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The Era of Meanness: Challenging the Barriers to a College Degree

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Abstract

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The U.S. Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRW) and the accompanying block grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which became the most dramatic restructuring of federal aid to mothers and children since its beginnings in the Great Depression of 1929 (Personal Responsibility Law 1996). These laws limited welfare to a total of five years over an individual's lifetime. PRW effectively allowed only one year of post secondary education, and only vocational education was accepted under the statute. Although PRW did not specifically prohibit welfare recipients from attending any other type of higher education program, the statute put states under such enormous pressure to fulfill work requirement quotas so that it became a practical impossibility for states to offer four years of higher education to their welfare recipients.

This paper analyzes the strategies of advocacy coalitions in Maine and New York after the passage of PRW. Maine had a very favorable political climate and was one of the most successful states to allow welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges; New York had a very hostile climate and made some serious inroads on the severe policies governing welfare recipients and access to higher education. The analysis focuses on the commonality of Maine and New York's implementation, and documents the effectiveness of these advocacy coalitions in fighting for programs that would accommodate welfare recipients ambitions to attend four-year colleges. The analysis lays

the groundwork for understanding what strategies work, and what needs to be developed to build effective education and welfare advocacy coalitions.

The Era of Meanness: Challenging the Barriers to a College Degree

“Academic ability is essential for meaningful participation in our society. We need to invest in intellectual ability. We as a society are in the human development business” (Gordon 2002).

Introduction

The U.S. Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRW) and the accompanying block grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which became the most dramatic restructuring of federal aid to mothers and children since its beginnings in the Great Depression of 1929 (Personal Responsibility Law 1996). These laws limited welfare to a total of five years over an individual’s lifetime. PRW effectively allowed only one year of post secondary education, and only vocational education was accepted under the statute. Although PRW did not specifically prohibit welfare recipients from attending any other type of higher education program, the statute put states under such enormous pressure to fulfill work requirement quotas so that it became a practical impossibility for states to offer four years of higher education to their welfare recipients. The states were mandated to have 50% of welfare recipients working by FY2002. Consequently, states had a strong disincentive to help welfare recipients attain higher education. The Catch 22 was recognized: “If you’re on welfare, you probably need more education in order to get a good job – a productive job that will move you out of poverty and dependence and off welfare. But if you stay in classes to

get the training you need for the good job, you will lose the welfare benefits that support you while you go to school” (Buffalo News 1997, 2B).

Indeed, a wealth of evidence demonstrates that higher education improves the financial opportunities and enhances the quality of life for those who are able to attend college. Ann Reynolds, former Chancellor of the City University of New York, reported: “Our research shows that people with bachelor's degrees from CUNY earn \$690,000 more over their lifetimes than high-school graduates -- and, obviously, pay much more in taxes” (Reynolds 1997). A 1995 study by the U.S. Department of Labor concluded that for every year of postsecondary education, earnings increased by 6 to 12% (Boggs 2001). Moreover, education, at every level, significantly increases earnings capacity. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the following concerning the correlation between earnings and education:

Table 1: Median Weekly Earnings of Full Time Workers Ages 25 & Over

	College Graduates	Some College, No Degree	High School Graduates, No College	Less than a High School Diploma
Hispanic	\$681	\$460	\$395	\$294
Black	\$627	\$443	\$376	\$304
White	\$803	\$541	\$480	\$326

Note: Greater Upstate Law Project, 2002.

Research demonstrates that welfare recipients benefit significantly from higher education. In 1990, a New York City study found that of 158 former welfare recipients who were college graduates, 83% were working and 87% were off welfare (Gittell, 1990). The study was replicated in Illinois, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wyoming with similar results (Dann-Messier 2001, April, 4). A 1990 Ford Foundation

study showed that welfare recipients who completed a two or four-year degree earned significantly more than other former welfare recipients (Boggs 2001). Thomas Karier, research associate for the Jerome Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, urged state welfare reform programs not to overlook the importance of "welfare recipients being allowed to pursue a college education -- instead of only emphasizing immediate work experience." (Knight Ridder Newspapers 1998, K8). Karier studied 253 welfare recipients who graduated from college in 1995 and 1996. Seventeen months after graduation, 88 per cent of the students were off welfare, and their median wage was \$11 an hour. "It appears that the benefits of a four-year college degree ... lead to a rapid reduction in welfare dependency" (Ibid.).

