should be given a raise in their cash benefits to bring them up to a livable wage to sustain them and their families from the threat of impoverishment and homelessness.

Blalock’s, Tiller’s & Monroe’s (2004) research looked at families that were living in deep poverty in rural areas after their government mandated lifetime limit from PRWORA had expired. Their longitudinal study of 10 women
over 6 years was designed to test the implicit suggestion by the policymakers that with the passage of this legislation the public would see a reduction in the poverty rate and a reduction in the caseloads with the employment of the mothers who were dependent on the governmental assistance for their income. The stated goals of PRWORA of 1996: reduction in the welfare rolls through employment, increase child support collections, and encourage the formation of two parent families (Greenberg et. al., 2002).

Blalock ET. al., (2004) research acknowledged that PRWORA had been effective in decreasing the number of people on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) the program that replaced the entitlement program Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC). The focus of their research was to ascertain or measure the mothers that were self-sufficient after their time limit on PRWORA had expired. Their research took a close look at 10 families who remained in persistent and concentrated poverty in the remote area of one state, using welfare reform as a contextual backdrop for their research (Blalock, et al., 2004). Their longitudinal study interviewed the female head of household at three points in time: 1) when the mother was engaged in the process (more or less) engaged in mandated process by the government to exit welfare, 2) during a transition period as she attempted to leave welfare for work, 3) and as we found her caring for herself and her family a year or more after her welfare participation after her time limit had expired (Blalock, et. al, 2004).

Blalock et al. posits that the ten women post welfare participation ended, some were employed but none had found employment that would allow them to
attain and maintain self-sufficiency overtime. The research revealed that on the first and second visits with the women they were hopeful and positive about the opportunity for self-sufficiency and gaining job skills to benefit themselves and their families. However, at the third visit the women had moved beyond hopeful and positive and to acceptance of their situation of a life of poverty (Blalock, et. al., 2004). According to the researchers, these 10 women had individual and structural factors that were inherent in their inability to become self-sufficient. All 10 women were poor, Black, single –parent living in a remote rural community and looking for work that would provide sufficient funds to maintain themselves and their children. According to the researchers, all 10 women in the study were poorly educated and had limited opportunities to improve their education or vocational training because of a lack of direction which could be seen as depression, lack of transportation, and child care.

Blalock et. al. (2004) research revealed that for these 10 women’s welfare benefits ended because they exhausted their time limit, were sanctioned, or found a job for a short time; but not because they made a successful transition into the workplace and achieved self-sufficiency. According to the researchers, “The women and their families now live in what was described, from an ecological perspective, as persistent deep poverty, almost regardless of their employment status. They remain vulnerable to numerous persistent barriers to self-sufficiency and their well-being rests largely within their support network”

Blalock’s research questions whether the conservative and liberal policymakers had taken an assessment of the barriers and structural impediments
for the women involved in their research and similarly situated women throughout the nation or was the focus just on decreasing the number of single mother households dependent on welfare for their income and thus depriving the women’s quest for self-sufficiency. If the ladder was their goal they exceeded; but if it were designed to provide options for women to gain and maintain self-sufficiency for themselves and their families, PRWORA is an abject failure. The barriers that these women face cannot be removed in the foreseeable future without a modification of PRWORA that would allow formal education in lieu of mandatory work requirements.

**Residential Mobility**

According to research done by South and Crowder (1998) the single never married mother receiving public assistance, the fact that her income comes from public assistance may inhibit her from moving from a poor unsafe neighborhood and into a community with employment opportunities, better educational opportunities for her children, and a wider and more diverse cultural environment. The single never married mothers that depend on public assistance are very reluctant to relocate and suffer through the bureaucratic paper work and interrogation that may not be a net improvement for the family.

According to South and Crowder (1998), the race of the single mother can impede the rationale for the single never married mother from moving despite the decay within the community and the lack of educational and job opportunities. The single never married mother is restricted to certain areas which have very few options of where she can find housing that offers a safe environment and have
properly funded schools that will provide quality principals, teachers and paraprofessionals and role models for her children. Without adequate literacy skills, communications and critical and analytical skills that postsecondary education will foster, Min and Pandey (2004) explains that the single never married mother will continue to live in poverty and languish in an environment that will not elevate her status as a productive and taxpaying member of society. An educated single mother will become a self-sufficient member of society and will overtime not require taxpayer support for her income.

South’s & Crowder’s (1998) research examined the single mothers’ options for mobility and determinants of residential mobility between poor and nonpoor neighborhoods. Their research was done using the longitudinal data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and local census data to understand the mobility pattern of poor and nonpoor single mothers. South et. al., (1998) research posit that even net of numerous controls, African-American single mothers are substantially less likely to escape poor neighborhoods and significantly more likely to move into them than their non-Black counterpart (South, et. al., 1998). McLanahan & Garfinkel, (1996) posits that their research shows that, relative to two-parent families, families headed by never married single mothers are spatially concentrated in high-poverty and high crime neighborhoods. These families of never married single mothers who reside in these economically disadvantaged areas have adverse consequences for never married single mothers and their children (McLanahan, et. al., 1986). Research also suggests that low-income, female-headed families who move from inner-city, underclass neighborhoods to

The single mother’s socioeconomic status can be a defining characteristic in whether a single mother will have the social capital to move from a poor to a nonpoor neighborhood. Single employed mothers, according to their research, with high and increasing incomes have lower rates of mobility into other poor neighborhoods, and among movers, getting a job and having a high income significantly increase the odds of moving to a nonpoor neighborhood (South, et. al., 1998). Their findings reveal that one quarter of single mothers move within a calendar year. However, their findings also reveal that the bulk of these moves are to neighborhoods with about the same rate of poverty.

