

“ABSOLUTELY SORT OF NORMAL”: THE COMMON ORIGINS OF THE WAR ON  
POVERTY AT HOME AND ABROAD, 1961-1965

by

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B.A., UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, 2005  
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

Scholars identify the early 1960s as the moment when Americans rediscovered poverty – as the time when Presidents, policymakers, and the public shifted their attention away from celebrating the affluence of the 1950s and toward directly helping poor people within the culture of poverty through major federal programs such as the Peace Corps and Job Corps.

This dissertation argues that this moment should not be viewed as a rediscovery of poverty by Americans. Rather, it should be viewed as a paradigm shift that conceptually unified the understanding of both foreign and domestic privation within the concept of a culture of poverty. A culture of poverty equally hindered poor people all around the world, resulting in widespread illiteracy in India and juvenile delinquency in Indianapolis. Policymakers defined poverty less by employment rate or location (rural poverty in Ghana versus inner-city poverty in New York) and more by the cultural values of the poor people (apathy toward change, disdain for education, lack of planning for the future, and desire for immediate gratification). In a sense, the poor person who lived in the Philippines and the one who lived in Philadelphia became one. They suffered from the same cultural limitations and could be helped through the same remedy. There were not just similarities between programs to alleviate poverty in either the Third World or America; the two became one in the mid-1960s. Makers of policy in the War on Poverty understood all poverty around the world as identical and approached it with the same remedy.

President John Kennedy inspired the paradigm shift. After reading about the culture of poverty in Dwight Macdonald's review of Michael Harrington's book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, Kennedy began to bring together experts within a new mentality to discuss a program to end poverty. The experts had been working for separate programs that focused on seemingly disparate issues—juvenile delinquency, poverty in New England, and Third World development—but they now realized that they were all working on the same problem, namely, the culture of poverty. The understanding that cultural values created poverty led them to unify their programs and approaches as they created the War on Poverty in 1964. The discovery was not the beginning of national attention on poverty but a culmination that brought together prominent people, ideas, and programs already in existence within a new paradigm.

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Approved by:

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This dissertation argues that this moment should not be viewed as a rediscovery of poverty by Americans. Rather, it should be viewed as a paradigm shift that conceptually unified the understanding of both foreign and domestic privation within the concept of a culture of poverty. A culture of poverty equally hindered poor people all around the world, resulting in widespread illiteracy in India and juvenile delinquency in Indianapolis. Policymakers defined poverty less by employment rate or location (rural poverty in Ghana versus inner-city poverty in New York) and more by the cultural values of the poor people (apathy toward change, disdain for education, lack of planning for the future, and desire for immediate gratification). In a sense, the poor person who lived in the Philippines and the one who lived in Philadelphia became one. They suffered from the same cultural limitations and could be helped through the same remedy. There were not just similarities between programs to alleviate poverty in either the Third World or America; the two became one in the mid-1960s. Makers of policy in the War on Poverty understood all poverty around the world as identical and approached it with the same remedy.

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When a member of the audience asked comedian Jimmy Carr, “What book changed your life?” Carr responded, “Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. Before I got that book we had a wobbly table in the kitchen.”<sup>1</sup> Carr’s quote captures my experience writing this dissertation. I have tried to be intellectually rigorous while always bringing every thought back to its application in reality. Donald Mrozek, my major professor, has been indispensable in that progress. He has taught me to understand the myriad of ways to interpret a historical topic without losing sight of how people in the past actually experienced it. This realization, although powerful and important, caused me innumerable complications as I attempted to formulate a single thesis that could unify the many ideas, people, and programs related to poverty in the 1960s. Dr. Mrozek was always there to offer guidance with style and grace. He is a model of what I hope to be as a historian and person. It has been an honor to work with him.

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Carr, “Comedy Chat,” 2004; available from <http://www.subzin.com/quotes/M46608e50c/Jimmy+Carr+Live/-+What+book+changed+your+life%3F+-+Being+And+Nothingness>; accessed November 8, 2014.

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## **Dedication**

For my wife Amanda.

## Introduction - Kennedy's Paradigm Shift: From Alleviating Poverty through Employment to Reforming Cultural Values

In February 1962 President John Kennedy sat down at his desk to read a book review in the *New Yorker*. According to historian and special assistant to the president Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Kennedy read “partly for information, partly for comparison, partly for insight, partly for the sheer joy of felicitous statement.”<sup>2</sup> He read in the typical places, such as at his desk or in bed, but also in the bathtub, while walking, during meals, and while dressing in the morning. In this instance, Kennedy was reading Dwight Macdonald’s review of Michael Harrington’s book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*.<sup>3</sup> The Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Walter Heller, passed the review to Kennedy that same month and asked him to read it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 105.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy never recorded when or where he read the review. He also never stated that he read *The Other America*. This has spawned an ongoing debate among historians and Kennedy’s contemporaries as to whether Kennedy actually ever read the review or the book. The vast majority are convinced that Kennedy read one or both. Charles L. Schultze, the assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget from September 1962 to February 1965 claims: “I suspect Michael Harrington’s book on poverty [*The Other America*] got a lot of stir. Kennedy had read it, and it impressed him.” Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. stated that “Kennedy read both [John Kenneth] Galbraith and Harrington; and I believe that *The Other America* helped crystallize his determination in 1963 to accompany the tax cut by a poverty program. Sargent Shriver, the director of the Peace Corps from 1961 to 1966 and the director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) from 1964 to 1968, said: “That was one of the really great things about Kennedy; when he was president somehow or other he found the time to read a thoughtful book by Michael Harrington, or ‘a take-out essay’ in the *New Yorker* magazine.” I rely on such accounts when I state that he read the review.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 208. Other accounts reported that Presidential Adviser Ted Sorensen passed the review to Kennedy. The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, 12. Hereafter listed as LBJ.

The review informed Kennedy that Harrington's book had two essential points about poverty. First, poverty continued to exist in America despite the arrival of the "affluent society" of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Forty to fifty million Americans lived in poverty— including the urban poor, the aged, migrant workers in California, small farmers in the Midwest, coal miners in Appalachia, African Americans in southern towns, Native Americans on reservations in Arizona, Latinos in the small towns of Texas, Asian laborers in San Francisco, people with little education, and the children of female-headed households. These poor Americans were "invisible" because they lived in rural isolation or in crowded urban slums, where few middle-class people ever ventured.<sup>6</sup> Harrington wrote that "they are not simply neglected and forgotten as in the old rhetoric of reform; what is much worse, they are not seen."<sup>7</sup>

Second, Harrington claimed that poverty was a culture. He explained poverty as a set of cultural values and personality traits rather than solely as an economic condition. He saw a person's lack of income more as an effect of poverty rather than as the underlying cause of it. He argued that "Poverty should be defined psychologically in terms of those whose place in the society is such that they are internal exiles who, almost inevitably, develop attitudes of defeat and pessimism and who are therefore excluded from taking advantage of new opportunities."<sup>8</sup> He claimed that "because of the sheer, grinding, dirty experience of being poor, the personality, the spirit, is impaired. It is as if human beings dilapidate along with the tenements in which they live."<sup>9</sup>

Harrington argued that poverty was a "separate culture, another nation, with its own way of life."<sup>10</sup> Harrington asserted that unlike what was experienced by previous generations of poor people who lived in immigrant ghettos while working to gain financial mobility the "new poverty" consisted of people immune to progress because of their cultural values and lack of aspiration. In short, what started as deprivation of opportunities to escape poverty turned into a

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<sup>5</sup> Term coined by Galbraith; John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 195.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Isserman, 195.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Touchstone, 1962), 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

self-perpetuating and stifling culture with individuals who focused on individual wants rather than on community needs, a culture that saw nuclear families as a liability to personal advancement, proved uninterested in completing school, remained fatalistic and apathetic toward change, found planning for the future useless, and valued immediate gratification that bred delinquency. The cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors of the poor, when shared by others in the community, formed a culture of poverty, a web of interdependent and mutually reinforcing values that trapped all in a life of deprivation. Even if one value changed, the others remained and compromised any gain. Harrington explained that “being poor is not one aspect of a person’s life in this country; it is his life. Taken as a whole, poverty is a culture.”<sup>11</sup>

Few Americans saw the full extent of or understood poverty in the 1950s and early 1960s. Sargent Shriver, who directed the Peace Corps and War on Poverty in the 1960s, described Americans’ understanding of poverty as tantamount to “giving an American sports page to an Englishman.”<sup>12</sup> However, Kennedy knew that poverty existed in America. He did not fully understand the cultural aspects of poverty, but he had personal experience. Kennedy had developed part of his interest in helping the poor during the 1960 Democratic primary in West Virginia. He spent a month before the primary in the state discussing what West Virginians saw as their most pressing concerns. Kennedy’s chief goal in the state was to prove that he could carry a heavily Protestant state as a Roman Catholic. Many doubted that a Catholic in the late 1950s could attain enough votes to become the President. Although Kennedy’s purpose centered on the issue of religion, the time he spent in West Virginia opened his eyes to entrenched and pervasive poverty in Appalachia. Special Counsel and Adviser to the President Ted Sorensen explained that, for Kennedy, the Democratic primary gave poverty a human face and instilled in him a personal desire to help poor people. Kennedy eventually won the primary in West Virginia and carried his concern about poverty into his time as President. Kennedy mentioned poverty

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>12</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 135, LBJ.

three times in his inaugural address. He claimed that, “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”<sup>13</sup>

Harrington’s book enabled Kennedy to see poverty in a new light. The book reoriented Kennedy’s assumptions about why people were poor and how to help them. Prior to this, Kennedy viewed poverty in much the same way as Franklin Roosevelt had during the Great Depression. He identified the poor as those who happened to be unemployed. FDR described the poor as “The ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished . . . lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions.”<sup>14</sup> In short, poor people were merely out of work. Providing jobs would cure their poverty. However, Harrington’s book explained to Kennedy that poverty existed on a deeper level. It resided in the psychology of the poor person. Jobs could not solve the problem. Sargent Shriver explained later in an oral interview:

You don’t make them employable simply by giving them a job. You give them a job, they come to the job, they don’t perform. You give them the job, they’re there for three days a week, and they don’t show up for the next two. You give them a job and they have no idea of time, they don’t have any idea that during a two-hour period you’re supposed to produce X amount of product. That’s not their fault. They’ve never lived in an economy where time is important, production is important, showing up regularly is important, keeping to a schedule is important; all those things are bourgeois, middle-class ideas.<sup>15</sup>

By growing up in poor communities, individuals were socialized and acculturated with values and priorities that inhibited their ability to overcome poverty. More than just money, poor people lacked the will to achieve, the motivation, and the ability to overcome poverty because the repeated blockage of opportunities taught them to distrust that life would get better.

