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Imagined Bridges:
Welfare Rights Collaboration Among Women of Color & the LGBT Community in Minnesota

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 1

Chapter 1: Puzzling Out America's Welfare State 3
The Development of America's Welfare State 13
The Minnesota Family Investment Program 19
Looking Ahead: A Chapter Outline 25

Chapter 2: Bridge-Building, in Theory 28
Why "Bridgework?" 29
Common Roots: Social Welfare Discrimination 34
Negotiating the Politics of Interest and Welfare Rights 46
The Welfare Rights Movement 54
Conclusion: Moving Bridgework from Theory to Praxis 68

Chapter 3: Sticky Politics 70
Justifications for Broad Issue Organizing 73
Making Nice with Legislators: Lobbying Tactics 79
Coalition-Building: Causes and Barriers 86
Why Legislators Support Coalition-Building 90
Invisible Faces and Silent Voices: Diversity in MFIP Hearings 97
Conclusion: The Barriers that Remain 102

Chapter 4: The Promises and Perils of Bridgework Activism 104

References 114

Chapter 1—Puzzling Out America's Welfare State

> *If we take the route of the permanent handout, the American character will itself be impoverished.* - President Richard Nixon, proposing to reform welfare in an address to the nation (1969)

> *Women [on welfare] are in bondage to a kind of slavery that the 13th Amendment just didn't deal with. The old master provided food, clothing and health care to the slaves because he wanted them to get up and go to work in the morning. And so on welfare: you get food, clothing and shelter—you get survival, but you can't really do anything else. You can't control your life.* - U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, explaining her priority to focus on unplanned and out-of-wedlock pregnancies among impoverished women (1994)

Although both of these quotes come from notable individuals within the administrative sector of the United States government, the schism between the attitudes and assumptions they present illustrates the polarized beliefs regarding welfare policy that continue to dominate the American sociopolitical landscape. President Nixon's words encapsulate the belief popularized by the welfare reform debates of the past forty years that public assistance allows people the opportunity to avoid participation in the workforce and live off of government "handouts." Jocelyn Elders, however, brings to light the struggle for individual empowerment that so many welfare recipients encounter, and her invocation of slavery pointedly emphasizes that women, particularly women of color, suffer disproportionately under poorly designed welfare policies. Now, nearly four decades after President Nixon's address, the number of Americans in poverty continues to grow and the nation is not much closer to achieving effective, non-discriminatory welfare than it was in 1969.

With more than a century to its name, America's welfare state remains controversial in contemporary American politics. The need for welfare to advance the lives of individuals who draw benefits inspires competing visions regarding policy design, a debate subject to political activism. This thesis examines the formation and

competition of ideas in welfare politics, focusing specifically on bridgework activism in the area of welfare rights between women of color and the LGBT community, an area largely untouched by existing scholarship.[1] Scholars have long recognized the importance of gender, race, and other social identities in the development of political activism and interest group mobilization.[2] Welfare rights activism among women of color, in particular, garners a specific interest within welfare and social movement scholarship.[3] While LGBT individuals do not represent similarly popular subjects of study in welfare scholarship, they share with women of color a history of discrimination at the hands of social welfare policies and frameworks. Also, contrary to stereotypes, many receive public assistance. Recent welfare reform policy proposals, on national and state levels, continue to threaten the capacity for members of these communities to control their own lives, particularly in regards to their sexual and reproductive rights. This project thus expands upon existing literature by examining the extent to which bridgework between these two groups—on the common platform of resisting government efforts to police

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[1] The term "bridgework" comes largely from feminist-based research on collective organizing, and in the context of my paper is meant to convey any point at which members of the specified activist communities have exchanged resources, shared organizing responsibilities for specific events or given one another written support on a political issue. In Political Science scholarship, this is more commonly referred to as "interest group mobilization," "combined [political] activism," or "collective organizing," while in more general organizing scholarship it may be called "coalition-building." I intend to use all of these terms interchangeably in my project in order to fairly represent each of the schools of literature that inform my research.

[2] Rhoda Lois Blumberg and Guida West, eds, Women and Social Protest (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Rinku Sen, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). Dara Z. Strolovitch, "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender," Journal of Politics, 68.4 (2006): 894-910.

[3] Linda Burnham, "Racism in the U.S. Welfare Policy: a Human Rights Issue," African Americans in the U.S. Economy, eds. Cecilia Conrad, et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) 309-316. Susan H. Hertz, "The Politics of the Welfare Mothers Movement: A Case Study," Signs, 2.3 (1977): 600-611. Felicia Kornbluh, "The Goals of the National Welfare Rights Movement: Why We Still Need Them Thirty Years Later," Feminist Studies, 24.1 (1998): 65-78. Premilla Nadasen, Welfare Warriors: the Welfare Rights Movement in the United States (New York: Routledge, 2005). Ellen Reese, "Income Rights, Mothers' Rights, or Workers' Rights? Collective Action Frames, Organizational Ideologies, and the American Welfare Rights Movement," Social Problems. 50.2 (2003): 294-318.

individual sexuality and produce exclusive definitions of the family through welfare reform—exists in the state of Minnesota, as well as exploring the influence activism by and for these communities has on state-level policymaking.

Both women of color and queers suffer under national and state welfare policies such as the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, 1996) that promote restricting access to welfare services through family caps, two-parent income ineligibility, and suitable home requirements. These policies ultimately promote marriage and the so-called "nuclear family" as the answer to getting and staying off of welfare.[4] The combination of such policies with positive reinforcement tactics like welfare benefits bonuses for welfare mothers who marry, has existed on local and national levels since the very beginning of America's welfare state in the late 19th century, and continues to exist today.[5] Frightening tactics to police sexuality such as the coerced sterilization of women of color on welfare and homosexuals in general throughout much of the 20th century are a part of welfare's history that continue to define it in contemporary society. [6] Furthermore, the decision to create block grants of welfare

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[4] Martha Fineman, Gwendolyn Mink, and Anna Marie Smith, "No Promotion of Marriage in TANF!" Social Justice, 30.4 (2003): 126-134. Amy Lind, "Legislating the Family: Heterosexist Bias in Social Welfare Policy Frameworks," Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 31.4 (2004): 21-35. Anna Marie Smith, "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy: the Defense of Marriage Act and the Personal Responsibility Act," Citizenship Studies. 5.3 (2003): 303-320.

[5] Randy Albelda and Ann Withorn, eds. Lost Ground: Welfare Reform, Poverty, and Beyond (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002). Noel A. Cazenave and Kenneth J. Neubeck, Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor (New York: Routledge, 2001). Richard C, Fording, Sanford F. Schram, and Joe Soss, eds. Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). Teresa Kominos, "What do Marriage and Welfare Reform Really Have in Common? A Look Into TANF Marriage Promotion Programs," Review of Economics of the Household, 21.3 (2007): 915-949. Gwendolyn Mink, ed. Whose Welfare? (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Frances Fox Piven, et al., eds. Work, Welfare, and Politics: Confronting Poverty in the Wake of Welfare Reform (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2002). R. Kent Weaver, Ending Welfare as We Know It (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

[6] Michael Porter, The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women ([United States]: African American Images, 2001). Jill Quadnago, The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Joanna Schoen, Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and

funds to the individual states in the switch from Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) during the Clinton welfare reform era makes the burden of reconciling regional political leanings with the restrictive nature of federal welfare policy ever-more relevant to welfare rights activism.

Scholars have thoroughly examined the development of America's modern welfare state and the negative consequences it has had on welfare recipients, taxpayers, and policymakers alike, including the tension between federal, state, and local entities that policies such as TANF engender. The prevailing view among academics concludes that minority populations bear the brunt of such consequences. Scholars of American Political Development such as Theda Skocpol and Linda Gordon have helped to shed light on the racial and socio-economic discrimination evident in the earliest American welfare programs, noting that since the inception of "maternalistic" welfare policies in the late 19th century, poor and minority women, not to mention homosexuals, have been consistently denied the same treatment and benefits as their rich, white, heterosexual counterparts.[7] The welfare rights movement has also been well-documented by scholars, including the crucial point that most welfare activism was and is led by women of color who have systematically suffered from racial and gendered discrimination under past and

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Abortion in Public Health and Welfare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Rickie Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[7] The term "maternalistic" in this context refers to how scholars like Gordon, Skocpol, and Piven categorize America's earliest welfare policies, which largely focused on the wellbeing of mothers and the stability of the family. Localized conceptions of such wellbeing and stability, however, most often lead to the systematic denial of welfare benefits to African-American and working-class women.
Linda Gordon, ed. Women, the State, and Welfare (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935 (New York: Free Press, 1994). Gwendolyn Mink, The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). Gwendolyn Mink, Welfare's End (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). Ann Shola Orloff, Theda Skocpol, and Margaret Weir, eds. The Politics of Social Policy in the United States (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992).

present forms of welfare.[8] Much of this work, however, fails to draw a connection between the subjects of its study and frameworks of interest group mobilization or collective organizing.[9] Scant efforts examining the welfare rights movement manage to avoid this gap.[10]

To a lesser extent, scholars have examined the role LGBT-identified people play in the social welfare system, pointing out similarly oppressive circumstances, particularly in processes involving child welfare such as foster care, adoption, fertility treatments, and welfare policies.[11] Rarely, if ever, has scholarship extended its study of welfare and welfare rights activism to examine the practical relationships existing among communities that are disproportionately affected by discrimination within welfare policies. Specifically, no work to date has delineated a network of these relationships in order to gain a better grasp of the climate for interest group mobilization around the issue of state-level welfare reform. I will explore the merits of these areas of literature and the varied connections between them at greater detail in the following chapter, in an effort to

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[8] Susan H. Hertz, "The Politics of the Welfare Mothers Movement: A Case Study," Signs, 2.3 (1977): 600-611. Felicia Kornbluh, "The Goals of the National Welfare Rights Movement: Why We Still Need Them Thirty Years Later," Feminist Studies, 24.1 (1998): 65-78. Premilla Nadasen, Welfare Warriors: the Welfare Rights Movement in the United States (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[9] Lorraine Gutierrez, et al. "Multicultural Community Organizing: a Strategy for Change," Social Work, 41.5 (1996): 501-508. Terry Mizrahi and Beth B. Rosenthal, "Complexities of Coalition Building: Leaders' Successes, Strategies, Struggles, and Solutions," Social Work, 46.1 (2001): 63-76. Rinku Sen, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). Dara Z. Strolovitch, "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender," Journal of Politics, 68.4 (2006): 894-910.

[10] Reese, "Income Rights, Mothers' Rights, or Workers' Rights? Collective Action Frames, Organizational Ideologies, and the American Welfare Rights Movement."

[11] Carlos A. Ball, "The Immorality of Statutory Restrictions on Adoption by Lesbians and Gay Men," Loyala University Chicago Law Journal, 38 (2007): 379-397. Amy Lind, "Legislating the Family: Heterosexist Bias in Social Welfare Policy Frameworks," Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 31.4 (2004): 21-35. Anna Marie Smith, "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy: the Defense of Marriage Act and the Personal Responsibility Act," Citizenship Studies. 5.3 (2003): 303-320. Jeffrey G. Gibson, "Lesbian and Gay Prospective Adoptive Parents: the Legal Battle," Human Rights: Journal of the Section of Individual Rights & Responsibilities, 26.2 (1999): 7-12. Karla J. Starr, "Adoption by Homosexuals: a Look at Differing State Court Opinions," Arizona Law Review 40 (1998): 1497-1514.

demonstrate how the academy can widen the lens with which it views welfare reform, while simultaneously deepening the significance of welfare scholarship by making more visible the marginalized populations most historically oppressed by America's Welfare State.

Since the mid-20th century, Minnesota, particularly its urban centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul, has gained a reputation as highly progressive politically, meaning that, among other things, the government and local organizers reach out to these marginalized communities in both state-level policies and activism. Following the federal welfare reforms of the mid-1990s, the Minnesota state legislature used its block-grant funding to maintain and expand its main state assistance program started under AFDC: the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)—aimed at providing welfare families with the appropriate welfare services and helping them not only get off of welfare, but out of poverty as well. Unlike policies in many other states and those supported by conservatives at the federal level, MFIP does not give "marriage" bonuses, nor does it disqualify families bringing in a dual income (up to 40% above the federal poverty line), whether the adults are married or not, heterosexual or not.[12] After less than two years of implementing MFIP, Minnesota saw a thirty percent decrease in its welfare rolls, and the Minneapolis-based Welfare Rights Committee of Minnesota successfully organized over the years following TANF implementation to raise the state and federal welfare budgets at least one percent each, moving Minnesota to the forefront of state-level welfare

[12] Jennifer Ehrle et al. "Recent Changes in Minnesota Welfare and Work, Child Care, and Child Welfare Systems," Assessing the New Federalism, State Update No.3 (1 Jul. 2001). 7 Aug. 2007. <http://www.urban.org/publications/310181.html>. Lisa A.Gennetian and Cynthia Miller, "How Welfare Reform Can Effect Marriage: Evidence from an Experimental Study in Minnesota," Review of Economics of the Household. 2.3 (2004): 275-302. Alexandra Starr, "Shotgun Weddings by Uncle Sam?" Business Week, 4 Jun. 2001: 68.

reform.[13] Pioneering programs such as MFIP present excellent opportunities for scholars to examine how the relationships among communities affected by welfare reform and the passage of state welfare legislation inform one another. As the first state to enact such a progressive policy, years ahead of other TANF programs, Minnesota is a logical point at which to begin this examination.

Given the shared history of policed sexuality between women of color and the LGBT community under the welfare state, and Minnesota's success with less sexually restrictive welfare policies, my research focuses on two fundamental issues. First, the historical narrative of organizational interaction between the two communities within the state of Minnesota, including any activism regarding to welfare rights or reform, their possible involvement in MFIP's initial development stages, and any current coalition-based lobbying efforts between advocacy groups. Second, the potential for and possible structure of future bridgework among these communities, particularly in the area of welfare rights, and activist and legislator perceptions of bridgework's capacity to motivate political change.

Certainly value exists in the act of broadening the knowledge and theoretical development of countless academic questions, particularly those displaying a distinct gap in their literature. It is important, however, to pursue this specific line of research not just because existing scholarship has yet to critically examine the link in welfare rights between women of color and the LGBT community. This research is also important because it furthers the current critique of welfare reform within academia and the political arena, illustrating the possibility of practical connections between the various

[13] Minnesota Welfare Rights Coalition. Welfare Committee of Minnesota. 20 Jul. 2007. <http://www.welfarerightsmn.org/index.html>. A more thorough chronology of MFIP and its relationship to the federal welfare reform acts of the 1990s will appear later in this chapter.

groups that are systematically disadvantaged by and discriminated against in the current American welfare state. By looking for ways in which welfare can mutually advantage marginalized populations through the use of interest group mobilization, organizers and policymakers can revitalize the grassroots nature of welfare rights activism, organizing for change beginning at the state level and extending the motivation for such change outwardly. On a larger level, the pursuit of this research topic will help politicians and activists gain better insight on the viability and value of bridgework as an effective tool in the complex process of organizing for political change.

In order to gain insight on such viability and value, the empirical research required for this project needed to move beyond theoretical analyses of Minnesota's current welfare policies in relation to federal policies, the history of welfare rights activism in terms of participation by women of color and LGBT-identified people, and the current state of welfare rights organizing by women of color and queers in Minnesota. While my research necessarily encompasses each of these components, the actual impetus for bridgework activism lies with the members of the two communities and their desire, willingness, and capacity for such mobilization.[14] To determine the degree to which combined activism exists within Minnesota, I therefore conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders of Minnesota-based welfare rights organizations, queer rights

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[14]Jeffrey M. Berry, The Interest Group Society (New York: Harper Collins, 1989). Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, "Introduction: The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics," Interest Group Politics, eds. Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, Washington (D.C.: CQ Press, 1991) 1-32. Anne N. Costain, "Social Movements as Interest Groups: The Case of the Women's Movement," The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed, ed. Mark P. Petracca (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 285-307. Gutierrez, et al. "Multicultural Community Organizing: a Strategy for Change." Mizrahi and Rosenthal, "Complexities of Coalition Building: Leaders' Successes, Strategies, Struggles, and Solutions." Paul A. Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories," The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed, ed. Mark P. Petracca (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 99-129. Sen, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy.

organizations, and women's organizations regarding the extent to which they personally and their organizations formally participate in joint organizing around the issue of welfare rights, and specifically against sexually restrictive welfare policies and in support of non-nuclear family inclusion in the welfare system. I chose as my initial starting points for interviews organizations that either focus specifically on welfare rights or are committed to the political, social, and economic equality of all women or of LGBT-identified individuals. Although I approached more than thirty organizations based in Minnesota, representing various communities throughout the state, only four accepted my request for an interview with a member of their staff or membership group. The information gathered in these interviews, although comprising a small data set, not only establishes a history of these organizations' involvement in welfare rights activism during and since MFIP implementation, but also delineates a network of the professional connections between each of these groups based upon their various organizational agendas, access to financial and staff resources, and lobbying strategies. While I found that bridgework activism does not, and has never existed between these advocacy communities on the issue of welfare rights, their shared interest in economic justice, coalition-building, and serving marginalized communities suggest a particular model of bridgework that incorporates the groups' diverse goals and needs, while promoting the visibility of their most disadvantaged members.

Simply determining the attitudes and resources of the activist organizations on this matter does not fully answer the question of whether or not the existence of this bridgework activism could aid in further improving Minnesota's welfare policies to the benefit of severely disadvantaged populations. The potential for actual success depends

not only on the activists that push for political change but on the government officials that create and implement such change; the "human element" of this research question thus extends beyond Minnesota's women of color and queer activists to its policymakers. In light of this, I also spoke to current politicians in Minnesota's state legislature, to assess the political body's current motivations regarding sexuality and marriage in welfare reform, its perception of the usefulness of coalition-based lobbying, and the changes it feels are necessary for improving the Minnesota Family Investment Program. This information helps to determine the degree to which legislators support the concept of non-traditional families gaining more entitlement under the welfare system and how high up the policymaking chain such support extends. In my interviews, I was also able to speak to some of the legislators involved in drafting and enacting MFIP when the governor's office first began the project back in the late 1980s. The legislators I spoke with in this particular set of interviews laid bare the original goals and intentions behind the Minnesota Family Investment Program, as well as the degree to which bridgework activism and advocacy lobbying in general helped shape the program's unprecedented structure and policies. Legislators echoed organizers' contentions that bridgework in the area of welfare rights does not currently exist in Minnesota, but their support of coalitional lobbying efforts and a greater diversification of MFIP recipients present at policy hearings similarly support a framework of bridgework activism between advocacy organizations that intentionally works to make severely disadvantaged communities more visible in the welfare reform process.

The Development of America's Welfare State

To understand how truly anomalous such policies were when MFIP came into effect, one must first contextualize MFIP within the greater narrative of America's Welfare State history. This section will delineate a chronology of welfare development in the United States from the first inklings of public assistance programs in the 19th Century and through to the creation and evolution of the nation's most well-known federal welfare programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Drawing out this history will illustrate the racism inherent to American welfare policy.[15] After having fleshed out a clear chronology of federal welfare policies, the paper will move on, in the following section, to provide a more in-depth view of the history and policies of the Minnesota Family Investment Program. Placing MFIP's own history within the broader context of U.S. welfare development will therefore draw out the ways in which MFIP both reaffirms and rejects the patterns of patriarchy, heterosexism, and racism intrinsic to America's past welfare frameworks.