South et. al., (1998) explains upon examination of the determinants of mobility between neighborhoods by single mothers suggest that there are multiple avenues to leaving poor neighborhoods: 1) marriage is a route out of a poor neighborhood and a route out of family poverty; 2) Single working mothers have significantly higher escape rates than non-employed single mothers. However, race is a predictor of residential mobility by poor single mothers (South, et. al., 1998).

Clark’s (2005) research was an examination of the successes or failures in the Moving to Opportunity (MTO), a program within the Housing and Urban Development (HUD). MTO was a special program to evaluate outcomes of moves in the Gautreaux program in Chicago and the Hollman settlement in
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Minneapolis that empowered the occupants of projects to live in less segregated environment. In 1976, a fair housing case Hills v. Gautreaux (415 U.S. 284, 96 S. Ct. 1538, 47 L.Ed.2d 792), the court ordered the federal government to integrate occupants of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to suitable housing in the outlining white suburbs. The residents of the projects were given Section 8 voucher by HUD to move from their decaying neighborhoods to lower-crime neighborhoods or to integrated neighborhoods in suburbia.

The MTO research was done to determine whether the outcome of moves from high poverty projects will have a positive effect on low-income families that had been relegated or restricted the families to a housing project. Clark’s (2005) research was done to answer the question: whether growing up in a poor neighborhood inhibit later life chances (Clark, 2005). The research was also done to validate the assumption that with federal public policies directed toward low income residents that did not have social capital that with a Section 8 voucher these citizens would be empowered to make decision about what was a suitable environment to grow, work and form new relationships.

Clark’s (2005) researched revealed that even though MTO was partially successful and the program did its due diligence in empowering citizens to initiate a move that would potentially enhance the resident’s employment opportunities, education and living environment. However, the partial success is a telling indication of how difficult it is to intervene in the complex process of housing choices. Many of the control groups that accepted the offer of the MTO program to move to a lower-crime neighborhood or an integrated neighborhood in
suburbia, on the next move about 50% of the MTO and Section 8 movers, moved back to their home neighborhood. Clark’s (2005) research explains: “That simply providing a housing voucher does not negate the powerful forces of concerns with neighbors, friends, and access to work in the choice process.”

Jacob’s (2004) examines the effect of concentrated poverty in high-rise public housing developments which has been the symbol of urban decay and ghetto poverty for the inhabitants in the “projects” managed by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). The critics argue that public housing has fostered racial and economic segregation on the poor (Massey & Denton, 1993), increased crime and juvenile delinquency (Newman et. al., 1993), and reduced educational and employment outcomes for children and adults (Ong, 1998). Recent analyses have vividly portrayed the poverty, violence, and despair endemic in inner-city public housing (Kotlowitz, 1991). These factors above have shifted public policies from government funded high rise projects to providing low-income renters with vouchers to purchase housing on the private market.

According to Jacob’s research (2004), between 1977 and 1997, the number of households receiving housing vouchers increased from 162,000 to over 1.4 million, which comprised over one-third of all low-income renters served by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Jacob, 2004). In 1996, the US Congress passed Section 202 of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act (Section 202) which required housing authorities to do a cost benefit analysis of the projects within their system and if maintenance cost exceeded the free market expense for a family, then the housing authority must
remove the unit from its stock. This legislation was the impetus for the Chicago Housing Authority to eliminate 19,000 units in 17 developments (Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), 1998.)

Jacob’s (2004) research examined the impact of the demolition of the high-rise housing projects on the student’s educational outcomes after relocation to private market housing. Jacob’s researched compared the academic achievement of relocated ex-CHA residents to current CHA residents. The data collected for this research was from administrative data provided by the CHA and the Chicago Public Schools (ChiPS). This research revealed that the demolition led to a small increase in the dropout rate among older children (i.e., youth aged 14 and older at the time of the closure announcement), but had very little impact on the academic achievement of younger children on a wide variety of outcome measures (Jacob, 2004). These children in the study no longer lived in high-rise public housing; but they were still living in high poverty neighborhoods and attending the same caliber of schools as the control group. According to Jacob’s research, even those who did move to substantially better neighborhoods did not end up in significantly better schools and thus their test scores did not improve significantly (Jacob, 2004).

