

**HALF A LOAF: GENEROSITY IN CASH ASSISTANCE TO SINGLE
MOTHERS ACROSS US STATES, 1911-1996**

by

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DEDICATION

“Mrs. Mary McCarthy told David Ranch, a social worker, ‘We will no longer go without things we need. We’re tired of the policy of welfare which makes us settle for half a loaf.’”

Boston Herald Traveler, August 3, 1968, page 1,

“Ott Orders Welfare Clampdown” by Robert F. Hannan

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ABSTRACT

Prior to the establishment of Aid to Dependent Children in 1935, states offered cash assistance to single mothers and their children through locally administered programs known as mothers' pensions. Since the first mothers' pension law was passed in 1911, the rank-ordering of states' generosity has been remarkably stable, shifting only after welfare reform in 1996. Prior research has neither documented nor explained this remarkable path dependence. In this dissertation, I argue that states' racial and ethnic composition and their state capacity, as measured in the 1930s before the federalization of cash assistance to single mothers, set states on particular trajectories.

To see how this operated in practice, I conducted a case study of benefit levels in Massachusetts from 1913 to 1996. I found that a constellation of factors at the beginning of mothers' pensions—the lack of a legislated maximum benefit level, state involvement in funding, and a competent professional bureaucracy—set Massachusetts on a trajectory toward being a generous state. The early years of Aid of Dependent Children reinforced this trajectory, as benefit levels were consistently raised due to cost-of-living increases. Things began to change in the 1960s, however, as the caseload grew, the state experienced a fiscal crisis, and welfare rights activists campaigned for higher benefit levels. Welfare rights activism generated a backlash that resulted in a lack of public support for adequate benefit levels. Benefit levels declined until the early 1980s, when a strong economy, savvy advocates, and sympathetic elected officials combined to increase

benefit levels. The early 1990s recession, which began in 1988 in Massachusetts, instigated another decrease in benefit levels.

Ultimately, the case study showed that states may appear to have solid trajectories, but these trajectories are contested. Both raising and lowering benefit levels came up in the Massachusetts Legislature many times, and a fundamental change in Massachusetts' state capacity, such as permanently reduced fiscal resources, could have sent Massachusetts down a different path.

INTRODUCTION

When women who need money to support their children have nowhere else to turn, they turn to the state. Usually, a series of unfortunate events has led them to this point: they are unable to find jobs that pay enough to cover all their expenses, or their children have health problems, or the children's fathers are incapacitated, incarcerated, or otherwise unavailable. These women and their children exist today, and they have existed since the United States was founded. At various points in time, these women have been directed to poorhouses or forced to send their children to orphanages. In the twentieth century, women who needed money to support their children could receive cash assistance from local, state, and federal government agencies. The amount of cash assistance could vary widely according to where mothers lived, but it was never enough to allow women to raise their children according to minimum standards of decency and health.

Curiously, despite the obvious salience of benefit levels to recipients, few scholars have investigated why states offer cash assistance payments that are always inadequate and that differ so substantially across states. Those scholars who do examine benefit levels in programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) tend to take a contemporary approach (e.g. Moffitt, Ribar, and Wilhelm 1998; Moller 2002; Orr 1976; Plotnick and Winters 1985; Ribar and Wilhelm 1999; Tweedie 1994). This neglects the first two to three decades of AFDC as well as the state-level precursors to the federal programs. This is

problematic because, despite the changes that federalization brought to state programs in 1935, the rank-ordering of states' benefit generosity did not substantially change from the 1910s until the 1996 welfare reform. Using a mixed-method design, I examine the processes and mechanisms behind the extraordinary stability of the rank-ordering of state benefit levels. I begin with a quantitative analysis of benefit levels, showing that state capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions in the 1930s are excellent predictors of the generosity of cash assistance to single mothers until the 1996 welfare reform. In order to elucidate the mechanisms behind this finding, I utilize process-tracing of archival material to study Massachusetts, which is an exemplar of one of the major welfare regime types in the pre-1996 period. Through this multi-method investigation, I hope to improve our understanding of the determinants of American social policy.

History

Mothers' pensions, which were "paltry long-term cash provisions for children without employable fathers, contingent upon their mothers' acceptance of middle-class behavioral norms" (Leff 1973:397), are the little-known state-level precursors to the federal Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). First instituted in Illinois and Missouri in 1911, state laws allowing localities to establish mothers' pension programs were on the books in all but two states by 1935. ADC then became Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1962 when mothers were added to the benefit. Although some work-oriented reforms were implemented, AFDC's basic structure did not change until 1996. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act eliminated

AFDC and replaced it with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which was intended to make cash assistance more restrictive and to increase labor-force participation. While I present evidence from the TANF era, I am not concerned with explaining benefit levels in this period, as TANF instigated the first real shake-up in the cross-sectional distribution of benefit levels since the 1930s. Since the programs that provided cash assistance to single mothers changed names so often, I simply refer to them as “welfare” when I am not referencing a particular time period.

Empirical Puzzle

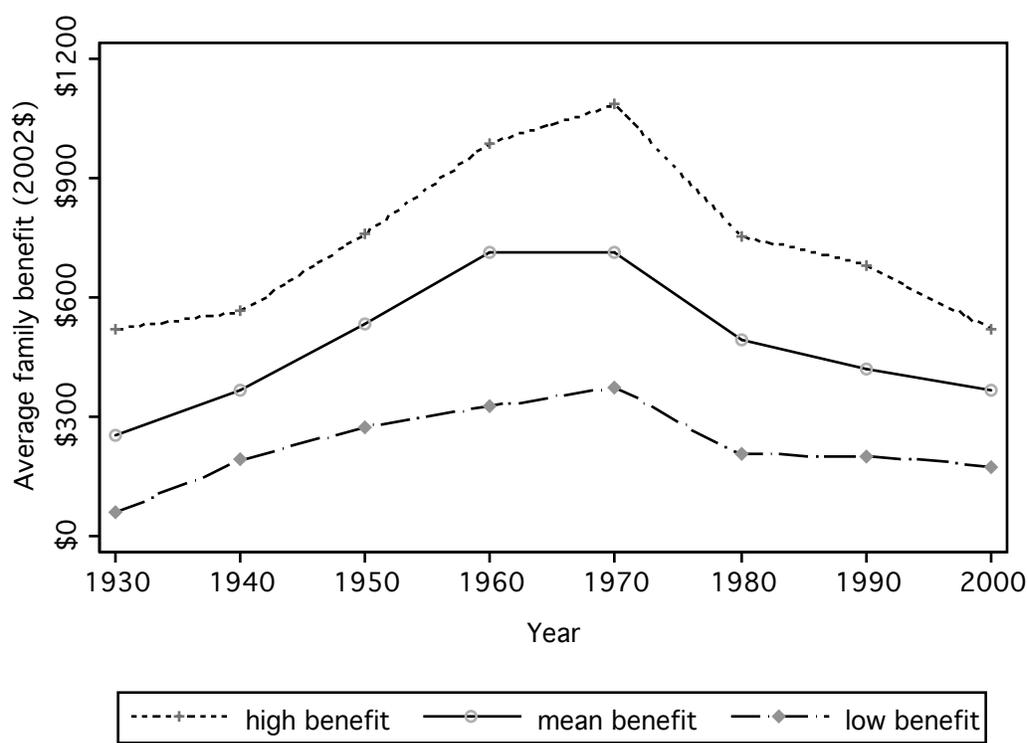
This project began with perplexing findings: contemporary data did not explain nearly as much variation in states’ benefit generosity¹ as did data from the 1930s. Moreover, states’ relative levels of benefit generosity had changed little since the era of mothers’ pensions; the cross-state correlation between 1931 mothers’ pension and 1992 AFDC benefit is .70. This continuity of the initial rank-ordering of generosity is most apparent at its extremes. In 1931 Massachusetts provided the most generous mothers’ pension; in 1992 it was the fourth most generous state with regard to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits (Moller 2003; U.S. Children’s Bureau 1933). In 1931 Alabama became one of the last states to pass mothers’ pension legislation; in 1992

¹ In this work “generosity” refers to benefit levels rather than aggregate social or welfare spending, which is a somewhat different concept. States can have very similar benefit levels but very different welfare expenditures if they differ on non-cash services provided (e.g. job training programs). Focusing on the amount of cash assistance received privileges recipients’ perspectives on what constitutes generosity.

it offered the second least generous AFDC benefit (Moller 2003; U.S. Children's Bureau 1933).

Figure 1 illustrates the extent to which states follow the same over-time pattern. The solid line in Figure 1 is the mean state average family benefit over time. The upper line in Figure 1 is the mean state average family benefit for the five states—Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, California, and Wisconsin—that have the highest average benefit levels. The lower line in Figure 1 is the mean state average family benefit for the five states—Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas—that have the lowest average benefit levels. The slope of all three lines is very similar, implying that states follow the same pattern over time.

Figure 1. Low, Mean, and High Average Family Benefit, 1930-2000



Substantively, this implies that state welfare benefit generosity is path-dependent. States' positions in the cross-sectional distribution of benefit levels were set early, prior to the 1935 Social Security Act, and states experienced similar over-time changes. This dissertation attempts to answer two questions that these patterns generate: (1) How were initial benefit levels determined? (2) What explains the extraordinary persistence of the initial cross-state configurations? Why are benefit levels path-dependent, particularly as the programs proffering assistance (and the nation as a whole) changed dramatically over this period?

PREVIOUS RESEARCH, THEORY, AND METHODS

To get a better handle on the issues at stake, this chapter reviews previous research on benefit generosity and outlines relevant theoretical perspectives. It also presents the hypotheses to be tested and describes the research design and data sources.

Previous Research

Previous research does not take this initial, stable configuration of welfare benefit generosity into account when assessing the determinants of state welfare benefit generosity. Economists working within a public good framework have conducted the vast majority of the research on state welfare benefit generosity (Moffitt et al. 1998; Orr 1976; Plotnick and Winters 1985; Ribar and Wilhelm 1999; see Cauthen and Amenta 1996 and Moller 2002 for exceptions). In the public good framework, taxpayers derive utility from redistributing some of their income to the poor because they believe the poor should enjoy a minimal standard of living. These taxpayers are also voters, and the median preference for redistribution of these voters is what politicians and state bureaucrats implement. The level of redistribution, then, is primarily dependent upon taxpayers' income (taxpayers with higher incomes are willing to redistribute more) and the price of redistribution (the amount each taxpayer pays toward redistribution).

There are a number of problems associated with the public good model. One problem is that the model depends upon redistribution being responsive to need, as recipients' incomes are part of taxpayers' utility function (Orr 1976; Plotnick and Winters

1985; Tweedie 1994). Tweedie (1994) finds that this is not the case. Instead, redistribution is responsive to the availability of state revenue. Another problem that Tweedie (1994) highlights is that the model assumes that states rather straightforwardly translate median voter preferences into policy outcomes. This assumption does not take the interests of state actors into account. For instance, state bureaucrats may act to preserve or increase their power rather than simply execute voter preferences. A related problem is that the model assumes voters make decisions about whom to elect based on redistribution preferences (Moffitt et al. 1998). It seems unlikely that the level of state welfare benefits determines anyone's vote.

Furthermore, most research on welfare generosity across states ignores the first two to three decades of ADC.² For those working within the public good framework, this has to do with the way that federal-state cost-sharing operated in this period. Cauthen and Amenta (1996) examine 1935 to 1950, but they combine benefit generosity with benefit coverage (that is, the number of families that received ADC as proportion of single-mother households in a state). Due to the way the measure is constructed, coverage is privileged over generosity.³

The fact that the rank-ordering of states' generosity appears to change little over time also has implications for research methodologies. Most of the research on welfare generosity across states employs pooled cross-sectional time-series regression (hereafter referred to as "pooled regression"). Pooled regressions combine observations across

² Aside from Cauthen and Amenta (1996), Wexler and Engel's (1999) descriptive piece is the only exception.

³ This accounts for the difference between what Cauthen and Amenta (1996) find—that ADC was a significant departure from mothers' pensions—and what I find.

units—states, in this case—with observations across time. The motivation is to increase statistical power by increasing the number of observations. This strategy has been criticized for a number of reasons, but the most salient here is that “the effect of a given independent variable may be quite different in time-series and cross-section ‘because the underlying causal structures differ’ (Firebaugh, 1980, p. 333)” (Shalev 2007:279–280). As Shalev (2007:281) notes, “it is rare for analysts to differentiate between over-time and cross-sectional effects or to take seriously the possibility of temporal or national [or within-state, in this case] specificity.” The reliance upon pooled regressions has allowed the extraordinary stability of the cross-sectional distribution of benefit levels to be ignored. Thus, researchers may be misspecifying the determinants of welfare generosity.

Determinants of Benefit Generosity

The public good framework is clearly unsatisfying. What else could explain welfare generosity? The cross-national literature on welfare states (Huber and Stephens 2001; Korpi 1983) is difficult to apply to the US context (Amenta, Bonastia, and Caren 2001:222). For example, power resources theory holds that welfare states are the result of strong labor movements supporting left parties, but the US has never had a strong left party and its union strength is much weaker than other advanced industrialized nations. Leading theoretical perspectives in comparative and historical work on US social policy identify business interests (Domhoff 1990; Reese 2005), political processes (Amenta 1998), and social movements (Piven and Cloward 1993) as important causal factors. As I discuss later, I will consider these perspectives as alternative hypotheses. For my main

hypotheses, I expect that state capacity and the racial and ethnic composition of the state's population are what drive welfare generosity. While the emphasis I place on the role of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the early twentieth century is unusual, I am building on a growing literature on the relationship between race, state capacity, and welfare state generosity (Brown 1999; Reese 2005).

State Capacity

State capacity—that is, the ability of states to implement their goals—is a key concern of state-centered theory, in which the state is an independent, self-interested actor (Skocpol 1985). Skocpol (1985:16) identifies “loyal and skilled officials and plentiful financial resources” as “basic to state effectiveness in attaining all sorts of goals.” Capacity, often conceived primarily as a professionalized bureaucracy and sufficient revenue, assists in explicating why different states or state organizations take different forms. If states are able to raise significant revenues, they can support larger bureaucracies or more generous social policies than states with lesser revenues. Size is not the only aspect of state organizations that might be affected by capacity; state organizations can take on fundamentally different forms if they have different capacities. State capacity, then, can be integral to explaining policy outcomes.

While women's organizations like the National Congress of Mothers and the General Federation of Women's Clubs were integral to passing mothers' pension legislation (Skocpol et al. 1993; Skocpol 1995), local and state bureaucrats were responsible for the implementation of mothers' pensions. States often had very little to do with mothers' pensions aside from passing the law that allowed more local forms of

government to institute the program. In 1931 thirty of forty-three states with active mothers' pension programs did not use any state revenue to fund mothers' pensions, and only Arizona and New Hampshire funded mothers' pensions entirely out of state revenue (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933). Cities, counties, and municipalities had to both finance and administer mothers' pensions in most states, which resulted in a great deal of variability between and within states (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933). Thus, local state capacity in terms of competent bureaucracy and ample revenue was important to the development of mothers' pension programs.

Similarly, most research on the adoption of ADC emphasizes the role of federal bureaucrats like the staff of the Children's Bureau, which was part of the Department of Labor (L. Gordon 1994; Howard 1992; D. E. Ward 2005). The program was included in the Social Security Act as part of the uncontroversial public assistance package that included Old-Age Assistance and Aid to the Blind (L. Gordon 1994:256). Dependent children were in the same category as the disabled and the elderly, so obviously in need of assistance that no one questioned the inclusion of ADC as Title IV in the Social Security Act. The Children's Bureau, which had championed mothers' pensions since their inception, wrote Title IV and kept the structure very similar to mothers' pensions. They also requested only \$25 million for the program, which they continued to call 'mothers' pensions' (L. Gordon 1994:257). In contrast, the Works Progress Administration had "an initial appropriation of approximately \$4.9 billion, an enormous sum for that time" (Amenta 1998:83).

Due to the similarities between the programs, the transition from mothers' pensions to ADC was not dramatic. ADC simply federalized the patchwork system of mothers' pensions that was available in some localities of almost all states. Because the Social Security Act left states in charge of determining benefit levels, many states continued the practices they, or the localities within them, developed for mothers' pensions. In many states, the legislature gave the responsibility for setting benefit levels to state agencies like the Department of Public Welfare. Benefit levels were thus the result of bureaucratic deliberation rather than the outcome of partisan maneuvering in these states.

Most recent studies of welfare generosity either do not consider state capacity (e.g. most of the studies following the public good model) or treat a state capacity-like measure as a control (Moller 2002). In the only study to systematically examine the effect of state revenue on welfare generosity, Tweedie (1994) found that AFDC benefits rise when state revenues rise. I expect to find that the way state bureaucrats constructed their mothers' pension programs and the revenues available to them at that time set states on particular trajectories with regard to welfare generosity. State bureaucrats, I hypothesize, were also responsible for the maintenance of these trajectories over ADC's existence. Greater state capacity, in form of larger revenue and a more professional bureaucracy, should result in greater generosity.

Race

Many scholars have documented the central role that race played in the development of the American welfare state (Abramovitz 1988; Brown 1999; L. Gordon

1994; Lieberman 1995; Mink 1995; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Piven and Cloward 1993; Quadagno 1996; D. E. Ward 2005). In particular, race has influenced almost every aspect of cash assistance to single mothers, from the initial exclusion of African-Americans from mothers' pensions to the family cap policy that many states instituted in the 1990s that denied benefits to children conceived while their mothers were receiving welfare (L. Gordon 1994; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Quadagno 1996; Soss et al. 2001; D. E. Ward 2005). Although much of this research has focused entirely on African-Americans, scholars have observed that other racial and ethnic minorities as well as immigrants have also faced discrimination, exclusion, and mistreatment (L. Gordon 1994; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; D. E. Ward 2005).

Research on the determinants of cross-state variation in benefit levels has not tended to focus on race, however. Some researchers use a measure like the percent of the state's population that is African-American as a control (e.g. Orr 1976), but there has been little systematic attention to its causal effects. In the only study to seriously examine race, Moller (2002) finds that states with higher percentages of African-American single mothers tend to be less generous than states with higher percentages of white single mothers.

While the literature on race and benefit levels is scarce, there is a thriving literature that examines how race affects initial eligibility for welfare as well as the requirements that one must meet in order to continue to receive welfare (Bell 1965; Mink 1995; Piven and Cloward 1993; Reese 2005; Soss et al. 2001; Soule and Zylan 1997). The literature on benefit eligibility may be suggestive of what to expect when studying

benefit generosity as these are the two main aspects of welfare policy over which states had control in the ADC/AFDC era (Brown 2003). Generally, this literature finds eligibility requirements are used to disproportionately exclude African-Americans from receiving welfare and to enforce white middle-class behavioral norms. For example, Bell (1965) examines the requirement that welfare recipients provide a “suitable home” for their children. While this rule, on its face, reflected the idea that children should live in a place that “conform[s] to a minimum standard of decency and health,” in practice this rule allowed states to exclude African-Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities from welfare rolls (Bell 1965:34–36). In some cases, the suitable home provision also permitted welfare caseworkers to deny benefits to single mothers they found to be morally suspect (Bell 1965). Not surprisingly, nonwhite single mothers were more likely to be found morally suspect (Bell 1965). Given the similar findings in other relevant research, I expect that the percent of a state’s population that is African-American will have a negative effect on states’ generosity.

Assimilation of Southern and Eastern European Immigrants

When reading the literature on mothers’ pensions, it is impossible not to notice that most of the people who received mothers’ pensions appear to have been immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (L. Gordon 1994:46–49). Goodwin (1997) opens her account of mothers’ pensions in Chicago with the story of an Italian immigrant family, and Italian, Polish, Czech, Russian, Lithuanian, and Jewish (along with some German and Irish) immigrants seem to comprise the majority of those who received mothers’ pensions. Mothers’ pensions tended to be implemented in large cities to which

immigrants flocked, both creating the need for mothers' pensions and shaping the particular form that mothers' pensions took. These cities tended to lack significant populations of other minority groups, such as African-Americans or Latinos, and these minority groups tended not to receive pensions, sometimes because they were explicitly excluded (Gordon 1994).

While much of the rhetoric surrounding the passage of mothers' pension laws emphasized the beginning of a new era of respectable, state-supported motherhood, in practice the women who received mothers' pensions were treated as people needed to be trained to appropriate, Anglo-Saxon standards of childrearing (Mink 1995). The people who ran mothers' pension programs (often themselves women) saw intensive casework that taught poor immigrant women how to cook nutritious meals, among many other duties, as an essential part of the program. In their view, the cash they doled out was more the means through which Americanization and assimilation occurred rather than the entire point of the program.

Caseworkers often saw ethnicity as the basis for differing levels of support. A 1922 study of mothers' pensions found that eleven of thirty agencies had different budget schedules for recipients of different nationalities (L. Gordon 1994; Proceedings of Conference on Mothers' Pensions 1922). While some Southern and Eastern European immigrant groups were singled out for lower benefits, other racial and ethnic groups seemed to have still lower benefits. One agency in the 1922 study referred to "a Mexican problem" that resulted in lower benefit levels; no other racial or ethnic group was framed as a "problem" (Proceedings of Conference on Mothers' Pensions 1922:4). Because

urban centers with high white immigrant populations were more likely to establish mothers' pension programs, these areas may have been more generous than ones in which other racial and ethnic minority populations were the more likely recipients.

Business Interests, Political Processes, and Social Movements

Building on Mills' concept of the power elite, Domhoff (1990) argued that capitalists, often indirectly, persuade legislators and government officials to create policies that are in their interest. With regard to a program like welfare, capitalists would want to ensure that expenditures are as low as possible and that benefits are modest enough to avoid work disincentives. Most scholars have found little evidence that capitalists were concerned with means-tested social programs like welfare. They do not appear to have opposed the creation of mothers' pensions (Skocpol 1995), for example. More recently, however, Reese (2005) contended that business interests, particularly agribusiness and farm organizations, agitated to restrict welfare eligibility in the 1950s. In order for business interests to affect benefit generosity, states would have to differ on the strength of business interests in ways that reflect the distribution of benefit levels across states. The measure that Reese (2005) uses to indicate the strength of agribusiness, the percentage of farms that had ten or more hired workers in 1950, does not seem to vary in ways that correspond to benefit levels. For example, of the five most generous and five least generous states, only two of the most generous states have percentages of large farms below the median. Furthermore, since benefit levels are not decided by elected officials in many states, it is unclear what mechanisms agribusiness would use to get state bureaucrats to reduce benefit levels.

Political actors and the structure of political institutions have also been argued to be critical to the development of American social policy. Amenta (1998:20) theorizes that the “political rights of citizens, the character of the party system, fragmentation of functions and powers in the political system, and administrative capacities in public policies...influence public spending policy.” I agree that the two institutional factors he names—the lack of centralization in American political institutions and administrative capacity—are likely to be important for explaining welfare generosity. Amenta’s institutional politics approach may rely too much on elected political actors to be able to explain benefit levels, however. The actors deciding benefit levels were often not elected and sometimes maintained their positions regardless of the political party in the governor’s office. This insulated them from the political pressures that led to generous spending policies in Amenta’s framework. The institutional politics perspective may work only in situations in which electoral politics are important for determining outcomes, and this was not the case for benefit generosity.

Social movements have also been thought to be important for a variety of welfare-state outcomes. The classic version of this argument comes from Piven and Cloward (1993:1), who state that “relief arrangements are initiated or expanded during the occasional outbreaks of civil disorder produced by mass unemployment, and are then abolished or contracted when political stability is restored.” This perspective cannot account for either the establishment of mothers’ pensions, which did not occur in a time of mass unemployment (Skocpol 1995), the initial generosity of benefit levels, or why benefit levels have stayed so similar over time. As many scholars who studied mothers’

pensions and the early years of ADC have noted, there was little interest in cash assistance to single mothers after mothers' pension laws were passed (Mittelstadt 2005; Skocpol 1995; D. E. Ward 2005). The welfare rights movement is the only social movement actor that had any interest in influencing welfare policy, and it was only active from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Furthermore, the welfare rights movement was largely composed of women who were receiving or had received welfare, a relatively small and politically unimportant constituency.

Research Design

This dissertation has a comprehensive research goal—explaining how and why US states vary in the generosity of cash assistance to single mothers—that requires a comprehensive research design. First, drawing on research about the American welfare state and on historical research on mothers' pensions, I hypothesize that states' capacities are positively related to benefit levels, and the percentages of states' populations that are African-American or Eastern and Southern European immigrants are negatively related to benefit levels. I test these hypotheses in the cross-case quantitative component of this dissertation and find support for them. Identifying causal effects via regression is not enough to establish causality, however (Achen 2002; George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007). Discovering causal pathways and causal mechanisms is necessary to determine what actually explains social phenomena (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007). Thus, in order to bolster the quantitative results through triangulation, the second part of the dissertation contains a detailed case study of one state, which allows me to investigate

the mechanisms that perpetuated path dependence in benefit generosity. Through this in-depth examination I can assess alternative hypotheses, explore interactions between the independent variables, and identify causal chains.

Quantitative Component

Following Moller (2002), I use decennial ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to explore how state capacity and states' racial and ethnic composition affect welfare generosity across states. Because the differences I want to explain are across states rather than over time, this is more appropriate than a pooled analysis. However, the regressions do have a temporal component. By testing the relative impacts of contemporary and 1930s-era measurements of my key independent variables, I am able to demonstrate the policy continuity. My intention is to describe and establish path dependency, rather than to make causal inferences about the determinants of benefit levels.

My initial results indicate strong path dependency. The 1930s independent variables explain over 60% of the variation in 1931 mothers' pension and 60-70% of the variation in each of the years of the ADC/AFDC period. If I take the inflation-adjusted mean benefit level for each state over the ADC/AFDC period (1942-1992), the 1930s independent variables explain 77% of the variation across states. Examining the standardized coefficients indicates that 1930s state capacity, percent black, and percent white immigrant each have a strong effect, and 1930s state capacity and percent black are better predictors than contemporaneous measures of state capacity and race. There are no contemporaneous measures of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, but

approximations of this—percent of the state’s population that is foreign-born, for example—follow the same pattern. The quantitative chapter examines these results in greater detail.

Moreover, adding other independent variables to the analysis, such as cost-of-living indicators or measures assessing the number of families receiving assistance while controlling for the size of the state’s population, does not change this picture. None of the variables tested thus far are statistically significant when the 1930s independent variables are also in the model.

Qualitative Component

The quantitative results imply questions that qualitative research can answer: How were initial benefit levels determined? What explains the extraordinary persistence of the initial cross-state configurations? Why are benefit levels path-dependent, particularly as the programs proffering assistance (and the nation as a whole) changed dramatically over this period?

It is clear that states’ relative welfare benefit generosity is remarkably stable over time, but the causes of this stability are less clear. Because it is difficult to get at micro-level mechanisms in cross-case research (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007), I turn to a case study to explore how the factors I identified in the cross-case quantitative component work out in practice. Gerring (2007:20) defines a case study as “the intensive study of a single case where the propose of that study is—at least in part—to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population).” Other scholars also emphasize the relationship

between cases and populations, such that one should remember that cases always refer back to particular populations (George and Bennett 2005; Walton 1992).

Case studies are an ideal way to examine this particular research question for methodological and substantive reasons. While there are other ways to think about causation (see G. King, Keohane, and Verba 1994), many researchers who use observational data argue that identifying causal mechanisms, pathways, and processes is crucial to establishing causality (Brady and Collier 2004; George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007). An additional advantage of performing case studies alongside a statistical analysis is that the case studies can confirm (or disconfirm) the quantitative results. Case studies can also allow for better understanding of interaction effects, particularly when the interaction is complex and the sample size is small (George and Bennett 2005). Further, unlike quantitative analyses involving regression, case studies are not tied to any understanding of causation, be it probabilistic or deterministic. Substantively, it is difficult to overstate how little is known about the actual processes behind setting benefit levels. For example, no research addresses which state government entity, usually either the legislature or the Department of Public Welfare, has responsibility for setting benefit levels. This varies both across states and over time, and one could imagine different incentives for legislators versus state bureaucrats.

One of the most important aspects of designing a case study is case selection. Close examination of the quantitative data convinced me that states tended to cluster in a few identifiable patterns. This meant that I could not choose one representative or typical state, as no one state embodied average values on the independent and dependent

variables. Based on the quantitative data, I grouped all 48 states (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) into four categories, which are listed in Table 1.⁴ The most generous states, which include Massachusetts, New York, California, Washington, Minnesota and others, have high state capacity, a large white immigrant population, and a small African-American population. The states that are moderately generous, which includes New Hampshire, Utah, North Dakota, Ohio and others, have medium state capacity, a medium-high white immigrant population, and a moderate to low African-American population. Moderately stingy states, including West Virginia, Arizona, Indiana,

Table 1. Types of States

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	List of States
Stingy	Heavily African-American, very few white immigrants, low to moderate state capacity	AL, AR, LA, MS, GA, FL, TX, TN, NC, SC, VA
Moderately stingy	Significant African-American, Mexican-American, or American Indian population; low to moderate white immigrant population; moderate state capacity	WV, NM, OK, IN, SD, AZ, MO, KY, NV, DE
Moderately generous	Low to moderate African-American population, moderate to large white immigrant population, medium state capacity	NH, IL, UT, PA, ND, ID, IA, KS, WY, MT, NE, OH, ME, OR, CO, VT, MD
Generous	Small African-American population, large white immigrant population, high state capacity	MA, NY, NJ, RI, MI, WI, MN, CA, WA, CT

⁴ The dependent variable used in Table 1 is the mean of states' inflation-adjusted benefit levels in the entire ADC/AFDC period (1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1982, and 1992 benefit levels).

Delaware and others, have medium state capacity, a moderate to low white immigrant population, and a significant racial minority population. The stingy states are essentially the former Confederacy and are characterized by moderate to low state capacity, a small white immigrant population, and a large African-American population.

It is important to note the way that configurations of independent variables hold together in these categories. For example, the stingy category includes the states that are lowest on state capacity, highest on percent black, and lowest on percent white immigrant. The generous category is its inverse, as it contains the states that are highest on state capacity and percent white immigrant (though not, necessarily, lowest on percent black, as there are many states that have very low percentages of African-American residents). While the moderately generous states have, on average, slightly greater state capacity, the main differences among them are on the percent black and percent white immigrant variables. Additionally, there are a handful of states that have significant minority populations that are not African-American. When these states have two significant minority populations, such as Mexican-Americans and American Indians in Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada, they are classified as part of the moderately stingy group. Other states with one significant minority population, such as Colorado and its Mexican-American population, sometimes fit a different pattern better.

While this typology works for the vast majority of states, there are some exceptions. In particular, Maryland does not fit any group well. Maryland and Delaware have state capacity that approaches that of the generous group but both states have African-American populations that are among the highest outside the former

Confederacy. Delaware's generosity is in line with the other states in the moderately stingy group while Maryland's level of generosity is in line with the moderately generous group, so this is how they are grouped. On percent black and percent white immigrant, however, Maryland looks like the moderately stingy states, and one could make a case for putting it in that group. Similarly, New Jersey has a relatively high (seventh of states that are not part of the South) percentage of the population that is black, and California does have a considerable Mexican-American population, but both states otherwise follow the pattern of the most generous states.

Typological theorizing⁵ is a way to deal with the "limited diversity" of the social world: "the tendency for features of cases to be confounded and to clump into interpretable combinations" (Ragin 1987:104). Given the paucity of research in this substantive area, this strategy makes the most sense because the goal is to have a comprehensive understanding of how and why states set the benefit levels they do. For typological case selection, a case only needs to be representative of the other cases in the type (Gerring 2007:100).⁶ This is because the case is generalized to others in the category rather than the entire population of cases. Furthermore, because typological theories rely on the idea that types form a "unitary construct" (Ragin 2000:77) that includes both the

⁵ Typological theories "seek to identify the various causal mechanisms and pathways that link the independent variables of each 'type,' or cell in a typology, with its outcome" (George and Bennett 2005:234).

⁶ In fact, typological theories often use extreme cases. Consider all the work building on Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare-state typology that uses the United States, Germany, and Sweden as primary examples of liberal, conservative, and social-democratic welfare states.

independent and dependent variables, taking a case's score on the dependent variable into account is not problematic for this research design (Gerring 2007:99).

While examining a state in each category would be ideal, the 85-year span I am covering makes this impractical. In order to examine the processes behind benefit levels, I am conducting a case study of one of the generous states, Massachusetts. I chose Massachusetts because I knew it had data available for the early years of mothers' pensions while having fewer case-specific confounding factors, such as the small size of Connecticut or the city-upstate divide in New York. Furthermore, in the Progressive Era, Massachusetts was viewed (and viewed itself) as a leader in social welfare provision. It was the first state to make education compulsory and passed minimum wage and other social protection laws earlier than many other states (Katz 1996). In this sense, Massachusetts can also be seen as a best-case scenario for generous benefit levels.

To conduct the case study, I utilize process-tracing techniques. According to George and Bennett (2005:206), the "process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable." Process-tracing can generate hundreds of observations that must be connected in specific ways in order to generate the outcome of interest (George and Bennett 2005:207). It is often compared to detective work because the observations are independent of one another, and each observation on its own is incomplete (Gerring 2007:173). Together, however, the observations explain the how the outcome occurred. For example, Gerring (2007:174-175) relates how J. Mahoney (1999) separated Skocpol's (1979) account of what caused

the 1789 French Revolution into thirty-seven different components. Each of these components—“dominant class often exempted from taxes,” “military is unwilling to repress dominant class resistance”—must be related to others in a particular sequence so as to result in the French Revolution. It is also important to note the difference between these observations—what Collier, Brady, and Seawright (2004:252) call “causal-process observations”—and “data-set observations,” which is their term for the kind of observations utilized in regression-based quantitative research. Their insight is that the causal leverage in causal process-observations is based on a fundamentally different logic, one of sequences and context, than the leverage in data-set observations, which is based on a covariational logic.

My expectations about what process-tracing will reveal about the causal mechanisms at work are related to Massachusetts’ categorization as one of the most generous states. I expect that Massachusetts based its benefit levels on standards of assistance that were established by scientifically assessing the cost of living. I expect that officials, whether elected legislators or appointed bureaucrats, put rules requiring these assessments into place early on, and later officials simply continued past precedent. I do not expect to find that benefit levels regularly came up for debate at the state legislature, as my suspicion is that benefit levels were not a concern for state legislators. I also expect to see an absence of race or racially coded language (e.g. around deservingness), though I do expect more explicit discussion of white immigrants in the early period.

Assessing alternative hypotheses is critical to establishing causal mechanisms. Researchers need support for their prevailing hypotheses in addition to a lack of support

for alternative hypotheses in order to tell a compelling causal story. In order to evaluate support for alternative hypotheses, I will generate predictions for what I would expect to find if business interests (Domhoff 1990; Reese 2005), political processes (Amenta 1998), and/or social movements (Piven and Cloward 1993) played key causal roles. For example, if social movements were an important part of the story, I would expect to find references to public pressure to raise benefit levels in Department of Public Welfare documents or news stories or letters to the editor in newspapers. If I find this kind of evidence, then I need to adjust my hypotheses. This forms an important check on both the quantitative and qualitative data: finding the appropriate quantitative measures to evaluate the veracity of competing perspectives is difficult, and it is tempting for researchers to view the evidence they gather through their preferred theoretical lenses.

Data Sources

I have two sets of data on benefit levels across states for the quantitative analyses. One includes data on the maximum guaranteed benefit for a family of four in each state. These data, gathered by Robert Moffitt (2002), cover a few years in the 1960s and every year from 1970 to 1998. I call this the “Moffitt dataset.” The second set of data contains average family benefit for each state in the years 1931, 1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1982, 1992, and 2002. The 1931 data is from a Children’s Bureau publication, and the other years are from the Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin. Data from 1972, 1982, and 1992 were collected by Stephanie Moller (2003) while I collected data for the remaining years. I call this the “Moller dataset.” Although these two data sets have different variables, they are quite comparable. Moffitt also gathered average family

benefit for almost all years, and the correlation between nominal maximum guaranteed benefit for a family of four and nominal average family benefit is .98. I use the maximum guarantee rather than the average family benefit for one analysis because there are both real and nominal measures for the maximum guarantee while only a nominal measure for average family benefit.

The independent variables I examine are state capacity and state racial and ethnic composition. State capacity is measured as revenue per capita while racial and ethnic composition is measured as the percent of the state's population that is black and the percent of the state's population that is from a white immigrant background. I define "white immigrant background" as both foreign-born whites and native-born whites with foreign-born parents (by "whites" I mean those from Southern and Eastern Europe). This allows me to capture both first- and second-generation immigrants. With the exception of some immigration data and the 1930s variables, data for the independent variables are from various years of the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and are measured in 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000.⁷ Because data on white immigrants are not available in all years, the percent immigrant variables do not always represent white immigrants. For 1940 and 1950, the immigrant independent variable is percent foreign-born white or native-born white of foreign or mixed parentage. For 1960 and 1970, it is percent foreign-born or native-born of foreign or mixed parentage. For 1980,

⁷ I also used data from the *Statistical Abstract* to examine other minority populations, such as Mexican-Americans, that I used to categorize all 48 states.

1990, and 2000, it is percent foreign-born.⁸ While I was able to get data on state revenue per capita in 1930 (as well as for 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000), the data on county and city revenue per capita are from the 1932 fiscal year, which started on October 1, 1931. This seems to be the first time that county and city revenue by state are included in the *Statistical Abstract*, so I assumed that revenue is generally similar in contiguous years.

Massachusetts has a variety data sources that I use for the case study. The Massachusetts State Library contains House and Senate Journals for every session of the legislature in the time period under study. By looking up the name of the program at the time, either “mothers’ pensions,” “mothers’ aid,” “Aid to Dependent Children,” or “Aid to Families with Dependent Children,” I can see all bills related to these programs that were proposed. This has the advantage of allowing me to see options that were proposed but not passed. Once I identified all the bills related to cash assistance to single mothers in a legislative session, I read through them for any mention of benefit levels or any changes in the administration or funding of these programs. For example, local boards of public welfare, which once administered welfare at the local level, were abolished in the 1960s, and the funding structure for ADC changed from local-state-federal to state and federal around the same time. These are the kinds of changes in state capacity that I documented in addition to any mention of benefit levels or standards of assistance. In addition to these legislative records, the Massachusetts Archives house records for the Department of Public Welfare and other state agencies. Examples of the kind of material

⁸ Data for these years is also from sources other than the *Statistical Abstract* (Malone et al. 2003; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999).

in these agency records include memos from the state Department of Public Welfare to local boards of public welfare and changes to the Massachusetts Public Assistance Policy Manual. Another data source is the state administrative code, the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR). The CMR, which began in 1979, is updated annually as administrative practices change. It lists maximum benefit levels for households of different sizes and supersedes the Public Assistance Policy Manual, which previously outlined standards of assistance. The Massachusetts Archives also have the original copies of all engrossed bills (that is, ones that become law); I examined bills related to the 1913 mothers' pension law as well as the 1974 cost-of-living law. Finally, the Massachusetts State Library has copies of state publications since 1826, including annual reports for agencies like the Department of Public Welfare and a complete set of the General Laws of Massachusetts and Acts and Resolves.

Another major qualitative data source is newspapers. The Boston Public Library provides access to the *Boston Globe* from 1872-1922 and from 1981 to the present through two different databases. These databases were used for 1911 to 1922 and 1981 to 1996. I searched for the terms "mothers' pensions," "mothers' aid," "Aid to Dependent Children," or "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" to find relevant articles. The Massachusetts State Library also has microfiche copies of the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* for the entire period, although they are only indexed from 1962 to 1978. I looked for articles indexed under "Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare" that were related to AFDC. The index was not entirely reliable, however, and I may have missed some articles that I would have found through a keyword search. This search

method yielded approximately 900 newspaper articles for the 1962-1978 period, so it was quite thorough. After the microfiche search was completed, I found that the Boston Public Library had started providing access to the *Boston Globe* for the 1922 to 1981 period through a third database source. This allowed me to access articles from 1976 (when the index became spotty) to 1981 and to compare the articles I found via the microfiche index with ones available in the database. I likely found more articles using the microfiche method because it covered two newspapers rather than just one. I also looked at the period for which I did not have newspaper coverage, 1923-1961, and found that there were approximately 300 articles. Because I had other good data sources for this period, such as annual reports, a cursory examination of the articles did not reveal any new information.

THE QUANTITATIVE CASE FOR STATE CAPACITY, RACE, AND IMMIGRATION AFFECTING WELFARE GENEROSITY

The contention that factors in the 1930s affect welfare generosity until welfare reform in 1996 requires solid empirical evidence. To that end, the quantitative analysis has three major components. First, I present evidence that the variation in welfare generosity is primarily between states rather than over time. I use pooled regression to examine how much variation is between states and how much is over time, in addition to graphs of mean benefit levels over time. Second, following Moller (2002), I use decennial cross-sectional ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to explore how state capacity and states' racial and ethnic composition, particularly as measured in the 1930s, continue to affect state welfare benefit generosity. Because the differences I want to explain are cross-sectional rather than over time, this is more appropriate than a pooled analysis. Third, I examine threats to the internal validity of my results. Since there are not control variables in the second section, I employ a variety of strategies to ensure that that states' racial/ethnic composition and state capacity are, in fact, the main drivers of welfare generosity.

As explained in the previous chapter, I use two sets of data on benefit levels across states, what I call the Moffitt dataset and the Moller dataset, as the dependent variables. The Moffitt dataset includes the maximum guaranteed benefit for a family of four in each state for a few years in the 1960s and every year from 1970 to 1998. The

Moller dataset contains average family benefit for each state in the years 1931, 1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1982, 1992, and 2002. Most analyses use the Moller dataset.

The independent variables I examine are state capacity and state racial and ethnic composition. State capacity is measured as revenue per capita while racial and ethnic composition is measured as the percent of the state's population that is black and the percent of the state's population that is from a white immigrant background. Data sources and definitions are listed in the previous chapter.

Results

Although most research on state welfare benefits only examines real benefit levels, looking at the difference between real and nominal benefit levels can be useful. Table 2 presents explained variation (R^2) from pooled OLS regressions utilizing the Moffitt dataset. One regression uses state dummies as independent variables, another uses time as the sole independent variable, and the final regression uses state dummies, time, and the interaction between the two as the independent variables. (The N for these regressions is 1,584 and includes all the states plus the District of Columbia.) Fully half of the variation in nominal benefit levels is due to differences between states while two-thirds of the variation in real benefit levels is due to differences between states. Time plays a much smaller role, particularly once inflation is controlled by using real benefit levels rather than nominal benefit levels.

Examining Figure 2, which uses data from the Moller dataset, furthers understanding how nominal and real benefits relate to each other. From the 1930s to the

1960s and 1970s both nominal and real benefits were increasing. Starting in the 1970s, however, real benefits fell while nominal benefits continued to increase. The culprit for declining real benefits seems to be the fact that nominal benefits, while increasing, were not increasing enough to keep up with inflation. The difference in explained variation in Table 2 is also due to inflation. All of this suggests that much of the over-time variation in benefit levels is simply inflation.

Table 2. R2 for OLS Regressions on Maximum Guaranteed Benefit Levels, 1960-1998

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>States</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>States x Time</i>
Nominal benefit levels	.51	.38	.95
Real benefit levels	.66	.20	.91

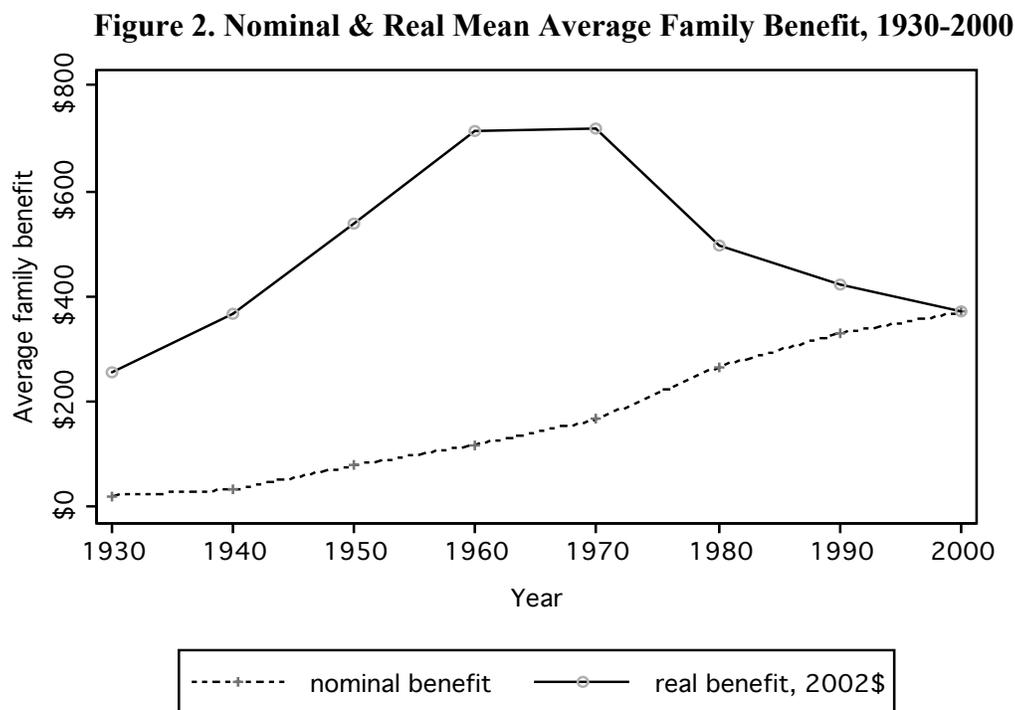


Figure 3. Low, Mean, and High Average Family Benefit, 1930-2000

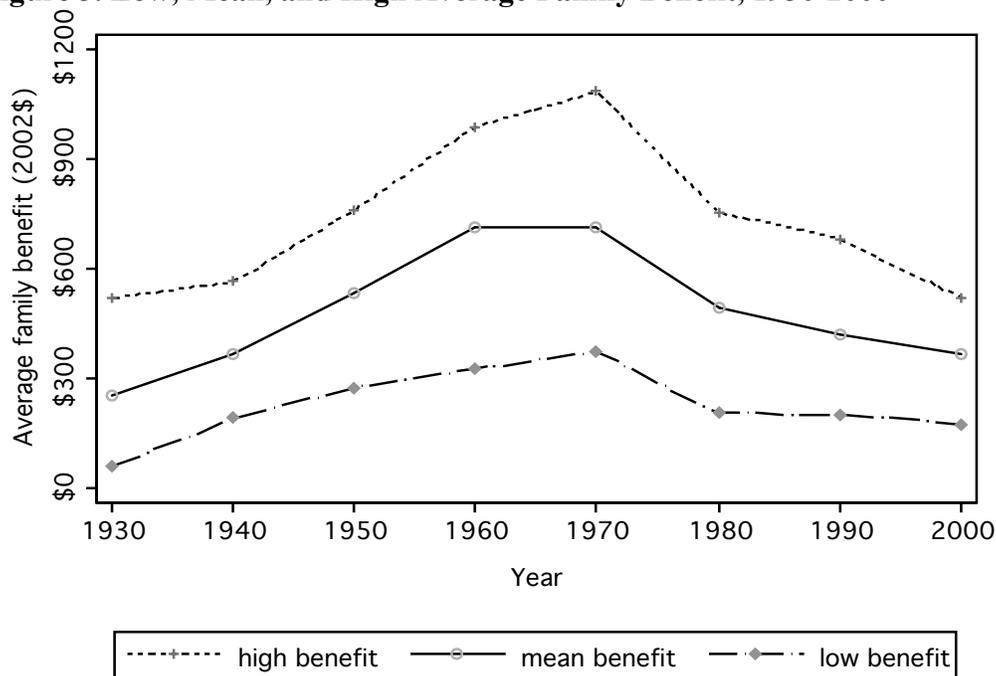


Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which states follow the same over-time pattern. The solid line in Figure 3 is the same as the solid line in Figure 1: the mean state average family benefit over time. The upper line in Figure 3 is the mean state average family benefit for the five states—Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, California, and Wisconsin—that have the highest average benefit levels. The lower line in Figure 3 is the mean state average family benefit for the five states—Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas—that have the lowest average benefit levels. The slope of all three lines is very similar, implying that states follow the same pattern over time. In sum, the available evidence indicates (1) that most of the variation in benefit levels is between states rather than over time and (2) that much of the over-time variation in benefit levels is simply inflation.

Now that I have shown that the variation is between states rather than over time, I use OLS regression to build a model of the determinants of 1931 mothers' pensions across states. The results are listed in Table 3. (For Arizona and New Hampshire, which had statewide mothers' pensions funded entirely by the state, the city per capita revenue value is actually state per capita revenue.) Given what is known about local implementation of mothers' pensions, the finding that city revenue per capita has more explanatory power than state or county revenue per capita makes sense. In the early years most funding was through counties, but the counties that chose to implement mothers' pensions were often urban counties containing cities.

Putting all three variables in the same model presents a number of problems. The percent black and city revenue per capita variables are not correlated with each other ($r = -.19$), but both are correlated with the percent white immigrant variable ($r = -.63$ for percent black and $r = .62$ for city revenue per capita). Model 6 shows all three variables together while Model 7 leaves out the percent white immigrant variable. Possibly due to the correlations among the independent variables, the percent black variable does not have a significant effect in Model 6. When the white immigrant variable is dropped, however, the percent black variable does have a significant effect. Explained variation is relatively high for both models, particularly considering the number of independent variables. In Model 6 over 70% of the variation in 1931 mothers' pension is explained while in Model 7 over 60% of the variation is explained.