In response to the passage of PRW and TANF, broad-based advocacy coalitions formed in many states to lobby for meaningful college programs for welfare recipients. These advocacy coalitions, including Democratic and Republican legislators, advocates for the poor, college officials, state and local officials and foundation leaders, rose above partisan politics and became active and far-reaching lobbyists. State by state, these advocacy coalitions wrestled with the problem of creating mechanisms that would allow welfare recipients to pursue four-year college degrees.

However, only a handful of states managed to develop programs that allowed welfare recipients to pursue four-year colleges after the passage of PRW. What alignment of power, perseverance and good fortune was required to cause these few states to implement a progressive educational agenda for their welfare recipients? This paper compares the successes and failures of advocacy coalitions in two states, Maine and New York, where welfare advocates struggled to achieve progressive state welfare

higher educational policies, and, in some instances, succeeded in keeping welfare recipients in four-year colleges. Studies of the successes of the advocacy in Maine reveal circumstances that fairly quickly resulted in the development and implementation of a successful program, which was then replicated in other states. The successes in Maine are in stark contrast to those in New York, a state in which advocacy coalitions fought hard, over many years, to eliminate, reduce and contain draconian state and local welfare policies, and managed to win limited opportunities for welfare recipients who wished to pursue higher education.

Background

Advocacy Groups

Pressman and Wildavsky in their book, *Implementation*, examined reasons why well-intentioned programs fail (1984). They analyzed the implementation of federal programs sponsored by the federal Economic Development Administration and implemented in Oakland, California. Pressman and Wildavsky were concerned with the degree to which the federal government implemented their policy goals. Although Pressman and Wildavsky examined the implementation of national policies at the local level through analyzing the behavior of interest groups, they emphasized the disruptive nature of these groups - how the interest groups made the achievement of national policy more difficult - and did not assess the extent to which state and local policymakers and interest groups might actually disagree with the policy goals in the national policy. Short of revolution, how do states resist a national policy with which state policymakers disagree and how do interest groups influence these state policymakers to amend a national policy?

Advocacy coalitions are “actors from various public and private organizations who share a set of beliefs and who seek to realize their common goals over time” (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989, 304). “These belief systems are a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time” (Sabatier 1993, 25). This type of framework focuses upon a policy subsystem, (i.e. “those actively concerned with a policy problem or issue,”) and it contains a variety of actors from varying institutions, such as state and federal legislators, and agency officials, interest group leaders, local officials, and intellectuals “who share a set of normative and causal beliefs on core policy issues” (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989, 306). The goal of any advocacy coalition is to influence the implementation and administration of government programs in conformity with the coalition’s values, assumptions and perceptions. In the arena of welfare policy, the role of advocacy coalitions is, and, historically, has been of great importance.

Welfare Legislation

The Great Depression marked the beginning of support for very poor families, particularly single women with children. Franklin Roosevelt created Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as part of the Social Security Act of 1935. Support for single parents with children remained strong and steady until Ronald Reagan took power and passed the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988 which, for the first time, required welfare mothers with small children to work. Notably, FSA still made allowances to permit welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges. PRW replaced FSA, and for all practical purposes eliminated those allowances.

The Great Depression also marked the beginning of significant support for higher education, when Roosevelt's National Youth Administration established the first federal program for student aid. After World War II, it became obvious that an entire generation had missed higher education, and that the United States needed an educated workforce. In response, the federal government offered to pay for the college education of every veteran through the G.I. Bill. Generous governmental investment in higher education continued unabated in the non-veteran context, by way of loan programs and tuition grants, until 1982 when the Secretary of Education William Bennett in the Reagan administration reversed the longstanding federal support for higher education access and began significant reductions of government aid to higher education. Secretary Bennett achieved his goals, and although Pell grants and federal loans were preserved, the amount of funding was reduced (St. John 2002).

The 1988 FSA mandated that every state implement a Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS), continuing the 50-year policy of strong support for education for welfare recipients, while adding a new emphasis on work. Eight years later in 1996, PRW eliminated the JOBS program and instituted Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which required states to get welfare recipients to work quickly without accommodation for those ready and able to achieve in college. TANF is a block grant leaving the states responsible for developing and implementing welfare programs within federal guidelines. The mandates of PRW limited higher education for welfare recipients to one year of vocational education.