Jacob’s (2004) research validated the work done by Currie and Yelowtz (2000) and its finding that low-income families receiving housing vouchers tended to relocate close to their original neighborhood. Jacob’s research also validates the findings of the MTO studies (Clark, 2005), “That simply providing a
housing voucher does not negate the powerful forces of concerns with neighbors, friends, and access to work in the choice process.”

In Jacob’s (2004) explains that in spite of stagnant scores on the standardized test which may be heavily weighed on a student’s cumulative schooling or life experiences, the control group and the students uprooted for the demolition of their homes did not perform the same. His research concluded that these students had gone through such a traumatic experience of being uprooted from their neighborhood schools into a different environment where it could have been the precipitating event that led to a higher dropout rate for girls by 5.7 percentage points compared to the dropout rate of the boys at 2.6 percent. The girls that did not drop out improved their math scores marginally when compared to the boys.

**Culture of Poverty**

Corcoran’s (1995) research was a review of earlier research that synthesizes the research on whether there is a “culture of poverty” or intergenerational connection between the individual lot in life that was passed on to their children or whether there were barriers or obstacles that did not allow all citizens access to the American dream. The “culture of poverty” theory was debated throughout the 70s despite the decrease in the poverty rate as a result of the social programs of President Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and the improved economic conditions during the 1960s and 1970s. However, with the research of Blau & Duncan (1967) the “culture of poverty” theory has been disproven with his research that revealed that intergenerational socioeconomic mobility was a
reality and with little evidence for a “vicious cycle of poverty” (Blau & Duncan 1967). This researcher, Corcoran, also reviewed Wilson’s (1987) underclass model which was under the umbrella of the intergenerational poverty theory.

Corcoran argues that if poverty is intergenerational this would violate the US ideal of equality of opportunity, i.e. that a young adult’s economic destination should not be predetermined by his or her social origins (Corcoran, 1995). Corcoran’s research tends to validate the economic resource model or parental economic resources consistently predict children’s adult attainment. In essence, the parent’s income has more to do with the children’s access to high quality schools, transportation, healthy foods, and cultural events such as museums, amusement parks, low-crime environment and safe transportation. Corcoran’s (1995) research explains that childhood poverty itself damages children’s economic prospects. Becker’s (1981) model of the family plausibly predicts that parents’ resources affect children’s mobility because parents use these resources to develop children’s human capital – particularly school: no money, no investment (Becker, 1993). However, Becker’s research did not reveal how the socio-economic status of the poor families adversely affected the job or work opportunities of their children (Becker, 1993).

Corcoran’s (1995) posits that evidence for Wilson’s underclass theory which indicates that labor markets and neighborhoods matter for black children’s economic mobility. The analyses of the Gautreaux Program shows that moving children from inner-city Chicago to the suburbs predicted dramatically increasing their expected schooling and work outcomes; however the data derived from the
project was inconclusive because of the length of time that families spent in either location. Wilson’s (1987) qualitative research validated his theory that the characteristics of children’s neighbors are associated with adult outcomes in educational achievement, lifestyle and occupational choices.

In “When Work Disappears” Wilson, (1997), examines the crisis in the urban decaying communities on the South side of Chicago. His qualitative research involved interviewing lifelong residents of Chicago and analyzed their opinion on the current climate in their neighborhoods. Many citizens complained about the manufacturing jobs leaving the community without replacement jobs to support the family. The well-paying low skilled positions had been moved to the suburbs, international emerging markets or the Southern states that are right to work states. The effects of not having union jobs in the community have led to a community in decline where there is a segment of the population that is underemployed or unemployed and not contributing to the tax base. The neighborhoods have gone from being a middle class professional, police officers and other government positions which has been slowly transformed into a neighborhood of service class workers who are one pink slip away from losing their place in their community and society. The homes have not retained their value because a number of the homes on the block have been foreclosed. The foreclosed home becomes an eye sore on the block and while vacant it can become a temporary home for the adolescent and the homeless residents that are involved in deviant behavior.
Education

This research project examines explanations of why and how poverty in never married single mother households and homeless families have affected the educational achievement of minority students in the public schools systems in the United States. According to the U.S. Commerce Commission Report of 2010, that asserts that children from two parent households are advantaged from a financial and educational perspective than children that reside with a single parent; and the children of a divorced single mother are financial and educational advantaged over a child born to a never married single mother. The income difference will allow the divorce mother to own or rent in a more desirable location than the young never married single mother who has fewer options for housing and schools for her children.

The case of Brown v. Board of Education, 1954, outlawed segregation in public school systems in this country. According to the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), despite the equalization of the schools by “objective” factors, intangible issues foster and maintain inequality. Racial segregation in public education has a detrimental effect on minority children because it is interpreted as a sign of inferiority. The long-held doctrine that separate facilities were permissible provided they were equal was rejected (Oyez Project, Chicago-Kent College of Law.) After the ruling of the Warren Court, scholars were optimistic that the achievement gap would close in rural and urban districts as well as affluent and poor school districts. However, after a decade had passed and very few school districts in the North as well as the South had not moved to put
racial integration in their mission statement for their school system, and without any policies in place to overcome the barriers that a segregated society still represent in the public school systems in this country. President Johnson’s Great Society program, Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was funded to provide resources for poor rural and urban schools for programs and initiatives that were inadequately sourced to meet the needs of poor children. Title I resources have been credited for decreasing the achievement gap during the 1970s; but during and after the 1980s the achievement gap has remained static in rural and urban public schools.