Having determined that state capacity and racial/ethnic composition are associated with 1931 average monthly mothers' pension, the next step is to see if they

continue to influence welfare generosity in later years. If ADC did, in fact, institutionalize these relationships, one would expect models using welfare generosity in ADC/AFDC years as the dependent variable to have similar effects. Thus, I regressed average family benefit in 1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1982, 1992, and 2002 (all in constant 2002 dollars) on the same independent variables (measured in 1930-32) as in Models 6 and 7 in Table 3. The results, which are in Table 4, show a remarkable similarity to Models 6 and 7 in Table 3. The main difference is in 2002, which is the only year after the 1996 welfare reform that I have included. It may be that welfare reform provided an opportunity for states to finally change the patterns they set during the formation of ADC. Examining the standardized coefficients shows that the effects of the three variables change in different years. However, in all of the models prior to welfare reform the R^2 is between .60 and .70 for the models with two variables and between .65 and .80 for the models with three variables, so a significant amount of variation in benefit levels is being explained. Furthermore, the standardized coefficients indicate that each of the independent variables have strong effects.

Table 3. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standardized regression coefficients, and standard errors for average monthly mothers' pension, 1931

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
State per capita revenue	.309 .214 (.208)						
County per capita revenue		.001 .001 (.249)					
City per capita revenue			.697*** .722 (.098)			.375** .389 (.100)	.631*** .654 (.088)
% Black				-.505** -.480 (.136)		-.086 -.082 (.110)	-.373*** -.354 (.096)
% White immigrant					.700*** .807 (.076)	.447*** .515 (.114)	
N	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
F statistic	2.21	0.00	50.20	13.75	85.61	40.82	40.45
Prob > F	0.144	0.997	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.046	0.000	0.522	0.230	0.651	0.736	0.643

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<.001

Table 4. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standardized regression coefficients, and standard errors for average monthly AFDC/TANF benefit

	1942(a)	1942(b)	1952(a)	1952(b)	1961(a)	1961(b)	1972(a)
Per capita revenue, 1932	2.906** .353 (.974)	4.298*** .523 (.771)	1.976 .170 (1.382)	4.291*** .368 (1.114)	1.963 .133 (1.499)	4.968*** .338 (1.242)	3.287 .195 (1.665)
% Black, 1930	-2.890* -.322 (1.073)	-4.443*** -.496 (.841)	-5.266** -.414 (1.522)	-7.849*** -.617 (1.215)	-7.827*** -.488 (1.651)	-11.182*** -.697 (1.355)	-5.159** -.280 (1.834)
% White immigrant,	2.426* .328 (1.104)		4.035* .385 (1.566)		5.239** .396 (1.698)		8.318*** .548 (1.886)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
F statistic	28.00	36.47	27.95	34.31	43.01	50.24	46.93
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.656	0.619	0.656	0.604	0.746	0.691	0.762

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<.001

	1972(b)	1982(a)	1982(b)	1992(a)	1992(b)	2002(a)	2002(b)
Per capita revenue, 1932	8.058*** .477 (1.502)	3.087* .261 (1.229)	5.291*** .447 (1.001)	3.192** .312 (1.056)	5.267*** .515 (.872)	1.057 .117 (1.318)	3.012** .334 (1.048)
% Black, 1930	-10.484*** -.570 (1.639)	-5.559 -.430 (1.354)	-8.018*** -.621 (1.091)	-3.881** -.348 (1.163)	-6.198*** -.556 (.951)	-2.667 -.271 (1.452)	-4.850*** -.492 (1.143)
% White immigrant,		3.840** .360 (1.393)		3.619** .394 (1.196)		3.409* .420 (1.493)	
N	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
F statistic	43.03	40.98	50.28	41.52	48.85	13.46	16.08
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.657	0.736	0.691	0.739	0.685	0.479	0.417

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<.001

Table 5. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standardized regression coefficients, and standard errors for average monthly AFDC/TANF benefit with contemporaneous independent variables

	1942(a)	1942(b)	1952(a)	1952(b)	1961(a)	1961(b)	1972(a)
Per capita revenue	1.989 .183 (1.448)	2.275 .209 (1.560)	1.426 .155 (.947)	.840 .091 (1.069)	.529 .145 (.368)	.847 .232 (.441)	-.011 -.016 (.066)
% Black	-3.866** -.411 (1.263)	-4.441** -.472 (1.348)	-8.270*** -.551 (1.562)	-9.576*** -.638 (1.743)	-6.956** -.336 (2.316)	-12.055*** -.582 (2.503)	-6.046* -.225 (2.876)
% Immigrant	11.054** .327 (3.792)		18.507*** .382 (4.809)		9.661*** .498 (2.024)		18.281*** .669 (2.844)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
F statistic	13.56	13.79	21.13	18.58	33.98	26.67	26.40
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.480	0.380	0.590	0.452	0.699	0.542	0.643

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<.001

	1972(b)	1982(a)	1982(b)	1992(a)	1992(b)	2002(a)	2002(b)
Per capita revenue	.007 .010 (.091)	.093* .242 (.041)	.109* .283 (.046)	.078** .311 (.026)	.099** .393 (.030)	.063* .307 (.025)	.064* .309 (.026)
% Black	-14.837*** -.552 (3.483)	-8.897*** -.471 (1.997)	-9.498*** -.503 (2.250)	-6.967*** -.429 (1.652)	-6.845** -.421 (1.916)	-5.300** -.380 (1.678)	-5.407** -.387 (1.790)
% Immigrant		19.719** .376 (5.361)		14.224*** .410 (3.495)		7.542** .315 (2.796)	
N	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
F statistic	10.00	18.05	15.89	19.53	15.61	9.88	9.81
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.308	0.552	0.414	0.571	0.410	0.402	0.304

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<.001

Possible Objections

With two to three independent variables and no controls, this analysis is not particularly persuasive. While there are data limitations that prevent me from fully refuting possible objections in some years, these tend to be the earlier years. One would expect my continuity argument to fall apart in later, rather than earlier, years, so this should still provide a good test of the strength of my argument.

The independent variables are proxies for contemporaneous measures. One possible objection is that the 1930-32 independent variables are having strong effects because they are proxies for those variables in contemporaneous years. To answer this objection, I regressed the same dependent variables on independent variables that were measured one to two years prior to the dependent variables. These independent variables included measures of state revenue per capita (because ADC was usually funded solely through state and federal funds), the percent of the state's population that is black, and the percent of the state's population with a white immigrant background (or, in some years, the percent of the state's population that is foreign-born). The results are in Table 5. State racial and ethnic composition continues to have a strong effect in the models, even though the percent immigrant variables are not always the best proxies for percent white immigrant. The strong effect for percent black is to be expected since percent black by state is quite stable over time. The state capacity results are quite interesting though; per capita revenue in 1932 seems to be a better predictor of state welfare benefit levels in 1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1982, 1992, and 2002 than contemporaneous measures of per capita revenue. Additionally, the R^2 is much lower for the models in Table 5 than it is for

the models in Table 4. This suggests that benefit levels do not fluctuate according to how much revenue the state has (as Tweedie 1994 might argue is the case) but rather reflect institutional configurations.

Other than in the initial models in Table 3, I have examined state capacity and state racial and ethnic composition in combination. Figures 4, 5, and 6 display the R^2 from regressions with single independent variables. In almost every year, for all three independent variables, the 1930s measures explain more of the variation in benefit levels than the contemporaneous measures do. The exception is state capacity in 1960, which is a year in which the correlation between state capacity and race is about .20 higher than in

Figure 4. Explained Variation in Regressions with Per Capita Revenue Variables, 1930-2000

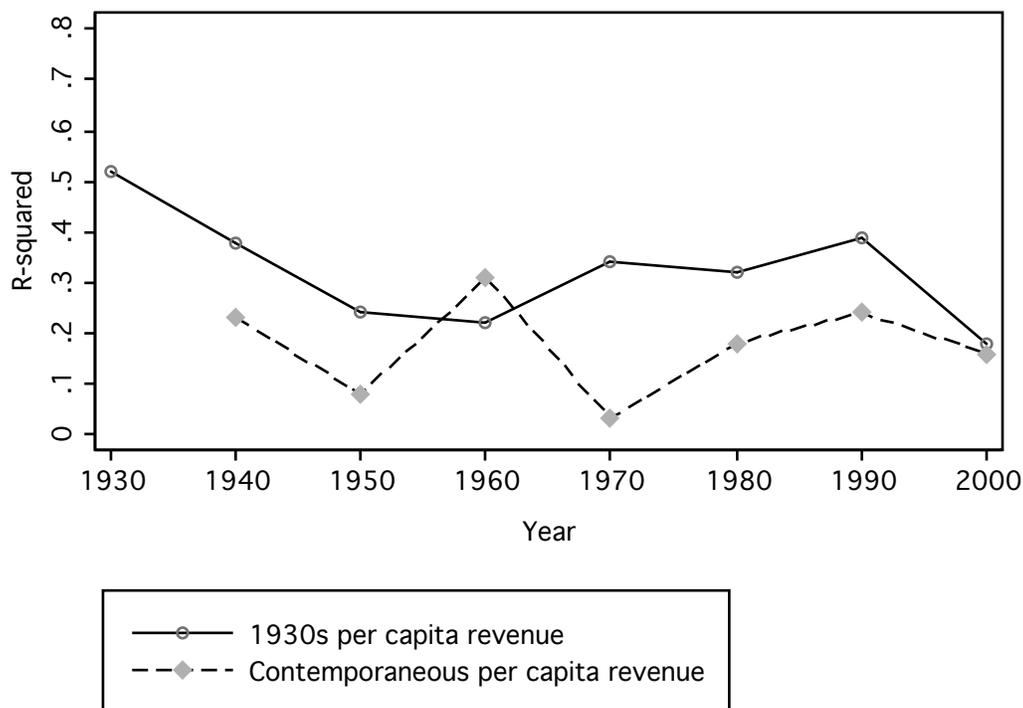
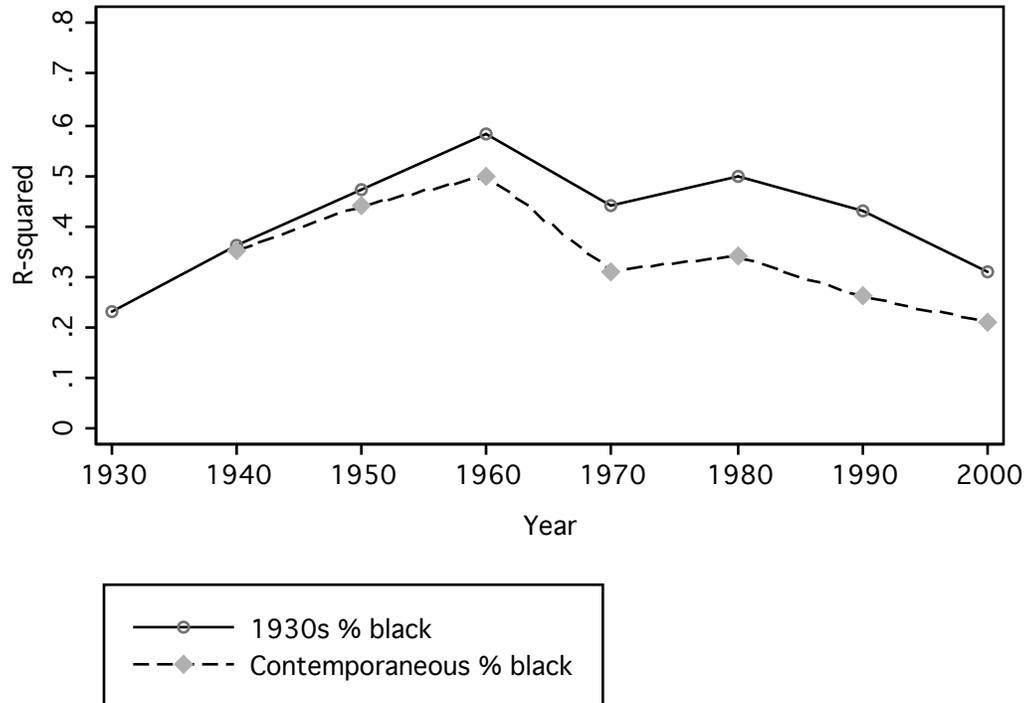
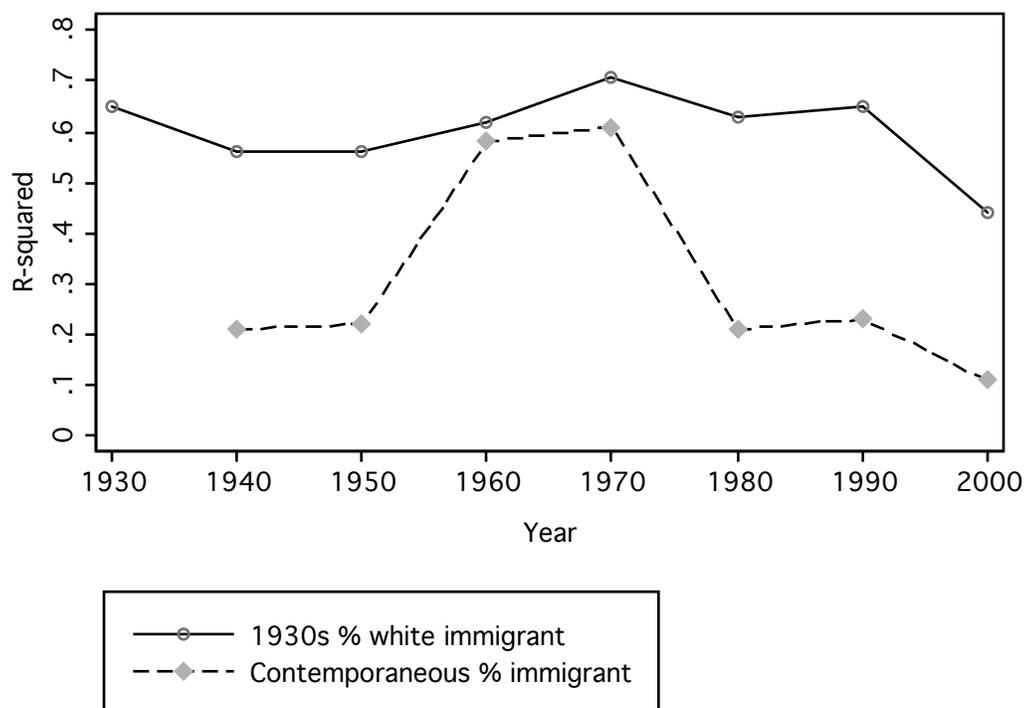


Figure 5. Explained Variation in Regressions with Percent Black Variables, 1930-2000



other years. My supposition is that race was more salient for state revenue at that time due to the civil rights movement. Additionally, there is a notable drop in explained variation for the 1930s measures in 2000, indicating that the relationship between benefit levels and both state capacity and race changed after welfare reform.

Figure 6. Explained Variation in Regressions with Immigration Variables, 1930-2000



There are no controls for cost of living differences across states. One would expect that benefit levels would be higher in states with higher costs of living. Glancing at the data seems to support this suspicion, as high cost-of-living states like California and New York are generous while states with low costs of living, such as many southern states, are not. Thus, it is plausible that, after controlling for cost of living, the race and state capacity variables I identify would no longer be significant in regressions similar to the ones I do above.

Good measures of cost of living over time at the state level have, historically, not existed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has examined regional and city-level cost

of living since the 1960s, but they do not provide a state-level measure. While a handful of researchers have created their own measures, the most widely used measure is the Berry-Fording-Hanson state cost of living index (Berry, Fording, and Hanson 2000)⁹. This index uses BLS data on regional cost of living, BLS data on urban and rural cost of living, and data on housing values, per capita income, and population to create an index that is comparable across states and over time. Unfortunately, the first year for the index is 1960, so I am unable to assess cost of living differences for the 1930s to the 1950s.

For the 1960s to the 1990s I examined the relationship between cost of living, nominal average family benefit, and state capacity. In regressions with cost of living as the only independent variable, it is always significant ($p < .001$). When state capacity and percent black are added to the regressions, cost of living is only significant in the 1980s ($p < .05$) and the 1990s ($p < .01$). Percent black ($p < .001$) and state capacity ($p < .01$) retain their significance in all regressions. In regressions contain cost of living, state capacity, percent black, and percent white immigrant as independent variables, the picture changes a bit. Both cost of living and state capacity do not have significant effects in the 1960s and 1970s regressions while percent black ($p < .01$) and percent white immigrant ($p < .01$) have significant effects. In the 1980s regression cost of living and percent white immigrant do not have significant effects but state capacity ($p < .05$) and percent black ($p < .001$) do. In the 1990s cost of living does have a significant effect ($p < .05$), and state capacity ($p < .05$) and percent black ($p < .01$) do as well. Percent white immigrant does not have a significant effect in the 1990s. Essentially, when the key

⁹ I use the revised 2004 version of the index, which is available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

independent variables are added, cost of living has a significant effect in the 1980s and 1990s regressions but not in the 1960s and 1970s regressions.

The changing effect of cost of living over time—it seems to matter more as time goes on—may be related to state capacity. Cost of living and state capacity are correlated at .39 in 1960, .44 in 1970, .50 in 1980, and .66 in 1990. As the correlation between cost of living and state capacity grows over time, so does the correlation between cost of living and benefit levels. Either states are choosing to adjust their benefit levels to cost of living more as time goes on, or the confluence in the cost of living and state capacity measures is driving the relationship. Overall, however, controlling for cost of living does not erase the relationship between generosity, state capacity, and state racial and ethnic composition.

There should be a relationship between the number of people aided and benefit levels. Welfare state programs usually operate in a state of insufficient funding, and sometimes they consciously follow one of two strategies. Some prefer to provide adequate benefits to a small number of recipients while others choose to offer benefit levels they know to be deficient to a far larger number of recipients. To the extent that these are conscious strategies, states' benefit levels may be dependent upon the number of people they serve.

In order to assess the extent to which the number of people assisted affects generosity¹⁰, I created an independent variable that I call “coverage”: the percentage of

¹⁰ The concept of “generosity” could encompass both the number of people receiving assistance and the amount of the assistance. Throughout this chapter I am using only the latter because I see the amount of assistance and the number of people assisted as related but different.

families in the state that received assistance.¹¹ In regressions with coverage as the sole independent variable, coverage does not have a significant effect in the 1930s¹², 1940s, 1980s, and 1990s, but it does have a significant negative effect ($p < .01$) in the 1950s and 1960s. When state capacity, percent black, and percent white immigrant are added, the coverage variable does not have a significant effect in any years, and the three key independent variables have effects similar to those in earlier regressions. I also tried a different specification for coverage, using the number of families that received assistance, and found similar results. This specification of coverage had significant positive effects in single independent-variable regressions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, but it never had significant effects once percent white immigrant, percent black, and state capacity were added. Additionally, the effects of race and state capacity did not change with the inclusion of this coverage variable. Thus, there does not appear to be a relationship between the number of families that states assist and the generosity of benefits.

Benefit levels reflect the political ideology of the citizens of a state or of its elected officials. There is a general relationship between the political liberalism of a state and the generosity of its welfare programs. More generous states tend to be more politically liberal, and stingy states tend to be politically conservative. It stands to reason, then, that controlling for the political orientation of a state's residents or elected officials

¹¹ Data on the total number of families in each state comes from various years of the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. I was unable to obtain these data for 1970, so that year is left out of this analysis.

¹² The 1930s measure of coverage is families aided per 10,000 population, which is different from the way it is measured in the other years. This is due to its data source (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933).

may mean that race and state capacity no longer have significant effects on welfare generosity.

I use the revised 1960-2006 citizen ideology series and revised 1960-2006 government ideology series to evaluate the impact of political ideology on benefit levels over time (Berry et al. 1998; Fording 2010). Again, I am unable to assess the role of political ideology prior to 1960 due to data limitations. Citizen ideology is highly correlated (above .60) with percent white immigrant in each year (1960, 1970, 1980 & 1990) as well as with percent black (1960 & 1970) and state capacity (1980 & 1990) in some years. I performed regressions with all variables in those years, but I also performed additional regressions, dropping variables in and out, and compared R^2 to determine the better model. For both government and citizen ideology, higher scores indicate political liberalism while lower scores indicate political conservatism.

Government ideology has similar effects across all years considered. When it is the only independent variable, it has significant effects, but those effects disappear when percent black, percent white immigrant, and state capacity are added. The effects of state racial and ethnic composition and state capacity do not change with the addition of government ideology, which leads me to believe that the inclusion of government ideology does not alter the baseline effects of the three independent variables described earlier.

Citizen ideology has stronger effects than government ideology does, perhaps as a result of its relationship to the key independent variables. It has significant positive effects in regressions in which it is the only independent variable, and it is still significant

($p < .05$) in the 1990s when it is included with the three main independent variables. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s it does not have significant effects when state capacity, percent black, and percent white immigrant are added. There is so much correlation among the independent variables, however, that models with all four variables do not provide particularly trustworthy results. Dropping all four variables in and out in all possible permutations indicates that there are two patterns for citizen ideology, one exemplified by the 1960s and 1980s and the other by the 1970s and 1990s. In the 1960s and 1980s citizen ideology had a significant effect ($p < .05$) in three regressions: for both the 1960s and 1980s when it and state capacity were the only independent variables and for the 1980s when it and percent black were the only independent variables. In the second pattern, exemplified by the 1970s and 1990s, citizen ideology has stronger effects. In these years, citizen ideology has a significant effect ($p < .05$) in all but one of the regressions with one to two of the key independent variables. The sole exception is the regression with percent black and percent white immigrant for the 1970s. In some of these regressions (for the entire 1960s to 1990s period), the key independent variables do not have significant effects but citizen ideology does, and sometimes models with citizen ideology have higher R^2 and may be the better fit.

There are a few ways to interpret these results. Citizen ideology is rather stable over time, and the three key independent variables may be tapping into long-standing preferences of state populations. That is, the key measures I discuss are really measuring citizen ideology, or a related concept like political culture (Elazar 1972), rather than what I purport they are measuring. Alternatively, state racial and ethnic composition and state

capacity could be driving states' scores on the citizen ideology measure. Finally, one could see citizen ideology, state racial and ethnic composition, and state capacity as factors that vary together in particular and predictable ways. In this sense, the fact that I am unable to rule out citizen ideology as a factor affecting states' welfare generosity simply reflects the limited diversity of our social world. I consider this last explanation most likely, but there is no way to adjudicate between these perspectives given the data available here. In the qualitative section of the dissertation, I can be alert to the role that citizens' political preferences play in Massachusetts' welfare generosity.

What about the roles of per capita income, unemployment, and unionization? There are a variety of other variables that could conceivably affect welfare generosity, including per capita income, unemployment, and unionization. Moller (2002) includes many of these variables in the regressions she presents for the 1970s to 1990s, and I use data she gathered for these years to test my expectation that none of these variables will affect the relationship between state racial and ethnic composition, state capacity, and generosity.

Per capita income, while highly correlated with state capacity and percent white immigrant in all three years that I examine, does not change the basic relationship established above. It is significant ($p < .05$) in single-variable regressions and in regressions with percent black for all years (1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) as well as in regressions with state capacity for the 1970s and 1980s. It is not significant when there are two or more of the key independent variables along with per capita income in regressions. Comparing R^2 shows that regressions with per capita income and either state

capacity or percent black have substantially less explained variation (usually .10 or .20) than regressions with any two of the three key independent variables. This leads me to believe that per capita income is not substituting for state capacity or percent white immigrant, and it is not more related to welfare generosity than the three key independent variables.

Unemployment has no relationship with benefit levels. In 1970 and 1980 the bivariate correlation is close to zero (-.04 in both years). In 1990 the bivariate correlation is stronger (-.21), but unemployment does not have a significant effect in a single-variable regression, in a regression with percent black and state capacity, or in a regression with percent white immigrant, percent black, and state capacity.

Unionization also does not affect the relationship between benefit levels, state racial and ethnic composition, and state capacity. It is significant in single-variable regressions for 1970 and 1980 ($p < .001$) but not for 1990 ($p < .05$). In all possible permutations of unionization with the three key independent variables, unionization only achieves significance ($p < .05$) when it and state capacity are the only independent variables for the 1970s and 1980s. As with per capita income, explained variation is much higher for every other combination of two of the key independent variables. There is not much to support the idea that unionization is a major factor influencing benefit levels.

What is this state capacity measure, and why does it explain so much variation? The state capacity measure I use is a measure of local state capacity that is aggregated to the state level. There was a lot of variation in mothers' pension programs

across localities (Mink 1995), and this measure captures the empirical reality that states in which cities collected more per capita revenue had more generous benefits. It is not strongly related to race ($r = -.19$), and it does not indicate that the South had uniformly poor state capacity. Virginia and Florida, former Confederate states with the sixth and eighth largest African-American populations in 1930, also had relatively high state capacity in the early 1930s (ranked 13th and 14th among all states). This may account for why they are more generous than states with similar or smaller African-American populations (Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina). State capacity is strongly related to the percent of the state that resided in urban areas in 1930 ($r = .74$), but, when substituted for state capacity in regressions, urbanization consistently explains less variation than state capacity does.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I detailed the reasons to think that state capacity and states' racial and ethnic composition may affect benefit levels. Here I established that benefit levels primarily vary across states rather than over time, and that city revenue per capita (aggregated to the state level), the percent of a state's population that is black, and the percent of a state's population that has a white immigrant background—all measured in the 1930s—are the best predictors of the generosity of cash assistance to single mothers from the 1930s to welfare reform in the 1990s. Of all of the alternative explanations considered, only the political ideology of states' citizens cannot be eliminated as a possible factor in states' welfare generosity. While this quantitative

analysis appears both thorough and solid, it does raise questions as to how this works out in practice. Were benefit levels set prior to the 1935 Social Security Act and never examined again until the 1996 welfare reform? Or did benefit levels continually surface as a politically potent issue? To examine how these quantitative findings looked on the ground, I conducted a case study of Massachusetts' efforts to provide cash assistance to single mothers from the 1910s to the 1990s. The results of this case study are in the following chapters.

GENEROSITY IN THE MOTHERS' AID ERA, 1911-1934

The previous chapter established that there is some evidence to support the theoretical assertion that state capacity and states' racial and ethnic composition influence the generosity of states' programs that provide cash assistance to single mothers. In this chapter I begin a case study of benefit levels in Massachusetts. Due to the stability of benefit levels over time, it may be particularly important to understand how states initially adopted particular benefit levels. To that end, I outline how Massachusetts came to pass mothers' pension legislation and then discuss benefit levels and how they connect with the three key independent variables. I find that high levels of state capacity in Massachusetts led to the state being one of the few to not have a legislated maximum benefit. Additionally, the absence of a substantial minority population and the presence of a large white immigrant population proved to be a best-case scenario for high benefits. Unlike African-Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were seen as assimilable (Jacobson 1999), and mothers' pensions were a way to Americanize them (L. Gordon 1994; Mink 1995). Finally, I should note that the terms "mothers' pensions" and "mothers' aid" were used interchangeably in this period, though advocates pushing for the establishment of the program tended to call it "mothers' pensions," and it was usually termed "mothers' aid" after it was created. I use these terms in the same way.

The Origins of Mothers' Pensions in Massachusetts

In order to understand the origins of mothers' pensions, one needs to know what public relief and private charity looked like in the early days of the 20th century.¹³ In Massachusetts, and in other parts of the country as well, each city and town had its own overseer of the poor (in larger cities like Boston this was a board composed of several individuals rather than just one person). The overseer managed "indoor relief" that was dispensed through public institutions like orphanages, poorhouses, and infirmaries as well as "outdoor relief." "Outdoor relief" could be cash assistance, but more often it was coal, food, and other in-kind assistance. The overseers of the poor were appointed by mayors and relatively autonomous, although the State Board of Charity nominally supervised them. The State Board of Charity also regulated private charity, but there was a rather cozy relationship between the State Board and private charity. Most of the people who served on the board were involved in private charity. For example, David Tilley, who becomes important for mothers' pensions, was quite involved with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a major Catholic charity, both before and after he served on the State Board of Charity.

For people who needed assistance, public relief and private charity functioned as one system. Relief officials referred their better-off applicants to private charity organizations, and private charity organizations referred their most desperate cases to the overseers. Receiving public aid was very stigmatizing and usually only available to very poor widows with young children and the very poor elderly. If any able-bodied men

¹³ This section is based on Katz (1996), Kelso (1922), Traverso (2003).

wanted public assistance, they would have to perform some labor—usually something public and humiliating such as shoveling coal for the overseers—in exchange for assistance. Overseers generally tried to keep expenditures as low as possible by doling out as little assistance as possible. Consequently, the cash assistance that overseers provided usually came nowhere near to meeting the need of those receiving assistance, even if those receiving assistance were also working.

In contrast to public relief, both cash and in-kind assistance from private charity tended to be more generous. There was a catch, however. Especially in Boston and other larger cities in Massachusetts, private charity organizations, particularly the larger Protestant ones, were influenced by the “scientific charity” movement. This movement saw poverty as the result of immoral habits like laziness and excessive alcohol consumption and proscribed guiding aid recipients through a moral transformation that would allow them to be upstanding citizens. Private charity organizations required their clients to allow “visitors” (today we would call them “social workers”) into their homes to examine their daily habits and make recommendations. Visitors would suggest ways of economizing and provide the latest scientific information on nutrition and child-rearing to recipients, who were supposed to follow these instructions. Otherwise, they risked losing whatever assistance private charity organizations were providing. Eventually recipients would no longer need assistance, as they would know how to manage their money better and know how to raise their children well. Because they were focused on helping recipients that they could reform, private charity organizations often refused to assist the

poorest of the poor because they had the most problems and were the least likely to improve over time.

This was the state of affairs at the outset of the debate over mothers' pensions, which began in full force at the 1909 Conference on the Care of Dependent Children that Theodore Roosevelt hosted in his last days as President (Howard 1992; Ladd-Taylor 1994; Leff 1973). The conference brought together child advocates from private charity organizations as well as state-level public relief officials to discuss what to do with children who were in the care of the state or private charity organizations. It was clear that orphanages were not working as their most ardent supporters had hoped. The idea behind orphanages was that children would prosper once they were removed from ill-advised (or perhaps merely poverty-stricken) home environments. However, children in orphanages weren't being well cared for, and the institutions were expensive to run. The idea that "home life" was better for children began to emerge, and this view coalesced at the conference. The conclusions that the conference came to are well-known within the literature on this topic:

Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the great molding force of mind and of character. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Children of parents of worthy character, suffering from temporary misfortune and children of reasonably efficient and deserving mothers who are without the support of the normal breadwinner, should, as a rule, be kept with their parents, such aid being given as may be necessary to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of the children. This aid should be given by such methods and from such sources as may be determined by the general relief policy of each community, preferably in the form of private charity, rather than of public relief. Except in unusual circumstances, the home should not be broken up for reasons of poverty, but only for considerations of inefficiency or immorality." (*Proceedings of the Conference on the Care of Dependent Children 1909:9–10*)

The endorsement of private charity as the best means of administering mothers' pensions was contested at the conference, and just two years later, the first laws permitting Kansas City, MO and municipalities in Illinois to establish mothers' pension programs were passed. This set up the major tension for mothers' pensions: private charity endorsed the idea of mothers' pensions but believed that they should be the ones to administer it. This belief was based on the idea that mothers' pensions would only be successful if individualized casework were part of the program. The overseers of the poor were ill equipped to have the kind of influence that private charity thought was essential. Overseers lacked social work training (and often education in general), and their jobs required managerial skills more than they required knowledge of good child-rearing practices. Many scholars who have studied this issue (and some people writing at the time) also argue that private charity didn't want to lose worthy widows as a constituency because it would mean a loss of donations.

While the very first mothers' pension laws in 1911 were the result of advocacy from juvenile court judges who attended the 1909 conference, women's organizations soon began to play a role, particularly the National Congress of Mothers. The President of the National Congress of Mothers, Mrs. Frederic Schoff, (who was also one of its founders) attended and spoke at the 1909 conference, which no other representative of a women's organization did. She was involved with other child-saving organizations in Philadelphia, serving as President of the Philadelphia Juvenile Court and Probation Association. *Child-Welfare Magazine*, the official publication of the National Congress of Mothers, published a variety of articles advocating for mothers' pensions.

The story of mothers' pensions in Massachusetts is largely the story of one woman, Clara Cahill Park, working through the Massachusetts branch of the National Congress of Mothers to enact mothers' pension legislation (Deegan 2006; Skocpol 1995; Traverso 2003). Interestingly, Park didn't engage in much other activism either prior to the fight for mothers' pensions or after it. She left Massachusetts in 1914 when her husband, sociologist Robert Park, left Harvard to take a job at the University of Chicago. In the 1911-1914 period, however, she was a prolific writer on the topic of mothers' pensions, publishing articles in *Child-Welfare Magazine* and *Home Progress* and having letters-to-the-editor published in *Survey* and the *Boston Globe* (Traverso 2003). In these articles, she explains her interest in mothers' pensions as something that rose organically from her concern about a widow with eight children (Park 1911). The widow's plight was publicized in Boston newspapers, and someone from the Massachusetts branch of the Congress of Mothers personally investigated the situation. Having determined that Mrs. Ellen Morris was indeed worthy, the Congress of Mothers embarked upon a fundraising campaign to buy Mrs. Morris a cottage.

According to her writings, the case of Mrs. Morris opened Park's eyes to the troubles that widows faced. She thought that the state should provide some means of supporting worthy widows that was not poor relief. Widows like Mrs. Morris tried very hard to keep their families together, such that by the time they applied for poor relief, everyone in the family was a wreck—sick, malnourished, possibly permanently damaged by poverty. As Park (1912b:343) states in an article for *Child-Welfare Magazine*, "I began to see why it was that so few widows arrived at the doorstep of the State in a

condition favorable to making a good impression on the guardians of the law, or the heads of the State institutions.”

This newfound interest in the plight of poor widows prompted Park to present a paper titled “The State and the Fatherless Child” at the national convention of the National Congress of Mothers in 1911. According to Park, it was there she found out that Missouri was experimenting with mothers’ pensions and that many others in the Congress were interested in the same issue.

Park’s argument for mothers’ pensions represented a particular strand in mothers’ pension advocacy, one that was different from the argument that private charity made. Park saw mothers’ pensions as a way for worthy widows to receive more financial assistance than they could from poor relief while not experiencing the stigma of pauperization. Like many others in the Mothers’ Congress, she thought of mothers’ pensions as representative of a new era of respectable, state-supported motherhood. The idea of motherhood as service to the state, similar to military service and just as deserving of payment and respect, was common among mothers’ pension advocates in the Congress of Mothers.

This perspective implied a particular structure for mothers’ pension programs. While Park and others with similar ideas were quite concerned with ensuring that pensions would benefit only the deserving, they do not seem to have envisioned a program with heavy supervision. Rather, once the initial investigation was completed, they seem to assume that the state would stay out of the way. Another important aspect was adequacy of benefits. One of the main arguments for mothers’ pensions was that they

would pay significantly more than poor relief, enabling a higher standard of living. I would argue, too, that these elements are related; mothers' pensions pay more because the program is not intended to have the punitive elements of poor relief.

Through the Massachusetts Congress of Mothers, where she served as the state vice president, and contacts with respected figures, Clara Cahill Park pushed for her vision of mothers' pensions. In 1912 she proposed a bill that would establish a commission to explore implementing mothers' pensions in Massachusetts (Park 1912a). While hers is the first name listed as petitioning for the bill, she persuaded clergymen, a physician, a lawyer, a Harvard philosophy professor, and others to sign the petition for the bill as well.¹⁴ In addition to the Congress of Mothers, Park convinced the Massachusetts General Federation of Women's Clubs to support her bill (Skocpol 1995:548; The General Federation Bulletin 1912:352). This wide swath of public support allowed Park to get her legislation, rather than one of the seven alternative bills on mothers' pensions, passed.

This is not to say that Park's bill was uncontroversial. By advocating for mothers' pensions, Park set herself in opposition to the State Board of Charity and Protestant charity organizations (Traverso 2003). These constituencies did have some power. Park's original bill created an unpaid commission of three people, at least one of whom was required to be a woman, to investigate the social problem that mothers' pensions were intended to solve. The commission was then supposed to propose legislation based on what had been learned in the study. The bill allocated \$1,000 to pay for administrative

¹⁴ The original petition is available in the legislative packet for Chapter 82, 1912 Acts and Resolves, housed at the Massachusetts Archives.

expenses and for a study based statistics from public relief and private charity officials. The Ways and Means committee added a provision that one member of the commission must also be a member of the State Board of Charity and slashed the appropriation to \$500. The committee on Bills in the Third Reading¹⁵ restored Park's original bill, and this is what passed the legislature.

With the bill passed, the next step was for the governor to appoint the commission. Apparently, it was known all along that Clara Cahill Park would be the woman on the commission.¹⁶ In addition to Park, the governor appointed David F. Tilley, who was a member of the State Board of Charity and who attended the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, and Robert F. Foerster, who was an instructor in social ethics at Harvard University. Despite the fact that he was Catholic, Tilley's views were mostly in line with the Protestant charity establishment. (He likely wouldn't have been appointed to the State Board of Charity otherwise.) Foerster chaired the commission, and Park served as secretary.

The commission hired Ralph E. Heilman, who was an instructor at Harvard University and at the School for Social Workers in Boston, as the investigator.¹⁷ Heilman sent out a number of surveys to private charities and all the overseers of the poor in the state. These surveys and their attendant statistical information formed the basis for the

¹⁵ All bills were required to be read three times before they could be passed.

¹⁶ Pencil notations on the original copy of the engrossed bill indicate that someone with access to the bill was considering a commission composed of Park, a lawyer, and an investigator. The original copy of the engrossed bill is available in the legislative packet for Chapter 82, 1912 Acts and Resolves, housed at the Massachusetts Archives.

¹⁷ Heilman would have been finishing his PhD dissertation at Harvard University at this time. He went on to serve as the dean of the Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University from 1919-1937 (Kellogg School of Management n.d.).

investigator's report, which was supposed to inform the commission's report and proposed legislation. The commission reported its findings in January 1913 in a majority report, minority report, and the investigator's report, which was much longer than the other two items (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1913).

The majority report, written by Foerster and Park, found a number of flaws in the patchwork system of public and private charity available to widows with minor dependent children. According to the majority report and the investigator's report, over half (56.7%) of all children who were separated from their mothers were not separated due to "bad conduct of the child" or "the immorality or other unfitness of the mother" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1913:12–13). Instead, "insufficiency of the mother's income" or "absence from home at work" were the primary reasons for most of the separations. They criticized a number of aspects of public and private charity: the lack of oversight by the overseers of the poor, the practice of demanding that relatives support poor widows, the inefficiency of receiving aid from several different agencies, and two others that they seemed to regard as particularly damning. The first is the amount of relief available to intact families of widows with dependent children. The commission found the amount of relief available to them from private and public charity was woefully inadequate, often requiring the mother to work excessively. The second is the lack of differentiation between worthy and unworthy widows. Here is Foerster and Park in the majority report (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1913:23):

Your commission believes that as poor-relief is administered to-day in the State as a whole, highly respectable families, in poverty for absolutely no reason deriving from themselves, are dealt with by the same methods as are persons clearly to blame for their condition. That is humiliating. It tends to break down family pride,

which is a precious asset in the Commonwealth and the thing that, more than anything else, social workers have difficulty in reconstituting when once it is broken down. To receive fuel or clothing from one source, milk from another, groceries from a third, rent from a fourth, doles of cash from two or three sources, —to receive these, as they are received in a neighboring home where drunkenness or shiftlessness is characteristic, is purposeless, and, by association, degrading. If moral stamina are lacking in a family such devices, with constant supervision, are inevitable and commendable; but where the cause of poverty is death of a husband there may well remain abundant strength and trustworthiness and household skill in the survivors.

This report did not sit well with Massachusetts' charity establishment, and they took to the pages of *Survey*, the preeminent journal for private charity and social work, to attack the commission and the general idea of publicly provided mothers' pensions (Carstens 1913; Lee 1913; Traverso 2003). Some cited Tilley's minority report as a sign that the commission was off track, but Tilley did not actually write a scathing rebuke of the majority report. His opposition stemmed from two points: 1) In his 20 years of experience working with the poor, he did not know of any families that were separated only because of inadequate income. Here he criticized the other two members of the commission for basing their opinions on "books and figures" rather than on experience visiting the poor in their own homes (experience that Park and Foerster did not have). 2) All of the aspects that needed to be changed about the current situation could be achieved through a "liberal interpretation of our existing statutes" and a willingness on the part of communities to accept somewhat higher taxes.¹⁸ Other members of the charity

¹⁸ According to Tilley, Massachusetts needed "a realization on the part of our different communities that those who are elected or appointed to serve them as overseers of the poor are not selected because of their ability to keep the tax rate down, but because of their ability to do what is best for those who, through no fault of their own, have become dependent upon public charity" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1913:35).

establishment did not acknowledge that anything needed to change and simply criticized Park and Foerster as unknowledgeable.

Despite the charity establishment's opposition, it appeared that some version of mothers' pensions was likely to be proposed and passed in 1913. To stop what they perceived to be "most serious defects" in the commission's plan, "a small group of social workers...undertook the task of constructing a statute which might be presented to the Legislature as an alternative" (Pear 1938:2). These prominent social workers, including heads of the Boston Provident Association, the Associated Charities, the Children's Aid Society, and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, thought that the commission's focus on widows was misguided, as many mothers who were not widowed required assistance, and they favored strengthening the public relief system rather than creating a separate system for widowed mothers (Pear 1938). Judge Harvey Baker from the Boston Juvenile Court helped them transform their ideas into legal terms, and J. Arnold Lowell, an attorney, lobbied for the passage of the charity establishment's bill (Boston Provident Association 1944:11-12; Pear 1938).

The commission and the Protestant charity establishment both submitted bills with their preferred solutions to the problem of widows with dependent children to the state legislature. How did these bills differ? The commission proposed a permanent five-person board, called "the commission on subsidies for the children of widows," and required that two members of the board be women (Commission on the Support of Minor Dependent Children of Widowed Mothers 1913). This new commission would investigate applications, which were supposed to come from overseers on behalf of

widows in their jurisdictions, and set the levels of assistance, which the overseers were supposed to disburse. Private charity organizations were locked out of the process; overseers and the commission were not allowed to solicit contributions from them. Additionally, the bill explicitly stated that the payments were to be called “subsidies” and that mothers receiving aid should not “be regarded as paupers.”

In contrast, the bill from the Protestant charity establishment was little different than the relief already available to mothers with dependent children, although it also distinguished mothers’ aid recipients from paupers (Lowell 1913). The overseers would conduct the initial investigation and set benefit levels, and private charity organizations were encouraged to contribute to families’ upkeep. The State Board of Charity played a small supervisory role, and there was no separate commission for mothers’ pension recipients. Unlike the commission’s bill, however, mothers did not have to be widows to receive assistance, although the children did have to be less than fourteen years of age. (There were no firm age restrictions on children in the commission’s bill.)

The Protestant charity establishment was able to use its influence to get mothers’ pension legislation they wrote to pass rather than legislation proposed by the commission (Traverso 2003). Notations on a draft of the final bill indicate that legislators solicited comments from Lowell, the charity establishment’s lobbyist, and Robert W. Kelso, the Commissioner of Public Welfare.¹⁹ There is no indication that legislators sought Park’s or Foerster’s opinion on the final form that mothers’ pensions would take in Massachusetts.

¹⁹ The annotated draft is in the legislative packet for Chapter 763, 1913 Acts and Resolves, housed at the Massachusetts Archives.

While the Social Welfare committee did make some changes to the Protestant charity establishment's bill, it kept the structure that relied heavily upon the overseers (Committee on Social Welfare 1913). Interestingly, two aspects of the Social Welfare committee bill do seem to come from the commission's bill. The first is that the State Board of Charity has investigative power, similar to the new commission proposed in the commission's bill. The board could visit and inspect families rather than relying solely upon the overseers' investigation and reports. The second is the funding structure. The original bill from the Protestant charity establishment said nothing about funding from the state for mothers' aid; presumably, assistance would come from local revenues, just as public relief did. In the commission's bill, the state would cover the entire cost of payments to mothers' aid recipients who did not have a settlement in the state and one-third of the cost of payments to mothers' aid recipients who did have a settlement. This is the same funding structure that the Social Welfare committee's bill had. The first-year appropriation of \$50,000 was the same as well. It seems, then, that what the Social Welfare committee liked about the commission's bill was a greater role for the state.

Park did not let her bill go down without a fight. She mobilized women's groups such as the Dorchester chapter of the Daughters of American Revolution to write to the legislature in support of the commission's bill; these groups gathered signatures supporting the bill as well.²⁰ After the Social Welfare committee reported its bill that was clearly based on the bill submitted by the Protestant charity establishment, a legislator

²⁰ These petitions are contained in the legislative packet for Chapter 763, 1913 Acts and Resolves, housed at the Massachusetts Archives.

tried to substitute the commission's bill for the Social Welfare committee bill but failed (Massachusetts House of Representatives 1913:1607).

The program that emerged from the legislative process represented a significant difference from what mothers' pension advocates like Park envisioned. Instead of a dignified program to help a particular subset of widows with dependent children, mothers' pensions ended up being much closer to poor relief. Indeed, the 1913 annual report from the State Board of Charity, which covered the first three months of the existence of mothers' aid, was adamant that the program "provides *relief* and not *pensions*" (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1914:129).²¹ Park wanted to create mothers' pensions as a way of getting around the stigma associated with being a pauper, but the mothers' pension program as created ended up having all the traits she wanted to avoid. In particular, the connection between private charity and public relief was still strong. In the 1913 annual report the State Board of Charity (1914:133–134) chides charity groups that shifted their caseloads into the mothers' aid program, praises private charity as having been "of invaluable assistance to this Board," and discusses the possibility of creating more private charity organizations to "remov[e] some of the burdens now imposed upon the taxpayers."²²

²¹ Emphasis in original. Later the board states: "It is to be regretted that the agitation for so-called widows' pensions should have become so fixed in the public mind that the present law is looked upon as a pension act or annuity rather than a relief measure" (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1914:133).

²² According to Traverso (2003), the charity organizations that would have encouraged potentially eligible recipients to apply for mothers' aid would have been the Jewish and Catholic ones rather than the larger and more politically powerful Protestant ones.

There was one key aspect of the mothers' pension legislation in Massachusetts that was progressive, however. All of the bills under serious consideration—the commission's bill, the Protestant charity organizations' bill, and the Social Welfare committee bill—did not specify a maximum benefit level. This was not the case for all of the bills proposed in the legislature, and it was a relatively unusual provision nationally. In 1919 39 states plus the Alaskan and Hawaiian territories had mothers' pension programs, and only four states (Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, and New York²³) and the Hawaiian territory had no legislated maximum (Thompson 1919:15). The states that did not legislate a maximum benefit level by 1931 were all over the map in terms of generosity²⁴, so this provision alone was not enough to guarantee a generous mothers' aid program (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933).

What this meant is that benefit levels could respond to actual need. It is important to note how this breaks with past practice. One of the major rationales for mothers' pensions, the lack of an adequate level of assistance, stemmed from the piecemeal way in which assistance was delivered. The overseers of the poor and private charity started with how much they had and then broke that down into what they could distribute to each family. The family's actual level of need was often never met. Mothers' pensions started a new way of determining benefit levels, in which you figure out need and then the state or private charity makes up the difference between the income families have and the income they need.

²³ In New York the benefit could not exceed the cost of institutional care for the child.

²⁴ The other states were Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Rhode Island and Wisconsin were quite generous while Mississippi and Louisiana were not.

The role of the state in Massachusetts' mothers' pension law was also unusual. Of the 39 states with mothers' pension programs in 1919, only nine states allocated state funds to help finance mothers' pensions (Thompson 1919:17).²⁵ An additional three states (Maryland, New Hampshire, and New Jersey) used state funds for pay for administrative costs. What is interesting about this is that the nine states that allocated state money for mothers' pensions were rather generous. Two-thirds of them fall into the generous category, and only Delaware, which has the largest black population of any of these states, falls into the moderately stingy category. Perhaps state financial involvement meant that more money was available for needy mothers. One could imagine a scenario in which state funds replace local funds and benefit levels bear no relationship to states' financial involvement, but this does not seem to be the case. By 1931 the picture had changed a little bit (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933). Two states, Arizona and New Hampshire, administered and paid for mothers' pensions entirely at the state level, and 11 additional states provided either one-half or one-third of the grant. Of the 9 states that provided financial assistance in 1919, only Minnesota was not continuing to do so in 1931. Rhode Island and North Carolina established their mothers' pension programs after 1919, and the state provided one-half of the grant. Illinois, the mothers' pension leader whose laws were continually in flux, was also providing one-half of the grant amount by 1931. While there is not a perfect relationship, a strong majority of the most generous states (7 out of 10) contributed to mothers' pension grants. In contrast, 6 of 16

²⁵ These states were California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

moderately generous states, 2 of 11 moderately stingy states, and 1 of 11 stingy states contributed to mothers' pension grants.

Massachusetts conforms to theoretical expectations in terms of state racial and ethnic composition. There was absolutely no rhetoric that I can find that even mentioned African-Americans. This continues for many years, well into the first decades of the federal Aid to Dependent Children program. In contrast, before the passage of mothers' pension legislation, there is some evidence that immigrants were the intended recipients for mothers' pensions. The Congress of Mothers persuaded an Italian immigrant widow to testify in favor of mothers' pensions before the commission, apparently because they thought her story would be compelling (Traverso 2003). After the legislation took effect, the prototypical recipient appears to be an Italian immigrant widow whose husband died in a work-related accident (or of an illness related to his employment) and has four or more small children to support.

Benefit Levels in the Mothers' Aid Era

At the beginning of mothers' aid, benefit levels were the result of the operation of two different factors: income and expenses. When they requested assistance, applicants filled out an extensive form that listed all possible forms of income (Thompson 1919:102–115). Major categories included mothers' net wages, children's net wages, payouts from insurance, assistance from relatives, and assistance from agencies. There was also space for applicants to list expenses such as rent. For some of the "necessaries of life," such as food and clothing, the State Board of Charity established a schedule of

expenses in 1914 that it updated annually (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1919:105). For example, the weekly food allowance for the mother was \$1.50 while the food allowance for a child under 5 years of age was \$1.00. The actual benefit level was calculated by subtracting the income from expenses.