This policy shift forced welfare recipients out of four-year colleges. The dropout rates from four-year colleges by women on welfare ranged from 29 to 82% (Finney 1998,

2). At the City University of New York, 28,000 welfare recipients were in college in FY1996, and only 7,000 welfare recipients were at CUNY in FY2000, a 75% loss (Richardson 2000, 3). At the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the school lost 60% of its students who were on welfare (Ritter 1997, 3A). Other colleges report similar dropout rates. “Almost 6,500 recipients were forced to leave Milwaukee Area Technical College to seek work. Most were young women, and many were within months of earning a two-year degree” (Rosen, 1998, 22A).

Unlike post World War II, when the U.S. government responded to the mid-century technological revolution with a policy to create a highly educated workforce; in 1996 Congress passed the most restrictive anti-education bill in its history, despite the continued and accelerated need for an educated workforce to compete in the technological based workplace of the 21st century.

Under TANF, states could provide limited accommodation for college students by defining work to include work-study, an internship or in some cases, actual coursework. 49 states (Oklahoma was the exception) allowed some form of post-secondary education to count as at least part of the work activity required by TANF (Center for Women Policy Studies 2001, 15). States developed two strategies: a) permitting welfare recipients to participate in work-study on campus so that it would be easier for students to attend classes; and b) permitting welfare recipients or eligible welfare recipients to attend higher education fulltime. This massive movement toward treating education as a work activity requirement or allowing students to fulfill work activity through on campus work-study was partly the result of the work of the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In 1996, the Center for Law and Social Policy and the

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities concluded that a state could use its maintenance of effort (MOE) dollars to create a separate state program to support families eligible for welfare apart from its TANF-funded program. The program would count toward the state's MOE obligation. This analysis was accepted by the federal Department of Health and Human Services in 1997 (Depez & Butler 2001, 225). Final regulations issued in 1999 provided a great deal of flexibility to "spend TANF and state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds on a broad array of programs far beyond traditional cash welfare programs" (Welfare Law Center 1999).

After the passage of PRW, most states limited the definition of work as an educational activity to two years or less of postsecondary education (Depez & Butler 2001, 213). Only 19 states and the District of Columbia allowed postsecondary education or work-study to count as a TANF work activity for longer than 24 months (Center for Women Policy Studies 2001, 15). Of these 19 states, Massachusetts and North Carolina permitted only 3 years; South Carolina permitted only 30 months; and Wisconsin only permitted welfare recipients to attend technical colleges. Fifteen states allowed welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges.

The Sociology of Welfare Policies

Review of the fifteen states that permitted welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges reveals several trends. All fifteen states provided some types of supportive services, such as childcare and/or transportation for welfare recipients in school. These states also had slightly more female state legislators (23.77%) as compared to the average (22.3%). Several studies of state legislators demonstrated that women legislators were

more likely to list among their priority bills legislation relating to children, the family or women (Welch & Thomas 1991; Thomas 1991; Mattei 1998).

Their populations were slightly whiter (77.25%) than the average state (75.1%) (see Appendix A). Such characteristics support research that found “states with high percentages of African American and Latinos in their TANF populations are far more likely to have imposed strict sanctions, time limits, and family cap policies” (Bok, 2003, 5). Both Gilens (1999) and Pittz & Delgazo (2002) concluded that analyses of state welfare policies have consistently found race to have a significant influence on state welfare policy. Abramovitz (2003, 16) reported that “researchers report that states with higher proportions of African American and Latino recipients make greater use of sanctions, the child exclusion, shorter time limits, and other harsh rules.”

Even though these fifteen states responded more positively than other states by allowing welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges, most of these states did not allow actual in-class education time to count towards satisfying the TANF work requirement; rather, the requirement was satisfied through campus work-study or an internship. Some states set grade point standards. Many required students to pursue a program that lead to employment in a recognized occupation from a prescribed list or only allowed skill upgrades. Maine was unique in using state MOE funds to sponsor more than 800 TANF eligible college students to study without working for the first two years, and then permitting work in the form of an internship or campus work-study for the remaining two or three years.