Lack of education is a key predictor of poverty, in fact, there may not be another individual factor more closely linked to persistent poverty (Rank, 2001). Women who do not have a high school diploma or a GED have greatly diminished likelihood of exiting welfare to work and gaining self-sufficiency (Porterfield, 2001). Another barrier cited by the researchers for these women were occupational segregation, where women are typically relegated to low paying service sector positions rather than manufacturing positions that are typically filled by men. Another barrier the welfare recipients have not overcome is their race. Race plays a role in persistent poverty level for Blacks at around 26%. For Blacks, race may be more significant than education (Horton & Allen, 1998).

Without adequate educational opportunities, not only does the single mother suffer, but her children and society suffer from the growing population that is undereducated. The legacy of educational inequality has had a profound effect on the economic and social factors within the country. According to Linda
Darling-Hammond (2010) lack of education has forced the United States to fill high tech positions from other countries; and the inequality in the educational system has left countless number of American citizens unemployed, and/or in the welfare or prison systems.

Berends, Lucas and Penaloza (2008), argue with educational reformers stressing raising the educational achievement of the entire population while at the same time reducing the achievement gap among groups, which in their opinion is quite a challenging because of the increasing immigration, diversity and socio-economic status of the student population. The federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) of 2001, requires the reporting school district to have 100% of their students meeting the required threshold to achieve the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by the year 2014.

Berends, Lucas and Penaloza (2008) research studied the following: (1) how did the test scores of blacks and whites change between the early 1970s and 2004? (2) What was the family’s socio-economic status and how it changed during the period studied? (3) To what extent were changes in these measures associated with the convergence of the gap in black-white test scores that occurred during this period? (4) What are the policy implications that can arise from our empirical analyses of how changes in families and schools are related to gaps in students’ achievement in mathematics (Berends, Lucas & Penaloza, 2008)?

The research done by Berends, Lucas, and Penaloza (2008) which used data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that the students were doing about the same in 2004 as they were in 1970s in mathematics and reading. However, the researchers found the overall trends mask significant progress made by many groups. For instance their research found that between the early 1970s and early 1990s, African-American students
made substantial progress toward closing the gap in their scores in both mathematics and reading tests (see Campbell, Hombo, and Mazzeo 2000). However, according to Berends, Lucas and Penaloza (2008), the black-white achievement gap in mathematics and reading increased somewhat in the early 1990s and was attributed to the explosion of the immigrant population enrolled in the urban schools which were populated by a diverse body in language, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

**Figure 3.1 Trend in fourth-grade NAEP mathematics average scores and score gaps for White and Black students**

![Graph showing trend in fourth-grade NAEP mathematics average scores and score gaps for White and Black students](http://nces.ed.gov)


This graph shows the overall trajectory of gap in mathematics test scores of 4th graders. In 1990 the gap between white and black students was 32 points; but the gap between white and blacks students in 2011 had decreased to 25 points.
Figure 3.2 Trend in fourth-grade NAEP mathematics average scores, by eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunch


The graph depicts the achievement gap based on the family’s socio-economic status from 2003 through 2011. In 2003 there is a gap of 24 points between the students eligible for free lunch and the students that are ineligible for the free lunch program. The achievement gap in 2011 was static at 24 points advantage for the students that are ineligible for the free lunch program compared with the students that are eligible for the program. As the chart depicts the achievement gap when based on socio-economic status does not decrease.
Figure 3.3 A closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower-and higher-performing students

4th graders - In 75th Percentile

72% White, 10% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 5% African-American.

http://nces.ed.gov

The high achievers in the 75th percentile: 72% of the white, 10% Hispanic and Asian, and 5% African-American. This chart shows the aggregate number by race; but the next charts’ focus is on the socio-economic status of the students.
Figure 3.4 A closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower- and higher-performing students

4th Graders - In 75th Percentile

- FREE LUNCH: 23%
- W/DISABILITIES: 4%
- ENGLISH 2ND LANGUAGE: 3%
- Other: 4%


This data in this chart is based on the socio-economic status of the students that scored in the 75th percentile. The 75th percentile student: 23% are entitled to have free lunch. The 75th percentile student: 4% have disabilities. The 75th percentile of student: 3% English is their 2nd language.
Figure 3.5 A closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower- and higher-performing students

http://nces.ed.gov

The achievers in the 25th percentile: 34% of the Hispanic, 31% White, 28% African-American, and 2% Asian-American. This chart shows the aggregate number by race; but the next charts’ focus is on the socio-economic status of the students.
Figure 3.6 A closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower- and higher-performing students

![Pie Chart](http://nces.ed.gov)

4th Graders in 25th Percentile

- **Free Lunch**: 74%
- **w/disabilities**: 24%
- **English 2nd Language**: 22%


This data in this chart is based on the socio-economic status of the students that scored in the 25th percentile. The 25th percentile student: 74% are entitled to have free lunch. The 25th percentile student: 24% have disabilities. The 25th percentile of student: 22% English is their 2nd language.
A number of scholars have done research that explains the family structure and background and how it relates to gaps in students’ achievement in national data. Grissmer et al.’ (1998) found that major factors that led to the higher predicted test scores were the markedly higher educational levels of parents and couples with a smaller family size in 1990. Grissmer et al. (1998) research found that children in the 1990s were living with better-educated parents, in smaller families, and with more income per child. Grissmer et al. concluded that the effect of these factors far outweighed the negative impact of more single-parent families and the small shift in birth rates of the younger mothers.