Harrington’s book enabled Kennedy to understand poverty in a new way. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. recalls Kennedy saying, prior to this, that “In England . . . the unemployment rate goes to two per cent, and they march on Parliament. Here it moves up toward six, and no one

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<sup>13</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “Inaugural Address”; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Schlesinger Jr., 1009.

<sup>15</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 27.

seems to mind.”<sup>16</sup> Now it made sense. Blockage of opportunities created a distinct culture of poverty. The poor adapted to their lives and viewed them as normal. No need existed to fight for a way out of poverty. Poverty was life. Poverty was their lot. Poverty was not unemployment. It was a way of life, a culture.

Kennedy’s new awareness of the form and prevalence of domestic poverty inspired him to do something about it. Shriver recalls Kennedy saying to Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Walter Heller:

Look, these guys [Harrington and Macdonald] said that there’s a big poverty problem.... I want you to investigate this and make some recommendations to me. If this situation exists as they say it does, we have a significant social problem in our country, then perhaps we at the federal government ought to do something about it. It doesn’t mean that we have to do it all; maybe the states should do it, maybe private enterprise should do it, but something should be done about it. So make me some recommendations.<sup>17</sup>

Shriver identified this as the discovery of the poor and the start of the War on Poverty. Kennedy began to bring together policymakers from the federal and state levels, social scientists, and volunteers over the course of the 1960s. They began to discuss poverty and to design a national service corps, essentially a domestic Peace Corps, to combat poverty in America. The national service corps never passed Congress; however, after Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson expanded the War on Poverty. On the day after Kennedy’s assassination Johnson met with Heller. Heller explained to Johnson that “the very last substantive conversation that I had had with Kennedy was about a [domestic] poverty program.”<sup>18</sup> Heller continued: “[H]is reaction immediately was, ‘That’s my kind of program. I’ll find money for it one way or another. If I have to, I’ll take money away from things to get money for people.’”<sup>19</sup> Johnson, in his State of the Union address on 8 January 1964, just forty-seven days after Kennedy’s assassination, declared that “This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.”<sup>20</sup> In his proposed Great Society, Johnson zealously stressed the need for programs to

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<sup>16</sup> Schlesinger Jr., 1011.

<sup>17</sup> Shriver, Oral Interview, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “State of the Union”: available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2013.

combat poverty. Once passed by Congress, Johnson's Great Society included programs such as Head Start, Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU), Medicare, Medicaid, Upward Bound, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).<sup>21</sup> All these programs functioned on the logic that cultural values created poverty.

Bertrand M. Harding, the Acting Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity under Johnson, identified the moment when Kennedy read Macdonald's review of Harrington as the discovery of poverty in America.<sup>22</sup> Several scholars, including James T. Patterson, agree with Harding and identify this point as the discovery of the new, cultural understanding of poverty as well. This was the moment when Presidents, policymakers, and the public shifted their attention away from celebrating the affluence of the 1950s and toward directly helping poor people. Patterson argues that "his [Harrington's] powerful, passionate book, *The Other America*, exposed the misery of a 'new,' specially deprived poor.... Within the next few years a virtual avalanche of books and articles on poverty rolled off the presses. President Kennedy read both Harrington and Macdonald and set his advisers to study the problem."<sup>23</sup>

Scholars argue that the discovery of poverty had two major components. It entailed making poverty a political issue. Both Presidents Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson made the alleviation of poverty a major priority of the federal government. The second component of the discovery was to view poverty as something new. The "old poverty" was unemployment. The "new poverty" was a self-perpetuating culture that trapped generation after generation. The "new poverty" came from cultural values, not solely from an absence of income.

However, the moment when Kennedy read the review was not a rediscovery in either sense of the word. The cultural understanding of difference had been the dominant analytical framework within the social sciences since the mid-1950s, including Margaret Mead's culture and personality school in anthropology, Erik Erikson's psycho-social theories of personality in

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<sup>21</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, "The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969," Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 1, LBJ.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 97.

psychology, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's sub-group theory of gang culture in sociology, and economist Walt Rostow's cultural explanation of the propensities affecting economic development in the Third World. More than that, several governmental programs, including the Peace Corps, Gray Areas Project, President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, Mobilization for Youth, and Alliance for Progress, already operated based on the logic that cultural values and distinct personalities accounted for economic inequality.

I argue that Kennedy's reading of the review should be understood as a paradigm shift. I argue that Kennedy's reading Macdonald's review marked the point when the policymakers and intellectuals began to view distinct cultures and personalities as responsible for all poverty rather than to put the blame on a lack of jobs or on a national economic structure that was preventing certain segments of people from gaining economic mobility. The shift came not only from Kennedy being exposed to ideas about the new forms of poverty. It came also from Kennedy bringing together people who, previously, had been working on separate programs. As Kennedy began to address the problem of domestic poverty, and Johnson continued the government-led attack on poverty, groups that had been working on seemingly disparate issues came together and realized that they were all working on the same problem, the culture of poverty.

The understanding that cultural values created difference led them to unify their programs and approaches. Frank Mankiewicz and Sargent Shriver had been working on the development of the Third World through the Peace Corps. Adam Yarmolinsky worked for the Gray Areas Project in New Haven, addressing inner-city poverty. Saul Alinsky led the Back of the Yards Movement in Chicago, organizing community action teams to increase common people's sense of political empowerment. Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan addressed unemployment through the Department of Labor. David Hackett, Richard Cloward, and Lloyd Ohlin worked for Mobilization for Youth, combating juvenile delinquency in Lower East Side settlement houses in New York City.<sup>24</sup> All reformers now came together and viewed their task in

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<sup>24</sup> The people brought together in the War on Poverty within the United States and around the world are far too numerous to list completely here. However, they include: Walter Heller, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, speechwriter and political aide for Kennedy and Johnson Richard Goodwin, Undersecretary for Health, Education, and Welfare Wilbur Cohen, aide Paul Jacobs, author of *The Wasted Americans* Edgar May, Ted Sorensen, Kennedy's domestic policy chief of staff, Richard Boone from programs on juvenile delinquency, and political scientists James Sundquist.



this new light. Harding described it as “a time of chaos and exhaustion when energies were fueled by excitement and exhilaration—itsself, at times, the product of a kind of hysteria.”<sup>25</sup>

Kennedy brought together reformers who unified national and international programs within a new mentality. The rediscovery was not the beginning but a culmination that brought together prominent people, ideas, and programs already in existence.

Washington insiders dubbed the group the “Poor Corps.”<sup>26</sup> As they came together because of prompting from Kennedy and then from Johnson, policymakers and social scientists realized that they were all working on the same concept, a culture of poverty. Norbert A. Schlei, the assistant attorney general in charge of the Office of Legal Counsel, described it as everyone “grab[bing] hold of a different part of the elephant.”<sup>27</sup> The new mentality allowed them to see that they were all working on the same elephant, the culture of poverty. The culture of poverty created distinct values and personalities. It created specific ways of understanding the world. It manifested in rural poverty in Appalachia, juvenile delinquency in inner-city New York, political apathy in Chicago, a stagnant national economy in Peru, lawlessness in Micronesia, low educational achievement in Ghana, and broken families in Oklahoma City. Since the new paradigm of a culture of poverty assumed that the poverty had essentially the same cause everywhere, it unified reformers’ approach to the poor in America and abroad. They applied the same approach to inhabitants of the Third World and poor people in America. The reformers shared an understanding of all poverty and a common approach to its cure.

To be sure, the paradigm of these men and women in the 1960s had flaws. First, it assumed weakness. They claimed that the poor resigned to a life of misery, lacked motivation,

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<sup>25</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” 28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* The official Task Force members were the following: Andrew Brimmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce; William Capron, Staff Economist, Council of Economic Advisers; Ronald Goldfarb, Justice Department; Richard Goodwin, International Peace Corps Secretariat; David Hackett, Justice Department; Harold Horowitz, Associate General Counsel, HEW; Frank Mankiewicz; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Assistant Secretary of Labor; Anne Oppenheimer, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Norbert Shlei, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice; Milton Semer, General Counsel, CFA, HHFA; James L. Sundquist, Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture; Christopher Weeks, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Stephen Pollak, Office of the Solicitor General; Eric Tolmach, Labor Department; and Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 82.

failed to join social movements, and shunned political participation. The social movements during the 1960s, often carried out by poor and marginal people, proved these assumptions wrong. Caesar Chavez's fasting to rally support for the National Farm Workers Association, Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington for civil rights for African Americans, Betty Freidan's campaign for gender equality, and Native Americans' occupation of Alcatraz, all showed the strength and political fervor of poor and marginalized people. Second, the paradigm assumed cultural uniformity among the poor. The poor person in Ghana and West Virginia suffered from the same debilitating cultural values. From the late 1960s on, people's recognition of diversity revealed the many forms of lifestyles within the United States and around of world. In a way similar to the way in which Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) revealed the vibrancy and complexity of life when viewed from the sidewalk to challenge the assumed universalism of Modernist architecture, Americans in the late 1960s, such as Hylan Lewis, fought to reveal the diversity of people who were poor.<sup>28</sup>

Despite its weaknesses, the mentality about culturally created economic inequality had national and international importance beyond both the 1960s and policies toward poverty. It became part of the in the way in which policymakers understood marginalized Americans, how marginalized Americans differed from others, what caused that disparity, and what repercussions resulted. In the same way that blockages of opportunity created a culture of poverty, later in the 1960s liberals explained that blocking African Americans from opportunity created distinct cultural values and personality types. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who worked on the War on Poverty, wrote an attention-grabbing report entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (1965)." He relied on historian Stanley Elkins' *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*.<sup>29</sup> Elkins argued that the closed system of the plantation, without opportunities to escape, created distinct cultural patterns and personalities in African Americans that continued all the way into the 1960s. Elkins' "Sambo" characterization of African Americans resulted from the plantation's closed and total system of oppression. He

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<sup>28</sup> Jane Jacob, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc, 1961); Hylan Lewis, "Culture, Class, and the Behavior of Low-Income Families," in *Culture Class, and Poverty* (Washington D.C.: Crosstell, 1967).