The Rationale of Welfare Policy

The rationale for the restructuring of welfare was premised upon a series of assumptions about single women with children that reversed decades of social policy. The first assumption is that poor women with children must be forced into independence, which is defined as working for a wage. This new assumption repudiated the long-held value of the time spent by women with parenting small children (Gordon, L. 2002, 21). The honoring of motherhood ended in 1996 with the passage of PRW and TANF. The second assumption defines dependency as receiving a government check without working, and holds this to be immoral, repugnant, and to be extinguished though this assumption is held only in the context of welfare recipients. That is this moralistic assumption was applied solely to poor women with children, but has not been applied to the countless government beneficiaries, both individual and corporate, distributed independently of the recipient's worthiness. If a single woman seeks a government benefit, she is uniquely defined as undeserving and uniquely perceived and treated as a parasite (Ibid). The third assumption abandons the long held public policy value of investment in this country's human capital as a wise investment with long term benefits to the social fabric and tax base; rather, under the TANF rationale, investment in human capital is now considered wasteful. One mother on welfare said it best: "I want them to know that supporting someone on TANF for four years while she gets a college degree is a drop in the bucket considering that you will have someone who is fully educated, who can get a job at decent wages, and you will get that money back in taxes" (Center for Women Policy Studies 2001, 14).

Methodology

This paper analyzes the strategies of advocacy coalitions in Maine and New York after the passage of PRW. Maine had a very favorable political climate and was one of the most successful states to allow welfare recipients to attend four-year colleges; New York had a very hostile climate and made some serious inroads on the severe policies governing welfare recipients and access to higher education. The analysis focuses on the commonality of Maine and New York's implementation, and documents the effectiveness of these advocacy coalitions in fighting for programs that would accommodate welfare recipients' ambitions to attend four-year colleges. The analysis lays the groundwork for understanding what strategies work, and what needs to be developed to build effective education and welfare advocacy coalitions. The author reviewed the relevant literature, analyzed relevant state and federal law and regulations, and interviewed state officials and advocates.

Advocacy Coalitions

Maine

Maine represented one of the most successful challenges to the draconian federal welfare restructuring of 1996. PRW threatened the well-established public policy of strong support for education, including higher education, in Maine. Under AFDC, Maine encouraged welfare recipients to attend college and job training (Smith, Deprez, & Butler 2002, 5). When PRW was passed, Maine legislators had a history of positive experiences with a different model, one emphasizing education.

In the early 1990s, the Women's Economic Security Project (WESP), a coalition of groups in Maine representing women, low-income families, social service, religious

and labor organizations, “began an aggressive campaign to counter the powerful anti-welfare sentiment sweeping the country” (Deprez & Butler 2001, 210). The founding organizations were Maine Equal Justice Partners, Maine Women’s Policy Center, Maine Center for Economic Policy, and Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods. Joining with them was the Alliance for Family Successes (27 organizations including unions and the Catholic Church).

The advocacy coalition found Maine’s political landscape amenable to the agenda of creating educational opportunities for welfare recipients. The Governor of Maine, Angus S. King, Jr., was an Independent and thus did not have to toe a party line. In 1995, the Republicans controlled the state senate and were uncooperative in augmenting welfare benefits; not so in 1997, when the Democrats won control of both state legislative houses. In addition, there were more women in the legislature. Not every woman legislator was on board with the coalition but the increase of women in the legislature made a difference.

In 1997, several women won leadership positions in the State Legislature: Elizabeth Mitchell, Speaker of the House; Dale McCormick, Treasurer of the State of Maine; Jane Amero, Minority Leader of the Senate; Rochelle Pingree, Senate Majority Leader; and Carol Kontos, House Majority Leader. Over the next few years, the percentage of women in the Maine State Legislature increased from 26% in 1996 to 30% in 2002, back to 27% in 2003.

Another critical factor in the campaign was the personalization of welfare recipients to Maine legislators. In 1997, the advocacy coalition succeeded in creating an internship in which welfare recipients could meet and shadow a state legislator. State

Legislators, perhaps, for the first time, met and talked extensively with one person on welfare (Carrier 1997). This personalizing of the welfare recipient cannot be overstated. Gone was some of the rhetoric about lazy welfare recipients; instead, legislators adopted a more reasonable viewpoint. “We don’t have the venom this time around,” said Laura Fortman of the Maine Women’s Lobby. “You’ve got a different tone. I think it’s a much more thoughtful debate” (Ibid. 1997). By 1997 the coalition had gathered support from State Legislators on both sides of the aisle to enact the Parents as Scholars Program (PaS). Maine Legislators from both sides of the aisle were supportive.

Anyone eligible for TANF was eligible for the PaS, a state-funded student aid program. PaS required students to spend at least 30 hours in educational activities and during the last two years to work, including volunteer activities, practicums, tutoring, internships, and work-study. Student support included the same range of benefits of any welfare recipient as well as immediate help to support that student in school. The success of the Maine PaS program was dramatic – 800 participants annually.