Grissmer et al.’s (1998) research concluded that the family characteristics only accounted for no more than a third of the gain for black students. Their research (Grissmer et al. (1998) extended their analysis by assessing issues that may have contributed to the convergence in the achievement gap in black-white test scores. Their research analyses pointed to the enactment of public policies during the 1970s through early 1990s as being factors in black student gains in decreasing the achievement gap. The researcher offered these factors that could have produced the gains by the African-American students: school desegregation, secondary school tracking, changes in the curriculum, per pupil expenditures, and decrease in school violence.

Hedges and Nowell (1998, 1999) research cited limitations in the research done by Grissmer et. al.’s (1998) assumptions that family characteristics remain the same between the 1970s and the early 1990s and all unexplained changes in gap was attributable to social and educational policies changes. Grissmer and
Hedges overall agreed that the family background characteristics (e.g., family income and parents’ education) accounted for one-third of the decrease in the gap in black-white test scores. Hedges and Newell’s study (1998, 1999) attributed the decrease in the achievement gap between the 1970s and the early 1990s to curriculum development and education policies.

The Moynihan Report, (1965) narrative is that the African-American community has been divided, one is firmly in the middle class and the second is primarily single mothers as the head of the household without the benefit of a quality educational experience, living in a poor urban environment, and without financial support and guidance from the absent father. The plight of the poor and the culture of poverty were not researched or debated within the public sphere until scholars such as Moynihan published his research on how the social fabric in the lower-class African-American family had impeded the progress of the lower socioeconomic class in the African-American communities.

In 1960, 22% of all African-American families were headed by divorced or never married single mother households. However, by 1982 single mother households had increased to 42% (US Bureau of the Census 1983). Also, according to the census data 81% of the single mother households were in large metropolitan areas of the country. The increase in numbers of the never married single mother households adversely affected the quality of life of the family and narrowed the educational and housing options for the family. These families were shut off from middle-class Americans, and did not have transportation for many opportunities outside of their environment, and their children were hindered
because of a lack of exposure to the larger fabric of other ethnicities, religious and economic diversity (US Bureau of the Census 1983).

The environments that the never married single mothers and their children lived were primarily in large urban centers which narrowed the opportunities for a well-rounded education for their children. Blalock, Tiller, and Monroe’s (2004) research acknowledge that a complex interaction of individual and structural factors produces the poverty experienced by women and children. The researchers, Blalock et al., (2004) posits that without a sound secondary education the African-American single parent living in a rural or urban setting does not have the social and financial capital to negotiate the bureaucracies to overcome the barriers that are placed before her and her children that prevents them from positioning themselves and their children in an environment to become part of the mainstream of society which includes making choices in residential housing and having options for the enrollment of their children in a school system that will meet their needs (Blalock, Tiller and Moore 2004).

The lack of social and financial capital has a bearing on the student’s academic development and achievement. The schools in the rural and urban centers of America are not funded at the rate of school funding for middle class children in the blue ribbon school districts within their home states. Lichter (1997) research argues that the isolation of the single mother’s children in urban schools have led to the achievement gap for minority students with their white cohorts. The higher up the socio-economic scale, the greater emphasis is placed on the child to do well in school.
Literature Review – Key findings and underlining themes

The Mother’s Aid Programs enacted in 1935 was viewed as necessary when the people that benefited from the program were widows, disabled or spouse of a disabled person. The demographics were for the most part white and poor. However, after the enactment of Social Security legislation that included the Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) included the same demographics only widows, spouses of the disable the public deemed these women as the deserving poor. However, overtime public policy evolved to include all divorced as well as single never married mothers which met the guidelines set by the federal government which disturbed the conservative populist that did not view the single never married mother households as deserving of redistributive public policies of middle class tax dollars. The conservative movement was determined to address the decline of the two parent family households, and according to the conservative movement had been replaced with divorced or single mother households which were chronically depended on the governmental programs for their income.

The progressive Democrats within the Congressional Black Caucus had lost the battle on framing the message of the proposed legislation; and the Executive Branch was focused on remaining in office and conceded to the conservative message of chronic dependency, single parent mother household, and childhood poverty could be eliminated by promoting a two parent family household. The conservative’s central focus was on the behavior of the teen-aged single never married mother and the chronic dependency that allowed her cash benefits to increase based on the number of children in the family. Along with the
concern for the chronic dependency and behavior, there was an underline focus on the race of the young teen-age mother.