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1959).

asserted that “Absolute power for [the slaveowner] meant absolute dependency for the slave—the dependency not of the developing child but of the perpetual child.”<sup>30</sup> The environment of blockages of opportunity and oppression created a “gay, care-free black clown.”<sup>31</sup> Moynihan accepted Elkins’ contention that the system damaged African Americans.<sup>32</sup> For African Americans, slavery broke up families, destroyed confidence, and broke their will in a way that lasted until the present. Federal action had to aim at reforming this “tangle of pathology.” Much like the idea of a culture of poverty, historian Peter Novick asserts, the notion of a “tangle of pathology” prevented “those caught in its coils from taking advantage of formal equality of opportunity.”<sup>33</sup> Also as with the culture of poverty that prevented an escape from poverty even when opportunities opened, Moynihan said, the pathology was “capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world.”<sup>34</sup>

The cultural understanding of difference influenced conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s as well. Conservative Republicans such as Ronald Reagan used the idea of a culture of poverty to justify cutting aid to the poor. Historian Bruce Schulman argues: “The president truly lacked sympathy for the downtrodden, accepting the canard that the poor deserved and even desired

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Historians disputed Elkins’ “sambo” characterization and the concept lost intellectual credibility by the late 1960s. Historian Carl Degler claimed that “the entire ‘damage’ argument, as applied to any aspect of Negro life in American, had become ideologically untenable.” Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 481. In the late 1960s sociologist Frank Tannenbaum’s argument—written in 1938—over the effect of labeling gained credibility among sociologists. Tannenbaum argued that a change occurs in a young person when people in society stop labeling a delinquent act as evil—breaking windows or petty theft—and start to label the young person as evil. The young person becomes overwhelmed by the reaction of people in society and starts to internalize the label of being evil. Over time he or she accepts the label, acts accordingly, and realizes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In short, the total plantation system described by Elkins was not required, a label or “dramatization of evil” alone could transform a young person’s personality.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 482.

<sup>34</sup> Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1967), 93.

their own misery.”<sup>35</sup> Reagan believed that the culture of poverty did not result from adapting to blockages of opportunities. Rather, it proved that poor people desired their way of life. No aid could help them. Reagan accepted the concept of the culture of poverty, but, unlike Kennedy and Johnson in the 1960s, he contended that it could not be remedied. In fact, Reagan argued that governmental programs actually aggravated the problems of the poor, further trapping them in a cycle of dependency and poverty.

In the 1990s American policymakers, social critics, and the public fought “Culture Wars.” People such as sociologist James Davison Hunter and Republican Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan argued that Americans divided along cultural lines rather than the traditional lines of political party, religion, ethnicity, or social groups. Culture determined Americans’ stance on issues such as separation of church and state, privacy, recreational drug use, abortion, gun control, homosexuality, and censorship.

But the belief in the all-pervasive power of culture can be traced back to the 1960s. The way in which Kennedy’s actions created a paradigm shift in policies toward poverty was evident in Shriver’s experience. Kennedy appointed Shriver to design the Peace Corps, secure Congressional approval for the program, and administer the program once in existence. Shriver accomplished all of these objectives. He served as the Director of the Peace Corps from 1961 to 1966. Historian Michael Latham has pointed out that the Peace Corps was founded on the idea that cultural differences accounted for the disparity in economic development around the world.<sup>36</sup> For example, the lesser development of the Philippines’ economy stemmed less from international trade or politicians’ decisions, and more from Filipinos’ absence of motivation to accumulate money, their laid-back approach to work, low prioritizing of punctuality, and acceptance of a life of poverty. All such cultural traits would be attributed to the American poor later in the 1960s during the War on Poverty.

But Shriver did not immediately recognize the connection of ideas about development in the Third World to a program against domestic poverty when he reluctantly accepted the task of running Johnson’s War on Poverty in America. Shriver’s reluctance stemmed partly from his

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 235.

<sup>36</sup> Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 12.

fear that the American anti-poverty program would take time away from the Peace Corps, his successful and popular international anti-poverty program. Shriver told Johnson: “I’ve just traveled the world trying to get volunteers charged up, what kind of message will it send if I leave now?”<sup>37</sup>

Shriver also objected because he felt that he knew nothing about domestic poverty. He explained to Johnson that “I didn’t know beans about it, because I’ve been overseas.”<sup>38</sup> Johnson responded: “Well, you don’t need to know much.... You’ll have an international Peace Corps—one abroad and one at home.”<sup>39</sup>

It would seem that Shriver, as someone simultaneously conducting a war on foreign and domestic poverty, ought to have instantly recognized the connection made possible by the concept of a “culture of poverty.” He didn’t. He met with Michael Harrington and discussed the culture of poverty, but the meeting failed to leave an impression. Shriver still believed that he knew nothing about domestic poverty.

He continued the process started by Kennedy to gather together experts on various subjects relating to poverty, including juvenile delinquency, community development, and the development of the Third World.<sup>40</sup> Shriver set up weekly informal seminars in a suite in the Mayflower Hotel in Washington D.C. to discuss domestic poverty with social scientists, authors, and members of other governmental agencies. Shriver biographer Scott Stossel described the meetings as “a beautiful hysteria.”<sup>41</sup> Sociologist Daniel Bell remembered: “When the poverty issue arose, nobody was really prepared, nobody had any data, nobody knew what to do.”<sup>42</sup>

However, through these meetings Shriver came to be convinced that the concept of a culture of poverty did unify the Peace Corps abroad and the War on Poverty in America. When appointed by Johnson in February 1964 to run the War on Poverty, Shriver honestly claimed that

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Scott Stossel, *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 350.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Shriver brought together people including Yarmolinsky, Mankiewicz, Moynihan, John Kenneth Galbraith, Dave Hackett, Dick Boone, Ohlin, Cloward, Harrington, Jacobs, Heller, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, Richard Goodwin, and Kenneth Clark.

<sup>41</sup> Stossel, 355.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Patterson, 76.

he understood international poverty but knew nothing about poverty in America. But, within a few short months, Shriver experienced a paradigm shift and came to realize that his effort in the Peace Corps had been the same as what his effort would be in the War on Poverty. He previously separated home from abroad, exhibited in his “scrambling” for experts on poverty although he was the head of the Peace Corps. Now he realized that *he* was the expert. He elaborated during an oral interview in 1980 with historian Michael Gillette:

Now in fact, doing community development in Ecuador is, philosophically and substantially, no different than doing the same thing in some West Virginia hollow. Now I’m not trying to say West Virginia hollows are like Ecuador, but the concept of going into Ecuador to try to help people decide their own problems, and to energize them, motivate them, assist them to be able to handle their own problems themselves, is no different than the psychology you take into West Virginia or to the South Bronx. In the Peace Corps one called this process community development; in the war against poverty, we called it Community Action.<sup>43</sup>

Shriver explained: “In fact, [domestic] community action—which the people in community action thought was so revolutionary—was something that we had been running in the Peace Corps for four years before it ever got into the War on Poverty. So I thought community action was absolutely sort of normal. To me it was routine; to them it was a giant revolution.”<sup>44</sup> In short, the War on Poverty in America, originally instigated by Kennedy’s reading of Macdonald’s review, implemented a paradigm shift that unified foreign and domestic poverty. The Peace Corps already existed when Kennedy read the review. Community development already existed, in the Peace Corps, Mobilization for Youth in New England, and the Back of the Yards program in Chicago. The cultural understanding of difference existed in policies toward juvenile delinquency in the Mobilization for Youth, urban poverty in the Gray Areas Program, and the development of the Third World through the Peace Corps. But suddenly all were brought together into a unified approach. Although many viewed the culture of poverty and community development as revolutionary, Shriver’s experience shows that they were not. Both already existed in the social scientific literature and in governmental programs. Kennedy’s reading of the review unified them within a new paradigm.

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<sup>43</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 64.

I am not attempting to cover the growth, spread, entrenchment, retreat, or stasis of the welfare state. By contrast, the typical account of policies in the 1960s pertaining to poverty, such as historian Gareth Davies's *From Opportunities to Entitlements*, tells the tale of expansion of the welfare program with the inauguration of Johnson's Great Society and then its retreat as the neo-conservative movement develops in the late 1960s.<sup>45</sup> Davies argues that the perspectives about welfare shifted in the late 1960s from its being seen as providing opportunities for the poor to promising entitlements to anyone who lacked money. Rather, I am examining a unique period in America when policymakers believed that all poverty, despite its location, stemmed from cultural values or, to use the more familiar term, it stemmed from the *culture* of poverty.

My argument solves many historiographical problems. In her dissertation, "A Different Kind Of People': The Poor At Home and Abroad, 1935-1968," historian Sheyda Janhanbani argues that the concept of development unified foreign and domestic poverty.<sup>46</sup> She claims that the concept of development required an understanding of progress. It separated proper from inadequate development. She writes that "these chapters chart the ways that ideas about poverty in developed societies and underdevelopment in 'developing' ones first came entangled, then became intertwined, and eventually became one."<sup>47</sup> However, she fails to acknowledge that development came in many forms and changed over the course of the postwar period. It was not just that the poor at home and abroad were put on the same continuum in the postwar era; they did not actually come to be viewed as one until after the shift to viewing poverty as cultural had come about. No major figure in the 1940s and 1950s had proposed that poverty at home and abroad were the same thing. President Harry Truman spoke separately about needing to end poverty in the Third World and needing to maintain abundance in America. He viewed the two as separate. Poverty in the Third World stemmed from a lack of economic development that showed itself in poor healthcare, low agricultural production, and widespread illiteracy. Americans could avoid poverty by consuming more radios, cars, magazines, televisions, houses, and clothes. Poverty in America differed sharply from poverty in the Third World. Yes, poverty

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<sup>45</sup> Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Sheyda Jahanbani, "A Different Kind of People: The Poor at Home and Abroad, 1935-1968," (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

in both America and the Third World concerned Truman, but the two still were not conceived as one phenomenon until Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations. Development had many forms, but the poor at home and abroad only became one within the shared mentality of cultural difference in the 1960s.

Second, my argument demonstrates that Americans' treatment of people in the Third World did not differ from their treatment of poor Americans in places such as Harlem or Appalachia. My contention that policymakers understood all poverty as the same challenges scholars who claim that Third World development is nothing more than Americanization, paternalism, or, as historian Fritz Fisher states, "Making them Like Us."<sup>48</sup>

Third, my argument demonstrates that there was no divide between foreign and domestic spheres. Scholars who focus exclusively on either domestic or foreign poverty, such as James T. Patterson, Michael Katz, Odd Arne Westad, or Gabriel Kolko, falsely view anti-poverty programs as unique creations with unique solutions for unique problems.<sup>49</sup> They were not.

Lastly, my argument that a single mentality about poverty existed corrects the inaccurate characterization of the 1960s as an era of fragmentation, polarization, and contradiction. Scholars often focus on lines of social cleavage: non-violence versus black separatism; liberal feminists versus radical feminists; military critics of the policy in Vietnam versus anti-war protesters at home; or neo-conservatives versus socially active liberals. But how reformers approached poverty actually shows an essential uniformity in how Americans understood and sought to help the poor at home and abroad.