Maine shifted from sending welfare recipients to college to sending welfare eligible recipients to college, whether or not they were actually accepting welfare benefits. Key to the success of PaS was the support of the state agency responsible for implementing TANF, Maine’s Bureau of Family Independence of the Maine Department of Human Services. DHS already had a program for welfare recipients in place (ASPIRE) for welfare recipients that permitted limited education with work and ASPIRE already had a waiting list of over 2,400. An education program like PaS, would take emphasis away from work activities, which was the first priority of DHS officials trying to meet strict federal guidelines which required 50% of welfare recipients to be working.

Thus, DHS insisted that PaS's participants be funded with state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds required by PRW rather than TANF funds. If a client applied for welfare benefits, expressed an interest in higher education, and was deemed eligible for college, the client was funded using MOE funds. By using this funding stream, DHS officials would not have to count such clients as part of the welfare rolls and thus would not undermine the statistical requirements of the federal guidelines.

In 2002, researchers from the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine evaluated PaS. The study found that the PaS program was a stunning success. Participants increased their earnings by nearly 50%; 90% maintained a grade point average of at least 3.0; and, 90% left welfare behind. In addition, benefits were found in the next generation as well: children of PaS participants demonstrated higher aspirations than before the program (Smith, Deprez, & Butler 2002).

New York

In 1996, the New York State Legislature was cast differently than was Maine's. The legislature was split - the Assembly was Democratic, the Senate and the Governor were Republican. The percentage of women in the New York's Legislature was far less than Maine - 18.0% in 1996 and 21.7% in 2003. Significantly, no woman held a leadership position in the state legislature.

In 1997, in response to the passage of PRW, Governor George Pataki proposed several reforms that would help in the implementation of PRW. The Governor and State Legislature locked horns over the Governor's proposals. Assembly Democrats wanted welfare participants to be eligible for union membership and to receive prevailing union wages for the assigned work. But the proposal was lost in the late hours of the passage of

New York State's budget. The Democrats yielded to Pataki's welfare bill, Welfare Reform Act, in exchange for a dramatic hike in school spending (Caher & Metzgar, 1997, A1). Clearly, the advocacy coalition around schools was a more powerful lobby than the welfare advocacy coalition, and when pitted against each other in a form of wedge politics, the "school" lobby beat out the "welfare" lobby. The irony of this compromise is that the Democrats in order to get more school construction funds had to have the proposal be voted upon by voters, and the school construction bond was defeated at the polls.

New York State's Welfare Reform Act consisted of two parts - Family Assistance (FA) provided public assistance to families with children, and the Safety Net Assistance (SNA) was established for needy persons not caring for children. This legislation was hostile to any form of education for welfare recipients under the notion that "more emphasis on education would mean less emphasis on work" (Times Union, 2002, A10). "The state law, similar to the federal law, gave local social service districts tremendous flexibility to administer the work programs" which meant that New York City had broad discretion in the implementation of the federal and state laws (Ciarletta 2000, 3). Public officials in New York City, where 43% of the state's general population, and 70% of the State's welfare population resided, introduced severe measures to reduce the welfare rolls. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (1994-2002) made reducing the welfare rolls a top priority; and during his administration, the welfare rolls plummeted from over 1,000,000 to 500,000 (Weikart 2003). Mayor Giuliani's use of WEP workers was notorious. Over 30,000 WEP workers worked for pittance painting benches, cleaning parks and beaches, and concurrently, undercutting good paying union jobs with benefits.

He greatly enlarged the Work Experience Program (WEP) in which welfare recipients were assigned work. “They worked off their cash and Food Stamp benefits at a government or nonprofit office, with hours of work calculated based on the minimum wage rather than the prevailing wage” (Ciarletta 2000, 10).

The advocacy coalition in New York is extensive consisting of several organizations that work closely with one another: the Welfare Reform Network (WRN) sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and consisting of hundreds of organizations that meet and strategize together, the Welfare Law Center (WLC) often in partnership with Legal Aid Services. The Urban Justice Center, and the Welfare Reform Network, and the Welfare Rights Initiative (WRI) at Hunter College, City University of New York participating and often leading an entire network of organizations. “WRN is a 13-year-old coalition of organizations and individuals that advocates for humane income security policies. Its mission is to advocate for a welfare system that assures all people a decent standard of living without stigma.” (WRN 2003).