There was limited scholarly literature published that described the cause and effect of the breakdown in the African-American family until the Moynihan Report, 1965, “The Negro Family, The Case for National Action.” His analysis of the single never married mother was tied to not laziness and lack of jobs but drew a bright line between “ghetto culture” to slavery and Jim Crow Laws. After Moynihan’s white paper had been delivered to President Johnson, the war in Viet Nam was the president’s focus and the political parties, scholars and academics did not debate the content of his work. Decades later, President Ronald Reagan reignited the cultural wars with his narrative about the “welfare queens.”

The scholarly articles written from the liberal ideology such as Bianchi, Min & Pandey and Lichter research asserts that racial discrimination, poverty, lack of housing mobility and the educational system had failed the divorced and the single never married mothers. The conservative ideology did not address the barriers or impediments that these mothers faced in reaching self-sufficiency.
CHAPTER 4

Methodology

The research projects was based on a secondary analysis of data from the US Census Bureau of 1996 and were used as a basis point to ascertain the aggregate number of single mother households and the number of families living in poverty before the implementation of PRWORA of 1996. This current study will also analyze the reports from Survey of Income and Program (SIPP) which is within the US Census data that analyzes the decrease or increase of the aggregate number of single mother households living in poverty. This analysis was done starting in the year of 1996 through the year 2011.

The current study analyze the wording in Personal Responsibility Work Authorization Act of 1996 and compared it with the words describing poverty and never married single mothers in the Heritage Foundation’s scholars writings.

Research Design

In order to further examine the relationship between poverty, single mothers and welfare reform these questions must be answered. (1) What would self-sufficiency look like for a single never married mother according to the conservative or liberal analyses, exiting PRWORA after her time limited benefits had expired? (2) What impediments, structures or barriers (racism, occupational segregation, lack of quality education, housing segregation, lack of transportation, diverse environment) the divorced or single never married mother households must overcome to become independent of all governmental support? This research project will synthesis the research and propose a comprehensive analysis
and recommendations for the divorced or single never married mothers to gain self-sufficiency and freedom and independence from governmental programs.

**Data Sources**

The researcher used the legislation, PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), to analyze how the wording of the legislation mirrored the goals and language of the Heritage Foundation, Contract with America of 1996. The historical legal decisions of the 19th and 20th century that raised the question of equality, The *Plessey v. Ferguson* of 1892 was a test case for the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 which was used to understand the rights and privileges that has been settled law in the courts since the civil rights period during the 1950s and the 1960s. The US Treasury Department, Census Reports of 1996 – 2010 were used to discern whether the conservative ideology of which PRWORA of 1996 was taken from has been successful in reducing the number of women on the welfare rolls and whether the divorced or never married mother households gained their independency from governmental entitlements and had become part of the mainstream of middle America.

**Data Analyses**

The language used to frame the argument for PRWORA was of personal responsibility, end to chronic welfare dependency, welfare to workforce, elimination or decreasing unmarried teenage births, and abstinence only education. The language and ideology of the scholars at the Heritage Foundation was appropriated to the welfare reform legislation, PRWORA of 1996.
This research project analyzed the wording in the legislation with the language of the Heritage Foundation and compared the two.

**Figure 4.1a Language in the PRWORA**

- Abstinence education only sex education in public education systems
- Ending cash benefits (entitlements)
- Requiring work for two years of benefits
- A lifetime limit of five years of benefits
- Encourage two-parent families
- Mandatory enforcement of child support
- Children’s income included in household revenue

**Figure 4.1b Heritage Foundation Scholar (Robert Rector's) vision for inclusion in welfare reform**

- Abstinence only sex education in public education systems
- Elimination of chronic dependency
- Eliminate or decrease unmarried teenage pregnancy
- Foster marriage as a way to eliminate poverty
- Mandatory Work
- Genetic testing for unmarried teenage mothers <18
- Biological fathers accountable for their children
- Women in the workforce to grow the tax base
Figure 4.2 The income of single mothers in poverty pre-PRWORA of 1996

The data shows: 3.3 M Divorced mothers & 4.3 single never married mothers lived on $20,000 or less; 1.1M Divorced mothers & 600,000 never married mothers lived on $30,000 or less; 800,000 Divorced mothers & 4000,000 never married mothers lived on $40,000 or less; 900,000 Divorced mothers & 6000,000 never married mothers earned more than $41,000.
Figure 4.3 The income of single mothers living in extreme poverty pre-PRWORA and post-PRWORA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number in Extreme Poverty in Thousands</th>
<th>Percent of All Households in Poverty</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1460</td>
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<tr>
<td>with SNAP</td>
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<td>795</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;$2 Threshold:</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>with SNAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Households</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>2,806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