This understanding of poverty as having the same dynamics at home and abroad may serve as an organizing principle for scholars studying various aspects of the 1960s. Whether it was people trying to alleviate poverty or the groups who suffered deprivation, poverty was a component in nearly all social movements of the decade. Protesters called the Vietnam War a "Poor Man's War" while Lyndon Johnson created a plan for a Mekong River Project to improve South Vietnam's economy and end Vietnamese poverty. Martin Luther King founded and

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<sup>48</sup> Fritz Fischer, *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corp Volunteers in the 1960s* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian, 1989).

<sup>49</sup> James T. Patterson, *American's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*.



conducted the Poor People's Campaign, a program to help poor African Americans find jobs. Malcolm X recruited poor African Americans in Harlem to fight America's oppressive system of racial segregation. Women's rights activist Betty Friedan fought to secure jobs for middle-class housewives. Radical feminists helped poor single mothers find jobs and earn money to raise their families. Although all had specific causes, their efforts all related to poverty.

This study will explain the way in which Kennedy's reading of Macdonald's review initiated a paradigm shift and created a unique moment when programs for foreign and domestic poverty operated under a common mentality. Governmental programs and social scientific literature that had developed separately in the 1950s suddenly came together under the concept of the culture of poverty. The new mentality saw foreign and domestic poverty as essentially one phenomenon, because they had the same structural origin and the same supposed remedy. It proposed that all poverty, despite its location, stemmed from cultural values and that the remedy for poverty was to change those values.

Chapter One argues that Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower both believed that poverty existed in many distinct forms and that the solution for each differed. The chapter argues that Truman and Eisenhower sought to end poverty by inducing consumption in America, reconstructing European industry, and developing the Third World. Neither of them discussed cultural values and their relation to poverty. Foreign and domestic poverty were not one. A single mentality about poverty did not exist yet. Truman argued that European poverty differed from poverty in the Third World. European poverty stemmed from World War II and the physical destruction of buildings, roads, lines of transportation, communication, and trade. All of this hurt the economy. By contrast, the poverty in the Third World came not from the destruction of preexisting structures and lines of transportation but from the fact that they had never existed on a satisfactory scale. Rather than pressing for the reconstruction of Europe or development of the Third World, postwar Americans needed to consume more products to continue to grow the economy. In short, America needed consumption, Europe needed reconstruction, and the Third World needed development. In policymakers' minds, three separate forms of poverty existed in the 1940s and 1950s.

Chapter Two argues that several major fields in the social sciences experienced important intellectual shifts in late 1940s and 1950s that were pivotal to unifying the understanding of foreign and domestic poverty in the 1960s. Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict

led the field of anthropology to embrace the theory that personality hinged on culture. Mead and Benedict argued that the culture of any given society determined each member's values, behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations. In short, culture, not biology or race, accounted for difference in the world. Among psychologists, Erik Erikson developed a highly influential theory that attributed the development of personality to psycho-social factors, such as parenting style and peer influence. Erikson's theory became instrumental in understanding how parents socialized their children into the culture of poverty. Within the field of sociology, Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin, and Walter B. Miller proposed that sub-cultures existed that differed from America's mainstream culture and led to alternative behavior, such as gang violence and poor educational achievement. The theory of sub-cultures validated a culture of poverty that existed apart from America's mainstream culture and the middle-class culture. Finally, an interdisciplinary theory of Third World development, known as modernization theory, developed and proposed that the underdevelopment of the Third World stemmed from the conflict between traditional cultural values and modern industrialized society. In short, when a country industrialized, the institutions of the society mattered less than the attitudes and values of its people.

Chapter Three argues that the intellectual shifts explained in Chapter Two served as the operational logic for new governmental programs in the 1950s and early 1960s. Such programs included the Mobilization for Youth, Gray Areas Program, and the Peace Corps. Administrators of the Mobilization for Youth sought to combat delinquency by changing the juveniles' personality and cultural values. The idea of cultural change also formed the foundation of programs to end urban poverty in New England, specifically the Gray Areas Program in New Haven, Connecticut. Liberals in the late 1950s began to rely on the concept of culture and personality to understand poverty in the Third World as well. This chapter will explain the way in which policymakers' focus on Third World development shifted from one based on economics to one based on cultural and psychological factors. The ascendancy of modernization theory proved instrumental to this change in approach. I will highlight how the economic approach of the Point Four Program (1948 to 1952) transformed into modernization theory with its cultural and psychological dimensions, and formed the logic of the Peace Corps in the early 1960s.

Chapter Four argues that Kennedy created a paradigm shift in the understanding of poverty by bringing together makers of policy and social scientists who had been working in

separate areas. The discussions between these men and women marked the shift when cultural poverty became universalized in the minds of American policymakers. They unified foreign and domestic poverty, juvenile delinquency and elderly neediness, urban and rural scarcity, and male and female deprivation. Separate programs, founded on the concept of cultural difference, already existed. Harrington was not the first to propose that cultural difference explained inequity. But the Peace Corps', Grey Area Program's, and Mobilization for Youth's respective policymakers and social scientists did not view each program as part of a single approach to poverty. When Kennedy and Johnson brought together various social scientists and policymakers, all discovered that the idea of a culture of poverty unified them all in a common approach. All experienced a paradigm shift.

Chapter Five argues that, after 1964, the development of the Third World and War on Poverty in America became founded on the universal concept of the culture of poverty. A common mentality about the causes of poverty and about the best method to remedy it shaped programs at home and abroad. All poverty stemmed from cultural values that prevented poor people from seizing opportunities to achieve upward economic mobility. Poor people throughout the world lacked motivation, a belief in and desire for change, trust that the future would be better, and a wish to plan for that future. In the new understanding of how to cure poverty, both programs for the development of the Third World and ones to end domestic poverty used community development as the remedy. All programs used the same method, community development, to change poor people's values and to energize them—to transform a person who valued immediate gratification into one who valued planning for the future, to make a person who only cared from him or herself, into one that valued community, and to make a person who once feared change embrace and initiate it.

Chapter Six argues that, by the late 1960s, the liberal conviction that cultural values accounted for poverty was challenged by a view that poverty stemmed from deficiencies in the economy—including unfairness in its basic structure. Social and political movements around the world discredited claims that marginalized groups suffered from cultural values that enervated their will to fight for a better future. Social and political movements showed the power of marginalized groups who suffered poverty. Rather than victims of blocked opportunities who needed help to change, they were powerful people who fought against the system despite their oppression. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared "We shall overcome" and adroitly led protesters for

civil rights. Instead of accepting that all African Americans lived in a “tangle of pathology” with cultural values that compromised them, African-American social leaders from Stokely Carmichael, the leader of the Black Panthers, to host of Soul Train Don Cornelius proclaimed “black power” and asserted that black was beautiful. Historians Lawrence Levine in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* and Eugene Genovese in *Roll Jordan Roll* demonstrated the power of the African American community, not its weakness. Internationally political movements in areas as diverse as Algeria, Vietnam, South Africa, Peru, Indonesia, Ghana, and Czechoslovakia showed the will and power of marginalized people. By the late 1960s liberals including Andre Gunder Frank and Raul Prebisch attributed poverty to an unfair economic structure rather than to the values of poor people.

The Conclusion argues that, despite challenges to the culture of poverty and the assertion of cultural strength, the terms remained largely unchanged as policymakers and social scientists continued to discuss difference in terms of culture. Cultural discussions continued to be primarily over those of biology (race), economics (progressives and haves versus have-nots), or politics (political system or voter participation). All discussions held a larger, more complex cultural dimension that reoriented the source of problems and their cure. Extending the vote through the Voting Rights Act of 1964 was not enough to ensure equality. Providing income through welfare was not enough to overcome poverty. Providing full racial equality before the law through the Civil Rights Act of 1963 did not eliminate all difference in treatment. Cultural values withstood all. Policymakers and social scientists in the early-to-mid 1960s first attempted to grapple with such issues in terms of poverty. The lens of cultural difference has remained ever since.

# Chapter 1 - Distinct Poverties, Distinct Cures: Consumption, Reconstruction, and Development

Poverty held national attention in the 1960s. In his Presidential Inaugural Address on 20 January 1961, John F. Kennedy pledged to “assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty.”<sup>50</sup> Five days after assuming office in November 1963, Lyndon Johnson declared that “We will carry on the fight against poverty, and misery, and disease, and ignorance, in other lands and in our own.”<sup>51</sup> In his State of the Union address in 1964 Johnson proclaimed that “This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.”<sup>52</sup> Although the attention was being given to it as something rediscovered, poverty had never left the minds of Americans in the 1940s and 1950s. It was true that America had emerged from World War II with a strong national economy. Observers such as John Kenneth Galbraith characterized Americans as being the “Affluent Society.” Americans prospered in their professions, bought houses in newly built suburbs, purchased and drove cars on recently paved roads, and shopped at recently constructed shopping malls. But many nonetheless believed that poverty always lingered in the background.<sup>53</sup> Historian Lizabeth Cohen wrote: “The United States came out of World War II deeply determined to prolong and enhance the economic recovery brought on by the war, lest the crippling depression of the 1930s return.”<sup>54</sup> A

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<sup>50</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “Inaugural Address “; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 December 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Lyndon Johnson. “Let us Continue” available from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbjletuscontinue.html>; Internet; accessed 10 May 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Lyndon Johnson. “State of the Union”“ available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/lbj-union64/>; Internet; accessed 10 May 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*, 2nd ed. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 167.

<sup>54</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, “A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America,” *The Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jun., 2004), 236.

depression as bad as the Great Depression could happen again and cause national and class divisions. Poverty also threatened to help communists win important inroads in war-torn Europe and gain an advantage in the Cold War. Finally, combined with the press for decolonization, poverty in countries in the Third World presented the possibility of new communist governments that would produce gaps in American's containment of the Soviet expansion. Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower both focused on maintaining America's prosperity, retaining a non-communist Western Europe, and steering newly independent countries in the Third World toward democratic capitalism. In short, each thought that poverty invited communism, and both sought to eliminate deprivation all over the world.