The Welfare Law Center is a national legal and policy organization headquartered in New York City formed with the mandate to promote economic security for low-income individuals and families. The advocacy coalition took their fight to the courts and won often, using New York State law. Welfare rights are codified in the New York State Social Services Law (SSL). Section 336(a) of the SSL outlined various educational activities that social services districts had to make available to recipients (Ciarletta 2000, 3). Under this New York State law, the City is required to assess each welfare recipient and develop a program that best meets his or her needs (Welfare Law Center 2002).

In a class-action lawsuit, *Davila v. Turner*, the Welfare Law Center took on the issue of education and welfare recipients. In the spring of 1997, the Welfare Law Center, the Urban Justice Center, and the Legal Aid Society obtained a preliminary injunction prohibiting the City from ordering welfare recipients to drop out of education and training programs for work programs. The Court found that in violation of their duties and obligations under New York State Law, the City was conducting sham assessments, and then automatically assigning all persons to workfare. WLC celebrated their victory in human terms – “We are pleased to report that not only was [one of the plaintiffs] able to complete the course because of the preliminary relief we obtained, she has now obtained employment at \$11.95 an hour at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital working as a phlebotomist” (Welfare Law Center, 2002). In 2003 the City settled the case with the Welfare Law Center, and agreed to take seriously its obligations regarding proper assessments and education and training programs.

The Giuliani administration, even while under this preliminary injunction, went ahead in June 1997 and ordered college students throughout the City to attend workfare programs rather than summer school or internships. WLC returned to court to stop the City’s illegal actions. As the City appealed and WLC amended their complaint, time passed. “In September 1998 the trial court entered an additional order staying the City’s new policy of assigning TANF recipients attending college to workfare. Fortunately, the Appellate Division refused to stay the enforcement of the second preliminary injunction, and thousands of college students were able to remain in school” (Ibid.).

One of the most disturbingly punitive actions by New York City officials was the imposition of a requirement that all 19-year-old students had to report to Work

Experience Programs (WEP) rather than attend even high school. This action was taken by the Giuliani administration in defiance of state education law that provides secondary education to all interested to the age of 21. This illegal act also was prevented only by court action (Bodack 2000, 1).

One of the longest battles in New York State and New York City was the fight to allow welfare recipients to work in workfare sites closer to their college. Even this small concession, which would have cost the City nothing, was intolerable to an administration actively hostile to academic achievement by welfare recipients. In 1997, the State Legislature adopted bipartisan legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Roberto Ramirez, Democrat from the Bronx, and State Senator John J. Marchi, Republican from Staten Island, which allowed social service agencies to place students in workfare jobs on college campuses. But the City dug in its heels, and the press took notice. “For CUNY students to get campus workfare assignments, NYC’s welfare agency would have to approve those sites as acceptable substitutes for its own assignments, like cleaning city parks and streets...each of the City University system’s 17 colleges drew up detailed plans showing how it would put students on welfare to work.... City University officials have not heard from the City....Meanwhile, the money that the State Legislature set aside to help the university with workfare remains unspent...” (Kolbert, 1998, B5).

Indeed, one year after the State Legislature mandated that workfare could take place on college campuses, the City still refused to allow work sites at college campuses in chronic violation of the State law. The New York Times condemned the Mayor for resisting a campus workfare plan: “Over the last two years, ... the city has steadfastly resisted a program to provide workfare on campus, so that welfare recipients might fulfill

their work obligations without disrupting progress toward a college degree” (New York Times 1998, A10). Students turned for help to the Welfare Rights Initiative.

Centered at Hunter College’s Center for the Study of Family Policy and founded by college students Melinda Lackey, the Welfare Rights Initiative, begun in 1995, was at the forefront of the battles against New York State’s and New York City’s campaign to discontinue welfare benefits to students. “WRI seeks to address the absent voice of welfare recipients, the negative stereotypes of welfare recipients that dominate policy-making, and the needs for socially constructive and realistic reform. WRI provides students with the opportunity to participate in organizing and leadership development, and its volunteers and staff inform other students about local, state and federal policies that affect their lives” (Center for Community Change 1998). Maureen Lane who joined Melinda Lackey as a leader of WRI notes that startup funding for WRI came from the Child Welfare Fund and later from student fees. In addition to Melinda Lackey, two nationally known professors in social welfare policy, Miriam Abramovitz, and Janet Poppendieck, were instrumental in forming WRI, and developing a yearlong seminar in community organizing and leadership, which is currently in its 9th year.