Although many Americans may think of welfare programs as a relatively contemporary issue, the roots of modern welfare extend back into the 19th Century. Prior to the Civil War, most towns and localities had almshouses for the impoverished, and the onset of the war encouraged the creation of soldier's pensions. Not until the postwar hey-day of Reconstruction, however, did towns and states seriously consider wresting the

[15] This section will only focus on racism to the extent that the historical scholars referenced within the section, themselves, note its importance. A more thorough critique of the discriminatory foundations of America's Welfare State, as well as a critique of American Political Development scholars' failure to recognize the full scope of such foundations, will appear in the following chapter. This critique of existing welfare literature will widen its lens to explore the shared oppression of women of color and LGBT individuals under social welfare frameworks and the lack of recognition of this link by the academy, issues that require attention beyond that provided by the basic chronology laid out here.

responsibility for public assistance from what Theda Skocpol identifies as ineffectual "patronage politics" and re-focusing public assistance efforts on women with children.[16] Although there certainly existed support for workingmen's insurance and other pensions given to the male "breadwinner" of the household in the event of a labor emergency, almost any public assistance to men related directly to their participation in the labor force. As Skocpol notes, "early pensions, social insurance, and labor regulations were intended...to keep respectable working-class families headed by male breadwinners away from the indignities of poor relief," such as that offered by almshouses or church kitchens.[17] Any public assistance for those unable to participate in the labor force, for whatever reason, existed primarily to serve the elderly until middle-class women began agitating for state support of struggling mothers, and widows in particular.

This focus on supporting women struggling to raise families in the absence of an income-earning patriarch led to localized pension programs intended not only to give financial aid to these women, but to encourage the proper moral upbringing of their children as well. Stemming from a nationalized fear of the immigration boom at the turn of the century, these "mothers' pensions," as welfare scholars have termed them, fed directly into the growing public interest in molding an upright citizenry from the expanding immigrant population. Most, if not all, mothers' pension programs in the late 1890s up to the 1930s thus stipulated strict eligibility requirements which hinged not only upon a demonstration of financial hardship, but also upon proof of what policy scholar Robin Rogers-Dillon calls the mother's "moral fitness."[18] Binding eligibility to morality

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[16] Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States.
[17] Ibid., 314.
[18] Robin Rogers-Dillon, The Welfare Experiments: Politics and Policy Evaluation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

enabled America's upper classes and governmental bodies to manipulate the creation of the nation's future citizenry. As feminist welfare scholar Gwendolyn Mink observes, "the only way" to ensure that American mothers would "produce ideal American democrats" was through the "reform and reward of maternal practices," making welfare policy an ideal space for such rewards.[19] Additionally, the "moral fitness" eligibility requirements of mothers' pensions made it quite easy for local agencies to discriminate against women of color, and many frequently did, with welfare rolls carrying a significant underrepresentation of people of color up through the 1960s.

Mothers' pensions, distributed in such clearly discriminatory fashion by localized agencies and organizations, reigned as the primary method of public assistance for fatherless families until the 1930s. In 1935, under the auspices of the Social Security Act, Congress created the first federal welfare program, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC).[20] The federal and state governments shared the program bill, giving states the power to supplement federal eligibility standards. Taking their cue from the tradition of mothers' pensions, most states continued to base eligibility at least in part on moral standards, further entrenching the previously established patterns of institutionally supported racist and classist practices.

Several states also included stipulations prohibiting cohabitation in single mother households, making any woman found with an unmarried partner in her house automatically ineligible for cash-based public assistance.[21] Much of the basis for such

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[19] Gwendolyn Mink, "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State," Women the State and Welfare. ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 92-122.
[20] Rogers-Dillon, The Welfare Experiments: Politics and Policy Evaluation, 52.
[21] Ibid. 57. These "cohabitation rules" can be seen as predecessors to the so-named "midnight raids" of the 1970s and '80s, raids on welfare homes to determine if female welfare recipients were living with a male

overt moralization in welfare programs arose from the assumption that women with children should avoid working at all costs, devoting themselves instead to raising proper child-citizens. Court cases at the state and federal level, such as *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), which allowed for gender-based maximum work hours and other safety requirements for women, reflected and built on this assumption.[22] This mentality of discouraging mothers from seeking work would, in fact, characterize American welfare up to the 1960s, when federal welfare finally began to break free from its undeniably moralistic chains.

Recognizing the shift in public sentiment towards a more centralized welfare system, the federal government renamed ADC in 1962 as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and significantly lessened the control of individual states over welfare administration.[23] Stricter federal guidelines attempted to create more symmetry among the various state programs in the hopes that it would decrease instances of personal attachment between welfare caseworkers and public assistance recipients and inequitable benefits distribution. The stress on cash-only benefits and limited social services under AFDC occurred in conjunction with both a major push by civil rights and welfare rights organizers to encourage impoverished people of color to apply for welfare benefits across the nation, as well as an evolving public view that mothers should not necessarily be exempted from the workforce simply based on their status as parents. Rogers-Dillon argues that the simultaneity of these events led to significantly greater visibility of African American welfare recipients at the same time that the public grew to

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partner to whom they were not married. The following chapter will explore midnight raids and other infringements upon sexuality under welfare policies at greater depth.

[22] Theda Skocpol and Gretchen Ritter, "Gender and the Origins of Modern Social Policies in Britain and the United States," Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 98.

[23] Rogers-Dillon, The Welfare Experiments: Politics and Policy Evaluation, 54.

criticize welfare as cash handouts to women, formerly relieved of the need to work by their household role as mothers, who were now perceived as lazy for failing to find gainful employment. The stigmatization of the black "welfare queen," a lazy woman having child after child in order to remain on public assistance as long as possible, thus grew in prominence under AFDC and continues to influence the national public sentiment towards welfare recipients. The government's initial focus on splitting cash funds into AFDC and other social services into non-AFDC programs, although intended to streamline the welfare process, only worsened the welfare queen stereotype by making federal welfare into a perceived handout line.

By the 1980s federal welfare rolls had skyrocketed and public opinion had continued its negative downturn, making AFDC not only one of the least popular social welfare programs in the country, but also fairly ineffective at helping people become economically self-sufficient. Race relations in welfare had only worsened, as well. As Teresa Amott notes, the "public consensus" that the "social problem [of welfare] was concentrated among blacks" led to a conclusion that the "disintegration of the black family" required immediate attention from both society and the state.[24] Such fears spurred the public demand of work requirements for welfare recipients, bringing to the national welfare discussion the concept of "welfare-to-work." In an attempt to address this growing trend toward encouraging rapid employment among welfare recipients, Congress passed the Family Support Act of 1988, which created the federal welfare-to-work program, Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program.[25] Because JOBS did not require recipients with young children to participate in job skills training or

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[24] Teresa Amott, "Black Women and AFDC: Making Entitlement Out of Necessity," Women the State and Welfare. ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 280.
[25] Rogers-Dillon, The Welfare Experiments: Politics and Policy Evaluation 59.

employment searches, the continuation of a historic maternalist preference, it did little to stem the growing tide of welfare rolls or assuage negative public response to AFDC. This massive public discontent reached its apex at the height of the Clinton Administration. By 1994, 79% of Americans no longer thought that the welfare system was effective and less than 20% believed that welfare recipients had an entitlement to their benefits.[26] This failure of public faith in the welfare system drove a perceived need for a significant change in federal welfare policy.

With a strong Republican presence in Congress and undeniable public demand for stricter welfare policies, the Clinton Administration felt tremendous pressure to pass welfare reform legislation focused on time limits for welfare benefits, strict work requirements, and family planning. Landmark changes in welfare policy were the result. President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1995 (PRWORA), a bill which stressed the concepts of welfare-to-work and time limits for public assistance benefits. Through PRWORA the federal government did away with AFDC entirely and introduced Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a federal welfare program that distributes block grant funding to the states to develop their own state-level programs within strict federal guidelines. TANF essentially returned welfare program development back into the hands of the states, as it had been so many years prior in the form of mothers' pensions, but retained a significant amount of federal oversight in the process to ensure national consistency over certain provisions (time limits, family caps, etc.).

Still functioning as the country's federal welfare program, TANF gives states flexibility in their planning to account for regional differences, whether economic,

[26] Ibid. 60.

political, or social. This flexibility, however, means that more conservative states have seized the opportunity to create extremely strict programs that aim to promote marriage, fund job placement programs disproportionately more than educational programs, and value reducing welfare rolls over reducing poverty rates. On the other hand, this balance between federal and state control also means that states which seek to eradicate poverty, can develop programs that accommodate various levels and types of difference, possibly even breaking down the American Welfare State's historic patterns of discrimination. Minnesota's answer to this challenge exists in the Minnesota Family Investment Program, but whether or not MFIP provides a positive model for progressive state-level welfare programs remains to be seen.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program

Perhaps recognizing that federal welfare benefits under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) were failing to meet the needs of many welfare recipients, the Minnesota State Legislature began examining options for state-initiated welfare programs in the late 1980's, nearly ten years before the massive welfare reforms of the Clinton Administration. After deadlocking over the question of whether or not to decrease state-level AFDC benefits by thirty percent, the legislature convened a bipartisan welfare reform commission in the spring of 1986 to address the issue of how to make state control of welfare benefits both more efficient and more accessible to public assistance recipients.[27] This commission evolved as the forerunner to the committee that just one year later began the arduous process of creating the Minnesota Family

[27] "History of MFIP," Publications. Minnesota Department of Human Services (2 Aug. 2004). 1 Nov. 2007. <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_005326>.

Investment Program, Minnesota's now statewide welfare program and one of the most progressive state-level welfare programs in the nation, at least at its inception. The ten-year process of MFIP's creation, from the initial conceptual stages to statewide implementation in 1997-1998, not to mention the numerous commissioned studies measuring the program's success every few years after implementation suggest a high level of commitment by the Minnesota state government to ensuring that Minnesota has an effective and efficient welfare program. Furthermore, the state's reliance on input from myriad sources, including interest and advocacy groups, in the development of MFIP's unprecedented inclusive eligibility requirements indicates that those who drafted MFIP legislation and policy may have been more intentional in acknowledging the diversity of the public assistance populace than those who authored the majority of federal and state welfare policies in effect at that time. While MFIP certainly has its share of policy-related issues, its success in lifting Minnesota residents out of poverty while maintaining familial stability through less discriminatory guidelines implies that those states wishing to achieve similar success in their own public assistance programs would do well to consider the Minnesota Family Investment Program a model for building the foundation of a more effective state-level welfare program, while perhaps also accounting for the various types of difference operating among and between welfare recipients.

Although AFDC was still operating fully as the federal welfare program in 1987, Minnesota's governor, Rudy Perpich, nevertheless sensed the need for the state to develop a comprehensive state-level welfare plan in the event that federal welfare benefits were eliminated. Perpich commissioned the Office of Jobs Policy with the task of formulating such a plan and under his auspices, in the spring of 1987, the OJP created

a committee made up of Department of Human Services, State Planning Agency, and Finance, Education, Jobs and Training Department staff to draw up the initial proposal for the Minnesota Family Investment Program.[28] Recognizing that enacting an effective welfare program required gaining the perspectives of individuals who may not belong to any state departments at all, the OJP committee drafted an initial proposal for the program and mailed it out to advocacy and interest groups, job training agencies, county officials, and education organizations. Further drafts took into account their input, as well as information gathered from focus groups of AFDC and other public assistance recipients. It is likely that the more generous eligibility requirements, income caps, and benefits timetables than those offered under AFDC were initially written into MFIP at the recommendation of these various agencies.

The Department of Human Services took control of the project in 1988, drafting legislation that would allow the DHS commissioner to pursue congressional approval to test MFIP in counties across the state. According to the DHS, feedback from advocacy and interest groups was "key to the development of the legislation," which the legislature passed in its 1988 session.[29] Over the next five years, the DHS enacted the preliminary measures necessary to implementing field trials of MFIP in seven Minnesotan counties, including hiring an independent research firm, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), to conduct studies at various points throughout the field testing process. The studies were meant to provide balanced and accurate feedback on the program's capacity to lift recipients not only out of welfare, but above the poverty

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[28] "History of MFIP," Publications. Minnesota Department of Human Services (2 Aug. 2004). 1 Nov. 2007. <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_005326>.

[29] "History of MFIP," Publications. Minnesota Department of Human Services.

threshold, while maintaining the stability of welfare families. Although the field-tested version of MFIP differed in many ways from AFDC policies, its most unprecedented standards directly linked to this effort to maintain stable family relations. Unlike AFDC and many state-level welfare programs created under the switch to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), MFIP did not require that parents found with an unmarried partner in the house would automatically lose their welfare benefits, a concept that had survived from the earliest days of the American welfare state. Instead, in order to encourage the transition to self-sufficiency, MFIP at this time supported dual-income earning, with no stipulation as to the sexual orientation of the income-earners, and allowed families to continue to receive benefits until they reached 140% of the federal poverty line.[30] Under MFIP, the policing of sexuality and the enduring push by the state for heterosexual marriage that both women of color and LGBT individuals experienced under AFDC thus gave way to an encouragement of familial stability, regardless of the make-up of the family or the existence of a marriage license between the household adults.

The field tests of the MFIP pilot program began in early 1994, eventually expanding to eight counties by the time the federal government overhauled national welfare policy in 1996. Under TANF, individual states received block grant funding to administer their own welfare programs, guided only by a few general federal standards. Having already developed a comprehensive program, Minnesota used its new TANF funding to expand the field tests and MDRC research, so that the legislature could, in its next session, decide whether to adopt MFIP statewide or revise the program before doing so. Despite preliminary reports from the MDRC suggesting high rates of employment,

[30] David Hage, "Welfare Reform: Minnesota Style," State Legislatures, 30.7 (2004): 43.

decreased welfare rolls, and, surprisingly, higher marriage rates and lower instances of domestic violence under the piloted version of MFIP, the legislature split along partisan lines on the issue of statewide MFIP implementation.[31] Republicans in both the House and Senate felt that MFIP benefits were too generous, the work requirements too lax, and the incentives to get and stay off of welfare too few. Eventually, the 1997 legislature passed an amended version of the program, with the intention of enacting it statewide by 1998. The new version was more stringent in many respects: it had stricter work requirements, fewer options for job training and education, it cut benefits once a family reaches 120% of the federal poverty line, included a family cap (denying benefits for children born to a mother on MFIP after she has actually joined the program), and limited benefits to a 60 month period.[32] Although it was still a remarkably progressive state-level welfare program for that time, most notably because it still sought to encourage familial stability through income-earning rather than through marriage promotion, Democratic legislators decried the changes as a step backward in creating an effective welfare policy. In the words of Senator Linda Berglin, one of the members of the original drafting committee, the legislature "took a prom dress and turned it into a housecoat."[33] Nonetheless, the "housecoat" version of the program was signed into law by then-Governor Arne Carlson in April of 1997, and was fully enacted statewide by July of 1998.

MFIP served as Minnesota's primary public assistance program without significant structural changes until the election of Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty in

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[31] "History of MFIP," Publications. Minnesota Department of Human Services.
[32] "Chapter 256J, Minnesota Family Investment Program," Minnesota Statutes 2007. Minnesota State Legislature (20 Oct. 2007). 1 Nov. 2007. <www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/revisor/pages/statute/statute_chapter_toc.php?chapter=256J>.
[33] Hage, "Welfare Reform: Minnesota Style," 43.

2002. Up to that point, the program was relatively successful in achieving its main goals of poverty reduction and familial stability. Periodic reports released by the MDRC after the initiation of the 1994 field tests and again after statewide implementation indicated unexpectedly high rates of employment among MFIP recipients, as well as increased instances of marriage and higher rates of marital longevity, and significantly lower rates of child poverty, although such victories were significantly greater prior to the programmatic revisions made during statewide implementation.[34] The MDRC reports thus suggest that the very policies which set MFIP apart from other states to begin with- continuing benefits well beyond the federal poverty line, emphasis on family stability rather than marriage promotion- may well be making Minnesota one of the forerunners in successful state-level welfare reform. Despite the MDRC's findings, Governor Pawlenty initiated several structural changes to MFIP in 2003. This newest version of MFIP requires applicants to seek work for four months prior to formal acceptance to the program, cuts recipients off at 115% of the federal poverty line, and strips a family of its entire cash benefit if it is deemed "noncompliant" by the state (under the prior program, noncompliance stripped a family of just 30% of its cash benefits).[35] Governor Pawlenty promoted these changes as an encouragement of the "workfare" trend in post-AFDC welfare reform policies, prioritizing employment of any type over poverty reduction. Policies with such underlying assumptions regarding laziness and incentives to work tend to undermine the initial concept behind MFIP: encouraging poverty reduction and stable families by supplementing welfare benefits with income earnings.

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[34]Gennetian, Miller, and Smith, "Overview: Turning Welfare Into a Work Support: Six-Year Impacts on Parents and Children from the Minnesota Family Investment Program," Publications. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Hage, "Welfare Reform: Minnesota Style," 44.

[35]Hage, "Welfare Reform: Minnesota Style," 44.

Not surprisingly, in a six-year impact report released by the MDRC in 2005 as an assessment of the program since its statewide enactment in 1998, research indicated a slowing in employment, marriage, and welfare roll reduction rates, factors that had shown significant progress in the earlier studies.[36] Such trends suggest that these newest alterations undercut the scheme that kept Minnesota at the top of the charts for recipient employment, marital longevity, and familial stability. The same policies also made Minnesota's welfare system more inclusive of difference (racial, gender, sexuality, etc.) and less restrictive of recipients' personal sexual practices. Although Governor Pawlenty's changes to MFIP did not address marriage promotion or family planning, they struck at the same ideological core that had produced both higher allowances for income earning and fewer restrictions on sexuality within the initial MFIP guidelines. This departure from the more inclusive, stability-oriented standards of the original program risks Minnesota's position as one of the top six states in reducing family poverty, as ranked by the Urban Institute in 2004,[37] while a return to such standards would signal a recognition that they not only work to the benefit of a diverse recipient population, but benefit the state economically and politically, as well.

Looking Forward: A Chapter Outline

Minnesota, as a case, suggests one model for bridgework activism which, if adopted, could help activists and legislators regain the more pathbreaking elements of the Minnesota Family Investment program to the advantage of some of the state's most

[36]Gennetian, Miller, and Smith, "Overview: Turning Welfare Into a Work Support: Six-Year Impacts on Parents and Children from the Minnesota Family Investment Program," Publications. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.
[37]Hage, "Welfare Reform: Minnesota Style," 44.

disadvantaged communities. The structure of this model draws both from the comments and ideas put forth by interview subjects, as well as the ways in which those comments and ideas reflect various elements of key scholarly theories regarding intersectionality, interest group mobilization, and welfare rights. The rest of this thesis will therefore focus on the theoretical framework that guides this model and the empirical evidence gathered in the field.

The next chapter comprises a review of the work of various scholars, whose own research and arguments inform and provide the theoretical backbone of the bridgework activism model. The review includes a definition and academic contextualization of "bridgework," drawing heavily upon women of color feminist scholarship. It will also analyze historical narratives of women of color and LGBT individuals' experiences of social welfare policy discrimination, paying special attention to the commonalities between these experiences. The discussion will move to an examination of interest group mobilization theories, particularly those dealing with the costs and benefits of coalition-based organizing among advocacy organizations. The chapter will finish with an analysis of welfare rights movement scholarship and what it suggests for the successful revitalization of welfare rights in contemporary organizing communities.

The third chapter consists of the empirical research gathered in this study. It outlines the current organizing and legislative climates, noting the lack of coalitional activism in the area of welfare rights, as it does so. Citing tensions between organizational agendas, lobbying strategies, and resources as possible reasons for this absence of bridgework, the chapter develops a specifically structured bridgework model, based mainly on funding and lobbying support levels, and examines its potential to

resolve such tensions in the interest of progressive welfare reform. It concludes with the contention that bridgework activism represents a potentially effective and efficient model for improving Minnesota's welfare system in ways that benefit disadvantaged constituents from any number of advocacy organizations, but that certain barriers still exist that threaten the development of this model.