Whereas the paradigm shift initiated by Kennedy created a common mentality that asserted that all poverty, despite its location, stemmed from cultural values, Truman and Eisenhower believed that different forms of poverty existed. Truman and Eisenhower sought to end poverty by inducing consumption in America, reconstructing European industry, and developing the Third World. In short, each believed that poverty existed in many unique forms and that the solution for each kind of poverty differed. America needed consumption, Europe needed reconstruction, and the Third World needed development. In contrast, what scholars such as Galbraith and political scientist Michael Harrington called the "new poverty" of the 1960s conceptually unified the condition of poor people at home and abroad. All poor people, despite their location, suffered from cultural values that limited their ability to prosper. A poor person might lack motivation, fail to plan for the future, value immediate gratification, hold a disdain for school, or seek solutions through violence and aggression. Accordingly, all poverty, in America, Europe, and the Third World, could be alleviated through changing poor people's system of values. Neither consumption, reconstruction, nor development alone could remedy poverty-producing values. Anti-poverty programs in the 1960s were designed to make the poor person value education, seek change, plan for the future, settle disputes amicably, defer gratification in favor of long-term goals, sustain motivation, and be self-reliant. Kennedy and Johnson made no distinction between poor people in America and around the world. Truman and Eisenhower did.

Truman argued that poverty in Europe differed from poverty in the Third World. European poverty stemmed from World War II and the destruction of buildings, roads, lines of transportation, communication, and trade. The loss of such structures hurt the economy. By contrast, poverty in the Third World came less from the destruction of preexisting structures and

lines of transportation than from the fact that they had never existed. For example, Lima was unlike London in that it did not have a large thriving commercial center that military conflict had destroyed, leaving its reconstruction as the only obstacle to creating a thriving economy and returning the country to an era of prosperity. Rather Peru had never had a thriving commercial center. It had to be built from the ground up. This meant that American aid had to go to the first steps toward industrialization—including widespread literacy and education, higher crop yields to produce a surplus that could be sold internationally and serve as a national source of income, and better health care that could enable teachers and students to be healthy enough to remain in school and workers to consistently work. In short, poverty in Peru differed from poverty in Britain. The Marshall Plan for Europe and the Point Four Program for the Third World focused on what Truman and Eisenhower saw as two separate and distinct sources of economic deprivation. Rather than reconstruction as in Europe or development as in the Third World, postwar Americans needed to consume more products to continue to grow their economy. The larger consumer-based economy enabled all people—men and women, black and white, old and young, white collar and blue collar—to participate through purchasing in what Roland Marchand described as the “democracy of goods.”<sup>55</sup> Consumption increased America’s wealth and eliminated the threat of communist solutions of redistribution.

The major way in which policymakers attempted to create wide-spread prosperity in America was through consumption. Federally induced consumption dated back to the latter years of the New Deal. Led by Franklin Roosevelt, the early New Deal focused on increasing production. Roosevelt maintained that government-facilitated competition would bring prosperity to a wider swath of the population by eliminating concentrated power and profit. Once government successfully operated as the “broker” among economic interests, Roosevelt and his advisers on economic matters maintained, the private sector and market would be able to revitalize an economy stuck in a lull. He oversaw the creation of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) to achieve this end. The NRA attempted to create fair competition between companies by codifying rules and regulation. It also attempted to help workers by setting a minimum wage. Roosevelt intended to achieve what he termed the Four Freedoms:

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<sup>55</sup> Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (San Francisco: The University of California Press, 1986).

freedom of speech; freedom of religion; freedom from want; and freedom from fear. Breaking up monopolies and providing opportunities for competition dominated Roosevelt's efforts between 1933 and 1935. However, in 1935 in *Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States* the Supreme Court deemed the NRA unconstitutional on the grounds that it delegated too much power from the Legislative to the Executive branch. It also violated the Commerce Clause by giving a disproportional amount of authority to Congress for regulating state matters. Roosevelt needed a new method to help his country overcome the national economic crisis.

In 1937 Roosevelt switched from focusing on production to trying to induce consumption.<sup>56</sup> Historian Alan Brinkley argues that Roosevelt embraced Keynesian economics to spur consumption. British economist John Maynard Keynes' theory afforded government an enlarged role. Government spending, such as for public works projects, was to be the catalyst that would spur consumption and therefore economic growth.<sup>57</sup> The labor required for the projects would provide employment and income for thousands of unemployed citizens. The citizens would spend their salaries on various goods and services within the community, increasing consumption, thereby improving other sectors of the economy. Keynes' "multiplier effect" stated that the effects would continue to radiate outwards, until the entire economy had been jumpstarted back into growth.<sup>58</sup> Economist Leon Henderson succinctly stated that, "when farmers and laborers, that is consumers, have funds to spend, the merchants do more business, factories receive large orders, and soon find themselves compelled to add new equipment and so the spiral of recovery is set into high gear."<sup>59</sup>

In 1938, faced with a nation-wide Depression, Keynes advised Roosevelt to take measures to immediately stimulate consumption.<sup>60</sup> According to Brinkley, the economists who subscribed to the Keynesian approach contended that "consumption, not investment, was now

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1997), 116-117.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Brinkley, 71.

<sup>60</sup> Brinkley, 65.



the principal engine driving the industrial economy and hence the principal social goal toward which public efforts should be directed.”<sup>61</sup> Consumption was more important than investment. Consumption drove production rather than the inverse. Increasing consumption rather than production provided the best route to prosperity and growth.

Poverty occurred not because of the lack of production but because the economy failed to widely distribute consumer products and the profits they generated. The federal government needed to stimulate consumption. Consumption would allow companies to prosper and expand their distribution, which would increasingly spread products and profits to poverty-stricken areas. The poor would be integrated into the consumer economy and all segments and sectors would prosper. Consumption could narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots and reduce class tensions.

America emerged from WW II determined to maintain the economic recovery brought on by the war and to prevent depression from returning. Military spending during WW II helped to spread prosperity by employing millions of people in the military and in factories that supported the war effort. But once the war ended, new consumer products and markets had to be found if personal consumption was to replace military spending and the same level of economic activity was to continue. Historian Lizabeth Cohen has observed:

Beginning during the war and with great fervor after it, business leaders, labor unions, government agencies, the mass media, advertisers, and many other purveyors of the new postwar order conveyed the message that mass consumption was not a personal indulgence. Rather, it was a civic responsibility designed to improve the living standards of all Americans, a critical part of a prosperity-producing cycle of expanded consumer demand fueling greater production, thereby creating more well-paying jobs and in turn more affluent consumers capable of stoking the economy with their purchases.<sup>62</sup>

Historian Eric Rauchway has noted: “Consumption replaced production at the center of economic thought, and “[a]s the concept of the ‘consumer’ gained resonance in American politics, it became the basis of an almost universal political language.”<sup>63</sup> Everyone’s duty could

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>62</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, “A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America,” 236.

<sup>63</sup> Eric Rauchway, “No Remedy Against This Consumption,” review of *A Consumers’ Republic*, by Lizabeth Cohen, *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Sept. 2003), 450.

be defined, every policy could be framed, in terms of what it did for consumers and their ability to consume.<sup>64</sup>

However, increased consumption by consumers was not a given. A great pent-up demand for consumer goods existed. Americans desired a plethora of goods after experiencing two decades of depression and rationing. But if a mass consumer economy helped the nation and its people prosper, Cohen argued that the experience of the WW II and the Depression caused Americans to hesitate before spending their savings and war bonds.<sup>65</sup> Many continued to distrust banks, economic recovery, and non-essential spending. The federal government needed to build trust in the economy and enhance consumer spending. Historian Charles McGovern wrote that the “federal government abandoned price and production controls and made other, quieter commitments to enhance consumption. Government policies made consumption a ‘state project’ through programs that promoted private, family-centered consumption to enhance the economy and manage social conflict.”<sup>66</sup>

The federal government intended to unleash pent-up purchasing and consumption through initiatives such as the G.I. Bill of Rights. The G.I. Bill passed Congress in 1944 and offered income tax deductions for mortgage payments to veterans and their families. It helped buyers by giving loan insurance to lenders and developers through the Federal Housing Administration. The G.I. Bill stimulated the purchase of houses and the many consumer products used to fill homes including televisions, barbecue grills, refrigerators, stoves, record players, chrome-leg tables, and backless stools.

The housing industry exploded. 25% of the homes that stood in America in 1960 had been constructed in the 1950s. During the Depression, by contrast, most Americans lived in apartments, flats, or small houses in the city. Suburban housing projects such as Levittown dominated the housing markets of the 1950s. William and Alfred Levitt organized the construction of 10,000 identical, prefabricated homes on a 1,200-acre plot in New York State, formerly occupied by potato fields. By 1960 62% of Americans owned homes.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 449-456

<sup>65</sup> Cohen, “A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America,” 237.

<sup>66</sup> Charles McGovern, “Consumption,” in *A Companion to 20th-Century America*, Stephen J. Whitfield (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 349.

The federal government constructed highways and roads that linked cities, made commuting reasonable, and helped transform farmland bordering cities into vast suburban tracts. The automobile industry grew to new proportions. In 1956 nearly seventy-five million cars and trucks were being driven on American roads.

Economists began to use Gross National Product (GNP) as the primary indicator of a healthy national economy. In these terms, the United States thrived after WW II. From 1945 to 1970 the United States' GNP rose from \$200 billion to \$1.1 trillion. Historian Eric Foner wrote that "the 1950s represented the culmination of the long-term trend in which consumerism replaced economic independence and democratic participation as central definitions of American freedom."<sup>67</sup> Americans began to understand their definitive characteristics as consumption and abundance.

Advocates of consumption-created abundance argued that consumption erased class divisions in many ways. It led all groups in society to intermingle in the centers of mass consumption, including shopping malls, sporting arenas, movie theaters, and musical concerts. In such places men and women, working- and middle-class people, those born in America and immigrants, all occupied the same space. Historian John Kasson points out that Coney Island, one of the definitive centers of American consumption and entertainment, drew people from all social classes and all ethnic backgrounds.<sup>68</sup> Little attention was paid to the fact that commodification separated classes based on seating at stadiums and distanced affluent from poor Americans by locating malls nearer the suburbs.

There is no doubt that consumption separated segments of the population based on their means and taste, but it brought people together by challenging many of traditional sources of authority that had divided the country in the past. Parents, family, class, community, religious leaders, and even managers in the workplace had separated Americans in the past. All lost a degree of power in the new consumer society. McGovern argues that "Leisure and play, youth and novelty, possession and accumulation, individuality and desire gained great influence in American life as cornerstones of the new culture."<sup>69</sup> Those advocating consumption argued that

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<sup>67</sup> Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 995.

<sup>68</sup> John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> McGovern, "Consumption," 344.

it eliminated many obstacles to escaping poverty for poor people. Advocates of consumption argued that consumption made class lines less rigid and mobility more attainable.