Benefit levels, then, were supposed to respond to actual levels of need. This was the innovation of mothers' aid—the reason for the program's existence. In exchange for greater oversight, mothers with dependent children could, theoretically, have all their needs met. According to a 1923 report from the Children's Bureau, the standard of living that mothers' aid administrators aimed for was “the way in which a normal workingman's family lives” (Nesbitt 1923:5). In Massachusetts, at the beginning of mothers' aid, there was a strong emphasis on individualization, exemplified by the policy laid out in the State Board of Charity's 1913 annual report: “Aid granted should be of the kind best adapted to the needs of the individual family. In many cases a partial allowance of cash is desirable; but we would suggest that only in cases where the mother is intelligent and judicious should the full allowance be in cash. Cash allowances should be granted weekly, never monthly” (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1914:128).

Another aspect of this policy is the distrust that the members of the State Board of Charity have toward mothers' aid recipients. They seem to start from the premise that mothers will not spend the aid wisely. In other parts of the annual report, they encourage mothers to continue working if they can combine work with adequately caring for their children and indicate that aid should be educational, contributing to the uplift of families that receive it. Furthermore, the fact that aid is adequate means that the Board can

demand high standards from those receiving assistance. The emphasis on individualization continues in the 1914 report: “The fact that there is no stated per capita allowance, and the further fact that each case is treated as an intensely individual problem to be worked out upon its own lines, make the perfunctory handling of these cases practically impossible” (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1915:103).

By 1915 the State Board of Charity (1916:167) formulated a policy on benefit levels that it kept in place for several years:

15. *Amount of Aid — Family Budget.* — In determining the amount of aid necessary for a given family, not only the number of persons in an applicant’s family, but also the health, the age and the capabilities of each member of the family should be considered. The former income, and the former standards of living of the family, as well as the standards of self-supporting citizens in the neighborhood, should also be considered.

The amount of weekly aid should vary with the changing needs of the family; for instance, aid should be increased in time of sickness, and it should be decreased proportionately as the earning capacity, or the income of the family from any other source increases. Aid should be discontinued as soon as the family becomes self-supporting.

What does this tell us about benefit levels? First, benefit levels are highly individualized, dependent upon a number of factors that defy categorization (e.g. “capabilities of each member of the family”). This likely reflects the strong social work background of the members of the State Board of Charity. Tailoring aid to the specific needs of the family was a central tenet of the most advanced social work thought in the 1910s. Second, people from more advantageous circumstances—those who earned higher wages in the past, those who live in good neighborhoods—may merit higher benefit levels. This could be seen as an aspect of individualization, but it’s also a way of preserving privilege. Native-born whites could justify receiving larger payments through

the higher wages of the now-deceased breadwinner or due to the nicer neighborhoods in which they lived. Class and ethnic distinctions would not be erased through receiving assistance; the social world did not have to be upended. Third, aid should be responsive to shifts in income and circumstances. Again, this could be an outgrowth of the emphasis on individualization, but it also indicates how deeply visitors were supposed to be involved in recipients' lives. Visitors should know when children get new jobs, when one of them falls ill, and any other events that may affect how much assistance the family receives.

An official policy that replaces this one is not articulated in the annual reports, partly because they seem to move away from recounting policy decisions in annual reports by the 1930s. There was an update in the 1921 annual report (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1922:20), however:

In estimating the needs of a family, it is necessary to consider not only the number of persons, but also the age, the health, the special needs and the capabilities and handicaps of each member. The racial characteristics and food preferences of the family, the skill of the mother in household management, the former standards of living, and the standards of living of self-supporting families in the community must be kept in mind.

There are minimum standards of decency and comfort which govern housing and fuel expenses, and there are scientific estimates of clothing and food requirements of persons of different ages which serve as guides in making family budgets.

This 1921 update reflects some changes in how the Department of Public Welfare, which replaced the State Board of Charity in 1920, saw benefit levels. In addition to all the considerations outlined in 1915, “racial characteristics and food preferences of the family” as well as “the skill of the mother in household management” are important. “Racial” here likely refers to country of origin rather than skin color; it is

closer to the contemporary concept of ethnicity. Nonetheless, this makes the idea that people from different ethnic and racial groups deserve different levels of support explicit. Another difference is the reliance on “scientific estimates” for clothing and food rather than the visitor’s own expert judgment. It is one of the first moves toward standardization and away from individualization that is evident in the historical record.

It is important to note that Massachusetts was not alone in having a policy that people of different nationalities should have different benefit levels. At a 1922 conference on mothers’ pensions sponsored by the Children’s Bureau, it was reported that, of thirty agencies surveyed, “Eleven agencies made deviations from the schedule on account of nationality. One agency had a Mexican problem which affected the use of the schedule. Another agency figured a low estimate for food and clothing for foreign families. A third agency granted lower allowances for Italian and Czechoslovakian families” (Proceedings of Conference on Mothers’ Pensions 1922:4).

The actual level of assistance, in dollar terms, is difficult to determine in this period. Table 6 lists all references to benefit levels found in documents from this period. The general trend seems to be decline from 1914 to the early 1920s and then a sharp rise over the 1920s. Two factors probably influenced this trend: the number of people receiving mothers’ aid and inflation. Assistance levels and the number of people receiving assistance have an inverse relationship. The number of people receiving assistance rose until 1919 at the same time that benefit levels were declining. The program became more generous in the 1920s at the same time that it served fewer and fewer people. With the start of the Great Depression, caseloads began rising again in

1930. From 1933 to 1935 the program served a record number of people each year. Rising cost of living was also clearly a concern for mothers' aid administrators. It is mentioned in every annual report from 1918 to 1921, corresponding to the rapid inflation that followed the end of World War I. Inflation also helps explain how the declining

Table 6. Benefit Levels by Year, 1914-1934

Year	Benefit level	Monthly amount in 2010\$ for a mother with three children
1914	“The amount of mothers' aid per family is based upon the needs of the particular family, and varies from \$1.50 to \$15 a week... In size the average family aided consists of a mother and three dependent children under fourteen years of age. The average amount of mothers' aid furnished such a family (in addition to its income from other sources) was \$6 a week” (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1915:101).	\$520.08
1916	\$25.61 average payment per family (see below)	\$509.15
1917	“The average payment per family this year has been \$28.07, as against \$25.61 last year” (Boston Daily Globe 1917).	\$475.22
1918	“The average rate of weekly aid per family during 1918 was \$8.34. Out of a total of 1,239 families in which the amount of aid per week was definitely stated on the notice, 253 families were receiving \$10 a week; 119 were receiving \$12; 21 were receiving \$14; and 13 were receiving \$15. The largest amount given to any one family was \$24 a week; the smallest, \$1.50. Eight families were receiving \$2 each per week” (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1919:104).	\$478.75
1919	“The average amount of aid granted per family by the overseers of the poor on date of notice was \$8.90 per week. This figure does not indicate the average total income of the family, but it is the average amount of aid granted by the overseers of the poor to supplement all the other sources of family income” (State Board of Charity of Massachusetts 1920:90).	\$445.93
1920	“The present aid averages \$8.30 a week for a mother and three children” (Boston Daily Globe 1920).	\$359.72
1923	\$17.14 avg. monthly grant per child in Boston, \$19.68 avg. monthly grant per child in Haverhill (Nesbitt 1923:141).	\$651.62 in Boston, \$748.19 in Haverhill
1931	\$69.31 average monthly grant per family (U.S. Children's Bureau 1933:17).	\$988.12

number of recipients did not result in declining state appropriations for mothers' aid during the 1920s.

Despite the emphasis on adequate assistance, there is evidence that some mothers' aid recipients did not perceive it as adequate. In 1920, which, according to available evidence, is the nadir of benefit levels in the mothers' aid program, a state legislator proposed a minimum weekly payment of \$4.25 per child (Martin 1920). As a mother and three children received \$8.30 per week on average at this time, this bill would have substantially increased payments to at least \$12.75. Around the same time, Robert W. Kelso, the State Commissioner of Public Welfare, called a conference at the State House to discuss "revising the figures estimated as caring for a family budget under the Mothers' Aid act" (Boston Daily Globe 1920). According to Kelso, a five-person family needed \$14 per week but a mother and three children averaged \$8.30 per week. This attention may have worked. As previously stated, benefit levels rose over the course of the 1920s.

Because the people who received assistance often did not speak English or were illiterate, the historical record leaves no trace of their opinions of assistance that are not filtered by mothers' aid administrators. One indicator that assistance was at least somewhat helpful was that Boston's colorful mayor, James Michael Curley, tried to take credit for the program wherever he could. Curley, an Irish Democratic machine politician, served as Boston's mayor from 1914-1918, 1922-1926, 1930-1934, and 1946-1950. One example comes from Curley's propaganda in trying to get people to vote for a proposition he favored: "More men are employed today by the city of Boston than ever

before and they enjoy greater privileges in the matter of two weeks' vacation, pensions for aged workers and mothers' aid for the families of those where the father has died in the service of the city. These results have been accomplished largely through my personal efforts" (quoted in Boston Evening Globe 1915). In 1917 he justified a larger appropriation for mothers' aid this way: "even if the sum required for next year is twice as great as the amount expended this year, the obligation of the municipality to the mothers and helpless children of this city is such that no needy mother should be denied assistance" (quoted in Boston Daily Globe 1917). This played into the image Curley created for himself as "the advocate of blue-collar, ethnic Bostonians who had been deprived of power by a pervasive, enduring Brahmin conspiracy" (Connolly 1998:135).

Nationally, benefit levels do not seem to have been able to meet need. At the 1922 conference on mothers' pensions, the thirty agencies surveyed reported that grants were large enough to cover the difference between income and needs. However, the director of aid and relief at the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare, who analyzed the questionnaires, stated that there was other evidence implying that "the maximum grants are inadequate, especially in the case of the small family, or that the appropriations are insufficient to provide adequate grants" (Proceedings of Conference on Mothers' Pensions 1922:5). This evidence seems to be that other public and private agencies regularly supported mothers' pension recipients. For example, 27 of the 30 agencies in the study stated that private agencies augmented mothers' pension grants. Other Children's Bureau reports from the 1920s and early 1930s report that benefit levels did not meet need, and they blamed maximum benefit levels that legislatures set (Lundberg

1926, 1928; Nesbitt 1923; U.S. Children's Bureau 1933). For example: "Adequate aid was frequently prevented by provisions in the law, or by rulings of boards, which set a maximum beyond which the relief could not go, regardless of the circumstances in an individual case" (Nesbitt 1923:22).

Aid in Massachusetts seems to have functioned differently than in other states, partly due to the lack of legislated maximums. In a 1923 Children's Bureau report on nine localities, two of which were in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts localities (Boston and Haverhill) had the highest average grants per child.²⁶ The reason for this appears to be that mothers' aid recipients in Massachusetts were much less likely to have income in addition to mothers' aid grants. At least 89% of recipients in other localities reported income other than mothers' aid grants, but only 66% of Boston recipients and 55% of Haverhill recipients reported other income. The main reason for this appears to be mothers' and children's wages; about one out of three recipients in Massachusetts reported wage income while the average for recipients in the eight localities examined was 63%. Despite the high benefit levels in Massachusetts, mothers' aid recipients in Denver, which was also located in a state without legislated maximums, were most likely to have sufficient incomes.²⁷

²⁶ The other localities were Hennepin County, MN (includes Minneapolis); Montgomery County, NY; Northampton County, PA; St. Louis, MO; Westchester County, NY; and Yellow Medicine County, MN, which was often left out of aggregate analysis due its small numbers of residents and recipients.

²⁷ This was, in part, the result of an explicit strategy. There was never enough money appropriated to aid all the families that qualified for mothers' aid, so administrators in Denver chose to assist fewer families so that they could provide adequate grants (Nesbitt 1923).

State Capacity in the Mothers' Aid Era

According to Robert W. Kelso (1922:92), who was the first State Commissioner of Public Welfare as well as the author of a book on the history of poor relief in Massachusetts, “the first axiom of Massachusetts public poor relief is that the responsibility is local.” This emphasis on local responsibility explains why poor relief was administered and funded entirely by cities and towns. The social workers who got their preferred vision of mothers' aid passed also believed strongly in the appropriateness of local control of poor relief, which is why their vision built on the existing poor relief system. Reformers like Clara Cahill Park wanted to create an entirely new centralized system while social workers thought creating a new system was wasteful. The result of social workers winning the battle of competing visions for mothers' aid was the system of state oversight and local administration that persisted until the 1960s.

A key aspect of local responsibility was legal settlement. Cities and towns were only responsible for poor people who were legally settled within their jurisdictions. One could acquire legal settlement by residing in a city or town for five years without receiving relief, and five years' absence from a city or town is what was required to lose legal settlement. The state came into play whenever a poor person did not have legal settlement. In mothers' aid, cities and towns were reimbursed by the state for one-third of the cost of grant payments for recipients who had a legal settlement in the city or town. If the recipient had a legal settlement in a different city or town (“City A”), the one in which the recipient was currently living (“City B”) could require City A to reimburse it for the cost of all the grant payments to the recipient. If the recipient had no legal

settlement in the state, the state assumed all the cost of grant payments for the recipient. Most mothers' aid recipients had legal settlement somewhere in the state, though. According to the annual reports for the State Board of Charity/Department of Public Welfare, in 1914 less than 11% of all mothers' aid recipients did not have a legal settlement, and this does not appear to have exceeded 19% in any later year.

From the beginning of the poor relief system, the overseers were primarily concerned with "avoiding or unloading the financial burden of supporting the poor" (Kelso 1922:94). The overseers were appointed by mayors or city councils and served without pay. Their chief virtue was in keeping taxes low through refusing to assist the poor or proffering insufficient assistance. This was a significant factor affecting the generosity of poor relief, and it is why the state had to be involved if mothers' aid was supposed to provide adequate assistance. The system of reimbursement created a substantial incentive for the overseers to try to get recipients to be considered legally settled in other cities and towns or not legally settled in Massachusetts at all. In turn all the wrangling over settlement issues created a lot of paperwork, and the state Department of Public Welfare did not consider it a good use of time and resources. In 1934 the Department of Public Welfare proposed legislation to reimburse cities and towns for one-fourth the cost of all grant payments, which their calculations showed would result in more money for cities and towns (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1935). The legislature rejected this proposal because cities and towns feared that neighboring locales would send their poor to them (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1936). The Department of Public Welfare revised their original bill so that cities and towns could still require

reimbursement for poor persons who had settlement in different cities and towns, but it still did not make it through the legislature in 1935 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1936).

The best way of understanding how mothers' aid functioned may be through understanding the application process, which was extensive.²⁸ First, the applicant visited the office of the overseers of the poor (or, as the name was later changed to, the board of public welfare) and filled out a form that required her to list a variety of information: date of marriage, date of husband's death (if applicable), all income, any property, amount of money in bank accounts, names and dates of birth of children, and more. A visitor (what we would now call a "social worker") investigated the application, which included visiting the applicant's home and conducting an interview with the applicant. The visitor then made a recommendation to the overseers at their weekly meeting. If the overseers and the visitor agreed that the family deserved assistance, aid could commence at that moment. (The family may have already been receiving temporary relief if the visitor thought the case merited that.) A report with a request for reimbursement was sent to the state office.

Next the state office launched its own investigation with its own visitor. The state visitor requested letters from all the agencies that the applicant reported had been helping the family, contacted relatives for information, and verified all the public data, such as dates of birth for the children, date of marriage, and the date of the husband's death. The state visitor also paid the family a visit and interviewed the mother. Then the visitor

²⁸ These paragraphs on the application process draw on Nesbitt (1923: 91-93).

estimated a family budget, using schedules for food and clothing that Boston Dietetic Bureau and other groups had created. The aid amount was the estimated family budget minus all reported income. The state Director of Mothers' Aid and the visitor discussed all this information—what the state visitor found, what the overseers found—and recommended approval, disapproval, or a change in the amount of the grant. This recommendation gained the approval of the director of the Division of Aid and Relief and became the official recommendation of the Department of Public Welfare. What to do with this recommendation was the overseers' choice, but the State Board of Charity (or, later, the State Department of Public Welfare) had to approve the grant amount that the overseers decided upon in order to obtain the one-third reimbursement from the State.

There is some evidence that state involvement in this process made the grant amounts higher. While the overseers were mostly concerned with keeping expenses (and therefore taxes) as low as possible, the state Department of Public Welfare was more concerned with meeting applicants' needs. It "frequently requested an increase in the original grant and forwarded its reasons to the overseers, who then reconsidered the matter—not always favorably" (Nesbitt 1923:93). The fact that the state Department of Public Welfare had to approve the grant amount in order for the city to be reimbursed gave the state's recommendation some weight, so one imagines that overseers often raised their initial grant amounts somewhat just to get approval for reimbursement.

In addition to these more coercive mechanisms, state officials also tried to use moral suasion and scientific evidence to get the overseers to raise benefit levels. In January 1920, when he was the State Commissioner of Public Welfare, Robert W. Kelso

organized a conference of “experts from the Bureau of Statistics, hospitals, public dispensaries and dietetic bureaus” to modify the estimated family budgets for mothers’ aid recipients (Boston Daily Globe 1920). Kelso stated that, due to the rising cost of living, grants needed to be substantially higher. A mother with three children received, on average, \$8.30 per week while a family of five actually needed a grant of \$14 per week to make ends meet. Because, ultimately, the overseers set benefit levels, this was the upshot of the conference: “An effort will be made to secure larger sums from the municipalities in furtherance of the movement” (Boston Daily Globe 1920). The state could only do so much.

As soon as mothers’ aid was created, legislators were proposing changes. Starting in 1914 and continuing through 1917, several bills called for increasing the amount the state reimbursed localities from one-third to two-thirds (or one-half, or the total cost of grant payments) (e.g. H. J. Mahoney 1914). Given who was proposing this change—the state branch of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1914-1916, a socialist legislator—it seems that their motivation was more likely increasing benefit levels than offloading local costs on the state (Massachusetts State Branch of the American Federation of Labor 1914, 1915, 1916; Sawyer 1914, 1917). In 1914 James Michael Curley, the mayor of Boston, proposed legislation to institute the two-thirds state reimbursement change, probably to increase benefit levels without affecting his city budget or increasing the local tax rate (Curley 1914).

Another change that was proposed in the legislature related to the administration of mothers’ aid. In 1916, along with changes in state reimbursement, the Massachusetts

branch of the AFL wanted to institute penalties for overseers if they did not promptly report cases to the State Board of Charity, penalties for the State Board of Charity if it did not respond to overseers promptly, and an appeals process for women that the State Board of Charity chose not to fund. This provision reappeared in bills for the next three years. Another 1916 bill completely removed the overseers and the State Board of Charity from the process, creating a new position, Commissioner of State Aid, at the state level and having mayors, selectmen, and other elected city and town officials administrate at the local level (Beck 1916). All of this demonstrates that at least some people were unhappy with the way that mothers' aid was being administrated. The people in charge of the program were unresponsive to at least some applicants, and these applicants were able to get legislators or advocacy groups to try to change the system.

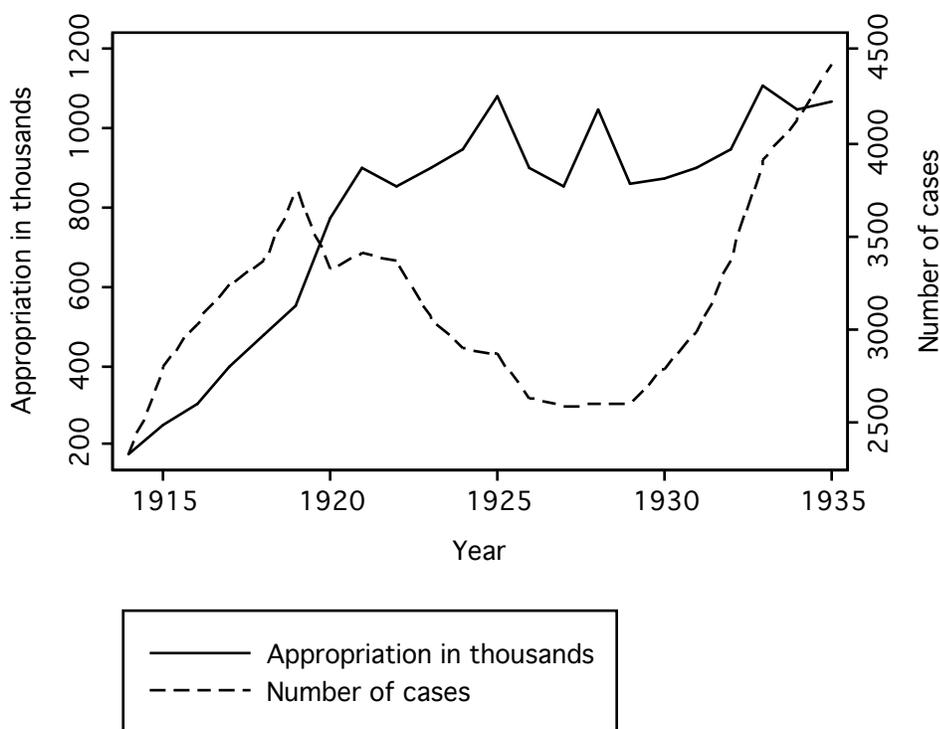
A major rationale for mothers' aid was that it would prompt the overseers to be more generous with other forms of assistance, such as temporary relief. After all, it was the overseers' inability to grant adequate assistance that led to the development of mothers' aid. By 1917 State Board of Charity (1918:120) admitted that mothers' aid has not "had the broadening influence over other forms of public relief that should be expected." Overseers were not applying the lessons in family budgeting that mothers' aid had taught them to those receiving temporary relief, for example. This was an explicit part of the rationale for mothers' aid, and mothers' aid cannot be considered a success in this respect. The problem is likely that mothers' aid advocates assumed that overseers would be responsive to education and try to do what was right regardless of their personal interest in keeping benefit levels as low as possible.

The relationship between state appropriations, benefit levels, and the number of mothers' aid recipients is an important part of the story of state capacity and generosity. Figure 7 shows trends in caseloads and appropriations for the entire 1914-1935 period.²⁹ Caseload rise over the 1910s, and appropriations rise with them. In real, inflation-adjusted terms, benefit levels declined, though they rose slightly in current, non-inflation adjusted terms. In this period, mothers' aid was second only to temporary relief in size, but temporary relief was funded entirely at the local level. With respect to state programs, mothers' aid was larger, both in terms of number of recipients and amount of appropriation, than any other aid program. While mothers' aid remains a large and important state program in the 1920s, the number of recipients falls throughout the entire decade. At the same time that the number of recipients is falling, however, the level of appropriation remains about the same. As is reflected in Table 6, benefit levels rise as a result. Caseloads skyrocket from 1930 to 1935, as the Great Depression deepens. While there is an uptick in appropriations, it is nowhere near enough to meet the growing demand for mothers' aid. Benefit levels are difficult to come by in these years, but it is reasonable to assume that they declined in real terms.

What do these patterns indicate about the relationship between state capacity and generosity? First, there is an inverse relationship between the number of people receiving assistance and how generous that assistance is. Whenever the number of mothers' aid recipients was rising in this period, benefit levels were declining. Second, appropriations

²⁹ By "appropriations," I mean the amount the legislature appropriated to reimburse cities and towns for mothers' aid payments. Administrative expenses at the state level were covered by a different appropriation, and cities and towns paid for their own administrative expenses.

Figure 7. Appropriation & Number of Cases for Mothers' Aid, 1914-1935



are sticky. As the number of mothers' aid recipients dipped to near-record lows, appropriations stabilized rather than declined. This trend is still evident when appropriations are adjusted for inflation. Officials in charge of mothers' aid used declining caseloads to raise benefit levels rather than to cut costs. This may be one way that Massachusetts maintained its high benefit levels—a way that many other states may not have utilized.

Race and Immigration in the Mothers' Aid Era

The way that we think about race in early twenty-first century America is not the way that we thought about race in early twentieth century America. At that time, "race" did not mean a scheme of social categorization based loosely on skin color, as it usually does today (Guglielmo 2003). Instead, "race" referred something more akin to what we would call "nationality" or "ethnicity." It "could mean many things: large groups like Nordics and Mediterraneans, medium-sized ones like the Celts and Hebrews, or smaller ones like the North or South Italians" (Guglielmo 2003:9). Sometimes it even meant the entire human race.

In a place like Massachusetts, in the early twentieth century, the salient racial distinctions were within the boundaries of what we would today call "white." African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans formed such miniscule percentages of the state's total population that they never appear in any discussion of mothers' aid in Massachusetts (and only rarely appear in discussion about mothers' aid in other parts of the country). As Linda Gordon (1994:48) phrases it, they did not "threaten social disorder" the way that immigrants did, at least in northern states in the Progressive Era.

Instead, the discussion about race in Massachusetts focused on immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. While groups like Italians and Czechs were unmistakably white, they were also unmistakably inferior to Anglo Saxons (Guglielmo 2003). This caused a political crisis around who counted as a citizen and who was deserving of assistance. Matthew Frye Jacobson (1999:7–8) concisely explains the evolution of what

the term “white” meant for citizenship:

The nation’s first naturalization law in 1790 (limiting naturalized citizenship to ‘free white persons’) demonstrates the republican convergence of race and ‘fitness for self-government’; the law’s wording denotes an unconflicted view of the presumed character and unambiguous boundaries of whiteness. Fifty years later, however, beginning with the massive influx of highly undesirable but nonetheless ‘white’ persons from Ireland, whiteness was subject to new interpretations. The period of mass European immigration, from the 1840s to the restrictive legislation of 1924, witnessed a fracturing of whiteness into a hierarchy of plural and scientifically determined white races. Vigorous debate ensued over which of these was truly ‘fit for self-government’ in the good old Anglo Saxon sense. Finally, in the 1920s and after, partly because the crisis of over-inclusive whiteness had been solved by restrictive legislation and partly in response to a new racial alchemy generated by African-American migrations to the North and West, whiteness was reconsolidated: the late nineteenth century’s probationary white groups were now remade and granted the scientific stamp of authenticity as the unitary Caucasian race—an earlier era’s Celts, Slavs, Hebrews, Iberics, and Saracens, among others, had become the Caucasians so familiar to our own visual economy and racial lexicon.

For the reformers who championed mothers’ pensions, the program was a way to assimilate southern and eastern European immigrants (L. Gordon 1994; Mink 1995). At the time there were two main views on immigrants. The conservative view was that southern and eastern European immigrants were irremediably, genetically inferior to those with northern European backgrounds. Even some people involved in social work had this view. According to Robert Kelso (1922:194), “pauperism is due in greatest measure to a lack of mental capacity in the individual to support himself and his dependents. His trouble is largely hereditary. He is brindle stock.” The liberal view, which is what most social workers and Progressive Era reformers espoused, located the problem with immigrants in their cultures. Immigrants could be molded into good citizens; there was nothing inherently defective about them (Mink 1995). The solution to immigrant poverty was education and training, particularly in scientific methods of child-

rearing and household management. The conservative view won out with federal legislation in 1924 that severely limited immigration, but the liberal view provided a way to deal with the immigrants already in the country.

Mothers' aid functioned as "a reward to immigrant and other poor single mothers who allowed themselves to be 'Americanized' and otherwise reformed" (Gordon 1994:46). Mothers' aid recipients had quarterly visits from either the overseers or state visitors, and the overseers (or, more likely, visitors that the overseers hired) set up a variety of budgets, schedules, or plans for recipients to follow. The plans could include learning how to cook healthy, budget-friendly meals, taking English classes, or moving to a location that would be better for the children's health. As well-meaning as some of this advice was, it sometimes forced mothers' aid recipients to choose between staying close to their families and cultures and receiving adequate assistance: "many foreign born mothers prefer to put up with poor housing conditions rather than move away from relatives or friends who speak their own language.... Indeed, it is a waste of public money to finance the plan of a mother who prefers to live in an unsanitary home. We have, therefore, insisted upon better housing for Mothers' Aid families, even going so far as to decline to reimburse for cases where the mothers refuse to move into better available tenements" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1924:11). It was always very clear that mothers refusing to follow visitors' recommendations risked losing aid entirely.

The connection between mothers' aid and assimilation was most clear in Department of Public Welfare's 1926 annual report, which contained an entire section on

Americanization in relation to mothers' aid. The Department described best practices in Lowell (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1927:10):

The Lowell Overseers in particular have shown great interest, and they have co-operated with the Americanization Supervisor to an unusual degree. They have furnished her with a list of all the foreign born mothers, and have introduced her to each, thus placing the seal of their authority on her efforts. The overseers have encouraged the women to join neighborhood classes, and have commended them for regular attendance. They have encouraged mothers to begin the process of naturalization. The Americanization work is very important, and should be fostered. Anything that helps a mother to understand and discipline her children, helps her to be a more valuable member of society and helps her children to become better American citizens.

While nativity was not reported among regular statistics, it is clear that southern and eastern European immigrants were the prototypical mothers' aid recipients in Massachusetts. In the 1923 Children's Bureau report two-thirds of Boston's mothers' aid recipients were foreign-born, and 64% of Haverhill's mothers' aid recipients were foreign-born (Nesbitt 1923). These were the highest percentages of foreign-born recipients of the eight localities for which that data was collected in that study.³⁰ Furthermore, case descriptions often mention nativity. Of the 14 case descriptions found in the 1923 report and annual reports, half mention that the recipient is foreign-born. Traverso (2003:34) also recounts how advocates trying to establish mothers' aid in Massachusetts used the testimony of an Italian immigrant mother to make their case for the necessity of the program.

³⁰ Other percentages of foreign-born recipients from that study: Northampton County, PA, 33%; Montgomery County, NY, 39%; St. Louis, MO, 40%; Denver, CO, 50%; Hennepin County, MN, slightly over 50%; and Westchester County, NY, 60%.

Conclusion

Understanding how mothers' pensions began in Massachusetts is integral to understanding why Massachusetts is such a generous state. At the outset, Massachusetts had no maximum benefit levels, and the localities that established mothers' aid programs had financial assistance and oversight from the state. That, along with the substantial white immigrant population and dearth of minority populations such as African-Americans and American Indians, helped Massachusetts' mothers' aid program become one of the most generous mothers' aid programs in the country.

GENEROSITY IN THE AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN ERA, 1935-1964

The transition from mothers' aid to Aid to Dependent Children was, in Massachusetts, mostly seamless. Massachusetts' mothers' aid program essentially conformed to the federal requirements listed in the Social Security Act, at least at the beginning. One long-standing effect of federalizing the program was to further tension between two competing goals for cash assistance: individualized tailoring of assistance and uniform, high-quality assistance. Benefit levels were supposed to fit the specific circumstances of each recipient, but they were also supposed to be non-discriminatory. The major battles regarding state capacity in this period, over merit-based local administration and state reimbursement to cities and towns, reflect this tension. Race, ethnicity, and national origin were largely absent from all welfare-related discourse in these years, in part due to an attempt to make welfare more appealing to the general public. Finally, benefit levels steadily rose throughout the period, and a statutory change and a policy shift were instrumental in this rise.

Benefit Levels in ADC, 1935-1964

State administrators began Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) by emphasizing how little the federalization of the program would change operations on the ground. In the 1935 annual report they wrote: "Our mothers' aid law had been in effect since 1913 in practically the same form as the Social Security Act. It was only necessary for us to reduce from three years to one year the length of time during which an applicant must

have resided within the state” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1936:2) However, federal government involvement did lead to a number of changes in the way that social workers in Massachusetts formulated benefit levels. From 1935 to 1964 there was a shift from the individualization that characterized mothers’ aid to state-mandated budgetary standards. This shift increased benefit levels across the state and made benefit levels more responsive to changes in the cost of living.

At the outset of this period, local boards of public welfare had sole responsibility for determining benefit levels and standards of assistance. As the Department of Public Welfare stated in its 1940 annual report, this was problematic: “This lack of uniform standard has resulted in 351 different standards set by the intelligence and generosity—or lack of them—of the local administrators, a practice obviously unfair to the recipients whose allowances have varied not in accordance with need but with the community in which they happened to live” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1941:7). When cash assistance to single mothers was a state and local program, this variation may have been unfair, but it was difficult to uncover, and there was no real impetus to reform. With federal participation in cash assistance to single mothers came federal rules. Two rules were particularly important in establishing the need for uniform, statewide standards: the right of appeal and the necessity of avoiding discriminatory practices.

The initial assessment that only the residency rule needed to be changed in order to satisfy federal requirements for ADC proved to be false. In the following year the Legislature made a number of changes so that Massachusetts would be in compliance with the Social Security Act. One such change was creating a state appeal board so that

applicants and recipients could challenge local public welfare boards' decisions. This had the effect of making benefit levels in cities and towns more public knowledge, and it showed wide variation in levels of assistance. Local welfare boards needed some definitive standard to show that they were treating all applicants and recipients fairly (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1941).

Similarly, the non-discrimination clause in the Aid to Dependent Children title in the federal Social Security Act made establishing standards of assistance appealing. In theory, the state could lose federal funding if recipients or applicants were able to prove that they had not been treated fairly. (In reality, many southern states continued discriminatory practices and did not lose federal funding.) As the Department of Public Welfare stated in its 1939 annual report, "administration of relief on a definite budgetary standard is the only way in which need can be determined without discrimination" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1940:5).

As a result of these pressures, the Department of Public Welfare issued a *Manual of Laws, Rules, Policies and Procedures for the Administration of Public Assistance* on September 27, 1939. The preference for individualization and conformity to local conditions had not disappeared, though. As the Department of Public Welfare stated in its 1939 annual report, "the Department however will make no attempt to impose a state standard of relief on cities and towns" (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1940:3). The budget was "intended as a guide to the visitors of this Department in considering cases in which reimbursement is requested and in which the Federal government participates through its grants. It is also intended as a guide to local welfare boards to the extent that

they wish to use it” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1940:4–5). The state Department wanted local boards to prepare their own budgets and create their own standards. The information the Department gave local boards was supposed to be a baseline for their own investigations rather than a mandate.

The 1939 manual is the first resource that lists different kinds of income and how they should be treated. Benefit levels are still determined by adding up all forms of income and subtracting that from all expenses. The manual lists 22 different kinds of income that should be investigated, from real estate, stocks and farm income to workmen’s compensation and pensions. This is much more comprehensive than any previous policy or guide.

Because the manual is essentially a suggestion, the budget section of the 1939 manual is rather undefined. “Essential” budget items include “food; shelter; fuel for cooking, heating and light; household necessities; and clothing” (Department of Public Welfare 1939:105). No specific dollar amounts or ranges are listed for anything except food. Instead, local boards are told they should set up standards such as a “maximum local shelter allowance” themselves. Caseworkers may permit higher benefit levels for special needs such as particular diets or housekeeping services, but it is clear that the necessity for such deviations must be well established.

The food budget provides a window into the Department’s ideas about how to establish benefit levels. First, it’s much more specialized than anything you would find today. The “Suggested Food Budget,” as it is called in the manual, is broken down by age, gender, and level of activity and includes modifications for women who are pregnant

or nursing and other common issues, such as smaller families. Second, the Department or another state agency did not determine the dollar amounts. According to a memo the Commissioner of Public Welfare sent to local boards of public welfare, the food budget was prepared by the Community Health Association of Boston (Rotch 1940). The Department released updated food budget figures in August 1940 as food prices increased, and, again, this is based on work the Community Health Association did.

At this point, the Department realized that creating standards of assistance would be quite helpful to local boards, and it decided to hire staff to accommodate local boards' desires for more guidance. In 1940 the Department hired a home economist whose job was to create standards of assistance and to keep the budget figures current. The policy was to update budget figures whenever food prices changed 5%. When food prices increased again in 1941, the Department did not indicate that the Community Health Association was the source of the new budget figures (Rotch 1941c). It also appears that the home economist created "suggested amounts for household supplies and personal needs, the items sometimes referred to as incidentals" (Rotch 1941c). The home economist also headed up a committee that produced standards for clothing in 1941 (Rotch 1941b). Due to rapidly increasing prices, the Department sent out revised budgets in July 1941, November 1941, and February 1942.

Hiring a home economist is likely what allowed the Department to issue the *Manual of Standards of Assistance* in April 1942. Unlike the 1939 manual, this one is devoted entirely to determining expenses, income, and assistance payments. It becomes

the basis for all caseworkers' decisions regarding benefit levels in this period, as the manual is not fully revised until 1965.

In the 1942 manual the Department provides a much more detailed description of necessities (Department of Public Welfare 1942:5–24). There is an estimate of how much coal, oil, and other fuel is required to keep a family warm and able to cook as well as a ceiling on the shelter allowance (\$25/month). Personal needs are itemized by gender, age, and level of activity (e.g. teenage boys need shaving soap while teenage girls need hair pins). Other categories did not exist in the 1939 manual. For example, expenses related to keeping a medicine chest, providing church contributions (\$.20/month for children age 7-16), and transportation are outlined, along with estimated budget figures. The resources or income section of the 1942 manual is more detailed than that section in the 1939 manual, but there are not more types of income (Department of Public Welfare 1939:107–108, 1942:25–36). Instead, the procedures are laid out more clearly.

With this information, caseworkers are able to compute uniform budgets across the Commonwealth. The 1942 manual gives the example of a mother, 10-year-old boy, 7-year-old girl, and 4-year-old girl who pay \$20/month in rent (Department of Public Welfare 1942:42–43). Their only resource or source of income is the mother's sister, who pays a life insurance premium for the mother. According the manual, this is their budget:

Food	\$35.50
Rent	20.00
Fuel and light	11.25
Household Supplies	.85
Replacement of Household Supp.	3.45
Clothing	12.60
Personal needs	2.80
Medicine chest supplies	.85

Church contributions	1.10
Insurance	<u>1.10</u>
	\$88.65

Because the sister pays for insurance, the assistance payment is \$87.55 (\$1,169.84 in 2010\$).

Despite this move toward extreme specificity, the Department still wanted to encourage local boards to adapt the standards of assistance to their localities and ensure that assistance was individualized. In the memo introducing the manual, Commissioner Arthur G. Rotch (1942) wrote: “This Manual is not an automatic calculator of assistance payments. It is a basis for thoughtful consideration of each individual case. When accompanied by investigation adequate for determination of all facts in respect to each individual situation, this Manual will enable you to determine the individual grants on a consistent equitable basis.” Again, the need for uniformity to avoid discrimination comes into conflict with the belief that personalized assistance is best.

The next major development in benefit levels is a 1946 statutory change. In 1943 the Legislature, acting on the recommendation of the Department of Public Welfare, began requiring cities and towns to submit budgets for Old Age Assistance recipients to the state Department for approval (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1943:2). Cities and towns that did not submit their own budgets would have to use the State Standard Budget. In 1946 this change was extended to Aid to Dependent Children. A legislator proposed adding “and shall be in an amount to be determined in accordance with budgetary standards as approved by the department” to the statement about amount of assistance in Massachusetts state law regarding ADC (Wood 1946). This change went through with,

apparently, little debate. The Department of Public Welfare was pleased with this change, noting in its 1946 annual report that “studies in the past have indicated that many communities grant considerably less money to Aid to Dependent Children families than is required according to good nutrition and health standards” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1946:7). This change was not totally without controversy, as a bill was introduced in the 1947 legislature to undo this change (Finnegan 1947). The bill, which was from someone who was not a legislator, died in committee.

While this may seem like a minor change in wording, it represents an enormous shift in thinking about benefit levels. It gives the state the ultimate power to determine benefit levels, moving away from individualization and local control. There was also a substantial increase in benefit levels as a result. In the 1947 annual report, the Department of Public Welfare reported that “the use of mandatory budget standards as required by an act of the Legislature...caused a substantial increase in the average payment per family” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1947:7)

One can see a similar shift toward uniformity in the Department’s own practices. In 1948 the Department revised the 1942 standards of assistance, making an “effort...at streamlining and simplification” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1948:8). This revision reduced the number of categories of expenses from nine to six and slashed the number of pages required to discuss the budget from 50 to 17. Trying to cover every situation that caseworkers could possibly encounter was becoming unwieldy.

Also in 1948 the Legislature changed the state law for Old Age Assistance (OAA) to require semi-annual changes in assistance payments when the cost of living changed

5% (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949). This meant that the Department had to change the way it calculated cost-of-living increases. Starting in 1941 it had “periodically conducted a cost study of consumption items and revised the standard budget allowances for the food, fuel, clothing, and personal care items in accordance with price changes” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:8). The new legislation mandated that the Department use figures on the cost of living that the State Bureau of Necessaries of Life computed to adjust benefit levels for Old Age Assistance. The Department decided, “in fairness to other recipients,” to extend this method of changing benefit levels to Aid to Dependent Children and suggested that local boards also extend it to General Relief recipients (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:8).

This is probably the single most important policy put into place that kept benefit levels for Massachusetts high. While these cost-of-living increases for ADC were not required by the legislature as the OAA increases were, that did not matter for local boards of public welfare. Due to the 1946 change mandating that local boards follow the state’s suggested budget or get their own budgets approved by the state Department of Public Welfare, local boards of public welfare were required give ADC recipients semi-annual cost-of-living increases. Again, this definitely increased benefit levels. Implementing this new rule necessitated an 8.3% increase in recipients’ budgets, which was applied to the whole budget rather than to specific items in the budget (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:8).

The move away from individualization and toward uniformity can also be seen in changes to the Department of Public Welfare’s official policy on benefit levels. Table 7

Table 7. Changes in State Department of Public Welfare Policy on Benefit Levels, 1939-1949

Year	Policy Statement	Source
1939	<p>“The amount of aid which should be granted should be determined by the local board of public welfare with due regard to the resources and necessary expenditures of the family and the conditions existing in each case, and in accordance with the rules established by the department, and should be sufficient, when added to all other income and support available, to provide reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health.</p> <p>“The amount of aid should be changed according to the needs of the family, increased in case of acute illness entailing extraordinary expense, and reduced as the need for aid lessens.”</p>	<p>Manual of Laws, Rules, Policies and Procedures for the Administration of Public Assistance</p>
1944	<p>“The amount of aid shall be determined by the local Board of Public Welfare with due regard to the resources and requirements of the family. In cases appealed the amount of aid shall be determined in accordance with the standards of assistance established by the State Department of Public Welfare and revised periodically. Reimbursement in all cases shall be limited to the amount needed by the family in accordance with these standards.</p> <p>“The amount of aid shall be changed in accordance with changes in need and the reasons for such change shall be recorded in the case record.”</p>	<p>RULES RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN LAW, February 3, 1944</p>
1949	<p>“The amount of aid shall be determined on the basis of the individual requirements and resources of the family and in accordance with the standards of assistance established by the State Department of Public Welfare and revised periodically. A local Board may submit for approval of the State Department current local prices of the list of individual requirements according to the procedures established by the State Department. However, the State standard budget figures issued by the Department shall be used except in communities which have secured written approval from the Department of a different standard of assistance. The cost-of-living adjustment, which is required from time to time under Section one of the Old Age Assistance Law, shall similarly be applicable to cases receiving Aid to Dependent Children. Reimbursement in all cases shall be limited to the amount needed by the family in accordance with these standards.</p> <p>“The amount of aid shall be changed in accordance with changes in need and the reasons for such change shall be recorded in the case record.”</p>	<p>RULES RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN LAW, February 15, 1949</p>

shows the changes in Rule 6, which is the policy statement about the amount of assistance that should be granted. In 1939 benefit levels are the sole responsibility of local boards of public welfare, which simply need to follow the rules that the state Department created. The amount of assistance also should respond to the specific situation of each family. The statement seems to imply that the level of assistance should be quite variable, adapting to any changes the family may experience. By 1944 the state Department of Public Welfare plays a role in determining benefit levels by serving as the arbiter in cases that are appealed. The local board of public welfare still has primary responsibility though. By 1949 the state assumes all responsibility for setting benefit levels, and the Department of Public Welfare must approve any deviation from the state's standards of assistance. Cost-of-living adjustments are also now official policy, meaning that increases in the level of assistance occur uniformly across the Commonwealth without debate.

As the developments of the 1940s make clear, understanding developments in Old Age Assistance is integral to understanding Aid to Dependent Children. OAA was a much larger and more popular program with an activist constituency. Organizations that advocated for the elderly showed up at public meetings and proposed legislation. The two main developments in the 1940s, requiring local boards to use state Department-approved budgets and granting cost-of-living increases, occurred in OAA before they were applied to ADC.

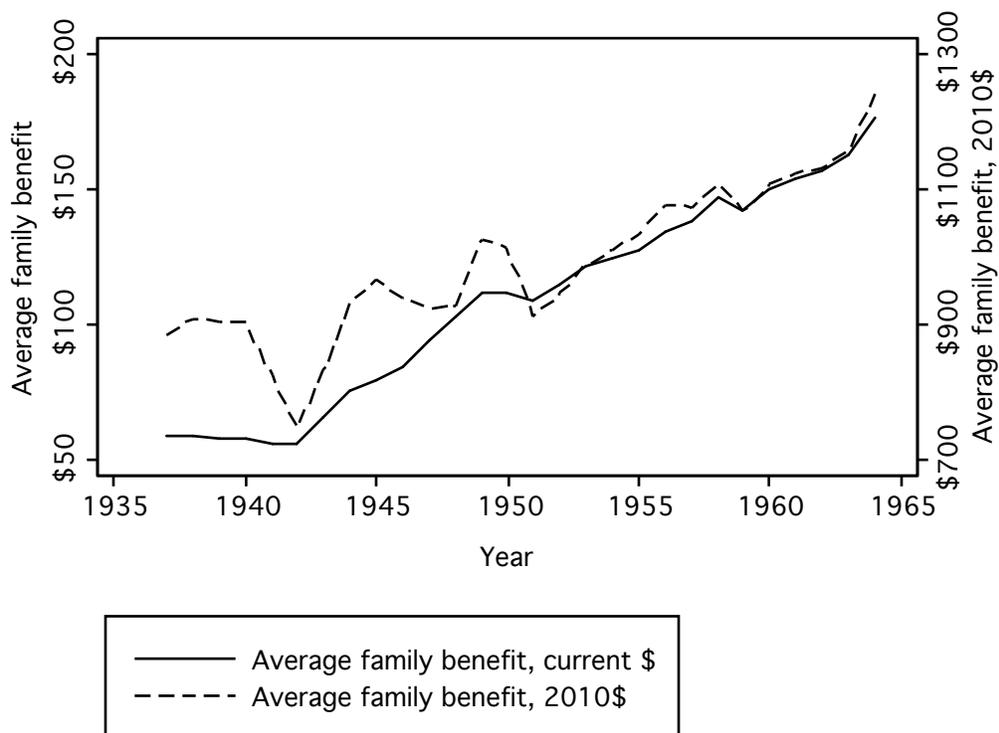
This trend continued through the 1950s. The 1949 legislature created a new budget item for OAA recipients for "Leisure Time Activities" (Commonwealth of

Massachusetts 1950). The \$4 per month budget item was added to all the other budget items, essentially increasing OAA benefits by \$4 per month for each recipient. In 1951 a legislator proposed that the personal needs item for children who are ADC recipients should be at least \$1 per week but no more than \$4 per week and should also vary with the age of the child (J. D. Ward 1951). A 1954 bill would institute a \$3/month budget item for each ADC recipient titled "Recreational Activities," a \$5/month budget item for Aid to the Blind recipients called "Transportation Activities," and a \$5/month budget item for Disability Assistance recipients named "Recreational and Cultural Activities" (Iannella 1954). The same legislator who introduced that bill proposed a similar one in 1955 that leaves out ADC recipients. He introduced it again in 1956 and 1957, this time stating that the money for the additional budget items would come entirely from the state. Although the proposals for programs other than OAA never get very far, the 1955 legislature gives OAA recipients who are not nursing home residents a "Transportation Allowance" of \$2.50/month (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1956). Once more, this amounts to a \$2.50 per month increase for OAA recipients who are not in nursing homes or otherwise institutionalized. It is noteworthy that two bills increasing the amount of public assistance the elderly receive were able to be passed, but bills aiding dependent children, the disabled, and the blind failed.

There is a similar pattern in the 1960s. Senior Citizens & Associates of America (1960) introduced a bill that would require the Department of Public Welfare to make rental ceiling surveys in order to set the amount allocated for rent in public assistance budgets. This does not seem to be restricted to OAA recipients, but it is clearly aimed at

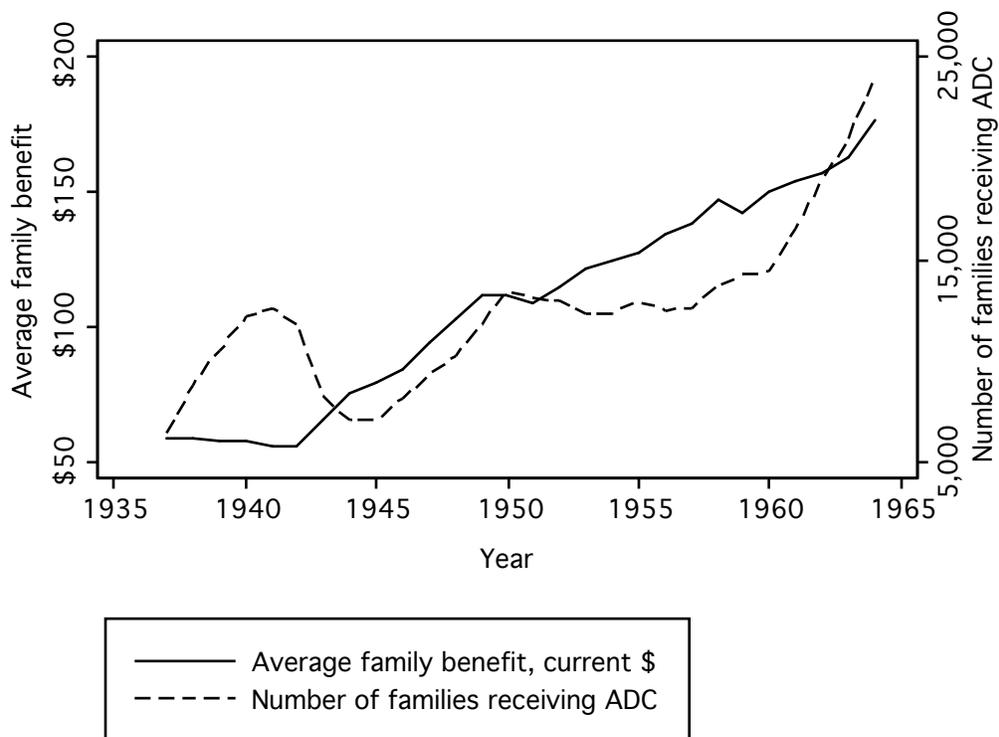
helping them in particular. In 1963 a legislator proposes increasing the allowance for heat and fuel during unseasonably cold weather—but only for OAA recipients. Two other bills in the 1963 legislature would increase the budgets for Disability Assistance recipients through adding budgetary items like leisure and transportation allowances. In 1964 a legislator proposes doubling the budget of the item “incidental expenses arising from blindness” for Aid to the Blind recipients (from \$4/month to \$8/month). In sum, after 1954 there are no proposals to increase ADC recipients’ budgets while recipients in other federally assisted categories receive multiple proposals to do so.

