

# Welfare Recipients or Workers? Contesting the Workfare State in New York City\*

CHAD ALAN GOLDBERG  
*New School for Social Research*

*This paper addresses how New York City's workfare program has structured opportunities for collective action by welfare recipients. As workfare blurs the distinction between wage workers and welfare recipients, it calls into question accepted understandings of the rights and obligations of welfare recipients and fosters new claims on the state. The concept of "cultural opportunity structures" can help to explain the political mobilization of workfare participants if it is linked to a Durkheimian tradition of cultural analysis attentive to symbolic classification. The dramaturgic approach to culture exemplified in the work of Erving Goffman can usefully complement this structural approach if a narrow focus on frames and framing processes is broadened to include interaction rituals and ceremonial profanation.*

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Substantive Problem*

In 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton promised U.S. voters that he would "end welfare as we know it." In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. Among other provisions, this legislation imposed strict time limits and work requirements on welfare recipients. These reforms are perhaps the most significant in U.S. social policy since Lyndon Johnson's antipoverty programs 30 years earlier. It is necessary therefore to take up once again the political sociology of the welfare state in the light of these recent historical changes.

This article is devoted to the substantive problem of understanding how the shift from welfare to workfare has restructured opportunities for collective action by public assistance recipients in New York City. As Theda Skocpol (1980) has shown in reference to New Deal legislation of the 1930s, the activities of state managers sometimes stimulate rather than merely respond to political pressures from below. Similarly, Piven and Cloward (1977) have shown how the antipoverty programs of the 1960s encouraged poor blacks to demand greater government services. Unfortunately, most of the literature on contemporary welfare reform approaches it narrowly in terms of its economic effects on recipients. Little attempt has yet been made to understand how the shift from welfare to workfare is shaping the political capacities, ideas, and demands of welfare state clients. This article provides some tentative and provisional conclusions based on a comparatively informed case study.

I argue that the shift from welfare to workfare is fostering political mobilization of public assistance recipients in unintended ways. How? Poor relief in the United States has

\*An earlier draft of this paper was presented at a Power, Politics, and Protest workshop at New York University. I would like to thank Jeff Goodwin, Drew Halfmann, and the other participants at that forum for their comments and criticisms. I would also like to thank Frances Fox Piven and my three anonymous reviewers for *Sociological Theory* for their valuable input. Finally, a special word of thanks to Mustafa Emirbayer, who provided ceaseless encouragement and countless suggestions for improvements. Address correspondence to: Chad Alan Goldberg, Center for Studies of Social Change, 80 Fifth Avenue, Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10011, USA; e-mail: 194943@newschool.edu.

historically reflected and reinforced an enduring set of moral distinctions, divisions, and classifications of the poor (Katz 1989; Mohr 1994; Schram 1993, 1995). These moral and social distinctions, often gendered and raced, determine the appropriate basis for claiming social rights (e.g., need, financial contribution, citizenship), shape the kinds of rights claims that are made, and influence the way clients are treated. I examine welfare reform as an interpretive act that may potentially disrupt as well as reinforce these distinctions and symbolic classifications.

One important distinction in the discourse and practices of U.S. social welfare is that between *wage workers* and the *dependent poor* (Piven and Cloward [1971]1993:149; Fraser and Gordon 1994), a distinction not so much between individuals as between social categories or positions occupied by individuals. New York City's Work Experience Program (WEP) has not destabilized this opposition, nor has it led to the reclassification of welfare recipients as wage workers. However, it has weakened this distinction and problematized their classification. This in turn has led workfare participants to develop an expanded notion of rights and to advance new claims on the state. In this way, workfare structures opportunities for political mobilization differently than the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program that preceded it.

Before continuing, some limitations of this study should be noted. First, there are limits to how much the arguments advanced here can be generalized beyond the case studied. Because workfare programs differ from state to state, significant aspects of the Work Experience Program may be unique to New York City. Comparative study of workfare programs in different states is clearly needed.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it makes sense to focus on New York City. The city's Work Experience Program is rapidly becoming the largest public jobs program since the Great Depression and is already the largest workfare program in the nation (Firestone 1996a; Finder 1998a). This has prompted one observer to note that "national attention is fixed on the Big Apple and its workfare scheme as other cities and states begin to reshape their welfare systems in response to the new federal mandates" (Fuentes 1996). In a 1997 editorial, the *New York Times* made a similar point, writing that "the city's workfare program is viewed by many other cities as a potential model" (*New York Times* 1997; Fuentes 1996).

A second limitation concerns the various ways that social policy constrains and enables political mobilization: By altering political opportunity structures, by eroding or strengthening the organizational bases for collective action, and by shaping cultural norms and social solidarity. In this article, my focus will be primarily on cultural norms and meanings, particularly principles of classification. This is not meant to suggest that other factors are unimportant to explaining the insurgency of workfare participants. Because culture is only one of the structural contexts within which action is embedded and shaped, an exclusively culturalist explanation of collective action would be one sided and incomplete. I will therefore invoke other factors throughout the article where appropriate and point to their interactions with the cultural processes I am foregrounding.

A final limitation concerns the nature of the evidence used in this study. The claims presented here are based largely on testimony given by workfare participants at public hearings. With evidence of this sort, one must always ask whether the views expressed were accurately reported and widely representative. There are a number of reasons for believing that the testimony cited here reflects the opinions of those who spoke. None of the hearings were held by the city's social services agency; one hearing was not connected to city government at all. Moreover, workfare participants frequently made comments

<sup>1</sup>Important comparative work is now being done by John David Krinsky and Ellen Reese. See Krinsky and Reese (n.d.), which compares political mobilization in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and New York.

about the workfare program and their experiences with it that they would have been unlikely to make had they feared sanctions from the city government or its social services agency. Although it is difficult to assess how representative these opinions are, the results of a recent unionization election among workfare participants—about which I will say more in the final section of this article—suggest that these sentiments are in fact widespread.

### *Theoretical Contributions*

In the course of addressing this particular substantive problem, I seek to make more general theoretical contributions. Doug McAdam (1994) has recently suggested that social movements emerge in the context of a *cultural opportunity structure* as well as a political opportunity structure. In this article, I demonstrate the fruitfulness of this concept by using it to help explain the insurgency of workfare participants in New York City. Before doing so, however, I reconstruct the concept to avoid some of the problems inherent in McAdam's formulation. I do so by drawing on insights from the Durkheimian tradition of cultural analysis (e.g., Alexander 1989; Bourdieu 1994; Collins 1988; Douglas 1966; Emirbayer 1996; Kane 1991; Turner 1969) and from the dramaturgic approach to culture of Erving Goffman.

Following Durkheim ([1912] 1915), I conceive of cultural formations as being organized according to a binary logic that serves an evaluative as well as a cognitive function: "Sacred symbols provide images of purity and they charge those who are committed to them with protecting their referents from harm. Profane symbols embody this harm; they provide images of pollution, identifying actions, groups and processes that must be defended against" (Alexander and Smith 1993:157). The work of Victor Turner (1969) and Mary Douglas (1966) complements this approach by showing what happens (or can happen) when this binary logic is undermined or threatened. In this article, I show how one particular binary opposition—that of wage worker/relief recipient—structures action while being reproduced through discourse and ritual and how reforms that undermined the binary logic of this cultural structure inadvertently helped to foster political mobilization.

I draw on the work of Erving Goffman (1961, 1963, 1967) to link the production and policing of symbolic boundaries to the "rituals of degradation" that Piven and Cloward ([1971] 1993) describe as integral to the administration of poor relief. Goffman's dramaturgic approach to culture has been more prevalent in social movement theory than the structural approach of Durkheim. However, social movement theorists have tended to draw exclusively on Goffman's later frame analysis work. By neglecting his earlier work on interaction rituals and failing to link up the later work to it, social movement theorists have prematurely closed off a promising source of theoretical ideas. In this case, Goffman's work on interaction rituals, total institutions, and stigmatization helps to explain why political mobilization by welfare recipients is so rare.

In addition to these contributions to social movement theory, I present an alternative approach to the welfare state and provide a new way to conceptualize the state in general. Current theories of welfare state development examine how social welfare benefits may potentially enhance the power of recipients by increasing their independence from the market or the patriarchal household (Esping-Andersen 1990; Orloff 1993). I move beyond this dependence/independence dichotomy by conceptualizing the welfare state as a web of social *interdependencies*. In addition, drawing again on the Durkheimian tradition of cultural analysis, I show how the interpretive effects of different (re)distributive policies can serve as an important source of power in their own right. Finally, I posit a connection between micro- and macrolevel welfare apparatuses, showing how their interaction enables and constrains the political mobilization of welfare recipients. I argue that the profanation

and degradation of welfare recipients occur not only through public discourse and policy making but also through the rituals of face-to-face interaction described by Goffman (1967).

### *Structure of the Article*

The article is divided into three main parts. In the first part, I develop my theoretical arguments about social movements and welfare states. I discuss cultural structures and their role in constraining and enabling collective action, the ties of interdependence between welfare recipients and administrators, the interpretive effects of social policies, and the symbolic profanation of welfare recipients at both the micro- and macrolevels. In the second section, the article shifts to a comparison of the now defunct Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and New York City's current Work Experience Program (WEP). Applying the theoretical framework developed in the first section, I explain how and why these programs structured opportunities for political mobilization differently. In the third section, I move from a focus on structures to agency and process. Here, I provide a brief overview of the insurgency among New York City's workfare participants, showing how actors have engaged their structural contexts over time.

## I. STATES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### *Rethinking Social Movements*

According to the predominant political process model of social movements, protest emerges in response to the shifting power relations that make up a movement's *political opportunity structure* (Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996).<sup>2</sup> Although in general agreement with this model, Doug McAdam has recently criticized it for neglecting how movements interpret their political environment. In his view, "the movement analyst has two tasks: accounting for the structural factors that have objectively strengthened the challenger's hand and analyzing the processes by which the meaning and attributed significance of shifting political conditions is assessed" (McAdam 1994:39). Shifts in the interpretation of political conditions, McAdam suggests, can best be explained with the concept of a *cultural opportunity structure*. By this he means "specific events or processes that are likely to stimulate the kind of collective framing efforts" that lead to insurgency (McAdam 1994:39). I demonstrate the fruitfulness of McAdam's concept of a cultural opportunity structure by using it to explain the insurgency of workfare participants in New York City. Before doing so, however, I reconstruct the concept to avoid some of the problems inherent in McAdam's formulation. This reconstruction draws on insights from the Durkheimian tradition of cultural analysis and from the dramaturgic approach to culture of Erving Goffman.

Although McAdam means to draw attention to the structure of meaning, he defines cultural opportunity structures in terms of "events and processes" rather than relations. While the construction of meaning is a process, it presupposes a system of classification upon which actors draw to interpret the world. To what else can the structure of meaning refer except this system of differences? Unable or unwilling to conceive of culture in relational terms, McAdam tends to see culture as merely subjective. Culture is, of course, subjective in the sense that it is internalized by actors. However, this juxtaposition of subjective meanings and objective social structures neglects the way in which culture also constitutes an objective structured environment in which action is embedded and shaped

<sup>2</sup>In addition to changes in political opportunities, proponents of the political process model also generally invoke two other sets of factors to explain the emergence and development of social movements: Mobilizing organizations/networks and cultural framings (Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996). On the concept of framing, see also Gamson (1985) and Snow et al. (1986).

(Alexander 1988a; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996). Culture may be internalized, but, like language, it is also a “social fact” in Durkheim’s sense (Hays 1994). If the objective aspect of culture is neglected, framing processes and collective definitions will appear to stand on their own, unconnected to systems of classification and to the relations signs have to one another. Indeed, McAdam’s focus on collective framing efforts draws attention away from the deeper structural foundation on which such efforts are built. While frames themselves constitute a kind of cultural structure, beneath frames and discourses there rests a system of binary relations that forms a deeper, more basic semiotic structure (Alexander 1992; Alexander and Smith 1993). The concept of cultural opportunity structures should therefore be used to refer not only to the construction of frames and narratives but also to the relations between signs in a particular cultural system.