A consumer society was ostensibly more inclusive because every person could freely participate and benefit from it. Cohen writes: “For its promoters, this mass-consumption-driven economy held out the promise of political as well as economic democracy. Reconversion after World War II raised the hopes of Americans of many political persuasions and social positions that not only a more prosperous but also a more equitable and democratic American society.”<sup>70</sup> Politicians rarely tired of identifying as a key proof of America’s superiority over the Soviet Union the more democratic distribution of goods.

Women constituted one group who had previously suffered poverty but who were included in the new consumer economy. Older forms of American freedom, democracy, and citizenship excluded women. Suffrage was denied to women until 1920 and lower wages compromised women’s economic independence throughout the twentieth century; but consumption included women in a way difficult to deny. In the 1950s women did 85% of the household spending, giving her a tremendous amount of power over the consumer economy. In 1953, one advertiser claimed, “frozen and prepared meals offered housewives freedom from tedium, space, work, and their own inexperience.”<sup>71</sup> By indulging her desires, the housewife helped the entire national economy and helped bring prosperity to all Americans. Purchasing dresses and make-up, appliances and shoes, Tupperware and cling-wrap, all propelled the economy, helped America prosper, and ensured that democracy triumphed over communism. Rauchway writes: “She had only to stoop—and rummage through her purse—to conquer.”<sup>72</sup> An advertisement in *Printer’s Ink* concisely stated, “The proper study of mankind is man . . . but the proper study of markets is woman.”<sup>73</sup>

A second, traditionally poor group who experienced inclusion in the consumer society of the 1950s was African Americans. To be sure, African Americans endured harsh exclusion because of Jim Crow laws, political disenfranchisement, and restrictive covenants that prevented

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<sup>70</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, “A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America,” 236-237.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Foner, 999.

<sup>72</sup> Rauchway, “Review: No Remedy against This Consumption,” 450.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Cohen, 313.

them from purchasing houses in certain neighborhoods. In 1957, a neighbor of the first black family to move into Levittown explained to a reporter from Life magazine: “He’s probably a nice guy, but every time I look at him I see \$2,000 drop off the value of my house”<sup>74</sup> Racial exclusion cloaked in the language of property rights would become the dominant form of segregation after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, but consumerism was an important area of freedom that could never be completely denied to African Americans in the postwar.<sup>75</sup> Even when whites attempted to block African Americans from the consumer society by deeming certain lunch counters, department stores, buses, and movie theaters as “whites only,” African American were able to create their own markets, albeit it smaller than those comprised of businesses owned by whites. “Buy black” campaigns existed throughout the postwar years and were intended to help black producers, store owners, and consumers.

Historian Ann Douglas writes: “With material and political power out of reach, black New Yorkers chose culture as a palpably important form of politics.”<sup>76</sup> African Americans helped create and took part in the thriving consumer economy through movies, music, fashion, and food. Local community markets arose in neighborhoods such as Harlem, Watts, the Bronx, and throughout the South. But African Americans also connected to and were included in the national consumer market through the production and consumption of music. Chuck Berry’s “Johnny B. Goode,” Chubby Checker’s “The Twist,” Fats Domino’s “Blueberry Hill,” and Little Richard’s “Good Golly Miss Molly” all sold a huge number of records throughout the country. Although some African Americans criticized such musical figures for “selling out” to white tastes, few could deny that the performers were included as part of the mass consumer society.

The rise of rock ‘n’ roll also ushered in another group who experienced inclusion through consumption—youth. A distinct “youth culture” developed in the 1950s. Teenagers purchased their own clothes, cosmetics, records, food, cars, and recreational equipment. McGovern writes: “Victorian culture had celebrated children for their innocence and purity, even as the idea of

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Cohen, 357

<sup>75</sup> Derek S. Hoff, “The Original Housing Crisis: Suburbanization, Segregation, and the State in Postwar America,” *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June 2008).

<sup>76</sup> Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1995), 17.

childhood as a separate stage of life had taken firm hold in the nineteenth century. In the consumer era, commentators began to see children as differing from adults through the precise qualities celebrated in the new leisure: energy, boundless enthusiasm, imagination.”<sup>77</sup> Youth culture contained a plethora of new markets that connected children and teenagers to America’s consumer culture. Historian Jessie Bernard recorded that during the 1950s, teenagers spent \$20 million annually on lipstick, \$25 million on deodorants, 9 million on home permanents, and \$75 million on music records.<sup>78</sup> By 1960, nearly 11 million teenagers owned their own cars. Teenagers’ spending expanded the economy and helped the nation financially.

In addition to women, African Americans, and teenagers, laborers experienced inclusion through consumption, too. Blue-collar laborers had historically earned less than white-collar workers in America. McGovern writes: “workers fashioned a critique of the uneven and inequitable distribution of goods and abundance that they endured under industrial capitalism. They demanded justice in wages and working conditions by claiming their rights to consumer goods and entertainment.”<sup>79</sup> Cohen argues that from the 1930s on owners and workers agreed on slightly higher wages. Workers in the steel, meat-packing, and agricultural industries agreed to reduce strikes if the owners provided high enough wages to enable them to consume products. Workers enjoyed more money and the ability to consume while owners avoided larger labor disputes that could have ended in strikes.<sup>80</sup> Historian Rudolph J. Vecoli contends: “They avidly embraced mass culture, since it provided an opportunity to participate in mainstream life in ways otherwise denied them.”<sup>81</sup> In short, consumption in the 1950s muted labor disputes, raised workers’ wages, satisfied owners and managers, and helped the national economy.

The major point is that there were reasons for Truman and Eisenhower to believe that consumption helped all Americans. The consumer society appeared inclusive, open to racial and

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<sup>77</sup> McGovern, “Consumption,” 343.

<sup>78</sup> Jessie Bernard, “Teen-Age Culture: An Overview,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 338 (Nov., 1961), 4.

<sup>79</sup> McGovern, “Consumption,” 339.

<sup>80</sup> Rudolph J. Vecoli, review of *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, by Lizabeth Cohen, *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec., 1992):529-535.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

ethnic distinctiveness, beneficial to all, and America's best chance for avoiding another depression. Accordingly, Truman, Eisenhower, and other policymakers in the federal government believed that there was no need to offer federal assistance directly to poor people. When on the presidential campaign trail in West Virginia in 1960, Nixon told Eisenhower that seventeen million people in America went to bed hungry every night. Nixon recalled that Eisenhower responded: "Now look, I go to bed hungry every night, but that's because I'm on a diet. The doctor won't let me eat any more."<sup>82</sup>

To the many people who had this old understanding of why poverty persisted that differed from what was to come in the 1960s, the poor did not possess cultural values that kept them in poverty. Rather they were the same as other Americans; they simply lacked money to consume. Direct aid was not needed. Widespread consumption would cure poverty. Policies to increase consumption did not expressly aim to change poor people's culture or psychology; that goal only appeared in the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s.

If consumption had the purpose of helping Americans win the Cold War domestically by strengthening the American economy through capitalism and of reducing the risk that communism would seem like a good idea, the reconstruction of Europe was intended to win the war in Europe. Governmental programs to combat poverty in Europe, including the Marshall Plan, relied on reconstructing buildings, factories, roads, railroads, and harbors that had been destroyed during WW II. Countries in Western Europe already had representative governments and skilled workers. Truman believed that avoiding economic depression and widespread poverty in Europe required only the rebuilding of structures that had made it possible to create and sustain prosperity in the past.

Reconstruction was intimately linked to winning the Cold War. Truman feared that stagnant national economies created the conditions that led to the fall of representative governments and to the expansion of communism. In 1951 Truman tersely proclaimed that

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Randall Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 450.

“economic stagnation is the advance guard of Soviet conquest”<sup>83</sup> and that the seeds of totalitarian regimes “spread and grow in the soil of poverty and discontent.”<sup>84</sup>

On 5 June 1947 Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced a comprehensive plan to rebuild the economies of all European countries willing to allow democratic capitalist forms of reconstruction. In a speech at Harvard University, Marshall declared that the United States would contribute billions of dollars to finance the economic recovery of Europe.<sup>85</sup> Marshall proclaimed: “Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos.”<sup>86</sup> Historian Diane Kutz succinctly states that, “providing the seed money for the recovery of Western Europe, the Marshall Plan transformed its beneficiaries from poverty cases into partners.”<sup>87</sup>

In line with Truman and Marshall’s logic, the European Economic Recovery Plan, or Marshall Plan, proposed that poverty created the conditions that weakened capitalism and strengthened the appeal of communism. To contain communism, the United States must end poverty in Europe.

Kennedy and Johnson proposed that the culture of poverty could be solved only by transforming the individual poor person’s system of values. Only then could he or she seize opportunities to escape poverty and remain prosperous. The people must change, not the infrastructure. In short, contrary to what was possible to do in Europe with successful results, the construction elsewhere, or reconstruction, of factories, apartments, roads, and rail lines could not solve a people’s poverty.

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<sup>83</sup> Harry Truman to Nelson D. Rockefeller (March 1951). Student Research File Folder 1 of 10: “The Point Four Program: Reaching Out to Help the Less Developed Countries,” Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume 2 Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956), 229.

<sup>85</sup> Foner, 954.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Diane B. Kunz, “The Marshall Plan Reconsidered: A Complex of Motives,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 3 (May - Jun., 1997), 162.



Truman thought it could. His administration designed the Marshall Plan to do exactly that—to cure poverty by reconstructing structures important to the community. Truman argued that European poverty differed from that in Africa or on reservations of Native Americans in Arizona. European citizens already had the beneficial cultural values that enabled them to sustain prosperity; they only needed a limited amount of financial aid to return to their former financial success. By contrast, Kennedy and Johnson believed that all poverty was the same. Truman thought that many forms of poverty existed.

Truman and Marshall contended that Europe had a distinct form of poverty created by the destruction of the economy in WW II. In 1945 and 1946, freezing British officials—experiencing some of the harshest winters in the twentieth century—worked without heat. Because transportation networks had been destroyed, bountiful coal supplies piled up at their sources. By 1947 Britain had dropped from being the world’s biggest creditor to the world’s biggest debtor. Inflation ran rampant. In 1948 the price of wholesale goods in Austria stood 200% higher than before the war. In France the cost of wholesale goods was 1,820% higher than before WW II. Aerial bombing and heavy artillery had destroyed entire cities throughout Europe, creating thousands of displaced persons and refugees. Immobilized train cars froze on their destroyed tracks all over Europe. General Lucius Clay, the U.S. military commander in occupied Germany, “concluded that Germany’s predicament was truly appalling.”<sup>88</sup> Allied bombing had destroyed around 25% of Germany’s urban housing. Germany’s gross national product (GNP) dropped by 70%.