Figure 8. Average Family Benefit in Nominal & Real Dollars, 1937-1964



What were benefit levels in this period? Figure 8 shows the trend in nominal and real levels of assistance. In 1937 the average family benefit was \$58.49 (\$884.66 in 2010\$), rising to \$176.90 (\$1242.87 in 2010\$) in 1964. This means that benefit levels more than doubled in current dollars and increased over 40% when controlling for inflation. This is a rather rapid rise in benefit levels, likely due to the forces that required benefit levels to respond to actual need. As the state Department of Public Welfare took more and more control over benefit levels, benefit levels should have been responsive to need as determined by scientifically assessing the cost of living. This can be seen in Figure 8, as the convergence of the lines in the early 1950s shows. Looking at the early part of this period also shows what could have happened to benefit levels if they were not tied to the cost of living in 1948. While nominal benefits remained stable in the early 1940s, inflation eroded their value substantially, as can be seen in the drop in real benefits in the early 1940s. One can also see the stability (or slight decline) in real benefits in the early 1940s. In nominal terms, benefits were rising, just not fast enough to keep up with inflation. The dramatic rise in real benefits in the late 1940s is likely the 8.3% increase in benefit levels that accompanied the implementation of the cost-of-living policy. The later years in this period, the 1950s and 1960s, illustrate how important this policy was to maintaining adequate benefit levels.

Figure 9. Average Family Benefit & Caseload, 1937-1964



The relationship between benefit levels and the number of families receiving assistance may be strong. When caseloads rise, benefit levels often fall to make up for the increased cost. As Figure 9 shows, though, in most of this period, both caseloads and benefit levels were rising. Caseloads rose at the end of the Great Depression, fell dramatically throughout World War II, and started rising again immediately after the war ended. They were mostly stable through the 1950s but began skyrocketing in the 1960s. Benefit levels rose steadily in this period, in a way that does not seem connected to caseloads. In an ideal world, benefit levels would correlate to what recipients actually need to survive, and that seems to be what is happening in this period.

Despite the efforts of the state Department of Public Welfare, there is some evidence that benefit levels were not high enough to meet need. A bill in the 1941 legislature would have established a commission “to investigate standards and conditions of welfare recipients and the amounts paid to them by cities and towns” (Buckley 1941). The person who wrote the bill, who is not a legislator, blamed increased prices, stating that welfare recipients are “existing on budgets and rates set many years ago before the current rise in living costs” (Buckley 1941). In 1949 another bill from someone who was not a legislator called for a temporary 20% cost-of-living increase for OAA and ADC recipients (Hanlon 1949). A similar bill was proposed in the 1950 legislature. It would provide a 20% increase in ADC benefits for children less than seven years of age (Lynch 1950). Another bill in the 1950 legislature stated that no public assistance recipient should receive less than the established budgetary standards for OAA recipients. Two bills in the 1958 legislature appear to be attempting to increase benefit levels for ADC. One would make any increase in federal government grants for ADC, OAA and DA apply only to assistance payments (not to administration), and the other would increase ADC assistance payments by \$5 per month (Desmond and Feeney 1958; Pope 1958). (The same legislator proposed a \$5 per month increase for DA in a separate bill.) In 1963 a legislator introduces a bill that would increase payments for OAA, ADC and DA by \$10 per month (Iannello 1963). None of these bills make it out of committee. In addition to proposed legislation, a 1964 newspaper article indicates that one advocate for welfare recipients thought benefit levels for ADC were too low (Negri 1964). Rev. Joseph T. Alves, D.S.W., a Catholic priest who was director of the Family Counseling and

Guidance Centers, outlined a number of problems with the welfare system, including inadequate assistance payments. All of this indicates a long-standing belief that benefit levels are not high enough to meet the needs of public assistance recipients.

State Capacity in ADC, 1935-1964

This period begins with local welfare administrators trying to retain their power as the federal government starts to get involved with cash assistance to single mothers. Localities fought any advances in administration that may have decreased their power while, at the same time, trying to get the state to play a larger financial role. The two big battles, over merit-based local administration and state reimbursements to cities and towns, are not resolved until the late 1960s.

At the beginning of Aid to Dependent Children, Massachusetts had an elaborate bureaucracy governing cash assistance to single mothers. Both the local board of public welfare and the state Department of Public Welfare investigated applicants and determined benefit levels. State officials congratulated themselves on the improvements they had been able to make in local administration: “State supervision has brought about a decided improvement in the administration of all forms of public relief. Under the Mothers’ Aid Law adequate weekly cash allowances have taken the place of inadequate doles and restricted grocery orders...” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1937:12). They were also pleased that they had raised standards for personnel, stating that “the employment of trained visitors under Civil Service rules has become the rule” for local boards of public welfare (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1937:12). Thus, one of the

first changes in ADC is that the state no longer conducts its own investigation of applicants, relying instead on local boards of public welfare and their employees. By 1939 the state has focused entirely on supervising local administration.

It is important to understand what the administration of public assistance looked like at the beginning of ADC. Because Massachusetts' administration of public assistance was essentially grafted onto the structure of Elizabethan poor law, in which all aid is at the town or city level, local administration of public welfare varied widely across the state. A 1944 survey of local administration that the state Department of Public Welfare conducted found that 91 units were administered by elected officials without any staff, 32 units were administered by elected officials with paid staff, 202 were administered with Civil Service workers in one unit, 9 were administered with Bureau of Old Age Assistance members acting as workers, and 17 were part of welfare districts in which two or more towns banded together to employ one worker (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1944:15). Each city and town had its own board of public welfare, meaning there were 351 local boards that the state Department had to manage.

This hodge-podge of administration presented a number of problems to the state Department of Public Welfare, but the biggest problem had to do with merit-based administration. In 1939 the U.S. Congress passed a number of amendments to the Social Security Act, including a new rule requiring "the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis" for all the grants-in-aid programs that the 1935 Social Security Act created (United States Congress 1940). Local administration in Massachusetts contained many clear violations of this rule, such as having elected

officials manage public assistance. The 1939 amendments seem to assume a centralized program that originated at the state level. In contrast, in Massachusetts, the entire system was totally decentralized, and both state and local administrators believed strongly that local administration was best.

Starting in 1939 the state Department of Public Welfare tries to use any tools possible to get local administration aligned with federal requirements. They start working with the Civil Service Commission that year “to bring more uniformity in qualifications for like positions in public welfare work” in order to comply with the new requirements (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1940:5). In 1941 the Commissioner of Public Welfare, Arthur G. Rotch, writes to mayors of cities and chairmen of finance committees, asking them “to give careful consideration to their welfare budgets when increased appropriations are requested for administration” because more workers may be needed to meet established standards of administration (Rotch 1941d). Later that year, Rotch submits a bill to the legislature “establishing a merit system, substantially similar to the civil service system, for certain officers and employees of local boards of public welfare, to be administered by the department of civil service, and validating the action under the merit system installed and administered by the Department of Public Welfare at the instance of the Federal Social Security Board” (Rotch 1941a). It passes, but it is more of a workaround than an actual solution, as it does not change the administrative practices of any town or city.

In 1946 the federal government began paying a substantially larger share of total administrative costs for Old Age Assistance and Aid to Dependent Children as part of

another set of amendments to the Social Security Act. This prompted a new series of conversations between state and federal officials, with federal officials stating that “members of Boards of Public Welfare could not perform staff functions or participate in administrative duties” for OAA and ADC as a result of the merit-based standards for administration (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:5). Reconciling federal requirements with the longstanding state laws mandating local responsibility for welfare functions would mean some fundamental changes in state law. These changes were heavily opposed at the local level: “The towns look upon many of the Federal requirements as an unwarranted intrusion upon the concept of town government as established by the founding fathers” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:5). Indeed, “many communities would be willing to forego reimbursement for administration rather than employ Merit System personnel” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1950:11). Federal officials “could not be wholly reconciled to the Massachusetts’ system under which small-town Board members participate in the administration of assistance” and threatened withhold all federal funding (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:5). This set up quite the dilemma for the State Department of Public Welfare, as towns were unwilling to give up any part of their autonomy and the federal government seemed likely to cut off all federal funding.

This is how the State Department of Public Welfare described the problem (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1949:11, emphasis mine):

The most difficult problem of administration in Massachusetts centers around the small communities whose caseloads do not warrant the employment of full-time Civil Service personnel. Approximately a hundred of the towns have combined caseloads in all programs of 50 or less. Many communities have caseloads of 10

or less. For the most part, the members of the elected Board of Public Welfare or selectmen administer public welfare in these small towns. These officials usually carry on the work as a matter of expediency and purport to have little interest or knowledge of the details of the job. There is virtually no financial incentive as many of the small town officials receive no additional compensation for the work performed. Case records in many of these communities are wholly inadequate. The home visitations which are required by statute rarely occur. While there is little evidence that money is wasted in the administration of public assistance in these small towns, it can be fully demonstrated that the programs are inefficiently and improperly administered. **Recipients frequently do not receive the full amount of assistance which the State law requires shall be given to them.** The helpful service and counsel which is available to recipients in larger communities with employed staff is rarely given. The problem cannot be completely remedied except through legislation.

There were a couple of attempts to solve this conundrum. The 1947 Legislature approved a resolution creating a special commission to study laws related to public welfare, and the third report from this commission focused on aligning Massachusetts with federal rules on merit-based administration. The commission noted that “more than 110 cities and towns” were not meeting these requirements and that \$32 million in grants from the federal government might be withdrawn if the situation was not fixed (Massachusetts Recess Commission on Revision of Public Welfare Laws 1949:5). Much to the dismay of both the commission and the state Department of Public Welfare, the legislature did not pass the bill that the commission proposed. The commission filed the same legislation with one minor change in 1950, and this time the legislation was endorsed by the Massachusetts Association of Relief Officers, the Public Welfare Administrators Association, and the Western Massachusetts Public Welfare Association. It was the subject of much debate and many revisions, but it did finally pass. The revisions took the teeth out of the legislation, however, and problems remained.

While this legislative battle was going on, the state Department of Public Welfare

created “a comprehensive set of regulations and procedures known as ‘Standards for Administration’ which require local agencies to set up personnel practices, plans covering hours of work, sick leave and vacations” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1950:10). Finished in 1949, with the fate of the legislation unknown, this manual allowed the state Department to comply with most of the federal government’s requirements. Combined with the legislation passed in 1950, it was enough to keep the federal government satisfied that Massachusetts was operating a merit-based system for the administration of the grants-in-aid programs.

The other battle, over reimbursements to cities and towns for welfare expenditures, began with the advent of mothers’ aid. In mothers’ aid cities and towns were reimbursed by the state for one-third of the cost of assistance payments for recipients who had a settlement in the city or town and all of the cost of assistance payments for recipients who did not have a settlement in Massachusetts. Federal involvement would change the reimbursement formula, and it was an open question as to what would happen. In 1936 a recess commission established by the legislature made a number of recommendations to ensure that Massachusetts’ Aid to Dependent Children law conformed to federal requirements (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1937). One of these recommendations was that the breakdown of payments for ADC should be 3/9 federal government, 4/9 state government, and 2/9 local government. This recommendation was adopted, so the initial ADC formula was roughly 1/3 for each level of government, with state government shouldering a bit more of the burden and local government shouldering a bit less of it.

This solution kept the peace for about ten years. In 1946 James Michael Curley³¹, who was serving his fourth term as mayor of Boston, submitted a bill to the legislature on the reimbursement of cities and towns for ADC. The bill was changed into a resolve calling for an investigation into issues surrounding reimbursement and, ultimately, failed. Curley submitted another bill in 1949 that would provide “for the immediate disbursement to municipalities of money received by the commonwealth from the federal government as a grant for aid to dependent children” (Curley 1949). The Massachusetts Mayors’ Association and the mayor of Revere submitted a similar bill in the same year, and a third similar bill was introduced in the Senate (Corbett and O’Brien 1949; Massachusetts Mayors’ Association 1949). The Senate bill eventually passed. These bills are primarily about prompt payment; it seems that the state was taking a long time to disburse funds to reimburse localities.

Around the same time, 1948 to 1950, the Massachusetts Selectmen’s Association proposed three different bills. Selectmen were the individuals who ran town governments, so they represented the smallest, poorest, and least professionally managed local governments. The first bill they proposed would “restore the application of the settlement law to the granting of aid to dependent children” (Massachusetts Selectmen’s Association 1948c). With the change to ADC, settlement law no longer governed reimbursements. Essentially, this was intended to decrease the number of people on ADC as well as the amount of money local governments were paying for it. Reinstating the

³¹ Curley’s first term as mayor was 1914-1918, during the implementation of mothers’ aid, and he was a big supporter of the program. By 1946 he had also been a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Governor of Massachusetts, so he was a well-known figure.

settlement law also violated federal requirements, so it was not happening regardless of what the selectmen might have wanted. The second bill they proposed would “limit contributions from earning children under the law relative to aid to dependent children to the amounts of such contributions required by the law relative to old age assistance” (Massachusetts Selectmen’s Association 1948a). According to the 1942 manual, wage-earning children are treated the same in OAA and ADC, so the effect of this bill is unclear. The third would prohibit “increases in allowances for aid to dependent children and old age assistance out of municipal funds after municipal appropriations have been made for the year during which such increases are required” (Massachusetts Selectmen’s Association 1948b). The third bill, which seemed to be aimed at localities being able to better control welfare spending, did not get out of committee. The first two bills died in Ways and Means in 1948 and were reintroduced in 1949 and 1950 to no avail. The major thrust of what town government officials seem to want with regard to ADC is to spend less.

There is another 10-year period in which cities and towns seem satisfied with state reimbursement. That changes in 1958. Each year from 1958 until the end of this period in 1964 there are multiple bills attempting to increase state reimbursement for public assistance. Other data sources for this period are limited, so I am unable to determine what sparked this renewed interest in the reimbursement issue. The bills differ in their details—for example, some are focused on administrative expenses—but they all call for the state government to play a larger financial role.

By 1961 legislators begin examining the possibility of having the state take over

all financing and administration for public assistance. An order instructing the Legislative Research Council (LRC) to review bills related to state reimbursement to cities and towns for ADC is introduced and adopted in that year. The LRC submits a report to the legislature in 1962, noting that 1960 legislation establishing medical assistance to the aged required the state to pay part of the administrative costs for ADC and OAA (Legislative Research Council 1962). Because the order asks the LRC to examine legislation that was proposed 1961, it is not a very comprehensive report. In 1964 a bill calling for a special commission to examine the feasibility of transferring administration of all welfare programs to the state is proposed. It is not adopted, but it does indicate that there is a desire on the part of some legislators to have the state take over the welfare system.

At the same time that local governments are trying to decrease the amount of money they pay for welfare and the state government is trying to gain more power, the federal government is increasing the share of assistance payments it covers. The Social Security Act is amended a number of times between 1935 and 1964, and many of those amendments change the federal reimbursement formula. The clear trend is toward the federal government reimbursing a larger and larger portion of all expenses related to ADC and the other grant-in-aid programs. Toward the end of the period, in 1963, the breakdown in Boston is 46 percent federal, 33 1/3 percent state, and about 20 percent city (Boston Globe 1963).

Race and Immigration in ADC, 1935-1964

Race is essentially absent from Aid to Dependent Children in this period. None of the state Department of Public Welfare's annual reports mention race at all, for example. Because it is so difficult to discern what is and is not related to race, I have chosen to discuss all the restrictive legislation that was proposed in this period in this section. It is possible that race had everything to do with this restrictive legislation, but it is equally possible that the restrictive legislation had nothing to do with race. In addition, I also discuss more national-level trends that may provide some insight into what was going on with race and ADC in Massachusetts.

It is striking that no restrictive legislation appears until 1952. This means the first 15 or more years after the inception of Aid to Dependent Children contained no legislative efforts to scale back the program. Interestingly, 1951 is the year that the only restrictive legislation for Old Age Assistance appears. In discussing that development—a lien law—the state Department of Public Welfare calls it “a radical departure in Massachusetts indicative of the countrywide concern about the rising cost of public assistance” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1952:3).

The restrictive 1952 bill was broad (Massachusetts Taxpayers Association 1952). Proposed by the Massachusetts Federation of Taxpayers in the Senate, It would have made the names of recipients as well as the type and amount of aid received open to public inspection (but not able to be published). The House version walked this back a fair bit, limiting it to city and town officials with some responsibility for public assistance (but not specifically limiting it to the local boards of public welfare). It passed both

houses, but, in an extraordinary move, Democratic governor Paul A. Dever vetoed the bill. This is part of the letter attached to his veto (Dever 1952):

The present law has removed the abuses which obtained before its enactment. At that time relief recipients' names were published in town reports. Then the chief administrative control on Welfare expenditures consisted of making relief so shameful that many preferred hunger and cold to accepting it.

During the past twenty years our Commonwealth, with increasing help from the Federal Government, has been able to develop a comprehensive public assistance program in which every citizen of Massachusetts should take pride. Adequate monthly payments are provided to those groups who are obviously dependent—the blind, the aged, the disabled, and most important of all, the children deprived of normal parental support conditions because of the death, illness, or continued absence from home of the family breadwinner. This bill is symptomatic of an unremitting effort of the part of certain interests to repeal the social gains of the last twenty years.

'Let's shame them off the rolls', 'We can save millions by this bill', are the clarion cries of certain interests who apparently would be willing to bring back the alms house and pauper system. By re-enacting the poor laws of Elizabethan England they would be willing in the name of economy and efficiency to jettison those legal safeguards which assure some measure of security with dignity to our less fortunate brothers who receive public assistance....

We already have adequate administration of our public assistance program in Massachusetts. Every community of the Commonwealth, in addition to its paid Public Welfare workers, has a Board of Public Welfare of three or five members, elected in the towns and appointed by the Mayor, or the Council, or the Manager in the cities. These boards are the overseers of public assistance programs. They are in a position to assure the public that the programs are properly administered.

If the proposed law were as harmless as some of its adherents contend, then it would be meaningless and should not be enacted. Since I am convinced that it is dangerous and represents a malicious threat to all of the worthy achievements in the field of social legislation of the past two decades, I must withhold my approval.

Despite all of the drama associated with this bill in 1952, a version of it passed the legislature in 1953, and Dever's successor, Republican Christian A. Herter, signed it into law.

A number of other pieces of restrictive legislation were proposed in the 1950s and 1960s, although none of them were adopted. In 1953 the mayor and city council of Springfield submitted a bill to make the relatives of people on public assistance repay the state. In 1956 a legislator introduced a bill that would send rent payments for ADC families straight to the landlord, presumably because ADC recipients could not be trusted to manage their money wisely. In 1960 and 1961 the Massachusetts Federation of Taxpayers proposed requiring ADC (and only ADC) recipients to pay back the money they received.

There was also an effort to increase residency restrictions, even though doing so violated federal requirements. In 1958 a legislator proposed limiting assistance to people who lived in Massachusetts for at least five continuous years or were born there. The same bill was introduced in 1959, and it was changed to a “resolve authorizing the Department of Public Welfare to make an investigation and study relative to eligibility of applicants for welfare assistance and aid to dependent children” (House Ways and Means Committee 1959). The Department of Public Welfare reported to the 1960 legislature that instituting a five-year residency requirement would mean giving up federal reimbursement (Department of Public Welfare 1960):

In the fiscal year 1958, the Federal share of expenditures on this program exceeded \$11,100,000. Obviously, we are not prepared to forego the Federal grant-in-aid for this program based on the allegation that persons come to Massachusetts for the sole purpose of availing themselves of the relief benefits in the Commonwealth which are in fact available in every State of the Union. There has been no substantiation of the concept that persons in receipt of assistance in other States come to Massachusetts for the sole purpose of establishing eligibility or are sent here by other States for that same purpose.

Even with this clear explanation of why a five-year residency requirement was unnecessary and counterproductive, legislators introduced the same bill in the 1960 and 1961 legislatures. Needless to say, those bills did not make it out of committee.

The legislature was also influenced by a welfare crisis outside Massachusetts. In 1961 the city manager of Newburgh, New York, a town with less than 35,000 residents, introduced a “thirteen-point program” to cut welfare rolls (Ritz 1966). The program, and the attention-seeking city manager behind it, Joseph Mitchell, made national headlines, and many state and municipal governments intended to copy it. The manager of Mansfield, Massachusetts stated he wanted to implement the program, and a candidate for mayor in Springfield, Massachusetts “flew in a private plane to Newburgh in order to converse with Mitchell about the thirteen points” (Ritz 1966:86). State officials in New York vigorously opposed the thirteen-point program, as virtually every point violated state or federal rules and regulations. The program’s implementation was stopped by a court injunction, so the vaunted thirteen-point program was never put into operation. Mitchell became a hero to right-wing groups like Young Americans for Freedom and the John Birch Society (Ritz 1966).

Despite all this controversy, two years later, a state legislator named Theodore J. Vaites proposed a bill that is an almost exact copy of the thirteen-point program (Vaites 1963). House Bill No. 2116, reproduced below, is by far the most restrictive legislation seen in this period. I have underlined some of the more interesting or restrictive aspects of the bill:

Notwithstanding any provisions of general or special law to the contrary, all public welfare agencies of the commonwealth or of a city or town shall issue to

recipients of public assistance in voucher form all cash payments which can be converted to food, clothing, and rent vouchers and the like without basic harm to the intent of the aid; shall assign to the proper authorities for work assignment on a forty hour week all able bodied adult males on relief of any kind who are capable of working; shall deny relief to all mothers of illegitimate children who have more children out of wedlock and shall so advise all mothers of illegitimate children; shall deny relief to all recipients physically capable of and available for employment who are offered a job but refuse it, regardless of the type of employment involved; shall deny relief to all applicants for relief who have left a job voluntarily, that is who have not been fired or laid off; shall not make any allotment to any one family unit which shall exceed the take home pay of the lowest paid employee with a family of comparable size of a city town where the family unit resides and shall deny relief to any family whose income is in excess of the latter figure; shall cause all files of all aid to dependent children cases to be brought to the city council or board of selectmen for review monthly and shall refer all new cases of any kind to the city council or board of selectmen prior to certification of payment; shall limit to two weeks of relief all applicants for relief who are new to any city or town and who show evidence that their plans in coming to the city or town involved a concrete offer of employment, similar to that required of foreign immigrants and shall limit to one week of relief all such applicants who cannot show evidence of such concrete offer of employment; shall limit to three months in any one year aid to persons except the aged, blind and disabled; shall cause all recipients who are not disabled, blind or otherwise incapacitated to report monthly for a conference regarding the status of their case; shall not exceed the budget for the fiscal year approved by the city council or board of selectmen by supplemental appropriation; shall establish a monthly expenditure limit at the time of presenting this budget and shall take into account seasonal variations; and shall, prior to certifying or continuing any more aid to dependent children cases, cause a determination to be made as to the home environment and if the determination proves the home environment is not satisfactory, shall place the children in foster care in lieu of welfare aid to the family adults.

Obviously, Vaitses' bill and the thirteen-point program do not explicitly mention race. Race was very much part of the story in Newburgh, however, and it is reasonable to believe that it may have been part of the story in Massachusetts as well. It is clear that Mitchell and many of his supporters blamed African-Americans who migrated from the South for the increased welfare costs that supposedly prompted the thirteen-point program (Ritz 1966). In Massachusetts, the 1963 bill comes at a time when the

disproportionate number of black recipients was starting to be known. Later that year, an article in the *Boston Globe* about new welfare laws discusses who exactly is on welfare, using Dr. Daniel I. Cronin, deputy director of the Boston Public Welfare Department, as its source: “**Cronin said Negroes, who were 9.1 percent of the population in the 1960 Boston census, represent 42.5 percent of the families on A.D.C., due to chronic unemployment and lack of opportunities**” (Boston Globe 1963, emphasis in original).

Similarly, in 1964, newspaper data indicates increased attention to ADC but with no explicit mention of race. For example, Rev. Joseph T. Alves, the Catholic priest who was also director of the Family Counseling and Guidance Centers, heavily criticized practices such as “midnight raids” where police and social workers invade welfare recipients’ homes in the middle of the night to see if any men are spending the night (Negri 1964). The idea is that these men should be paying to support the children, even if they are not the fathers of the children. As other scholars have noted, this was a very racialized practice used to cut African-American ADC recipients from the rolls (Bell 1965). Another example is Suffolk Probate Court Justice Robert Gardiner Wilson, Jr., who advocated for greater measures to prevent welfare fraud (Boston Herald Traveler 1964). There was no specific mention of race in Judge Gardiner’s critique, but welfare recipients are sometimes thought to be fraudulent merely because they are not seen as being worthy of assistance (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001).

At the national level, a number of factors contributed to the absence of race in welfare-related discourse in this period (Mittelstadt 2005). The 1939 amendments to the Social Security Act expanded coverage beyond retirement benefits to workers. These

amendments allowed spouses and children of retired workers receive benefits and provided survivors' benefits to spouses and children of workers who died prematurely. In practice this moved all of the widows from ADC to Social Security and fundamentally changed the composition of the caseload. Twenty percent of children on ADC in 1941-42 had widowed mothers, in contrast to eighty percent of children in the mothers' aid era (Mittelstadt 2005:44). Furthermore, children were increasingly likely to have mothers who had never been married, or who were divorced, separated, or deserted. Because the more advantaged white women left for Social Security and the federal program emphasized non-discrimination, African-American and other minority women both had increased access to cash assistance and comprised a larger percentage of the caseload.

This change in the composition of the caseload presented a challenge to welfare advocates like the American Public Welfare Association (Mittelstadt 2005). They knew that programs primarily assisting low-income, unmarried, minority mothers and their children were unlikely to be popular. The solution that welfare advocates came up with was to ignore race, emphasize family, and focus on rehabilitation (Mittelstadt 2005). By focusing on rehabilitation, welfare advocates could justify more generous benefit levels as well as increasing spending on ancillary services such as counseling and job training. In the 1950s, with the prominence of Freudian psychology and its individualized therapeutic solutions, this seemed like the best way to help women get off the welfare rolls. Emphasizing family went along with the rehabilitation strategy and was a way to distract attention from the fact that white families formed a shrinking percentage of the

caseload. The emphasis on family was even behind the program's name change in 1962 to Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Part of ignoring race was omitting it from all documents and research. According to Mittelstadt (2005:79), "welfare organizations accepted what one observer termed 'an unofficial ban on racial identifying statistics.' HEW [the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare] followed this 'unwritten law,' discouraging the use of racial statistics in welfare surveys, research, and reports. Furthermore, most research and demonstration projects on welfare in the late 1950s did not keep track of the differential patterns or experiences of African Americans on welfare." If no one ever mentioned race, perhaps the public would not notice that African-Americans and other minorities constituted a disproportionate number of welfare recipients. This was a strategy endorsed by welfare advocates as well as civil rights activists like Whitney Young, the head of the National Urban League. Both groups thought ignoring race would "decrease controversy and hostility" (Mittelstadt 2005:85). In a 1962 letter Young says that he favored the unofficial ban on racial statistics for many years "for the obvious reason that these facts were used to our disadvantage" (Young quoted in Mittelstadt 2005:85).

These national-level trends shed some light on the absence of race in the official statements and documentation from the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare. No one from the state Department mentions race at all from 1935 to 1964. The one public welfare official who does mention race is a local official, and he does so in 1963, almost at the end of this period. This seems to be a result of following the best practices of officials at the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare and staff of national

organizations like the American Public Welfare Association. Despite all of the efforts to keep race out of the welfare conversation, restrictive welfare legislation still emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, and some of it was implemented. State officials could not ignore the connection between race and welfare forever.

Alternative Hypotheses, 1935-1964

While there is a total lack of evidence for business interests being concerned about Aid to Dependent Children, one can find evidence that might support the idea that social movements played a role or that political processes might be important.

With regard to social movements, there were no organizations of welfare recipients in this period. There were a few other types of social movement organizations that were important, however: groups that advocated for the elderly, taxpayer associations, and associations representing social workers. These are the main groups who attended public hearings in 1947 on revising laws related to public welfare. The report from the commission on revising public welfare laws lists “The Massachusetts Federation of Taxpayers Association, schools of social work, Massachusetts Old Age Pension Society, Massachusetts Civil League, etc.” as attendees (Special Commission to Study and Revise the Laws Relating to Public Welfare 1947). One meeting seems to have been specifically for “representatives of Massachusetts Public Assistance Administrators Association” (Special Commission to Study and Revise the Laws Relating to Public Welfare 1947).

Groups that advocated for the elderly clearly had some power. For example, the state Department of Public Welfare attempted to institute prorating of common household expenses for OAA recipients who lived with adult children in 1947, arguing that paying “the full cost of rent, fuel and light, while any number of employed, self-supporting, single children may be living in the home without making any contribution towards meeting the cost of common household expenses” was “not a very realistic approach” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1948:8). Because prorating meant a decrease in benefit levels for OAA recipients, “groups representing the aged brought considerable pressure upon various agencies of government. In October, less than three months after the release of the standards, the Attorney General had ruled that the Department had no authority to establish prorating of common household expenses between applicants and recipients of Old Age Assistance and self-supporting, single children” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1948:8).

The main way that advocacy groups for the elderly would have affected ADC is through a coattail effect. ADC and OAA were the two main programs for which Massachusetts received federal assistance in this period, and it would have made sense to welfare administrators (and possibly to legislators as well) to treat them as similarly as possible. This could explain the two big policy and statutory shifts in this period. The Legislature began requiring the state Department to approve local budgetary standards for OAA in 1943 and then did the same for ADC in 1946. In 1948 the Legislature tied benefit levels for OAA to cost-of-living measurements, and the state Department of Public Welfare chose to mandate that ADC benefit levels also be tied to cost-of-living

measurements. No one advocating for the elderly intended to help children or ADC recipients, but that may have been one of the consequences.

The Massachusetts Federation of Taxpayers Associations starts proposing legislation to restrict Aid to Dependent Children and other public assistance programs in 1952. In the available evidence it is the only organization advocating for more stringent regulations and lower benefit levels in this period, although individual legislators, who may or may not have been affiliated with taxpayer associations, also attempt to institute more stringent regulations. Clearly, the taxpayer associations were not a force behind steadily rising benefit levels.

Associations of employees who worked in public assistance do not seem to have been concerned with benefit levels per se. Their main concerns seemed to center on the conditions of their own employment, opportunities for promotion, and the size of their workloads. While the evidence indicates that professional social workers were generally sympathetic to ADC recipients, they did not use their lobbying power to increase benefit levels.

In the political processes argument, elected officials are important. They choose to increase the generosity of assistance programs in order to garner more votes. While legislators did institute one important change to ADC benefit levels—requiring localities to either use state budgetary standards or get their own standards approved by the state Department—they were generally not involved in raising or lowering benefit levels for ADC. Individual legislators did introduce bills that would affect benefit levels, but these bills almost uniformly did not make it out of committee. As Amenta might predict, the

legislature was more involved with benefit levels for OAA, perhaps because the elderly were a more organized constituency who may have voted their interests. With the absence of any political gain associated with supporting higher benefit levels for ADC recipients, elected officials largely ignored benefit levels for the program.

The evidence suggests, then, that social movements and political processes affected ADC benefit levels almost by accident. The actual goal of social movement actors seems to have been helping OAA recipients, not ADC recipients, and OAA recipients were the true beneficiary of political processes. Additionally, it is difficult to argue that legislators or social movement actors were more important than state bureaucrats in raising benefit levels. While legislators did institute the 1946 statutory change, it was likely at the behest of officials at the Department of Public Welfare, and the cost-of-living increase, which was the primary force behind rising benefit levels in this period, was a policy change that was entirely under state bureaucrats' control.

Conclusion

Despite all the rhetoric in the mid-1930s about how easily Massachusetts shifted from mothers' aid to Aid to Dependent Children, this period saw substantial change in how Massachusetts provided cash assistance to single mothers. The state assumed more power in deciding benefit levels, mostly due to the efforts of state bureaucrats in the Department of Public Welfare and to federal requirements. Greater power for the state translated into higher, more standardized benefit levels for recipients. The absence of

discourse about the racial and ethnic composition of Massachusetts' welfare caseload likely also contributed to the steadily rising benefit levels in this period.

**GENEROSITY IN AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN,
1965-1974**

This ten-year period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s was a time of extraordinary transition for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), both nationally and in Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, the state finally relieved cities and towns of their responsibility for administering welfare programs. This came at the same time that the caseload was increasing rapidly, and state legislators were not interested in expanding the welfare budget further. The result was diminished state capacity, as caseworkers and front-line staff were not able to adequately serve all recipients. The racial composition of the AFDC caseload was also a factor. While African-Americans were never close to a majority of the caseload in Massachusetts, African-American recipients in Boston were the public face of the welfare rights movement, and this influenced public opinion on AFDC. As soon as welfare rights activists began protesting, and the fact that some of the people receiving assistance were black or Puerto Rican became well known, state legislators became concerned about welfare fraud and about the number of people receiving assistance who were not native to Massachusetts. Both of these trends in state capacity and the racial and ethnic composition of the AFDC caseload affected benefit levels. After continuing to rise through 1970 due to cost-of-living increases and errors in estimation surrounding the implementation of a simplified grant calculation system, benefit levels began to decline in real terms for the first time since the program was federalized in 1935.

Benefit Levels in AFDC, 1965-1974

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of turbulence in welfare, and benefit levels in Massachusetts were no exception. The emphasis on simplifying the process of determining recipients' payments continued. The dramatic caseload increases that began in the early 1960s persisted. This, along with the welfare rights movement, meant that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) faced increased scrutiny, including press attention to benefit levels. This increased scrutiny is partially responsible for the main innovation in benefit levels in this period, the flat grant. Additionally, this period sees the beginning of the end for the mechanism that kept benefit levels generous in the previous period, cost-of-living increases.

Figure 10 shows the trend in nominal and real benefit levels in this period. There is a significant change in pattern in this period. The late 1960s continue the pattern established in the previous chapter, where there is a tight coupling in the trends in nominal and real benefit levels. This pattern, which started in the early 1950s, ends abruptly in 1970. In nominal terms assistance payments were essentially flat from 1970-1974. In real terms the 1970-1974 period contained a substantial decline in benefit levels. This is the first substantial decline in real benefit levels since the program was federalized in 1935, and benefit levels in Massachusetts never fully recovered. Consequently, the real benefit level in 1970, \$1,455.31 in 2010\$, is the highest for the entire history of cash assistance to single mothers in Massachusetts.

Figure 10. Average Family Benefit in Nominal & Real Dollars, 1965-1974

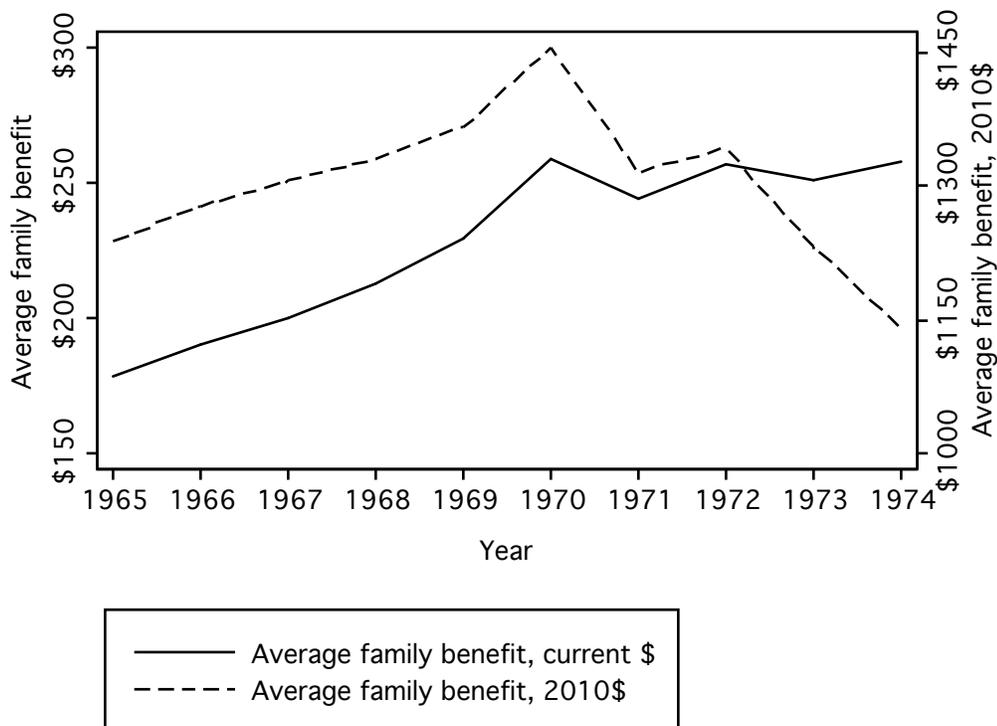
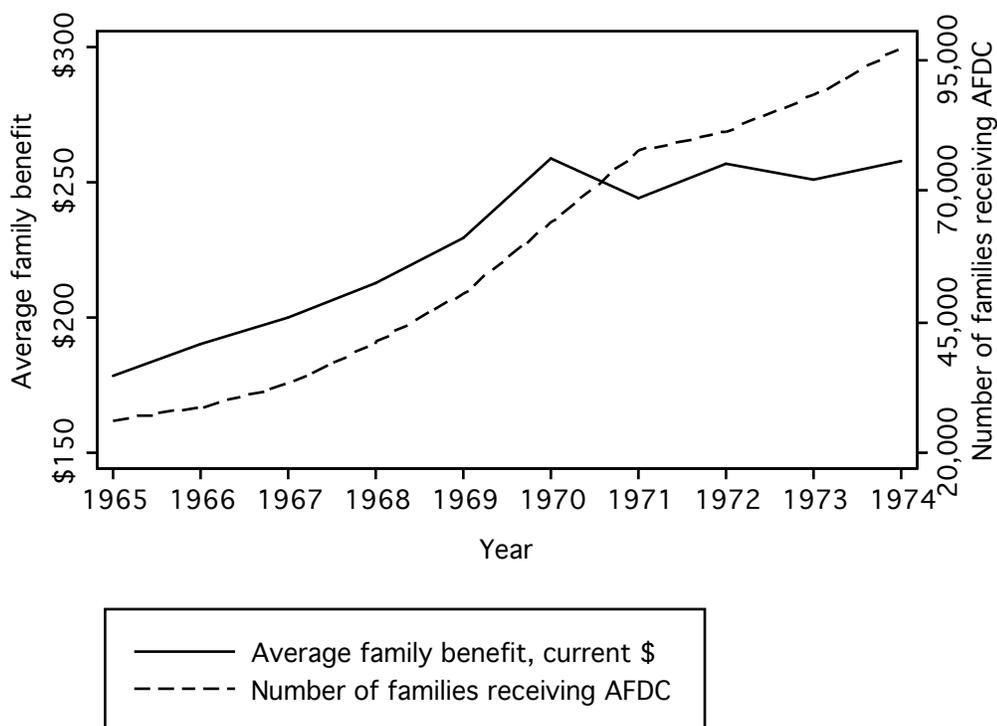


Figure 11 shows the trend in nominal benefit levels compared to the trend in caseloads. Fitting the caseload trend on the graph requires one to obscure just how dramatic the caseload increases in this period are. For reference, when the caseload increase begins in 1960, there are 14,418 cases. By 1965, when the period this chapter covers begins, there are 26,279 cases, an 82% increase in five years. By 1970 there are 63,800 cases, constituting a 343% increase over the 1960 caseload and a 143% increase over the 1965 caseload. The number of people receiving assistance keeps rising, such that by 1974 there are 97,118 cases. That means that caseloads more than tripled in the 10-

year period this chapter covers. This dynamic of rapidly increasing caseloads is in the background of many discussions about benefit levels.

Figure 11. Average Family Benefit & Caseload, 1965-1974



The other trend to note is that caseloads rise even when nominal benefit levels flatten and real benefit levels fall. If there is a causal relationship between caseloads and benefit levels, it is likely that caseloads are the cause. As other evidence that will be discussed later shows, the flattening of benefit levels may be a result of the enormous increase in the number of people receiving assistance. Welfare officials could not control the number of people that were eligible for AFDC, but they could control how much help AFDC recipients obtained.

What is behind these trends? A big part of that answer has to do with debate surrounding cost-of-living increases and the general idea of ensuring that benefit levels are generous enough to cover what it costs to live in Massachusetts.

As the previous chapter stated, the last time that the Department issued updated standards of assistance, which outlined what items the Department covered in its budget and how much it allocated for these items, was 1947. From 1947 to 1966 the Department simply increased the budget by periodically adjusting for inflation. By 1965, when the cost-of-living adjustment reached 36%, it was clear that the state standard budget needed to be adjusted (National Study Service 1965:9). A 1965 report provided the examples of frozen food and natural gas for heating as evidence the way that people live had changed since 1947 (National Study Service 1965:9). The report also argued that the amounts budgeted for rent, fuel, and utilities were far too low, and recipients were taking money from other parts of the budget to pay for these items (National Study Service 1965:10).

In 1966, as a result of this report and other factors, the Department of Public Welfare chose to update its standards of assistance. In February 1966 the Department issued an administrative memo: “For several years, the Department, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and Boards of Public Welfare have been desirous of simplifying the Standards of Assistance in all public assistance categories... The Department is currently reviewing the AFDC Standards to determine how these can also be simplified” (State Department of Public Welfare 1966a). In September 1966 the Department announced that it had “revised the Standards of Assistance in accordance with many and various statutory requirements that the Department maintain, review and

revise and provide to local Boards 'Standards of Assistance' and to approve any standards used by local Boards or in lieu thereof to apply those formulated and promulgated by the Department (Ott 1966). The "simplified budgeting procedure for AFDC" embodied in the new Standards of Assistance was "in conformity with Federal requirements for simplified procedures" and had been "tested by the field staff of the Department in various Boards of Public Welfare throughout the Commonwealth" (State Department of Public Welfare 1966b).

The new standards of assistance provided a much easier process for social workers. They started with determining the number of persons participating in the grant, how household expenses were shared or not (and if they were shared with another welfare recipient), and whether the recipient lived in public or private housing. Between one table for private housing and three tables for public housing, the social worker could locate a starting number for the assistance grant. Then extra money was added if the grant was intended to include more than one adult, children age 7-12, children age 13-20, and any other needs the recipients had, which included utilities if they were not covered in rent. These calculations established total need. Income determination was a complicated procedure in its own way; there was an entire section of the manual devoted to how to count various types of income. Total need minus total income determined the grant amount.

The new procedure represented a substantial change from the one that had been in place since the 1940s. Rather than totaling the costs of several categories of necessities, many of which varied according to the composition of the family, the social worker using

the new standards of assistances started with a number that was then adjusted for a few common variations. The categories of assistance—food, rent, fuel and utilities, household supplies and replacements, clothing, and personal care—were quite similar across the 1940s and 1960s standards, however. The innovation was all in saving time and effort for the caseworker, not in what counted as necessities.

It is important to note how this innovation affected benefit levels. Recipients could no longer point to the rent category and say that their rent exceeded the allowed levels or simply have their actual rent computed in their assistance grant. By simplifying procedures for calculating grants, the actual cost of the components of the grant was obscured. All recipients could say is that they were unable to make ends meet on the grant. To prove their case they would need to detail their entire budgets, not just one category like rent. Ultimately, this obfuscation aided the decoupling of benefit levels from the actual cost of living.

At the same time, it was getting easier to assess the actual cost of living. In 1967 the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) completed a study using a hypothetical city worker and his family of four to evaluate how the cost of living varied around the country. This study found that Boston was the third most-expensive region in the country, after Honolulu and New York, and that the family would need \$10,141 a year to live “at a modest standard” (Turner 1969). Another 1967 BLS study established family budgets for three different living standards—low, moderate, and high—for 39 metropolitan areas (Morris, McManus, and Healey 1969). That study found that total family consumption, which included necessities as well as a few other items such as reading materials,

recreation, educational supplies, alcohol and tobacco, and miscellaneous expenses, was \$5,103 for the lower standard of living, \$7,900 for the moderate standard of living, and \$11,061 for the high standard of living. Using these two studies and several other documents, the Department of Public Welfare created a budget for a family intended to be comparable to an AFDC family (Morris, McManus, and Healey 1969). This hypothetical family, which includes an unemployed father, a mother under 35, a 13-year-old boy, and an 8-year-old girl, requires \$4,613 to make ends meet (that figure is lowered to \$4,354 when the more optional consumption categories such as reading materials are removed). In contrast, AFDC would give this family \$3,463, which is 25% less than the BLS methodology indicates they need (20% lower when the more optional consumption categories are removed).

This is how the Department of Public Welfare explained the differences between these two budgets (Morris, McManus, and Healey 1969:58):

There are two reasons for the discrepancy between the two budgets. One is the fact that the Bureau of Labor Statistics budget includes components not provided for in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children standards, and, secondly, that where the components are the same, the amounts allowed in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children budget are often less than those in the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggested budget. Covered in the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggested budget, but not included in the regular Aid to Families with Dependent Children grant, are allowances for transportation, recreation, educational supplies, household furnishings and reading materials.

There are a number of implications of this study. Even near the apex of AFDC benefits (at least in real terms), the level of assistance that Massachusetts, one of the most generous states in the country, provided was 20-25% below what welfare recipients actually needed to live. Recipients and advocates used this information to advocate for

higher benefits (e.g. Boston Herald Traveler 1970a), but it did not seem to persuade anyone. A common counterargument was that Massachusetts' AFDC payments could not be too low because they were so much higher than other states' AFDC payments. Perhaps as a result of this reaction, there were no other studies like it, at least that I was able to find, until 1980. There seemed to be little need to compare a scientific assessment of how much money it took to achieve a minimal standard of living with what Massachusetts paid AFDC recipients.

Although little attention was paid to how benefit levels stacked up against what recipients actually needed to live, most people recognized that benefit levels should be adjusted for inflation. From 1965 to 1970 cost-of-living increases proceeded just as they had since the early 1950s. Through 1967 the Division on the Necessaries of Life informed the Welfare Department whenever their cost of living index showed a 3% rise above the Welfare Department's current standard. The Welfare Department then raised benefit levels by the amount that the cost of living had changed. From 1968 to 1970 the Department monitored changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and changed benefit levels accordingly. This procedure resulted in increases in benefit levels in April 1966, September 1967, July 1968, March 1969, September 1969, and April 1970.

Starting in 1970 this process seems to have broken down for AFDC, primarily because the Department of Public Welfare was running out of money. In November 1970 Welfare Commissioner Steven Minter announced that even though prices had risen 3.1% he would be unable to grant cost-of-living increases due to insufficient funds (Irving 1971:97). By January 1971 the budget situation was so acute that Commissioner Steven

Minter said that he was unable to provide Old Age Assistance (OAA) recipients with cost-of-living increases that were mandated by state law (Liston 1971). To rectify this situation, Republican governor Francis Sargent submitted a deficiency appropriation bill that included funds to cover cost-of-living increases for all welfare recipients (that is, people receiving AFDC, OAA, Disability Assistance, and General Relief) in the last five months of fiscal 1971 (Lucas 1971b). The Massachusetts House cut Sargent's bill by \$84 million, eliminating the cost-of-living increases, on a 175-52 roll call vote (Lucas 1971a). The vote proceeded mostly on party lines in the heavily Democratic House, with all but the most liberal Democrats in support of cutting welfare. The Republican assistant minority leader spoke in favor of keeping the cost-of-living increases, noting that Massachusetts had been giving them since 1947. Newspaper data does not indicate the final status of the legislation, but it is clear that welfare recipients did not receive a cost-of-living increase as a result.

More liberal legislators did attempt to give welfare recipients a cost-of-living raise in 1970 and 1971.³² In 1970 Democratic Rep. David Liederman, a former social worker and one of the strongest advocates for welfare recipients in the Legislature, introduced a bill written by someone else that would tie benefit levels to "the amount determined by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics to be the minimum adequate income for a basic standard of living in the Boston urban area" (Faden 1970). Two African-American Democratic representatives from Roxbury, a predominantly black

³² From 1965 to 1969 there were no bills related to cost-of-living increases in the Legislature, and the Department of Public Welfare could usually count on deficiency appropriations if it went over its budget.

neighborhood where many welfare recipients lived, introduced the same bill again in 1971. In both years the bill was never seriously considered.

Later in 1971 Governor Sargent appears to have given up on cost-of-living increases for AFDC recipients. In a speech in June 1971, Dr. David M. Austin, the chair of the Department of Public Welfare's State Advisory Board stated that Gov. Sargent told the board that granting a cost-of-living increase to AFDC recipients was not "politically feasible" (Longcope 1971e). Dr. Austin, an associate professor at Brandeis University's Florence Heller Graduate School of Social Work, criticized this move, noting that Old Age Assistance (OAA) recipients were to receive an 11% cost-of-living increase starting July 1. By August 1971 the Department was publicly stating that all the cuts to the welfare department budget the Massachusetts House and Senate were making would mean either restricting eligibility or reducing benefit levels for welfare recipients (Longcope 1971d). Despite continuing to reduce the Welfare Department's budget, legislators seemed to resist benefit cuts. Almost a year later the Senate Ways and Means Committee, which was dominated by Democrats, "recommended 3.1 percent cost of living increase for welfare recipients" at the same time that Democrats favored a spending freeze (Hartnett 1972).