McAdam’s effort to distinguish shared meanings and understandings from power relations is also unconvincing. He conceives of power relations narrowly in terms of the access a challenger has to the polity, stressing such factors as the availability of allies, divisions between members of the polity, and the level of repression (McAdam 1996a). However, as Foucault points out, “relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter” (Foucault 1978:94). Power operates through social-structural ties of various kinds, through cultural or discursive structures, and even through emotional ties and libidinal cathexes (Goodwin 1997). Moreover, power operates not only at the macrolevel of the political system as a whole but also, as I show below, at the microlevel of face-to-face interaction rituals.

This does not mean that the notion of a cultural opportunity structure should be abandoned or that the concept of a political opportunity structure should simply be redefined to include both a cultural and an institutional component (Gamson and Meyer 1996). It is surely useful to distinguish the factors that facilitate collective action, particularly when they do so in different ways, rather than lump them all together under one vague heading. Moreover, a distinction between cultural and social-structural influences on collective action is useful insofar as the former are not a mere reflection of the latter. Cultural influences on collective action are structured, but they are also relatively independent of the social ties that help to determine the leverage or strength of insurgents (Kane 1991). Because cultural and social structures may constrain and enable collective action in different and even incompatible ways (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996:367–68), “contradictions between the cultural and other, more materially constrained levels and imperatives of the social system may therefore arise” (Alexander and Smith 1993:160).

McAdam’s distinction between social-structural and cultural influences on collective action is therefore potentially useful, but it needs to be reformulated to avoid the problems noted above. This distinction should be understood as analytic and not concrete; its terms correspond to different levels or dimensions of social life, not to separate entities. On the one hand, social structures may be defined as the *ties of interdependency* between social positions. Power is, in part, rooted in social interdependencies and in the leverage that inheres in interdependent relations (Schwartz 1976:171–77; Piven 1981:501).<sup>3</sup> As the web of social interdependencies changes, opportunities for collective action expand or contract. On the other hand, cultural structures may be defined as the *relations between signs* in a particular cultural system. These “symbolic configurations or formations” enable and constrain collective action “by structuring actors’ normative commitments and their understandings of the world and of their own possibilities within it” (Emirbayer and Goodwin

<sup>3</sup>This understanding of power was pioneered by Hegel (1977) in his celebrated description of the struggle between master and slave.

1996:365; cf. Hays 1994:66). It is important to note that structures facilitate some types of action even as—or precisely because—they limit and discourage others (Giddens 1984). Cultural structures are no exception (Hays 1994). If they make a particular course of action seem less possible or desirable, they will render other courses of action more so. In short, the idea of opportunity is implicit in the concept of structure.<sup>4</sup>

### *Rethinking Welfare States*

These considerations encourage us to rethink not only social movements but welfare states as well. Proponents of the influential social citizenship or power resources model of welfare state development have long linked the expansion of social rights to the political mobilization of the working class (Marshall 1963; Esping-Andersen 1990). They argue that social welfare benefits can potentially enhance the power of workers and their leverage over employers by increasing their independence from the market (Esping-Andersen 1990). Feminists have criticized the power resources school for its narrow focus on male wage workers; they point out that women's economic independence from a spouse is just as important as independence from the market (Orloff 1993). In contrast to both the power resources school and its critics, I move beyond the dependence/independence dichotomy with the more nuanced notion of *interdependence*. On the one hand, welfare state intervention in civil society and in the economy changes social and economic interdependencies and thereby increases or decreases the leverage available to various groups. On the other hand, the welfare state can itself be seen as a web of social interdependencies within which clients, administrators, state managers, and others are all embedded.

The power resources model of welfare state development, like the political process model in social movement theory, is also limited by a narrow focus on access to the polity and a narrow understanding of power. While its proponents identify two major power resources, capital and the right to vote (Orloff 1996:306), they neglect the interpretive effects of (re)distributive policies as an important source of power in their own right. Social welfare programs can be understood as “institutionalized patterns of interpretation” that reinforce (or call into question) norms, meanings, and principles of classification (Fraser 1989). A focus on this as well as other sources of power allows one to more fully understand the ways in which the welfare state shapes opportunities for political mobilization.

Finally, again like the political process model of social movements, the power resources model of welfare state development focuses on the macrolevel of the political system as a whole. However, opportunities for political mobilization are enabled and constrained in significant ways by micro- as well as macrolevel mechanisms. Of particular importance are the rituals of face-to-face interaction described by Erving Goffman (1967). While political sociologists have drawn heavily on Goffman's frame analysis work to help explain the “shaping of political consciousness” (Gamson 1985), little use has been made of his earlier work on the presentation of self through interaction ritual. This is in part due to the “ideational bias” described by McAdam, by which he means an “exclusive concern with ideas and their formal expression” in discourse (McAdam 1996b:340–41). Yet it is precisely Goffman's neglected earlier work that is so relevant for understanding the cultural aspects of political mobilization. In this case, it is useful for explaining how the rituals of

<sup>4</sup>On culture and its relation to action and to social structure, see the important statement by Kane (1991) and also Alexander and Smith (1993). I leave open the question of whether *all* social and cultural structures are power relations.

degradation involved in the administration of poor relief shape the self-understanding and normative commitments of both welfare recipients and wage workers.

**The welfare state as a web of social interdependencies.** The function of poor relief, according to one influential thesis, is to regulate labor (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993). When mass unemployment leads to protest, strikes, riots, and other forms of civil disorder, political elites expand poor relief to quell unrest. When order is restored, political pressure from capitalist elites leads to a contraction of relief. What is of interest here is not whether welfare programs are functional for the reproduction of capitalist social relations but rather the idea that the contractionary phase of the relief cycle also entails a contraction of political opportunities for workers and welfare recipients. This appears to be so for at least two reasons, neither of which requires a functionalist framework of analysis.

Welfare state retrenchment forces former welfare recipients into the labor market and thereby swells the ranks of the unemployed. The resulting increased competition among workers has two principal effects. First, workers tend to be more vulnerable and docile in the face of market pressures, less willing to make demands on their employers and more likely to accept discipline (Piven and Cloward [1982] 1985:27–28). Welfare state retrenchment thus reduces the bargaining power of workers. For similar reasons, welfare state clients find their leverage with administrators reduced. Whereas workers become more fearful of losing their jobs, welfare recipients become more fearful of finding themselves cut from the relief rolls. The possibility of losing benefits becomes a powerful disincentive to participation in protests or other forms of political action (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:168–69).

Second, in addition to reducing the bargaining power of workers and welfare recipients, competition also tends to undermine the solidarity necessary for collective action. Commodification stratifies and divides workers according to the kinds of services that can be offered in the market. The more that securing subsistence depends on the sale of labor power, the more skilled labor will strive to protect its privileged position in the labor market. As Esping-Andersen notes, “since their resources mirror market inequalities, divisions emerge between the ‘ins’ and the ‘outs,’ making labor movement formation difficult” (1990:22). The tightening of eligibility requirements creates similar divisions among welfare recipients between the “ins” who continue to have a stake in particular programs and the “outs” who no longer do (Pierson 1994:22–23). Furthermore, divisions *among* workers and welfare recipients are also exacerbated by divisions *between* workers and welfare recipients: Workers have no stake in welfare programs intended to benefit those outside of the labor market, while welfare recipients have no stake in legislation to protect those inside the labor market.

**The welfare state as an institutionalized pattern of interpretation.** In the section above, I suggested that welfare state intervention alters material incentives in relation to which strategic calculation is possible. However, welfare states do not merely affect opportunities for protest and insurgency “from the outside,” so to speak. Welfare state intervention also reflects and reinforces actors’ internally binding normative commitments. It is this aspect of welfare state intervention to which Piven and Cloward refer when they argue that degradation of welfare recipients “serves to celebrate the virtue of all work and deters actual or potential workers from seeking aid” (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:165). Punishment of deviants serves to strengthen the norms that have been violated (Durkheim [1893] 1984). In this case, it is workers’ acceptance of their own commodification that is being reinforced: “Relief practices are not a mere reflection of market ideology; they are

an agent in nurturing and reinforcing that ideology” (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:149; cf. Schram 1995:123–41).<sup>5</sup>

How is this claim to be understood? Is culture (the symbolic profanation of relief recipients) to be seen only as a means to various essentially noncultural ends (power, profits) that elites might have? Such an instrumentalist and reductionist understanding of culture is clearly untenable. “Norms create order only when they bind action via internal commitments, in relation to which an exclusively rational calculation is impossible” (Alexander 1995:155). To put it differently, “we cannot separate ourselves . . . from our classification system” (Alexander 1988a:312). The symbolic pollution of relief recipients tends to complement the rational concerns of capitalist elites for the maximization of wealth and power and the systemic imperatives of capital accumulation. However, this does not mean that cultural codes are extended and applied as a means to noncultural ends. Relief practices both *reflect* and *reproduce* cultural norms and meanings. Relief administrators, as well as the political and economic elites who pressure them, *draw upon* these cultural norms and meanings to account for their actions while *reinforcing* them through their actions.

However, to see norms and meanings as binding action via internal commitments is not to deny the strategic aspect of action. “It is through the concept of accountability that the strategic aspects of action come back into the picture, for differing accounts of actors, relationships and institutions can, if successfully disseminated, have powerful consequences in terms of the allocation of resources and power” (Alexander and Smith 1993:165). Actors will attempt to tar or taint opponents with profane symbols to delegitimize them and to wrap themselves and their allies in sacred symbols that confer legitimation. Political struggles over the status of excluded or marginalized groups always involve discursive struggles over how to extend and apply collectively held cultural codes (Alexander 1992, 1995).<sup>6</sup>

Struggles over how and to whom to extend and apply cultural codes are fought not only through discourse but through ritual as well. Ritual is a “means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation” and “represents a way in which selves are confirmed” (Goffman 1967:54, 51). While many rituals are meant to confirm the status or rights of others, rituals can also be used to symbolically pollute an individual. Goffman calls such inversions ceremonial profanations. Such profanations take many forms, may be directed at self or others, and may or may not provide the recipient with ways to ignore or overlook the affront. Ceremonial profanations are not necessarily successful; success depends on a host of specifiable conditions that cannot always be controlled by those attempting the profanation (Garfinkel 1956).

The degradation of relief recipients is a ritualistic as well as a discursive process, but in what specific ways does it constitute a ritual? As I have already described, it legitimates the commodification of labor. Relief recipients tend to accept, internalize, and endorse their symbolic profanation. Such stigmatization discourages demands for social rights

<sup>5</sup>Some feminist scholars have argued that welfare programs have also reinforced patriarchal gender norms, but others have argued that their effects are more ambiguous. The role of welfare programs when capitalism and patriarchy conflict is also disputed. See Abramovitz (1996:102–08, 117–18) and the exchange between Gordon (1988) and Piven and Cloward (1988).

<sup>6</sup>How can cultural codes be internalized and binding and at the same time constitute resources to be used in discursive struggles? “Even when they are aware that they are struggling over these classifications . . . most political actors do not recognize that it is they who are creating them . . . Social events and actors seem to ‘be’ these qualities, not to be labeled by them” (Alexander 1995:297). While every individual typifies and accounts for actions and events, this is a practical accomplishment in Harold Garfinkel’s sense. Symbolic classification appears natural, normal, already accomplished, despite the fact that actors must work to make it so. Actors organize social life while appearing only to account for it, but this organizational work necessarily remains hidden to those engaged in it.

because clients see themselves as unworthy of greater assistance and perhaps undeserving of the assistance they already receive. Moreover, degradation of relief recipients has an equally powerful effect on those who remain in the labor market. Fear of the profaned and stigmatized status associated with those detached from the labor market deters workers from making claims on the state for assistance, security, or protection even in times of economic hardship.<sup>7</sup>

There is an additional way in which the degradation of relief recipients constitutes a ritual. "At every moment of history," writes Durkheim, "there is a dim perception, in the moral consciousness of societies, of the respective value of different social services, the relative reward due to each and the consequent degree of comfort appropriate on the average to workers in each occupation" ([1897] 1951:249). Durkheim characterizes this implicitly understood map of the social order as a hierarchy, but it would be more accurate to describe it as a system of signs. A social position or status derives its meaning from its relations to other statuses in the system; it takes on its value because it is an element in a system of differences. The degradation associated with poor relief is thus not merely a punishment but also a kind of semio-technique<sup>8</sup> for relationally defining the statuses of wage worker and relief recipient: "To demean and punish those who do not work is to exalt by contrast even the meanest labor at the meanest wages . . . [T]he ritual degradation of a pariah class . . . serves to mark the boundary between the appropriately motivated and the inappropriately motivated, between the virtuous and the defective" (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:3–4, 149). Wage workers represent the sacred pole of a binary opposition, while relief recipients clearly occupy a profane status; each pole is defined only in relation to the other.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, in addition to constituting two social statuses through the play of difference, these rituals also transfer the meaning of each status sign to individuals. Put differently, the rituals not only distinguish social categories but also serve as a means of typifying specific individuals. It is, in part, through these rituals that individuals become identified as equivalent tokens of a more general social type.