< $2 Threshold = people living on $2.00/day

Source from: SIPP US Census Data
This chart validates theory that the inequality in the system has not allowed the single mother households and the low skilled African-American and Hispanics citizens to earn an income that will put them in a comparable economic status with their white cohorts.
These charts illuminate the overall increase in the poverty rate in the decade after passing the legislation of PRWORA in 1996. This legislation was enacted to eliminate poverty and increase the tax base. The only years of decline in poverty were the years of 2005 and 2006. In 2007 poverty increased and has continued through 2011.
These charts illuminate the overall increase in the poverty rate in the decade after passing the legislation of PRWORA in 1996. This legislation was enacted to eliminate poverty and increase the tax base. The only years of decline in poverty were the years of 2005 and 2006. In 2007 poverty increased and has continued through 2011.
This chart illuminates the overall increase in the poverty rate in the decade after passing the legislation of PRWORA in 1996. This legislation was enacted to eliminate poverty and increase the tax base. The only years of decline in extreme poverty were the years of 2006 and 2007 for all persons; but the decrease in extreme poverty decreased 2006 for children living in extreme poverty.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion & Analysis

Overview

The public policies that defines Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) is redistributive and morality public policies. The redistributive welfare policies is defined as shifting resources downward from middle and upper income families who pay higher taxes to lower-income families who receive the benefits (Wilson, 2008). The PRWORA was a product of bipartisan legislation which was a departure from the entitlement provisions within the previous welfare policy, Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). It also devolved power by shifting responsibilities to states through block grants. The block grants are administered for the sole purpose of helping needy families, but with the requirements that the needy family leaves the welfare system after two years of assistance with a cumulative time of 60 months.

The block grants also rewarded work in that there are funds for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), child care expenses, and medical coverage for families that have left welfare and joined the workforce. However, morality public policy which involves moral issues and notions of right and wrong were targeted toward the elimination or decrease in the number of non-marital childbirths of welfare recipients. The elimination of non-marital childbirths played an important role in passing this legislation. The unmarried teenage mother is penalized 25% of her benefits if she does not live at home with a parent or
responsible adults; and are also penalized substantially if they do not name the father of the child.

The law mandates that each 50 state shall manage their federally funded block grants within the federal guidelines which established a provision that rewards an individual state that quickly moves their citizens from welfare to workforce. A process was put in place with the National Governors Association (NGA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish the criteria to which the states could be deemed in compliance with the federal government in transitioning their citizens from welfare to the workplace.

This legislation, PRWORA, was very complex and was framed as promoting responsibility, family values, and the elimination of entitlements in the welfare system. The policies of TANF mandate that each state was responsible for setting up a child support enforcement agency with a structure that would enable the uniform collection of child support payments from each state within the country. President Clinton proposed child support enforcement during his campaign which he urged congress to pass sweeping legislation that would put child support enforcement in the welfare reform legislation. According to the Congressional Budget Office estimates, this legislation would increase the child support collection by 32 billion and reduce the local and federal governments’ expenses for entitlements to 4.6 billion.

There is also a provision in this legislation which requires women seeking TANF benefits to agree to genetic testing to match the father with the dependent child. This law also dictates that the never married teenage single
parent must live with their parent(s) or a responsible adult to be eligible for TANF benefits and she must be enrolled in an educational institution to receive benefits.

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant was established within the TANF to promote abstinence only sex education in the public school system; and to implement strategies to eliminate or decrease teen pregnancies. PRWORA, 1996 was responsible for the elimination of funding for sex education in the public schools systems and funding for clinics that provided birth control information and medication for enrolled students. The goals for the elimination of the clinics were that abstinence only sex education should be the message and the focus of the health care professionals in the public school system.

This legislation, PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), also eliminated the benefits of non-citizens and families who had been on welfare for more than five (5) years. This legislation also eliminated cash payments from the Supplemental Security Income Program for individuals who are drug addicts and individuals who are alcoholics. Fix & Tumult (1997) research posits that while immigrants were never the focus of the nation’s long-running debate over welfare reform, they were thrust into the center of this important debate. As initially passed, the PRWORA of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), had restrictions on immigrant access to benefits. These benefits were expected to account for $23 billion – or almost half of the total federal savings that welfare reform would generate (Congressional Budget Office, 1996). After a loud outcry from the immigrant community and friends of the immigrant communities, benefits were restored to almost a half million non-citizens. The fact remains that welfare
reform represents a sharp reduction in the safety net available to current and especially future immigrants as well as a shift in immigration policy and its governance (Fix & Tumult, 1997.) This legislation, PRWORA of 1996 fragments immigration policies by allowing the individual state leverage in deciding who is eligible. Before PRWORA immigration policy was administered by the executive branch of the federal government (Fix & Tumult, 1997).

According to the Heritage Foundation, in 1960 the rate of illegitimacy was 5.3 percent of the births in America; however in 1997 the illegitimacy rate had increased to 32 percent. With the African-American illegitimacy rate was 48% and for non-Hispanic Whites the rate is 28%. A Cato Institute’s fellow wrote a white paper in which he posits that welfare dependency was intergenerational and it was up to the government to change the behavior of dependency by eliminating the cash entitlements in exchange for work. The conservative establishment within the think tank environment and the Republican Party framed the narrative of PRWORA that there would be a significant decrease in the welfare caseloads and would increase the number of divorced and never married single mothers in the workforce, poverty rate would be decreased and the number of taxpayers would increase because these women were now in the workforce and not dependent on government for their resources.