European poverty could be cured by reconstructing the structures instrumental to restoring a thriving economy. Historian George Herring has stated: “The essential goal was to spark economic recovery and relieve the vast human suffering.”<sup>89</sup> Under the assumption that human suffering caused by poverty led to communism, policymakers intended the Marshall Plan to stop the leftward drift of European politics. Socialist sentiment pervaded much of Europe both before and after WW II. Officials became concerned about this sentiment in the context of the Cold War. Policymakers such as Acheson feared that communism had gained even stronger

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>89</sup> George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 618.

inroads in France and Italy after WW II. In November 1946, the *Parti communiste français*, France's communist party, earned 28.3% of the vote and 182 seats in the newly created French Fourth Republic. Communist members of *la résistance* won more French respect for communism during WW II; national voting patterns suggested that the postwar economic tribulations increased the French attraction to communist solutions. Acheson feared that the French would democratically vote to install a communist government in their country.

The April 1948 elections in Italy to install the First Republican Parliament also revealed strong support for communist candidates. The Italian Communist Party, united with the Italian Socialist Party as the Popular Democratic Front Party, gained 31% of the vote and 183 seats. Truman, Acheson, and Marshall intended to use the European Economic Recovery Plan to end widespread poverty, thereby reducing the appeal of communism and containing the influence and spread of the Soviets. Prosperity was expected to ensure that representative governments friendly to democratic capitalism would survive. This goal was concisely captured in the Marshall Plan's slogan, "Prosperity Makes You Free."<sup>90</sup>

The Marshall Plan achieved great success. By 1952 Western Europe's aggregate GNP had risen 32 percent, agricultural production increased 11 percent above prewar levels, and industrial manufacturing stood 40 percent higher than in 1938. Most important for the policy of containment, none of the Western European countries had adopted communism. Kunz writes: "Fortunately, the fathers of the Marshall Plan had aimed their economic weapons at economic problems that were susceptible to an economic solution."<sup>91</sup>

The most important aspect was that the policymakers of the Marshall Plan never included changing Europeans' cultural values as a prerequisite to ending poverty. It was taken as a given that the destruction of WW II alone had created the poor economic conditions. Values mattered little. In whole, the argument was that rebuilding structures could accomplish great and far-reaching results, including unifying Western Europe, bolstering the United States' economy, and preventing the spread of communism. The Truman administration did not believe that European poverty stemmed from values that handicapped people financially or that prosperity, when restored, would be difficult to sustain. In this regard, European poverty differed from American

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<sup>90</sup> Foner, 955.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

poverty. Europe had physical destruction. Americans lacked consumption that—through the multiplier effect—would introduce prosperity all over the country and to all segments of the population.

European poverty after WW II also differed from poverty in the Third World. European poverty could be remedied by rebuilding previously existing structures. Poverty in the Third World required building structures that had never existed. In short, the United States helped to reconstruct Europe, but had to develop and fully industrialize the Third World.

Although Truman gave priority to European poverty, he considered ending poverty in the Third World as a vital step in containing communism. In his inaugural address on January 20, 1949, he announced “a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”<sup>92</sup> Introduced as the fourth policy Truman intended to follow in foreign relations during his second term, it eventually became known as the “Point Four Program.”<sup>93</sup> It signaled the first time that U. S. policymakers championed the economic development of the Third World as a strategy within the Cold War.

In line with the logic of containment and the Marshall Plan, the policymakers of Point Four, including Truman, Dean Acheson, and the U.S. ambassador to India from 1951 to 1953, Chester Bowles, assumed that prosperity supported democracy and conversely that economic stagnation threatened it. Like Truman and Eisenhower in developing consumption-stimulating policies in America, Acheson, and Bowles based their theory about the development of the Third World on the economic ideas of Keynes. Within the context of the Third World, Keynes argued, government spending in agriculture, education, and health would stimulate and improve the economy. All projects within Point Four focused on improvement in each of these areas to lay the foundation for industrialization—which they considered to be the goal of development.

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<sup>92</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Inaugural Address,” 1949; available from <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1030&st=inaugural&st1=>; Internet; accessed February 4, 2008.

<sup>93</sup> The first three points were unfaltering support for the United Nations, the continuation of world economic recovery through the European Economic Recovery Plan, and support for North Atlantic security plan to be named the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Truman intended the Point Four Program simultaneously to bring prosperity to the entire Free World while preventing “unstable” countries from becoming communist. The policymakers of Point Four assumed that political instability resulted from a lack of industrialization and economic prosperity. They argued that all countries of the world could and should become industrialized. They believed that unindustrialized and economically stagnant societies were at risk of turning to communist methods to stimulate development and economic growth. In his 1951 State of the Union Address, Truman declared that “[communists] deliberately try to prevent [capitalist] economic improvement,” persuading stagnant countries that only communist methods were able to spur their economy.<sup>94</sup> Convinced that Germany’s interwar economic tribulations caused World War II, both Truman and Acheson believed that economic stagnation was the principal cause of war. Acheson articulated the program’s aim as the “use of material means to a non-material end.”<sup>95</sup> He thought that global peace and democracy could be achieved if the United States successfully used the Point Four Program to spur economic improvement, raise the standard of living, and end poverty within Third World nations.

The policymakers of Point Four envisioned three types of objectives—foundational, economic, and strategic. Foundational efforts, in concert with Keynesian economics, included technical assistance to improve the quality of food, health, and education in a given Third World nation. American experts would provide the training and education so that workers could effectively build modern structures and manage modern techniques and operations. These efforts would lay the base for industrialization, leading to the policymakers’ second objective, economic progress. Economic progress meant augmenting industrial production and maintaining global free trade for the benefit of all participating countries. The improved economies and increased global cohesion through augmented trade would in turn strengthen the non-communist world. Finally, strategic efforts included securing democratic governments, especially those in countries

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<sup>94</sup> Harry Truman, “1951 State of the Union Address,” in *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, Vol. 27, The Point Four Program: Reaching Out to Help the Less Developed Countries*, ed. Dennis Merrill (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1999), 455.

<sup>95</sup> Dean Acheson, “Transcription of Extemporaneous Remarks by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Concerning Point 4 of the President’s Inaugural Address, at His Press Conference, January 26, 1949,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. 1, National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1976), 758.

with raw materials vital for military or security purposes, and containing the spread of communism.<sup>96</sup>

In order to avoid charges of imperialism, the original Point Four procedure did not seek out recipient countries but required them to request assistance. The Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA)—one of the agencies within the State Department that administered the program—instructed countries to submit requests for assistance to the State Department in Washington D.C.<sup>97</sup> Upon receiving the request, the TCA staff in Washington evaluated the request’s feasibility, Point Four’s budget, and the capability of the technicians who worked for the program. If the staff accepted an original or modified request, it then secured and transferred the qualified personnel. The TCA paid the technicians’ salaries and a small portion of the project’s cost. The State Department required recipient countries to finance the remaining cost, gradually assuming the entire financial burden in subsequent years.

Activities varied widely from exhibitions to expose the Bolivians to the current literature on growing corn in their region and projects meant to offer an elementary-level education to Iranians living in rural areas to building a medical school in Burma and demonstrating the way in which to use DDT to kill Anopheles mosquitoes and control malaria in Indonesia.<sup>98</sup> Typically each project focused on a single field, such as education or agriculture.

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<sup>96</sup> Chester Bowles, *Ambassador’s Report* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954), 344.

<sup>97</sup> The U. S. State Department administered the program. Acheson, as Secretary of State, delegated the power to carry out the program to three agencies: the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA); The Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA); and the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (IIAA). The State Department created the TCA specifically for the Point Four Program while both the ECA and IIAA already existed and had been offering technical assistance to foreign countries. The State Department originally established the ECA in 1948 as part of the European Economic Recovery Plan (ERP), while Franklin Roosevelt’s administration created the IIAA in 1940 as part of its “good neighbor” policy with Central and South America. When conducting operations for Point Four, the ECA worked mainly in the Far East. The TCA primarily offered assistance in India, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. The IIAA retained its original jurisdiction and carried out technical assistance in Central and South America. Although the TCA, ECA, and IIAA had primary areas of responsibility, all three conducted assistance in nearly every country receiving Point Four aid, often simultaneously. In all, Point Four functioned alone or in conjuncture with the other two programs in thirty-five countries.

<sup>98</sup> Jonathan B. Bingham, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomacy: Point 4 in Action* (New York: The John Day Company. 1953), 86, 109, 114; Department of Public Affairs, “The Importance of Scientific and Technical Books and Magazines in the

Bowles administered and shaped the newly-created Point Four Program in India. He enthusiastically championed economic development as the best method to end poverty and maintain a democratic and friendly India. He distanced himself from the more military-oriented policy set forth by National Security Council in NSC-68, which Truman approved in June 1950. Whereas NSC-68 outlined a policy to contain the spread of communism, enforced by the military, Bowles advocated a policy stressing the economic development of the Third World. Bowles declared that it was time “for Point Four, in Asia, Africa, and South America to become Point One, to rank equally with our program for military defense.”<sup>99</sup> Bowles believed that only economic development and an end to poverty could provide a solid foundation on which to build lasting amicable relations.<sup>100</sup>

Bowles created a program in India unlike any other project of Point Four. His method differed from that used in other Point Four projects because he combined agriculture, education, and health improvement into one integrated approach known as a community development project. Bowles derived the idea from Dr. James Y. C. Yen, a Chinese citizen and Yale graduate. Dr. Yen had discovered, as Bowles put it, “that far more could be accomplished in each of these fields if these three workers (food, health, and education) went as a team, entering the villages together and developing a broad, coordinated development program.”<sup>101</sup>

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Point Four Program” (College Park, MD: Dec. 1951), in *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, Vol. 27, The Point Four Program: Reaching Out to Help the Less Developed Countries*, ed. Dennis Merrill (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1999), 705-726.

<sup>99</sup> Bowles, 325.

<sup>100</sup> Bowles’ interest in economic development derived from his experiences in Europe after World War II. He served as international chairman of the U.N. Children’s Appeal from 1948 to 1951. It was while touring war-torn Europe in January and February 1948 for the U.N. Children’s Appeal that Bowles realized his life’s ambition. The sight of malnourished children three years after the end of hostilities convinced Bowles that his mission in life had to be to “create international understanding and encourage greater cooperation among all people regardless of ideology.” Although his revelation came from his experience in Europe, Bowles directed his energy toward the Third World. He believed Europe was on its way to recovery while the real need resided in the periphery nations; Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 245.