The semio-technique described here can be resisted at two levels. First, actors can contest the meaning of a particular social status (such as relief recipient) by challenging taken-for-granted understandings of the prestige, rights, and rewards appropriate to that status. Because the meaning and value of each status are derived from its relations to others in a system, any transformation in the meaning or value of one status will necessarily involve a transformation of its relations to others. This is resistance at the level of the system of signs. Second, actors can continue to take the meaning of each status (and therefore the system of signs) for granted but resist the process by which the meaning of a particular status is transferred onto them. Resistance of this sort is less deep and operates only at the level of typification.

**Symbolic profanation at the microlevel and the macrolevel.** Struggles over ceremonial profanation are fought at both the microlevel of face-to-face interactions and the macro-

<sup>7</sup>The successful profanation of welfare recipients is evidenced by the views and self-understanding of AFDC recipients themselves, by the rarity of fair hearing appeals, and by the widespread refusal by wage workers to accept relief supplements to their wages (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:171–75). On the views and self-understanding of AFDC recipients, see also Briar (1966), Handler and Hollingsworth (1969), Goodban (1985), and Popkin (1990). As the welfare rights movement of the 1960s suggests, the profanation of welfare recipients was rendered less successful in those years by the War on Poverty and the civil rights movement (Piven and Cloward 1977:267–70), although even welfare rights activists sometimes reaffirmed the work ethic (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:171–72).

<sup>8</sup>The notion of a semio-technique is borrowed from Foucault (1977) but used here in a modified way.

<sup>9</sup>The relationship between this opposition and gender norms is variable, complex, and contradictory. While the opposition has been gendered in important ways, its gendered character has also been undercut at times. See the comparison of AFDC and WEP below.

level of large time-space distances. Piven and Cloward ([1971] 1993) allude to these two levels of ritual degradation without distinguishing between them carefully. When degradation occurs at the microlevel of face-to-face interactions, it takes the form of *interaction rituals* (Goffman 1967). Examples include searches of welfare recipients' homes, surveillance and eavesdropping, interrogation concerning the sexual activities of recipients, and the rehabilitation programs intended to curb out-of-wedlock births or foster the work ethic (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993). These forms of degradation can usefully be analyzed in Goffmanian terms, for they profane welfare recipients through the violation of avoidance rules and presentational rules (Goffman 1967). On the one hand, *avoidance rules* require an actor to keep at a distance (both spatial and social) from the recipient and not to violate the recipient's privacy and personal reserve (Goffman 1967:62–63). Such rules “tend to focus around . . . physical places and properties defined as the recipient's ‘own,’ the body's sexual equipment, etc.” (Goffman 1967:65). Man-in-the-house rules and the infamous “midnight raids” to which public assistance recipients have historically been subjected, plus more recent practices intended to curb out-of-wedlock births (i.e., to regulate sexual relations and gender norms), clearly imply invasion of privacy and personal reserve. On the other hand, the loss of commonly accepted rights in exchange for assistance constitutes a violation of *presentational rules* that imply what is to be done rather than what is not to be done (Goffman 1967:71). Citizens are ordinarily obligated to extend such rights to each other; in this case, the extension of such rights is withdrawn.<sup>10</sup>

However, a focus on interaction rituals is by itself insufficient to understand the symbolic profanation of relief recipients. Ceremonial profanation at the microlevel is not effective unless it can be “lifted out” from localized contexts of interaction and extended through time and space. Such time-space distancing is accomplished through the use of disembedding mechanisms (Giddens 1990). These mechanisms allow the circulation of representations and signs throughout different kinds of publics. Piven and Cloward ([1971] 1993) provide several examples of such disembedding mechanisms: Legislative investigations, newspaper exposés and mass campaigns attacking children born out of wedlock or welfare fraud, press releases and public announcements from welfare agencies concerning new rehabilitation programs, and newspaper editorials. These disembedding mechanisms enlist the participation of various kinds of publics in ritual degradation, involving them in “guarding against and exorcising the moral and personal defects that are the presumed source of poverty” (Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:170–71).<sup>11</sup>

Even when representations are initially constructed through interaction rituals, their circulation in macrolevel publics tends to react upon and influence the very sources on which these representations depend. This is particularly true when they become institutionalized through public policy, legislation, or judicial decisions or in the design of social programs. However, neither of these levels is primary or more fundamental. Successful ceremonial profanation at the macrolevel reinforces, strengthens, and influences profanation at the microlevel, but the converse is also true. Successful profanation at the micro-

<sup>10</sup>The rituals of degradation described by Piven and Cloward are in some cases strikingly similar to the kinds of ceremonial profanations that one finds in total institutions. “The recruit comes into the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance, he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements . . . [H]e begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self . . . He begins some radical shifts in his *moral career*, a career composed of the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and significant others” (Goffman 1961:14).

<sup>11</sup>Alexander (1988b, 1988c) has shown in his analysis of the Watergate scandal how ritual is not merely confined to microlevel interaction but can involve publics spanning large time-space distances through the mass media. For further examples of the ritual and discursive degradation of welfare recipients, see Gordon (1988), Fraser (1989), Katz (1989), Piven and Cloward ([1971] 1993), Schram (1993, 1995), Fraser and Gordon (1994), and Abramovitz (1996).

level makes actors more receptive to profanation at the macrolevel, and it causes macrolevel profanation to resonate more effectively. By the same token, transformation of cultural representations at one level may render their reproduction at the other level less effective.

## II. A COMPARISON OF WELFARE AND WORKFARE

In the preceding pages, I discussed several ways in which the welfare state facilitates or hinders collective action. The pages that follow direct attention to *variation* in these effects over time as a result of institutional reform. I compare the now defunct Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program to New York City's current workfare program, known as the Work Experience Program (WEP). Originally called Aid to Dependent Children, AFDC was established by the Social Security Act of 1935, was administered jointly by the federal government and the states, and served as the primary public assistance program in the United States for 60 years. In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWOA) repealed AFDC, replacing it with block grants (lump sums of federal money) to the states. This allowed elected officials at the state and local levels greater discretion to redesign public assistance programs. PRWOA also required most adult public assistance recipients to work within two years of receiving aid and imposed a five-year lifetime limit on public assistance payments (National Governors' Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Public Welfare Association 1997; Mink 1998). These reforms have affected 450,000 families that receive welfare in the state of New York, approximately 70 percent of whom reside in New York City (Firestone 1996a).

Below, I explore the continuities and discontinuities between AFDC and WEP, focusing on ties of social interdependence, ritual and discursive profanation, and symbolic classification. Despite some continuities, opportunities for insurgency among WEP participants have expanded as a result of shifting ties of interdependence and the blurring of the boundaries between wage workers and relief recipients. As WEP called this distinction into question, WEP participants developed an expanded notion of rights and advanced new claims on the state. In these ways, New York's workfare program has created greater—although unintended—structural opportunities for political mobilization of public assistance recipients than did AFDC.

### *Shifting Ties of Interdependence*

On the one hand, workfare participants are constrained by some of the same social interdependencies that discouraged protest among welfare recipients. Since the early 1940s, elected officials at both the state and federal levels periodically attacked AFDC, slashed benefit levels, and made eligibility requirements more restrictive (Katz 1989; Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993; Abramovitz 1996). The shift from welfare to workfare has been accompanied by similar efforts at retrenchment, undermining the leverage of workfare participants in the ways described above.

On the other hand, the shift from welfare to workfare has also transformed social relations between public assistance recipients and administrators and thereby created new opportunities for collective action. Under AFDC, clients depended heavily on public welfare agencies for access to the goods and services these agencies controlled. However, a welfare agency needed clients, at best, as resources "to justify its existence, to obtain fiscal resources, to operate its service technology and to demonstrate its effectiveness" (Hasenfeld et al. 1987:405). In contrast, the rapid and continuing expansion of workfare under the Republican administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has made New York City increasingly reliant on the *labor* of workfare participants, giving them potential leverage that welfare recipients never had.

In addition, federal welfare reform has further shifted responsibility for public assistance to local and state governments to allow for more experimentation. Although the administration of public assistance has always been decentralized in the United States, the status of AFDC as a federal entitlement limited the discretion of state and local officials in important ways: "Entitlement programs offer more protection than programs funded by block grants because their appropriations are automatically renewed each year." Moreover, "in exchange for federal support, states must follow federal guidelines, including the mandate to serve all qualified applicants" (Abramovitz 1996:43). Although the removal of these constraints makes public assistance programs more vulnerable, it also increases the responsibility and discretion of state and local officials, who are more vulnerable to pressure tactics than the federal government. Dissensus and division among state and local elites, which I discuss in more detail below, have also increased the leverage of workfare participants.

Finally, workfare is less isolating than AFDC. To be sure, rather than being completely atomized, AFDC recipients were typically embedded in kin-based networks of cooperation and reciprocity (Stack 1974). However, although these networks link several households, they tend to confine solidarity, cooperation, and concerted action to kin and close friends. Workfare, in contrast, facilitates interaction and social ties across such networks by placing clients from different kin-based networks in a common work site for extended periods of time. This, in turn, fosters a collective identity centered on work rather than kin or community.

### *Ritual Degradation and Discursive Profanation*

Ritual degradation and discursive profanation of public assistance recipients have continued with the shift from welfare to workfare. I have already noted some of the forms of profanation to which AFDC recipients have historically been subjected. Below I describe similar forms of ritual and discursive degradation experienced by workfare participants.

First, there is the interview process preceding work assignments. One State Supreme Court justice found the conditions under which workfare interviews were conducted so disturbing that she ordered them halted until conditions were improved (Kennedy 1996). The interviews themselves are similar to the admission procedures of total institutions described by Goffman; they ensure "a deep initial break with past roles," shaping and coding the applicant "into an object that can be fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment" and "worked on smoothly by routine operations" (Goffman 1961:16). The refugee-camp-like conditions where the interviews are conducted represent inversions or violations of the avoidance rules described above. They strip public assistance recipients of their "front," expressive equipment that might be employed to control the presentation and construction of self and to resist role dispossession.

Other forms of ritual degradation are vividly described in the testimony of workfare participants themselves. This testimony was provided at several public hearings between 1997 and 1998.<sup>12</sup> It reveals a form of ritual degradation that may be described as "morti-

<sup>12</sup>The first of the hearings was held in March 1997 by the New York Workers' Rights Board, an association funded by unions and charity organizations. Although the hearing was held in Albany, many of those testifying were from New York City. A second hearing was held in August 1998 by the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations. A third hearing was held jointly by the City Council's Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Higher Education on October 14, 1998. Finally, testimony was also provided at an October 20, 1998, hearing of the Committee on General Welfare. In all of these hearings, many of the workfare participants who testified were also members of social movement organizations that oppose the city's workfare program. I will say more about these organizations below. I will also try to show that there are good reasons for believing that the views expressed in this testimony are widespread among the city's workfare participants. For now, I only wish to draw attention to the various forms of ritual degradation that they reveal.

fication of the self by way of the body” (Goffman 1961:21). This is accomplished in part by contaminative exposure, the “besmearing and defiling of the body or of other objects closely identified with the self.” For example, one workfare participant assigned to the city’s Sanitation Department described her experience of the program this way: “We walk over sharp debris all day, yet we’re not given protective boots or foot wear of any kind. We work with filthy garbage, yet we’re not given uniforms or coveralls to protect our clothing . . . Some of us have to put plastic garbage bags over our bodies [on rainy days] . . . On cold days . . . we’re not given any warm clothing or winter coats . . . After we have worked all morning, we have to eat our lunch in the street with no place to wash our hands. Often, my hands are filthy when I have to pick up my sandwich” (Workers’ Rights Board [WRB] 1997).