In my research project, I find that the conservative ideology failed to understand why the women on welfare were dependent on the governmental assistance for their livelihood. The people writing the narrative about poor people and the solutions for their problems did not come from a disadvantaged or
minority background and did not understand the barriers or impediments that did not allow the welfare recipient to become self-sufficient. This research project outlines how and why the young never married African-American and White mother households face chronic economic hardship that is very hard to overcome without public policy that addresses the barriers inherent in racial discrimination and inequality. These barriers to self-sufficiency for single mothers cannot be overcome by the legislation, PRWORA as written.

This research project outlines the public policy initiatives to alleviate the barriers, racial discrimination, mental and physical health issues, transportation issues, lack of childcare, and secondary school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED). First and foremost a single mother without a high school diploma or a GED in the era of information technology, these single mothers are not employable in an occupation that will allow them to become self-sufficient. The single never married mother that did not do well in high school does not have the skill set required to function in a position that will pay her a living wage.

With the current employment rate in 2012 at about 8.2%, an employer has a pool of qualified candidates for entry level positions; and the single never married mother or divorced mother that did not complete high school will not have the skill set that matches the requirements for the a position that is paying a living wage. In the information technology era an employee requires a perspective employee to have a skill set that the person is willing and capable of learning new programs and equipment. The competitive work environment could be challenging for a person that does not have discipline, structure and confidence
in her abilities. If this single mother has not had been involved in technology she will be intimated by what she does not know which requires a reasonable amount of reading, writing, comprehension, and computer skills to function and be a successful employee in a work setting that will put the single mother on a pathway to self-sufficiency.

Society would benefit if the chronically dependent mother would be afforded an opportunity to pursue her education where she left off. Time limit should be flexible to make sure she has the support she needs to become self-sufficient. She cannot be self-sufficient unless and until she is provided resources for at a minimum an associates arts degree which would enable her to become employed in many different fields. Housing for the family must be in a safe environment for the mother and her children. Her children should be afforded the opportunity to have reliable public or private transportation, and a license day care center for pre-school children. The public school in which her children attend must have teachers that are content certified in the classroom.

The mother’s mental and physical health should be evaluated because if she is depressed that will affect her disposition and her will to achieve her goals. The governmental agencies should not expect the chronically dependent mother to grasp the importance of the concepts of punctuality and structure in her new lifestyle. This new lifestyle would be a down payment of bringing the chronically dependent mother into the mainstream and would eliminate the ridicule and misunderstanding that has been around for decades about the chronically dependent mother on welfare.
The barriers to self-sufficiency must be revisited in the re-authorization of PRWORA unless society is willing to write off an entire segment of society and their children. The data show that it is much cheaper to educate a child than to provide a system that funnels a segment of society and their offspring into the welfare system or the prison industrial complex.

In conclusion, my research has found that the PRWORA legislation did not understand the complex nature of the barriers and impediments that the chronically dependent welfare recipient encounters in her life on an ongoing basis. The conservative theorist and scholars asserted that the childhood poverty rate would decrease each year as more and more mothers would leave the welfare system and join the workplace. However, the US Census data shows that not to be a fact. They predicted that the caseload would decrease drastically; and according to the Health and Human Services the caseloads have dropped dramatically. However, since the “Great Recession” of 2007 the caseloads have started to increase in states such as Utah and Wyoming and decreasing in states such as Michigan and Ohio (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011.) The HHS could not give a definitive number of the increase because many large states have waivers that do not mandate that the state’s with waivers report their statistics on the number of people receiving assistance.

The goals of this research project were to objectively review the language of the PRWORA legislation and to determine if the goals were about morality and redistributive public policies or were it about putting public policies in place to empower single mother households an opportunity to become self-sufficient. My
research revealed that PRWORA of 1996 legislation was about morality politics and redistributive public policies. However, the conservative scholars failed to comprehend the inequalities in the system that the chronically dependent single mother household has not been able to overcome.

This research requires further study. My design for a longitudinal study would be for several states, a mostly rural state such as North or South Dakota and a state with a large urban population such as Illinois or Michigan to study long term recipients of welfare policies that are chronically dependent on the welfare system for their income. The women chosen must lack a high school diploma and have not been successful in finding long term employment and has been time limited within the guidelines of the PRWORA guidelines.

A university within the rural and the urban state would organize their research project around the question of what are the different outcomes when a control group does not have the psychological or mental health evaluations, a high school completion program, formal education, transportation and quality child care and a comparable group that is provided with the psychological or mental health evaluations, a high school completion program, formal education, transportation and quality child care. The participants would have an ongoing relationship with the University to assess their progress, to assess their mental and physical health and their willingness to complete the study. This in my opinion is very important research because this society cannot continue to support a generation of people that do not have the same opportunities as their fellow citizens.
References


Welfare Reform: The Politics of Redistributive