In 1972 the State Advisory Board to the Department of Public Welfare began a campaign to get cost-of-living adjustments mandated by state law for AFDC, General Relief (GR), and Disability Assistance (DA). Each year the board had the opportunity to submit bills to the Massachusetts Legislature. In 1972 it submitted House Bill No. 172 (Department of Public Welfare 1972):

The department shall forthwith after this paragraph becomes effective, keep informed as to changes in the cost of living as shown by the monthly United States Consumer Price Index. If such monthly statistics show an overall increase or decrease in the cost of living of three per cent or more since June, 1971, the department shall immediately increase or decrease the total budget of each recipient by the same proportion to become effective on the first day of the month next following the end of thirty days from the date of said three per cent or more overall increase or decrease in the cost of living. After the first such change, the department shall secure such statistics every month and proceed in the manner aforesaid. Notwithstanding any provisions of this chapter to the contrary, the department of public welfare shall at all times provide adequate standards of assistance and shall, from time to time, increase the budgetary requirements to maintain such adequate standards.

In the same year Sen. Jack Backman, a liberal Democrat who chaired the Committee on Social Welfare, presented a very similar bill in the Senate. (It is likely he was working in concert with members of the State Advisory Board.) The Committee on Social Welfare reported both the House and Senate bills favorably and sent them to the respective House and Senate Ways and Means Committees, where both bills died.

In 1973 groups that advocated for the poor joined the fight for cost-of-living increases. The State Advisory Board introduced bills that were exactly the same as the ones introduced in 1972, and groups like United Community Services (which later became Boston's United Way affiliate) sponsored similar bills. The Committee on Social Welfare reported them as a slightly different bill, but this bill failed to go any further too. That was not the end of the story in 1973, however. A 3.84% cost-of-living increase for AFDC recipients was written into an appropriations bill (Secretary of the Commonwealth 1973). Effective September 1, 1973, this provision made the cost-of-living adjustment retroactive to January 1, 1973. This route may have been taken to satisfy the demand that AFDC recipients receive an increase in benefits to compensate for rampant inflation

while not going so far as to enshrine regular cost-of-living adjustments in state law. Regardless of the motivation behind the way the increase was done, it was not nearly enough to keep up with galloping inflation. According to a *Boston Globe* reporter, “the cost of eating alone has jumped nearly 30 percent since” 1970, when the last increase was instituted (Currier 1973).

The fight to mandate cost-of-living adjustments for AFDC recipients continued in 1974. Again the State Advisory Board submitted bills to the legislature that would require cost-of-living adjustments for AFDC and GR recipients.³³ The wording was different this year, though. Here is the relevant portion of House Bill No. 147 (State Advisory Board of the Department of Public Welfare 1974):

Effective July first of every year, the level of benefits under this chapter shall be increased or decreased by an amount equal to the percentage rise or decrease, respectively, in the United States Consumer Price Index for January first of that year over the level of said Index for January first of the previous year.

There are two substantial differences between this bill and the ones introduced in previous years. First, the older version requires a threshold of three percent before benefit levels are updated and calls for the Department of Public Welfare to check the CPI each month. The newer version seems easier to administer, as it calls for an annual evaluation of changes in the CPI. It also allows for smaller changes in inflation to affect benefit levels. Second, the newer version makes no mention of mandating adequate standards of assistance. This likely makes it more palatable to the legislature, as it seems likely that many members do not believe that welfare recipients deserve adequate assistance.

³³ By this time Disability Assistance recipients had been folded into the new federal Supplemental Security Income program.

In addition to the bills submitted by the State Advisory Board, a number of other bills were concerned with cost-of-living adjustments for AFDC and GR recipients. Some of these bills resembled the ones the State Advisory Board presented in 1972 and 1973, some resembled the version the State Advisory Board submitted in 1974, and others took a different tack. House Bill No. 2459, which was submitted by a cadre of liberal African-American and white legislators, would raise benefit levels until they are “equal to or consistent with the current annual budget at the intermediate level of living for a four-person family established by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the metropolitan Boston area” (Frank et al. 1974). As discussed earlier, the intermediate level of living was well above the amount that welfare recipients were receiving at that time. This bill also included language quite similar to House Bill No. 147, the State Advisory Board bill. The Committee on Social Welfare reported all of these cost-of-living bills in two bills, Senate No. 1678, which addressed GR and veterans’ benefits recipients, and Senate No. 1679, which addressed AFDC recipients. Senate No. 1679 included language on some other issues, but the relevant portion states (Committee on Social Welfare 1974):

Effective July 1, 1974 and every year thereafter the level of the basic assistance grant for each living arrangement in effect at such time shall be increased by a percentage amount equal to the percentage rise in the United States consumer price index for January first of that year over the level of said index for January first of the previous year plus such additional percentage amount as is recommended annually by the department and appropriated by the general court.³⁴ In determining said additional percentage amount, consideration shall be given to the goal of reaching, within a reasonable time, a total income level equal to or consistent with the current annual budget at the low level of living for a family of four established by the United States department of labor, bureau of labor

³⁴ The General Court is another name for the Massachusetts Legislature.

statistics, for the metropolitan Boston area. For the purpose of this paragraph, the level of the basic assistance grant shall include an amount equal to a pro-rated portion of any flat grant payment that is issued generally to recipients of aid under this chapter on a quarterly basis.

Any amount granted for extra allowances and recurring special needs shall also be increased by the same cost of living factor.

Senate No. 1679 is closest to House Bill No. 2459. The exact language in the bills differs, and Senate No. 1679 sets the low standard of living rather than the intermediate standard of living as the goal. Senate No. 1679, which seems to bear the imprint of the very liberal Social Welfare Committee chair Sen. Jack Backman, is far too generous to actually be passed by either the full House or the full Senate. Both Senate No. 1678 and Senate No. 1679 are reported out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee as Senate No. 1745. The Senate passed Senate No. 1745, and the bill went to the House, where an amendment affecting veterans' benefits was added before passage. The Senate concurred with the House amendment, so the bill went to Republican Gov. Francis Sargent, who signed it. The language in Senate No. 1745 is the same as the language in Chapter 623 of the 1974 Massachusetts Acts and Resolves (Secretary of the Commonwealth 1974):

Effective July first of every year, subject to appropriation, the department shall increase the total budget of each eligible recipient, before taking into consideration any available income and resources, by a percentage amount equal to the percentage rise in the United States Consumer Price Index for January first of that year over the level of said Index for January first of the previous year plus such additional percentage amount as is recommended annually by the department and appropriated by the General Court.

There are two things to note about the final language here. First, the Massachusetts Legislature explicitly chose to reject tying benefit levels to a measure of the actual cost of living. The reason for this is not difficult to discern: it would have

meant substantial increases in benefit levels at a time when the state was struggling to raise enough revenue to pay all its obligations. Furthermore, welfare recipients did not have a good public reputation at that time, and increased taxes to pay for more generous benefits to welfare recipients would have been extremely unpopular. Second, although this final language is quite similar to the first sentence of Senate No. 1679, there is a small but very significant change. The final language leaves the entire cost-of-living increase “subject to appropriation.” None of the other bills have this language in the part of the bill about the cost-of-living increase. In Senate No. 1679 the “subject to appropriation” phrase relates to the “additional percentage amount” that benefits would be increased, not the cost-of-living increase itself. While all the other options available made the cost-of-living increase mandatory, the bill that passed left it “subject to appropriation.” This had enormous consequences for the effectiveness of the legislation. In order to avoid paying a cost-of-living increase, all the legislature had to do was fail to appropriate funds for it.

With no reference to the Legislature’s actions and possibly through its own initiative, the Department of Public Welfare appears to have instituted a couple of cost-of-living increases in 1974. Administrative memos indicate that there was a 7% cost-of-living increase in April 1974 for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients, and the Department of Public Welfare intended to apply the same increase to AFDC and GR recipients starting June 1, 1974 (Minter 1974a). There was an additional 4% cost-of-living increase in July 1974 for Social Security and SSI recipients, and the Department again stated it would apply this increase to AFDC and GR recipients as well

(Minter 1974b). It is unclear if there was a new policy of applying Social Security cost-of-living increases to AFDC and GR—automatic cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security began in 1975—or if this was continuing the policy of updating AFDC when Old Age Assistance recipients received a cost-of-living increase.³⁵ The only other administrative memo related to cost-of-living adjustments for AFDC recipients from April 1970 to May 1974 discusses the 1973 cost-of-living increase that the Legislature mandated.

There was also attention to cost-of-living increases at the federal level. In 1966 the Advisory Council on Public Welfare, which was created by the 1962 Social Security Amendments, issued its federally mandated recommendations for improving public assistance programs, including requiring states to meet 100% of their need standards³⁶ and providing cost-of-living adjustments. In 1967 the Johnson administration submitted a bill containing amendments to the Social Security Act to the House of Representatives. The bill included a provision related to cost-of-living adjustments that may have been a result of the Advisory Council's report (quoted in Harlan 1970:410):

(14) provide (a), effective July 1, 1969, for meeting (in conjunction with other income that is not disregarded . . . under the plan and other resources) all the need, as determined in accordance with standards applicable under the plan for determining need, of individuals eligible to receive aid to families with dependent children (and such standards shall be no lower than the standards for determining need in effect on January 1, 1967), and (b), effective July 1, 1968, for an annual

³⁵ In 1974 Old Age Assistance recipients became part of the new Supplemental Security Income program.

³⁶ States were required to have a need standard that represented what recipients needed to survive, but they did not have to pay benefits equal to that standard. States' payment standards could be based on a percentage of their need standards or on maximums set by state legislatures.

review of such standards and (to the extent prescribed by the Secretary) for updating such standards to take into account changes in living costs.”

This is, in many ways, a radical departure from previous practice. Part (a) meant that states would have to provide 100% of their need standards, and they would not be allowed to lower their need standards below the amount of the need standard that was in effect at the beginning of 1967. (Less than half of the states at this time met 100% of their need standards.) Part (b) mandated raising the need standard annually to include cost-of-living increases. Both parts represented a rejection of absolute state control over benefit levels and gave the federal government more authority to set AFDC policy.

The House Ways and Means Committee was not ready for this level of federal control over benefit levels and removed that provision from the bill. Eventually, the bill passed the House and went to the Senate Finance Committee. The Finance Committee held hearings on the bill, and officials from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) advocated for reinstatement of the cost-of-living provision. John Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare argued forcefully for it (Gardner 1967:216):

The House bill does nothing to improve the level of State public assistance payments. As things stand today, the States are required to set assistance standards for needy persons in order to determine eligibility—but they need not make their assistance payments on the basis of these standards. The result is that welfare payments are much too low in a good many States. That is a widely accepted fact among all who are concerned with these programs; indeed it is probably the most widely agreed-upon fact among welfare experts today.

We strongly urge you to adopt the administration’s proposal requiring States to meet need in full as they determine it in their State assistance standards, and to update these standards periodically to keep pace with changes in the cost of living.

Only 20 States and the District of Columbia provide under the AFDC program the amount that their own standards indicate is needed. Of these 20 States, only 12 have updated their standards to reflect price levels as recent as 1966.

HEW submitted the same language that appeared in the original bill as a proposed amendment to the Senate's version of the bill. The Senate Finance Committee chose to adopt a watered-down version of the amendment in its version of the bill. This version would require states to adjust their need standards to meet the current cost of living and update the need standards annually to adjust for changes in the cost of living. The Senate passed a version of the bill that included this watered-down version. In conference this provision was watered down even further, as the annual cost-of-living updates were removed. The final version merely required one cost-of-living adjustment (quoted in Harlan 1970:412):

By July 1, 1969, the amounts used by the State to determine the needs of individuals will have been adjusted to reflect fully changes in living costs since such amounts were established, and any maximums that the State imposes on the amount of aid paid to families will have been proportionately adjusted.

As one might expect, there was some debate about what the cost-of-living provision required states to do (Rabin 1970). Did states have to update what they actually paid AFDC recipients, or did they merely have to adjust their need standards to accommodate changes in the cost of living? HEW issued regulations to states that conformed to the latter interpretation about six months before the July 1, 1969 deadline (and one year after the 1967 Social Security Amendments were passed). HEW officials and National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) leaders met often in the early years of the Nixon administration, and NWRO leaders pushed for strong enforcement of the cost-of-living provision. The NWRO did not agree with HEW's interpretation of the

provision but thought that some states might increase benefit levels as a result of being forced to increase their need standards (Rabin 1970). HEW took a lax approach to enforcement of the provision, however, resulting in 41 states not being in compliance at the end of July 1969. HEW seemed totally unwilling to exercise any power it had to enforce the cost-of-living provision. Even when it held hearings about noncompliance in two states, noncompliance with the cost-of-living provision was not on the table (Rabin 1970).

This meant that the courts would have to determine what the cost-of-living provision required states to do. While there were a handful of court cases based on this cost-of-living provision, the most important one was *Rosado v. Wyman*. In 1969 New York State attempted to change the method used to compute benefits, switching from providing 100% of its need standard to a flat grant system in which payments were based on the size of the family receiving benefits. Some recipients would experience a decrease in their assistance payments as a result of this change. Recipients argued that switching to a system of flat grants amounted to a reduction in New York's need standard, which they and the NWRO thought violated the cost-of-living provision. While a district court judge agreed with the NWRO and New York welfare recipients that the provision was virtually meaningless unless it increased benefit levels, the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit thought that HEW had primary jurisdiction (Rabin 1970). According to the appeals court, recipients needed to address their concerns about New York's switch to flat grants with HEW. HEW was not responsive to recipient complaints, however. The case went to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court addressed two different issues in *Rosado v. Wyman*. First, the 6-2 majority agreed with the district court on the procedural issue, stating that there is no process for recipients to express concern about states' AFDC programs meeting their statutory obligations. The two dissenters, Justice Hugo Black and Chief Justice Warren Burger, based their disagreement with the majority on this procedural issue. Second, the majority considered the merits of the case and generally agreed with HEW's interpretation of the cost-of-living provision. Justice John Marshall Harlan, (1970:412) writing for the majority, reviewed the legislative history of the provision, calling it "a child born of the silent union of legislative compromise." Unable to discern Congress' intent in passing the legislation, Justice Harlan (1970:412-413) wrote:

We think two broad purposes may be ascribed to § 402(a)(23): first, to require States to face up realistically to the magnitude of the public assistance requirement and lay bare the extent to which their programs fall short of fulfilling actual need; second, to prod the States to apportion their payments on a more equitable basis. Consistent with this interpretation of § 402(a)(23), a State may, after recomputing its standard of need, pare down payments to accommodate budgetary realities by reducing the percent of benefits paid or switching to a percent reduction system, but it may not obscure the *actual* standard of need.

The Supreme Court did find that New York State violated the cost-of-living provision by avoiding the process of recalculating its need standard. This was a rather hollow victory, though. Rabin (1970:1161) calls both of the purposes Justice Harlan identified "dubious" as they seem to be based on the idea that states can be shamed into providing adequate benefit levels. There is little evidence that shaming legislators and other governmental officials is an effective way to raise benefit levels. It must be said, however, that there is little in the legislative history to indicate that Congress intended to do anything more than that. That particular version of the cost-of-living provision made it

into law precisely because it was likely to be wholly ineffective. Other efforts to raise benefit levels through the equal protection clause (rather than this statutory route) also failed (Melnick 1994).

This is the state of cost-of-living adjustments at the end of the 1965-1974 period. The mostly automatic cost-of-living increases that began in the early 1950s ended in 1970, when the Department of Public Welfare had exhausted its appropriation and was unable to grant cost-of-living increases. Legislators sympathetic to welfare recipients had managed to get a bill providing annual cost-of-living increases to AFDC recipients signed into law, but the bill ended up being rather toothless. A similar process happened at the federal level. After a couple years of high inflation and no increases, there were a few cost-of-living increases in 1973 and 1974, but they do not appear to have been enough to compensate for the rapidly increasing cost of living. As the scientific studies evaluating the actual cost of living showed, at no time were benefit levels in Massachusetts high enough to meet all of welfare recipients' needs.

Another major change in the 1965-1974 period was the institution of quarterly flat-grant checks. Prior to September 16, 1970, when the flat grant went into effect, welfare recipients could ask for special needs grants to pay for items that the regular monthly grants were never intended to cover. For example, the regular grant assumed that recipients had appliances such as refrigerators and stoves, furniture such as couches and beds, and household goods such as pots and pans. If recipients did not have items such as these, they could request that the Department of Public Welfare provide them with a voucher that they could take to a department store and use to buy approved items. The

flat grant program replaced the special needs program. Rather than providing special needs grants to recipients who applied for them, every welfare recipient received a quarterly check in addition to her regular monthly check to cover large nonrecurring expenses like buying furniture.

The switch to flat grants was intended to solve three problems with the special needs program. First, the special needs program was an enormous recruiting tool for welfare rights organizers. The program was not well publicized, but organizers were very familiar with its regulations. They incentivized involvement in welfare rights activities by telling recipients that they would help them get furniture and other items if the recipients joined the welfare rights organization. The first mention of welfare officials instituting a flat-grant system in newspaper data is August 1968, at “the opening of the big offensive in this state by the National Welfare Rights Organization” (Stratton 1968). The actual implementation of the program coincided with Republican Gov. Francis Sargent’s 1970 gubernatorial campaign,³⁷ and it was widely seen as a political maneuver, showing Sargent doing something about the “welfare mess” (Irving 1971).

The second problem with the special needs program was related to the first: it was getting expensive and difficult to administer (Irving 1971). The only ceiling on the special needs program was its total budget, though deficiency appropriations made this ceiling less than solid. Prior to the increase in special needs requests in 1968, the Department granted all valid requests, which meant expenditures rose and fell according

³⁷ The 1970 election was Sargent’s first gubernatorial campaign despite having served as governor for two years. Sargent moved from lieutenant governor to governor in 1968 when then-Gov. John Volpe left office to become President Nixon’s Secretary of Transportation.

to what recipients needed. The flat-grant system would not have this ability to expand to meet all the needs recipients identified, which was one of its virtues to welfare officials. Processing all the new special needs requests also took a lot of caseworkers' time and energy. They had to verify that recipients actually needed the items they requested, a process that theoretically involved visiting the recipients at home (sometimes that did not happen so as to expedite the process) as well as a fair bit of paperwork.

The third problem was also related to the welfare rights organizations' strategy of gaining membership through helping recipients navigate the special needs program. The special needs program allowed the most activist welfare recipients to gain more benefits than the recipients who did not cause such problems for the Department. From the perspective of welfare officials, this meant that special needs benefits were not equitably distributed, and that the recipients who caused the most problems were rewarded for doing so. By replacing the special needs program with a flat-grant system, administrators would be better able to control expenditures and reduce administrative costs, all while taking the legs out of the welfare rights movement.

The design of the flat-grant system was telling. Gov. Sargent announced the replacement of the special needs program with a flat-grant system in December 1969. He did not consult with welfare advocates prior to his announcement, and they immediately opposed it (Irving 1971). In what Sargent claimed was an attempt to negotiate with welfare advocates, a group called the Welfare Coalition and the Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) met with Albert Kramer, special assistant to the chief executive for urban affairs and the person in charge of constructing Massachusetts' flat-

grant system, throughout the spring of 1970 about how the flat-grant system should be structured. Little actual negotiation took place, however, as it was probably more politically advantageous for Sargent to be at odds with welfare advocates. Furthermore, welfare advocates wanted something that Sargent was unable to give, as it would have been both expensive and politically unpopular: a benefit level that recipients could actually live on. The Welfare Coalition supported the MWRO's "\$5500 or fight" position with regard to benefit levels, and there was no way Sargent was going to raise benefit levels by approximately \$2000 annually for a family of four.

Because the negotiations bore little fruit, Kramer designed the program mostly based on the Governor's preferences. According to Mark Lewis Irvings, who wrote an undergraduate honors thesis on the institution of the flat-grant system for his economics degree at Harvard University, Kramer began with "the total amount of money which the Governor felt should be spent on AFDC" (Irvings 1971:78). This amount was set at the conclusion of the negotiations, but it is unclear how much influence welfare advocates had over the amount. Perhaps the biggest influence that the negotiations had on the final structure of the program was the quarterly check. A legislator who traveled to New York to observe their flat-grant system proposed it based on his experiences there (Irvings 1971). He thought that a quarterly check would be more effective in assisting recipients with major purchases like furniture. Irvings (1971:78-79) describes how Kramer came up with the amount of the quarterly flat-grant checks using these parameters:

Quite simply, he established an average monthly caseload and divided it into the total expenses for standard budget payments to families to arrive at the average yearly payment of \$3300. He then divided the caseload into the total payments, which included an estimated cost for special needs of \$21 million, and saw that

the average would be \$3700, or the amount of money an average family would receive if all the welfare funds were agglomerated and dispensed equally. The first figure was very close to the level for a family of four with a mother, and one child each under seven, over seven, and over thirteen, so the latter average was identified as the approximate amount for the same family. With this general range in mind, Kramer fitted an equal percentage increase to all the family sizes, while justifying it with the desired total outlay. The payment schedule which was produced contained the often-quoted family of four figure of \$3760. As was previously mentioned, the levels were adjusted upward by the time of implementation to reflect a cost of living increase, so the family of four benefits were raised \$60. The flat grant payment schedule was devised by subtracting the basic budget, which remained the same, from the new total payment per family figure for each family size, and dividing the difference by four.

Again, it becomes clear that the level assistance Massachusetts provided was based primarily on political considerations and bore little relationship to actual need.

The switch to a flat-grant system raised benefit levels, as can be seen in Figure 10. It raised them more than it should have, though, due to some problems with estimation that Kramer had. He originally estimated the fiscal 1970 average monthly caseload at 56,635, but the fiscal 1970 average caseload was actually 58,273. Because Kramer underestimated the caseload figure, the divisor was lower than it should have been, and the average payment figure was consequently higher (Irving 1971:139). There was also an overestimation of what the special needs program would have cost, perhaps because Kramer based his estimates of the cost of the special needs program on months in which the MWRO ran special needs drives (Irving 1971:140). This error also increased benefit levels. As Irving (1971:140) states: "What these miscalculations mean is that either knowingly or accidentally, by using a total payments figure which was too large and a caseload figure that was too small, those in the government set an average level which would serve to increase the amount spent for AFDC in Massachusetts." As stated in the

beginning of this section, benefit levels in 1970, adjusted for inflation, were the highest for the entire 1935-1996 period. The evidence here indicates that this was, in part, the result of errors in estimations that were used to construct the flat-grant system.

While there was some controversy surrounding the implementation of the flat-grant system, including protests by the MWRO, the most common problem cited was not the structure of the program, but the fact that the assistance payments were still too low (Kaufman 1970). After the first few months, opposition to flat grants quieted down. The Research Department at United Community Services conducted a couple of studies to see how the flat grant was working. They found that the flat-grant system seemed to particularly disadvantage large families (Dobbin and Driscoll 1971) but that recipients had no clear preference for either the special needs program or the flat grant system (Driscoll and Dobbin 1971). Just under 50% of the recipients who participated in a 1971 survey preferred the flat grant while about 40% preferred the special needs program (Driscoll and Dobbin 1971). About one-third of the recipients thought their benefits had increased since the flat grant went into effect, about one-third thought their benefits had decreased, and the final third thought their benefits were about the same (Driscoll and Dobbin 1971). In terms of how recipients fared under either the flat-grant system or the special needs program, it seemed to be a wash. Larger families and more activist recipients received more benefits from the special needs program, but less activist recipients (and most recipients were not particularly activist-oriented) benefited more from the flat-grant system.

The final thing to note about benefit levels in this period is that their inadequacy was widely known among welfare experts at the national level. The same kind of cost-of-living studies that were done in Massachusetts were done around the country, and it was clear that benefit levels were not even close to being high enough to meet need in any state. In fact, they were, in every state, below the newly established poverty level (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1967). The Advisory Council on Public Welfare listed creating a floor for benefit levels as one of its major proposals. According to The Advisory Council on Public Welfare (1966:xii): “Public assistance payments are so low and so uneven that the Government is, by its own standards and definitions, a major source of the poverty on which it has declared unconditional war.” The Council was sensitive to the need for regional variation in assistance payments but thought setting a minimum national standard was the only way that some states would offer meaningful assistance. The need for a national minimum standard for AFDC was also behind some of the agitation for a guaranteed annual income in the mid-late 1960s and early 1970s (Steensland 2008). Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan (FAP) would have raised benefit levels in Southern states and other states where welfare expenditures were low (Steensland 2008). None of the guaranteed income plans passed, but it is important to note that increased assistance payments, at least for the poorest and stingiest states, were part of all of these plans.

State Capacity in AFDC, 1965-1974

This period is a time of diminishing state capacity. While the movement toward state administration of all welfare assistance that began in the 1935-1964 period came to fruition, the size of the public assistance budget became a source of controversy, and working conditions for social workers deteriorated. It became impossible for the state Department of Public Welfare to keep with the rapid caseload increases that characterized this period. All of this helped lead to the stagnation in benefit levels that occurred in the latter half of this period.

In 1968 the State Department of Public Welfare took over all aspects of public welfare in Massachusetts. Rather than a federal-state-local operation, public welfare became a federal-state operation. This state takeover was complicated and poorly executed, meaning “the department suffered an institutional shock from which it only began to recover ten years later” (Withorn 1982:97). The battle over whether or not Massachusetts should centralize its public welfare system illustrated a number of issues related to state capacity: how much money should be spent on welfare, whether the people who ran public welfare programs in small towns needed to be trained social workers, and whether it was fair if benefits varied according to the preferences of officials in the cities and towns in which welfare recipients resided.

While there had been discussion about making public welfare a state-level responsibility before then, the story of how state takeover happened begins in 1964. In that year the Massachusetts Committee on Children and Youth (MCCY) asked the Committee of the Permanent Charity Fund for funds to study AFDC in Massachusetts.

Also in 1964 United Community Services of Metropolitan Boston (UCS) requested funds from the same committee to examine the administration of public welfare in the Greater Boston area. The Committee of the Permanent Charity Fund suggested that MCCY and UCS join forces, which they did. The resulting study, *Meeting the Problems of People in Massachusetts*, which became public in December 1965, became the catalyst for state takeover.

Meeting the Problems of People in Massachusetts began by describing the current system and its problems. One problem that the National Study Service (1965:6), who conducted the study for MCCY and UCS, identified was that how the needy were treated and how much assistance they received varied from locality to locality and from program to program:

Striking paradoxes are found in Massachusetts. It is a generous state. It is also a penurious and a withholding one. It is a place where some needy people are treated with great kindness and understanding, and where others are treated with unconcern and coldness. It depends on where a needy person lives, whether he is old or young, whether he is considered 'worthy,' whether or not he fits into a particular description or a 'favored' category. It depends greatly on the views and the temperament of the government officials and citizen leaders in the town or city where he lives. From the reports describing the welfare programs in the sample towns and cities it appears that, in some of them, there is a lack of basic feeling for and interest in helping people, particularly in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the General Relief categories.

The National Study Service (1965:41) also noted "one of the principal structural problems in Massachusetts is that of the large number of administrative units, some very small, which are used to carry out the public assistance program." By this time Massachusetts was the only state in which towns and cities operated public welfare programs, though about two-fifths of the rest of the states used counties as administrative

units. Out of 270 administrative units in Massachusetts—only three other states had more than 100 local administrative units—106 had one full-time worker or less, and only 30 had ten or more workers. As a result of all of these small units, “the cost of administering public assistance in Massachusetts is considerably higher than comparable costs for most other states” (National Study Service 1965:42). The inequities that the National Study Service (1965:43) found were directly related to this administrative structure: “Some of the wide variations in attitudes, programs, and quality of service...can also be attributed to the existence of such a large number of local units and to the fact that they are not under a unified central direction as would be true in a state-administered rather than in a state-supervised plan.”

With this diagnosis of the problems in public welfare in Massachusetts, having the state take over all the public welfare functions seemed like the best solution. It would rectify at least some of the inequities in public assistance, and it would save money by consolidating administration. The National Study Service proposed a state-run system of at least 50 Community Service Centers where comprehensive social services and financial assistance would be located. Each center could also have branch offices to better serve communities that were not large enough to merit a full Community Service Center. State takeover would also mean reorganization at the State Department of Public Welfare. According to the National Study Service (1965:80), “it will be necessary to review every aspect of the department’s structure with its new tasks in mind.”

Immediately after the study became public in December 1965, local welfare chiefs expressed their opposition to state takeover (Noonan 1965). While their opposition

often stemmed from the loss of control they would experience (though this was generally unstated), they listed several advantages of local administration. One was that recipients would receive more personalized service and be treated as “human beings, not as case numbers,” according to Albert Dupsha, president of the state Public Welfare Administrators Association and director of the Brimfield-Holland Welfare District. A second (related) advantage was that fraud would not increase because the welfare director lived in the community and knew its residents. Several local directors, even some that supported state takeover, noted that the state was already having trouble supervising local welfare offices, so they suspected that state administration would not be effective. Opposition to state takeover mainly came from local chiefs in small towns, many of whom thought the state was too liberal with public welfare. Directors in larger communities were more likely to favor state takeover because their offices were already more professionalized, and they realized that public welfare was getting to be more and more complicated to administer.

Based on the National Study Service report, Dr. Martha Eliot, former head of the U.S. Children’s Bureau and MCCY chairman, submitted a bill to the Joint Committee on Public Welfare to allow the state to take control of all public welfare responsibilities in April 1966 (Richard 1966). The bill had to be late-filed, so substituting it for a bill that proposed studying the welfare system at a public hearing was the best way to get it before legislators. It aroused a great deal of public attention, as the hearing attracted 500 people. Local welfare chiefs (and the legislators who supported them) reiterated their opposition to state takeover.

After the hearing, the bill got clogged up in the Legislature. In the interim welfare mothers staged their first series of protests, making welfare a more prominent issue in the state. The bill did not get much attention until August, when the Joint Committee on Public Welfare had a public meeting on a heavily revised version of the bill (Zorn 1966). Republican Lieutenant Governor Elliot Richardson, who had worked in the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) under Eisenhower, spoke in favor of the bill, as did a wide variety of welfare experts. Again, opposition came from local administrators and the legislators who supported them. A day or two after this hearing, the Joint Committee on State Administration had yet another well-attended hearing on the bill. After six hours of debate, the State Administration committee killed the bill because its chairman, Sen. James A. Kelly Jr., a Democrat from Oxford, did not think it would be able to pass the full Legislature (Davidson 1966b). Kelly promised to work with Sen. Beryl Cohen, a Democrat from Brookline who sponsored the welfare reorganization bill and chaired the Public Welfare committee, on putting together a bill that could pass the Legislature in the next session.

The battle to get a bill requiring the state to take over public welfare heated up in the following legislative session. UCS, Cohen, and legislators from both parties sponsored a welfare reorganization bill while the Public Welfare Administrators Association sponsored a competing bill. The Public Welfare Administrators Association planned to “wage an all-out battle” against state takeover (Dietz 1967a). Advocates tried to prepare for this: “ ‘Unless you organize the greatest social welfare lobby in history,’ [Sen. Beryl Cohen] warned more than 600 community leaders at a legislative clearing

house sponsored by United Community Services, ‘well-intentioned but uninformed legislators’ will vote with those who ‘shout the loudest’ on proposed welfare reforms” (Dietz 1967d). Eight hundred people showed up to a public hearing organized by the Joint Committee on State Administration on the two bills (Plunkett 1967b). Most of the people attending, including a contingent of activist welfare recipients, favored the UCS state takeover bill. Sen. Cohen, State Welfare Commissioner Robert Ott, and Elliot Richardson, who by then was Attorney General, along with the mayors of New Bedford and Taunton supported the bill too. Opponents of state takeover argued that poor service would result and that elderly people would be unable to reach welfare offices. Proponents of reform argued that state takeover would save \$50 million in administrative costs in addition to promoting efficiency and equity. The Joint Committee on State Administration was full of anti-reform legislators, however, and getting the bill out of committee seemed unlikely (Gallagher 1967). The committee was about to kill the UCS bill in favor of the Public Welfare Administrators Association bill until a lobbyist (who was also a powerful former legislator) and U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy intervened.

Activity on the welfare reorganization bill cooled for a couple months. During this time welfare recipients held a sit-in that turned into three days of rioting, bringing welfare issues to the forefront of public consciousness again. The *Boston Globe* editorial page advocated for the welfare reorganization bill soon after the riot as a way to help prevent future crises (Boston Globe 1967e). It seems that this period may have been a time of closed-door negotiations trying to reconcile the Public Welfare Administrators Association bill with the UCS/Cohen state takeover bill (Boston Globe 1967c). While

both camps were able to achieve agreement on “increasing the state’s share of welfare costs, reducing residency requirements, and increasing the authority of the welfare commissioner,” they still fundamentally disagreed on the necessity of the state administering public welfare programs (Boston Globe 1967c). Pro-reform forces organized a 300-person rally on Boston Common, which is across the street from where the legislature meets, in an effort to convince the legislators that state takeover had popular support (Dietz 1967c). The Massachusetts Council of Churches coordinated the rally, which was attended by the welfare rights group Mothers for Adequate Welfare, Massachusetts Senior Citizens, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and the Jewish Labor Committee.

This rally signaled the beginning of renewed efforts on behalf of both bills. While Republican Governor John Volpe had tepidly supported the concept of state takeover for over a year, he decided to put more muscle behind his support in July 1967 (Dietz 1967f). Most Democrats, who held a majority in both the Senate and the House, opposed state takeover, and Democratic leaders such as Senate President Maurice Donahue, a Democrat from Holyoke, and Democratic Senator James A. Kelly Jr., the chairman of the Joint Committee on State Administration, either remained neutral or openly supported the Public Welfare Administrators Association bill. Many of the reasons for legislators favoring retaining local control over public welfare had to do with an urban/rural split and the fact that rural areas were overrepresented in the Legislature. State takeover was seen as “bailing out Boston” and welfare problems were seen as being only in Boston too. There was likely a racial tinge to this, as African-Americans were concentrated in

Boston, and rioters and activist welfare recipients were predominantly African-American (though this is less true for the welfare recipients). This is the background for the Senate Ways and Means Committee voting in favor of a so-called compromise bill written by Sen. Kelly that would leave public welfare administration in the cities and towns. Sen. Cohen's bill was sent to a study committee, but he was able to get his original bill substituted for the compromise bill on the Senate floor in a 24-12 roll call vote (Dietz 1967b). The key to Cohen's success appears to have been Republican support, as Senate Minority Leader John F. Parker, a Republican from Taunton, and other Republican senators voted for the state takeover bill. Although there was some debate about how to finance the bill, it passed the Senate in August and headed to the House (Boston Herald Traveler 1967). The House passed the bill with a few amendments, most notably one explicitly stating that the state would pay all welfare costs and one establishing a fraudulent claims bureau, a couple weeks later (R. W. Daly 1967a). House Speaker John F. X. Davoren, a Democrat from Milford who seems to have been the only member of Democratic leadership in favor of the Cohen bill, was apparently instrumental in getting the bill through the House (Dietz 1967e). By the end of September, the bill officially passed the Legislature (Lucas 1967).

Having passed the legislature, the next step was figuring out how to finance state-run welfare. Gov. Volpe, who supported welfare reorganization, was tempted to send the bill back to the Legislature with suggested amendments, but he feared this meant the bill would never come back to him (R. W. Daly 1967b). Consequently, Volpe signed the bill despite the fact it needed a number of technical corrections as well as a way to fund the

state's new responsibilities. Volpe favored using money from the local aid fund, which was the product of a relatively new three-percent statewide sales tax. The purpose of the local aid fund was to relieve the property tax burden in cities and towns, and cities and towns had previously used funds from that pot to pay for their local share of public welfare. Volpe, and others who agreed with him, thought that using local aid fund made sense because cities and towns were getting rid of one of the costliest local programs through turning public welfare over to the state. Many legislators wanted to use the general revenue fund instead so that towns and cities got more money from the state. Other options for raising greater tax revenue included increasing corporate taxes and eliminating the federal deduction on state income taxes. Ultimately, Volpe got his way, and the money came out of the local aid fund.

The estimate of how much extra state-run welfare would cost kept creeping upward too. The estimate for much of the legislative debate was \$62 million, but this was based on a September 1966 study (Noonan 1967). After the bill was passed, the estimate rose to \$85.8 million due to increased caseloads and increased payments. By March 1968, when planning for state takeover was in full swing, that estimate was revised upward to \$120 million because the state's Medicaid program was more expensive than anticipated (H. D. Gordon 1968).

The actual transfer took place on July 1, 1968, the beginning of the 1969 fiscal year, and initially it went well (Dietz 1968d). In March the State Department of Public Welfare realized that the easiest way to consolidate would be for local welfare officials to retain their current offices while the regional centers were set up (H. D. Gordon 1968).

All local workers kept their jobs and were transferred to the state payroll and retirement system. At this time there were 350,000 cases in the state, and checks to clients and the 4,000 welfare workers were not interrupted—a major accomplishment given the lack of funds and staff at the state level to make reorganization happen (Dietz 1968a).

State takeover set the stage for a number of issues related to state capacity in the rest of this period. The way that state takeover was done—with only several months of preparation and no hiring of additional staff—meant that the State Department of Welfare was overburdened and the transfer was, in many ways, incomplete for years to come. Part of this was due to the fact that the main welfare rights organization launched its first offensive against the department one month after reorganization. Dealing with activist welfare recipients occupied the department for a couple years, leading them to delay forming the 50 or so community centers that the welfare reorganization law called for. State takeover also made the State Department of Public Welfare a consolidated target, both for welfare recipients across the state and for state legislators. Welfare recipients used different practices in different localities as a way to argue that the most liberal practice should be used throughout the state. State legislators, who were then responsible for the entire state public welfare budget, paid significantly more attention to how much the state was spending on welfare. This increased attention coincided with massive caseload increases, as Figure 11 shows, leading to a number of battles over the state budget.

While the state welfare budget was a concern during the late 1960s, it was dwarfed by the chaos created by the welfare rights movement. It was not until late 1970,

after Steven Minter had taken over as Commissioner of Public Welfare, that the state budget, and the welfare portion of the state budget in particular, began to regularly appear as a topic of debate in newspapers. For example, Democrats in the Legislature refused to pass Republican Gov. Francis Sargent's tax program due to "frustration over the cost of public welfare," according to House Speaker David Bartley, a Democrat (quoted in Healy 1971). While Bartley said he did not agree with this view, he stated that the perception among legislators was that "the state wouldn't need half the money the governor was requesting if a substantial portion of it wasn't 'going down the drain in welfare abuse'" (Healy 1971). This was also a common theme: the state budget was far too high as a result of out-of-control welfare spending, and this out-of-control welfare spending was caused by massive fraud. As will be discussed later, virtually any fraudulent activity merited breathless front-page news coverage while stories that discussed welfare recipients in a sympathetic light were never front-page material. While fraud certainly existed, no investigations ever provided any evidence that it was the major factor in the skyrocketing state budget.

This concern about spending too much on welfare manifested itself in multiple ways. First, as will be discussed later, the department was constantly understaffed. Salaries for social workers were below what they could earn at private agencies, and there was a lot of staff turnover due to low wages, poor working conditions, and ineffective management. Second, the Department of Public Welfare did not even have office supplies conducive to managing a massive state program. A 1971 report from the federal General Services Administration, which the *Boston Globe* quoted in a newspaper

article, condemned working conditions after visiting several field offices in the Boston area (Goldenberg 1971a):

‘The present work areas used for medical payment processing are without doubt the worst office environment we have encountered. The space used is not efficiently allocated for the processing of large volumes of paperwork, resulting in excessive transporting of batched invoices between the several processing teams or groups.

‘Physical handling of the invoice input document is extremely difficult to describe, since it does not in any way approach minimum standards for records handling. The payment records and supporting documents, including look-up files, are housed in shirt, shoe, liquor, beer, toilet tissue and cereal boxes stacked on the floor, tables, desks, bookcases and file cases in the scattered processing areas of the offices visited.’

The report in subsequent paragraphs said clerks admitted they went ‘trash-picking’ to obtain empty cartons for filing, and that, ‘This statement of the physical conditions prevailing in the field offices does not adequately convey the chaotic state of local resources for the paperwork pipelines task.’

After this report became public, Welfare Commissioner Steven Minter stated that the House cut his request of more than \$1 million for office equipment to \$28,000, and the General Services Administration report itself criticized the legislature for not appropriating adequate funds. The chairman of a legislative committee investigating the Department of Public Welfare, Sen. Robert L. Cawley, a Democrat from West Roxbury, used this report to condemn the department for poor management practices, though he was also an advocate of cutting the welfare budget.

This lack of funding for adequate staff and supplies even led to the departure of the state’s Medicaid administrator in 1972 (Knox 1972). Jim Callahan quit after the governor refused to add even one more person to the 23-person staff Callahan had

running Massachusetts' \$400-million Medicaid program. As the *Boston Globe* noted, Massachusetts Blue Cross paid out \$370 million in 1971, and it had a 2,000-person staff.

Finally, the concern about welfare spending resulted in fewer benefits and services for welfare recipients. In 1971 the legislature instituted a crackdown on welfare spending and passed a variety of punitive measures. The legislature passed a \$810.6 million welfare budget for fiscal 1972, down from the \$929 million that Commissioner Minter initially budgeted (Maraghy 1971). The legislature also put a ceiling of \$850 million on welfare spending for fiscal 1972. While cutting the welfare budget was common—both the governor and the legislature did so that year—so was submitting a deficiency budget after the fiscal year was underway. Minter stated that, in the face of rising caseloads and rising medical costs, the department could not live within the \$850 million ceiling, and benefit cuts or restricting eligibility would likely result (Longcope 1971d). It seems that Minter did not have to go this route because the legislature chose to appropriate an additional \$95 million for welfare several months into the 1972 fiscal year (Solito 1972). Seeing where things were going, Minter began exploring options for reducing benefits and services, including a program that provided special needs like household supplies and clothing in disaster situations to AFDC recipients (Longcope 1972b).

The fiscal 1973 budget proved to be even more difficult. The legislature instituted a spending freeze, and every person with responsibility for the welfare budget—the governor, the House Ways and Means Committee, the House, and the Senate Ways and Means Committee—cut it (Longcope 1972d). Minter's initial request of \$970 million was

reduced by \$132 million by the time it got to Senate Ways and Means. According to a *Boston Globe* reporter, AFDC, “the most suspect of all public assistance categories,” took the biggest hit, and AFDC grants would face an 8.8% reduction (Longcope 1972d). Despite continuing to cut the welfare appropriation, the Senate Ways and Means committee recommended a 3.1% cost-of-living increase for all welfare recipients (Hartnett 1972). Apparently, the rationale was that the department was so poorly administered that funds could be saved through more efficient administration. The Department ended up with an \$836.6 million budget, but the spending freeze meant that an additional \$33.5 million was slashed from the welfare appropriation (Kenney 1972a). When Commissioner Minter announced that this meant a 4% reduction in benefit levels for all recipients, Democrats in the legislature were outraged. Gov. Sargent told all departments to avoid submitting deficiency budgets, and, according to Minter, lowering benefit levels was ultimately his decision. Democratic House Speaker David Bartley slammed Minter and Sargent, saying that the benefit cuts were “a political decision,” the budgets for other agencies could be cut instead, and that savings could be found by removing ineligible people from the welfare rolls (quoted in Campbell 1972a). About a month after the cuts were announced, Sargent had a change of heart. He had met with the Massachusetts Public Welfare Council³⁸, which was advocating for a number of

³⁸ The Massachusetts Public Welfare Council was the main nonprofit group advocating for welfare after the welfare rights movement fell apart. The Council, which began in 1971, included prominent businessmen such as Arthur J. Gartland, who was chairman of the Council, and other advocacy groups, such as the Massachusetts Taxpayers Association and more liberal groups. The group believed in the concept of public welfare but thought the system could be administered better, often promoting technocratic solutions.

administrative changes and for actively pursuing fraud committed by medical vendors in order to avoid benefit cuts (Longcope 1972c). To preserve benefit levels, Sargent chose to cut services at hundreds of agencies, such as reducing the hours of operation at swimming pools and hockey rinks, and to bring on sixty welfare investigators (some on loan from private businesses) to ferret out welfare fraud and ineligibility (Nyhan 1972). Even with all of that maneuvering, the Sargent administration requested \$124.4 million more for welfare by February 1973 (Fuerbringer 1973). While \$30 million of that came from unfreezing funds, the rest was part of a deficiency appropriation. Ultimately, the legislature approved of spending all of these funds except \$29 million for delinquent vendor payments (Rosenblock 1973). The legislature wanted better documentation of the vendor payments, which Minter said he would provide.

The last two fiscal years in this period were relatively quiet. 1974 was a gubernatorial election year, and Sargent was running for re-election, so that may explain the lack of budget battles. Caseloads were still increasing, so the budget had to keep rising, though. It seems that the way the Sargent administration chose to deal with the issue was to try to cut programs where possible and rely on large deficiency budgets to make up the difference between what the Department of Public Welfare spent and what its initial appropriation was. For example, the department chose to eliminate the Initial Needs program for AFDC recipients in early 1974, and it was also considering eliminating the Special Needs program for AFDC recipients (Kenney 1973). Both programs were part of the Hardship Fund that the department established after the switch to flat grants in 1970. Initial Needs supplied welfare recipients with items such as

bedding and furniture during their first 30 days on AFDC while Special Needs provided extra funds for welfare recipients who paid particularly high rent, had special dietary needs, required a telephone for medical emergencies, and had other miscellaneous needs. While saving money was surely part of the reason for closing these programs, they also contributed to the high error rate that Massachusetts had in determining eligibility and the amount of the assistance payment. Reliance on deficiency budgets seemed to be about avoiding broadcasting the actual cost of public welfare during an election year. After Republican Gov. Sargent lost his re-election bid to Democrat Michael Dukakis, the Sargent administration revealed that the Department of Public Welfare needed another \$213 million to finish out the fiscal year, far more than had ever been included in previous deficiency budgets (Fuerbringer 1974). This set the stage for the fiscal austerity that Gov. Dukakis implemented in his first term.

One final aspect about the state budget deserves mention. While, at least by fiscal 1973, Medicaid accounted for about 40% of the total welfare budget, far more than any other program, it was AFDC that garnered all the public opprobrium (Longcope 1972c). When politicians attempted to “do something” about welfare spending, they usually targeted AFDC recipients. This was despite the fact that medical costs always rose substantially faster than inflation in this period, sometimes outrageously so. For example, in 1971 the Department of Public Welfare stated that the average bill for acute hospital care increased 44% over the previous year (Longcope 1971d). Massachusetts had one of the most generous Medicaid programs in the country, and it helped a lot of people who were not otherwise welfare recipients. While the legislature did restrict eligibility from

time to time, Medicaid never came under the same microscope as AFDC, despite its significantly greater cost. Some advocates, such as the Massachusetts Public Welfare Council, were cognizant of this disconnect and tried to focus attention on reigning in Medicaid costs, but they were largely unsuccessful. The high cost of Medicaid was publicly perceived as the high cost of AFDC, even though the drivers of Medicaid cost growth were often the elderly—not AFDC recipients.

One aspect of state capacity is a competent, professional bureaucracy. In this case, that means social workers who helped individual welfare recipients as well as state-level staff who administered AFDC. All of the evidence in this period indicates that both social workers and state bureaucrats were unable to adequately perform their duties due to persistently low appropriations from the legislature. To the extent that this affected benefit levels, it meant that errors in calculating benefit levels were more likely, and it was often impossible for welfare recipients to establish strong relationships with caseworkers, perhaps limiting welfare recipients' abilities to get the assistance that they needed.

A controversy at the beginning of this period, in 1965, illustrates some of the issues surrounding social workers at this time. There was a new federal regulation from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) that called for new social worker hires to have bachelor's degrees and that required at least a bachelor's degree for promotion to supervisory positions (Dietz 1965). If Massachusetts did not pass legislation changing Civil Service rules—at that time the rules stated that a college education was not required for any public welfare position—the state would lose \$119 million in federal

welfare funding. There was some opposition to this change, primarily from the same local welfare administrators and politicians who opposed state takeover. Their opposition stemmed from the idea that it was not fair to social workers who had a lot of experience and wanted to advance or to transfer to a different office (Eames 1965). As the state takeover debate also demonstrated, these opponents had a fair bit of power, and they almost killed the bill changing the Civil Service rules. Proponents of the change pointed out that HEW would cover 75% of the educational costs of social workers who took a leave of absence to get more schooling, so social workers seeking advancement did have some options. Furthermore, as this was before state takeover, 189 communities had only one welfare worker, making advancement a moot point (Boston Herald Traveler 1965).

Other information that became publicized during this debate painted a less-than-appealing portrait of Massachusetts' public assistance workers. The Bureau of Government Research at the University of Massachusetts found that Massachusetts had the least educated public assistance workforce among the 45 states with over 100 public assistance workers (Eames 1965). The percentage of public assistance workers without any college education was 42.7%. At the same time—and perhaps not surprisingly—Massachusetts' public assistance workers were the most experienced. Massachusetts' restrictive Civil Service rules, as well as the fact that towns and cities administered public welfare programs, undoubtedly had something to do that (Dietz 1965). Civil Services rules required people to live in the towns and cities in which they worked, so finding competent welfare administrator with a college degree was difficult to do in smaller communities. Massachusetts also seldom gave Civil Service exams and took six months

to give test-takers their results. Other states with Civil Service exam requirements gave the exams much more frequently and gave results in three to four weeks. Federal officials trying to convince Massachusetts to meet the new educational requirements told state legislators that changing these kinds of Civil Service rules would also help them attract better personnel. The kind of people who lived in small communities and were willing to wait six months to find out if they had a job were not always the class of professionals that HEW wanted running public welfare programs.