Other workfare participants have reported similar kinds of contaminative exposure: Being ordered to pick up dead animals, feces, condoms, dirty needles, rusty nails, glass, and other hazardous materials without protective gloves; being prevented from using bathrooms and instead being forced to urinate on the street or on the sides of highways; lack of safety equipment and protective gear (WRB 1997; New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations [CGO] 1998). This kind of exposure, as Goffman suggests, often involves “a breakdown of the usual environmental arrangements for insulating oneself” (1961:25). The result is again a loss of demeanor, the ability to control the way the self is presented and constructed.

More serious abuses have also been reported. One workfare participant testified to seeing others placed “in positions hazardous to their health and even causing death” (CGO 1998:123). Another testified that “people with documented heart attacks and other health conditions have been forced to work and a number have died and sustained permanent injuries” (CGO 1998:211). In 1997, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of workfare participants alleging that “the City [of New York] was routinely assigning people whom its own medical contractors found to be employable with limitations . . . to work sites at which their physical and/or mental limitations were in no way taken into account, let alone reasonably accommodated” (CGO 1998:188). A lawyer for the Legal Aid Society noted that “these inappropriate WEP assignments can and do exacerbate the workers’ medical problems and disabilities” (CGO 1998:189). A Brooklyn congressional candidate concurred, claiming that “people are having their health placed at risk [and] their lives placed at risk” as a result of the city’s workfare program (CGO 1998:208). In response to a question about training, one workfare participant testified that he “was trained how not to lose my hand in a conveyor belt the way it happened to a 17-year-old young man” at his work site (WRB 1997). Another angrily exclaimed that “they don’t care what body part you lose. We’ve had people that have died, we have people that have gotten [sic] sick, I myself have been injured and am now on medication for a hip injury from lifting up all of this garbage” (WRB 1997). This kind of physical injury to the body clearly constitutes a more extreme form of the mortification of the self described by Goffman.

It is clear from their testimony that workfare participants perceive such treatment as degradation and not merely the result of oversight. “When I think of the degradation [sic] and disrespect I suffer here,” testified one workfare participant, “it literally brings a tear to my eye” (CGO 1998:212). “We are being held back,” complained another, “beaten down and being punished for what?” (New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Higher Education [CGW/CHE] 1998:16). Another workfare participant angrily suggested that unionized municipal employees are complicit in the degradation: “As far as Sanitation [Department] workers, Parks [Department] workers, housing managers and stuff, they look down on WEP workers like, you know, we do their dirty work for them . . . we get treated like sluts” (WRB 1997). A commonly voiced complaint is the lack of dignity, fairness, and respect given to workfare participants (e.g., WRB 1997; CGO

1998:213; New York City Council Committee on General Welfare [CGW] 1998:18; CGW/CHE 1998:205–07).

Efforts at symbolic profanation also persisted at the macrolevel, although here it tends to be more discursive than ritual. Mayor Giuliani, for example, has consistently represented public assistance as polluting to both the city and to recipients themselves. Public assistance is said to sap the city of the entrepreneurial spirit that once made it great, a “spirit that embraces individual initiative, responsibility and drive” (Giuliani 1997). Moreover, it is said to weaken the social contract on which civic life is based. Workfare, the mayor declared in a speech in February 1998, forces public assistance recipients to “contribute back to the rest of society. Now what’s wrong with that? That is exactly what the social contract is all about” (quoted in Finder 1998a). At the same time, public assistance is linked to dependency and fraud and deemed to prevent each recipient from “utilizing his or her potential” and from developing “the self-worth that comes from having a job” (Giuliani 1996a, 1996b). Work, in contrast, is associated with dignity, hope, opportunity, self-sufficiency, and independence and is exalted as “the very best social program there is” (Giuliani 1995, 1996a, 1996b).

If the city’s workfare program was deemed to be work rather than public assistance, such discourse would hardly be profaning. Yet city and state officials have vehemently insisted that workfare is *not* work. City welfare administrators have publicly maintained that workfare participants are not and should not be considered public employees, carefully referring to them as “WEP participants” rather than “WEP workers” (CGO 1998) and emphasizing the transitional or temporary nature of workfare. Richard Schwartz, the architect of New York’s workfare program, announced to the press that “workfare is a supplement to the city workforce, not a substitute” (Greenhouse 1996a). New York governor George Pataki has suggested that workfare merely “models a real-life job” (quoted in testimony, WRB 1997). This view was reiterated by the *New York Times* in a 1997 editorial that flatly insisted that “what they [workfare participants] are doing does not amount to a job” (*New York Times* 1997). In short, work is redeeming only when it is remunerated in the form of wages rather than welfare benefits.

Implicit in these various forms of ritual and discursive degradation are specific interpretations of the needs of workfare participants (Fraser 1989), assumptions about the specific bases on which workfare participants may claim social rights, and assumptions about the kinds of claims workfare participants are entitled to make. To the extent that these interpretations and assumptions are internalized by workfare participants and by wage workers, they will have a profound effect on the political capacities, ideas, and demands of both groups. But how successful has this profanation been?

### *Symbolic Classification*

As noted above (also see footnote 7), the ritual and discursive profanation of welfare recipients were relatively successful in the case of AFDC. Has the profanation of workfare participants also been successful? One way to gauge its success is to examine workfare participants’ notions of their worth, status, and rights, all of which are tied to their symbolic classification. I have argued that ritual and discursive profanation imply and presuppose a binary opposition between a positive, privileged, and foundational status and a negative, subordinate, and deficient status. To the extent that this opposition is called into question, the attempted profanation is unsuccessful or ineffective.

Fraser and Gordon (1994) have traced the wage worker/relief recipient opposition back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. “When white workingmen demanded civil and electoral rights, they claimed to be independent . . . As wage labor became increasingly

normative—and increasingly definitive of independence—it was precisely those excluded from wage labor who appeared to personify dependency” (Fraser and Gordon 1994:315–16). White workingmen defined themselves in contrast not only to paupers, “who lived not on wages but on poor relief,” but also to housewives, slaves, and Native Americans. The opposition between wage laborers and the dependent poor was therefore gendered and raced from the very beginning.

The New Deal reinstitutionalized the older distinction between wage workers and paupers as a division between social insurance and public assistance, thereby creating a dualistic welfare state with a gendered and two-tiered system of social rights (Katz 1986; Fraser 1989; Abramovitz 1996). Social insurance programs were nonstigmatizing because they were tied to participation in the labor market, or what Nancy Fraser (1989) calls the “official paid economy.” In contrast, AFDC was modeled on the state-level mothers’ pensions of the early 1900s, which were designed to provide single mothers with an alternative to wage labor. Similarly, until the 1960s, AFDC rules prohibited women on federal welfare from engaging in wage labor (Abramovitz 1996:26, 76). However, by the 1960s, the gendered character of the wage worker/relief recipient opposition was weakening. On the one hand, wage work was feminized by the increasing participation of women in the official paid economy. On the other hand, AFDC was masculinized by the extension of payments to families with unemployed fathers (AFDC-UP) and by new incentives to push recipients into the labor market. Nevertheless, public assistance continues to be a largely feminine tier of the U.S. welfare state. In 1995, the last year for which published figures are available from the New York State Department of Social Services, 60 percent of public assistance recipients in New York State were women (New York State Department of Social Services 1995:35).<sup>13</sup>

New York City’s workfare program threatens not only to further weaken the gendering of wage labor and public assistance but to blur the wage worker/relief recipient distinction itself. Of course, merely putting relief recipients to work does not threaten the opposition between wage workers and the dependent poor. However, the punitive work that relief recipients perform must be kept distinct from paid work in the labor market if the former is to confer a degrading status in contrast to the latter. As Felix Driver puts it, the “semiotics of deterrence” depends on “a clear distinction between ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ labour” (Driver 1993:24). Consequently, relief recipients cannot be allowed to do the same work in the same locations at the same time as wage workers. The sacred and the profane “cannot coexist in the same place” or “in the same unit of time” without undermining the distinction (Durkheim [1912] 1915:337–38, 346–47).<sup>14</sup>

Despite the insistence of political officials that it is not a job, New York City’s workfare program has done just that, undermining the separation of these domains. To be sure, the activities of welfare recipients do not completely coincide in time and space with those of city employees. However, as I show in more detail below, they overlap sufficiently to blur the frontiers that separate these social categories. In addition to being *anomalous* figures whose activities overlap with those of paid city employees, workfare participants are also

<sup>13</sup>This figure includes both AFDC and Home Relief (general assistance) recipients. In 1995, approximately 63 percent of AFDC recipients but only 47 percent of Home Relief recipients in New York State were women (New York State Department of Social Services 1995:35). Unfortunately, no comparable figures are available for New York City alone. On Home Relief, see footnote 19 below.

<sup>14</sup>This does not mean that the category of wage laborer has in all times and all places been clearly distinguished from that of relief recipient. Rather than assuming such an opposition as given or universal, this study is concerned with the way this boundary is actively produced, policed, and contested in particular times and places. Nor am I suggesting that wage labor itself is never stigmatized. Some forms of wage labor may become just as stigmatizing as public assistance, perhaps even more so. However, when wage labor or particular forms of it do become stigmatized, the ritual degradation of paupers is less likely to deter actual or potential wage workers from seeking public assistance.

*liminal* figures, which further problematizes their classification. Workfare is often justified as a form of rehabilitation, moving individuals from the profane (dependency, indolence, promiscuity) to the sacred (self-sufficiency, discipline, family), from one social category (relief recipient) to another (wage worker). Hence, Mayor Giuliani proclaimed in 1998 that “those who passed through our welfare to work programs prove to be excellent, motivated, dedicated workers” (quoted in CGO 1998:177). Because workfare participants are perceived to be in a process of transition, they are “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial” (Turner 1969:95). As Turner has shown, this liminal period constitutes a moment of “anti-structure” since “these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (1969:95). Turner argues that this “limbo of statuslessness” may appear under certain conditions as a threat to the social structure, provoking hostility and efforts to reimpose order. “From the perspectival viewpoint of those concerned with the maintenance of ‘structure,’ ” he explains, liminal periods “must appear as dangerous and anarchical and have to be hedged around with prescriptions, prohibitions and conditions” (1969:109).<sup>15</sup>

As the classification of workfare participants becomes problematized—are they welfare recipients or workers?—so too does the moral economy defining the reciprocal rights and obligations between welfare recipients and the city government: Welfare recipients begin to demand the same rights and protections as workers. However, calling “cherished classifications” into question can also be deeply disturbing and may be interpreted as polluting (Douglas 1966). The outcome of this kind of confusion is therefore far from predetermined, and defenders of the symbolic status quo will try to reconstruct the distinction between workers and the dependent poor in new ways. Ritual responses to anomalies such as workfare participants provide a way of dealing with them and reintegrating them into the dominant system of classification.

### *The Impact of Earlier Reforms of AFDC on Symbolic Classification*

Work incentives were first introduced into AFDC in 1962, when the Social Security Act was amended to allow states to encourage employment of welfare mothers through training and social services. In 1967, the Social Security Act was further amended with the introduction of the Work Incentive Program (WIN). WIN was intended to encourage employment by providing welfare recipients with supplementary benefits if they gained full- or part-time work. In 1971, work incentives were toughened by the Talmadge amendments, which emphasized job placement rather than training. In 1988, the Family Support Act further expanded job training and placement provisions for welfare recipients.<sup>16</sup>

These reforms linked welfare benefits to work long before AFDC was abolished in 1996. Why, then, did these earlier reforms not undermine the distinction between dependent clients and wage workers and thereby open up similar opportunities for political mobilization?<sup>17</sup> First, employment of welfare recipients by the state and their interaction with primary-sector unionized workers are essential. When welfare recipients are placed in private-sector jobs, the recipient’s employer remains distinct and separate from the agency

<sup>15</sup>Liminality, of course, is not always conducive to collective action. It may at times also discourage political mobilization by reassuring the aggrieved that injustices are temporary. Like all causal mechanisms, its effects vary depending on “initial conditions, subsequent sequences and adjacent processes” (Tilly 1997:53).