The final chapter presents the many opportunities for successful advocacy-based lobbying that bridgework offers local organizations, as well as the many obstacles, organizational and legislative in nature, that may continue to prevent the practical development of a bridgework model in the area of welfare rights. Bridgework activism offers one method for extending the democratic hope of representation in policymaking to individuals and communities not currently visible in the welfare reform process. The decision as to whether it is the best method for doing so or even a desirable one remains largely up to those responsible for implementing and supporting it: the activists and legislators who must deal with the everyday realities of Minnesota's complex political and organizing systems.

Chapter 2—Bridge-Building, in Theory: The Scholarly Justifications for a Bridgework Model of Welfare Rights

The historical narratives of AFDC and MFIP only just begin to suggest why women of color and LGBT communities would make likely coalitional partners in state-level welfare rights activism and provide little by way of framing for the theoretical conception of "bridgework activism." Existing literature, however, provides the necessary foundation for a broad theoretical framework of "bridgework" and also outlines the historical circumstances that help to explain why these two communities represent possible allies to one another and what makes welfare rights the logical area through which to explore such alliances. Laying out this theoretical groundwork now will help to illuminate the significance of my research findings in later chapters, particularly as they relate to the rise and fall of the welfare rights movement of the 1960s and 70s.

This chapter will thus articulate what "bridgework" means, its theoretical significance and practical implications for organizing communities, the dynamics of organizational coalition-building, and the historical precedents for bridgework activism within welfare rights, particularly among the two communities on which this thesis focuses. I will begin by defining what exactly I mean by the term "bridgework," placing it within scholarly discourses of women of color feminisms and intersectionality. Having established a working understanding of bridgework, the chapter will move to an examination of the history of oppression under American social welfare policies which women of color and LGBT individuals share. This historical analysis will provide a more thorough and nuanced justification as to the reasoning behind a potential coalitional partnership between the two communities, emphasizing coalition work in social welfare policy as the practical policy arena through which to establish such a partnership. Such

analysis, however, calls for a structural suggestion as to how organizing groups within these communities can create effective coalitional politics; the chapter will therefore move next to a discussion of basic interest group mobilization theory, focusing most specifically on interest group theorists' arguments regarding the potential for and barriers to successful intersectional coalition-building. Lastly, I will finish with an analysis of the existing literature on the American welfare rights movement of the 1960s and 70s from within the lens of interest group theory, exploring what its various successes and failures suggest as far as the structure and scope of contemporary welfare rights activists' organizing and lobbying strategies. Concluding that the relevant literature points towards bridgework activism as a logical organizing framework for women of color advocates, LGBT advocates, and welfare rights advocates to develop with one another, the chapter will have followed the necessary steps for moving to an empirical examination of whether such theoretical conclusions play out in the practical world of Minnesota's activist communities.

Why "Bridgework?"

> *Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar [Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks].* –Gloria Anzaldua

As explained in the prior chapter, I use such terms as interest group mobilization, coalitional or coalition building, alliances, and collaboration interchangeably throughout this study to create an image of activists coming together around a common cause that draws upon the many schools of thought that inform my research. Frequently, however, I speak of the connections between communities that I hope to uncover as "bridgework" and "bridgework activism." Neither the repetition with which these phrases appear in this

study nor the physical metaphor of a bridge that they imply are accidental. Women of color and Third World feminisms first introduced the use of the word "bridge" or "bridging" to articulate coalitions and alliances between diverse sociopolitical communities beginning in the late 1970s, and growing in popularity in both academic and organizing circles as an apt descriptor of the mediating positions women of color, particularly lesbians of color, so often find themselves in as both activists and scholars. Because my research focuses so prominently on two communities socially marginalized through discourses of gender, race, and sexuality—women of color and queers—these feminisms and the theories they produce strongly inform the theoretical basis of my study, and as such, require substantial acknowledgement in each aspect of my work, including the terminology I use to explain and interpret my research. Furthermore, although many women of color theorists and organizers attach a negative connotation to the term "bridge," as this chapter will explain at greater length, I intend my use and interpretation of "bridgework" to transform such negativity by combining the more practical, quantifiable aspects of Political Science terms such as interest group mobilization and combined political activism, with the elements of critical race and gender theory inherent to feminist terms like coalition building and alliance politics. In this way, the term itself functions as a linguistic bridge. Collaborative political action between the various communities in this study, under the term bridgework activism, thus encompasses the image of building a bridge between communities from both ends, with organizing events and shared resources functioning as the bridge's foundation.

Most feminist and queer theorists credit the birth of the term "bridging" and, in many ways, the iconic founding of the modern women of color feminist movement to an

anthology, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, entitled This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. Moraga and Anzaldúa's book epitomizes the growing discontent among women of color with the racially insensitive priorities of America's women's liberation movement, but moves beyond just a critique of white feminist culture to also expose the sexually marginalizing politics of much organizing led by women of color. A single woman can simultaneously inhabit such a wide multiplicity of identities that the idea of organizing around one identity category or one identity-based oppression results in forcing women to choose to ignore all other points of identity and oppression in their lives for the sake of a single cause, or excludes them altogether. Anzaldúa gives voice to this frustration in an essay from a different anthology, explaining that as a queer Chicana in the women's movement, she felt that white lesbians did not understand that "there is more than one way to be oppressed." She argues that "not all women experience sexism in the same way, and for women-of-color sexism is not the only oppression."[38] Women experience both oppression and empowerment in such myriad arenas: racial, sexual, cultural, political, economic, religious, gendered, ethnic, national, etc. ad nauseam. Within activist communities, such women, and most often queer women of color, frequently find themselves pushed into mediating positions, with those who are culturally dominant asking them to transmit knowledge and experience between the various communities to which they felt called. In this way, they are laid down as the bridges between communities, rather than integrated as members in any of them.

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[38] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island: Lesbians-of-color Hacienda Alianzas," Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances, eds. Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990) 219.

This sense of needing to be the constant mediator for and between dominant and self-isolating communities led women of color, immigrant women, and queer women to both name and reject the bridge analogy. In her piece from This Bridge Called My Back, entitled "The Bridge Poem," Donna Kate Rushin expresses this disassociation with being a bridge between so many communities, claiming that she has "had enough/I'm sick of seeing and touching/Both sides of things/Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody" and concludes that "the bridge I must be/is the bridge to my own power."[39] Moraga quotes Barbara Smith, in a statement even more simple than Rushin's, as uncovering the most basic truth about being a bridge: "a bridge gets walked over…over and over and over again."[40] Rather than gaining true empowerment through their multi-layered identities, these women come to understand that the act of "bridging" communities means, for them, laying themselves down and allowing others to walk all over them, stripping them of any active role in creating healthy, progressive, lasting bonds between ever more fractured social groups. As Anzaldúa notes, in the process of mediating between communities, "the you that's the mediator gets lost in the dichotomies, dualities, or contradictions that you're mediating…It's a tough job, not many people can keep the bridge up."[41] Instead, women of color feminist theorists and activists draw upon the notion of alliance politics, community-initiated links between diverse social groups in the interest of recognizing, working through, and celebrating difference. Often referred to as "multicultural alliances," these links represent points of contact between various

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[39] Donna Kate Rushin, "The Bridge Poem," This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981) xxi-xxii.
[40] Cherríe Moraga, "Preface," This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981) xv.
[41] Anzaldúa "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island," 223.

communities, but often translate into ideological support rather than necessarily implying practical, planned collaboration. In the foreword to Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer's anthology, Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances, Caryn McTighe Musil stresses that alliances are "fundamental to our collective survival as women,"[42] and though she and other writers in the book bring up the bridge analogy, much of the anthology encourages the production of more ideologically or emotionally-centered, supportive alliance politics. While the concept of multicultural alliances thus speaks to the need for community-based networks of support and empowerment that give women what Third World feminist Chela Sandoval calls "[significant]…mobility" between the various nexuses of their identities, they lack a sense of urgency for substantial cross-community organizing.[43] Finding their center within the complexity of identity politics, alliances thus remain significantly less quantifiable as part of a community activism study than the more activism and policy-based concept of interest group mobilization, the word "mobilization" inferring a certain degree of practical organizing.

Where, then, does the middle-ground exist between political terms that fail to account for the complexity of identity politics and feminist terms that fail to invoke practical activism? The premise of this project, to analyze state-level welfare reform through the network of relationships that exist between three communities strongly connected to welfare policy, draws heavily from each of these areas. I therefore use the terms "bridgework" and "bridgework activism" as a way to convey both the complex identity politics and the physical organizing at work in the subject of my research. The bridge analogy in this context means to suggest not that the bridges between women of

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[42] Caryn McTighe Musil, "Foreword," Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances, eds. Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990) vi.
[43] Chela Sandoval, Methodology of the Oppressed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 58.

color activists and LGBT activists in the state of Minnesota are, yet again, individual women mediating between these two groups, but rather consist of points of collaborative organizing between these two communities. Such bridges imply that the *work* of building a bridge comes from community-generated efforts on both ends, with the two groups meeting in the middle, rather than running back and forth across the backs of queer women of color. This process, however, in no way means to imply that women of color do not already exist within queer communities or that queer women do not already exist within communities of color, but instead seeks to relieve them from their mediating positions by placing the burden of bridge-building on each entire community. The term "bridgework activism" serves to stress the focus of this particular bridge analogy on political activism; events, resources, or documents that seek to encourage policy change, but rely on bridgework as a means by which to accomplish such change. Lastly, the inclusion of the word "work" in this term means to suggest that such bridges do not always or already exist, but these communities must consciously work at not only initially building them, but at rebuilding them time and time again as they, themselves, grow and evolve politically, socially, and economically. Social communities thus become Gloria Anzaldúa's voyagers, learning to build these bridges as they organize and mobilize, rather than treading upon the tired backs of their own members.

Common Roots: Social Welfare Discrimination

Although women of color and LGBT individuals may not automatically come to mind as logical allies in the struggle for improved welfare policies, both groups have suffered and continue to suffer from definitions of the family and familial morality in

social welfare policies. Welfare reform, though a more narrowed strand of social welfare, remains an area in which recent federal and state activity has revived patriarchal, white, heterosexist definitions of the American family. Given that each of the above communities has experienced oppression due to similar circumstances in the past, bridgework activism on the issue of family rights in welfare reform between organized entities of these groups comprises a logical step in the continued struggles to gain equal rights for women of color and queers.

A clearer articulation of each group's experiences of social welfare discrimination will aid in demonstrating the basis for such activism. This section will therefore examine the literature that identifies women of color and LGBT individuals as subjects of discrimination under social welfare policies of the last century, emphasizing the common experiences of the two communities as it does so. Because so much literature exists that explores the discriminatory experiences of women of color specifically under public assistance policies, my analysis of their experiences will remain within that more narrowed lens. The difficulty of even contemporarily examining queers as a welfare recipient demographic, let alone over the course of the past century, means that my analysis of this community will extend to their experiences of oppression in other social welfare frameworks as well, particularly federal and state policies and programs addressing mental health and adoption. Such analysis will demonstrate that for each community, and particularly for individuals belonging to both communities (queer women of color), definitions of "suitable homes," "good parenting," and "morally appropriate sexuality" have prevented community members from creating and maintaining their own families, an issue that continues to plague them to this day.

As a demographic, women of color have suffered disproportionately under government policies and programs throughout American history, not the least of which includes programs, such as public assistance, meant to aid the underprivileged. From the inception of mothers' pension programs in the earliest years of public assistance to recent attempts by the Bush Administration to more strictly promote marriage under TANF, women of color have consistently been denied benefits, been stripped of their dignity as mothers and women, and lost the ability to control their own reproduction.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the advocacy for the first public assistance programs in America came from and on the behalf of white, middle-class women. Scholars of the American Political Development School frequently point to mothers' pension programs of the early 20th century as trademarks of the Progressive Era, illustrating a recognition of women's economic needs at a time when women's rights garnered little attention from the government. Although such scholars, most notably Linda Gordon and Theda Skocpol, acknowledge the majority white element of early public assistance, their focus on the maternalistic and progressive themes of early welfare significantly underemphasizes the racist practices at play in mothers' pensions. Indeed, work like Skocpol's, while important in its own right, does little to examine "the fact that [mothers' pensions] arose within a system of white racial hegemony that was heavily governed by Jim Crow racial segregation laws intended to protect white racial supremacy."[44] On the backbone of Jim Crow, welfare workers, particularly those in the South, freely denied black women public assistance on the grounds that not only did black families have fewer and cheaper needs than white families, but single black

[44] Noel A. Cazenave and Kenneth J. Neubeck, Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor, 43.

mothers failed to provide suitably moral home surroundings for their children, a caveat of many pension programs. The rejection of women of color from the welfare rolls based on their status as unwed mothers meant that for the most part, welfare simply did not exist for families of color, with white families constituting up to 96% of public assistance recipients in some states.[45] Those few women of color who managed to successfully gain access to public assistance lived with the constant knowledge that a single misstep, so judged by their local pension officials, could place their receipt of benefits in severe jeopardy. "Suitable home" policies remained a vital facet of welfare programs throughout the 20th century.

Even the establishment of a federal welfare program in the 1930s did little to fix such practices, given the high level of control local authorities had over eligibility determination. The exclusion of non-whites from the welfare rolls spanned the country at this time, with welfare officials in the American West as eagerly dismissing "morally degenerate" Hispanic and Native American women as Southern officials did African Americans.[46] As Gwendolyn Mink argues, even those individuals advocating for the right of women of color to receive public assistance in the early 20th century did so by reasoning that well-structured welfare programs could help to remedy the moral shortcomings of non-white homes. Such activists viewed out-of-wedlock births, laziness, and poor parenting as endemic to families of color and "prescribed cultural reform through the rehabilitation of individual mothers."[47] Federal welfare, as established by the Social Security Act, represented an opportunity for the middle-class to correct women of color's faltering moral compasses by encouraging marriage, discouraging sex, and

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[45] Cazenave and Neubeck, Welfare Racism, 44.
[46] Cazenave and Neubeck, Welfare Racism 54-56
[47] Mink, The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942, 150

invoking "proper" parenting skills. By suggesting that moral degradation could be remedied by encouraging an individual to "transcend her culture," these activists ultimately "assumed that the problems of discrimination, poverty, and inequality were as much a problem with the Black mother as a problem with society."[48] Whatever gains in benefits women of color may have achieved at this time thus remained tied to racist assumptions of the inherent immorality of the non-white family and the loose sexuality of women of color. Indeed the corrective nature of this time period in welfare history suggests the practice of policing women's, especially non-white women's, sexuality as part and parcel to the American Welfare State, almost since its inception.

Even more shocking than the blatant racism of early welfare eligibility requirements, America's welfare narrative exhibits a long history of governmental control over women's reproductive capabilities, with women of color subject to the most restrictive consequences of such control. From mothers' pensions through TANF reform, welfare officials and policymakers have, with varying levels of success, sought to determine how, when, and with what frequency women on welfare bear children. Such efforts have included denying women access to abortions and less dangerous forms of birth control, tying benefits to the completion of risky medical procedures (IUD or Norplant implantation), refusing to increase benefits upon the birth of a child to a woman already on welfare, and even sterilization.[49] Although coercing women on welfare into sterilization has thankfully dropped out of practice in more recent years, welfare officials took advantage of this tactic for decades in the early to mid-20th century, most often targeting women of color. Convinced that poor women, especially poor women of color,

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[48] Mink, The Wages of Motherhood, 150

[49] Schoen, Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare, and Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade.

could not handle their own "out-of-control" libidos, welfare officials sought methods for discouraging welfare mother pregnancies that would simultaneously discourage them from having any sex at all. Often this meant that they would force such women—officially labeled "feeble-minded" by state mental health professionals—"to agree to eugenic sterilization or the insertion of an IUD as a condition for receiving welfare benefits for their children."[50] Despite the dangerous health risks and clear racial discrimination at play in such practices, many officials viewed sterilization as one of the most effective tools in the fight to redirect poor women's morality, with some states running legalized sterilization programs as recently as the 1970s.[51] Such programs often ran hand-in-hand with policies that allowed for random searches of welfare homes for male partners, primarily targeting women of color recipients; if a man was found in the home of an unmarried recipient, she risked losing all of her benefits.[52] These practices gradually lost popularity during the 1970s and 80s in the wake of the welfare rights movement and increased public scrutiny of eugenics politics, but they remain undeniable evidence of the Welfare State's patterns of oppression.

In more recent years, states have turned towards marriage promotion programs, family caps, and coercive birth control policies as means for regulating welfare recipients' sexual and reproductive practices. The advent of TANF in the 1990s presented individual states with the opportunity to revitalize sexual policing through new and different means. In the months and years immediately following the establishment of TANF, several legislators suggested coercing welfare recipients into using Norplant and other high-risk, long-acting contraceptives to curb welfare pregnancies, whether by

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[50] Schoen, Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare, 7.
[51] Schoen, Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare, 76.
[52] Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade, 52-53.

making such drugs more readily available through Medicaid, giving financial bonuses to recipients who chose to use Norplant, or making the use of such drugs conditional to the continued receipt of benefits.[53] Though these options comprise a spectrum of coercive severity, each nonetheless represents policy efforts to control poor women's reproductive capacities and sends the message that poor women cannot be trusted to make what the government deems "responsible" sexual choices.

Additionally, states such as West Virginia utilized their newfound latitude under TANF to funnel government welfare funds into marriage promotion programs.[54] Such programs, in their practice of granting financial bonuses to welfare recipients who marry, ultimately advocate marriage as the key to getting and staying off of welfare, whether or not the marriage is healthy or stable. Welfare reform thus tells poor mothers that their only real hope in escaping poverty lies in finding a man, simultaneously reinforcing a patriarchal definition of the successful American family and retaining a belief in women's subordinate value to the workforce.

Lastly, and most popular among TANF-led sexual policing practices, family caps enforce the view that poor women should not have children. A "family cap" means that the state will not increase a family's welfare benefits in the event of a new birth within the family. A woman already on welfare will thus continue to receive the same level of benefits even if she has another child. Even MFIP, despite its other relatively progressive measures, includes a family cap provision in its statutes. As Dorothy Roberts argues, not only do family caps support the view that a "meager" increase in benefits will encourage welfare mothers to have more children, but they "enforce the view that childbearing by

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[53] Dorothy Roberts, "Welfare's Ban on Poor Motherhood," Whose Welfare? ed. Gwendolyn Mink (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 153.
[54] Alexandra Starr, "Shotgun Weddings by Uncle Sam?" Business Week 3735 (2001): 68-70.

poor women is pathological and should be deterred through social policy."[55] Roberts, along with other feminist welfare reform scholars, contends that as with prior methods of policing welfare recipients' sexuality, the state uses each of these more contemporary tactics to the disproportionate disadvantage of women of color. African American women are still targeted more frequently under such policies than any other recipient demographic.[56] Poor, black motherhood remains under attack as the government continues to "[decide] who belongs to welfare mothers' families and what those families should look like."[57] For activists seeking to advocate the rights of women of color, and mothers of color in particular, a contemporary welfare rights movement thus represents a logical site from which to perform such advocacy, reclaiming the equality and dignity that they deserve.

Of course, women of color hardly comprise the only community with a history of oppression under American social welfare frameworks. National and state government institutions have long targeted LGBT individuals as presenting threats to the "American family." Citing immoral sexual practices as a basis for this argument, legislators and state officials have, as with women of color, sought to restrict queers' lifestyle choices in social welfare policy over the past century through coercive eugenics practices, by denying them adoptive rights, and through the promotion of heterosexual marriage in welfare reform. In excluding gay Americans from legal definitions of suitable families, the government has effectively cut them off from receiving many social welfare benefits, including public assistance under TANF.

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[55] Roberts, "Welfare's Ban on Poor Motherhood," Whose Welfare? 153.
[56] Roberts, "Welfare's Ban on Poor Motherhood," Whose Welfare? 152.
[57] Gwendolyn Mink, "Aren't Poor Single Mothers Women? Feminists, Welfare Reform, and Welfare Justice," Whose Welfare? ed. Gwendolyn Mink (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 172.