After this controversy was resolved, social workers did not again make the news until 1967, when a welfare rights sit-in turned into a violent riot. According to some social workers, problems in welfare offices were so severe that something like that was bound to happen (Boston Globe 1967d). The *Boston Globe* (1967d) described it this way:

‘Conditions here are terrible for us and worse for the clients,’ says Mrs. Jessie Herr, a caseworker at the office where mothers on welfare staged a demonstration that ended in violence Friday.

Mrs. Herr says she had been planning to quit her job even before the demonstrations began—in part because of the conditions.

‘We’re overcrowded, understaffed, caseloads are high, budgets inadequate, and social workers are bogged down with paperwork, releases, and forms to fill out,’ she says.

She and other social workers say that welfare checks have sometimes been cut without notice because social workers lack clerks to help do necessary paperwork....

‘I can really understand the gripes of the mothers,’ Mrs. Herr says. ‘We would love to be—and we should be—giving more and better services. But we simply can’t under the present system.’

She reports that some of her clients ‘simply can’t live at the present cost of living’ on their ‘unrealistic’ budgets.

'I have a caseload of 70 and some of my co-workers have over 100.' The national standard is 60.

Sumner McClain, a social worker who quit the Grove Hall office last Fall to join a private agency, left a caseload of 90.

'I was spending 90 percent of my time with paperwork, not people,' McClain says....

'Forty and 50 case records would pile up on our desks because we had no clerks to keep them filed.' On one floor at Grove Hall, six clerk-typists are available for 30 social workers.

Mrs. Herr adds that 'We're weighted down with paperwork, and sometimes workers are unable to get into the field to see a client more than once or twice a year.' Recommended minimum is once every three months.

Mrs. Herr and some of her co-workers also point out that the Grove Hall office, which alone serves nearly one-fifth of Roxbury's predominantly Negro population, is over-crowded and understaffed.

Over 100 welfare recipients who visit the basement room office each day must wait two or three hours on straight wooden chairs to see social workers. A police officer patrols the crowded room.

Ten wood partitions provided for private interviews are sometimes not enough to cope with the numbers of clients who must be seen. Social workers can be seen speaking with clients standing up and in hallways.

On upstairs floors, social workers are crowded four and five in an office, sharing two or three telephones between them.

Although a new switchboard was recently installed, only one permanent switchboard operator is available in a building which handles an estimated 8900 cases. Social workers say they cannot get lines out. Clients say they cannot call in.

Whereas about 90 percent of the Grove Hall caseload is Negro, fewer than 10 percent of the social workers are Negro.

A year later, the situation had not improved. That 1968 summer was when the National Welfare Rights Organization sent an organizer to Boston and when militant welfare rights activity began. Welfare rights activists flooded welfare offices, and

caseworkers were quickly overwhelmed. Caseworkers wanted state officials set price guidelines for household supplies and furniture, as there was no set policy for these items. Welfare recipients in different offices or merely with different social workers could receive vastly different amounts of money for the same items or not be allowed to have any household supplies or furniture at all. State officials, some still hewing to the idea that individual caseworkers would know their clients best, were reluctant to provide statewide guidelines. Caseworkers were overwhelmed and felt attacked by their clients, though. Some social workers held “work-ins” where they only processed emergency cases as a protest against understaffing (McCaffrey 1968). Still, nothing was done to relieve social workers’ overload of cases.

In November 1968 a group of welfare mothers ransacked the Roxbury Crossing welfare office, tearing out telephones and looting social workers’ offices over a dispute involving money for winter clothing. The union business agent for the 40 clerks in that office led them out before the welfare mothers took over, and all 600 clerks in the union threatened to stay home the following day out of fear for their safety (F. B. Taylor 1968b). A few days later the unions were satisfied that the Sargent administration was moving toward guidelines for winter clothing and that social workers and clerks were safe, so they called everyone back to work (Dietz 1968c).

Also in November 1968 a consulting firm issued a report on the state of Massachusetts’ public welfare system (Boston Herald Traveler 1968). Its findings were quite similar to the 1967 *Boston Globe* article on working conditions for social workers. Morale was “at an all time low”; “key positions are riddled with incompetence”;

“caseloads are too heavy”; and “workers in local and regional offices, since the state assumed responsibility for all welfare, have not been told what their responsibilities are and there is a general breakdown in communication from top to bottom in the welfare department” (Boston Herald Traveler 1968). The major recommendations are for computers to help with data processing, hiring more staff, and raising salaries. In December 1968 Commissioner Robert F. Ott asked Republican Gov. John Volpe for more funds for these items, but his request was ignored (Coons 1968).

By October 1969 the Department of Public Welfare still had not hired more staff, and unionized social workers were discussing striking for better pay and more staff (Lucas 1969a). In April 1970 they finally struck, even though state law prohibited striking by state employees (Kurkjian 1970). The primary concerns were decreasing caseload size, a solid grievance procedure, and receiving accurate paychecks on time. The Department of Public Welfare obtained an injunction the next day, and social workers voted to end the strike the day after that, partially due to the injunction and partially because the Department seemed more willing to negotiate (F. B. Taylor 1970d). In June 1970 the Department agreed to give social workers a raise, but they were still negotiating over caseloads in August 1970 (Boston Globe 1970b).

In August 1970 the Department of Public Welfare looked like it was finally going to get more staff (Juda 1970). The legislature authorized hiring 450 to 500 more welfare employees, and the Department started recruiting 210 new aides in September 1970 (Boston Herald Traveler 1970b). These were the first new hires since state takeover in 1968, and they were “badly needed,” according to Commissioner Steven Minter (Boston

Herald Traveler 1970b). Just between 1968 and 1970, AFDC caseloads rose by over 50%. Minter sought to build on these gains, requesting funds for 1800 new employees for the next fiscal year (Liston 1971).

Even with these new hires, the Department of Public Welfare desperately needed more staff (Longcope 1971b). When Commissioner Minter mounted a review of the eligibility of one-quarter of the state's total welfare caseload, he found that 25.7% of Medicaid cases were not actually eligible, and 28% of those on General Relief in Boston were not eligible (Marchand 1971). While General Relief statewide also had a relatively high ineligibility rate (14.1%), statewide AFDC (2.7%), DA (1.6%), and OAA (1.2%) had much lower percentages. Both the president of one of the social worker unions and Minter argued that the reason for all these mistakes was lack of adequate staff. A few months after this, a special legislative committee investigating welfare released a report that was highly critical of administrative practices in the Department of Public Welfare (Merton 1971a). While noting the criticism, Commissioner Minter stated that "little or no comment is made about the failure to approve sufficient personnel and competitive salary levels to accomplish legislative mandates, or that legislative approval has been withheld for the establishment of necessary positions to implement community service centers provided for in the 1968 welfare reorganization package" (quoted in Merton 1971a).

The legislature and the governor continued to undermine public welfare through not providing funds for sufficient numbers of personnel or adequate salaries. In 1972 750 social workers demonstrated at six different locations throughout the state to protest budget cuts by the House Ways and Means Committee (Longcope 1972a). The president

of the Massachusetts Social Workers Guild promised more demonstrations if the cuts, which would mean the loss of hundreds of social workers' jobs, were not rescinded. Gov. Sargent, while running for re-election in 1974, proposed slashing the administrative portion of the state welfare budget by 6.5% for fiscal 1975 (Riley and Duncliffe 1974). The solution to this dilemma seemed to be to increase social workers' caseloads. Social workers in Dorchester rebelled against this tactic by instituting a work stoppage (Boston Globe 1973), and contract negotiations between the social workers' unions and the Department of Public Welfare were stalled over caseloads.

At the same time, effective administration was becoming more and more important. Starting in 1972, HEW began paying more attention to the error rate in each state (Campbell 1972b). HEW looked at the percentage of people who were determined to be ineligible who were actually eligible (HEW allowed 3% error), the percentage of people who were determined to be eligible who were actually ineligible (again, 3% error allowed), the percentage of eligible recipients who are overpaid (5% error allowed), and the percentage of eligible recipients who are underpaid (5% error allowed). Massachusetts' error rate of 40% was much higher than the federal error tolerance of 16% (determined by adding up the percentages in all four categories of errors). This meant that Massachusetts would be subject to federal penalties in the millions of dollars if its error rate did not improve.³⁹ Many people, including both Commissioner Minter and Richard Rowland from the Massachusetts Public Welfare Council, argued that Massachusetts' error rate would not improve without hiring more social workers.

³⁹ To be fair, very few states actually fell within the 16% allowable error in HEW's first investigation of error rates. Massachusetts had a lot of company in 40% territory.

Because hiring a satisfactory number of social workers was politically impossible, Commissioner Minter focused on simplifying eligibility determination and assistance payment calculation in concert with trying to get the funds for more staff (Kenney 1974).

Another issue in this period was a federal regulation, supposed to be implemented in January 1973, requiring “separation of services” (Kenney 1972b). “Separation of services” means that some social workers will only determine eligibility and assistance payments while others only provide counseling and other services. The divide for Massachusetts social workers was supposed to be two-thirds on eligibility and assistance payments and one-third on counseling and other services. Social workers were heavily opposed to this change, as most of them got into the profession to work on the counseling side, and that is not where most of the jobs would be. The announcement about this change came when social workers’ unions and the Department of Public Welfare were already on poor terms due to disagreement on how many cases each social worker should have to cover, so separation of services was not implemented until 1974. This change was probably effective in reducing the error rate that concerned HEW, but it represented a substantial shift in the role that social workers were supposed to play. Most social workers were now bureaucratic automatons rather than autonomous professionals helping people get back on their feet. This shift had long-term consequences for attracting competent personnel.

All of the debate over adequate staffing and the appropriate caseload for social workers finally came to a head in late 1974. In October 1974 US District Judge Frank H. Freedman ruled on a class action suit filed in December 1973 on behalf of public

assistance recipients who did not have social workers assigned to their cases (Miller 1974). Judge Freedman found that the Department of Public Welfare and the Office of Human Service (which oversaw the Department) violated federal law by failing to provide assistance with “reasonable promptness” to approximately 35,000 welfare recipients (Miller 1974). He directed Commissioner Minter and Secretary of Human Services Peter Goldmark to present a plan to deal with all of the uncovered cases within two weeks. In December 1974 Judge Freedman ordered Minter, Goldmark, and Administration and Finance Secretary David Marchand “to file with the Legislature within 10 days a request for supplemental appropriations sufficient to fill all presently authorized social workers jobs in the Welfare Dept. and to create and pay new social worker positions to July 1, 1976” (Harvey 1974). In his order the judge stated that he expected the legislature to approve the appropriation request expeditiously. If the legislature had not appropriated sufficient funds by February 5, 1975, the judge would consider withholding all federal matching funds for public assistance programs.

This, then, is the state of state bureaucrats at the end of this period. Social workers worked in such poor conditions that it was difficult to perform the routine tasks their jobs required, and all welfare offices were constantly understaffed. The number of people receiving assistance increased dramatically, and the response was to increase social workers’ caseloads and to try to make the mechanical aspects of the job (i.e., determining eligibility and assistance payments) easier. Furthermore, social workers were still underpaid, earning an average of \$10,000 a year in 1974 (\$44,239.35 in 2010\$). It seemed that the only way to get adequate staffing was for welfare recipients who were

adversely affected by the legislature's persistent refusal to sufficiently fund welfare personnel to sue the state. Nothing less than a court order requiring a satisfactory number of social workers, along with a threat that all federal funding would be eliminated if the order was not followed, would suffice.

Because Massachusetts continued to be one of the most generous states despite the lack of high state capacity, this section does call into question whether high state capacity needed to be maintained in order to preserve generous assistance payments. My perspective is that the stagnation in average family benefits in the early 1970s reflects Massachusetts' waning state capacity. Prior to this period, the state Department of Public Welfare never had much trouble with obtaining adequate appropriations, and benefit levels generally kept up with or exceeded the rate of inflation. It should be noted that the legislature was the key factor preventing higher state capacity. Legislators who faced voters every two years were not willing to raise taxes to maintain a generous welfare system when that system was the source of a significant amount of controversy.

Race and Immigration in AFDC, 1965-1974

In contrast to the early years of AFDC, race played an enormous role in this period. While it was not usually openly discussed, misperceptions about the racial composition of the AFDC caseload were pervasive, and they affected the public opinion on the desirability of having a generous welfare program. Newspapers often did report accurate information, but actual data could not change public perceptions. This concern about the racial composition of the AFDC caseload manifested itself through a public

fixation on the problem of welfare fraud as well as through a desire to keep people who had recently moved to Massachusetts from receiving public assistance. Ultimately, the realization that African-American women received AFDC—and that some of them were willing to demand a better public welfare system—contributed to the loss of public support that AFDC recipients experienced in this period.

Before discussing what was said about AFDC recipients, I want to begin with data on the demographics of the caseload in this period. A 1967 study found that 77.9% of AFDC recipients statewide were white (Morris et al. 1969). As one might expect, Boston was responsible for most of the nonwhite caseload. In Boston 54% of AFDC recipients were white while 44% were black; 17% of the city's population was black in 1965. In the rest of the state the caseload was 91.5% white and 8.2% nonwhite. Families usually had two or three children, and almost four out of five of those children were under 12 years old (Lucas 1969b). Over 70% of children receiving AFDC were born “under marital status” (Marchand 1970b). While 10% of the caseload had fathers at home, 60% of those fathers were incapacitated. Although Boston does have a substantial proportion of African-Americans receiving AFDC, this is probably a good indicator of just how disadvantaged the population was. It is not difficult to believe that blacks in Boston were two to three times more likely to be poor than whites in Boston in 1967.

The data on migration is also less sensational than many commentators might have expected. Drawing on the same 1967 report, most of the mothers were born in Massachusetts (65%) (Morris et al. 1969). States where welfare mothers were born included New York (9.1% of the mothers born outside Massachusetts), Rhode Island

(6.5%), Alabama (5.7%), Maine (5.5%), and North Carolina (4.8%). An additional 4.3% of welfare mothers not born in Massachusetts were from the Cape Verde Islands, and the remaining number were from approximately 30 other states or territories. As Morris et al. (1969:89) stated: “There does not seem to be a direct relationship of people migrating to the Commonwealth to obtain welfare funds. Welfare assistance seems to be relevant for these ethnic and minority groups at some critical point in their life after their arrival.”

The Massachusetts Public Welfare Council conducted a study in 1972 that had similar findings (Ayres 1972a). Whites were 70% of the AFDC caseload statewide, and 65% of AFDC mothers were born in Massachusetts. Again, the largest number of mothers who were not born in Massachusetts were from New York, where welfare benefits were actually higher than in Massachusetts. The Council also reported that less than 1% of the caseload was found to be committing welfare fraud.

Because so much of the contempt directed at welfare recipients was based on actions taken by welfare rights activists, it is important to discuss the racial composition of welfare rights organizations. Welfare rights activists were largely African-American women, although welfare rights organizers tended to be young white college students. At the beginning of the welfare rights movement in Boston, the welfare rights movement was more diverse. According to the *Boston Herald Traveler* (1966), a July 1966 rally “contained roughly equal numbers of Negroes and whites, as well as some Puerto Ricans, carrying signs in both English and Spanish.” While there are occasional reports of Puerto Rican welfare rights activists through the years, there are essentially no representations of white welfare rights activists from 1968 onward. Gertrude Nickerson, who was involved

with the original welfare rights group in Boston, Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW), was white, but she is the only identifiable welfare rights leader who was clearly white. She, along with the other MAW leaders, lost power after the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) started organizing Boston in 1968. As best I can tell, most of the leaders of Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) chapters were black women. There is some evidence that this was a deliberate strategy, as African-American women were thought to be more intimidating to elected officials and welfare bureaucrats (Bailis 1974). Some chapters that were not predominantly minority still elected black women into leadership positions because they thought it would demonstrate militancy. African-American women also dominated the photographs that accompanied newspaper articles on welfare rights organizations. A casual observer could easily think that only African-American women were part of welfare rights organizations, and this likely led to a lot of the negative perceptions of welfare recipients in general.

Another aspect of this is the racial composition of Massachusetts and of Boston. Massachusetts' overall population was 3.1% black in 1970, and the Boston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) was 5.5% "Negro or other" in that year (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1972). The SMSA, it should be noted, contained almost half of the entire state population (48.1%). When the central city area is separated from the rest of the SMSA, the percentage of the central city population that is "Negro or other" is 18.2%. This represented an almost 70% increase over the 1960 "Negro or other" central city population. Looking at the population outside the central city, the "Negro or other" category constitutes less than 2% of the non-central city SMSA population. The upshot of

all of this is that the African-American population in Massachusetts was heavily concentrated in central-city Boston. This means that it would have been easy for many white Massachusetts residents to avoid all contact with African-Americans, never having their preconceptions and stereotypes challenged by actual relationships or interactions with African-American Massachusetts residents. Some white Massachusetts residents may not have even realized that there was a substantial black population in Boston—or that it was very disproportionately poor—until they read newspaper articles or watched television news stories about the welfare rights movement or urban riots.

This probable lack of contact between white and African-American Massachusetts residents—or lack of contact between those receiving AFDC and those not receiving any welfare assistance—may explain why all attempts to correct misperceptions failed. As Neil Fallon, a regional official from the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare, speaking at the Tufts Assembly on Massachusetts Government in March 1967, stated: “We can’t seem to break the image people have that Aid to Dependent Children families include a man sitting around the house watching color television while he drinks nine bottles of beer” (quoted in Dietz 1967g). Sometimes condemnation came from sources that should have known better, such as social workers. One former social worker charged that welfare mothers were producing “litters of illegitimate children” at a public hearing on Boston’s welfare system in June 1967 (F. B. Taylor 1967b). Other speakers accused welfare mothers of wanting telephones mostly “to bring more and more illegitimate children into the world” and argued that some welfare recipients were prostitutes (F. B. Taylor 1967b).

While there were some people who defended welfare recipients (mostly either social workers, social work professors, welfare bureaucrats, or welfare recipients themselves), most of the letters to the editor about the welfare rights movement in both the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald-Traveler* were closer to this August 20, 1968 letter from Pauline Thomas in Somerville, who is referring to a satirical op-ed piece that made fun of welfare recipients:

Believe me, you wrote about the poor, starving MAWS, just as I would have written had I the gift. But I have become so nauseated at the sight and sound of these belligerent females that I hope steps will be taken to shut them off, and keep them off TV, which they just love. I was one of seven children, my father worked hard in a factory, long and dreary hours. I wore so many made over and re-styled clothes that I didn't know what to do with a brand new winter coat a neighbor gave me.

I could have wept over the sad plight of the 7-year-old whose MAW demanded a \$70 desk for her, and the poor underprivileged MAW who just had to have a \$496 divan . . . and how about all the silver ware, the china, the overdrapes and other asinine items too numerous to mention? The unmitigated gall and boldness of those shameless females! (P. 22)

One wonders if this level of vitriol would have been directed at poor white women who organized for better treatment and higher benefit levels. Given the data at hand, it is impossible to definitively prove that the race of welfare rights activists affected how they were perceived, and Gertrude Nickerson, the only white welfare rights leader who garnered any attention, seemed to be treated roughly the same as other welfare rights leaders (though she did get more press attention than many other leaders, either because she sought that out or because the press felt more comfortable with her). My assessment is that any people acting as some of the welfare rights activists did would have gotten overwhelmingly negative press and public opinion would not favor them, but there was

an extra layer of disapproval due to the perception of black welfare rights activists as “uppity.”

The disdain with which many regarded welfare led to some wild accusations. In October 1969 Rep. Roger L. Bernashe, a Democrat from Willimansett, dressed in overalls and visited bars where welfare recipients could be found (Sewell 1969). He charged that “the increasing number of recipients who come here are recruited by sharpies who provided their transportation expenses. The reason they picked Holyoke was because of its attractive welfare benefits. The state has the highest benefits in the country” (quoted in Sewell 1969). According to Bernashe, bar patrons who came from out of state told him:

There were recruiters who went to Puerto Rico to get people to come up here. These recruiters posed as travel agents and had brochures printed in Spanish. The welfare recipient, who was poor, was given money by these recruiters to travel to Holyoke. The recipient had to sign a note and make payment to these recruiters. I saw a big line of recipients at the post office making out money orders after they had received their checks. (Quoted in Sewell 1969:10)

In addition to Puerto Rico, Bernashe claimed that many people were coming from Vermont in order to receive more generous welfare benefits. Bernashe admitted that he had not met any recruiters or glimpsed any brochures. Gov. Sargent sent his special assistant for Spanish affairs, Ivan Gonzalez, to Holyoke, and Gonzalez determined that Bernashe’s allegations were overstated (Caldwell 1969). While the caseload had almost doubled in a little over a year, that was in line with increases across the state. Of 134 pending cases, 44 involved Puerto Rican families, though there was no evidence that there was any recruitment process. Nevertheless, Bernashe submitted a bill that would set assistance payments at the level of the state where the recipient previously resided if the

recipient had been in Massachusetts for less than two years. After two years of residence, recipients could receive benefits at Massachusetts levels.

Another charge related to Puerto Rican migration surfaced in 1974. At a meeting of the Business Development Council of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Federal Reserve Bank economist Richard F. Syron said that Puerto Rico's government created brochures to persuade its citizens to move to Boston to take advantage of Massachusetts' high welfare benefit levels (Boston Herald Traveler 1974). Another member of the council said he had recently read a San Juan, Puerto Rico newspaper that recommended Boston as a destination for Puerto Rican emigrants due to its generous public welfare programs. A couple months later Syron indicated that he had been misquoted (E. Corsetti, Hasset, and Duncliffe 1974). He stated that "the Puerto Rican government doesn't encourage migration but will tell anyone wanting to move to the mainland that there are differences in welfare from state to state" (E. Corsetti et al. 1974). Syron and another Federal Reserve economist, Frederic B. Glantz, conducted a study on migration and welfare, finding that "the very upper limit" is that "migrants receiving welfare account for about three percent of the entire state budget," or \$93 million (Glantz quoted in E. Corsetti et al. 1974). According to Glantz, in order to get to that \$93 million or 3% figure, "you have to assume that everyone who moved to Massachusetts did so solely for welfare benefits—and that's obviously not the case" (Glantz quoted in E. Corsetti et al. 1974).

The Massachusetts Public Welfare Council's 1972 report attempted to demolish some of the most prominent myths about welfare, and the *Boston Globe* chose to

highlight rebuttals to the top five myths about welfare on its editorial page. The *Globe* noted that the Boston Chamber of Commerce had funded the study, so it was hardly coming from a perspective that was overly sympathetic to welfare recipients. The five myths were: 1) “Half of all our state budget is going to people on welfare;” 2) “A lot of our welfare money goes to chiselers;”⁴⁰ 3) “The welfare rolls are loaded with able-bodied people who just don’t want to work;” 4) “Welfare is high-living—booze, color TVs and Cadillacs;” and 5) “Most of those on welfare are Blacks and Puerto Ricans who have come here to ‘get on the dole’” (Boston Globe 1972). The facts: 1) While 42% of the state budget went to welfare, the federal government reimbursed half of those expenditures, so welfare actually accounts for 23% of the state budget. 2) Less than 1% of cases contain fraud, and failure to adequately fund welfare administration is part of why fraud continues to exist. 3) “Three-fourths of the 423,000 welfare recipients are too old to work or too disabled or are children. Another 50,000 are mothers of dependent children under six. Of the 40,000 remaining, 28,000 are mothers whose dependent children are over six, and the rest, including 2300 unemployed fathers enrolled in the Federal Work Incentive Program, report monthly to the job placement bureau of the Department of Employment Security” (Boston Globe 1972). 4) If welfare truly provided a fabulous lifestyle, one would think people would stay on it as long as possible. Instead, the average stay on welfare is less than 2 years. 5) Seventy percent of welfare recipients are white, and only 4-5% are Spanish-speaking. Also, most welfare recipients who were born out of state were from New York, where welfare benefits are higher.

⁴⁰ “Chiseler” was a common term in this period for a welfare cheat.

This admirable attempt to set the record straight was doomed to fail. Both Boston newspapers also published a number of stories profiling welfare recipients and their problems in this period. Up close, many welfare recipients seemed sympathetic, and the facts never supported some of the most egregious accusations and myths. It is unclear, however, if there was any evidence that could change the minds of some people who opposed the very concept of welfare. Consider Pauline Thomas, who wrote the passionate letter-to-the-editor about welfare rights activists. Is this *Boston Globe* editorial or the report on which it is based likely to change her mind?

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of how the issues that legislators and others considered important were unmoored from reality is the debate over welfare fraud. There is one newspaper story in which Suffolk County Probate Judge Robert G. Wilson, Jr. complained of widespread welfare fraud in 1965, another story in which he and a justice from the Boston Municipal Court continue to complain about welfare fraud in February 1968, and nothing else appears until August 1968, after welfare rights activists start demanding the furniture to which they are entitled under Department of Public Welfare rules. Once welfare rights activists start being “uppity” and insisting upon getting as many benefits as possible, concern about welfare fraud emerges.

As a result of welfare rights activism, the Legislature’s Committee on Social Welfare decided to investigate the public welfare system. An August 1968 *Boston Herald-Traveler* article about the investigation noted that five of the ten committee members were “facing stiff fights for re-election,” including the chairman, Democratic Sen. Beryl Cohen (T. Taylor 1968). With all the public outcry about welfare recipients

getting more and nicer furniture than they deserve, the Committee on Social Welfare was under enormous pressure to find fraudulent activity, and the pressure would have been particularly intense for legislators who were in danger of losing their seats.

Against this backdrop, the Committee on Social Welfare—in actuality, just Sen. Cohen—released its report on welfare abuses (Gallagher 1968). The report seems to have been leaked to Thomas C. Gallagher, a columnist for the *Boston Herald-Traveler* who covered political issues. Gallagher appears to be rather biased against the concept of public welfare, and whoever leaked the report must have known that he was releasing information to someone who would sensationalize it. (My suspicion is that Cohen leaked it.) Gallagher broke the story on the Sunday front page, with the headline “Flagrant Welfare Abuses Bared.” Here is the list of abuses that Gallagher (1968) details in his story:

One Boston cab company, in a single month, collected \$47,000 from the public till for transporting welfare recipients.

Presuming the month was an average one, the cab company in question picks up half a million dollars a year just from servicing those on public assistance in the city of Boston.

A welfare recipient who broke his arm ran up taxi fares on 19 of 21 days, ostensibly to travel to and from the hospital.

Welfare mothers in the capital city, the legislative committee discovered, hire a cab to take them to a hospital, and then retain the services of the cab while they make a shopping trip downtown and visit a relative before returning home, all at public expense.

The law prohibits the use of cabs by welfare recipients if there are less expensive means of transportation, except, of course, in case of emergency.

There are numerous cases of welfare recipients who pick up their checks and return to the welfare office the next day to report they have lost them.

New checks are issued. And when both checks return canceled, they bear the same signature, yet nothing is done about requiring restitution.

Some welfare recipients move as many as six times in six months, and one moved three times in a single month. Almost invariably the same mover is involved, in each instance, at a \$120 fee.

The Department of Public Welfare allows Boston recipients \$6.75 a month for a telephone, but a telephone can be obtained for \$2 a month less.

Welfare recipients are given \$5 to purchase a bedsheet, but members of the committee on social welfare purchased sheets of excellent quality for \$2.37 each.

The furniture dealers struck gold when the state Department of Public Welfare relaxed its restrictions on the purchase of household furnishings by public welfare recipients.

In July, it cost the taxpayers approximately \$250,000 to pay for furniture for welfare recipients in Boston alone. The following month the figure jumped to more than \$600,000.

It is important to note that many of these accusations do not constitute fraud. For example, expenditures for taxis are allowable under certain circumstances, and there is no evidence provided that some or all of the \$47,000 for taxis was for circumstances that do not meet the criteria. Similarly, the fact that one can acquire a telephone or a bedsheet for less than what the Department of Public Welfare allots for a telephone or a bedsheet means that the Department's standards of assistance may need to be changed, not that anyone is committing fraud. Finally, the Department did not relax its restrictions on the purchase of household furnishings. Recipients had always been eligible for such purchases, but they did not know they were eligible and did not request items. The special needs system only worked if a small portion of eligible welfare recipients asked for items, so the large volume of special needs requests overwhelmed the Department and

became quite expensive. Other accusations that came later, such as a dentist making \$164,000 over the course of seven months for treating welfare recipients, were similar in that they did not alone constitute fraud (Wilson 1968). Some charges, such as Medicaid paying for veterinary treatment for a pet, seemed outrageous.

Eventually it came out that what Cohen included in his report were requests for reimbursement that were almost uniformly denied. Medicaid never paid for veterinary treatment for a pet, for example, although a request to do so was submitted. When Attorney General Elliot Richardson investigated the charges Cohen lodged in his report, he found “no evidence of civil or criminal wrong” (Wilson 1969). The Committee on Social Welfare “voted not to print Cohen’s welfare report until substantial changes are made” (Boston Globe 1968b), and Republican members of the committee issued a minority report as a “rebuttal” to Cohen’s report in March 1969 (Liston 1969). In the minority report Sen. Ronald C. MacKenzie (R-Burlington) and Rep. Robert A. Bellmonte (R-Framingham) write that Cohen was trying to “generate headlines and hysteria while presenting a misleading picture of the programs involved. It is poorly documented, sensationally written, and could not have been intended as a serious comprehensive assessment of the problems associated with our public assistance programs” (quoted in Liston 1969). It may be important to note that the governor, attorney general, and these two legislators were Republicans while Cohen was one of the more high-profile and influential Democratic legislators.

All of these accusations garnered substantial attention from both major Boston newspapers. Professional associations of doctors, dentists, and pharmacists responded to

charges that they were gouging taxpayers by saying they were committed to rooting out fraud, but they needed more evidence (Black 1968; Botwright 1968; Cobb 1968). They were concerned that their professional reputations would be damaged. While the *Boston Globe* stopped giving the story wall-to-wall coverage in less than a week and corrected misperceptions in articles and editorials once the facts became clear, the *Boston Herald-Traveler* did no such thing, as far as I am able to tell. Indeed, a February 13, 1969 letter-to-the-editor from John P. Riordan, executive assistant to Commissioner Robert Ott, corrects factual errors from a February 7, 1969 article that arise from that article's reliance on the Committee on Social Welfare report that Cohen and his staff wrote. According to Riordan (1969), "On Feb. 7, the lead story in the Herald Traveler stated that the federal government will launch an 'intensive' audit of the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare. The story referred to the 'allegations of the massive misuse of welfare money as outlined in the Nov. 19 report of the Joint Committee on Social Welfare.'" Riordan went on to repeatedly cite the Attorney General's report, explaining how each instance of fraud that the article mentioned had no merit. Thus, it seems that the *Herald-Traveler* was committed to the idea of widespread welfare fraud, even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

Unsurprisingly, Thomas C. Gallagher broke the next big story on welfare fraud in his regular column in the *Herald-Traveler* (Gallagher 1970). A special House committee, composed primarily of representatives from the Springfield area, was investigating reports of abuses in the Springfield welfare office, one of the larger welfare offices outside Boston. Interestingly, the reports initially came from a taxpayers group in

Springfield, which had heard from social workers in the office that the Department of Public Welfare was paying welfare recipients' expensive telephone bills, sometimes as much as \$221 a month (\$1,242.27 in 2010\$) (Kelley 1970). It turned out that the Springfield office was rather poorly run, and the Legislature was concerned that the problems were not specific to Springfield. As Gallagher asked in his initial column: "If this is happening in Springfield, is it not happening all over the state, particularly in such big cities as Boston?" (Gallagher 1970).

To determine if the Springfield situation was unique, the Legislature established a special legislative committee—one that had a \$100,000 budget and the ability to hire investigators—to examine Massachusetts' welfare system (Lucas 1970). It may be important to note that the committee was formed at the behest of Democratic leaders like Speaker of the House David M. Bartley a few months before Republican Gov. Sargent faced voters in the 1970 election. Democrats were trying to make a campaign issue out of the "welfare mess" while Sargent tried to counter with his flat grant plan. As Carol Liston (1970a) notes in her analysis of the members of the committee, it seemed like Democrats wanted to rail against the welfare system rather than come up with constructive ways of reforming it:

The two chairmen, for example, are disappointing to those who want an impartial probe. Sen. Robert Cawley (D-West Roxbury), who is actively campaigning for Kevin White⁴¹ for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, is Senate chairman. Cawley has not distinguished himself in the Legislature as a keen or deep thinker.

⁴¹ Democrat Kevin White was Boston mayor at that time, and prior to that he served as Secretary of the Commonwealth. He won the Democratic nomination and ran against Sargent for governor in the 1970 election. West Roxbury, along with Roxbury itself, is part of Boston.

Bartley chose Rep. John Desmond (D-Lowell), as House chairman. Desmond is a man with a reputation for absolute integrity and honesty. But he also is a conservative and has an automatic negative view of welfare. A more neutral House chairman might portend a more objective appraisal of welfare management. Desmond is however a highly conscientious man about his committee work and responsibility.

Other Senate members will tend toward a conservative view of the welfare situation.

As for the House members, Bartley has selected two blacks, Franklin Holgate (D-Roxbury) and George Johnson (R-Roxbury). Holgate has called Sargent a 'racist' for favoring a house cut. He is also a Kevin White partisan. Johnson is likely to be pro Sargent.

Bartley has added a little touch of irony to his selection. He named Rep. Martin Linsky (R-Brookline) as a committee member. Linsky is Sargent's choice for running mate...

Other committee members selected by Bartley, even the ones he terms 'liberals' are disappointing. The house has some bright, dedicated Legislators who could make this probe an impressive public contribution. This group looks like it may do little more than toil through the vineyards of welfare cliché."

Liston's analysis was largely correct. In an opinion piece in December 1970 she wrote: "The committee, which expired yesterday, failed to fulfill any of the goals the Legislature called for. With six months, a staff of ten, 15 legislator-members, a \$100,000 appropriation, it did not even file its required report" (Liston 1970c). Nevertheless, the Legislature voted to continue the committee when it reconvened in January 1971 (White 1971). While information the committee gathered did lead to the arrest of the director of the welfare office in Revere and his assistant (Smith 1971), mostly the committee served as a convenient post from which to demagogue about welfare. For example, both chairmen told the *Boston Herald-Traveler* in November 1970 that "fraud and mismanagement in the state's public welfare system are costing Massachusetts taxpayers

\$100 million a year” (Marchand 1970a). In 1971 Sen. Cawley used his position as chairman to advocate for requiring one year of residence in Massachusetts before allowing people to receive public assistance in Massachusetts (Goldenberg 1971b).

Democratic State Auditor Thaddeus Buczko also played a minor role related to welfare fraud in this period. As state auditor, Buczko’s role was to make sure that state money was being spent appropriately, and he had jurisdiction to investigate any irregularities in the Department of Public Welfare. Starting in late 1968, he became a vocal critic of the Department: “We have a situation in which a public agency (is operated) with complete freedom and unaccountability, under an established procedure which is readily susceptible to fraud and actual embezzlement” (quoted in T. Taylor 1969). Buczko wanted the Department of Public Welfare to follow the same procedures that other state agencies did, even though it disbursed substantially more funds than any other state agency and also was required to maintain the anonymity of its clients (F. B. Taylor 1969c). He also advocated for his state auditor’s office to house a bureau of welfare fraud investigators (Merton 1971b). Mostly what Buczko did in this period was investigate many local welfare offices—in Salem (Donovan 1969), Chicopee (Boston Herald Traveler 1970c), Framingham (Giguere 1971), Cambridge (Boston Globe 1971a), and other cities and towns. The fraud he found—or, his allegations of fraud which were often disputed by the Department of Public Welfare—got a fair bit of publicity. It seemed to be in Buczko’s interest as an ambitious politician to keep welfare fraud in the news, and he was the one Democrat with authority to investigate what the Republican executive branch was doing in this period. While most of his investigations seem to take place from

1969 to 1971, he was still making news for ferreting out welfare fraud in 1973 (P. Corsetti and O'Connor 1973).

The rather constant talk about welfare fraud in the 1968-1971 period did have a couple of positive outcomes. First, it provided a strong rationale for funding a robust “fraud squad” that investigated suspicious activity. Prior to this, the Department could not adequately examine all of the instances of fraud that were brought to its attention. By January 1972 the 61-member Bureau of Welfare Auditing, located in the Department of Administration and Finance, was in operation (Ayres 1972b). This new bureau had 50 investigators, more than 6 times the number that had previously been assigned to investigate welfare-related improprieties. All the attention on welfare fraud meant that at least some aspect of the welfare bureaucracy was finally being sufficiently funded. Second, the Springfield case in 1970 provided an opening for Commissioner Robert Ott to resign (Liston 1970b). While Ott had been heavily criticized for a few years, Gov. Volpe and Gov. Sargent always supported him. With all the publicity surrounding the poorly functioning Springfield office, which was one of the larger offices outside Boston, as well as the impending legislative investigation, Ott resigned at the end of April 1970, although he said he would stay until a replacement could be found. Ott was a career employee of the Department of Public Welfare who was in over his head after state takeover. Steven Minter, who started the job in August 1970, was, by all accounts, a far better administrator. Within a month of taking the job, for example, he had reassigned the Springfield welfare director and was taking steps to improve the administration of that office (Boston Globe 1970a).

In addition to the concern about welfare fraud, many people in Massachusetts were also concerned that a substantial number of people from other states and territories were moving to Massachusetts to take advantage of its generous welfare benefits. This was a long-standing problem for some people, and legislation mandating five years of residence in the Commonwealth in order to receive AFDC was proposed in the late 1950s. Massachusetts had a one-year residency rule, but the Supreme Court declared that residency requirements in welfare programs were unconstitutional in 1969. Despite this ruling, bills re-instituting a residency requirement, and sometimes making it longer, were proposed in every legislative session from 1969 to 1974. A variation on the residency requirement that was also popular was restricting benefit levels for people who were either not born in Massachusetts or who had not lived in the state very long to what they would receive in their home states. This is what Roger Bernashe, the legislator who talked to welfare recipients at a bar in Holyoke, proposed. He was not the only person to find it appealing; the *Boston Herald-Traveler* endorsed the idea on its editorial page a couple years later (Boston Herald Traveler 1971b).

In 1971 the Legislature began to seriously consider instituting a residency requirement for at least some welfare programs. Massachusetts was not the only state contemplating such a move. New York signed a one-year residency requirement into law in 1971, causing some legislators and commentators (including Thomas C. Gallagher at the *Boston Herald-Traveler*) to argue that Massachusetts should do the same (Gallagher 1971). Despite the fact that a federal court ruled that New York's residency requirement was unconstitutional, the Massachusetts House passed its own one-year residency

requirement in August 1971 (Longcope 1971a). The Massachusetts Senate passed a residency requirement for General Relief only in March 1971 (Boston Herald Traveler 1971a). Legislators sought the advice of the state Supreme Judicial Court on the constitutionality of residency requirements, and the Court ruled that residency requirements violate the equal protection clause, ending any hopes of Massachusetts enacting such legislation (Doherty 1971).

The arguments for and against residency requirements were illuminating in other ways. For example, proponents of residency requirements often claimed that it would save a lot of money. Thomas C. Gallagher wrote: “There can be no question that New York is going to save huge sums by its one-year residency statute, and it could indirectly cost Massachusetts many more millions in public welfare” because people will move to Massachusetts for its generous benefits now that New York has a residency requirement (Gallagher 1971). Proponents who admitted that, at most, about 10% of the caseload would be affected by residency requirements had to acknowledge that cost savings would not be the primary goal. The *Boston Herald-Traveler*’s editorial page took this tack, stating that even if residency requirements did not save much money, any savings would be helpful (Boston Herald Traveler 1971b). Sen. Cawley, the co-chairman of the legislative committee investigating the welfare system, had a somewhat different perspective. He claimed that “neither myself nor any other prominent advocate of welfare reform has ever claimed that a residency requirement will save Massachusetts a dime” (Cawley 1971). Instead, according to Cawley (1971): “A residency requirement will create a climate of reform in Massachusetts. It will put the public on notice that we intend

to get a handle on the welfare mess. And—most importantly—it will put considerable pressure on the Federal government to nationalize public welfare.” Apparently, all of this was more important than passing laws that were actually constitutional.

Opponents of residency requirements also adopted a variety of lines of attack. Some said that it was unlikely to create the enormous savings that proponents claimed it would. Commissioner Steven Minter pointed out that a recent survey of General Relief recipients found that 11% were from out of state (Longcope 1971c). Others were appalled that the Legislature appeared to be in favor of passing a law that the Supreme Court had struck down. The *Boston Globe* (1971b) editorial page represented this perspective: “Openly to defy the US Supreme Court is reprehensible. Even worse is to pass a bill which in effect prohibits poor people from exercising their right to travel across state lines by banishing them whence they came, all in the name of ‘economy.’ That, indeed, is the ultimate ‘welfare fraud.’” Finally, advocates for the poor were convinced that racism was behind the appeal of residency requirements. Hubert Jones, an African-American man who chaired the Welfare Coalition, lumped residency requirements in with some other proposals, describing them all as “new forms of racism, punitive measures, unconstitutional proposals and illogical conclusions” (quoted in Goldenberg 1971b). Alex Rodriguez of the Massachusetts Committee on Children and Youth stated he was “greatly offended” by what he saw as an effort to blame Puerto Ricans for some of the problems Massachusetts was facing (quoted in Goldenberg 1971b).

Residency requirements were not the only restrictive legislation proposed that may have had racial resentment at its core. Legislators proposed a wide variety of

stringent regulations following welfare rights activism in 1968. Nothing other than residency requirements was proposed from 1965-1967, and the 1968 legislative session only had a couple bills intended to be punitive, such as one that does not allow women who have more than one illegitimate child to receive public assistance (Iannello 1968). Starting in 1969, however, and continuing throughout the rest of this period, each legislative session contained numerous examples of legislation intended either to punish welfare recipients or to take away their agency. An example of the punishing type of legislation is 1969 House Bill No. 4233 from Edward P. Coury, a legislator who represented New Bedford and who was a conservative voice on the Committee on Social Welfare: “Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any female welfare recipient who is the mother of an illegitimate child and who, while receiving welfare benefits has another illegitimate child shall be committed to an institution for observation for ninety days” (Coury 1969). He introduced the same bill in the next two legislative sessions. Needless to say, the bill never got out of committee. While this example is extreme, it illustrates the concern over having children outside of wedlock that was present in a number of bills, as well as the desire to control welfare recipients’ behavior. The other stream of thought, that welfare recipients were not competent, manifested in a number of bills that 1) required the Department of Public Welfare to pay rent and/or utilities directly to the landlord and/or utility companies or that 2) compelled the Department to buy goods (e.g. clothing, furniture, kitchen appliances, bedsheets) and distribute them to welfare recipients. The administrative nightmare that these bills would create for the Department was never addressed.

There is no smoking gun when it comes to proving that racial animus was behind concern about welfare fraud, support for residency requirements, and restrictive legislation. The best evidence is circumstantial, showing that this concern arose after welfare rights activists began demanding furniture. It became clear that most welfare rights activists were black—and they were asking for items that the general public did not believe they deserved to have. Only after this did welfare fraud become a major issue, along with proposals to restrict access to public assistance. The logic behind residency requirements was somewhat different; they were aimed at keeping Puerto Ricans from migrating to Massachusetts, and perhaps also at keeping Southerners from moving north. Most importantly for benefit levels, the realization that welfare provided income for African-American women, and that some of them were not satisfied with the assistance offered them, undermined public support for AFDC. This loss of public support meant that there was little outcry when benefit levels did not adequately provide for AFDC families.

Alternative Hypotheses, 1965-1974

Two of the alternative hypotheses—Domhoff's theory about business interests and Amenta's political process theory—have little support in this period. The evidence that business interests are concerned about welfare benefit levels is anecdotal. There are some newspaper stories in which business leaders say they are unable to find employees because welfare is too generous, but there is, as far as I can tell, there is no effort to advocate for lower benefit levels. The most prominent businessman commenting on

welfare in this period was Arthur J. Gartland, chairman of the Massachusetts Public Welfare Council, who did not favor lowering benefit levels. The evidence that elected officials chose to make AFDC more generous in order to gain votes is also thin. While the initial response to protesting welfare mothers was to grant some of their demands and to treat them reasonably well, that faded after welfare mothers began demanding furniture and other items in August 1968. Judging by letters to the editor and newspaper reports, elected officials would get more far more votes from denying benefits to welfare mothers than they would from increasing them. In fact, legislators largely moved to restrict benefits in this period, rather than expand them.

The story for Piven and Cloward's (1993) argument about the role of social movements is more complex. They contend that the caseload expansion and other generous welfare policies in the 1960s were designed to calm civil disorder and predicted that a backlash against liberal welfare regimes would ensue. This backlash would take the form of “reinforc[ing] work norms” (Piven and Cloward 1993:xiv). There is an element of truth to this argument, but there is much that this perspective misses, particularly the role of protest in turning public opinion against the poor. In order to understand the critique of Piven and Cloward’s argument, it is necessary to review the history of the welfare rights movement in Massachusetts.

Welfare mothers first came together for organized action in April 1965, when about 30 mothers sat in at Boston Welfare Department headquarters to insist that “centers for distribution of free government surplus food be opened immediately” (Plunkett 1967a). They left after two hours when welfare officials told them that those centers

would be operational in short order. The next action was in June 1966, and this is when the name of the welfare mothers' group, Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW) first becomes known. On June 30, 1966 about 30 people, including six children and nine people who were not part of MAW, marched from the South End to City Hall and the State House to demand a variety of improvements in the welfare system. An additional 15 people took some form of transportation between the South End and downtown to participate in the beginning and end of the march.

This march, the first one that MAW conducted, illustrates a number of points about the early welfare rights movement in Massachusetts. First, it was multiracial. As the *Boston Herald Traveler* (1966) reported at the time, it “contained roughly equal numbers of Negroes and whites, as well as some Puerto Ricans, carrying signs in both English and Spanish.” Second, the march had ties to events and organizations outside of Massachusetts welfare mothers. The march was “planned to coincide with the last day of the 10-day, 150-mile Welfare March in Ohio” (Grimes 1966). Also, one of the leaders of the march, Gertrude Nickerson, said that she got involved with the welfare rights movement through a neighbor who was a member of Students for a Democratic Society, also known as SDS (Davidson 1966a). According to the *Boston Globe*, “S.D.S. was trying to interest mothers on welfare to organize and demand better welfare practices” (Davidson 1966a). Third, welfare mothers were treated respectfully by government officials and had access to high-level politicians. Boston Welfare Commissioner William J. Lally met with the women at their rally on Boston Common and listened to their demands, although he did not answer any questions. A couple of African-American

politicians from Roxbury, the predominantly black part of Boston where many of the welfare mothers lived, were on hand, lending their support. The mothers then moved on to the State House, where they were able to meet with Gov. Volpe for 13 minutes in a hallway and speak with Attorney General Edward Brooke, an African-American Republican who would soon be elected to the U.S. Senate. Fourth, and finally, there was already derision directed at welfare mothers. David B. Wilson (1966), an op-ed columnist at the *Boston Globe*, wrote of one of the marchers:

Mrs. Lew wore over her golden curls a triangular abbreviated babushka of synthetic tiger skin, and her silver-painted fingernails were long, implying, in the Chinese tradition, freedom from physical labor.

In case you missed earlier accounts, M.A.W. stands for Mothers for Adequate Welfare—so far the only established semi-permanent floating bilingual and electronically equipped demonstration in the commonwealth. It would be inaccurate to call it an all-girl demonstration. Some of the mothers' male children were along.

By almost any measure, the June 30 march was rather successful. The mothers had an additional meeting with Gov. Volpe later in July, and they continued to meet with welfare officials about their demands (Boston Globe 1966b). The *Boston Globe* (1966a, emphasis in original) published a list of 10 demands that the mothers made at their demonstration:

1. All welfare rules and regulations should be made public and distributed to welfare recipients.
2. The state should eliminate its one-year residency requirement for receiving Federal Aid to Dependent Children.
3. Rent allocations should be increased, as justified by a recent welfare department survey of Boston rental costs.
4. Mothers should be able to earn \$120 a month without having their welfare aid cut.
5. Day-care centers should be provided so mothers can work or educate themselves to leave welfare living.
6. All A.D.C. budgets should be raised to a decent level.

7. Some welfare recipients should be members of the Welfare Board of Appeals.
8. Children should be allowed to save money for their education and the welfare department should match each dollar saved.
9. Welfare interviewing should be done in private at all times.
10. Fathers' support checks should go directly to the welfare office and the money included in mothers' budgets.

About half of the demands amounted to an increase in cash assistance, and an additional three demands were about making the process of obtaining benefits fairer and more dignified. The end result was that the governor sent a letter to the state welfare commissioner, Robert Ott, outlining five recommendations that came out of talks with MAW (T. Taylor 1966). According to Gov. Volpe, "the most important" recommendation called for streamlining the process of determining family budgets and the amount of cash assistance that mothers would receive (quoted in T. Taylor 1966). This was said to provide greater amounts of cash assistance and to relieve social workers of the necessity of meticulous calculations that took up too much time. These are the other four recommendations (T. Taylor 1966):

- 1—Development of a 'clear and understandable' client handbook explaining welfare budgets rules and regulations, and the filing of complete sets of rules and regulations for public perusal at welfare offices and public libraries.
- 2—Provide that court-ordered support payments be handed as an administrative transaction between the court and the welfare department, without deducting expected support payments from family budgets. This would relieve family budgets 'uncertainties' as to whether the court-ordered payments will be made to the family.
- 3—Allow earned income exemptions for children to be raised to \$150.
- 4—Develop more and better equipped day-care facilities, under private, non-profit and even public auspices to permit mothers desirous of working to do so.