<sup>16</sup>More detailed overviews of these reforms can be found, among other places, in Mead (1986, 1992), Katz (1989), Piven and Cloward ([1971] 1993), and Abramovitz (1996).

<sup>17</sup>I leave aside a discussion of the welfare rights movement of the 1960s, which, in contrast to the current insurgency of workfare participants, emerged for different reasons and pursued different aims (a guaranteed minimum income). For comparison of political mobilization around AFDC and workfare, see Reese and Newcombe (n.d.).

Table 1. Participation of New York City Welfare Recipients in Employment-Related Activities by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Client Entries in Employment-Related Activities <sup>a</sup>	Persons Receiving Public Assistance	Rate of Client Entries per 1,000 Recipients
FY 1989 <sup>b</sup>	50,151	815,000	62
FY 1990 <sup>b</sup>	36,761	895,600	41
FY 1991 <sup>b</sup>	90,429	936,800	97
FY 1992 <sup>b</sup>	136,437	999,700	136
FY 1993 <sup>c</sup>	178,810	1,089,000	164
FY 1994 <sup>c</sup>	232,336	1,140,600	204
FY 1995 <sup>c</sup>	243,576	1,119,400	218
FY 1996 <sup>c</sup>	218,246	1,007,900	217
FY 1997 <sup>c</sup>	186,343	880,100	212

Source: City of New York (1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998).

<sup>a</sup>For all years, entries include AFDC and Home Relief clients. Employment-related activities include work and training programs, the BEGIN program, Job Club, Job Search, the Work Experience Program, and so on. Clients may be enrolled in more than one activity per year.

<sup>b</sup>Dinkins administration.

<sup>c</sup>Giuliani administration.

that provides her with benefits. Under these conditions, clients are less likely to transpose the norms and expectations that govern their relationship to their employer to their relationship with welfare administrators. Moreover, although paid employment undermines the distinction between wage workers and welfare recipients, this does not always lead welfare recipients to develop an expanded notion of rights. Welfare recipients' understanding of the rights to which they are then entitled will depend on what rights are successfully claimed by the wage workers with whom they regularly interact. In other words, welfare recipients are likely to perceive less deprivation relative to nonunionized, low-wage, or part-time co-workers in the secondary sector than they will relative to unionized, high-wage, full-time civil servants.

Second, although workfare in New York dates back to the administration of Mayor Ed Koch in the 1980s, its rapid expansion has only recently begun (Fuentes 1996; Finder 1998a).<sup>18</sup> Table 1 compares the participation of New York City welfare recipients in employment-related activities (including workfare) under the administrations of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his predecessor, David Dinkins. Although client entries in employment-related activities increased under the Dinkins administration, it is only under the Giuliani administration that they have reached a rate of 200 or more.

The number of welfare recipients working for the city at any given time in its workfare program is much smaller than the number of entries in employment-related activities over the course of a year, but the former is also increasing rapidly. By January 1997, there were 17,000 single mothers in workfare along with 16,000 adults on general assistance (Finder

<sup>18</sup>This claim is consistent with Lawrence Mead's argument that relatively few welfare recipients were placed in jobs by or even participated in the work and training programs created since 1962 (Mead 1986:120-26, 1992:176-79; cf. Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993:383).

1998a).<sup>19</sup> To meet the requirements of the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation, New York city and state officials plan to further expand the city's workfare program to include up to 200,000 welfare recipients by 2002. This would equal the number of municipal employees currently employed by the city. If city and state officials follow through with these plans, New York City's workfare program could rapidly become the largest public jobs program since the Great Depression. It is already the largest workfare program in the United States (Firestone 1996a; Wright 1997).

A third and final reason that work requirements have only recently spurred political mobilization by welfare recipients may be their increasingly compulsory character. WIN, for example, had to serve volunteers "before it could force mothers to participate against their will," and, of those who did participate, most were "placed in school or training that spared them immediate pressures to work" (Mead 1986:122). In contrast, the Giuliani administration has reduced the training and education options available to public assistance recipients (Fuentes 1996; Finder 1998a). In 1995, only general assistance recipients were required to work off their benefits; no training or educational programs are provided to these clients. In 1996, the Giuliani administration expanded workfare to include single mothers on federal welfare, permitting them to spend one month in a basic job-search class for every six months they work off their benefits. The vast majority do not find jobs in the private sector and usually return to workfare (Finder 1998a).

### *Challenging Symbolic Classifications*

To sum up, New York City's workfare program problematizes the classification of workfare participants in ways that earlier reforms did not. Workfare participants are *anomalous* figures who seem to be situated on both sides of the worker/relief recipient distinction. At the same time, workfare participants are *liminal* figures who seem to be situated on neither side of the distinction. To the extent that the opposition between wage workers and relief recipients remains gendered, there will be gendered effects as it is called into question. Other oppositions grouped around it, such as work/motherhood and production/reproduction, may also be reconfigured as a result.<sup>20</sup> However, examination of all the effects of welfare reform is beyond the scope of this article. Here I focus on how the increasingly problematized status of workfare participants has influenced their political ideas, capacities, and demands. More specifically, I examine how it has altered their perception of the kinds of rights due to them, the basis on which they claim social rights, and the organizational forms and modes of collective action through which they make rights claims. Other effects of welfare reform will not be addressed except insofar as they bear on these questions.

The political ideas and demands of workfare participants can be gleaned by a careful examination of the discourse of workfare participants themselves. Public testimony given by workfare participants reveals three basic kinds of grievances, not all of which are entirely consistent. First, workfare participants are concerned with practical and concrete improvements in their day-to-day working conditions. These concerns involve safety, access to proper equipment and gear, being treated with a modicum of fairness and respect, and so forth. While these concerns are understandable and important, they hardly show a change in self-classification.

<sup>19</sup>General assistance programs were run by state governments to serve low-income households that did not qualify for AFDC, usually because they did not include dependent children under the age of 18. In the state of New York, general assistance is known as Home Relief (Green 1997).

<sup>20</sup>However, gender divisions may be reinstitutionalized *within* workfare programs by assigning men and women to different kinds of work assignments, by access to different kinds of training, and so on. What effect workfare is having on the gender bifurcation of the U.S. welfare state is therefore unclear and requires further research.

Second, workfare participants repeatedly voice demands for “real jobs” as an alternative to workfare. Salaried or wage labor is represented as paid, “decent,” skilled, and permanent and is associated with a range of rights such as “full benefits and child care.” In contrast, workfare is associated with slavery—the racial overtones are obvious—and with political repression at the hands of a dictator (the mayor). It is represented as “phony” or unhelpful, a program where participants are “struggling and falling between the cracks of the system” (WRB 1997; CGO 1998:215, 222–23; CGW 1998:18–20). Demands for “real jobs” are often linked to demands for better education and training, which are typically perceived as the most effective means for improving income opportunities:

What it came down to was either holding onto my education, which will get me a real job one day, or picking up dirt in the park, which will get me nowhere. (CGO 1998:140)

I ask that all college students be allowed to finish, that training programs be made available and they be made available also to WEP workers so that they can find jobs that will support their families well into the millennium. Skills gained through education will help us keep off welfare . . . I strongly believe that the road out of poverty is through education and skill-building and not through permanent workfare. (CGO 1998:231–32)

Most of these students [receiving public assistance], like myself, are women trying to up themselves out of poverty through an education. Instead, we are being forced to work and participate in a dead-end workfare program . . . WEP is forcing me to push a broom when I could be getting my diploma. (CGW/CHE 1998:15–17)

While demands for “real jobs,” education, and training may reveal a more radical challenge to the city’s workfare program, they tend to assume rather than to challenge the boundary separating wage workers from the dependent poor.

However, mixed in with both of these kinds of demands are demands of a third sort, which reveal an emerging effort by workfare participants to reclassify themselves. I would like to suggest that it is the problematization of their status that has enabled workfare participants in New York City to question and contest the way in which they have been classified (i.e., as the dependent poor). Their public testimony shows that workfare participants are indeed doing just this, defining both themselves and the situation they face as similar to that of unionized municipal employees:

I am working hard and I at least deserve a decent lunch like the guy next to me—and as well a real paycheck. Regular Parks [Department] workers receive sick days, they get vacation days and they get lots of other benefits. WEP workers don’t. Is this fair? I put in a hard day’s work. I think I deserve what a Parks [Department] employee gets, don’t I? . . . I am not getting paid for the very real work that I do. (WRB 1997)

[T]here is no conceivable reason for any two-tiered system of treatment . . . [W]hat is it about me that allows this Mayor and political figures across this country to say that my work is different or of less value than the same work done by someone else? What in my humanity or my personage allows you or them to decide that I don’t deserve the same concern and humanity given to others that I am working right next to? What makes you decide the equal, fair rights don’t apply to me? (CGO 1998:210–12)

I am being forced to work for less than minimum wage, with no benefits. (CGW/CHE 1998:17)

Oh, well, I guess I've been preparing pseudo-reports and pseudo-flyers as well as pseudo-handing out and pseudo-documenting pseudo-food to pseudo-clients. The work that I and other WEP workers perform is genuine . . . Workfare is real work; it's not job training. (WRB 1997)

I feel it is necessary that as workers we are entitled to the same rights as regular workers . . . We need the same protection at the work site. (CGO 1998:122)

First, this new typification-via-analogy influences perceptions of the kinds of rights that are appropriate. Workfare participants are not merely demanding an end to relief restrictions, a guaranteed minimum income, or jobs but are demanding the rights and protections granted to unionized municipal employees: Fair pay, fringe benefits, and health and safety regulations. Second, workfare provides a new basis for rights claims: Productive citizenship and participation in the official paid economy.<sup>21</sup> This is significant considering the large percentage of public assistance recipients who are women. In contrast, the social rights of women have historically been linked to their status as mothers or derived from their relationships to husbands and children. Third, by blurring the boundary between wage workers and relief recipients, workfare influences the latter's choice of organizational forms and modes of acting collectively. This is apparent from repeated demands for the right to unionize:

You say to yourself, Why do we need a union? You heard the horror stories here today and that's just the tip of the iceberg. From an action that was held in Brooklyn for Sanitation [Department] workers, someone asked [Mayor] Giuliani, How do you feel about the WEP workers getting a union? . . . He said for the WEP workers to have a union, it would mess up the flexibility of the program. So, in other words, what this man is saying is that if we give them a union, I can't use them anymore like I do, OK? But I have news for Mr. Giuliani . . . We shouldn't have to go and bang on the door and say "please give me a coat." We're doing work alongside these people [city employees]; they have a coat, they have gloves, they have uniforms, they have a union. We want a union and we will have a union! (WRB 1997)

The question or scandal that I speak of is that WEP workers still do not have and must get equal protection under all labor laws, local, state and federal. This includes the right to pay and benefits, equal treatment and the right to unionize or to be part of an existing bargaining unit where they work . . . We recommend that language be added to the bill that affirms the right of WEP workers to organize free of threat or sanctions. (CGO 1998:220–21)

We will stick together and we will have this union. So far we have over 60,000 people in our union and we have 20,000 more that's about to sign up with us. The governor and the mayor says [sic] that these people do not have a right to a union. We have a right. We have a voice and we're going to speak for it. What do we want? We want the union! (WRB 1997)

<sup>21</sup> On the concept of "productive citizenship," see Stoltzfus (n.d.). The paper is based on her dissertation (Stoltzfus 1999).