Although scholars have less data on the numbers of LGBT welfare recipients, both past and present, and thus a less comprehensive knowledge of such recipients than women of color on welfare, literature in other areas suggests that coercive reproductive practices similarly affected less privileged LGBT individuals, particularly those placed in prison or mental health institutions. Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association included homosexuality in its annual list of diagnosable mental disorders.[58] This meant that up until that year, and in some cases even after 1973, any individuals identified as LGBT, either through self- or second-party identification, were subject to state and federal statutes that governed the mental health profession. Throughout the 20th century, countless gay Americans found themselves confined to mental health institutions, often as subjects of scientific research designed to cure homosexuality.[59] In fact, only recently have state officials considered issuing formal apologies to all those coerced into dangerous reproductive procedures like sterilization. California officials for example, contemplated issuing one such apology in 2003 to the more than 20,000 individuals sterilized in the state between 1900 and 1979 due to diagnoses of mental illness, a population which includes numerous LGBT people.[60] Though the government largely discontinued such practices in the latter part of the 20th century, contemporary scholars demonstrate concern over recent technological advances that may help determine a fetus' sexual orientation *in utero*. Such advances have sparked new policy debates over the morality of fetal termination due to the results produced by pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (pgd) technology. The advent of this possible revitalization of eugenics politics,

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[58] Starr, "Adoption by Homosexuals: A Look at Differing State Court Opinions," 1498.
[59] Timothy F. Murphy, "Redirecting Sexual Orientation: Techniques and Justifications," The Journal of Sex Research, 29.4 (1992): 501-523.
[60] Chris Ayres, "Liberal California Confronts Years of Forced Sterilisation," The Times (London) 11 Jun. 2003, Overseas news: 24-25.

in combination with past methods of controlling queer sexuality, indicates a narrative of reproductive oppression of LGBT individuals at the hands of the American state. Although none of these practices directly tied to public assistance policy or programs, they nevertheless contribute to an image of LGBT individuals, supported by the state, as undesirable, deviant, or threatening citizens. Such image has likely made it easier for political and governmental institutions to develop restrictions on queer marriage and family practices, as dictated by law.

In addition to questionable medical practices, government officials and policymakers have also sought to control queer sexuality by restricting LGBT individuals' adoption rights, a practice which a few courts are only recently beginning to reverse. Prior to the APA's removal of homosexuality from its list of diagnosable mental disorders in 1973, most states commonly barred adoption by gay individuals simply on the grounds of mental health issues.[61] Even after the 1970s, however, gays and lesbians faced significant barriers to adoption. As illustrated by a 1985 custody case in Virginia in which a gay man failed to gain custody of his son on the grounds that the court felt his sexuality made him an "unfit" guardian, many LGBT parents could not gain custody rights of their biological children, let alone adopt a partner's or stranger's child.[62] Believing that gays and lesbians cannot provide suitable homes for children, many courts- federal, state, and district- over the past few decades have consistently rejected queers' adoption requests.

In some cases, such judicial decisions have legislative precedent backing them up; state statutes that either outright ban same-sex couples from adopting or require adopting

[61] Starr, "Adoption by Homosexuals," 1498
[62] Starr, "Adoption by Homosexuals," 1498

couples to be married prior to undergoing the adoption process. Florida is currently the only state with a statutory ban on adoption by any person identified by the courts as homosexual. A federal district court upheld the constitutionality of the Florida statute in the landmark case of *Lofton v. Kearney*, finding that the statute represented "a 'plausible' means of promoting the state's goal of promoting a child's best interest in being raised in a home 'stabilized by marriage' with a family consisting of 'both a mother and a father' so that the child may receive 'proper gender role modeling.'"[63] Relying on the rhetoric of stable marriages as a necessity for positive child-rearing not only enables courts to conveniently exclude gays and lesbians from adoptive processes in an indirect manner, but also allows them to create narrow definitions of the "proper" American family. Many legal scholars agree that LGBT adults are currently gaining more and more adoption victories in court, likely due to several recent studies that have found no greater incidence of child developmental issues in homes headed by homosexual couples than those headed by married, heterosexual couples.[64] Nonetheless, other state and federal legislation that promotes the American family as patriarchal and heterosexual- gay marriage bans at the state level, the Defense of Marriage Act, and marriage promotion in welfare reform- threaten the longevity of such victories. This risk suggests that LGBT advocates focus their energy on policy areas they may otherwise neglect as irrelevant to their cause, particularly domains like welfare reform that may not initially appear to significantly affect LGBT sociopolitical livelihood.

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[63] Martin R. Gardner, "Adoption by Homosexuals in the Wake of Lawrence v. Texas," Journal of Law & Family Studies, 6 (2004): 32.
[64] Starr, "Adoption by Homosexuals;" Gardner, "Adoption by Homosexuals in the Wake of Lawrence v. Texas;" Gibson, "Lesbian and Gay Prospective Adoptive Parents: The Legal Battle."

In the past few years, scholars focused on poverty, women's rights, and LGBT rights have started the analytical process of linking the future of gay rights to recent welfare reform initiatives. Academics like Gwendolyn Mink, Amy Lind, and Anna Marie Smith all note that the passage of both the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in the same year (1996) is hardly a coincidence.[65] The federal welfare reform of the 1990s, a part of the conservative right's Contract With America, presented right-leaning policymakers with the opportunity to revitalize pro-heterosexual marriage promotion in social welfare legislation. While DOMA establishes the federal definition of marriage as "between one man and one woman," PRWORA encourages states to use their TANF funding to promote marriage to welfare recipients. As Smith contends, "both the religious right's campaign against same-sex marriage and the welfare reformers' attack on the rights of single mothers contribute to a reactionary politicization of marriage" in the contemporary political arena.[66] More recent attempts by the Bush Administration to earmark hundreds of millions of dollars in federal welfare funds for marriage promotion programs during TANF reauthorization suggests that the risk of such politicization has only continued to grow, threatening further sexual policing of both women of color and queers. The continuing promotion of heterosexual marriage through TANF programs not only "discriminates against same-sex couples, single parents, and parents who choose not to marry their partners," but also "perpetuates the myth that single mothers, particularly

[65] Fineman, Mink, and Smith, "No Promotion of Marriage in TANF!"; Lind, "Legislating the Family: Heterosexist Bias in Social Welfare Policy Frameworks:" Smith, "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy: The Defense of Marriage Act and the Personal Responsibility Act."
[66] Smith, "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy," 303.

African-American and Latina women, are to blame for poverty in the United States."[67] Additionally, even if marriage promotion and restrictive definitions of the family in welfare reform did not threaten the wider LGBT community, they certainly threaten LGBT welfare recipients. While scholars can only guess at the numbers of LGBT individuals on welfare, both Smith and Lind cite the work of M.V. Lee Badgett, who consistently holds that discrimination against gays and lesbians puts them at a socioeconomic disadvantage. Badgett argues that lesbians, in particular, are overrepresented among America's most poor.[68] This fact alone should motivate LGBT activist organizations to take a closer look at welfare reform as an arena in which their constituents face significant threats to their rights as parents, partners, and family providers.

Negotiating the Politics of Interest and Welfare Rights

Understanding that a shared history of discrimination under America's social welfare systems may provide an impetus towards bridgework welfare rights activism between women of color and LGBT individuals does nothing, however, to suggest what form such activism should take. Indeed, the question remains to be answered as to how contemporary welfare rights organizers in general can most effectively and inclusively organize for improvements in the welfare state. A wide swath of literature exists that analyzes organizing strategies from those of social movements, to those of businesses, to those of non-profit organizations. Academics, if not organizers, recognize the welfare

[67] Fineman, Mink, and Smith, "No Promotion of Marriage in TANF!" 126.
[68] As cited in Smith, "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy," 319.

rights movement as starting in the mid-1960s.[69] This era of American history saw an exponential rise in interest groups, a phenomenon referred to by scholars as the "advocacy explosion."[70] Given the birth of the welfare rights movement and welfare rights organizations during this time, this thesis will thus examine possibilities for contemporary welfare rights activism from within the frame of interest group politics. Examining basic theories of interest group mobilization, particularly those that explore the role of coalition-building or the involvement of marginalized populations in interest organizing, will lay the groundwork for analyzing the past organizing tactics of the welfare rights movement and what the various successes and failures of these tactics suggest for those currently invested in welfare rights activism.

Even within the school of interest group politics, however, myriad scholars have put forth their own theories of how and why interest group form, flourish, and fail. One scholar, Dara Strolovitch, provides theories of marginalization and discrimination from within interest groups which are of particular relevance to the scope of my study. Strolovitch ultimately concludes that intersectionally marginalized populations—poor, African American women, for example—that take part in interest organizing tend to be ignored by the more advantaged members of their interest groups. Her argument stands in contrast to most traditional interest group theories, particularly those advocating broad-based coalitional organizing as the key to longevity in interest organizing, which suggests that those activists wishing to revitalize certain areas of interest advocacy may wish to find a middle-ground between draining their resources through organizational isolation and neglecting the needs of their most disadvantaged peers.

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[69] Blumberg and West, Women and Social Protest; Cloward and Piven, Poor People's Movements; Nadasen, Welfare Warriors.
[70] Berry, The Interest Group Society, 16.

Much of the literature on interest group politics that has come out in the last few decades points to the evolution of social movements, changes in policymaking, and commitment to a particular ideal or cause as the main catalysts for interest group formation. Jeffrey M. Berry defines an interest group as "an organized body of individuals who share some goals and who try to influence public policy."[71] Welfare rights organizations, representing a specific interest in protecting the rights and dignity of America's poverty-stricken families through positive changes in welfare policy, thus qualify, under this definition, as interest groups. Many interest groups, however, although their main desire may be to lobby state and national legislators to create policies in line with their particular interests, find themselves mixing focused lobbying with grassroots organizing in an effort to maintain member support. This reliance on more "in-the-streets" organizing tactics as a method for appealing to non-professional activists stems from the popularity of such strategies in social movements, most notably the civil rights, gay rights, and women's rights movements.[72] Furthermore, most interest groups struggle to provide large enough incentives for individuals to sign on as members, donating their time, labor, and money for one specific cause. This view was popularized by the works of Mancur Olson in the late 1960s. Olson argues that any given interest group likely wrestles with what he terms "free-riding" in its organizing. As Paul Sabatier explains, Olson saw an inherent paradox in organizations requesting new members to join a group whose current leadership and membership were already working to the benefit of individuals not in the organization.[73] For example, a welfare rights organization that seeks to increase TANF grant funds to each of the states may have a hard time

[71] Berry, The Interest Group Society, 4.
[72] Costain, "Social Movements as Interest Groups: The Case of the Women's Movement."
[73] Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories," 102.

encouraging other welfare recipients to join the group not just because public assistance recipients tend to have little time and money to spend on organizing, but also because they will benefit from a successful lobby for increased TANF funding, whether or nor they join the organization. As Sabatier goes on to argue, groups that have a fundamentally ideological root, such as a belief in the right for poor people to receive the aid they require and be treated with respect and equity in the receipt of such aid, tend to appeal to individuals' sense of commitment and duty to a cause as significant incentives for taking the symbolic step of becoming a member of an interest group organization.[74] Beyond the basic issues of creating effective organizational and lobbying agendas that will appeal to potential members, however, interest groups focused on the needs of the economically disadvantaged face organizing difficulties that many interest groups, especially the larger, corporate-oriented groups, rarely encounter.

Despite their many disagreements about the details of the inner workings of interest group dynamics, most interest group scholars agree that the poor remain one of the populations that are both the hardest to organize within interest group politics and are severely underrepresented by past and existing advocacy organizations. Berry supports this theory, contending that "people who are desperately poor will be hard to organize under any circumstances. The disadvantaged cannot afford to contribute to interest groups and often lack a sense of efficacy, a belief that they can influence public policy."[75] Both Sabatier and Graham K. Wilson agree with Berry, arguing that currently, the poor "are badly represented" in interest groups,[76] and the past struggle of the welfare rights

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[74] Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories," 125.
[75] Berry, The Interest Group Society, 50.
[76] Graham K. Wilson, "American Interest Groups in Comparative Perspective," The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed, ed. Mark P. Petracca (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 95.

movement to correct the "relative disorganization of the poor" was an "unsuccessful effort."[77] Because interest groups so often find their strongest base of support in individuals personally invested in the policy outcomes the groups seek to achieve, the logical base of support for a welfare rights advocacy group exists in welfare recipients, themselves, who rarely have the resources—money for dues, transportation to and time for meetings, or extensive knowledge of legislative processes—to create and maintain interest groups. In addition, even if a group of welfare recipients did find the means to start an advocacy organization, the fact remains that the organizations with the largest resources—the most grant money, the best and most professional lobbyists, expansive headquarters—receive much more legislative and governmental attention to their demands than those just barely managing to keep their groups running.[78] This theory, known as "plural elitism," indicates that for those groups representing the interests of the poor, or other institutionally disadvantaged populations, the answer to how to maintain organizational legitimacy may lie in creating alliances and coalitions with more moneyed interest groups representing much broader interests.

Coalitional politics are nothing new to scholars of interest group mobilization. Indeed, many acknowledge that coalitions act as the life-blood of interest groups, preventing individual organizations from running low on resources while simultaneously expanding their visibility and power within political circles. Calling interest group coalitions "ubiquitous," Diana Evans argues that the wide networks of alliances between interest groups are highly practical, as "groups seek to maximize their chances of [legislative] success by working whenever possible with like-minded colleagues, thus

[77] Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories," 99.
[78] Cigler and Loomis, "Introduction: The Changing Nature of Interest Group Politics," 4.

increasing the total resources available to them and the credibility of their efforts."[79] Drawing off of each other's lobbying and membership strengths, organizations in coalition with one another stand a better chance of increasing the amount of political attention paid to their organizational interests than a single group working on its own. Whether formed permanently around a broad issue, such as social justice, or created temporarily to encourage the passage of a particular piece of legislation, coalitions thus represent an opportunity for less advantaged organizations to gain a political voice and their leaders to meet power players in the issues of their interest. Additionally, depending on the foundation of a given coalition, such alliances can bring together myriad populations that might otherwise work together on an infrequent basis. As Berry explains, "issues can cut across a wide variety of groups, prompting alliances of lobbies from many different policy areas."[80] While welfare policies may only directly affect a proportionally small population of Americans, the issues of discrimination, racism, sexism, and homophobia that such policies can raise, however, affect substantially larger groups of people, thus indicating possibilities for coalition-building between various social justice organizations around welfare and anti-poverty legislation.

Unfortunately, in the process of forming coalitions around more broad-based sociopolitical issues, interest groups run the risk of neglecting the specific needs of their membership constituencies. Acknowledging this tendency in coalitional politics, Berry contends that "the larger a coalition grows, the more peripheral members it attracts and

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[79] Diana M. Evans, "Lobbying the Committee: Interest Groups and the House Public Works and Transportation Committee," Interest Group Politics, eds. Allen J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991) 262.
[80] Berry, The Interest Group Society, 169.

the more effort is required to manage the coalition."[81] Particularly if the focus issues of a coalition expand with its membership, the less likely it will be for coalition leaders to commit the time and energy necessary to addressing the concerns of the original coalition members. Interest groups advocating for the needs of already marginalized populations, such as those in poverty, should therefore take extra caution in their involvement with coalitions. Becoming too dependent on the resources of a coalition or committing too much time and energy to an alliance that does not consistently address the issues most pertinent to an organization's membership can lead to the eventual development of an interest group that no longer serves its supposed interest.

Underscoring this potential risk in coalition-building, interest groups also, whether intentionally or not, tend to focus on the goals and issues of their most advantaged members over those of their most disadvantaged members. Dara Strolovitch argues that this actually tends to occur frequently within organizations that already claim to represent underserved populations, such as women, people of color, and LGBT individuals.[82] In a study of women's, racial minority, and economic justice organizations, Strolovitch finds that "while advocacy groups provide some representation for their disadvantaged members, they are *substantially less active when it comes to issues affecting disadvantaged subgroups* than they are when it comes to issues affecting more advantaged subgroups."[83] Even if they are not aware of this process, the leaders of such organizations seem unable to recognize and support the fact that their various members experience different types and levels of marginalization.

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[81] Berry, The Interest Group Society, 167.
[82] Strolovitch, Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics.
[83] Strolovitch, "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged?" 894.

As with "bridging" scholars, Strolovitch points out that for individuals who experience marginalization on racial, gendered, classed, and sexualized terms—poor, queer women of color, for example—organizational agendas that never focus on intersectional issues will increasingly make the needs and concerns of such individuals less visible. Women's, racial minority, and economic justice organizations thus tend to focus on what Strolovitch terms "single-axis" oppression—gender, race, and class, respectively—most often without considering their intersections or what such intersections might mean for the "intersectionally disadvantaged" members of their groups.[84] For organizers hoping to avoid replicating these patterns of behavior, it is prudent not only to remain vigilant about keeping privilege biases off of organizational agendas, but to encourage coalition-building that recognizes intersectional marginalization as well. Indeed, as Strolovitch argues, intentionally focusing on intersectionality is key to developing organizational coalitions that truly represent the interests of the various groups' disadvantaged constituents. Simply organizing a coalition, particularly one more permanent and broad-based in its nature does little to guarantee that said coalition will not simply reproduce individual organizations' tendency towards prioritizing the needs of their most advantaged members.[85] When organized with care and intentionality, however, coalitions represent spaces in which the ideals of bridgework can be realized, as "the relationships nurtured by coalitions can lead to a broader vision, to understandings about how issues are connected, and ultimately, to more comprehensive solutions to the multifaceted issues that face marginalized groups."[86] While even coalitions organized with the best of intentions run the risk of neglecting intersectional

[84] Strolovitch, "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged?" 896.
[85] Strolovitch, Affirmative Advocacy Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics, 192.
[86] Strolovitch, Affirmative Advocacy Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics, 189.

oppression in their policy priorities, they nevertheless offer some of the highest potential for extremely disadvantaged populations to gain voice and representation in both legislative and organizing processes.

In a perfect world, the impetus for creating coalitions that intentionally focus on intersectional issues would come from well-established, statewide organizations with extensive resources and funding, thus illustrating their acceptance of the burden of developing organizational bridges. In terms of contemporary welfare rights activism, however, welfare rights organizers remain largely responsible for extending requests for coalitional work to organizations advocating for women, people of color, and LGBT individuals. If they chose to do so, such action would both signal a recognition of the intersecting forms of marginalization that many welfare recipients experience and potentially help put welfare rights on the agendas of organizations that might otherwise ignore the issue. By joining together in the struggle for welfare rights advocacy, such groups can become more effective and more inclusive in their organizing, exemplifying the spirit and intentions behind bridgework activism.

The Welfare Rights Movement

Having established a basic theoretical understanding of the dynamics of interest group politics, particularly as they relate to coalition-building, I will now move to examine how such dynamics played out during the surge of welfare rights activism in the mid to late-twentieth century and what such historical analysis suggests for contemporary welfare rights organizing. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the U.S. welfare rights movement, while not a widely studied facet of American history, has garnered some

scholarly attention as a pivotal period in the evolution of America's Welfare State. Occurring alongside other more prominent social movements of the 1960s and 70s such as the civil rights movement, women's liberation, and the fight for gay rights, the welfare rights movement struggled to give a voice to the underrepresented and frequently misunderstood poor women and children that made up the nation's welfare recipient population. Organizing through community and grassroots-based campaigns, religious and civil rights alliances, mass demonstrations, and nationwide organizations, welfare recipients and their allies sought not only to insure improved systems of public assistance as a *right* for all those in need, but to reclaim and redefine the public image of American welfare recipients. Understanding the people and organizations involved in such activism, their goals and organizing strategies, and the various factors that led to the decline of the welfare rights movement in the mid-1970s can help illustrate the more successful avenues local welfare rights activists and their allies should seek out to make contemporary welfare rights organizing as effective and inclusive as possible.