WRI and the Welfare Reform Network (WRN) with a cohort consisting of State University of New York (SUNY) presidents, groups, networks and organizations from around the state lobbied the State Legislature to expand the definition of work activity to include work-study and internships, and to convince Republican upstate legislators in the Senate that promoting education for welfare recipients was essential for economic independence (Lane 2003). With the help of Senator Tom Duane, WRI invited key legislators to tour college campuses and talk to welfare recipients attending college and

WRN representatives. In 2000, Roberto Ramirez, Democratic Assemblyman from New York City, and Raymond Meier, Republican Senator from upstate New York, succeeded in passing the Work-Study and Internship Law, expanding the definition of a work activity to include work-study and internships (Hernandez 2000, B9). Students could not only fulfill their work requirement on campus, but the work-study assignment, up to 15 or 20 hours per week, would count toward the WEP/TANF work requirement. In 2002, the Welfare Rights Initiative, led this coalition to lobby the legislature successfully for the renewal of the New York State's Work-Study and Internship Law.

WRN led the “pledge of resistance” against Mayor Giuliani’s plans to place welfare recipients in workfare positions within the nonprofit community. Workfare was the City’s program for welfare recipients to pay back their welfare grant through low paying jobs. Cristina DiMeo, senior policy analyst in policy, research and advocacy department of the Federation explained the Federation’s leadership. “When Megan McLaughlin, Executive Director/CEO of the Federation announced that the Federation would refuse to place any workfare recipients at the Federation, it gave legitimacy to other nonprofits to resist” (DiMeo 2003). WRN then led the “pledge of resistance” campaign and succeeded in getting hundreds of nonprofit organizations including faith-based organizations to sign a pledge that they would not accept placements from the exploitative WEP program.

In 2000, WRN and WRI formed the Coalition for Access to Training and Education (CATE), which consisted of 12 organizational members and 50 organizational supporters in New York City that joined forces to lobby for education and other rights for welfare recipients before the City Council. In 2002 these coalitions sought changes in

New York City's welfare program. The New York City Council bill (93A) expanded the definition of work activity, insured that work-study grants would not be counted as income for welfare recipients, permitted welfare recipients to attend ESL and GED classes and college, and required the City to accommodate a student's class schedule in workfare assignments. The bill expanded the options for welfare recipients beyond the City's program, Begin Employment Gain Independence Now (BEGIN). The coalition succeeded in passing this City legislation over the veto of the new Republican mayor, Michael Bloomberg, who then sent City attorneys to court to try to stop implementation of this law, Local Law 23. Bill de Blasio, City Councilman from Brooklyn and chair of the Council's General Welfare committee, gave credit to WRI: "They [more than 100 Hunter students having taken the Community Leadership seminar] were active every step of the way" (Arenson 2003). The law is not yet implemented since Mayor Bloomberg appealed the legislation.

Other legislation in support of education for welfare recipients did not pass the State Legislature. In 2002, WRN worked closely with Assembly Social Services Committee chairperson Deborah Glick to introduce legislation to expand access to adult basic education, ESL and GED programs and allow participation to count as work activity (A7933). WRN also worked with Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Ed Sullivan to introduce legislation to allow college coursework to count as work activity (A7286). Assemblymember Glick's bill passed both houses, but Governor Pataki vetoed Glick's bill four days before Christmas in 2002. Sullivan's bill never made it out of the Legislature. Mayor Michael Bloomberg, supported Governor Pataki and sent a letter to that effect referring to the Glick bill as "unwieldy" (Glick, 2003).

Conclusion

The advocacy coalitions in Maine and New York had much in common. Although New York's coalition consisted of many more groups, both coalitions sought to broaden their coalition to include a wide variety of organizations across the political spectrum. These coalitions sought bipartisan sponsors to pass state legislation that would support their goals; at no point was any legislation seen as just a Democratic issue. Both coalitions sought, not just access to higher education, but support for students on welfare including assistance with childcare, transportation, tuition support, counseling, job development and placement, and relief from college fees. These coalitions worked closely with women on welfare; indeed welfare recipients were part of the coalition, and in leadership positions within the coalition. Maine welfare advocates arranged for women on welfare to meet and shadow legislators and New York's leadership arranged for a top State Legislator to spend the day with women on welfare. National think tanks and law centers became part of statewide advocacy coalitions, and were essential to both states' success.