You're a union man yourself, you know how hard your people fought to get a union. That's what we are doing now. We need people like you [union officials] to come out and say, "Yes, these people need a union." Union to union, this is what we need. (WRB 1997)

As the classification of workfare participants becomes a matter of contestation, so too do interpretations of needs (Fraser 1989) and the moral economy defining the reciprocal rights and obligations between welfare clients and the city government. In short, workfare may pose a threat to labor discipline, but it is a threat precisely the opposite of that associated with generous welfare benefits: Not that workers will choose to go on relief but that those on relief will demand the same rights and protections as workers! Admittedly, this attempted reclassification of relief recipients as workers is far from stable, even among workfare participants themselves. They define themselves, their opponents, and the stakes of their struggle in a variety of ways, not all of which are entirely consistent. Moreover, these inconsistencies do not simply reflect the differing views of discrete factions; rather, inconsistent or contradictory demands are often voiced by the same speaker. But messy, inconsistent, and contradictory constructions of collective identity are not unusual in real life political discourse (Gamson 1992). While workfare participants may not understand their struggle exclusively as a struggle over classification, it is, nevertheless, at least one of the ways in which they understand it.

As noted earlier, the outcome of this classification struggle is not predetermined.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, defenders of the classificatory status quo will resort to the kinds of protective rituals that Douglas and Turner describe. On the other hand, workfare participants and their allies will resist being identified with profane social categories through the use of what Goffman (1963) calls *disidentifiers*, symbolic practices that tend to further problematize a no longer taken-for-granted typification. Goffman provides as a now rather dated example of disidentification the use of "good English" by an educated northern African American visiting the South (1963:44). Such a disidentifier creates an anomaly or ambiguity within the system of classifications; in this case, it blurs the racial distinction white/black.

Although the resistance of workfare participants is at the level of typification, this can at least potentially lead to a deeper resistance at the level of the system of signs. In other words, as workfare participants try to change their relation to the dominant classifications, the classificatory system itself may be changed. The more workfare participants try to align themselves with the sacred pole of the wage worker/relief recipient distinction, the more the distinction itself threatens to dissolve. Anomalies, liminality, and other forms of symbolic disorder thus open up possibilities not only for reclassification but also for rearrangement of the internal structure of symbolic formations. As Mary Douglas points out, while threats to "cherished classifications" may lead to defensive ritualistic responses, they may also lead to creative transformation of the classificatory system itself: "Positively we can deliberately confront the anomaly and try to create a new pattern of reality in which it has a place . . . Disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality" (Douglas 1966:39, 95).

There is already some evidence that the system of signs may be in the process of transformation. To suggest that grievances arise among workfare participants because they compare their situation to that of unionized municipal employees is hardly surprising.

<sup>22</sup>The phrase "classification struggle" is borrowed from Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981).

What is more interesting is that unionized municipal employees have become a relevant reference group in the first place. As noted earlier, the social categories of wage worker and relief recipient have historically been defined in contrast to each other. Each of these social categories takes on its meaning because it is an element in a system of differences. But if workfare participants now see unionized city employees as a relevant reference group for comparison, this suggests an attempt to transform the relationship between these two social categories from one of binary opposition to one of homology or structural equivalence.

### III. THE CLASSIFICATION STRUGGLE: FROM STRUCTURES TO AGENCY

In the remaining pages, I would like to briefly describe the principal actors and sketch some of the major turning points in New York City's unfolding workfare insurgency. In these pages, I shift from a synchronic focus on social relations and systems of classification to a diachronic focus on agency and process to provide a more complete explanation of the insurgency. The discussion that follows is meant to show how actors have engaged their structural contexts over time. Although several social movement organizations are involved in New York City's workfare insurgency, I will devote special attention to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) because it has been the most effective and most important. As in the rest of the article, my focus on the cultural context of collective action should not be taken to mean that other structural contexts are unimportant.

As noted earlier, the rapid expansion of the city's workfare program during the Giuliani administration has threatened to undermine the distinction between municipal workers and public assistance recipients. To be sure, the distinction between workers and relief recipients was reaffirmed at the macrolevel in the discourse of political elites. City officials pledged not to replace unionized workers with workfare participants. In addition, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act sought to institutionalize this distinction by prohibiting the direct replacement of workers by welfare recipients (Firestone 1996a; National Governors' Association et al. 1997; Mink 1998). However, the legislation did allow vacancies to be filled by workfare participants. As a result of the growing numbers of workfare participants employed by city agencies, the activities of relief recipients began increasingly to overlap in time and space with those of city employees at the microlevel. As one observer noted in 1996: "WEP creates a pool of contingent workers, doing the same work as city employees and often working shoulder to shoulder with them, but for a fraction of their pay . . . [P]ublic sector unions have mostly watched with fear and loathing as WEP workers have begun to fill slots once occupied by their civil-service colleagues" (Fuentes 1996:14–15). At least some union officials were willing to admit this publicly, bitterly complaining in the press that "workfare people are doing the jobs that our members used to do" (Greenhouse 1996b). Perhaps the best example of this displacement can be found in the city's Parks Department. In 1990, the nonadministrative workforce of the Parks Department numbered 2,786. Under the Giuliani administration, that number dropped to 1,156 by April 1998, while workfare participants working for the Parks Department outnumbered nonadministrative wage workers by more than five to one (Greenhouse 1998).

As noted above, workfare participants also found themselves in a changing configuration of social relations that created new opportunities for collective action. Moreover, a number of welfare advocacy organizations and representatives from several unions in the city provided workfare participants with crucial resources such as staff, technical support, and legal expertise (Sexton 1996). As a result of an increasingly blurred distinction between

public assistance recipients and city workers, a more favorable configuration of social relations, and new resources, workfare participants began to mobilize by the summer of 1996. They formed an organization called WEP Workers Together with the support of three nonprofit welfare advocacy organizations: Community Voices Heard, the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn, and the Urban Justice Center in Manhattan (Fuentes 1996; Sexton 1996). In August 1996, it was reported that only about 100 workfare participants had been enlisted. A month later, that number had doubled, and a work slowdown—a new mode of collective action for relief recipients—was being considered (Firestone 1996a; Sexton 1996). In September 1996, roughly 40 workfare participants marched in the city's Labor Day parade alongside municipal employees—a highly symbolic disidentifying act (Sexton 1996). This increased recruitment and agitation were perhaps also spurred by the decision of a New York State Supreme Court justice to halt interviews for the city's workfare program because of the traumatic conditions in which they were held (Kennedy 1996). As Piven and Cloward (1977) have noted, insurgents often infer from this kind of macrolevel symbolic appeasement that political elites identify with their indignation.

In September 1996, the classification of workfare participants was further called into question by the terms of a new contract between the city's transit workers' union and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Under the terms of the contract, the union agreed to let the MTA cut up to 500 cleaning jobs (from a total of 2,800) through attrition and to use thousands of workfare participants to clean subways and buses. In return, the MTA agreed not to lay off any union workers through 1999. The agreement was the first in New York explicitly stating that workfare participants would perform duties formerly done by union workers (Perez-Pena 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1996e). It also specified that workfare participants working for the MTA would be given credit for their experience in the civil service point system that regulates the advancement of municipal workers, further contributing to disidentification of workfare participants (Perez-Pena 1996b).

The municipal unions responded to such ambiguity in conflicting and inconsistent ways (not unlike workfare participants themselves). On the one hand, the discourse of union officials sometimes revealed an emerging perception of workfare participants as workers. In August 1996, the leader of District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)—New York's largest union of municipal workers—announced that he would not stand by and allow the creation of a “separate, second-class workforce” as large as or larger than the union; he also announced his intention to organize workfare participants (Firestone 1996a). Although he later backed down from his demand that the city stop expanding its workfare program, officials from 20 unions and welfare advocacy groups met in September 1996 and agreed to “push for state legislation mandating that workfare participants have the same wages, benefits and protections as others doing the same work” (Firestone 1996b; Greenhouse 1996a).

On the other hand, city workers sometimes sought to reimpose the wage worker/relief recipient distinction through both discourse and ritual. “Honestly,” one rank-and-file transit worker was quoted as saying in the press, “how can you replace *working people* with *people on welfare*?” (Perez-Pena 1996c, emphasis added). In August 1996, AFSCME officials were quoted in the press as saying that workfare participants were not covered by federal labor law, implying that they were not workers after all (Firestone 1996a). Discursive reassertion of the boundary between workers and relief recipients at the macrolevel was reinforced when city workers drew on this distinction and reproduced it at the microlevel with avoidance rituals. As Mary Douglas notes, “a rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform”

(1966:40).<sup>23</sup> The transit workers' union insisted, for example, that workfare participants be prohibited from working together on the same squads as unionized workers (Fuentes 1996; Perez-Pena 1996a). Similarly, city workers in the Sanitation Department marked restrooms with signs that read "No WEP Workers Allowed" (Fuentes 1996; Sexton 1996; WRB 1997).

In addition, union officials sought to establish procedures through which some workfare participants could be hired full-time and move into permanent unionized jobs. In December 1996, it was reported that only 63 workfare participants had made the transition (Fuentes 1996). However, these apparently failed procedures did succeed in helping to shore up the distinction that was fast being eroded. They constituted rituals of a different sort, rites of passage that allow individuals to pass from one position (welfare) to another (permanent unionized job) while keeping the positions themselves distinct. The ritual serves as a symbolic hedge against ambiguity, excluding from the category of wage laborer all those workfare participants who have not completed the rite of passage. "By settling for one or other interpretation, ambiguity is . . . reduced" (Douglas 1966:40).

Even as some union members and officials were shoring up the boundary between themselves and public assistance recipients with protective rituals, a union-funded organization was busy exposing the city's exploitation of workfare participants. In November 1996, the New York Workers' Rights Board held a public hearing on workfare in New York City (Greenhouse 1996c). The hearing was attended by more than 250 people and reported in the press. Public hearings of this sort constitute a kind of legal or judicial ritual; they typically follow a well-defined, regulated, carefully codified set of rules and procedures that must be followed in establishing truth. This hearing focused partly on the displacement of city workers by workfare participants but also enabled workfare participants to voice their political claims and demands in public testimony. The panel to which testimony was directed was made up of academics and clergy as well as union leaders, which was itself highly symbolic. The composition of the panel allowed it to simultaneously signify the wider community of which organized labor was only a part, the scholarly expertise of academics, and the legitimacy conferred by close association with the sacred. Insofar as the board (signifying all of these things) condemned the city's workfare program for *exploiting* participants, its actions challenged the city's classification of workfare participants as relief recipients rather than workers.

Perhaps buoyed by the tacit support of the Workers' Rights Board, mobilization of workfare participants continued. In addition to WEP Workers Together, two new social movement organizations (SMOs) soon joined the task of recruiting workfare participants: A local group called Workfairness and, in November 1996, a nationwide community organizing group called ACORN. By the end of January 1997, WEP Workers Together claimed to have expanded its contact list from an initial 100 or 200 to 500, and Workfairness claimed to have collected 1,200 cards signed by WEP participants authorizing the group to represent them in any future talks with the city (ACORN 1997a; Wright 1997). ACORN quickly emerged at the forefront of organizing efforts. Between December 1996 and February 1997, they signed 2,000 workfare participants onto their unionizing campaign (Wright 1997).

Rallies of workfare participants and supporters were organized by both Workfairness and ACORN in December 1996 and at City Hall in January 1997 (Wright 1997). In December 1996, ACORN started to stage what it called "recognition actions" at WEP work sites

<sup>23</sup>This kind of avoidance ritual functions differently from the deferential avoidance referred to above. It is "a self-protective kind [of avoidance], that may resemble deferential restraint but is analytically quite different from it. Just as the individual may avoid an object so as not to pollute or defile it, so he may avoid an object so as not to be polluted or defiled by it" (Goffman 1967:69).

throughout the city, during which workfare participants confronted their site supervisors and demanded training opportunities; child care; and immediate improvements in their working conditions such as uniforms, coats, gloves, and protective gear (ACORN 1997c; *United States of ACORN* 1997a, 1997b; Wright 1997). That ACORN chose to call these confrontations recognition actions is itself highly revealing. Like rallies and threats of a work slowdown, these actions are not merely efforts to exercise the leverage inherent in social interdependencies. They are, just as important, disidentifying rituals in Goffman's sense. By borrowing pickets and other modes of collective action from organized labor, workfare participants hoped, on the one hand, to further blur the wage worker/relief recipient distinction and, on the other hand, to align themselves with its sacred pole. In this way, they sought to challenge their profaned status.