The foremost scholarly work on the welfare rights movement can aid in this understanding, as academic experts on the topic have already written comprehensive chronologies of the movement. Respected scholars in the field, such as Frances Fox Piven, Richard Cloward, Guida West, Jacqueline Pope, Felicia Kornbluh, Susan Metz, and Premilla Nadasen, have all produced groundbreaking pieces on the importance and effects of the welfare rights movement, building a firm theoretical foundation for an area of study that, prior to Piven and Cloward's writing, remained fixated on pre-World War I welfare agitation among middle-class, white American women. While many of these scholars agree upon the timeline of events within the movement and even most of the

factors integral in the birth and decline of the movement, they differ in the importance placed on various organizing strategies of welfare rights leaders and the ideological intentions behind such strategies.

The greatest of such difference lies between the work of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, and Premilla Nadasen. Active themselves in jumpstarting the welfare rights movement in the 1960s, Piven and Cloward contend that moving away from more broad-based, militant tactics of population mobilization and toward micro-managed, narrowly-focused organizations left the welfare rights movement without a wide enough base of support and irreparable internal tensions. They argue that in losing sight of the sheer power of poor people to mobilize in widespread demonstrations, welfare rights leaders signaled the demise of the movement by allowing themselves to get caught up in organizational and legislative politicking.[87] In contrast, Nadasen emphasizes that the more broad-based organizing strategies of the movement contributed to racial and gender inequalities within welfare rights activism and only through reclaiming organizational leadership positions and moving away from broader coalitions were poor, black women able to articulate their needs and experiences as welfare recipients. In doing so, she points out, black female welfare mothers created a new brand of black feminism that allowed for the expression of their multiple identities as raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized subjects within America's poor population.[88] The relatively rapid demise of the welfare rights movement in the mid-1970s and its failure to reappear as such an extensive area of activism in the years since suggests that the leaders and members of the movement were unable to strike the delicate balance between these two frameworks in time to keep

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[87] Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[88] Nadasen, Welfare Warriors.

welfare rights activism from fading in the public consciousness. Learning how to do so in the wake of contemporary welfare reform may prove to be the key to revitalizing the welfare rights movement on local and national levels.

The rest of this section will therefore tease out the intricacies of Piven and Cloward's, and Nadasen's arguments. While much of their scholarship works in tandem with each other, attesting to the significance of the welfare rights movement and the diligence of its leaders, this basic theoretical difference remains. It is this difference that I will work to reconcile in an effort to articulate possible organizing strategies for current, local welfare rights activists; strategies that both work to empower welfare recipients as multiply-identifying subjects, while also integrating coalitional and bridgework activism as a means to create a wider and more powerful support base for welfare rights.

Unlike many of the other welfare rights scholars named above, Piven and Cloward not only wrote about the welfare rights movement, but participated in it, as well. In fact, some of their earliest work, such as their article "A Strategy to End Poverty"—appearing in *The Nation* in 1966, but circulated among activist communities the year prior—has been credited with helping to jumpstart the movement. In the article, the authors advocate for a mass mobilization of poor people, arguing that vast numbers of Americans earned well below the eligibility standards for public assistance under AFDC and only by flooding the nation's welfare offices with demands for that assistance would the poor get the attention that they deserved.[89] At the time, grassroots activists and welfare recipients in various states had already begun the work of creating localized welfare rights organizations focused on advocating for the needs of those currenty on AFDC rolls. Cities such as San Fransisco, Baltimore, and Minneapolis led this trend of

[89] Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven "A Strategy to End Poverty," Nation 202.18 (1966): 510-517.

localized organizing, although Brooklyn quickly became the powerhouse of city-based welfare rights organizing after the establishment of the National Welfare Rights Organization in 1966, the same year that Piven and Cloward's article was published.[90]

Despite the drive that localized activism seemed to demonstrate, Piven and Cloward stress that simply working toward gaining better benefits for those on welfare rolls is not enough. Truly disrupting the welfare system requires mobilization by all those who *should* be receiving public assistance, as a way to assert welfare as a right for the underprivileged. They explain that "political influence by the poor is mobilized, not organized" and that "just by engaging in that defiant act" of demanding deserved public assistance, poor families "could contribute to a fiscal and political crisis."[91] Because of this, the authors' work both during the 1960s and more recently consistently supports the practice of mass disruptive demonstrations—sit-ins at welfare offices, flooding welfare offices with applications, marches, etc.—as a broad-based, non-organizational attack on the government's failure to eradicate poverty. In "A Strategy to End Poverty," they suggest the development of "a national network of cadre organizations," essentially an "organization of organizers- composed of students, churchmen, civil rights activists, anti-poverty workers, and militant AFDC recipients" that would oversee broader movements by the poor to demand public assistance and thus constitute a more coalitional approach to welfare rights.[92]

Piven and Cloward's work caught the attention of George Wiley, then an associate national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the man who

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[90] For more on Brooklyn-based welfare rights organizations, see Jackie Pope, "Women in the Welfare Rights Struggle: The Brooklyn Welfare Action Counci,l" Women and Social Protest, eds. Rhoda Lois Blumberg and Guida West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 57-74.
[91] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 284.
[92] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 284.

would, along with black women leaders Johnnie Tillmon and Beulah Sanders, transform their ideas into the creation of the largest nationwide welfare rights group, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). Ironically, his belief in the authors' arguments for more militant mobilization tactics led Wiley to the conclusion that the best format for creating such mobilization existed in the creation of a national organization for welfare recipients, the exact remedy Piven and Cloward recommend against. Strongly upholding the scholars' opinion that the mobilized poor represent a powerful tool for political change, the NWRO did organize mass demonstrations during the late 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on sit-ins in welfare offices across the country that demanded the release of funds for "special grants" given under AFDC for particular purchases (winter clothes, furniture, bedding, etc). Such demonstrations proved to be both successful in terms of the government releasing the grants and yielding large turnout rates of welfare recipients, which initially meant higher membership numbers in local and national welfare rights organizations.

Both Jackie Pope and Susan Hertz display similar findings in their case studies of Brooklyn and Minnesota-based welfare rights groups, respectively, arguing that militant organizing tactics such as "special grants" demonstrations were wildly popular among welfare rights activists in the early years of the movement.[93] According to Piven and Cloward, however, the receipt of special grants left little incentive for welfare recipients to maintain their memberships for the long-term and the backlash by the government in eventually eliminating special grants altogether and establishing "flat grant" funding led to a rapid decline in mass demonstration activism by the early 1970s. The combination of

[93] See Pope "Women in the Welfare Rights Struggle: the Brooklyn Welfare Action Council" and Hertz "The Politics of the Welfare Mothers Movement: A Case Study."

these two factors, they argue, meant that "the central dilemma of mass-based, permanent organizing theory- how to sustain continuing participation in the absence of continuing inducements to participation- had not been solved."[94] The NWRO most prominently and smaller localized welfare rights groups more privately, faced the difficult decision of either expanding or narrowing their organizing focus in order to revitalize their flagging memberships; a decision that may have sounded the death knell for the NWRO years before it actually disbanded.

By the early 1970s, the NWRO had already begun to see a steady decline in its membership ranks, and the internal tensions between the women of color recipient activists and the mostly white, male staff had started to significantly pull the organization in two very different directions. Wiley, as the national director, strongly felt that the NWRO should open its ranks to the working poor and seek out coalitional organizing with wider communities of the poor and elderly.[95] This movement away from a specific focus on welfare rights to broader themes of economic justice found support by the white male staffers of the organization, but outraged the recipient activists of the organization. The majority African American recipient organizers steadily rebuffed attempts to widen the activist basis of the NWRO, although it did open its membership to the working poor in 1969, arguing that working on much broader issues of economic justice is exactly what would erase the voice of women of color welfare recipients and gloss over the racial, gender, and sexual discrimination continually at play in the AFDC system.[96] By December of 1972, these internal tensions had become too strained and Wiley left the NWRO leadership in the hands of Johnnie Tillmon, seeking out and creating new

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[94] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 287.
[95] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 314.
[96] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements. 312.

organizations that focused on wider coalitional efforts to end poverty. Despite the passion with which Tillmon and other black women leaders of the NWRO approached their new control over the direction of the organization, the damage had already been done. Unable to revive its flagging membership and maintain a workable budget, the NWRO declared bankruptcy in 1973 and closed its national offices, simultaneously shutting down local WRO branches all over the country.[97] The organization never again restarted. Most local welfare rights groups experienced similar difficulties during this same time and by 1975, the welfare rights movement had effectively reached a state of undeniable decline.

While Piven and Cloward have produced several comprehensive analyses of the rise and fall of the NWRO and the wider welfare rights movement, their continual insistence that organizational politics are largely to blame for the movement's demise demonstrates a scholarly short-sightedness in the important role that welfare rights organizations played in empowering women of color welfare recipients. The authors certainly recognize that several external factors also led to the decline of the movement, citing the ebbing of the black power movement and the political swing to the right with Nixon's administration as two contributing factors in the movement away from welfare rights. They argue, however, that the NWRO and other welfare rights organizations ultimately failed because of the simple fact that they became organizations to begin with, rather than truly grasping hold of the power of mobilizing through coalitional networks. The NWRO, they contend, "could perhaps have left a legacy of another million families on the rolls," had it chosen to "[pursue] a mobilizing strategy."[98] Because welfare rights leaders allowed themselves to get enmeshed in the bureaucratic details of organizational

[97] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 352.
[98] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 353.

and legislative politics, Piven and Cloward consistently stress, they failed to adequately "[exploit] the momentary unrest among the poor to obtain the maximum concessions possible in return for the restoration of quiescence."[99] As Jackie Pope points out, the two authors continued for years after the decline of the movement to uphold mobilization, working poor coalitions, and other "front-line" street organizing strategies as the key to fixing welfare and ending American poverty.[100] This argument, while valuable in its illustration of the strengths of broad-based coalitional activism and the dangers of organizational bureaucracy, completely sidesteps the issue of how to address the concerns and needs of minority populations from within large, loosely organized networks. The tendency for people of color, and particularly women of color, to be shoved aside in social movements based on wide mobilizing strategies was not unknown to the recipient activists of the welfare rights movement. Organizations such as the NWRO represented an opportunity for poor black women to assert their dignity as women of color and demand the public assistance they deserved without being overshadowed by needs and voices of white people and men, a fact which Piven and Cloward's work continually ignores. In order to understand how to create effective welfare rights organizing today, it thus becomes necessary to incorporate Piven and Cloward's focus on coalition-building with scholarly theories of identity politics and feminism within welfare rights, for which Premilla Nadasen most prominently advocates.

Nadasen outlines a similar chronology to Piven and Cloward's for the welfare rights movement, although she focuses the majority of her work on the role of black women in the movement, rather than the more general overview of Piven and Cloward's

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[99] Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, 353.
[100] Pope, "Women in the Welfare Rights Struggle," 70-71.

work. As one of the first social movements in which black women acted as key players, welfare rights was a pivotal space for women of color to articulate their needs, a circumstance that both the civil rights movement and women's liberation had failed to fully realize. As Nadasen points out, despite actually being a minority on the welfare rolls in the 1960s and 70s, contrary to popular public opinion at the time, African Americans, with a female majority, made up roughly 85% of activists during the welfare rights movement, with whites constituting a mere 10% and Latinos only 5% (estimates of Native American involvement are less than 1%).[101] This discrepancy in representation between black women on the welfare rolls and involved in welfare rights organizing suggests that racial discrimination in welfare practices presented a far more compelling inducement to activism than simply the governmental neglect of the poor on which Piven and Cloward focus. As Nadasen and other scholars argue, while poor welfare policies and practices hurt all AFDC families, women of color on welfare suffered disproportionate discrimination at the hands of caseworkers, state officials, and policymakers. The push for welfare rights gave them the chance to bring this discrimination to light.

Like Piven and Cloward, Nadasen credits George Wiley with making enormous efforts to get a nationwide welfare rights movement off the ground, but she argues that he did not do so without the help of black women welfare recipients like Johnnie Tillmon and Beulah Sanders, a partnership that would eventually breakdown in the later years of the NWRO. Tillmon, Sanders, and many other welfare mothers had already participated in small-scale, grassroots welfare rights activism years before the founding of the

[101] Premilla Nadasen, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement: Black Feminism and the Struggle for Welfare Rights," Feminist Studies 28.2 (2002): 277.

NWRO.[102] The establishment of a national organization and subsequent local chapters, however, gave these women a much larger platform from which to speak. Beyond fighting for access to public assistance and special grants, the black women of the NWRO and local welfare rights groups also agitated for fair hearings in instances of caseworker discrimination and the right to control their own bodies.[103] For black welfare recipients, Nadasen contends, the welfare rights struggle was as much about asserting their dignity as raced, gendered, classed, and sexualized subjects as it was about defining public assistance as a *right* for poor American citizens.

While Wiley and other male staffers in the NWRO, both black and white, began pushing for broader coalitional efforts in economic justice, the black women organizers, particularly Tillmon, viewed such strategies as a significant threat to making real changes in the welfare system for those already systematically disadvantaged by it: women of color. By moving away from challenging specific welfare policies, Wiley and his followers would also be moving away from those areas that most deeply impacted the majority of welfare rights activists. One of the issues most likely to lose its visibility in such a shift was the control of black women's bodies by the welfare system. The frequent practice in the 60s and 70s of welfare officials telling recipients how, when, and where they could engage in sexual relationships, have children, or access abortion and birth control was only compounded by issues of racism.[104] In response to these restrictions on their bodies and behaviors, women welfare rights activists, but particularly women of

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[102] Nadasen, Welfare Warriors 15
[103] For more on fair hearings, see Felicia Kornbluh, "A Human Right to Welfare? Social Protest among Women Welfare Recipients after World War II," Women's America: Refocusing the Past, eds. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron de Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 552-559, and Kornbluh, "Goals of the National Welfare Rights Movement: Why We Still Need Them Thirty Years Later."
[104] Nadasen, Welfare Warriors, 51.

color, held demonstrations, produced handbooks and leaflets stating their rights, and lobbied legislators to give them control over their own lives. In contrast to anti-domestic sentiment of the women's rights movement, welfare rights activists defended their positions as mothers and their right to provide nurturing care to their children. Nadasen argues that "their concerns for their children often spurred their involvement in the welfare rights struggle and their status as mothers was inseparable from their activism."[105] Both Anne Valk and Ellen Reese argue similarly in their work on the movement that ideologies of motherhood and maternalism, redefined from the myopically white maternalism of the earlier 20th century, acted as sites of empowerment for welfare rights activists, who felt strongly that poor women should not be punished for having children.[106]

Despite their defense of motherhood, however, welfare rights organizers also vehemently defended poor women's right to reproductive choice and access to birth control. Taught to be ashamed of themselves and their sexual practices by caseworkers and officials with the power to cut their welfare benefits if they were found with a man in the house, public assistance recipients harnessed the power of the welfare rights movement to reclaim their sexuality with dignity. Nadasen contends that in both protecting their status as mothers and asserting their right to control their sexual and reproductive selves, welfare rights activists ultimately confronted the welfare system with a "[belief] that women should have control over their sexuality and their reproduction and

[105] Nadasen, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement," 278.
[106] See Anne M. Valk, " 'Mother Power:' The Movement for Welfare Rights in Washington, D.C." Journal of Women's History 11.4 (2000) 34-59, and Reese "Income Rights, Mothers' Rights, or Workers' Rights? Collective Action Frames, Organizational Ideologies, and the American Welfare Rights Movement."

autonomy in choosing partners."[107] The welfare rights movement thus became a tool for poor women of color to reconcile the domestic sphere with reproductive choice for women of all socioeconomic classes, an act women's lib had yet to accomplish, while also challenging the sexual stereotypes of black women created by both mainstream white America and the black power movement. Unfortunately, because Wiley and the other male leaders of the NWRO handed control over to Tillmon and other women of color activists once the movement was already exhibiting signs of decline, women organizers had only a brief period of time in which such activism garnered national attention.

In contrast to Piven and Cloward, Nadasen thus places high value on the role of organizations, particularly the NWRO, in achieving significant successes within the welfare rights movement prior to its decline. Although both sets of scholarship identify internal tensions as the single most likely factor contributing to the movement's demise, Nadasen credits the lack of support for black women leaders by white and male staffers for the eventual failure of the NWRO,[108] while Piven and Cloward blame the decline on the initial move to centralize welfare rights organizing in one national group. Both conclusions suggest various organizing strategies for those looking to revitalize welfare rights activism today. Piven and Cloward make a compelling case for loosely controlled mobilization, based in a network of "cadre organizations," thus avoiding the dangers of bureaucratic entanglement and reaching wider communities that both need and can provide differing forms of support. For activists looking to create a wide support base for broader economic justice, including welfare rights, Piven and Cloward's framework

[107] Nadasen, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement," 281.
[108] Nadasen, Welfare Warriors, 222.

presents a viable and logical option. Despite its coalitional basis, however, this framework, as illustrated by Nadasen's analysis of the welfare rights movement, ultimately fails to acknowledge the complex identity politics that bridgework activism should seek to address. In only focusing on larger issues of poverty, Piven and Cloward's framework ignores the layers of race, gender, and sexual discrimination that continue to inform welfare politics.

While it certainly fills in the gap left by Piven and Cloward, Nadasen's work also fails to offer a completely satisfactory organizing strategy. As she demonstrates, the establishment of definitive organizations at local and national levels was key to the empowerment of black welfare rights activists. The opportunity to hold leadership positions in such organizations gave poor women of color, perhaps for the first time, the power to explore their multiple identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality.[109] The ability to maintain this power while also running complex organizations without the help of more broad-based coalitions proved unsustainable, indicating that contemporary activists cannot wholly reject either Piven and Cloward's or Nadasen's frameworks in favor of the other.

The solution, as is often the case, lies somewhere in the gray area between the two frameworks. Creating a wide network of coalitions and alliances appears necessary to keeping a movement going throughout times of organizational tension and, when done well, could prove to work to the benefit of multiply-identifying subjects, as is the case with the bridgework activism I suggest. Achieving practical successes for welfare recipients, particularly those already at a disadvantage in the system, simultaneously requires the maintenance of organizations focusing specifically on welfare rights, but also

[109] Nadasen, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement."

active in coalitional networks. The key thus lies in *what types* of coalitions and alliances welfare rights groups choose to participate. Connecting with other communities that also experience systematic discrimination under social welfare policies, such as the elderly, disabled, immigrant women, and LGBT individuals, could help welfare rights activists avoid the pitfalls of both organizing frameworks. By working with communities of people whose experiences of discrimination are similarly complicated by issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality, welfare rights activists stand a much better chance of revitalizing the welfare rights movement with a firm support base and without running the high risk of losing their visibility in coalitional work.

Conclusion: Moving Bridgework from Theory to Praxis

Even this new framework of organizational bridging, a reconciliation of two already advanced sets of scholarship, is only truly useful if it is effectively applied in a practical setting. Understanding that bridgework provides an efficient and potentially effective method for addressing the interests of intersectionally disadvantaged populations and actually implementing a bridging framework do not necessarily line up as easily as one might hope. Organizational maintenance demands, legislative expectations, and inter-organizational tensions may prevent actual organizers from achieving the progressive ends for which bridgework theory aims. The examination of welfare rights activism between women of color and the LGBT community in Minnesota affords the opportunity to observe the potential for practical application of such theories. Such examination should address whether these communities are already at work in contemporary welfare rights organizing and if not, how activists and key welfare

policymakers view the potential for success of this framework. The following chapter will thus present the findings of my interviews with local activists and legislators, giving indications both as to the evolution of Minnesota's modern welfare rights movement in the wake of welfare reform and the direction which those interviewed believe the movement and future welfare legislation should follow. In turn, this information, coming from those intimately involved in Minnesota's legislative and organizing processes, gives a complex illustration of the practical opportunities for and barriers to bridgework activism around welfare rights within Minnesota's activist communities.