Aside from a demonstration for turkeys for Thanksgiving in November 1966, the next big action for MAW was at the beginning of June 1967. There had been two small sit-ins in the previous week, which disbanded at the request of police and civil rights leaders (McNiff 1967). On the afternoon of June 1, 1967, about 30 women, including both welfare recipients and social workers, began a sit-in at the Boston Welfare Department's Grove Hall office in Roxbury. The sit-in proceeded without incident—and with the protesters spending the night in the office under police watch—until the following afternoon. June 2 was a Friday, and at 4:45pm social workers at the Grove Hall office began closing up for the weekend (Boston Globe 1967b). At this point, none of the protesters' demands, which mostly centered on process grievances like being treated respectfully by social workers and having more say in Welfare Department decisions, had been met. They also were insisting upon meeting with Boston Welfare Director Daniel J. Cronin, and he had not shown up yet. The exact sequence of events following this is unknown, but it seems that some men who were not part of the sit-in locked both the inside and outside doors with bicycle chains so that no one could get in and no one could get out (Boston Evening Globe 1967). Some social workers were locked into the building, and it seems that Cronin decided to come to the Grove Hall office after receiving a phone call from one of the social workers trapped in the building. Cronin asked to be admitted to the building to meet with the mothers, but he was not allowed inside. Instead, he was asked to stand outside the building and speak with them through a window, mostly so that the crowd outside the Grove Hall office could hear. Cronin declined. A report that a woman inside was having a heart attack prompted police to

order that protesters leave the building (Botwright 1967). The protesters refused to leave the building, so the police used wirecutters to get through the bicycle chains. Police officers encountered what they described as significant resistance:

Asked about allegations of police brutality made by those arrested at the office, [Deputy Supt. William A.] Bradley said:

‘The policy had to use some measure of force—we don’t think it was excessive—because people were trespassing, refusing to move and resisting arrest.

‘At any demonstration of this nature, there are always allegations of police brutality. It’s like beating an old drum.

‘Actually, people at the welfare office complimented the police for the restraint they showed and the abuse they took.’

Another police veteran police official—his eyes red from apparent lack of sleep—was also bitter and angry.

‘When our men tried to cut the chains on the door, and to remove people blocking the doors, they were up against planned organized resistance,’ he said.

‘I’ve worked in Roxbury for years, and I know C.O.R.E., the N.A.A.C.P. and the other Negro welfare organizations. I’ve been at a lot of their protests, and they have always been passive resistance affairs.

‘But this was a different type of group. This wasn’t passive resistance. It was active resistance.’

He noted that ‘we didn’t have an easy time.’ He said one of his sergeants suffered a heart attack at the welfare building, and another had his arm broken. At least two policemen were bitten by dogs, he said.

He declined comment on police brutality charges. However, he did say: ‘Sure, we made some mistakes Friday night. I wish they had never happened.’ (Botwright 1967)

Unsurprisingly, welfare mothers had a different perspective:

‘Deputy Saia put his hands up and said ‘get them, beat them, use clubs if you have to, but get them out of here.’

Mrs. Doris Bland of Dorchester, a leader of Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW), gave this description Saturday of what took place Friday night in the Grove Hall welfare office.

She and Mrs. Katheryne Moore, another MAW member, said they were 'beaten, kicked, dragged, abused, insulted and brutalized' by policemen after Boston Deputy Supt. Joseph Saia gave his order to clear the office.

The women said some of the policemen used 'vulgar language' and the word 'nigger.'

Immediately after Deputy Saia spoke, the women said, policemen 'picked up a 17-year-old boy and threw him through the glass in the office door.' (F. B. Taylor 1967a)

Somewhere in all of this chaos, the crowd outside the building began to get involved, and the altercation between police and protesters erupted into a full-scale riot. By Saturday evening 44 people were arrested, 45 people were injured, and a fire had destroyed two buildings (F. Mahoney 1967). Things seemed like they were going to calm down until a firefighter was shot in the wrist late Saturday night (Murphy 1967). Violence continued through Sunday night, as gunshots, bricks, and bottles rained down from on top of buildings (Anglin 1967). There was still looting as well as fires and property destruction. While the sit-in set off the violence, it was clear that the rioting was mostly conducted by young African-American teenagers and men, and had little to do with the demands that welfare mothers were making. African-American male civil rights leaders, including one who had been mistakenly arrested shortly after midnight on Saturday morning, were instrumental in helping Roxbury calm down.

The mothers did try to use the implicit threat of violence to get welfare officials to meet their demands, which had evolved over time. There was a list of seven demands, all but one of which were process-oriented, that they outlined before the riot. The one non-

process-oriented demand, for the “welfare budget [to] increase to ‘an adequate level so that we won’t need special grants for every little thing,’” was about benefit levels, though (Boston Globe 1967f). That demand fell by the wayside after the riot, however. In a list of ten demands that MAW released on Saturday, the demand about benefit levels was omitted, and the only demand related to the amount of cash assistance received concerned how much money they could earn while receiving AFDC (Riddell 1967). As Doris Bland, the head of MAW, stated on Saturday, “Our main concern now is about the power to make decisions” (Bland quoted in Riddell 1967). In addition to demands related to decision-making power and being treated with respect, they also wanted the state Department of Public Welfare to embark upon a public relations campaign intended show that welfare recipients were decent, hardworking people. Cronin attempted, at least in the press, to keep communications open between MAW and the Boston Welfare Department. On Sunday night he produced a three-point plan to deal with overcrowding at the Grove Hall office (Boston Globe 1967a). MAW leaders were upset that he put forward this plan through the press rather than contacting the group directly. On Monday MAW “presented Boston Mayor Collins with a 48-hour ultimatum to correct welfare abuses ‘or they would take other action’” (Friedman 1967). MAW and the mayor had been in a stand-off since Saturday about where to meet. Mayor Collins stated that “the mayor of Boston conducts the city’s business in city hall” while MAW leaders insisted upon meeting Roxbury, as they said that the problem began in Roxbury and involves Roxbury residents (Friedman 1967).

The upshot of all of this was a lot of negotiating and a small amount of change.

These are the demands that Cronin agreed to meet:

1. 'Guarantee that no checks will be cut off pending investigation, and that all clients will be informed of any evidence which affects their cases and of its source.'
2. 'Guarantee that all case workers may be available to their clients every morning.'
3. Inform all recipients of their right to 'belong to any organizations' and to 'dignified and respectful treatment.' (F. B. Taylor 1967c)

MAW said that they could not come to an agreement with Cronin on the demands that they saw as most important:

- 1—The removal of all police officers, including plainclothesmen, from welfare offices.
- 2—Directing welfare workers to observe clients' rights 'to dignified treatment and respect.'
- 3—The establishment of a welfare grievance committee with recipients in the majority. (F. B. Taylor 1967c)

Mayor Collins established a bi-racial panel composed of four white community leaders and four black community leaders, including the African-American attorney for MAW, in the wake of the riot, and the panel issued a report about a month after the riot that contained a number of recommendations for the Boston Welfare Department (Hannan 1967). It backed the MAW demand for the removal of policemen from welfare offices but stated that a grievance committee composed of welfare recipients was not legal. Instead, it recommended that advisory committees containing welfare recipients be formed. Presciently, it also suggested the formulation of "clear cut criteria . . . for the

inclusion of special need items such as household furnishings, stove, refrigerators, beds, etc.” (quoted in Hannan 1967).

The special needs program would become the Achilles heel of the state Department of Public Welfare. This program, which allowed recipients to request items that were not covered in their grants, was the source of virtually all of the subsequent welfare rights activism. Over the next year there would be demonstrations, in August 1967 and March 1968, for back-to-school clothing and Easter clothing. While clothing was covered, at least theoretically, in the grant, welfare mothers argued that it wasn't enough to clothe growing children. Other items that could be requested included furniture, kitchen items like pots and pans, and household necessities like bedsheets. Social workers had to investigate each request, and recipients were given a voucher if it was determined that they had a need for the items they requested. What was particularly galling to welfare recipients was that their social workers had the final say on whether or not they would receive special needs items as well as the amount that recipients could spend on those items. The discretion of individual social workers governed which items recipients were allowed to purchase and how much they were allowed to spend. For example, if a social worker was sympathetic to welfare recipients, she could decide that a four-person family needed more than two plates, and the number of plates and amount of money that could be spent on them was entirely up to her. If the social worker was not sympathetic to welfare recipients, she could also decide that two plates was an adequate amount of dishware for a four-person family.

On July 30, 1968, just a month after the state took full control of all welfare operations, a group of 60 welfare mothers conducted a sit-in at the Roxbury Crossing welfare office (Auerbach 1968). They arrived at 11am, demanding standardized rules and procedures for special needs requests as well as requesting items themselves. Welfare officials spent the day negotiating with the protesting mothers, and they agreed to establish standardized rules and procedures. At some point during this discussion telephones were added to the list of items that needed to be standardized. When 5pm came and there was no agreement on allowing the mothers to have telephones, the mothers refused to leave the office. Commissioner Robert Ott came to the office at 5:30pm, and he met with the mothers until 8pm, when everyone left. In order to get the mothers to leave, Commissioner Ott agreed to give them “state-paid-for telephones and increased furniture allotments” (Auerbach 1968).

This decision, to allow the protesting mothers at the Roxbury Crossing office to obtain telephones and furniture, had a number of consequences. First, the success of the sit-in emboldened leaders in the welfare rights movement to claim that their ultimate goal was to destroy the welfare system by bankrupting it (Riddell 1968a). The strategy was that welfare recipients would request all the assistance to which they were legally entitled. The welfare system only functioned if a substantial number of people who were eligible for assistance did not apply for assistance; it would be too expensive to actually provide everyone who was eligible all the benefits to which they were entitled. This strategy exploited this discrepancy by encouraging people to apply for welfare and to request as many special needs items as they could. Once the welfare system was in crisis

as a result of being stretched well beyond all its appropriations, there would be a call from local and state leaders to nationalize the welfare system. The welfare system could then be replaced by a national guaranteed income program. This idea clearly came from Bill Pastreich, the organizer that the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) hired to help Massachusetts welfare rights activists. The NWRO promoted this idea, which its leader, George Wiley, took from Columbia University professors Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, in all its affiliates. This strategy was not popular among government officials. Commissioner Robert Ott condemned the protests as part of a “national movement to overthrow and overburden welfare systems to make them inoperable” (Ott quoted in Creamer 1968b).

Second, allowing the protesting mothers at Roxbury Crossing to have telephones and furniture provided a powerful incentive for other welfare recipients to engage in similar activity. Thus, welfare mothers flooded several other offices, arguing that they should also get phones and furniture. This caused enormous hassles for staff at local offices, as they could not process the special needs requests quickly enough. On August 1, the state Department of Welfare froze all special needs requests because there was no way that they could deal with the sudden influx of requests and continue routine work (Dietz 1968b). Commissioner Ott even threatened that the regular biweekly assistance checks might be delayed if welfare offices continued to be disrupted (F. B. Taylor 1968f). Despite this warning, organized groups of welfare mothers demonstrated at offices throughout the Boston area, Worcester, Lynn, and Waltham. On August 8 Bill Pastreich, the NWRO organizer, declared that 500 welfare rights activists in four cities would start

submitting requests for furniture when the state Department of Public Welfare lifted the moratorium on special needs requests (Keene 1968). After that they planned on submitting requests for clothing en masse. Pastreich did walk back earlier statements about wanting to destroy the welfare system, though: “We are not here to break the welfare system. The ultimate goal of our group is to obtain a minimum income for all \$4000 a year for a family of four” (quoted in Keene 1968).

August continued to prove a busy month for welfare rights activists and state welfare officials. Responding to recipients’ desire to have a set price list for all the household items they could receive through the special needs program, the state Department of Public Welfare issued price guidelines for furniture and household supplies on August 12 (Boston Evening Globe 1968c). Activist welfare mothers were not pleased with the guidelines, even though the Department allowed more for some items than the mothers did on their own version of price guidelines, mostly because they thought they should have been consulted (Boston Evening Globe 1968a). Because they thought the Department should increase the prices it was willing to pay for a variety of items, welfare mothers mounted sit-ins and sleep-ins in addition to continuing to try to directly negotiate with state welfare officials. The upshot of all of this was that 12-member Interim Special Committee composed of welfare recipients and citizens-at-large developed a new set of price guidelines for furniture, clothing, and household supplies (Creamer 1968a). This committee recommended emergency clothing grants of \$80 to \$270 per family in addition to price guidelines that were closer to guidelines issued by welfare rights activists than the guidelines that the state Department of Public Welfare

released (F. B. Taylor 1968e). Ott refused to implement the emergency clothing grants, saying it would cost over \$6 million (Giguere 1968). He did announce new guidelines on furniture and household supplies that seem to have taken the committee's ideas into account, though (F. B. Taylor 1968c). These guidelines were significantly more generous than the previous state guidelines, although not as generous as the guidelines that welfare activists created. Ott also set in motion a process to create clothing guidelines in which advisory committees in each of the state's seven regions would submit their own guidelines.

Third, allowing the mothers at Roxbury Crossing to get telephones and furniture was the first step in turning public opinion against welfare recipients. Welfare recipients were seen as greedy, and Ott was seen as weak for giving into their demands. Judging by letters-to-the-editor in the two main Boston newspapers, demanding furniture was substantially worse than setting off a riot. There were quite a few letters about how welfare recipients did not deserve to have furniture but no letters calling for restricted cash assistance in the wake of the 1967 riot. The real issue seemed to be that some working families were unable to afford items that the Department of Public Welfare deemed necessities. Here is a rather typical letter-to-editor on the issue from a housewife in Newton, a Boston suburb:

May I ask what the average mother of three children and a wife of a working man earning a gross salary of \$130 to \$140 a week does when she wants new bedding, tables, lamps, dishes, spreads? She saves, scrimps, does without and waits until she can afford them; then shops for the best value and certainly not from the highest priced groups.

While she is waiting to buy these necessary luxuries, she is also paying top prices to the dentist, doctor, and pharmacist because she doesn't have a state agency

paying these bills for her. Why not? One asks. She must be eligible on such a small salary. No, she has had the foresight to save some money before the children were born, and her husband years back took out and has struggled to maintain life insurance. The result of this planning is that the family cash assets (cash value of insurance is included) are above the maximum for Medicaid. They have protection for death but not enough for life.

What do they do? Work is the answer, do without, and not go around threatening people and demanding that they have a right to receive the best of everything by virtue of their existence, but not even try to earn for themselves.

On the personal side, my husband has worked two jobs and eventually I'll work when I can place the baby in school. We do this for necessities like food, clothing, medical expenses and hopefully advanced education of our children so that their lot might be easier. We are not living this way to support an increased welfare base so that lazy, demanding and selfish people can live better than we on our increased tax money. (Greene 1968)

This feeling that welfare recipients were living high on the hog on the public dime proved difficult to dislodge. Some welfare mothers organized a tour of their homes to show that they desperately needed furniture (Riddell 1968b). According to the *Boston Globe* reporter who went to the event:

The picture that emerged from the tour in South Boston's D street projects was:
 —Families living without sheets, blankets, lamps or mattresses because they weren't aware that the welfare department provides such items;
 —Families where children are sleeping four and five to a bed;
 —Mothers living on budgets so low they must write to charity agencies for winter clothing and shoes for their children;
 —Mothers who cannot return to school or work because they have small children and no money for baby sitters.

'I had no choice but to go on welfare,' Mrs. Frances Banusiewicz, a shy, plump, sandy-haired mother of three, said.

'My husband wasn't working and left me. I had no training. I left high school to help out my mother. I had done some work in hospitals, but with three small children it would cost me half a week's pay for a baby sitter. I'd like to take a home-making course, but there's nobody to mind the kids.'

She showed the stained mattresses where her children sleep without sheets or blankets.

‘I didn’t know I had a right to get sheets,’ she said shyly. ‘My social worker said I had a right to a parlor set, but I thought everything else had to come out of my check.’

She said she and her small children share two drinking glasses, two forks, and two towels. They eat in shifts. She has no curtains and no living room lights. (Riddell 1968b)

Even though articles like this, in which the actual living conditions of welfare recipients are detailed, appeared throughout the late 1960s, the public image of welfare recipients requesting furniture was of conniving, greedy women manipulating the Department of Public Welfare. The only actual representation of something resembling that caricature came from the recipients at the original July 31 sit-in at Roxbury Crossing:

‘I spent about \$1,600,’ one of the mothers said, displaying a stack of official vouchers showing:

Queen-size bedroom set—\$499

Three beds—\$219

Kitchenette-Dinette combination stainless steel—\$189

Sofa—\$159

Other items included a pole lamp, \$39.99; a chair, \$89.95; an end table, \$29.95; a coffee table, \$34.95; a child’s desk, \$79.95; dishes, \$39.95; stainless steel pots and pans, \$29.97, and a blender, \$27.99.

Her companion, who said ‘I felt like I owned the store,’ said she spent ‘close to \$1,000,’ and produced vouchers showing:

Six spreads—\$69.94; 10 pillowcases and eight sheets, \$37.62; pots, pans and silverware, \$59.87; a playpen, \$29; a high chair, \$20; a maple set of drawers, \$69.95; towels, \$25; an iron and ironing board, \$29, and a utility cabinet, \$35.

And a real nice table cloth I’ll save for Christmas,’ she said, pointing to a \$5 voucher.

They also claimed that 75 or 80 others from their MAW group spent an average of \$800 to \$900 apiece.

One of the women said she gets a \$124 welfare check every two weeks plus \$28 every two weeks from her former husband for her five children.

Two veteran women officials at the Roxbury Crossing office said they didn't think the mothers spent 'quite that much' but neither would confirm or deny the mothers' claims.

However, they did say that during the mass confusion of Tuesday approximately 135 mothers were given vouchers that included some items previously verified by social workers and other items quickly added by the mothers themselves.
(Creamer 1968c)

An additional point is that openly stating that their goal was to break the welfare system did not endear welfare rights activists to anyone who was not already left of center.

The activism in August 1968 set a new normal for welfare rights activism in Massachusetts. After Ott released new guidelines for furniture and household supplies in early September, welfare rights activists were quiet until early November, when they mounted a campaign to demand winter clothing. Some of the activists were more militant, harassing social workers and causing property damage at the Roxbury Crossing office (Boston Globe 1968a). Telephones were torn out, and eight offices were "ransacked" (Jordan 1968). Because he was concerned about their safety, the clerks' union agent told clerks to leave the building, which many of them did. Days later, 75 welfare rights activists stormed Commissioner Ott's office (Boston Evening Globe 1968b). The *Boston Evening Globe* (1968b) reported that welfare mothers "put their feet up on desks, played with typewriters and adding machines, and sang, 'We Shall Overcome.'" Ott did release guidelines for a few articles of winter clothing for children

(the regional committee had not finished creating their guidelines), but welfare mothers were unhappy that there were not guidelines for all of winter clothing they wanted (F. B. Taylor 1968d). Lieutenant Governor Sargent was deputized to broker a deal between welfare rights activists and the Department of Public Welfare on the winter clothing issue, but this did not end up going well. Forty-one activists (some welfare mothers, some students who were part of SDS) were arrested during a sit-in outside Sargent's office at the State House (F. B. Taylor 1968a). None of this improved either public opinion or legislators' opinions about welfare mothers.

While welfare rights activism continued at a relatively strong pace for the next two years, it followed the path set in August and November 1968. In March 1969, with the clothing guidelines that Ott promised back in August still nowhere to be found, more than 800 welfare mothers across the state demonstrated for Easter clothing (F. B. Taylor 1969b). Nothing came of these demonstrations, as the state Department of Public Welfare already needed to request a substantial deficiency appropriation from the Legislature. In fact, the Department instituted another freeze on special needs requests, this time due to lack of money rather than lack of time (F. B. Taylor 1969d). The freeze was softened and then lifted when the new fiscal year began on July 1 (Boston Herald Traveler 1969). In early August 1969 the Department of Public Welfare issued its final clothing guidelines, taking the wind out of the sails of the back-to-school clothing campaign that welfare rights activists had planned (F. B. Taylor 1969e). The Department also directed social workers to inquire about any children's clothing needs before the August 18 demonstration that welfare rights activists were staging (Boston Globe 1969). This

strategy may have worked, as there is nothing in the newspapers about protests on August 18 or later in the month. In November 1969 there was another demonstration for more generous winter clothing allowances, which, again, seemed to accomplish little (F. B. Taylor 1969a).

The object of welfare rights activism, at least, changed after December 1969, when Gov. Sargent announced the flat grant system. From December 1969 until September 1970, when the flat grant system was implemented, protests were aimed at preventing the institution of the flat grant system. Protest actions were occasionally more militant, which did not win welfare mothers very many converts. Welfare rights activists hanged and burned Gov. Sargent in effigy on Boston Common, right across the street from the State House (F. B. Taylor 1970b). They also took over the state Department of Public Welfare's computer center (F. B. Taylor 1970c). Thirty-eight people were arrested in a raucous demonstration at the State House the day before the flat grant system was scheduled to start (F. B. Taylor 1970a). None of this stopped the flat grant program.

The flat grant program spelled the end of vigorous welfare rights activism. While welfare mothers occasionally attended hearings en masse to register their disapproval of welfare cuts, they no longer regularly engaged in sit-ins and more militant action. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the special needs program—and the recruiting drives that welfare rights organizers built around the program—were uniquely structured to facilitate mass action (Bailis 1974). Welfare mothers experienced material gain immediately upon receiving their special needs vouchers, which helped recruit many of them to the cause. Maintaining the same level of activism without the immediate material

gain provided by the special needs program was impossible. Second, there were divisions within the welfare rights movement in Massachusetts dating back to August 1968 (Bailis 1974). The original members of MAW felt like their movement had been taken over by outsiders, particularly by Bill Pastreich, the NWRO organizer. While the newspapers referred to welfare rights activists as Mothers for Adequate Welfare for some time after August 1968, the reality is that it was really the Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) at that point. Even within MWRO, though, there were a number of leadership struggles that took attention away from direct action. Third, organizers, who were never particularly committed to the cause of welfare rights activism, lost interest (Bailis 1974). In his book on MWRO Bailis (1974) notes:

What was perhaps most striking about the explanations given by MWRO staff members for decisions to participate was the absence of references to the presumed ends of the welfare rights movement—that is, to improvement in the lives of welfare recipients. As is shown in Table 5-1, only 7 of 45 respondents explained their decision in terms of changing the welfare system or bringing benefits to welfare recipients. This stands in sharp contrast with the 22 respondents who made direct reference to the process of community organization. It was almost as if the means were justifying the ends: formal goals were less important than building poor people's organizations. Staff members discussed the nuances of organizing drives endlessly, they rarely mentioned such programs as a guaranteed annual income or President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan. (P. 83)

How does this history about welfare rights activism in Massachusetts fit with Piven and Cloward's perspective? First, their assertion that the initial impulse of government officials is to satisfy protesters' demands, and that this leads to an increase in benefit levels, is corroborated. All of the price guidelines—on furniture, clothing, and household supplies—were likely much more generous than they would have been otherwise as result of the demonstrations. Many recipients increased their standards of

living as a result of welfare rights activism, and this improvement should not be overlooked. Second, however, there was a cost to activism, particularly to more militant activism. The July and August 1968 sit-ins for furniture irreparably damaged the cause of generous benefit levels. Demanding items that some working-class families could not afford, even though the Department of Public Welfare allowed welfare mothers to have such items, turned public opinion, and state legislators' opinions, against welfare mothers. While there was a short-term increase in benefits, the long-term effect was to dampen sympathy toward welfare mothers and to make the idea of raising benefit levels so unpopular that it was very unlikely to happen. Creating civil unrest as a strategy for increasing the generosity of public assistance may work for groups like the unemployed in the 1930s, but welfare mothers in the 1960s were a small part of the population and already not well-regarded. They needed public opinion, which influenced how legislators acted, on their side if they wanted the state to spend more money to meet their needs. While the idea that government officials respond to civil disorder by placating protesters is corroborated by the Massachusetts example, Piven and Cloward neglect the associated cost, which makes welfare rights activism essentially a wash when it comes to benefit levels in Massachusetts in this period.

Conclusion

The welfare system in Massachusetts in 1965 was quite different from the welfare system in Massachusetts in 1974. With the move to a system that was no longer funded or administered on the local level, power was consolidated at the state level. While this

increased state capacity to a certain extent, it also meant that the legislature had more control over AFDC, and welfare activists had a well-defined target. Despite the rapid caseload growth in this period, the state legislature chose not to increase the welfare budget proportionately, which hampered caseworkers' abilities to meet their client's needs and which contributed to the decline in benefit levels after 1970. In this period, the fact that Massachusetts' welfare system served people of color also became well known, and this influenced public perceptions about AFDC. Legislators began introducing bills that were far more restrictive than almost anything introduced previously. Welfare rights protesters were also active in this period, which is related both to the realization that black and Puerto Rican Massachusetts residents received assistance and to the rise of restrictive legislation. Activists were able to get benefit levels increased, but these increases came at the expense of public support for welfare recipients. Protesting welfare recipients were seen as lazy and ungrateful, even when they were making legitimate points about the welfare system, and this affected how much money Massachusetts residents were willing to spend on welfare for years to come. Benefit levels themselves went through a serious transformation as they shifted from being increased as the result of taken-for-granted cost-of-living increases to being decreased as state appropriations failed to keep up with caseload growth. By 1974, Massachusetts, and the nation, had a welfare system that would persist, largely unchanged, until welfare reform in 1996.

**GENEROSITY IN AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN,
1975-1996**

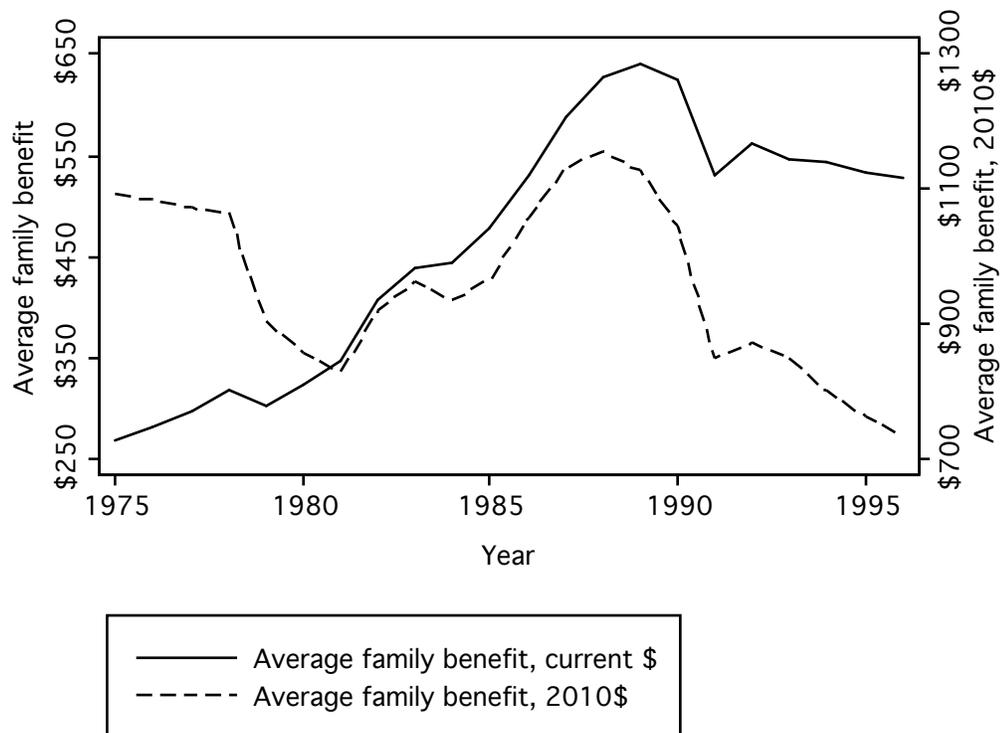
After the turmoil of the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the last 20 years of AFDC were much quieter. Massachusetts bucked the national trend of declining real benefit levels through benefit levels that increased in nominal and real terms during the 1980s. From the late 1980s to 1996, benefit levels decreased in nominal and real dollars, however. The 1980s benefit level increase was the result of a number of factors, most prominently a booming state economy and a savvy activist community. Racialized stereotypes about welfare recipients, while not extraordinarily prevalent in Massachusetts, likely played a role in preventing further increases. The legislature, not the Department of Public Welfare, is the entity that determined benefit levels in this period, so benefit levels were subject to political perceptions in a way that was quite different from the first 35 years of federalized cash assistance to single mothers.

Benefit Levels in AFDC, 1975-1996

By this period benefit levels and cost-of-living increases were politicized, and trends in benefit levels correspond to who occupied the governor's office and how the state economy was performing. There were also some technical changes to benefit levels. The legislature created clothing allowances as a way to increase benefit levels without giving cost-of-living increases, and the process of determining benefit levels continued to be simplified.

Figure 12 shows the trend in real and nominal benefit levels in the 1975-1996 period. There is a slight increase in nominal benefits during Michael Dukakis' first term as governor, which was 1975-1979. Toward the end of that term, nominal benefit levels decreased slightly and then mostly rose through all of the 1980s. Real benefit levels declined sharply from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, however. This decline seems to have begun at the end of Dukakis' term and continued into the first years of Edward King's 1979-1983 term. Real benefit levels rise throughout the rest of the 1980s, only declining at the end of Dukakis' third term, which was 1987 to 1991. Both nominal and real benefit levels decrease from the late 1980s to the end of the period in 1996. The decrease is more substantial in real terms than in nominal terms, though.

Figure 12. Average Family Benefit in Nominal & Real Dollars, 1975-1996



There are a couple of important things to note about these trends. First, the increase in both nominal and real benefit levels in the 1980s is unusual. The national trend in the 1980s is stagnation in nominal benefit levels and decline in real benefit levels. Something different is happening in Massachusetts to cause increases like that. Second, as will be discussed in the state capacity section, the rise and fall in benefit levels bears a strong relationship to the state's fiscal shape. When the economy is doing well, welfare recipients are able to get benefit increases. When the economy is floundering, welfare recipients do not get increases and sometimes get cuts.

Figure 13. Average Family Benefit & Caseload, 1975-1996

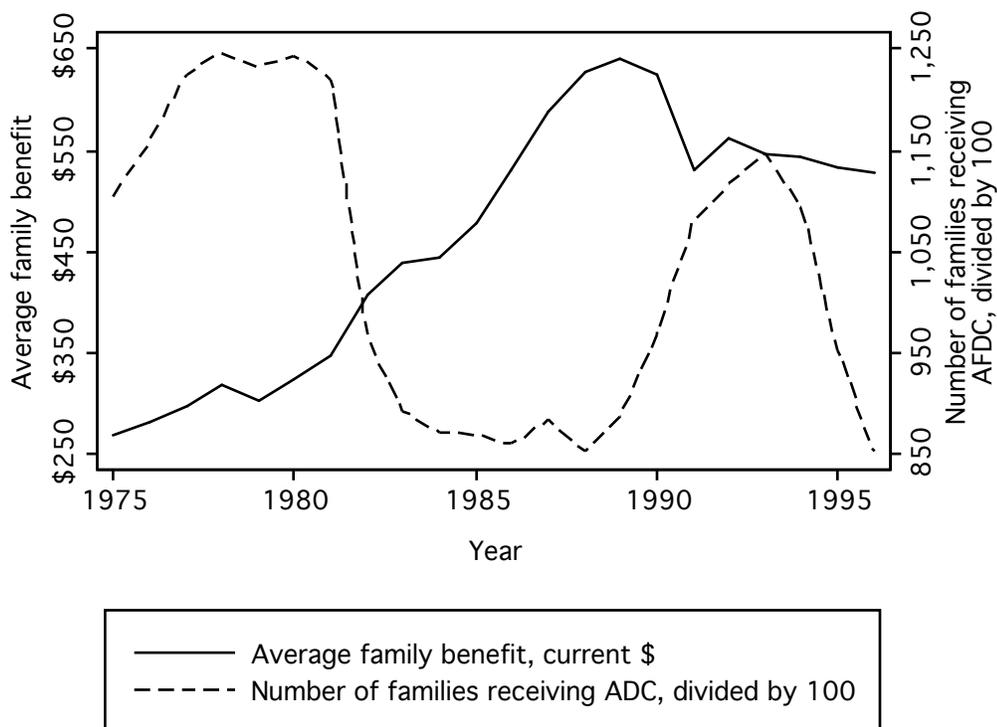


Figure 13 displays the relationship between changes in nominal benefit levels and changes in the AFDC caseload. After increasing in the mid-late 1970s, caseloads stay the same until the early 1980s, when they plummet dramatically. This steep decline was driven by changes at the federal level. The 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act changed eligibility requirements, which drove 26,000 families from AFDC in the early 1980s (Boston Globe 1984b). Caseloads remained low until the late 1980s, when worsening economic conditions caused caseloads to rise again. This rise peaked in 1993. By 1996 caseloads were back at 1980s levels.

There does seem to be a relationship between benefit levels and caseloads in this period. Falling caseloads precede the 1980s increase in nominal benefit levels, and newspaper evidence indicates that the reduced number of people needing assistance helped justify the benefit increases. Similarly, when caseloads began rising again in the late 1980s, benefit levels stopped increasing. In fact, the largest decrease in nominal benefit levels in this period happens after most of the caseload increase has occurred.

Due to virtually complete newspaper data and the ability to track changes in the Massachusetts administrative code, I am able to provide a comprehensive list of proposed and actual changes to benefit levels. This list is available in the appendix. Here I discuss major trends in benefit levels.

The first Dukakis term was characterized by fiscal turmoil, but increases in benefit levels did occur. Gov. Dukakis tended to talk tough on welfare, deciding against giving cost-of-living increases on more than one occasion, so the public impression was that of a cost-cutter. There were increases in 1975 and 1976, and a 1978 increase was

retroactive to 1977, however. The fiscal 1979 budget included a cost-of-living increase that was written in such a way as to raise the benefit level for current recipients but not make more people eligible for assistance. While the Legislature was ultimately responsible for this, they acted on the advice of the Governor and his staff. Whether or not the increase would actually be granted was still up in the air when Dukakis lost the 1978 Democratic primary to Edward King.

Edward King began his term as governor by taking a hard line on welfare. He refused to give the fiscal 1979 cost-of-living increase and also opposed a cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1980. Instead, Gov. King proposed a new plan that would give some welfare recipients an extra \$100 to \$250 annually. This plan was widely condemned and ended up motivating welfare advocacy groups to organize against the governor. King eventually approved cost-of-living increases for fiscal 1980 and fiscal 1981 as well as clothing allowances for fiscal 1982 and fiscal 1983.

Dukakis began his second term in 1983, and he continued to follow in King's footsteps by supporting a clothing allowance rather than a cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1984. Starting halfway through fiscal 1985, however, Gov. Dukakis endorsed cost-of-living increases almost every year of his second and third terms. Some of these cost-of-living increases were fairly large, too. Fiscal 1986 had a clothing allowance and a 9% cost-of-living increase; fiscal 1987 saw a clothing allowance, rent allowance, and a 10% cost-of-living increase; fiscal 1988 included a clothing allowance, rent allowance, and a 7% cost-of-living increase; and fiscal 1989 incorporated a clothing allowance and a 5.5% cost-of-living increase. This is, by far, when benefit levels rose the most in the post-

1960s period. Dukakis was still governor for the fiscal 1990 and 1991 budgets. (William Weld took over in the middle of fiscal 1991.) These budgets had clothing allowances instead of cost-of-living increases, primarily due to the early 1990s recession, which decreased state revenues.

Republican Governor William Weld's administration was noteworthy for the total lack of attention to benefit levels. Fiscal 1992 was so shaky that the clothing allowance only came through in the latter part of the fiscal year, and it was half the amount that had been given in previous years. The budgets for fiscal 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997 included the \$150 per child clothing allowance that had been established in the Dukakis years but no cost-of-living increases. In fact, only decreases were proposed in this period. In 1994 the House passed a 5.5% decrease, but the Senate did not, and final budget legislation did not include a cut in benefit levels. Massachusetts passed its welfare reform bill in 1995, before the federal reform, and this legislation reduced benefit levels by 2.75%. This benefit cut seemed to come from the Legislature rather than the Governor, although Gov. Weld seemed to have no problem in going along with it.

The innovation of clothing allowances deserves closer examination. It is first mentioned in a March 27, 1981 *Boston Globe* article: "The state Legislature's Human Services Committee, acknowledging there is little support on Beacon Hill for a welfare cost-of-living raise this year, decided yesterday to fight instead for a winter clothing allowance of \$50 per welfare child" (Boston Globe 1981a). This \$50-per-child winter clothing allowance did become part of the fiscal 1982 budget. The next year the clothing allowance was increased to \$75-per-child, and the *Boston Globe* (1982c) states, "the

legislature substituted [the clothing allowance] for the governor's recommended 5 percent cost-of-living increase.” A *Boston Globe* (1983c) editorial describes clothing allowances as “an imaginative program designed by welfare advocates two years ago as an alternative to a traditional cost-of-living increase which has the unfortunate effect of reducing such things as food-stamp benefits.”

This is the sum total of evidence regarding how the clothing allowance came about and how it was perceived.⁴² Based on this, it appears to be a method of raising benefit levels that has a couple of advantages over cost-of-living increases. First, it is less expensive, although this also means that welfare recipients may be getting less money as a result. Second, it is not, technically, an increase in benefit levels. This means: 1) it does not increase the number of people eligible for assistance, and 2) it does not raise income according to food stamp guidelines. Due to the design of the food stamp program, any increase in income leads to a decrease in the amount of food stamps available. Minor increases in benefit levels are sometimes a wash for welfare recipients because their food-stamp incomes decline. Clothing allowances give a minor increase in AFDC benefits without affecting food stamps.

During the Dukakis administration, clothing allowances seem to become somewhat severed from these roots. In the first budget of his second term, Dukakis doubled the clothing allowance and did not propose a cost-of-living increase, but there is no indication that he saw the clothing allowance as a substitute for a cost-of-living

⁴² The rent allowance that appears in a couple of the mid-1980s Dukakis budgets is essentially the same thing: a way to increase assistance without raising benefit levels. There is virtually no discussion of it in newspaper data, aside from advocates justifying it based on the increasing price of rent in Boston.

increase. The clothing allowance becomes a basic component of the human services package each year. From fiscal 1984 to fiscal 1986 it is \$125 per child, and the \$25 increase in fiscal 1987 is the Legislature's doing, not the governor's. The clothing allowance stays at the \$150-per-child level from fiscal 1987 through fiscal 1997, with the exception of fiscal 1992. This year was particularly cash-strapped, and it was Gov. Weld's first term. It seems like Gov. Weld tried to cut the human services budget to the bone and encountered some pushback. Welfare mothers protested at the State House, and the most prominent welfare advocate group began a persuasive lobbying campaign (Hanafin 1991; Kelly 1991). When caseloads remained below projections, there was enough money in the budget to give AFDC children a \$75-per-child clothing allowance in March 1992 (Jordan 1992). Weld seems to have learned his lesson, as there was a \$150-per-child clothing allowance every year after fiscal 1992.

Clothing allowances were not the only administrative or technical change to benefit levels in this period. The mid-late 1970s and early 1980s saw the end of the tailoring of benefit levels to recipients' specific situations. In 1975 the Department implemented what it called the "consolidated grant" (Stevens 1975). This new method of payment eliminated special allowances, which provided extra cash for special diets, excess rent and fuel expenses, and other variations on the basic grant. Instead, benefit levels would be based solely on family size and income. Most recipients would be getting somewhat more money as a result of the change because the Department decided to distribute the money being spent on special allowances evenly among all recipients (Fuerbringer 1975d). About 30 percent of recipients would experience a decline in

benefit levels, and this decline would be larger if the recipient family had a number of allowances.

There was some criticism of this shift (Fuerbringer 1975c). Human-service advocates, legislators, and the State Advisory Board to the Department of Public Welfare all wanted to implement the consolidated grant in such a way as to not lower any recipient's grant amount (State Advisory Board 1975). The Department said implementing the consolidated grant in that fashion would cost over \$25 million annually, and the change as proposed would already cost an additional almost \$7 million. According to the Department of Public Welfare, the switch to consolidated grants was necessary to help lower Massachusetts' very high error rate in calculating assistance payments. Lowering the error rate would save money and reduce the chance that HEW would impose penalties. It should be noted, too, that Steven Minter attempted to institute a change like this in 1973, but he encountered too much resistance from welfare recipients and their allies (Kenney 1976). By late 1975, after Gov. Dukakis had ordered a number of cuts on human service programs, human service advocates appeared to be too worn down to fight the consolidated grant, and it went into effect on November 1, 1975.

The consolidated grant did seem to have the intended effect. The error rate went down, as did the penalty that HEW could impose for Massachusetts' above-average error rate (Fuerbringer 1976). (HEW had not penalized any state for high error rates, but federal officials often mentioned that it could.) There was a \$17.50 decline in the total value of monthly benefits for a family of three, including medical assistance and food stamps, from January 1975 to June 1976 that was attributed to the consolidated grant, and

the new program still had its critics (Bruzelius 1976). Opponents of consolidated grants said the grants “made the system less responsive to real needs and produced a de facto benefit cut for a large number of recipients” (Bruzelius 1976). The director of the Cambridge welfare office thought they were an excellent innovation that “lessened hostility and confusion” around determining grant amounts for recipients (Bruzelius 1976). She also believed that recipients themselves found the consolidated grant system fairer and that social workers had an easier time calculating grant amounts.

When the consolidated grant was implemented, Massachusetts still had the quarterly grant. The quarterly grant was part of the flat-grant system that went into effect in 1970. When the Department decided to eliminate the special needs program that provided household items and furniture, it converted the money it was spending on the special needs program to a quarterly check that each AFDC family received. The money was intended to be used for large purchases and for paying off overdue bills. In 1980 the quarterly grant was folded into the regular monthly grant (Department of Public Welfare 1980). This change did not garner much attention, although there was some criticism from human-service advocates. According to human-service advocates, recipients liked the program because it allowed them to purchase furniture and other high-cost items (Boston Globe 1980). Also, folding the quarterly grant into the biweekly assistance checks caused a rent increase for recipients in public housing because the public housing authorities did not consider the quarterly grant regular income. Rent in public housing was based on a percentage of income, so any increase in income meant an increase in rent as well. The Department of Public Welfare did not have much of a rationale for ending

quarterly grants. According to Deputy Commissioner Ralph Muller, the Department was “not running a school in forced saving, and we felt it was appropriate for us to let people make their own decisions about how to spend their money” (quoted in Kenney 1979c). Nevertheless, it was clearly simpler for the Department not to administer quarterly grants, so quarterly grants were terminated about a decade after they began.

Benefit levels over this period continue some of the same trends established in the previous period. Inflation does erode the value of AFDC benefits, but this does not hold true for most of the 1980s. Why benefit levels increase faster than inflation in the 1980s is the key question about benefit levels in this period, particularly since most other states experience a decrease in inflation-adjusted benefit levels in this period. The trend toward simplifying the determination of AFDC benefit levels reaches its apex; calculating benefit levels does not get easier than identifying the number of members in a family and subtracting any income from the level of assistance given to a family of that size with no income.⁴³ Finally, the development of the clothing allowance as a way to get extra money to AFDC recipients without giving them a cost-of-living increase is intriguing. It would be interesting to see if other states innovated similarly.

State Capacity in AFDC, 1975-1996

In this period benefit levels become very strongly linked to Massachusetts’ economic performance. While it has generally been true that a good economy led to

⁴³ Income determination is actually rather complicated with its own set of arcane rules about how various types of income are treated. Benefit calculation, however, becomes quite simple.

greater revenues, greater revenues have not always translated into higher benefit levels. For example, in the 1950s benefit levels simply increased along with inflation, not according to how much revenue was available or how the state's economy was faring. In the 1975-1996 period, however, AFDC benefit levels were more widely known and more politicized. In newspaper reports, increases in benefit levels seemed to be justified more on the basis of the state being able to afford them than on the basis of recipients needing them to live decent lives. As I discuss after reviewing the entire period, data on gross state product per capita support the analysis derived from newspapers.

When Democrat Michael Dukakis began his first term as governor in 1975, Massachusetts' economy was not doing well, and Dukakis inherited a number of problems from his predecessor, Republican Francis Sargent. Sargent left an enormous deficit, and it is difficult to determine the exact amount from contemporaneous accounts. The *Boston Globe* (1983b) pegged the deficit at \$687 million. To provide some idea of what percentage of the state budget that is, the budget that House Ways and Means proposed in September 1975 was \$2.79 billion, and the budget for welfare programs (including Medicaid) was \$1.4 billion (Fuerbringer 1975b). The deficit, then, was around half of the annual welfare budget and a quarter of the total state budget. This called for some serious austerity measures. Dukakis "was forced to sign into law the largest tax package in state history" (Boston Globe 1983b). He also cut Medicaid and General Relief sharply but left AFDC rather intact.

The rest of Dukakis' first term involved climbing out of that fiscal hole. The deepest cuts to welfare programs were rescinded within a couple years, and by January 1978

Dukakis felt comfortable proposing a \$4.75 billion budget that included increases for welfare programs (Collins 1978). Of course, this budget for fiscal 1979 was also Dukakis' last budget before the 1978 gubernatorial election, so it was in his interest to be magnanimous and to tout that the state's economy was improving. Looking at Figure 12, one can see that this period, 1975-1979, contains slightly increasing nominal benefits and slightly decreasing real benefits. Considering the state's fiscal and macroeconomic situations, this is actually a small victory.

In late 1978 Dukakis lost the Democratic primary to Edward King, who subsequently won the general election. This was an important episode in Dukakis' political life because it indicated that liberals and human service advocates had abandoned Dukakis. Before running for governor, Dukakis had a reputation as one of the more liberal members of the House, and he represented a part of the Greater Boston area, Brookline, that was both wealthy and liberal. For example, Jack Backman, the longtime chair of the Human Services Committee, also represented Brookline, as did Beryl Cohen, the legislator who pushed for the state to take over the welfare system in the 1960s. Human service advocates heavily supported Dukakis in 1974, and they felt betrayed when he spent a substantial portion of his first term slashing welfare programs. Consequently, they sat out the 1978 primary and taught Dukakis a lesson that he never forgot.

In the short term, human service advocates and their allies may not have taken the best tactic in sitting out the 1978 Democratic primary, as Edward King was undoubtedly more conservative than Dukakis. King hired Robert Carleson, who was in charge of

California's welfare system as part of Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial administration, as his welfare adviser for the campaign (Robinson 1979). This was a hint of things to come, as King later supported President Ronald Reagan's approach to welfare:

If Edward J. King went to Washington last week known as Ronald Reagan's 'favorite Democratic governor,' he may well have returned home as the President's favorite governor, period.

Few, if any, Republican chief executives who assembled in the nation's capital for the National Governors' Association (NGA) annual winter meeting could have offered any stronger support for Reagan's New Federalism than King. (Boston Globe 1982b)

King was less inclined to increase funding for welfare programs than Dukakis, although he did preside over budgets that included cost-of-living increases. His time as governor seems to have been one of economic stagnation. There was no fiscal crisis, as in Dukakis' first term, but there was also no expansion, and King usually attempted to save money in his budgets (or to prioritize aid to localities over a more generous welfare program). In addition to his attempt to forego the 1979 cost-of-living increase, he also tried to institute a mandatory work program for AFDC recipients. All of these actions did not endear him to human service advocates, who supported Dukakis again in the 1982 Democratic gubernatorial primary. Dukakis spent some of his time out of office trying to win back the favor of human service advocates. For example, he gave a speech to the National Association of Social Workers in April 1982 in which he said that the "past four years under the King administration have been disastrous for human services" and called King "Ronald Reagan's favorite governor" (Dukakis quoted in Boston Globe 1982a).

Human service advocates were in an excellent position when Michael Dukakis won re-election in 1982. The economy was finally starting to pick back up, and Dukakis

never forgot the lessons of the 1978 Democratic primary. As the Massachusetts economy began to expand rapidly, Dukakis used that expansion to justify increases in benefit levels. It should also be noted that the booming 1980s Massachusetts economy—often referred to as the “Massachusetts miracle”—meant that many people were able to find jobs and leave the rolls, resulting in caseload decreases. These caseload decreases, combined with the ones due to the Reagan administration’s changes in eligibility requirements, shrunk the number of people who needed AFDC (see the dramatic caseload drop between 1980 and 1985 in Figure 13). Increases in benefit levels were not nearly as expensive when the caseload was smaller, which was another justification for them.

The good economy in Massachusetts helped Dukakis win a third term in 1986 as well as the Democratic presidential nomination in 1988. Around 1988, though, the Massachusetts economy began to slow down. This slump, which turned into the early 1990s recession, led to increased caseloads, budget cuts, and decreased revenue (Biddle 1989; Lehigh 1990). To prevent fiscal disaster, Dukakis rammed “massive” tax increases through the Legislature in 1990 (Howe 1992a). Voters were outraged over these tax increases, which led them to choose Republican William Weld to be their governor in the 1990 election.

As the first Republican governor in 16 years, William Weld operated quite differently from his predecessors, even Rockefeller Republican Francis Sargent. Human service advocates were never part of the coalition that supported Weld, and they had no influence in his administration. Having come into office during a time of fiscal and economic crisis, Weld was mostly concerned with stabilizing the situation. This included

measures that Dukakis was unlikely to take, such as eliminating the clothing allowance for children receiving AFDC for fiscal 1992. The *Boston Globe* describes this period in the early 1990s:

After three straight years of pitched political battles over taxing and spending, Beacon Hill leaders are approaching a new budget season that is likely to involve only scattered skirmishes over particular programs and tax breaks.

Almost certainly this spring will be nothing like the budget wars Massachusetts suffered through in 1989, 1990 and 1991 -- years of politically suicidal billion-dollar tax increases, gut-wrenching votes over cutting local aid and social-welfare programs and emotional debates over what state government should and can do for people.