In February 1997, the increasingly solidaristic discourse of union officials helped to further undermine the distinction between workers and the dependent poor. The executive director of District Council 37 publicly announced his support of efforts by community activists to organize workfare participants, and he again added that his union would join those efforts (Greenhouse 1997a). In that same month, the national executive council of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. announced that it would seek to organize more than 1 million workfare participants in New York and other states, with the goals of improving their working conditions and pressuring states and cities to give them permanent jobs (Greenhouse 1997a). In response, the Democratic minority leaders of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives announced that they would propose legislation to define workfare participants as employees covered by minimum wage laws and by laws giving workers the right to unionize (Greenhouse 1997a). Successful disidentification at the microlevel had laid the groundwork for this discursive reclassification at the macrolevel, rendering it increasingly plausible. At the same time, this kind of solidaristic discourse reinforced the effectiveness of disidentification rituals at the microlevel.

These actions by third parties posed a dual challenge to the city's workfare program. They threatened to alter the social interdependencies between workfare participants and city officials. At the same time, they posed a serious challenge to the city's classification of workfare participants as relief recipients rather than workers. Alarmed by these developments, city officials continued to insist that "these are not real jobs and it is a mistake for anyone on welfare to think they ever will be" (quoted in Kaufman 1997). The *New York Times* (1997) concurred in an editorial entitled "Don't Unionize Workfare." The reason, according to the *Times*, was clear: "[W]hat they are doing does not amount to a job."

Yet this assumption was no longer self-evident. It could no longer be taken for granted in an unreflective way, and it continued to be called into question by third parties. In March 1997, the New York Workers' Rights Board held another highly critical hearing in Albany. Two months later, in May 1997, the Clinton administration announced that workfare participants were covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act, which meant that the number of hours workfare participants were required to work had to be calculated on the basis of the federal minimum wage (DeParle 1997). Although New York City was already doing so, the announcement suggested that the policy could not be changed at the city's discretion. In the same week that the Clinton administration issued its legal interpretation, a New York State Supreme Court justice ruled that WEP participants must be paid not only the minimum wage but the prevailing wage paid to other public employees (DeParle 1997). In other words, the city was required to calculate the number of hours workfare participants are required to work on the basis of what it paid unionized city employees for similar tasks. This ruling not only further legitimated the efforts of workfare participants to challenge the way they were classified by the city but might also have strengthened the bargaining position of municipal unions vis-à-vis the city government if it had been upheld.

However, both workfare participants and city workers were dealt a setback when the ruling was overturned on appeal in September 1998 (Finder 1998b).

Mobilization of workfare participants showed no signs of abating in the spring and summer. By March 1997, the number of ACORN recruits had increased to 6,500 with plans to raise that number to 10,000–12,000 by May 1997 (Kaufman 1997). By June 1997, Workfairness reported 3,000 members, and 100 workfare participants had joined District Council 37 (Ettinger 1997). Rallies and demonstrations continued but were no longer confined to New York City. A rally of workfare participants and supporters was held in Washington in March 1997. Protesters chanted, “Day’s Work, Day’s Pay,” and held signs reading “Work with No Rights and No Pay Equals Slavery.” Of those who marched, more than 200 were New York City workfare participants (Kaufman 1997; *United States of ACORN* 1997a). In July 1997, 250 workfare participants marched to City Hall with 13,000 authorization cards to demand that the mayor recognize a union of workfare participants. At the same time, workfare participants began pressuring the New York City Council—dominated by Democrats hostile to the city’s Republican mayor—for a grievance system that would allow them to complain about dangerous work site conditions. The City Council Speaker agreed to schedule hearings on the issue (*United States of ACORN* 1997b). The increased recruitment and mobilization were perhaps partly facilitated by the death of a workfare participant in June 1997, which dramatized the grievances of workfare participants and temporarily increased their salience (Gonnerman 1997; Sexton 1997). It can also be attributed in part to the actions of the courts and of the federal government, which undercut the classification of workfare participants as relief recipients. At the same time, dissensus and division among political elites altered the web of social interdependencies in which workfare participants were embedded, further expanding opportunities for collective action.

In late July 1997, the context for collective action was further altered by the mobilization and involvement of actors in civil society. A coalition of 68 churches, synagogues, and nonprofit groups publicly announced their refusal to hire workfare participants on the grounds that WEP was exploitative and unjust (Greenhouse 1997b). In August 1997, two of the city’s best-known churches joined the coalition, bringing its membership up to 70 (Greenhouse 1997c). The boycott itself is likely to have little direct effect on social interdependencies: Only 2,500 of the city’s workfare participants work for nonprofit organizations, while the majority work directly for the city government. Much more significant will be the coalition’s impact on public opinion. As McAdam (1982) and others have shown, public support for the goals of a movement can help to constrain responses by elected political elites.

The moral support of religious leaders aligns workfare participants with sacred symbols in a powerful way, further undermining the efficacy of the ceremonial profanations by which the wage worker/relief recipient distinction is reproduced. Religious leaders represented the insurgency in language drawn from abolitionism and the Bible, repeatedly comparing workfare to slavery (Greenhouse 1997b; CGO 1998:155–65). This underscored the exploitation of workfare participants and invoked collective memories of past racial injustices. In response, the city government continued to insist that the moral economy defining relationships between workers and employers did not apply to workfare participants because workfare was a “transition program” and not a “regular job” (Greenhouse 1997b). Yet it was precisely this insistence on the liminal position of workfare participants that helped to problematize their status as public assistance recipients in the first place.

The summer of 1997 continued to reveal conflicts and divisions between political elites. In August 1997, a State Supreme Court justice ruled that those workfare participants assigned to the city’s Sanitation and Transportation Departments—5,000 in all—could not continue

to work until the Giuliani administration provided them with toilets, drinking water, protective clothing, and other necessities (Firestone 1997). This ruling bolstered the claims of workfare participants that they were being abused and helped to legitimate their grievances. In addition, the New York State Legislature passed legislation in the summer of 1997 giving the State Department of Labor jurisdiction over the workplace conditions of workfare participants (Firestone 1997). Although the bill was not signed into law by the governor, workfare participants perhaps saw it as a sign of partial support in the state legislature.

If so, such hopes were dashed when, in August 1997, the legislature refused to pass a bill allowing workfare participants to join unions (Greenhouse 1997d). District Council 37 had sought such legislation, similar to that proposed at the federal level, which would have required New York City to grant workfare participants union recognition if a majority supported unionization. The Giuliani administration lobbied against such legislation, again on the grounds that workfare participants were trainees or temporary workers. Unionization would have signified "permanency" rather than "transition," thus resolving the liminal situation of workfare participants in an undesired way (see Greenhouse 1997d). In the end, the Giuliani administration prevailed. The failure of the legislature to fully recognize the classification claims of workfare participants at the macrolevel constrained the responses of other parties to the conflict, most notably the city's municipal unions. In the face of such legal obstacles, the unions backed down from their earlier pledges made in February to organize workfare participants, thus depriving workfare participants of an important ally and a potential provider of resources. Instead, the unions reached yet another compromise with the city government in August 1997; the city promised to provide adequate health and safety protections for workfare participants while avoiding displacement of unionized municipal employees (Greenhouse 1997d).

Despite the loss of support from the unions, workfare participants won a series of smaller victories. A successful lawsuit gave workfare participants placed within the Sanitation Department the right to walk off the job if they were not provided with bathrooms and drinking water. The Parks Department was forced to conduct "right to know" training for workfare participants so that they no longer had to do hazardous work. Workfare participants also succeeded in getting both departments to provide coats and supplies to protect them against inclement weather. Perhaps most important, 22 City Council members were persuaded to cosponsor a grievance procedure for workfare participants (ACORN 1997a, 1997b, 1997d). By November, a majority of Council members had signed a pledge to support such a grievance procedure, and the Speaker of the City Council announced his support as well (*ACORN Report* 1997).

A key turning point in the classification struggle between workfare participants and the city occurred in October 1997. For four days, volunteers from unions, community organizations, and religious groups collected ballots on a nonbinding union vote at 150 workfare sites around the city. The election was supervised by a committee of labor, religious, academic, and political leaders and headed by a former union official. Over 17,000 workfare participants voted in the election. Of those who participated in the election, 16,989 voted to designate the WEP Workers Organization/ACORN as their representative in any future talks with the city. Two hundred and seven voted no (Ramirez 1997; Gonzalez 1997; *ACORN Report* 1997). A voter turnout of more than 45 percent accompanied by such overwhelming and unambiguous support suggests that the testimony cited earlier is representative of the views of many workfare participants. In addition, it should be noted that the election served as a remarkable disidentifying ritual, both at the microlevel for those who participated in it and at the macrolevel for those who became informed about it through the press and media coverage. This kind of collective action must be seen as an

end in itself; its aim is to question and contest those moral distinctions, divisions, and classifications of the poor reflected and reinforced by the welfare state; to expose their arbitrariness; and to retrieve the possibility that actors and things can be classified differently. In short, the election was a performative ritual that sought to bring workfare *workers* into being by stating that this is indeed what workfare participants are.

## CONCLUSION

The struggle over how to classify workfare participants has not concluded and probably will not for a long time to come. However, to continue the discussion beyond this point would take me beyond the emergence of collective action and the formation of the workfare movement, which are my primary interests. Moreover, the above discussion is sufficient to demonstrate the theoretical points I wished to make. It may be useful to review these points again.

New York City's Work Experience Program (WEP) has not destabilized the wage worker/relief recipient opposition, nor has it led to the successful reclassification of welfare recipients as wage workers. However, it has blurred this distinction and problematized their classification. Symbolic boundaries that were once taken for granted became thematized and in need of legitimation; new opportunities to question and contest these boundaries were created. Questioning those boundaries led workfare participants to develop an expanded notion of rights and to act collectively to claim those rights. Of course, the tenacity of the wage worker/relief recipient opposition should not be understated. As the third section of this article shows, unions, courts, and legislators often reasserted and revived it through discourse and ritual. As a result, the reclassification that workfare workers attempted is not at this time widely shared. Nevertheless, the formation of a new collective identity among workfare workers and collective action to secure and institutionalize recognition of that identity are themselves important accomplishments that required explanation.

If this article can contribute to understanding workfare insurgencies in other cities, it is by demonstrating the fruitfulness of the Durkheimian tradition of cultural analysis for rethinking both social movements and welfare states. The concept of cultural opportunity structures promises to become a valuable contribution to social movement theory but only if it includes a deeper understanding of cultural structures than is currently prevalent. A structural approach to culture also draws our attention to the systems of classification institutionalized in social welfare programs and to the interpretive effects of policy reforms. Reforms may result in anomalies and liminal states that provide "a source of creativity and improvisation, a counter-cultural and anti-structural force" (Lukes 1977:69), which in turn can be exploited to question and perhaps reconfigure cultural classifications. These classificatory schemes constitute an important stake in the struggles over social policy—in part because it is through such categories that social life is ordered.

Goffman's dramaturgic approach to culture is quite different from the structural approach described above, but it is just as indebted to Durkheim. This dramaturgic approach to culture can usefully complement a structural approach but only if it is broadened and extended beyond a narrow focus on frames and framing processes. Social movement theorists have only incorporated Goffman's insights in a limited way, largely neglecting his work on stigmatization and interaction rituals despite the relevance of such work for understanding collective identity formation and the normative commitments of movements. Goffman's work also underscores how the stigma of poor relief is produced at the micro-level of face-to-face exchanges as well as through public discourse and policy making at the macrolevel. The payoff of combining these structural and dramaturgic approaches to culture is that it allows one to take into account at the same time both cultural structures

and the structuration of culture through discourse and ritual. That in turn allows a better and more complete understanding of the cultural dimensions of both social movements and welfare states.