Chapter 3—Sticky Politics: Negotiating Welfare Rights Activism Within Organizational and Legislative Processes

The theories I examine and build upon in the prior chapter can only take us so far in understanding the complex social and political dynamics underscoring Minnesota's welfare system. Gaining useful insight drawn from the field requires speaking to the people and organizations connected in myriad ways to the individuals and institutions affected by public assistance programs. While this research does have its limitations, the information gathered in qualitative interviews with advocates for women of color, LGBT individuals, and welfare rights, supplemented by information I obtained in interviews with state legislators, has significant implications. Evidence from the field illustrates not only the multitude of advocacy work being done on behalf of Minnesotan women of color and gays and lesbians, but the amount of work that remains to be done, in order that welfare rights for marginalized populations act as a policy priority for both activist organizations and legislators. The communities on which this thesis focuses have yet to develop a coalitional effort on welfare rights, but changes in the political climate at the legislature and organizational ideals and structures already in place suggest that the space exists for the possible development of such an effort.

To delineate the organizing conditions in Minnesota and what they suggest for the potential application of a bridgework model, the chapter will lay out the current actions being taken by local activist organizations and move on to a discussion of activist and legislative response to the idea of coalition-building around welfare rights. It will begin by outlining the structures of issue organizing various advocacy groups employ, as well as their different approaches to lobbying. The chapter will then move on to examine whether and how organizations already participate in coalitional processes, and how both

activists and legislators perceive coalitions as useful tools in successfully motivating policy change, particularly in the area of welfare reform. Lastly, I will discuss the capacity for bridgework activism in welfare rights to provide the specific changes in welfare policy hearings that legislators view as necessary to developing a more comprehensive and improved statewide welfare program.

Interviews with organizational representatives and state legislators highlighted the activism performed by many different Minnesota-based organizations. This chapter focuses on four in particular: OutFront Minnesota, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, Ely Minnesota Progressive Organization of Women for Equality and Reform (EMPOWER), and the Minnesota Welfare Rights Committee (WRC). These four groups share a general agenda of social justice, but their different approaches give life to this chapter's analysis. OutFront, a statewide organization started in the late 1980s, advocates for LGBT rights and seeks to ensure that queer individuals have access to the resources and services they need throughout the entire state. OutFront has grown tremendously since its inception and currently operates as a staff- and volunteer-run organization, with program directors in various areas (communications, public policy, etc.) and a board of directors shaping the organization's activist priorities. Like OutFront, the Women's Foundation also operates on a statewide basis, with a larger staff base than many nonprofits, organizing around issues that affect women and girls. Although it has a lobbying, research, and public policy focus, the Foundation largely functions as a grant-making organization, granting funds to groups and efforts that focus on positive social and economic change for women and girls, particularly women and girls of color. By comparison to both of these, EMPOWER advocates for the rights of women and girls, but

does so on an extremely localized level. A small, volunteer-run organization based in the small, northern, rural town of Ely, MN, EMPOWER mainly focuses on educating and supporting the women within their township community, with little funding and no paid staff to expand their reach much further outward into the state. Another small, localized group, the Welfare Rights Committee is the only organization in the state with welfare rights as its primary organizing priority.[110] With women of color comprising a significant portion of its membership and leadership, the WRC is based in the Twin Cities and focuses its efforts on creating change at the Capitol, although its all-volunteer leadership does consciously try to include welfare recipients from across the state in its lobbying efforts. A lack of financial and transportation resources, in addition to the tremendous strain asking low-income individuals to devote so much time and energy to coming to the Twin Cities has on such individuals, means that such attempts can often fail to be fully realized.

As helpful as it is to analyze the various dynamics of organizational relationships in the context of this project, practically applying a lobbying-based coalitional model also requires understanding the goals and expectations of policymakers, themselves, particularly as such goals and expectations relate to their interactions with local activist groups. This chapter draws particularly on eight interviews with legislators. As with the organizational interviews, this sample is relatively small compared to the vast numbers of legislators who have been in office since MFIP's inception, yet the ideas and perceptions they shared are highly important to understanding how legislators view both MFIP and

[110] The Welfare Rights Committee is also a founding member of the Minnesota Welfare Rights Coalition, but based on interview comments and the Coalition's website, it appears that the Committee and the Coalition, at this point, basically comprise the same entity, although the WRC interviewee did point out that the Coalition has found a base of membership support in Duluth to which the Twins-Cities-based Committee did not previously seek access.

the potential for useful collaboration among organizing communities in order to shape the direction of state-level welfare.

While the interviewed legislators come from a variety of backgrounds, represent extremely different districts, and claim diverse ideologies, they expressed remarkably similar views on MFIP, welfare rights lobbying, and the dynamics of activist lobbying. General consensus emerges on the desirability of more and different types of welfare recipients testifying at the Capitol, of coalition-based lobbying by several groups on consolidated policy platforms, and of bringing MFIP back from the severely negative setbacks it has suffered in recent years, which will require major legislative and organizational efforts. Creating comprehensive solutions to current organizational inequities will do little to ensure that MFIP effectively serves disadvantaged communities if such solutions do not also take into account the needs and interests of policymakers. Building new and better coalitional bridges between organizations like EMPOWER, OutFront, the Women's Foundation, and the Welfare Rights Committee that specifically work to bring more and varying MFIP recipients to the Capitol could prove to be an integral step in sparking the political will necessary to realigning MFIP's operation with its original mission to lift underprivileged families not only out of welfare, but out of poverty, as well.

Justifications for Broad Issue Organizing

Because organizations guide their political action based on a central organizational mission, identifying the key issues each group views as integral to sustaining their advocacy vision makes a logical starting point for my analysis.

Developing a framework of interorganizational bridgework will help little if the framework cannot account for the ideological ends the various organizations involved seek to reach. The scope with which organizations address different issue areas reflect how willing its leaders may be to participate in coalitional efforts around a given issue and at what level they choose to participate. Broad issue organizing may thus suggest a willingness to participate in similarly broad-reaching coalitions, while coalitional efforts more narrow in their policy focus may meet with less approval among organizations seeking a wide scope in their organizational agendas. In the case of welfare rights, activism and coalition-building around the broader conceptions of economic justice and anti-poverty work tend to rise to the top of large, statewide organizations' priority lists, leaving activism around more narrow policy programs like MFIP in the hands of welfare-focused groups.

Ironically, what organizers note as a recent shift in their priorities towards more wide-reaching issues of economic justice mirrors the same shift within the welfare rights movement of the 1960s and '70s towards more general anti-poverty work, as discussed in the previous chapter. As with the decision by George Wiley and other male, welfare rights staffers to focus on broader issues of economic justice and poverty prevention, the local organizations with paid staffers and wider funding bases tend to function within a similar scope of economic justice. Just as Wiley's decision significantly impacted the women of color welfare rights volunteers of the 1970s, so too does broad issue organizing by better funded organizations like OutFront and the Women's Foundation leave smaller, under-funded groups like the WRC (most of whose volunteers identify as low-income, themselves) struggling to keep their organization afloat.

Larger, statewide organizations such as OutFront and the Women's Foundation have such extensive staff and membership networks and such broad organizing goals, that they largely fail to narrow their advocacy (even within coalitions) to more specific foci within economic justice, unless they feel particularly strongly that a single issue directly affects a majority of their constituents. Smaller, volunteer-driven organizations like EMPOWER and the WRC, on the other hand, have neither the human nor the monetary resources necessary to significantly broaden their work to a truly statewide level without also broadening their organizing priorities. This tension between broad-issue, big picture organizing and single-issue, localized activism not only works to the disadvantage of the organizations themselves, but to that of the communities they claim to represent as well. The historical and contemporary lack of bridgework activism between such organizations on welfare rights demonstrated in this chapter means that low-income women of color, LGBT individuals, and other marginalized low-income communities, such as the disabled and the elderly, invariably miss out on the practical policy benefits more narrowed activism could achieve. Changing this state of affairs, however, could require compromises from organizers on both ends of the spectrum.

When asked about her group's organizing priorities, a representative from the Women's Foundation explained that the organization seeks to "address root causes [of] and barriers to" social change, which means that it tackles socioeconomic issues from a wider lens of "economic justice [as] an issue area focus" in both its grant work and its lobbying. Acknowledging that "poverty is a women's issue," the Foundation supports organizations that work at "building bright economic futures" for women and girls. In fact, the Women's Foundation did sponsor the Welfare Rights Committee through grant

funding approximately three or four years ago, during its campaign to prevent Governor Pawlenty's cuts to MFIP, but does not consistently focus on welfare rights in its advocacy work or even necessarily target welfare rights work in its advertising for grant proposals. Instead, the Foundation likes to "focus on one project for a while and then move on," as the realities of grants-based organizing prevents them from financially supporting any single organization for an extended period of time. Since its brief funding of the WRC, the Foundation has since shifted its economic justice focus to the issues of female entrepreneurship, bridging the pay gap between men and women, and more broadly, poverty reduction. Arguing that "there are differing views on what social change is and what it means to do social change work," the Foundation's representative repeated the organization's commitment to "addressing root causes" of social problems through more expansive issue organizing as "poverty reduction," noting that while more narrowed, direct service work is important, it only provides "bandaid" solutions to deep social wounds. Though the Foundation does maintain a "conscious commitment" to reaching out to communities of color, its recent shift in focus on encouraging women of color entrepreneurs suggests that low-income women of color may lack visibility in the Foundation's current work and in their work over the next few years.

OutFront Minnesota provides little grant funding, so its decision to focus on broader economic justice issues in its advocacy, though similar to the Foundation's, stems from somewhat different justifications. Originally started in the late 1980s as a small direct service organization for the state's gay and lesbian population, OutFront has grown significantly in its staff, membership, and scope of operations, shifting from direct service to advocacy and resource awareness throughout such growth. The organization's

decision to focus on policy issues other than welfare rights flows out of serving such a large demographic and the organization's desire to, like the Women's Foundation, address root issues of economic justice. One staff member explained that "the way we talk about issues is from the perspective that we represent a very large group of people, if you're just looking at GLBT people," so many of OutFront's economic policy aims stem from asking "well, what is it that's underpinning those [big economic] issues that we could do to address, you know, make society a better place for everyone?" This does not mean the organization does not focus on realizable, single issue economic goals, but that the decision regarding which of these issues to prioritize is made with such "bigger picture" questions in mind.

Currently, OutFront works on a variety of economic justice projects, particularly advocating for consumer protection laws, full healthcare coverage, and equal accessibility to jobs, policy areas that affect both their target constituency and broader populations. While such approaches lend themselves more easily to wider-ranging coalition-building with various organizations throughout the state, they may also tend to encourage making "bigger systemic changes" within society that can be both slower to achieve and create less measurable goals than narrowed issue lobbying on behalf of a very specific, marginalized constituency, such as low-income lesbians of color. While OutFront maintains a firm commitment to serving GLBT individuals, with an increased focus on queers of color, the belief articulated by one OutFront staffer that working on broad economic justice issues will help alleviate problems caused by more specific policy programs, such as MFIP, does little to address issues of true low-income visibility within the group's organizing agenda. As an illustration of Strolovitch's framework, OutFront's

lobbying priorities tend to advance the interests of their most advantaged members (those whose membership in the organization center on a single identity as queer), while making less visible the interests of their most disadvantaged members (those who negotiate multiple race, class, gender, and sexual identities in their membership).

Unlike the Women's Foundation and OutFront, EMPOWER does not focus on broad issues of economic justice. In fact, the organization does not focus on economic issues at all. A much newer organization, less than ten years old, EMPOWER seeks to provide "a voice for women in [Ely's] community." According to a recent member and leader of EMPOWER,[111] the group has three primary focus areas that help the board and group members determine organizational programming; they include: women's leadership, reproductive choice (although the group's activity in this area has decreased in recent years), and peace. Because the organization only has 25 paid members (twelve of whom regularly attend meetings), individual interests, or, "where people have passion," largely influences what the organization does. Due to Ely's and the surrounding towns' demographic make-up, EMPOWER is "pretty much all white women," and issues of welfare or economic justice have yet to surface as areas on which these women would like to focus their organizational attention. In contrast to this apparent lack of a sense of urgency regarding rural poverty , and welfare policy in particular, within Ely's community, almost every single legislator with whom I spoke highlighted women welfare recipients in rural and greater Minnesota as one of the recipient populations most in need of greater advocacy and visibility in the lobbying process. This disjuncture between citizen and legislator perceptions strikes a troubling note within the context of this

[111] At the time of the interview, this individual was in the process of moving to a different area of the state and although she still supports the goals and mission of EMPOWER, she felt that its extremely localized focus did not give her a logical reason to maintain her membership after the move.

project, although it could simply be that Ely has lower poverty rates than many other rural Minnesota towns. Possibly, however, low-income residents within Ely are isolated enough that they become less visible, even to those in the same geographic community, who may not have the same statistical knowledge of rural poverty as state legislators.

Even if women's groups like EMPOWER, located in small, rural Minnesotan towns and operating on an entirely volunteer basis, did want to participate in welfare rights organizing on a more active and collaborative basis, the push for such participation must come from the larger, funded, metropolitan organizations. According to one EMPOWER representative, the organization would certainly be open to greater collaboration with other Minnesota nonprofits and to widening the scope of its organizational agenda to include issue lobbying, but a small membership, lack of funding, and the sheer distance between Ely and the Capitol prevent EMPOWER from initiating such changes on its own. The impetus for increasing rural interest groups' lobbying efforts even on broad issues of economic justice thus falls in the hands of organizational leaders of groups like the Women's Foundation and OutFront, who have the statewide resources necessary for both bringing rural activists to the Twin Cities and sending their own representatives to rural communities to encourage more membership diversity in groups such as EMPOWER.

Making Nice with the Legislators: Lobbying Tactics

Creating real change in state-level policy as an interest group requires moving beyond issue area organizing to actively working with legislators in drafting policy and encouraging specific voting outcomes. Markedly different lobbying tactics could help to

explain why local women of color, LGBT, and welfare rights advocates have yet to form long-term coalitions around welfare rights and also the lack of visibility these organizations had during the legislative development of MFIP throughout the 1990s. Differences in size, funding, location, policy agendas, and reputation among these organizations necessarily produce distinctly different legislator-to-activist relationships. The reputations organizations gain from these relationships, in turn, may constrain their willingness to participate in coalitional organizing with groups that they view as potentially damaging to their lobbying credibility. Larger and more established organizations like OutFront and the Women's Foundation have the available resources to create paid staff positions for lobbyists, meaning that they can maintain a constant and more professional presence at the Capitol, therefore increasing the likelihood of developing strong, amicable relationships with specific legislators, including committee chairs. A smaller, volunteer-run organization like the WRC, however, must ask its members to sacrifice time, transportation, and possible child care costs any time it would like to have representation at the Capitol, in whatever capacity (rallies, information gathering at hearings, or meeting one-on-one with legislators). Rural, Greater Minnesota groups such as EMPOWER exist in even more isolation from the legislative eye, relying on written or online communication with their legislative representatives and giving up significant chunks of time to travel to the Capitol on an even semi-regular basis. Building lobbying coalitions between these organizations could thus help not only to give greater visibility to issues such as welfare rights, but could also provide avenues for more sustainable, amicable relationship-building between legislators and leaders of smaller organizations that represent marginalized populations. In this way, building bridges

between organizing communities necessarily encourages building bridges between organizers and policymakers.

Representatives from the Women's Foundation and OutFront both discussed having strong ties to state legislators, with various staff members meeting with legislators on a regular basis, both during and outside of session, to review policy requests, progress, and concerns. Explaining that "it's a good climate right now" in the legislature for LGBT advocacy, an OutFront staffer stated that they have at least one "full-time lobbyist…over at the Capitol all the time," simply because "a lot of [legislation] comes up that affects same-sex couples and GLBT people." Last year alone, OutFront had "somewhere around sixty or eighty sponsors of our legislation," a significant number when it comes to influencing voting outcomes. Similarly, the Women's Foundation views lobbying for legislation that supports women's wellbeing and rights to be an integral component of their "research, education, and advocacy" program area, so they work at creating positive, one-on-one relationships with as many legislators as possible. Noting that the competition for state funds among the nonprofit sector is particularly fierce, a Foundation staffer stressed that "everybody's vying for the same small piece of the pie," so making sure one's organization has high visibility and recognition among legislators can significantly affect the organization's access to funding through the passage of various bills. The more an organizational representative can have face-to-face contact with key legislators, the more likely its policy interests will be represented in the legislative process. Particularly because these two organizations, along with other statewide advocacy groups, belong to broad-based coalitions and consortiums, they also have the networking resources available to make large, visible physical statements at the Capitol. OutFront has "had

between three and five thousand people there [at OutFront's Lobby Day] the past few years," making it "the largest lobby day in the country for GLBT equality." The power to make such a significant statement at a legislative institution is what makes groups like OutFront and the Foundation such visible presences in Minnesota's policymaking processes and such valuable coalitional allies for smaller, less funded interest groups.

An organization like EMPOWER—small, volunteer-run, located in a far northern rural community—simply cannot hope to have the same legislative sway as large, statewide power-players like OutFront, even given legislators' demonstrated awareness of how underrepresented rural constituencies are in the legislative process. Legislators interviewed in this study overwhelmingly cited rural communities as those most at risk of invisibility in policy and lobbying processes, particularly those regarding economic reforms such as changes to MFIP. An EMPOWER representative did stress the value the organization places on creating "ongoing relationships" with legislators, especially those directly representing Ely's district. Such "ongoing" contact, however, largely relies upon written, online, or telephone communication, even more so when the Legislature is actually in session. Even by phone conference, though, the group was grateful to be "able to share what we thought was important" with legislators who did care enough to listen. If anything, having the opportunity to contact legislators through EMPOWER helped one group member to realize that "I don't hold them on a pedestal, that's for sure. They're just people. We are just as capable of being leaders as them." Part of assuming such leadership, however, means having the power to be seen and heard beyond the organization's immediate community and on a broader, more statewide level. Legislators already acknowledge that entrenched poverty disproportionately occurs among rural

communities and communities of color, and efforts by groups like EMPOWER to increase their communication with individual legislators can certainly reinforce this acknowledgement. The feeling that they are already connected with legislators at some level may help to explain, in part, why EMPOWER is not already more involved with coalitional activism. Forming long-term lobbying coalitions with larger, resource-rich organizations offers one way to enable groups like EMPOWER to incorporate more issues into their organizational agendas (economic justice and welfare rights, for example), while also giving legislators actual faces to connect to Minnesota's rural communities.