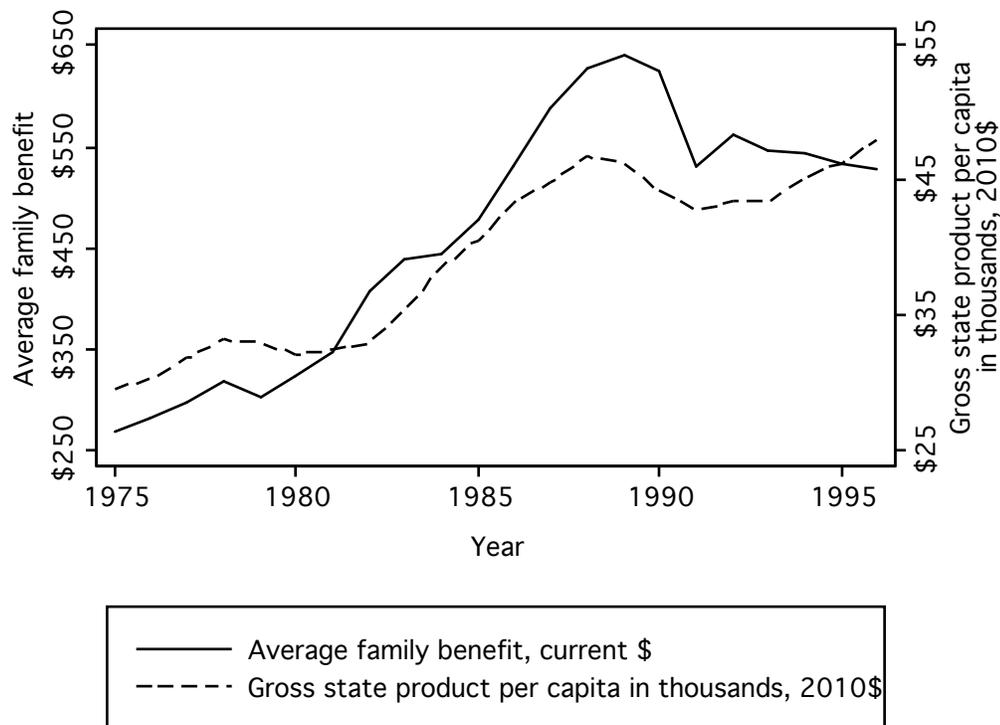
Rather, the budget debate over the next six weeks, normally the focus of the State House year, is likely to be a series of votes over only incremental spending increases or decreases. Also up for debate will be the choice among minor tax breaks. But altogether, it will be nothing like the desperate efforts of recent years to stave off fiscal chaos.

The lower-pressure atmosphere reflects Massachusetts beginning to regain fiscal stability. The state economy has gone from free fall to an uneasy bottoming out. Massachusetts may not yet have the resources to build a mansion with its state budget, but for the first time in four years, its leaders no longer have to fear the earth falling out from under the foundation. (Howe 1992b)

By the mid-1990s, the Massachusetts economy was once again on an upward trajectory. The improving economy helped Weld cruise to re-election with 71 percent of the vote in 1994 (Boston Globe 1994). Despite this, the welfare reform package that passed in early 1995 contained the first ever cut in benefit levels in Massachusetts. Welfare reform had a long and winding road in Massachusetts, and benefit cuts were not part of many earlier versions of welfare reform. Weld's initial proposal in 1993, as well as his revamped 1994 version, called for many changes to AFDC, including work requirements and time limits, but they did not decrease the amount of assistance available

to eligible Massachusetts residents. House Ways and Means Chairman Thomas Finneran, a Democrat from Mattapan, inserted a 5.5% decrease into the House's 1994 welfare reform package (Howe 1994a). The Senate removed it from its welfare reform package (Wong 1994a), and the welfare reform package that emerged from the conference committee did not include a benefit cut (Howe 1994e). There was a great deal of back-and-forth between the Legislature and the governor. The Legislature rejected Weld's 1993 and 1994 proposals, and Weld vetoed the Legislature's 1994 welfare reform plan (Howe 1994d). Democrats in the Legislature had enough votes to override the veto until two liberal female senators defected at the last minute (Howe 1994c). These senators thought the Legislature's welfare reform package was built on punishing welfare recipients rather than providing incentives to leave the welfare system, and they believed that upholding the governor's veto was the best way to get the kind of welfare system they wanted (Howe 1994b). It was clear at the time that Weld's version of welfare reform was harsher than the Legislature's version, and ultimately, something closer to Weld's version won out. After the veto was upheld, Weld funded AFDC only through February 1995 so that the Legislature would be forced to come up with a welfare reform package that he would sign (Wong 1995). Because a number of more conservative legislators were elected in 1994, the final package was more punitive than the one Weld vetoed, and Finneran fought to have a benefit cut included (Howe 1995). The 2.75% cut was smaller than the 5.5% cut Finneran sought, but it was a cut nonetheless.

Figure 14. Average Family Benefit & Gross State Product per Capita, 1975-1996



The tight relationship between state economic performance and benefit levels is easiest to see using quantitative data. Figure 14 shows the relationship between gross state product per capita⁴⁴ and average family benefit. Average family benefit in current dollars and inflation-adjusted gross state product have a very high bivariate correlation ($r=.95$).⁴⁵ One can see that, generally, benefit levels rise whenever gross state product per capita is rising. For example, in the seven-year period from 1975 to 1982 inflation-

⁴⁴ Data on gross state product come from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis while data on population size come from various years of the Statistical Abstract of the United States.

⁴⁵ I used inflation-adjusted gross state product because graphing gross state product in current dollars produces a straight line, and one cannot see variation easily. Gross state product in current dollars is somewhat less highly correlated with average family benefit in current dollars ($r=.89$), but the correlation is still very strong.

adjusted gross state product per capita grows by \$3,472. In the same period benefit levels increase by \$109. The six-year period from 1982 to 1988 is when inflation-adjusted gross state product per capita really rises. It increases by \$13,787 while benefit levels increase by \$220. The eight-year period from 1988 to 1996 sees a small increase in inflation-adjusted gross state product per capita of \$1,318, and that is entirely due to the 1996 figure, as 1995 gross state product per capita was still less than 1988 gross state product per capita. In this eight-year period benefit levels actually decline by \$99.

Newspaper data and quantitative data indicate that benefit levels in Massachusetts in the 1975-1996 period were strongly related to state economic performance. While this is somewhat different from the measure of state revenue that usually defines state capacity, state revenues are obviously, to some extent, dependent upon state economic performance. In other periods, newspapers referred to state revenues in determining if there was enough money for benefit increases while in this period it shifts to how the state economy is doing. Revenues are elided from the conversation, even though the choices that politicians make—for example, the tax increases that Dukakis pushed through in 1975 and 1990—influence available revenue. It also becomes clear that the increases in benefit levels in the 1980s could not have happened without the booming 1980s Massachusetts economy. While there were other factors involved in making the benefit increases happen, it is safe to say that excellent state economic performance was a necessary condition for the sharp rise in benefit levels over the course of the 1980s.

Race and Immigration in AFDC, 1975-1996

In this period the relationship between race, immigration, and welfare is understood but seldom discussed. After the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the demographic profile of AFDC recipients is well known, and most attempts to speak about race or immigration, at least in Massachusetts, are either trying to bring unspoken stereotypes to light or present factual information. Anti-AFDC language avoids mentioning race but draws upon racial stereotypes to argue against providing assistance.

At the national level, Ellen Reese (2005:151) contends that:

the rise of a tightly integrated network of right-wing, or ‘ultra-conservative,’ corporate-sponsored think tanks, starting in the late 1970s, played a crucial role in shifting political debate about welfare rightward and undermining public support for welfare in the 1980s and 1990s. These right-wing think tanks developed an emotionally powerful antiwelfare rhetoric that drew strength from widely held social values, such as the work ethic and individualism, and from public hostility toward poor minorities, unwed mothers, and immigrants.

This provided a basis for criticism of AFDC from politicians and the media, in which both groups “frequently appealed to racial stereotypes in their attacks on welfare, although racist antiwelfare rhetoric was more subtle and coded than in the past” (Reese 2005:173). The groundwork that right-wing think tanks laid allowed Ronald Reagan to condemn welfare recipients in Chicago, for example, without mentioning race, but painting a race-specific portrait of problems in the welfare system.

In Massachusetts this kind of antiwelfare rhetoric meant that proponents of a more generous welfare system had to rebut racialized stereotypes about welfare recipients to show that AFDC recipients were worth the extra funds. For example, the Massachusetts Women’s Caucus, which successfully fought for a 10 percent cost-of-living increase for

welfare recipients in the Massachusetts House, found that “their most difficult argument wasn't the money—it was the widely held negative reputation of welfare mothers” (Dabilis 1985b). Similarly, the Dukakis administration mounted a public relations campaign “to help convince employers that recipients are not lazy, shiftless and no-count, but are willing and motivated workers” (Jordan 1985c). This was part of the Dukakis administration’s much-lauded Employment and Training program that helped move AFDC recipients off the rolls and into paid employment. Apparently, misconceptions about welfare recipients prevented some employers from participating in the program.

By the 1990s immigration was a larger issue than race. In 1992 the Department of Public Welfare was accused of “hiring too few bilingual employees, ineffectively using those they do have on staff, and otherwise posing systemwide language barriers that prevented some clients from getting Medicaid, food stamps, General Relief or Aid to Families with Dependent Children” (Kong 1992). In 1996, when federal welfare reform excluded legal immigrants, states like Massachusetts had to make tough choices about whether to continue to fund assistance to legal immigrants through state funds (Boston Globe 1996). While the Weld administration opposed removing legal immigrants from welfare programs, choosing to use state funds to continue assistance ran contrary to its emphasis on fiscal discipline.

As in the 1935-1964 period, race was not openly discussed in the 1975-1996 era. Unlike that period, when race was not discussed because knowledge of the racial and ethnic composition of the welfare population was not widespread, in this era race was not discussed because it was well known. The turmoil of the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s

meant that the racial composition of the AFDC caseload was common knowledge by the late 1970s. This common knowledge is what made subtle attacks on AFDC that drew on racial stereotypes possible. Consequently, any attempts to make AFDC more generous had to combat these racial stereotypes, which was usually done by pointing out facts and figures about Massachusetts' welfare population. By the 1990s immigration had eclipsed race as a matter of concern, at least in Massachusetts. As this 1975-1996 period ends, Massachusetts has to decide if it is going to use state funds to continue to provide assistance to legal immigrants as the federal welfare reform law forbids using federal funds to support legal immigrants.

Alternative Hypotheses, 1975-1996

Domhoff's argument about business interests pushing for a less generous welfare state has little support in the evidence for this period. The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, a "business-backed budget monitoring group," had a reputation as a fiscal watchdog rather than as a group devoted to lowering taxes and spending (Howe 1992a). The group was even satisfied with Dukakis' 1990 tax increases, as those tax increases made the balanced budgets of the mid-1990s possible. The Associated Industries of Massachusetts, "a major Beacon Hill business lobby," was less pleased with the 1990 tax increases but never seemed to publicly advocate for lower welfare benefit levels (Howe 1992a). Citizens for Limited Taxation is the only group that actively campaigned for lower benefit levels, but it was more a group of activists opposed to taxes than a business lobby. Barbara Anderson, the director of Citizens for Limited Taxation, argued against a

cost-of-living increase in 1985 by stating that welfare recipients spend their money “on drugs and liquor and Twinkies” (quoted in Dabilis 1985b). While Citizens for Limited Taxation had some sway, it was not the kind of business lobby that Domhoff envisioned in his theory.

Similarly, there is not much in the evidence to support Amenta’s political process theory. The strongest evidence, perhaps, is Dukakis’ willingness to satisfy human service advocates’ desire for a more generous AFDC program. This is not exactly the same as making a program more generous to gain the votes of those who benefit, but the motivation—to win the next election—is the same. However, other factors that Amenta identifies as important, such as the democratization of the polity and the lack of a patronage-oriented party system do not apply to changes made in the mid-1970s to mid-1990s, particularly in a state like Massachusetts, which has always had an open polity.

While social movement or human service advocacy organizations played an influential role in this period, the evidence does not fit the argument that Piven and Cloward (1993) make. In their view “expansive relief policies are designed to mute civil disorder” (Piven and Cloward 1993: xv). Here the increase in benefit levels in the 1980s did not occur in a time of unrest. Indeed, all the evidence indicates that economic prosperity fueled the benefit increases, and there are no newspaper reports of major unrest in this period. While there are some protests to raise benefit levels, human service advocates were able to get their way through lobbying and through convincing female legislators to fight hard for benefit increases.

The story of the Up to Poverty campaign begins in 1979, when Gov. Edward King refused to give the 1979 cost-of-living increase. There was widespread opposition to this refusal, and a group called the Coalition for Basic Human Needs formed to spearhead the opposition (Kenney 1979a). The Coalition was run by two white female organizers, Paula Georges and Vivienne Simon, out of the offices of Low Income Planning Aid, a federally-financed antipoverty group (Kenney 1979b). Georges previously worked for various social service agencies, and Simon was a lawyer who had worked on other social justice issues. They successfully organized demonstrations at local offices and at the State House, and they tried to connect with any local welfare recipient groups that still existed. After the 1979 fight was over, the Coalition continued to organize local groups to protest any changes that Gov. King tried to make that they found counterproductive (e.g. a 1981 State House rally opposing cuts to the Medicaid budget [Boston Globe 1981b]). The Coalition and other groups denounced Dukakis' first budget of his second term for not providing enough assistance to the poor (Boston Globe 1983a). Dukakis was inaugurated in the same month that he needed to produce a budget, so, like other governors, he likely used substantial portions of the budget his predecessor's administration developed. The fiscal 1985 budget, the first one that was totally under the control of the Dukakis administration, contained an increase in welfare spending, but it was still not the budget that human service advocates would have liked (Boston Globe 1984a). Jean Entine, director of Women for Economic Justice, stated: "We were becoming disenchanted by asking for small percentages and getting even less than we asked for. We saw people falling further behind the poverty line and simply felt we had

to change our strategy and tell the truth about the situation these people were in” (quoted in Jordan 1985a).

It is in this context that the Up to Poverty campaign began in late 1984 or early 1985. The first reference to the campaign comes in a piece on the fiscal 1986 budget that Dukakis proposed in January 1985 11/30/12 7:06 AM:

The reaction of the Coalition for Basic Human Needs, a welfare rights group, was unfavorable to the proposed 5 percent increase in payments to recipients of General Relief and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The group had asked Dukakis to increase welfare payments by 40 percent so recipients would reach the poverty line set by the federal government. (Cooper 1985)

This succinctly lays out the goal of the Up to Poverty campaign: increase AFDC benefits to meet the federal poverty line.

This was a brilliant strategy for several reasons. First, it highlighted just how poor families receiving AFDC were. If benefit levels were 40% lower than the federal government’s poverty threshold, it meant that AFDC recipients were objectively very poor, even in a state as relatively generous as Massachusetts. Columnist Robert Jordan (1985a) reports the numbers: “the average AFDC family in Massachusetts - a mother and two children - is 46 percent below the federal poverty line of \$732 a month. Dukakis’ proposed 5-percent increase would give families \$416 monthly, leaving a ‘poverty gap’ of \$316.” Second, using the federal poverty line as a baseline made asking for huge increases seem (at least somewhat) reasonable. A 40% increase in benefits is huge—and expensive. Estimates for how much that would cost ranged from \$500 million if food stamps were included in the calculation to \$1.5 billion (Boston Globe 1985). Tying benefit increases to the federal poverty line helped justify spending massive amounts of

money. Third, by asking for a lot, a compromise in the middle would still be a much larger increase than AFDC recipients would normally get. Prior to the Up to Poverty campaign, any increase at all was a win. By defining total success as a 40% increase, a 10% increase, which would have been larger than any increase in the previous 10 years, could be seen as a failure. Fourth, moving the goalposts that far, so that only a 40% increase could be a real win for welfare advocates, meant that Dukakis could grant a large benefit increase and still not be seen as caving in to the human services lobby. Dukakis could allow an unprecedented increase in AFDC benefits and still be seen as a moderate, which would be helpful in running for re-election in 1986.

In contrast to advocacy groups in the 1965-1974 period, the Up to Poverty campaign focused on getting a wide range of organizations to push legislators to support large increases in AFDC benefit levels. The Coalition for Basic Human Needs, Women for Economic Justice, the Massachusetts Human Services Coalition, the Poor Peoples United Fund, and other women's, political, civic, and religious organizations all banded together as the Women's Campaign for Social Justice to pressure legislators. In April 1985 a member of the Women's Campaign for Social Justice told the *Boston Globe* that the Women's Legislative Caucus and a majority of the Joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs backed the Up to Poverty campaign (Jordan 1985a). Shortly after that article appeared, the Joint Committee on Human Services voted in favor of a bill that would raise AFDC and General Relief benefits to the poverty level during a hearing attended by welfare recipients and human service advocates (Ryan 1985). By May 1985 there was a shift in tactics. The Women's Campaign for Social Justice was

demanding a 25% increase for three consecutive years while the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators was pushing hard for a minimum 10% increase (Jordan 1985d). The women legislators were able to get House leadership on board with a 10% increase (Dabilis 1985a), although they did not do as well in the Senate, which voted for an 8% increase. The final fiscal 1986 budget included a 9% increase in welfare benefits, a much larger increase than Gov. Dukakis initially proposed.

Despite this comparatively large increase, welfare advocates viewed the fiscal 1986 budget as a defeat (Jordan 1985b). To achieve better results for the fiscal 1987 budget, the Women's Campaign for Social Justice decided to pursue a different strategy. Their previous strategy involved "obtaining endorsements and active support from organizations around the Boston area" while the new strategy centered on what the group called "constituency-organizing" (Jordan 1985b). "Constituency-organizing" entailed holding hearings in each state senatorial district in which senators and representatives could learn about what life on welfare was like from welfare recipients and those who work with welfare recipients. In December 1985 hearings in Lawrence, Boston, and Cambridge had already been scheduled.

This strategy seems to have been effective, at least in 1986. Gov. Dukakis proposed a 10% cost-of-living increase, and the House and Senate passed 10% cost-of-living increases for AFDC recipients. This was an election year, so both the governor and the legislature were more likely to do what human services advocates wanted. In 1987 the House rejected a proposed 12% increase in AFDC benefit levels and accepted Gov. Dukakis' proposed 6% increase (*Boston Globe*, May 14, 1987, page 72, "House rejects

welfare hike of 12 percent” by Peter B. Sleeper). This signaled a turning point in the effectiveness of the Up to Poverty campaign (*Boston Globe*, May 20, 1987, page 41, “Welfare advocates face new political landscapes; House refusal to raise benefits beyond 6% in next year’s budget said to reflect trend” by Joan Vennoch). Although there was a 7% increase in the fiscal 1988 budget passed in 1987 and a 5.5% increase in the fiscal 1989 budget passed in 1988, welfare advocates had lost their ability to goad legislators into truly large increases or to get them to buy into the idea of reducing the gap between the federal poverty thresholds and what Massachusetts allotted for AFDC benefits.

Some, if not all, of the opposition to large increases likely came as a result of the success that human service advocates were having in the legal system. In December 1985 the Coalition for Basic Human Needs, the Coalition for the Homeless, and three individual people filed a lawsuit accusing Gov. Dukakis, Human Services Secretary Philip W. Johnson, and Public Welfare Commissioner Charles M. Atkins of not upholding Massachusetts’ original 1913 mothers’ aid law (*Boston Globe*, May 22, 1986, “Advocates for poor want surplus funds to go toward grants” by Carol Pearson). That law mandated that aid be sufficient for parents to care for their children in their own homes. Advocates alleged that AFDC grants were not large enough to cover housing expenses and filed a preliminary injunction in May 1986 that would force the state to use its \$575 million surplus to increase benefit levels for AFDC. The Suffolk Superior Court justice that heard the case, Judge Charles M. Grabau, ruled that current AFDC benefits were not, in fact, sufficient for parents to raise their children properly and ordered the Department

of Public Welfare to come up with a dollar figure that represents how much money welfare mothers need to live in private housing (Jordan 1986).

This order brought to light how disconnected welfare benefit levels were from the actual cost of living. A couple months after the order, Human Services Secretary Philip Johnston said members of the Department of Public Welfare staff were hard at work examining housing costs throughout the state: “We’re doing a good deal of research, because no one’s ever really done this on a state level” (quoted in C. B. Daly 1986).

According to the *Boston Globe*:

That was precisely the key finding in Grabau's ruling. He interpreted a 1913 state law to mean that the welfare commissioner must calculate an adequate level of assistance, then submit that request to the Legislature.

Instead, the plaintiffs argued, that the Welfare Department has for years requested a level of benefits that it thought the Legislature would find politically acceptable....

And in arguing the case, the plaintiffs did not specify a dollar amount. But Barbara Sard, an attorney who was part of the welfare groups' legal team, said in June that complying with Grabau's order could mean ‘something on the order of \$900 per family -- more than double current grants.’ (C. B. Daly 1986)

When Secretary Johnson submitted the report on what it would take to support welfare families in Massachusetts adequately, it did not resolve any of the major issues (McNamara 1986). The report stated that there was a \$3,000 difference between what a family of three in the Boston area received in AFDC benefits annually and annual expenses for that family. Providing that extra \$3,000 would cost \$525 million a year. Judge Grabau did not mandate that the state increase benefit levels, so, as Sen. Patricia McGovern, a Democrat from Lawrence who chaired the Senate Ways and Means Committee, said, “there is no chance the Legislature is going to appropriate this money

tomorrow” (quoted in McNamara 1986). Sen. McGovern noted that it would be quite difficult to figure out exactly how much raising AFDC benefits would cost: “And the higher you raise AFDC benefits the more people become eligible for welfare. All those people get Medicaid, so that account would rise, too. This is going to take time to figure out” (quoted in McNamara 1986).

This response did not satisfy welfare advocates. In December 1986 the Coalition for Basic Human Needs and the Coalition for the Homeless asked Judge Grabau to force Human Services Secretary Philip Johnston and Welfare Commissioner Charles Atkins to create a plan to raise benefit levels in the fiscal 1988 budget (Witcher 1986). They also wanted Gov. Dukakis to submit a supplemental budget request to the Legislature so that benefits could be raised during the current 1987 fiscal year. The Dukakis administration had chosen to comply with Judge Grabau’s order rather than appeal, but these requests from the plaintiffs moved the administration to appeal the order (Mohl 1987).

In early January 1987 Judge Grabau issued another ruling, ordering the state to adopt a standard of need based on the report estimating the cost of living for Massachusetts families (Witcher 1987b). He also ordered the state to “to raise the level of AFDC benefits according to its revised budgetary standards” (quoted in Wilkins 1987:810). This statement caused substantial confusion, and even a hearing that the judge had with the defendants and plaintiffs two days after the ruling did not resolve the situation. State officials interpreted this statement to mean that Judge Grabau was ordering them to raise benefit levels to the standard laid out in the Department of Public Welfare’s report on adequate levels of support for welfare recipients. According to the

Boston Globe, “the judge said that he did not actually order state officials to raise benefits. Instead, he said that he simply ordered them to raise the ‘standard of need’ up to their revised ‘standard budget of assistance’—even if they don't pay it” (Witcher 1987a). State officials began to question if the judge actually understood the technical meanings of the terms “standard of need,” which came from federal AFDC regulations, and “standard budget of assistance,” which came from state law. In March 1987 Judge Grabau issued a clarification, in which he ordered state officials to increase benefit levels “to coincide with the higher ‘standard budget of assistance’ that they calculated welfare recipients need to meet their housing, food and clothing costs” (Witcher 1987c). This time the judge stated that the increase should be “by whatever amount they determine” and should employ “already appropriated funds” (quoted in (Witcher 1987c).

This clarification did not satisfy state officials, who appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. The state and advocacy groups both maintained that they had prevailed when the Court issued its ruling in August 1987 (Witcher 1987d). The Court decreed that the Legislature sets the standard of need, not the Department of Public Welfare (Wilkins 1987). According to state law governing Massachusetts’ AFDC program, determining the standard of need is the Department’s responsibility, and the Department did perform this function at one time. However, beginning with fiscal year 1983, the Legislature had been taking it upon itself to set the standard of need in its annual budgets. The Court cited language from the state budget for fiscal 1987, the year in question: “the Legislature appropriated AFDC funds ‘provided, that the standard [of payment] shall be increased [10%] as of [July 1, 1986] and rounded to the next whole

dollar; provided further, that the need standard shall be raised to the new payment standard” (Wilkins 1987:815). Pursuant to state law, the Department still needed to “issue a written report which will provide or permit a comparison in dollars between the standard budgets of assistance of each successive year and which, as the department has done, will discuss the adequacy of AFDC grant levels in comparison with the standard budget or budgets of assistance and with changes in the consumer price index” (Wilkins 1987:818). The state claimed it won because the Court asserted the primacy of the Legislature in determining benefit levels while advocacy groups claimed they won because the state would have to address the shortfall between actual benefit levels and an adequate level of assistance each year.

Returning to Piven and Cloward (1993), it is important to note the ways in which advocacy groups were and were not effective differs from their account. First, civil disorder does not appear to have been effective strategy in this period. Whenever the *Boston Globe* reports mass protest or particularly dramatic protest (e.g. protests against the 1975 welfare cuts [Fuerbringer 1975a], protests against welfare reform that “included a ‘legislator’ with blood-smearred hands and a ‘child’ in a body bag” [Wong 1994b]), the outcomes are generally unfavorable to the protestors. In 1975 welfare cuts proceeded as planned, and in 1994 welfare reform continued unimpeded. Second, what does appear to have been effective—lobbying legislators—does not appear in Piven and Cloward’s (1993) account. The success of a lobbying strategy in this period was likely dependent upon a host of other factors, such as the booming state economy, sympathetic elected officials, and the particular program under consideration. For example, it may be that

lobbying works better when the intended recipients of state largesse are stereotyped negatively. While the model that Piven and Cloward (1993) describe undoubtedly works in some circumstances, the evidence here indicates that it did not work this one.

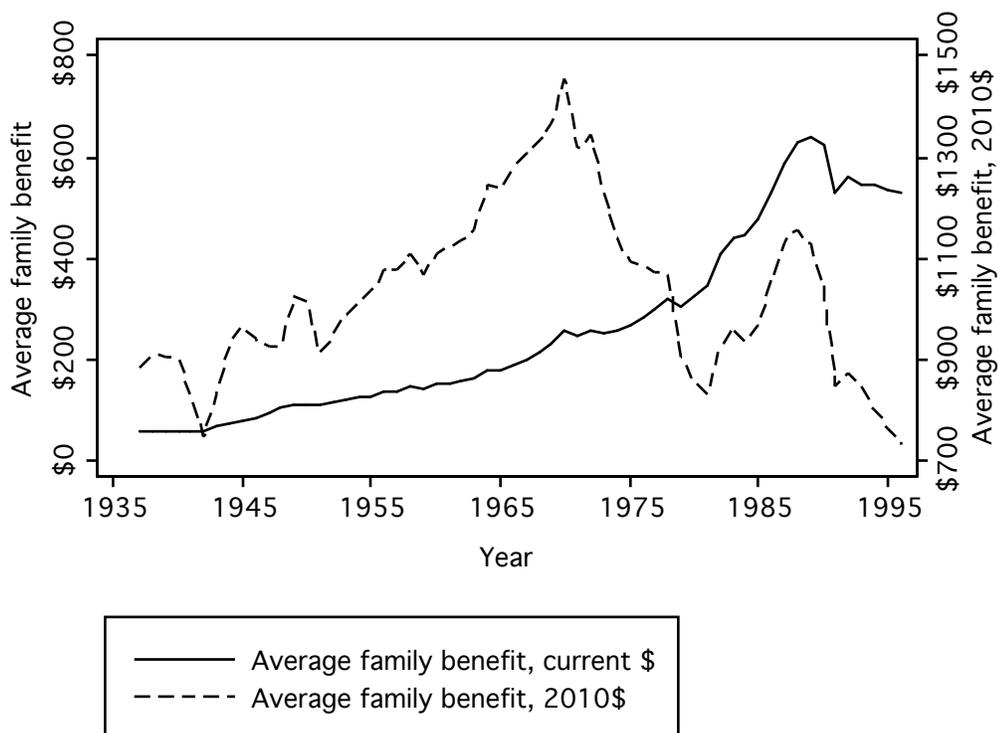
Conclusion

The last 20 years of AFDC in Massachusetts largely followed the path set in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. The main deviation from that path was the rise in real and nominal benefit levels during the 1980s, which was unusual nationally. Following tough fiscal times in the mid-1970s, benefit levels were stagnating in nominal terms but falling in real terms. The Massachusetts economy performed spectacularly in the 1980s, however, leading to a substantial caseload decline. Between skilled lobbying from human service advocates, the good economy, and the caseload decline, AFDC recipients were able to obtain significant cost-of-living increases. By this period, elected officials were the ones determining increases in benefit levels, and they were more susceptible to political pressure. While this meant that lobbying could be effective, it also meant that human service advocates had to combat racialized stereotypes about welfare recipients to secure benefit increases. In the final two years of this period, AFDC benefits were decreased slightly (2.75%) in nominal terms, which was the first time a nominal decrease occurred since AFDC's creation in 1935. This may have been the best indication of what was to come with the institution of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in 1996.

CONCLUSION

Having gone into great detail about benefit levels in Massachusetts from 1913 to 1996, it is time to put all the pieces together, including tying Massachusetts in with the quantitative story in Chapter 2. Figure 15 displays the trend in nominal and real benefit levels from 1935 to 1996. Striking trends emerge when looking at the entire course of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). While there is some noise in inflation-adjusted benefit levels in the first 15 years of AFDC, the general trend from 1935 to 1970 is steadily increasing benefits in nominal and real terms. From 1970 to 1980 there is an extraordinarily steep drop in inflation-adjusted benefit levels, although benefit levels are

Figure 15. Average Family Benefit in Nominal & Real Dollars, 1937-1996

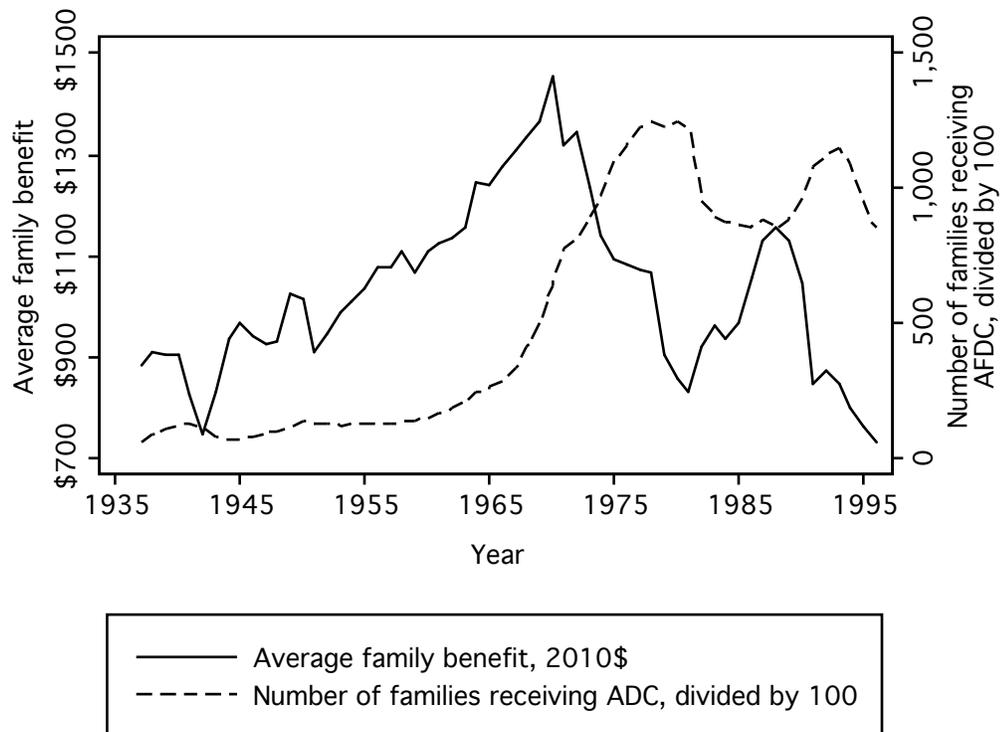


rising in current dollars in this period. From the early 1980s to the late 1980s, real and nominal benefit levels again follow the same trajectory as both increase in this timeframe. The trend from the late 1980s to 1996 is similar for both real and nominal benefit levels, although real benefit levels show sharper declines. Aside from a small bump in the early 1990s, inflation-adjusted and non-inflation adjusted benefit levels decrease. As discussed previously, states follow similar trajectories over time, and Massachusetts' trend over time is not an outlier, with the exception of the increase in real benefit levels in the 1980s.

As I have done in earlier chapters on specific time periods, it is helpful to compare trends in benefit levels over time with trends in the number of people receiving assistance over time. Unlike the previous chapters, I use inflation-adjusted benefit levels here rather than nominal benefit levels. Figure 16 shows that caseloads were relatively flat in the 25-year period from 1935 to 1960. In 1937, the first year that data were available, 6,401 families received assistance; in 1960, 14,418 families did. By 1980, caseloads were over eight times higher than in 1960, with 124,419 families on AFDC. This rapid caseload growth played a role, in combination with other factors, in changes in benefit levels in the 1970s and 1980s. Slow caseload growth from 1935 to 1960 meant that benefit levels could increase without affecting state and local budgets, and the caseload and benefit levels both increase until 1970. Then benefit levels plummet as caseload growth continues. Benefit levels only increase again when caseloads start declining in the early 1980s. Caseloads start rising again in the late 1980s, which is when benefit levels begin to decline again. Essentially, the inverse relationship between benefit

levels only exists after caseloads skyrocketed, and it seems to end around the end of this period. By the mid-1990s, both caseloads and benefit levels were decreasing.

Figure 16. Average Family Benefit & Caseload, 1937-1996



At this point, it is clear that state capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions have affected these trends. The quantitative chapter indicated that there was a strong statistical relationship between the percent of a state's population that was black in 1930, the percent of a state's population with a white immigrant background in 1930, early 1930s local per capita revenue, and benefit generosity from the 1930s to the 1990s. The evidence in the qualitative chapters on Massachusetts reinforced this finding, showing how these factors influenced Massachusetts' AFDC program from its beginning in 1935 to its end in 1996.

What still needs clarification is the way in which these factors were important. Did state capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions, as measured in the 1930s, set states on paths from which there was no deviation until 1996? Or is it that state capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions in the decades after the 1930s actually affected benefit generosity, and the effect of the 1930s is a statistical fluke? My assessment is that both are correct, to an extent. State capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions prior to the 1935 Social Security Act did affect the design and structure of the programs that eventually became AFDC and set states on particular trajectories. For example, the fact that Massachusetts' mothers' aid program had no maximum benefit level was likely critical in setting the expectation that the state would meet demonstrated need. However, it is also the case that states' trajectories could be altered based on changing circumstances. An excellent example of this is the decline in benefit levels during the 1970s, when state capacity in Massachusetts ebbed due to the state's fiscal crisis. When the state recovered financially, in the 1980s, benefit levels rose again.

The role of factors other than state capacity and states' racial and ethnic compositions also needs to be considered. The quantitative chapter suggested that the political ideology of states' citizens could influence benefit levels, and the case study of Massachusetts indicates that citizens' political ideology likely played an important role. Assessing the role of political ideology in Massachusetts is difficult, as one cannot make comparisons, but consider the counterfactual of a state that is otherwise just like Massachusetts, but whose citizens are substantially more conservative. Such a state is

unlikely to exist, as states' characteristics tend form particular constellations rather than vary randomly. However, it does seem unlikely that a state whose citizens have a political ideology resembling South Carolina's citizenry, for example, would value a generous welfare system, even if that state was otherwise like Massachusetts. The benefit increases in the 1980s are unfathomable without the support of women legislators and Governor Dukakis, for instance, and ideologically conservative citizens would not have supported elected officials who took those kinds of policy positions.

Similarly, the qualitative chapters consistently found that social movements, or, more accurately, advocacy groups, affected benefit levels in Massachusetts. Finding a way to represent this accurately in a statistical equation was difficult, so I did not include any measures of social movements or advocacy groups in the quantitative chapter. Nevertheless, I believe the qualitative evidence strongly suggests that advocacy groups like the National Congress of Mothers or those involved with the Up to Poverty campaign were an important factor in increasing benefit levels in Massachusetts. One cannot understand how Massachusetts created the mothers' aid program, or how benefit levels were increased in the 1980s, without examining the role that advocacy groups played in both instances.

These findings also have some methodological implications. First, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research strategies allows for a more holistic assessment of causal factors than would be possible with either quantitative or qualitative strategies alone. Because benefit levels are already numeric, conducting a purely quantitative study would not be hard. However, not every causal factor can be translated

into a number, so factors that defy quantification would be omitted from such studies. This means that quantitative studies may miss elements such as the role of advocacy groups that, when the qualitative evidence is examined, are actually rather important. Similarly, newspaper reports that indicated that benefit levels were related to state economic performance seemed accurate, but it would have been difficult to determine how accurate without examining the bivariate correlation between benefit levels and per capita gross state product. Adding the quantitative piece showed that the newspaper reports were indeed correct.

Second, through investigating such a long time period, it becomes clear that the independent variables manifest themselves in different ways at different points in time. For example, the canonical definition of state capacity discusses revenues, and revenues do appear to be a good measure of state capacity for most of the 1911-1996 period. However, in the 1975-1996 period, revenues drop out of the discussion, and state economic performance takes its place. They seem to perform the same role, limiting the state's ability to implement policies or programs to those policies and programs it can afford, but they are obviously somewhat different. I consider both revenues and economic performance as aspects of state capacity, and I believe this captures how state capacity is expressed at different points in time.

Third, investigating such a long period also permits one to see how the combination of causal factors varies over time. While, for instance, advocacy groups are important to benefit increases in other periods, they are largely irrelevant in the 1935-1964 period (with the possible exception of old-age advocacy groups). State bureaucrats

and state capacity, along with the absence of discourse on or attention to race, are what allow benefit increases to occur in that period. It is difficult to imagine the creation of mothers' aid without advocacy groups, however, so they are clearly crucial at other points in time.

Finally, what does all of this mean for welfare recipients? Most importantly, it means there is no time in the past in which welfare recipients were able to meet all of their needs through government assistance. Despite the fact that mothers' aid began as an effort to get more money to worthy widows, cash assistance to single mothers has never been adequate, largely because benefit levels have been perpetually subject to political considerations. Even in the 1948-1970 period, when benefit levels were theoretically based on the actual cost of necessities and consistently increased with the cost of living, they did not account for major categories of necessities, such as transportation, and were substantially less than estimates of the cost of living that the Bureau of Labor Statistics compiled. Welfare recipients' racial, ethnic, and immigrant backgrounds also influence conceptions about how much money welfare recipients deserve to have. In later years, benefit levels are a wholly political creation stemming from ideas about what the state can afford, not facts about how much money it takes to meet basic needs. Ultimately, benefit levels for cash assistance to single mothers say more about how much we value poor families than they say about how much money these families need to survive.

**APPENDIX A: PROPOSED AND ACTUAL CHANGES TO BENEFIT LEVELS,
1975-1996**

Year	Proposed and Actual Changes to Benefit Levels	Source
1975	Gov. Dukakis decides against giving welfare recipients a 11% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1976	<i>Boston Globe</i> , March 5, 1975, page 1, "Aide tells Dukakis ways to cut millions from welfare budget" by Ken Hartnett and Jonathan Fuerbringer
1975	8% increase effective July 3, 1975, because Social Security benefits were increased by that amount	State Letter 366, June 30, 1975, from Jerald L. Stevens, Commissioner
1976	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1977, then drops it because Medicaid costs are higher than initially expected	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 4, 1976, page 10, "State reportedly dropping 5% cost-of-living increase" by Jonathan Fuerbringer
1976	5% increase in consolidated grants (but not quarterly grants) included in state budget for fiscal 1977	State Letter 391, August 19, 1976, from Alexander E. Sharp, Commissioner
1976	Secretary of Human Services Jerald L. Stevens opposes a 5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1978, arguing that it is too expensive	<i>Boston Globe</i> , November 10, 1976, page 3, "Human services secretary opposes welfare cost-of-living increase in '78" by R. S. Kindleberger
1977	Senate Ways and Means Committee includes a 3% cost-of-living increase in its fiscal 1978 budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 11, 1977, page 5, "Senate unit ups budget for welfare" by Globe State House Bureau
1977	3% cost-of-living increase included in final fiscal 1978 budget, though "only if there is sufficient money in the accounts in December to pay for it"	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 10, 1977, page 29, "The Bay State budget: Some win, some lose" by Nils J. Bruzelius and Robert L. Turner
1977	Gov. Dukakis, who balked at including cost-of-living increases in the fiscal 1978 budget, considers asking for a deficiency appropriation to cover these increases, as revenues are higher than expected	<i>Boston Globe</i> , November 26, 1977, page 3, "Dukakis may ask for welfare increases" by Robert L. Turner

1977	3% increase in consolidated grants starts January 1, 1978, retroactive to July 1, 1977	State Letter 446, December 16, 1977, from Alexander E. Sharp, Commissioner
1978	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 5% cost-of-living increase in his initial budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 26, 1978, page 1, "Gov. Dukakis ends 3 years of austerity with \$4.75b budget" by Laurence Collins
1978	Legislature included 6% cost-of-living increase in its fiscal 1979 budget but wrote the legislation in a restrictive way so as to give an increase to current recipients but not make additional people eligible for assistance. HEW says this violates the Social Security Act and its own regulations, so the increase does not take place.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , September 15, 1978, page 55, "Legislative snag stops rise in welfare aid to families"
1979	Gov. King refuses to give the 6% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1979 as well as a 6.4% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1980. He proposes a new plan that will give cash grants of \$100 to \$250 to some welfare recipients instead.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , March 8, 1979, page 1, "King moves to cut welfare: Would scrap cost-of-living hike to family welfare recipients" by Walter V. Robinson
1979	House Ways and Means Committee includes a 4% cost-of-living increase in its fiscal 1980 budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 26, 1979, page 13, "Cost of living raise would be retroactive: Panel proposes budget welfare increase" by Globe State House Bureau
1979	Legislature approves a fiscal 1980 budget that includes a 6% cost-of-living increase. That 6% increase starts on January 1, 1980. Two percent of the increase is retroactive to January 1, 1979 while 4% is retroactive to July 1, 1979.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 12, 1979, page 1, "\$5.4b budget sent to King" by Laurence Collins
1979	Gov. King vetoes the cost-of-living increase in the fiscal 1980 budget and files corrective legislation (which passes the Legislature) for a 6% cost-of-living increase retroactive to August 1, 1979.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , August 22, 1979, page 21, "King signs 6% welfare aid increase" by United Press International
1980	Gov. King proposes a 5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1981 but ties the increase to "savings from service cuts and consolidations"	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 23, 1980, "King offers no expansion budget"; <i>Boston Globe</i> , March 21, 1980, "\$134 for a family of four"

1980	House Ways and Means Committee includes a 5% cost-of-living increase in its fiscal 1981 budget and Senate Ways and Means Committee includes a 6% cost-of-living increase in its fiscal 1981 budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 20, 1980, “A Progressive Road to Welfare Savings”
1980	Fiscal 1981 budget includes a 6% cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 5, 1980, “Massachusetts Electric Company has filed with the ...”; State Letter 516
1981	Fiscal 1982 budget includes a \$50 per child clothing allowance rather than a cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , March 27, 1981, “Clothing allowance backed for children on welfare”; <i>Boston Globe</i> , July 22, 1981, “Highlights”
1982	Gov. King proposes 5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1983, which he had stated earlier was contingent upon caseload decreases. Caseloads were declining, so cost-of-living increases were considered affordable.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , February 11, 1982, “King backs off work program”; <i>Boston Globe</i> , February 13, 1982, “State expects 19 percent decline in number on AFDC welfare rolls”
1982	Fiscal 1983 budget includes a \$75 per child clothing allowance rather than a cost-of-living increase. Substituting the clothing allowance for a cost-of-living increase was the Legislature’s idea.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 1, 1982, “King signs \$6.8b budget; Leaders work on tax cut”
1982	Welfare Commissioner Thomas H. Spirito recommends a 5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1984	<i>Boston Globe</i> , October 5, 1982, “State welfare agency seeks \$2b budget”
1983	Gov. Dukakis proposes a \$125 per child clothing allowance but no a cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1984.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , March 3, 1983, “Dukakis’ \$7.3b budget: More jobs, taxes and aid”
1983	Fiscal 1984 budget includes a \$125 per child clothing allowance and no cost-of-living increase.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 14, 1983, “\$7.26b budget sent to Dukakis”; <i>Boston Globe</i> , July 16, 1983, “Dukakis signs the new budget”
1984	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 5% cost-of-living increase (effective January 1, 1985, halfway through the fiscal year) in addition to a \$125 per child clothing allowance	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 22, 1984, “\$324m human resource hike sought; Biggest increase since Dukakis’ first term”
1984	House Ways and Means includes a 5% cost-of-living increase effective January 1, 1985 in its fiscal 1985 budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , April 24, 1984, “House backs GOP budget change giving \$31m more to

		cities, towns”
1984	House-Senate conference committee produces a fiscal 1985 budget that contains a 4% cost-of-living increase (effective July 1, 1984), a \$125-per-child clothing allowance, and rent supplements. Gov. Dukakis signs that budget.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 3, 1984, “Mass. House-Senate Committee agrees on \$8.09 billion budget”; <i>Boston Globe</i> , July 14, 1984, “Dukakis signs \$8.1b budget; Local-aid bonus, reserve vetoed”
1984	Department of Public Welfare recommends a 7% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1986	<i>Boston Globe</i> , October 25, 1984, “Mass. to seek 7% living-cost hike in benefits for families on welfare” by Jean Dietz
1985	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 5% cost-of-living increase and a \$125-per-child clothing allowance	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 24, 1985, “How the governor’s \$8.6b budget would be divided: Public welfare” by Jean Dietz
1985	House Ways and Means recommends a 6% increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 10, 1985, “Women legislators back 10% increase in welfare benefits” by Robert A. Jordan
1985	House budget for fiscal 1986 includes a 10% cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 22, 1985, “House adds \$13.3 million for welfare” by Andrew J. Dabilis
1985	Senate budget for fiscal 1986 includes an 8% cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 11, 1985, “Advocates for the poor criticize Senate’s budget plan” by Andrew Blake
1985	Final fiscal 1986 budget includes a 9% cost-of-living increase and a \$125-per-child clothing allowance	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 29, 1985, “Legislature set to vote on \$8.8b budget today” by Andrew Blake; State Letters 729 and 735
1985	Department of Public Welfare recommends a 4% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1987	<i>Boston Globe</i> , October 5, 1985, “When more isn’t enough” by Robert A. Jordan
1986	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 10% cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 19, 1986, “Human Services due for big budget hike” by Kenneth J. Cooper
1986	House and Senate both propose a 10% cost-of-living increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 30, 1986, page 24, “Meetings may solve differences on budget” by Bruce Mohl
1986	Final fiscal 1987 budget includes a 10% cost-	<i>Boston Globe</i> , July 4, 1986, page

	of-living increase, a \$150-per-child clothing allowance, and a \$15 rent allowance for recipients who live in private housing	13, "\$9.8b budget sent to Dukakis" by Andrew J. Dabilis; State Letters 771, 773 and 780
1987	While Gov. Dukakis initially intended to propose a 4% increase, he decided at the last minute to include a 6% increase in his fiscal 1988 budget.	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 27, 1987, page 1, "6% hike is Dukakis' welfare aim"
1987	House passes a fiscal 1988 budget that includes a 6% increase	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 20, 1987, page 41, "Welfare advocates face new political landscapes; House refusal to raise benefits beyond 6% in next year's budget said to reflect trend" by Joan Vennoch
1987	Senate includes an 8% increase in its budget	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 27, 1987, page 19, "Budget panel OK's 7 percent welfare hike" by Bonnie V. Winston
1987	Final fiscal 1988 budget includes a 7% increase, a \$150-per-child clothing allowance, and a \$40 rent allowance for recipients who live in private housing	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 27, 1987, page 19, "Budget panel OK's 7 percent welfare hike" by Bonnie V. Winston; State Letter 806
1988	Gov. Dukakis proposes a 5.5% cost-of-living increase for fiscal 1989	<i>Boston Globe</i> , January 31, 1988, page 26, "Welfare budget violates court order, groups allege" by Frank Phillips
1988	Final fiscal 1989 budget includes a 5.5% increase and a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	State Letter 843 (Massachusetts Register #589)
1989	Final fiscal 1990 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #616
1990	Final fiscal 1991 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #641
1992	Fiscal 1992 budget modified to allow a \$75-per-child clothing allowance for March (rather than the usual September allowance)	<i>Boston Globe</i> , March 7, 1992, page 21, "A whiff of compassion" by Robert A. Jordan; Massachusetts Register #682 (State Letter 956)
1992	Final fiscal 1993 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #694
1993	Final fiscal 1994 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #720 (State Letter 996)

1994	House passes a fiscal 1995 budget that includes a 5.5% decrease	<i>Boston Globe</i> , May 11, 1994, page 29, "House lawmakers vote to cut welfare checks 5.5%" by Peter J. Howe
1994	Senate budget does not include a decrease	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 15, 1994, page 1, "Senate says no to Mass. welfare cut; House plans to curb benefit, bar new payments rejected" by Doris Sue Wong
1994	Final fiscal 1995 budget does not include a decrease	<i>Boston Globe</i> , June 30, 1994, page 1, "Welfare is curbed in budget plan; State negotiators reportedly cut death penalty provision" by Peter J. Howe
1994	Final fiscal 1995 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #746 (State Letter 1035)
1995	Welfare reform legislation includes a 2.75% cut in benefit levels	<i>Boston Globe</i> , February 10, 1995, page 1, "Tough welfare rules set for Weld signature today; Bill passed to put 18,400 recipients to work, curb benefits" by Peter J. Howe
1995	Final fiscal 1996 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #774 (State Letter 1069)
1996	Final fiscal 1997 budget includes a \$150-per-child clothing allowance	Massachusetts Register #800 (State Letter 1098)

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