## REFERENCES

- Abramovitz, Mimi. 1996. *Under Attack, Fighting Back: Women and Welfare in the United States*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- ACORN. 1997a. "ACORN Workfare Organizing Project Update: September 1997." Unpublished report.
- . 1997b. "WEP Workers Organizing Committee, New York ACORN: YE/YB Report 1997." Unpublished report.
- . 1997c. "WWOC [WEP Workers Organizing Committee] Update." Unpublished memorandum.
- . 1997d. "WEP Workers Action Committee: Welfare Workers' Protection Act Summary." Unpublished memorandum.
- The ACORN Report*. 1997. Newsletter from the National Office of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (November).
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1988a. "Action and Its Environments." Chapter 10 in *Action and Its Environments*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1988b. "Culture and Political Crisis: 'Watergate' and Durkheimian Sociology." Chapter 8 in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1988c. "Three Models of Culture and Society Relations: Toward an Analysis of Watergate." In *Action and Its Environments*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1989. "Durkheimian Sociology and Cultural Studies Today." Chapter 5 in *Structure and Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1992. "Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society." Chapter 12 in *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, edited by Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1995. "The Reality of Reduction: The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu." Chapter 4 in *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander. New York: Verso.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Philip Smith. 1993. "The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies." *Theory and Society* 22:151–207.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field." *Sociological Theory* 12:1–18.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Luc Boltanski. 1981. "The Educational System and the Economy: Titles and Jobs." Pp. 141–51 in *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal since 1968*, edited by C. C. Lemert. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Briar, Scott. 1966. "Welfare from Below: Recipients' Views of the Welfare System." In *The Law of the Poor*, edited by Jacobus ten Broek. San Francisco: Chandler.
- City of New York. 1990. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1991. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1992. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1993. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1994. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1995. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1996. *Mayor's Management Report* (February). New York: City of New York.
- . 1997. *Mayor's Management Report* (September). New York: City of New York.
- . 1998. *Mayor's Management Report* (Preliminary). New York: City of New York.
- Collins, Randall. 1988. "The Durkheimian Tradition in Conflict Sociology." Chapter 5 in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DeParle, Jason. 1997. "White House Calls for Minimum Wage in Workfare Plan." *New York Times*, May 16, p. A1.
- Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge.
- Driver, Felix. 1993. *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834–1884*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. [1893] 1984. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by W. D. Halls. New York: Free Press.

- . [1897] 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. Edited by George Simpson. New York: Free Press.
- . [1912] 1915. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. New York: Free Press.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1996. "Useful Durkheim." *Sociological Theory* 14:109–30.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Jeff Goodwin. 1996. "Symbols, Positions, Objects: Toward a New Theory of Revolutions and Collective Action." *History and Theory* 35:358–74.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ettinger, Shelley. 1997. "Workfare Workers Sign Union Cards." *Workers World*. [Http://www.workers.org/ww/workfare0626.html](http://www.workers.org/ww/workfare0626.html).
- Finder, Alan. 1998a. "Evidence Is Scant That Workfare Leads to Full-Time Jobs." *New York Times*, April 12, p. A1.
- . 1998b. "Court Backs Giuliani's Way of Assigning Workfare Hours." *New York Times*, September 19, p. B3.
- Firestone, David. 1996a. "New York Girding for Surge in Workfare Jobs." *New York Times*, August 13, p. A1.
- . 1996b. "Labor Leader Drops Demand on Workfare." *New York Times*, September 28, p. 25.
- . 1997. "Workfare Put in Question for 5,000." *New York Times*, August 19, p. B1.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage.
- . 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1989. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fraser, Nancy, and Linda Gordon. 1994. "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19:309–36.
- Fuentes, Annette. 1996. "Slaves of New York." *In These Times*, December 23, pp. 14–17.
- Gamson, William A. 1985. "Goffman's Legacy to Political Sociology." *Theory and Society* 14:605–22.
- . 1992. *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamson, William A., and David S. Meyer. 1996. "Framing Political Opportunity." Chapter 12 in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, edited by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garfinkel, Harold. 1956. "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies." *American Journal of Sociology* 61:420–24.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Giuliani, Rudolph W. 1995. State of the City Address. New York City Council Chamber, January 11.
- . 1996a. State of the City Address. New York City Council Chamber, January 11.
- . 1996b. "Mayor Giuliani Praises Achievement of Work Experience Program Participants; Commends DC 37 Local 372 for Their Support of Workfare Initiative." Press Release, December 14.
- . 1997. "The Entrepreneurial City." Speech at the Manhattan Institute, New York City, December 3.
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- . 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- . 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Gonnerman, Jennifer. 1997. "Workfare's Casualties." *Village Voice*, June 8, p. 48.
- Gonzalez, Juan. 1997. "Read These Ballots and WEP." *Daily News*, October 21, n.p.
- Goodban, Nancy. 1985. "The Psychological Impact of Being on Welfare." *Social Service Review* 59.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 1997. "The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the Huk Rebellion." *American Sociological Review* 62:53–69.
- Gordon, Linda. 1988. "What Does Welfare Regulate?" *Social Research* 55:609–30.
- Green, Mark. 1997. "From Welfare to Work: Getting Lost along the Way." Report by the Office of the Public Advocate for the City of New York (July).
- Greenhouse, Steven. 1996a. "New York Union Leader Urges Halt to Broadening Workfare." *New York Times*, September 23, p. A1.
- . 1996b. "Union Head Is Assailed on Workfare Concessions." *New York Times*, October 1, p. B3.
- . 1996c. "Union Forum Is New Tool to Air Woes of Workers." *New York Times*, November 2, p. B1.
- . 1997a. "Labor Leaders Seek to Unionize Welfare Recipients Who Must Go to Work." *New York Times*, February 19, p. A18.
- . 1997b. "Nonprofit and Religious Groups Vow to Fight Workfare Program." *New York Times*, July 24, p. A1.

- . 1997c. "Two Well-Known Churches Say No to Workfare Jobs." *New York Times*, August 4, p. B3.
- . 1997d. "Compromise with Unions on Workfare." *New York Times*, August 8, p. B2.
- . 1998. "Many Participants in Workfare Take the Place of City Workers." *New York Times*, April 13, p. A1.
- Handler, Joel F., and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth. 1969. "The Administration of Social Services and the Structure of Dependency: The Views of AFDC Recipients." *Social Service Review* 43:406–20.
- Hasenfeld, Yehekel, Jane A. Rafferty, and Mayer N. Zald. 1987. "The Welfare State, Citizenship, and Bureaucratic Encounters." *Annual Review of Sociology* 13:387–415.
- Hays, Sharon. 1994. "Structure and Agency and the Sticky Problem of Culture." *Sociological Theory* 12:57–72.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.
- Kane, Anne. 1991. "Cultural Analysis in Historical Sociology: The Analytic and Concrete Forms of the Autonomy of Culture." *Sociological Theory* 9:53–69.
- Katz, Michael B. 1986. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1989. *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Kaufman, Leslie. 1997. "Welfare's Labor Pains." *Newsweek*, March 31, p. 39.
- Kennedy, Randy. 1996. "Workfare Screening of Homeless Starts, Then Stops." *New York Times*, August 21, p. B1.
- Krinsky, John David, and Ellen Reese. N.d. "Class Acts: Political Economy and the Structuring of Workfare/Welfare Rights Activism 1995–2000." Unpublished manuscript.
- Lukes, Steven. 1977. "Political Ritual and Social Integration." Chapter 3 in *Essays in Social Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Marshall, T. H. 1963. *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1994. "Culture and Social Movements." Chapter 2 in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, edited by Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- . 1996a. Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions." Chapter 1 in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, edited by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1996b. "The Framing Function of Movement Tactics: Strategic Dramaturgy in the American Civil Rights Movement." Chapter 15 in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, edited by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mead, Lawrence M. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*. New York: Free Press.
- . 1992. *The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mink, Gwendolyn. 1998. *Welfare's End*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mohr, John W. 1994. "Soldiers, Mothers, Tramps, and Others: Discourse Roles in the 1907 New York City Charity Directory." *Poetics* 22:327–57.
- National Governors' Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Public Welfare Association. 1997. "Analysis of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996." [Http://www.crisny.org/not-for-profit/unions/h3734.htm](http://www.crisny.org/not-for-profit/unions/h3734.htm). This page last updated: May 19, 1997.
- New York City Council Committee on General Welfare (CGW). 1998. The Transcript of the Minutes of the Committee on General Welfare. Transcript of committee hearing held October 20. City Hall Council Chambers, New York City.
- New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Higher Education (CGW/CHE). 1998. The Transcript of the Minutes of the Committee on General Welfare (Held Jointly with) Committee on Higher Education. Transcript of joint committee hearing held October 14. City Hall Council Chambers, New York City.
- New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations (CGO). 1998. The Transcript of the Minutes of the Committee on Governmental Operations. Transcript of committee hearing held August 5. City Hall Council Chambers, New York City.
- New York State Department of Social Services. 1995. *Statistical Supplement to the Annual Report*. Albany, NY: State of New York.
- New York Times*. 1997. "Don't Unionize Workfare." Editorial, February 21, p. A34.
- Orloff, Ann. 1993. "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: The Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States." *American Sociological Review* 58:303–28.

- . 1996. "Gender in the Welfare State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:51–78.
- Perez-Pena, Richard. 1996a. "Transit Union Agrees to Allow Workfare Plan." *New York Times*, September 19, p. A1.
- . 1996b. "A Union Chief Whose Life Led to His Workfare Deal." *New York Times*, September 20, p. A1.
- . 1996c. "Objections aside, Transit Officials Predict Mayoral Support on Workfare." *New York Times*, September 21, p. 23.
- . 1996d. "Transit Union Dissidents Feel Pressure." *New York Times*, October 15, p. B3.
- . 1996e. "Transit Pact Is Approved by Workers." *New York Times*, October 23, p. B1.
- Pierson, Paul. 1994. *Dismantling the Welfare State?* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Piven, Frances Fox. 1981. "Deviant Behavior and the Remaking of the World." *Social Problems* 28:489–508.
- Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. [1971] 1993. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, rev. ed. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1977. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . [1982] 1985. *The New Class War: Reagan's Attack on the Welfare State and Its Consequences*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- . 1988. "Welfare Doesn't Shore up Traditional Family Roles: A Reply to Linda Gordon." *Social Research* 55:631–47.
- Popkin, Susan. 1990. "Welfare: Views from the Bottom." *Social Problems* 37 (February).
- Ramirez, Margaret. 1997. "United Stance: Workfare Employees Vote Overwhelmingly to Unionize." *Newsday*, October 24, n.p.
- Reese, Ellen, and Garnett Newcombe. N.d. "From Welfare Rights to Workers' Rights: The Transformation of Welfare Rights Activism in the United States." Unpublished manuscript.
- Schram, Sanford F. 1993. "Postmodern Policy Analysis: Discourse and Identity in Welfare Policy." *Policy Sciences* 26:249–70.
- . 1995. *Words of Welfare: The Poverty of Social Science and the Social Science of Poverty*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Schwartz, Michael. 1976. *Radical Protest and Social Structure*. New York: Academic Press.
- Sexton, Joe. 1996. "Discontented Workfare Laborers Murrur 'Union.'" *New York Times*, September 27, p. B1.
- . 1997. "Woman's Death Prompts Concerns over Workfare." *New York Times*, June 24, p. B3.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1980. "Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal." *Politics and Society* 10:155–201.
- Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Stephen K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51:464–81.
- Stack, Carol B. 1974. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Stoltzfus, Emilie. N.d. "We Are Contributors to Our Society: Productive Citizenship and the Post-World-War-II Call for Child Care as a Social Wage in California." Unpublished manuscript.
- . 1999. "Citizen, Mother, Worker: Public Provision of Child Care, 1945–1965." Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate University.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1997. "Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology." *Comparative Social Research* 16:47–57.
- Turner, Victor W. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- United States of ACORN*. 1997a. Bimonthly publication of ACORN. Vol. 16, no. 2 (March/April).
- . 1997b. Bimonthly publication of ACORN. Vol. 16, no. 4 (July/August).
- Workers' Rights Board (WRB). 1997. Videotape of the Workers' Rights Board hearing on workfare held March 11 at the Legislative Office Building in Albany, New York. The videotape was provided by Mr. Dominic Chan, the board's executive director, and transcribed by the author.
- Wright, E. Assata. 1997. "Divided They Fall?" *Village Voice*, January 28, p. 21.