On the other end of the spectrum from this relatively casual legislator-to-activist method of interaction, some organizations employ noticeably demonstrative lobbying tactics; tactics, which as the case of the Welfare Rights Committee illustrates, may alienate greater numbers of legislators than those to which they appeal. The WRC's reputation for utilizing more radical "in-your-face" organizing maneuvers at the Capitol may, in fact, be a contributing factor to why the WRC has such few coalitional ties to other local organizations.[112] Particularly when the organization first formed in the early 1990s, it relied heavily on "disturbance" techniques at the Capitol to catch legislators' attention. Especially when MFIP went before the Legislature for the statewide implementation vote, WRC members and all the low-income or public assistance recipients they could gather "banged pots and pans…closed down hearings because of

[112] Strolovitch refers to this as a process of "marginalizing outsiders." Groups that "represent intersectionally disadvantaged subgroups such as low-income women…are likely to support extensive and fundamental changes in the policy areas in question and therefore also are more likely to be considered 'radical.'" Other organizations may avoid coalitional connections to groups like the WRC, whose lobbying tactics may be viewed as too radical in nature.
Strolovtich, Affirmative Advocacy, 198-199.

our noise" and after a five hour rally in the Capitol rotunda on the day of the vote, "23-25 people were arrested for civil disobedience." "We were there *all* the time denouncing the process," a WRC representative explained, "we called it the 'Minnesota Massacre'" because of the budget cuts and emphasis on workfare that the statewide implementation legislation recommended. They even went as far as to put legislators' faces on "Wanted" posters and picket their houses in protest of the proposed legislation. In fact, the WRC was the only organization of those interviewed in this study that was approached by the MFIP drafting committee in the early 1990s to give input on the originally drafted and piloted program. The group, however, declined to participate, suspecting that the committee basically wanted the organization to "put our stamp of approval on [the program]" as low-income women of color without actually taking their feedback into account, a process of "tokenization" that they perceived had happened to them a few years previously with a task force on housing and anti-poverty.

All of this, the WRC representative insists, occurred prior to the passage of the statewide implementation vote, yet few legislators who were on the Health and Human Services Committee at the time of the vote remember the WRC being particularly active until right after the vote had passed. "They picketed right afterwards," one legislator stated, but they made little memorable impact on the legislators prior to the vote. The same legislator, expressing doubt that "disturbance" tactics really achieve anything productive, explained that the WRC seems to "be much more calm… and constructive" in their more recent lobbying, although the lack of WRC visibility recognized by current legislators in their interviews suggests such calming has possibly transformed into silence and invisibility. This clear disconnect between the memories of the welfare rights

activists and then-legislators may also hint at underlying classism, whether intentional or not, in legislators' assessments of what are and what are not legitimate, effective, or, to use the above expression, "constructive" organizing strategies. Legislators prefer planned, one-on-one meetings with activist leaders to noisy, crowded demonstrations in the middle of policy hearings. In stating this preference, however, legislators, perhaps unconsciously, reinforce a bias towards organizations that can afford to maintain a constant lobbying presence at the Capitol over those who may only be able to achieve a noticeable presence at the Capitol a couple of times a year. In this way, institutional promotions of class-based legitimacy become an important part of the political process. "Legitimate" or not, since its inception, the WRC has successfully lobbied for a 10% increase in welfare grants to Minnesota families in 2006,[113] and it is currently the only group specifically lobbying to eliminate MFIP's family cap, on the basis that it is "unbelievably cruel" to parents on public assistance. If the WRC can contribute to such a large policy victory as an increase in the entire state's welfare budget using supposedly "un-constructive" lobbying tactics, they could potentially realize even more of their goals when backed by the more recognized and, to some extent, respected lobbying reputations of organizations like OutFront and the Women's Foundation. As all of the legislators and organizers interviewed readily agree, coalitional lobbying tends to be more effective because legislators "pay more attention when there are more individual forces coming together around a single issue." Stemming the organizational trend towards broad issue organizing and finding a middle-ground of lobbying tactics from within a coalitional

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[113] Minnesota Welfare Rights Coalition, Current Legislation, Welfare Committee of Minnesota, 20 Jul. 2007, <http://www.welfarerightsmn.org/legislation.html.>.

framework thus offers one method for making low-income queers and low-income women of color more visible and active in Minnesota's policymaking processes.

Coalition-Building: Causes and Barriers

Each of the organizational representatives interviewed expressed at least some commitment by their group to coalitional efforts, many of them perceiving, as legislators do, the ample opportunities for coalition-building and combined political activism provided by Minnesota's extensive nonprofit and grassroots organizing community. Nonprofits such as the Minnesota Women's Consortium, a network of over 170 Minnesota-based organizations connected in some way to women's rights, intentionally create spaces for networking and collaboration among myriad interest groups. Even state legislators, acknowledging the effectiveness of coalitions in lobbying efforts, encourage organizational collaboration and work themselves to develop think tanks and task forces to address specific legislative issues. Coalitions can be key to an organization's capacity to stay afloat, as well as instrumental in increasing issue and constituency visibility at the Capitol. Despite this, and also in spite of a likely overlap in membership between their various groups, the organizations with which I came into contact in my interview process rarely, if ever, collaborate with one another and certainly not on the issue of welfare rights.

One of the most cited justifications for choosing not to participate in coalitions in specific issues areas concerns the invisibility of an organization's constituency when placed within a much larger organizational space. Both the Women's Foundation and the Welfare Rights Committee representatives argued that economic justice coalitions are

typically more male-oriented spaces, or simply do not reference gender at all in their work. According to a Foundation staffer, the most prominent anti-poverty coalitions currently functioning within the state, particularly those focusing on homelessness, "lack [a] gender lens," even though "poverty is a women's issue." The group's decision to support economic justice coalitions signals their intention to fight for greater female visibility within anti-poverty work, but such support is necessarily underscored by a fear that this visibility will remain relatively small if not acknowledged by other coalition members. The Foundation's focus on women's issues, however, also means that its organizers "haven't done a huge amount of work" with LGBT advocacy groups because they do not tend to "focus specifically on lesbians." Because the Foundation is still transitioning to more organizational work outside the realm of grant funding, with the development of a new policy agenda that specifically aims "to build more coalitions," the potential exists for the Foundation to create more permanent coalitions with a wider variety of organizations, such as LGBT groups, an area which the staffer admitted is "something we need to grow in."

Akin to the Foundation, the WRC exhibits an organizational reluctance to collaborate with groups "who profess to work for economic justice" because they can be "absolutely disrespectful to women," treating low-income women of color as "tokens," rather than actually seeking out their input on whatever issue may be up for discussion. Echoing similar concerns as those raised by Strolovitch's research, a WRC member agreed that particularly in economic justice or anti-poverty coalitions, but also in other coalitional spaces (labor organizing, for example), the interests of the most privileged constituencies gain voice and visibility over those of multiply-oppressed constituents,

such as women of color welfare recipients. Due to this situation, the members and leaders of the Welfare Rights Committee "don't really do constant coalition work," and when they do, it tends to be "with women's rights groups." Because the Women's Foundation has funded the WRC in the past, however, the Foundation's relatively new shift towards greater policy agenda development and its commitment to support "small projects within larger institutions" offers the hope that the two groups can build a more permanent coalitional relationship with more consistent levels of collaborative lobbying.

A member of the Minnesota Women's Consortium and other networking organizations, OutFront Minnesota participates more in coalitional politics than any other interviewed organization; several legislators cited OutFront as an organization they frequently observe involved in collaborative lobbying efforts at the Capitol. This role in coalition-building can likely be attributed to OutFront's position as a large, multi-issue organization, with several different programmatic focus areas and a fully staffed office. Such resources give an organization like OutFront the flexibility and capability to devote its time, staff, and funding to several projects at once, especially those in which coalition members meet infrequently, such as the several national and statewide coalitions and consortiums to which OutFront claims membership. An OutFront staffer credited the rise in the organization's collaborative enterprises over the past few years to the group's decision to shift from framing their work in terms of identity politics and focusing instead on "GLBT equality," a distinction she claims has helped them to expand the circle of communities with whom they work, emphasizing that this shift has meant working more with and for communities of color. The groups has "shifted a little bit of how we talk about our organizing, which is we're working on GLBT equality issues as well as racial

justice, fighting oppression. And there's definitely more work that has to be done around that." Again, this rather broad category of equality reinforces the organization's commitment to more broad-reaching coalitional efforts, so while the group prioritizes coalition-building as an important organizational process, its level of participation in the process remains at a more wide level than perhaps it could be. Specifically prioritizing the interests of women of color, especially low income women of color, in its coalitional efforts may thus still be a ways off for OutFront

Despite OutFront's demonstrated commitment to coalitional activism, little evidence exists to suggest that the organization utilizes its extensive resources and statewide scope of operations to partner with small, underfunded organizations like EMPOWER or the WRC and work to ensure that their issues and voices find a space in lobbying and policymaking processes. Working with Minnesota nonprofits that are similarly statewide and widely known by legislators such as the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, or Take Action Minnesota, gives large organizations like OutFront the chance to enact positive activism without placing too great a strain on their resources. The tendency to do so, however, can leave smaller groups and their constituencies out of important organizing events, processes, and decisions.

Most poignantly, this circumstance is only exacerbated when put into context with the fact that OutFront and the Welfare Rights Committee had offices right next to each other in an office building in Minneapolis for years without any coalitional relationship developing between the two groups. According to a WRC representative, even though their organization has "always been very clearly anti-homophobic" and "there was

always the opportunity [for OutFront and the WRC] to support each other," that opportunity "has never been cemented." This could, in part, be due to the reality that many LGBT advocacy groups do not consider welfare rights within their scope of operations. In fact, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is one of the only national LGBT organizations that explicitly educates its members on welfare policy and its connection to their community. As a WRC volunteer acknowledged, "it is pretty rare that you would see somebody who is openly queer" involved in welfare rights, simply because "it can be really risky to come out in that demographic" (gay and on welfare) in terms of hiring and welfare program discrimination; thus, many low-income queers choose to remain publicly closeted. She also pointed out, however, that a lack of collaboration with OutFront despite their close physical proximity does have much to do with organizational politics. For the WRC to build a coalition with OutFront, it "would require a lot of internal stuff on their part to go from that multi-issue [position] to dealing with the whole welfare stigma," a process that OutFront has not initiated at this point. Additionally, despite OutFront's position as an LGBT advocacy organization, one WRC representative implied that social and fiscal conservatism within OutFront's ranks may also explain their lack of outreach to the WRC, a circumstance which, if true, presents a definitive barrier to coalition-building between the two groups that may require a separate means of resolution than the model suggested by this thesis. As one of the most high-profile and resource-rich LGBT organizations in the state, for OutFront to initiate a coalitional relationship with the WRC would mark a large stride in creating visible local bridgework activism between the LGBT community and low-income women of color, as women of color are highly involved in organizing and leading the WRC. Given

OutFront's decision to focus on broader "root issues" of economic justice and the WRC's current pattern of "sporadic coalitions," however, developing such a relationship in the near future seems fairly unlikely, even though it could potentially benefit severely disadvantaged member populations within each organization.

Why Legislators Support Coalition-Building

Inciting enough legislative motivation to create significant policy changes at the state level requires constant and visible pressure from lobbyists and organizers. Particularly if a given activist community wants to see policymaking occur in an area not currently at the top of influential legislators' agendas, the community must commit large quantities of time and likely a significant portion of its staff or volunteer base to create a large enough presence at the Capitol to merit legislative attention. Legislators agree that having a vast number of supporters from a variety of different organizing and professional communities convene on a specific policy platform or proposal can be crucial to ensuring the proposal passes in both the House and the Senate. In fact, the growing popularity with state legislators of broad-based coalitions may explain the rise in recent years of quite large, state-wide, extensively funded organizational coalitions around such issues as smoking and homelessness. That legislators credit these coalitions with largely contributing to the passing of high-profile legislation in the past few years suggests that achieving progressive welfare policy reform may require a wider and more cohesive organizational coalition around welfare rights.

Legislators value coalitional work as a critical tool in creating more clear and understandable policy agendas within the Legislature. When numerous groups each lobby

for a different policy proposal on the same general policy issue, legislators find it difficult to suss out which proposal will do the most good for the greatest number of communities represented by all of the different advocacy organizations. As a more experienced legislator expressed, in order to "bring a lot of pressure to bear on a legislative issue, you actually need a lot of people up there [at the Capitol]," meeting with legislators one-on-one, participating in rallies, and holding press conferences; thus, in many ways "when you work together it's always easier" to galvanize legislators, particularly across partisan lines, around a specific policy agenda. Bringing together diverse advocacy organizations with varying membership sizes, funding sources, legislative connections, and lobbying reputations can therefore prove fruitful to both the collaborating activists and state legislators. Organizers can share strategies and resources while working to promote a common policy goal, while legislators can focus on fine-tuning and promoting one streamlined policy proposal as opposed to evaluating the various merits of myriad slightly different proposals. Importantly, however, when coalitions become too broad-based or wide-reaching to create articulate and cohesive policy agendas it also "becomes more difficult to specifically influence legislation as opposed to providing support behind it." In lobbying legislators, particularly one-on-one, one legislator pointed out that "where people have the most impact is where they know a lot about [an issue], so that tends to be smaller, more specialized groups," meaning that to some extent "smaller groups actually have a bigger impact." Effective bridgework activism then must incorporate not only building a wide and diverse network of organizational support around a policy issue, but structuring such support in a way that lets larger, more broadly focused organizations provide wide peripheral support to the groups within the coalition that have more

specialized and in-depth knowledge of the particular policy issue. In this way, legislators encounter coalitional lobbying that provides knowledgeable, streamlined agendas backed by diverse, statewide advocacy networks, in turn enabling legislators to more effectively and more confidently promote such agendas to their colleagues.

In light of this emphasis placed by legislators on organizational coalitions, the current lack of a strongly visible and diversified welfare rights presence at Minnesota's Capitol can likely be attributed at least in part to a simultaneous lack of a solid, statewide welfare rights coalition. Despite the existence of the Minnesota Welfare Rights Coalition, its failure to generate extensive collaboration from larger or more varied types of advocacy groups has resulted in a noticeable absence in the lobbying arena. Current legislators agree that they have seen little evidence to suggest comprehensive coalitional activism around welfare rights, which in turn weakens the legislative will to generate progressive policy reforms for the betterment of Minnesota's most disadvantaged populations. As one legislator articulated, "it feels to me like there's not as much of an effective coalition on this area [welfare rights] as, for example, homelessness and affordable housing… those groups seem to have a stronger, richer, more sophisticated network [whereas] on this topic, it doesn't feel as rich of a breadth and depth and dividing up of the work." Because of this, legislators tend only to see marginalized recipient populations' interests represented in the lobbying process by the Welfare Rights Committee, an organization that has, as discussed previously, gained a reputation for its less accepted lobbying tactics. That bigger, better-funded, statewide advocacy groups like OutFront and the Women's Foundation choose to focus on broader systemic issues highlights the relatively isolated position of the Welfare Rights Committee in this respect.

A recently elected legislator expressed her opinion that welfare rights "has key support and well-articulated support, but it is narrow…there hasn't been a broadening of that coalition… the people involved in welfare just don't get the same attention as some of the issues that have a higher profile." In this instance, groups like the Welfare Rights Committee represent the small, specialized organizations that have an intimate knowledge of and experience with a particular policy issue, welfare rights; a possible next step in encouraging effective coalition-building around that issue requires drawing in larger organizations advocating for the needs of disadvantaged communities, like OutFront or the Women's Foundation, to create a broad-based periphery of lobbying support.

Encouraging such groups' involvement in this intentionally structured coalitional model would not only enable local welfare rights activists to demonstrate an extensive support network for their policy efforts, but would provide them with the experienced lobbying backbone and good reputations of larger, less volatile groups. Legislators tend to view welfare rights leaders as "not necessarily well-heeled lobbyists," even going as far as declaring "they basically just sit around and shout" and admitting that "I'm not quite sure what they ever accomplished [in prior hearings], not much." To a certain extent, even receiving professional lobbying training or learning new lobbying tactics from organizations with the resources to employ professional lobbyists could help to transform welfare rights activists' image at the Capitol. On the whole, legislators tend to look more favorably on hearing welfare rights platforms voiced by new or different advocates from myriad organizations. One representative suggested that "broadening the scope" of welfare lobbying would strengthen "the tie between MFIP and working people

and basic needs of people in our communities" in acknowledgement of the reality that in "moving an agenda like the one we're discussing [welfare rights]…you'll reach more legislators with different voices articulating the same message." This tactic would be particularly helpful in "reaching Republicans…moving beyond partisan lines" by drawing in any organization whose constituent members have some level of investment in the practical effects of welfare reform. The current, narrow structure of welfare rights lobbying consists of individuals concerned with "women's rights," for example, but "we don't [see] the women's organizations…the bigger organizations." Openly LGBT-identified individuals belong as members to the Welfare Rights Committee and support LGBT issues in the legislature, but LGBT advocacy organizations remain invisible in welfare rights lobbying. Drawing groups such as these into welfare reform lobbying, even on a peripheral level, can both boost legislators' confidence in the broad-based need for progressive reform and reinforce the fact that low-income individuals exist within other identity-based social communities, as well.

The relative absence of minority advocacy groups in welfare rights lobbying has, ironically, opened the door to such lobbying to religious and job training organizations; groups that while passionate in their commitment to making welfare issues visible at the Capitol, remain connected to institutions and processes that do not necessarily always have the interests of marginalized communities within MFIP at the top of their policy agendas. According to a seasoned legislator, as a result of the "general religious movement to help low-income people," local religious organizations "in the last five years… have taken a bigger role in welfare rights, [as well as] anti-poverty work and healthcare," while job training centers and employment organizations have similarly

increased their visibility in advocating for welfare reform at the state level. While most legislators agree that this increased involvement has generally been a positive development for legislators advocating for better and more progressive MFIP policies and benefits, they do acknowledge that these organizations do not currently work in conjunction with the Welfare Rights Committee, at least at a legislative level, and few send representatives to the Capitol who actually have personal experience with living on public assistance. This does not suggest that either group has not helped in MFIP policy development, particularly in the past few years. Indeed, "the religious groups have greatly improved" their presence at MFIP hearings and employment and job training organizations have gained high-ranking, influential legislative allies in their movement to make the workfare portions of MFIP as effective as possible. Welfare rights activists even support their presence in lobbying, "as long as they're actually supporting good policies" that focus on the needs and interests of recipients and their families.

The trend in increased religious and employment visibility at welfare reform hearings, has not, however, helped to foster a diverse recipient presence. Broadening coalitional welfare rights efforts to include religious and employment-based groups may increase welfare rights advocates' chances of receiving legislative support, but such a move should not overwhelm the pressing need to bring more and diverse welfare recipients to testify to their lived experiences with public assistance, which requires the participation of markedly different organizations than religious or employment-based groups. In this sense, the intricate process of developing an effective and intersectional welfare rights coalition becomes even more complicated, as those invested in such a project not only must learn to balance organizational needs and priorities, but legislative

priorities and expectations as well in the structuring and implementation of a coalitional network.

Invisible Faces and Silent Voices: Diversity in MFIP Hearings

Most organizers and legislators readily point out that providing representative individuals to testify in the legislature on a given policy issue is one of the most visible and sympathetic ways that organizations can influence policy outcome. Policymakers rely on experience-based testimony to provide them with first-hand information on the practical effects of various policy programs, without which they would have only the recommendations of professionals in related fields and whatever personal knowledge they may already have of the issue at hand. Presenting legislators with knowledgeable, articulate, and sympathetic witnesses to testify to their experiences with a particular policy can thus be the lynchpin for an organization's entire lobbying campaign. As a policy program that provides direct and essential services to individuals throughout the entire state, MFIP's policy path has relied heavily on recipient testimony to guide legislators in making crucial decisions regarding fiscal and structural changes within the program. Who has the time, resources, and organizational backing to testify, however, remains a limited population, resulting in a much more narrow, much less diverse representation of MFIP recipients and their welfare experiences at the Minnesota Legislature.[114]

[114] This circumstance reflects the failure of pluralism, as discussed by interest group theorists, wherein interest groups seek to represent wide communities, but may or may not have the resources with which to do so. This leads to the impression that most populations have advocacy organizations working on their behalf, even when such organizations may not actually be able to represent the diversity of their constituents in the legislative process. Everybody appears to have representations, while certain communities continue to receive greater access to policy processes than others. For further discussion on

A number of disadvantaged communities constitute demographic populations within the MFIP system, including: women, people of color, the elderly, immigrants, rural citizens, people with disabilities, those struggling with chemical dependency, and single parents. More often than not, however, legislators fail to see even a third of these communities adequately represented at MFIP policy hearings. Minnesota policymakers involved in welfare reform, in the view of one urban-based legislator, "don't often hear from people in rural Minnesota or Greater Minnesota, which is a huge place where people access MFIP…we don't see them or hear their voices." Typically, MFIP hearings largely consist of the urban recipients from immediate counties like Hennepin and Ramsey, a fact that can certainly be attributed to their closer location to the Capitol. Testifying at a Capitol hearing does not require the same level of sacrifice of time, child care expenses, and transportation for local, urban recipients as it does for those "living on the ragged edge" in Greater Minnesota. This results in a disproportionate representation of urban communities of color at such hearings because "in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, there is disproportionate use of public assistance by people of color; there's disproportionate poverty in those demographic groups…as a result of our hearings being in St. Paul, that is reflected in the people who come [to the Capitol], perhaps more than if we had a hearing in the northwest corner of the state." Lacking similar access to transportation and other resources necessary to making the trip to the Capitol, elderly recipients and recipients with severe disabilities (or with family members with severe disabilities) often fail to achieve a visible presence at MFIP testimonials. In fact, legislators most often cited rural/Greater Minnesota citizens, the elderly, and the disabled

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pluralism's failures, please see Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories."

as the recipient populations they would most like to see gain a voice in welfare reform hearings because being able to "put a face on the individuals we're talking about" with MFIP can make a significant difference in how legislators view the practical effects of welfare policy reform. Coalitional efforts to diversify welfare testimonials could thus work to the advantage of myriad marginalized communities, not just those on which this project most highly focuses.