Maine and New York parted strategy over staying within the welfare system or going outside the system. Maine used state MOE funds to get beyond the restrictions from the welfare state. New York sought and won changes within the welfare system. Maureen Lane of New York's WRI maintained that "it was important that we force the welfare system to change and not leave that system in order to get access to college. We want the welfare system to change" (Lane 2003).

New York added the litigation in courts to the political strategy. For years political scientists have lectured about the "iron triangle" of politics in agenda setting and

implementation – interest groups, legislators on key committees, and heads of administrative agencies. But at least in this arena, the judiciary must be included. A more accurate description is the “iron rectangle,” in which advocacy coalitions use the courts to advance their agendas. In New York, the advocacy coalition effectively used the courts to stop Mayor Giuliani’s blatant disregard for state law, some laws were ones, which the coalition had succeeded in getting passed.

New York’s resort to the costly and time-consuming use of courts reflects a major difference between Maine and New York. In Maine, advocates succeeded in persuading the State Executive and Legislative branches of the value of their cause. The hostility of the New York State and New York City government executives to the cause forced New York advocates into the courthouse to gain changes in state and city implementation of PRW.

There are factors beyond the immediate control of advocacy coalitions that influence the outcome of lobbying efforts: a critical mass of women legislators, women in leadership positions in the legislature, and control of the legislature by the Democratic Party clearly made a difference in passing important legislation in Maine. The number of women legislators in Maine that took an interest in welfare issues and won leadership positions must be considered. The literature is definitive – the more women legislators, and the more women legislators in leadership positions – the greater the legislative emphasis on family issues.

Advocacy coalitions that support access to education can achieve gains against extremely conservative public policies but Maine achieved earlier support from the State Legislature to support women on welfare in college. The biggest difference was that, in

Maine, advocates had a political environment that was favorable to their goal while the advocacy coalition in New York operated within a very hostile political environment that was philosophically opposed to the goals of the coalition.

Maine experienced this barren soil when it took the issue of access to higher education to the national debate, and at first had little success in that much more hostile political environment. U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (Republican from Maine) introduced the Parents-as-Scholars Program in Congress in 2002 as a model for restructuring PRW. Snow wanted to insure that education would be prominently displayed as the key to self-sufficiency on the federal level. Snowe sought bi-partisan support similar to the Maine model and succeeded in getting Senate Finance Chair Max Baucus, Democrat from Montana, to join her as lead cosponsor. Their attempts were defeated in the 107th Congress. But on September 15, 2003 in the 108th Congress, Senator Snowe had some success. The bill coming out of the Senate's Committee on Finance, of which Snowe is a member, permitted welfare recipients to attend postsecondary education. Once again, the presence of women in legislative leadership made a difference. The House passed a much more restrictive bill so the ultimate result is not yet known. The successes in Maine and New York as well as the Senate Finance Committee indicates the strength of Mazmanian & Sabatier's framework of a policy subsystem containing a variety of actors from varying institutions who share a set of beliefs can influence the implementation and administration of a government program (1989).

The external political environment remains critical to the success of advocacy coalitions. In a harsh political climate, success is difficult and can take years. Advocacy

coalitions will fare best with large numbers of women legislators and with moderates on both sides of the aisle. But with shrewd coalition building, including law advocates, even in the harshest political climates, advocacy coalitions can achieve at least partial success as witnessed in New York. Future research on the influence advocacy coalitions have on the implementation of state policy is essential to understand the extent to which national policy can be altered at the state and local level. The strategies used by welfare rights coalitions – bipartisanship, broadening the coalition, enlarging the “iron triangle” to the “iron rectangle,” the election of more women to leadership positions in the legislature, and staying power over a period of years – are translatable to other states and other policy issues.

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Appendix A: 15 states in which welfare recipients can attend four-year colleges+

States	% White++	% Women in State Legislatures+++
Alabama	71.10%	10.00%
Arkansas	80.00%	20.00%
California	59.50%	30.00%
Colorado	82.80%	33.00%
Delaware	74.60%	29.00%
Georgia	65.10%	21.60%
Hawaii	24.30%	27.60%
Illinois	73.50%	27.10%
Iowa	93.90%	21.30%
Maine	96.90%	26.90%
Missouri	84.90%	23.60%
Montana	90.60%	21.30%
New Jersey	72.60%	16.70%
Vermont	96.80%	30.60%
Wyoming	92.10%	17.80%
Average 15 states	77.25%	23.77%
Average 50 states	75.10%	22.30%

+ Center for Women Policy Studies, 2003.

++ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

+++ Center for American Women & Politics, 2003.