Despite legislators' demonstrated knowledge of and concern for the many marginalized communities that make-up Minnesota's welfare recipient population, LGBT families in poverty remain off the legislative radar as a community that receives little to no representation in MFIP hearings. Furthermore, this lack of concern for potential LGBT MFIP recipients stems less from an understanding that publicly coming out as LGBT-identified while receiving public assistance could be potentially damaging—as expressed by a WRC representative—and more from a belief that LGBT individuals tend not to constitute low-income families. Articulating this viewpoint, one legislator explained that "the LGBT families have higher incomes than us non-LGBT people [*laughs*], so by and large…they're not a significant section [in welfare rights]." Another stated that she "[does not] really see the GLBT issue as a public assistance thing" because for "the GLBT families I know…there's been much less economic risk at that point [of starting a family]," although she admitted that "maybe that's a really unfair stereotype just based on who I know." Not one legislator could recall any LGBT activist involvement at any point in MFIP's history; even in the most recent policy reform hearings in the last session (2006-2007), Minnesota's LGBT population "was not an organized voice in that debate." Simple acknowledgment by legislators that queer

advocates have yet to make themselves visible at MFIP hearings does not mean legislators do not account for LGBT families in weighing the effects of various policy options. The assumptions regarding LGBT access to wealth articulated above, however, suggest legislators may not acknowledge low-income queers as an existing MFIP constituency and may, in fact, prevent MFIP testimonials from being spaces in which LGBT welfare recipients can feel secure in testifying to their MFIP experiences. At the very least, these attitudes imply that despite their desire to see disadvantaged populations achieve greater representation at policy hearings, current state legislators are doing little to foster such involvement by LGBT advocacy groups on behalf of their low-income members. The motivation for providing a face and voice for LGBT welfare recipients at the Capitol will thus likely need to come from the advocacy organizations, themselves, particularly those that have the funding, staff, and lobbying experience to do so effectively.

This likelihood does not suggest, however, that legislators cannot be successfully encouraged to consider low-income queers a viable MFIP demographic population, or even that the majority of Minnesotan legislators agree with the belief that LGBT families often live at higher income brackets. Most articulated support for welfare policy structures that inherently benefit alternative families, particularly those that prioritize promoting familial stability over heterosexual marriage, as MFIP did in its original form. Despite their reluctance to accept LGBT individuals as likely MFIP recipients, the interviewed legislators vehemently expressed almost unanimous agreement that welfare policy should not explicitly promote marriage, nor reward recipients for getting married as a means to reinforce the perception that marriage is the best path to getting and staying

off of welfare. Articulating a common sentiment among the legislators interviewed in this study, one representative stated that welfare "is about people making choices in their lives," and while programs like MFIP "should encourage family stability," forcing individuals into marriage as a means for getting off of welfare is "just the stupidest idea." For legislators, it is not appropriate for the state to adopt the role of telling individuals exactly how to live their lives, and explicitly linking public assistance to marriage not only runs the risk of nudging recipients into "unstable…abusive" marital relationships, said another, but ignores the research "that shows when you have two parents in the household…you're a lot better off for economic reasons, whether they're married or not." One representative stated that if the Legislature, with the encouragement of advocacy organizations, can stay focused on policies that "try to hold families together," that support family stability by prioritizing getting recipients out of poverty, and fight national and state efforts to reallocate TANF funds to marriage promotion programs, "we [will be] much better off." Regaining the elements of MFIP that fostered such high rates of family stability in the piloted program will take enormous effort, and, as current legislators suggest, will likely require diversifying recipient testimonials. While several disadvantaged communities could benefit from higher visibility in the hearing process, actively working to expand this effort towards diversification to include LGBT voices could simultaneously raise awareness of low-income queers and bolster policy reform proposals that eschew marriage promotion and possibly even family caps in favor of stable family development.

Conclusion: The Barriers that Remain

That the leaders of advocacy organizations realize their memberships comprise myriad racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and class communities is not even a question. OutFront organizers consciously recognize that queers can come from communities of color and low-income communities, while Women's Foundation staffers know that advocating for women's rights means advocating, in some part, for poor lesbians of color. EMPOWER's leadership is highly aware of their group's overwhelmingly white demographic and the need to encourage diversity among the organization's membership, while the Welfare Rights Committee firmly operates from an anti-racist anti-homophobic platform in recognition that people of color and LGBT individuals can also be welfare recipients. Organizers and legislators acknowledge the power that coalitions of diverse advocacy groups can have on effecting policy change, particularly when constituent diversity at actual policy hearings is a result of such coalition-building. Bridgework that funnels resources and lobbying support from larger organizations uninterested in adopting narrow policy goals to smaller groups with specialized knowledge of specific policy issues offers one method for empowering disadvantaged constituent communities that does not entail massive changes to either organizational or legislative structures. What, then, limits these organizations' collaboration with one another, especially on an issue such as welfare rights, which affects the very livelihood of individuals within each group's constituency?

Practically speaking, balancing out the policy priorities, resource access, and legislative visibility of organizations that operate so differently in so many ways is a daunting task, and one that cannot be achieved overnight. Differences in organizational

agendas, lobbying strategies, and desire for coalitional work on such a specific policy area are barriers to a cohesive welfare rights coalition that a bridgework model of activism cannot completely resolve. The following chapter will address this question in greater detail, discussing the various opportunities for and obstacles to bridgework activism in welfare rights within the state of Minnesota and what they mean for the future of MFIP and its recipients. The potential for bridgework activism between these organizations and the many others like them to positively benefit Minnesota's most disadvantaged communities, especially if undertaken in regards to improving benefits and family definitions under MFIP, suggests that organizational leaders at least consider beginning the task of answering the above question for themselves. One WRC member eloquently articulated perhaps the most compelling reason for welfare rights to become a top organizing priority, arguing that in talking about welfare rights organizing, "we're talking about trying to preserve something that is very fragile…We're fighting for survival of people, of families and kids, now and for the future."

Chapter 4—Conclusion: The Promises and Perils of Bridgework Activism

Welfare reform in Minnesota faces several layered issues, stemming from any number of sources, institutional, organizational, and interpersonal in nature. MFIP has reached an almost stagnant point, wherein it works to the benefit of relatively few communities, serving even those few at lower levels than its inception and leaving many caught in an exhausting cycle of public assistance dependence that still leaves their families in need. Some organizers and legislators would like to see the program return to its former state, others want to move it forward with progressive reforms not included at all in its prior format, and still others fail to recognize MFIP as an area to which they can or should devote their time and energy. The likelihood that the program will or even can remain untouched in the coming years seems slim, as pressure to reformat Minnesota public assistance builds from both ends of the political spectrum, with recipient advocates pushing for more and larger improvements to the system and certain legislative blocs pressuring the legislature to reappropriate state TANF funds to other policy areas (as is the case in this current legislative session). Whether and how changes occur within MFIP, however, highly depends upon the welfare reform lobbying process: who policymakers see as affected communities of MFIP policy and how active diverse community organizers are in lobbying for change.

This project has demonstrated that coalitional organizing around welfare rights remains primarily nonexistent within the state and even those who do lobby for progressive welfare reform either as, or on behalf of, MFIP recipients do not necessarily receive legislative acknowledgement as “legitimately” lobbying. Legislators have their own perceptions of the recipient communities most in need of radical systemic changes to

Minnesota's welfare program and are constrained in their policymaking decisions by the people they see testifying at the Capitol, even if they recognize that those who testify in no way represent the diversity of age, race, sexual orientation, and ability among Minnesota's poor. Organizers must balance time, staff, funds, and member demands within their organizational agendas, tending, as they do so, to prioritize the interests of their most advantaged members over those within their constituencies who may experience multiple identities and thus, multiple forms of marginalization simultaneously. Bridgework, particularly within an intentionally structured process, offers a potentially effective and efficient solution to resolving many of these legislative and organizational tensions to the benefit of intersectionally disadvantaged communities like low-income queers of color. Conceptualizing bridgework and achieving it, however, do not necessarily flow together very easily.

Even if groups like OutFront and the Women's Foundation did move towards organizational models that incorporate giving more long-term lobbying and financial coalitional support to smaller groups focused on more narrow areas of economic justice such as the Welfare Rights Committee, the human element of political activism remains, to a certain degree. Like many research projects that attempt to apply a theoretical model to a practical setting, the framing of this thesis could not, in any measurable way, track the interpersonal dynamics at play between the various research subjects. Personal dislike, miscommunication, hurt feelings, and awkward interactions permeate Minnesota's organizing and political communities as easily as any other social settings and can create difficult barriers to both coalition-building among organizations and successful relationships between legislators and activists. Even when organizational or

policy agendas line up between these different state actors, interpersonal dynamics may not allow for such agendas to merge into a single, concentrated lobbying effort. Political activists and policymakers have historically had to negotiate between personal preferences and policy goals, and bridgework does not solve the tricky problem of how to find the perfect balance between these two areas. In the event that interpersonal dynamics do allow for bridgework in a particular policy field, however, it could possibly help to build new and strong professional and interpersonal relationships between various organizing and legislative communities.

Conceptually, bridgework encourages interest group leaders to carefully consider whether and how their organizing strategies address the interests of those in their constituent communities who may experience multiple forms of sociopolitical oppression due to their many and intersecting identities. Intersectionally disadvantaged individuals might not have actual membership in specific organizations (especially those individuals with low incomes, who may not be able to afford membership dues), but nevertheless belong to most of the communities for which such organizations advocate. Intentionally participating in coalitional organizing on behalf of intersectionally disadvantaged communities may push an advocacy group's policy agenda in new and different directions, perhaps not necessarily in line with where organizational leaders had initially intended it to go. Despite this possibility, such participation also demonstrates, on the organization's part, a broader consciousness of the varying communities whose interests the group represents. Additionally, utilizing coalition-building between various advocacy organizations could help organizational leaders to take the burden of bridge-building off the backs of disadvantaged communities, simultaneously reducing the tendency within

organizations to either tokenize or ignore multiply-identifying members and giving such members greater visibility in the organizing process. Particularly in policy areas like welfare reform that address the needs of the poor (a population comprised of individuals with myriad racial, cultural, sexual, and gender identities), organizers bear much of the responsibility for ensuring that policymakers recognize what those needs are and how best to meet them, as those affected by such policies may not have the time or resources to represent their own interests in legislative processes.

This rather broad conception of bridgework activism leaves open the many forms and structures that the practical application of bridgework can take. The current condition of Minnesota's welfare system combined with the state's existing organizing climate, as delineated by those interviewed, suggest one model for organizational bridgework that could potentially aid legislators in reforming MFIP to the benefit of Minnesota's most disadvantaged communities. Recognizing that their constituents come from diverse socioeconomic conditions, large statewide advocacy organizations like OutFront Minnesota and the Minnesota Women's Foundation already prioritize economic justice in their organizational and lobbying agendas and already do so in coalitional capacities. Such efforts, however, remain rooted in vocabularies of broad economic justice and anti-poverty work, a circumstance that, at least historically speaking, has largely excluded the needs and priorities voiced by low-income individuals who experience poverty alongside other forms of social marginalization. Representatives of these organizations justify their more broad-based coalitional anti-poverty work as well-suited to their organizational structures and missions. They emphasize that not only does lobbying for much more narrow issues within economic justice, such as welfare reform, make inefficient use of

their staff and resources, but working on the root causes of poverty will benefit more specific economic policy areas in the long run. At the same time, smaller, volunteer-run organizations with closer connections to those experiencing poverty, particularly the Welfare Rights Committee of Minnesota, make concerted efforts to lobby for progressive policy reform within more specific areas of economic justice. Their capacity to do so, however, remains constrained by a lack of funding, staff, and lobbying legitimacy at the Capitol, issues that limit not only the visibility of welfare rights activists in the legislative process, but also the types of low-income community members such activists can bring to testify in legislative hearings. Short-term grants from large foundations do little to ensure the longevity of welfare rights efforts and do not lend the same sense of intentional commitment to improving welfare reform and lobbying legitimacy by association that more permanent or long-range coalition-building offers.

For a larger, more broadly-reaching organization to represent the interests of its most disadvantaged constituents, more specific, intersectionally-minded activism may be the most effective method for doing so without compromising or radically reworking the vision of the organization as a whole. For smaller, more narrowly-focused advocacy groups to gain the visibility they seek in legislative processes, they likely need to acquire constant financial and at the very least, symbolic, support from more widely recognized and far-reaching organizations. In the case of Minnesota's welfare system, developing a model of bridgework activism that entails larger groups like OutFront and the Women's Foundation giving financial and lobbying support to smaller groups like the WRC could potentially aid both types of organizations achieve a better balance between their

organizational agendas and diverse member interests, while also reinforcing activist involvement in state-level welfare reform.

Given that these organizations have all existed for quite some time now and are all currently involved to a certain extent in working to change state economic policies, one might question why, if this model appears to offer a relatively comprehensive method for resolving certain organizational problems, leaders within this group have not already enacted the model, or one similar to it. The question also arises as to the need for bridgework activism in the area of welfare rights, particularly among women of color and LGBT advocates, given that legislators developed the more pathbreaking elements of MFIP, including its low levels of sexual policing, without the presence of any such coalitional relationships. In essence, could welfare reform in Minnesota improve to the benefit of disadvantaged communities without bridgework activism? Yes, possibly. Any number of alternatives to a bridgework model exist that offer methods for reforming MFIP in the interest of historically marginalized populations. As was the case when they first developed MFIP, legislators could enact progressive reforms based solely on their own initiative to do so. Larger advocacy groups could trend away from broad-based networks of anti-poverty and economic justice coalitions towards more specific policy areas, using their individual organizational influences to lobby for changes to MFIP. The Welfare Rights Committee could grow even more sensational and militant in its organizing and lobbying tactics, pushing legislators to enact policy reforms as a matter of political defense. None of these alternatives, however, function within a framework that allows for the organizational and legislative mechanisms already in place to remain relatively unchanged, meaning that for any of them to achieve practical application, large

changes would have to occur within organizational visions and legislative responsiveness. The possible exception to that is legislator-driven reforms, which, as history has illustrated, even when enacted, can be stripped of their progressive functions in the absence of "legitimate" activist lobbying. The bridgework model, on the other hand, demands a few changes to organizational funding structures, but allows for general organizational missions and legislative understanding of "constructive" lobbying to remain basically intact.

Returning to the first question, however, the point remains that if bridgework in the area of welfare rights really does follow such an effective and simple logic, advocacy groups would already be building interorganizational bridges in support of welfare rights. This is the point at which historical precedent plays a major role in explaining why bridgework has not existed in the past, but could, without tremendous difficulty, develop today. The United States, on a macrocosmic scale, and Minnesota, on a microcosmic scale, are at a critical point in both community organizing history and public assistance policy development. The first wave of welfare rights activism in the U.S. took place at a time in which non-profit organizing was reaching a fever pitch, reflecting the heightened social consciousness of identity politics spurred by the Civil Rights, women's liberation, and LGBT movements. The organizational predecessors to groups like OutFront were so busy grappling with the social and political implications of advocacy-based activism that, until very recently, they had limited capacity for engaging with policy issues beyond those that organizers saw as directly affecting their single identity-based missions. Coalition-building, although not a new concept, has only recently, perhaps within the past fifteen or so years, reflected activist awareness of the need for an intersectional lens

within coalitional politics. Theories of intersectionality existed years before this, but found little realization in practical organizing settings. Even when welfare rights activism revitalized during the first few years of the TANF reform era in the mid-1990s, recipients, rather than coalitions of advocacy groups, comprised the majority of welfare rights organizers, particularly within Minnesota, possibly because more legislatively popular organizations viewed lobbying tactics like those implemented by the WRC as too radical in nature and potentially damaging to their own reputations at the Capitol, should they support such activism coalitionally.

Now, however, the WRC has evolved in its organizing tactics, many local advocacy groups belong to multiple coalitions, and the Democrats, the legislators most visible in pushing for progressive changes to MFIP, have a majority in both the Minnesota House of Representatives and Senate. Having already made some structural changes to MFIP in an effort to return the program back to its original vision of helping recipients out of poverty, the Legislature is ripe for welfare rights lobbying, looking especially to hear the needs and concerns of recipient populations that have not necessarily had much voice in the lobbying process up to this point. Institutional and organizational barriers that may have prevented a welfare rights bridgework model in the past no longer pose as significant of threats to its potential development today.

Perhaps the most shortsighted aspect of this model as I have articulated it is the range of marginalized communities on which I had initially focused applying it. As noted by legislators, many public assistance recipient communities remain disproportionately underrespresented in MFIP hearings. While I chose to focus on women of color and LGBT individuals because historical narratives suggest a shared history of social welfare

policy oppression, those recipients living in rural areas and those either with a disability or caring for a family member with a disability remain at the top of legislators' lists of people most underserved by and invisible within Minnesota's welfare policymaking processes. Similarly to the connections I have drawn between groups like OutFront, the Women's Foundation, and the WRC, further research might explore the possibility of applying a bridgework model to groups advocating for the rights of rural and disabled citizens, reinforcing the reality that low-income people come from those communities, as well. The more widespread that organizers make coalitional efforts to support welfare rights, the more likely legislators will be able to see the diversity within Minnesota's welfare recipients and to hear testimonies from individuals not usually included in such processes, in turn increasing the likelihood that they will write and implement welfare policy reforms that account for the needs and interests of all MFIP recipients.

As the title of this thesis implies, welfare rights bridges between women of color and LGBT advocates remain relegated to the realm of imagination, theoretically and practically speaking. Because bridgework activism has not existed in Minnesota in the past and does not exist now, this project cannot realistically measure its actual usefulness as a tool in motivating political change. Organizational and legislative opinions nevertheless suggest that given the proper support and at the right moment in organizing and policy history, bridgework could have enormous potential not only for motivating political change, but for doing so to the benefit of intersectionally marginalized individuals. Whether the organizations and individuals in my study will choose to adopt this model in the coming years remains a question that only those organizations and individuals can truly answer. My research leads me to believe that despite the opportunity

for bridgework, they likely will not follow it as an organizational model, at least not in the area of welfare rights. If however, they are awakened to the possibility and choose to undertake the process of adopting a bridgework model, organizers and legislators stand a good chance of enacting progressive changes to the Minnesota Family Investment Program, empowering marginalized communities and making the imagined bridges of this thesis ever more real as they do so.

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