<sup>101</sup> Bowles, 196.

The community-development concept reappeared in the 1960s in the Peace Corps, War on Poverty, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Roy Hoopes, an author and Peace Corps volunteer, estimates that about 25 percent of all Peace Corps volunteers worked on community development assignments.<sup>102</sup> Volunteers working on community development assignments in the Peace Corps and VISTA were instructed to promote modernization at the town or village level, help the local population recognize a common need, coordinate collective action, and help the people complete self-help tasks.

Community development models unified anti-poverty efforts within the United States and abroad in the 1960s. The appearance of the model at home and abroad revealed not only the influence between foreign and domestic but also that the two areas relied on the same logic and assumptions about the cause of and cure for poverty. In short, both volunteers from the Peace Corps and VISTA used community development for the same reasons. Both viewed poverty as the result of cultural values (e.g., desire for instant gratification, fatalism, and fear of change) and believed that community development could best introduce a new value system. Both people in Lima's barrios and those in Montana's rural expanses could learn to plan for the future, take initiative, gain motivation, trust in a better future, and seize economic opportunities. The primary goal of community development in the Peace Corps and VISTA was the same -- to change people's cultural values.

Yet the logic of how community development alleviated poverty in the 1960s differed sharply from community development projects in the 1940s and 1950s under the Point Four Program. Later in the 1950s Bowles wrote books that included sections about the fact that cultural values could either accelerate or hinder economic development. He wrote about the fact that programs such as Point Four could reform deleterious cultural values and take advantage of values that helped develop foreign economies. However, Bowles, during the Truman administration, did not address the impact of cultural values on development or the impact of programs on cultural values. He exclusively focused on the economic considerations while

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<sup>102</sup> Roy Hoopes, ed. *The Peace Corps Experience* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. 1968), 152; Historian Gary May also estimated that the percentage of Peace Corps volunteers who worked on community development projects was 25 percent: "Passing the Torch and Lighting Fires: The Peace Corps," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 288.

administering projects of community development under Point Four in India.<sup>103</sup> From 1951 to 1953 he did not consider cultural values to be the cause of poverty. Nor did he consider changing those cultural values as the avenue out of poverty. He considered economic development—in the form of improvement in agriculture, education, and health—to be the only remedy for poverty. Bowles' projects for community development in India revealed that the understanding of poverty and ways to alleviate it differed markedly between the early 1950s and the 1960s.

Bowles's opportunity to apply his theory came on January 5, 1952, when Jawaharlal Nehru and Truman signed the Indo-American Technical Agreement, approving the Community Development Program (CDP).<sup>104</sup> The Community Development Program divided India into regional units, to be developed independently. Each area included between 150,000 and 300,000 people and centered on a central town of 5,000 to 10,000 people that acted as a nucleus. The central town housed an administrative headquarters, a hospital, and a center for agricultural, educational, and health improvement. Each center employed around 125 Indian workers and housed a rotating group of about three to five American experts with various specialties, paid for by the State Department. As a way to replicate America's development, Bowles ordered the construction of roads and telecommunication systems linking the entire development area to the central town. On 2 October 1952, fifty-five community development projects were launched covering 17,000 villages and nearly 11 million people.<sup>105</sup>

Bowles viewed economic improvement in agriculture, education, and health and sanitation—spurred by investment from the U. S. government and facilitated by technical assistance—as the first steps in the modernization process. He believed that the second stage would consist of industrialization. The Indo-American agreement itself stated that Community Development was “to lay the proper foundation for the industrial and general economic development of the country.”<sup>106</sup> As Acheson stated in a memorandum to Truman on 14 March 1949, “In those areas where economic life is primitive and stagnant, a basic improvement in

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<sup>103</sup> Bowles, 213, 341.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>105</sup> Dennis Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947-1963* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 84 & 92.

<sup>106</sup> Cited in Bowles, 212.



health and education may well be prerequisite to increased production and improved standards of living.”<sup>107</sup> In Bowles’s mind, as improvement in each area occurred, industrialization would start at the local level.

Given sufficient time and money, Truman and Bowles believed, the Point Four Program could strengthen Third World economies. However, the initial objectives of the program were limited because it was a small self-help program. Policymakers agreed that a substantial amount of investment in agriculture, education, and health and sanitation would accelerate Third World nations toward industrialization; but they also recognized that both the United States’ financial resources and the unindustrialized nations’ absorptive capacity, or ability to use financial aid to good effect, were limited.<sup>108</sup>

Bowles’s community development projects in India had been in operation for only three months when Eisenhower took office in January 1953. The ascendancy of an administration more conservative than Truman’s put Bowles on the defensive. Eisenhower believed that foreign aid cost money that could be used to help Americans domestically. In June 1953, Eisenhower terminated the Point Four Program. Throughout his first term, Eisenhower called for a balanced budget and an end to foreign aid programs that he considered expensive. Eisenhower claimed that “it is not easy to convince an overwhelming majority of free people, everywhere, that they should pull in their belts, endure marked recessions in living standards, in order that we may at one and the same time develop backward countries and relieve starvation.”<sup>109</sup>

During his first four years as president, Eisenhower rejected programs of development in favor of his “New Look” policy. His version of containment emphasized nuclear competition, alliance building, covert operations, and psychological warfare.<sup>110</sup> Eisenhower believed that it

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<sup>107</sup> Dean Acheson, “Memorandum from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to President Truman,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. 1, National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 14 March 1949), 774.

<sup>108</sup> Bowles, 324-336.

<sup>109</sup> Cited in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; revised and expanded edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 131.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-156.

was necessary to reduce governmental spending in order to avoid inflation and to sustain America's high standard of living. Eisenhower thought that, because both domestic and international expenditures came out of the same national budget, spending money abroad would automatically reduce the money spent domestically. In this way, spending money internationally would hurt America domestically. Because he gave a low priority to military spending—in his final address as President he even warned Americans about the way in which such military spending could damage the American economy and create a military-industrial complex—Eisenhower assigned even less importance to programs aimed to develop the Third World. He claimed that such programs “could alter the very nature of American society, either through the debilitating effects of inflation or through regimentation in the form of economic controls.”<sup>111</sup> Gaddis has argued that Eisenhower believed that a costly defense strategy, which included programs to develop the Third World, ran the risk of ruining the sole thing it was meant to sustain: the American way of life.<sup>112</sup> In short, Eisenhower valued domestic consumption over international development.

Eisenhower linked foreign and domestic in a way different from Kennedy and Johnson the 1960s. He believed that foreign and domestic poverty differed. Also, helping one was thought to limit the success of the other. In the 1960s Kennedy and Johnson viewed foreign and domestic poverty as intimately linked. The conditions that caused a person to be poor was the same at home and abroad.

The community-development approach that existed under Point Four also demonstrated that the way in which the programs were conducted varied from country to country. Policymakers understood the origins of poverty and the ways to end it differently depending on where they encountered it. They aimed to promote consumption in America, reconstruction in Europe, and development in the Third World. In short, three forms of anti-poverty programs existed during Truman's and Eisenhower's administrations. None of the approaches unified foreign and domestic poverty. All three—consumption, reconstruction, and economic development—also differed from anti-poverty programs in the 1960s. According to the policymakers of the 1940s and 1950s, enhancing consumption in America, reconstruction in

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<sup>111</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

Europe, and development in the Third World, did not require a transformation in cultural values. Increasing Americans' consumption required expansion and distribution of domestic products, European reconstruction required the construction of buildings and infrastructure, and development in the Third World required increased agricultural and industrial production. None included provisions that addressed cultural values. In the 1960s, such provisions formed the foundation of the Peace Corps, VISTA, Job Corps, Alliance for Progress, Head Start, and President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (PCJD). The attention to the cultural and psychological dimensions of poverty made anti-poverty programs of the 1960s distinct. Attention to cultural and psychological dimension also unified approaches to foreign and domestic poverty in ways never before considered in American history. Social scientists in the 1960s viewed anti-poverty programs of the 1950s as addressing only the surface of deprivation without contemplating the deep forces that created and sustained poverty around the world. Programs in the 1950s viewed poverty as a temporary problem that could be overcome; programs during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations deemed poverty to be a pervasive, multi-generational, and entrenched worldview.

## **Chapter 2 - “The Major Role Played by Culture in Determining Behavior”: The Triumph of Culture in the Social Sciences**

In late 1940s and 1950s several major fields in the social sciences, including anthropology, psychology, sociology, and economics, experienced intellectual shifts. These shifts resulted in new understandings of what accounted for cultural, social, and economic difference throughout the world. Together, social scientists with these new understandings provided an explanation for why poor people differed from the rich, juvenile delinquents differed from law-abiding youth, and why the Third World relied on agricultural economies while the Western World created and sustained industrialization. Experts in each field revised previous theories by demonstrating the role of culture in shaping people’s behavior and countries’ economies. The cultural understanding of difference made possible the paradigm shift initiated by President John F. Kennedy. Social scientists made it possible to conceive of all poor people around the world as suffering from the same debilitating cultural values by providing a universal criterion to evaluate and explain their condition. Insurmountable biology or economics no longer divided people and made change impossible. Culture equally impacted a rich man in London and a poor girl in Lima. Both could be evaluated, changed, and measured using the same criterion of culture.

The new theories also formed the foundation of anti-poverty programs and programs to develop the Third World in the early 1960s, notably the Peace Corps, Mobilization for Youth, and Gray Areas Program. The paradigm shift initiated by Kennedy unified these programs. It unified their policymakers’ understanding of the problem they faced and the approach to its solution.

In the 1950s Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict led the field of anthropology to embrace the theory that culture shapes personality. Mead and Benedict argued that the given culture of a society determined each member’s values, behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations. A woman might value her extended family, show deference to her grandmother to behave properly, and aspire to work on the family farm. Conversely, a woman in a different cultural environment might value her immediate family only, move across the country to attend school, and aspire to be the CEO of a major business. In short, culture, not biology or race, accounted for difference in the world. Within psychology, Erik Erikson developed a highly influential theory that attributed the

development of the personality to psycho-social factors, such as parenting style and peer influence. Erikson's theory explained how parents socialize their children to the culture of poverty. Within the field of sociology, Albert Cohen, Walter B. Miller, Richard Cloward, and Lloyd Ohlin proposed that subcultures existed that differed from America's mainstream culture and led to negative behavior, such as gang violence and poor educational achievement. Later, in the 1960s, their theory of subcultures would support the idea of a tenacious self-sustaining culture of poverty—with values that prevented an escape from poverty and that existed separate from America's middle- or upper-class culture. Sociologists' studies of juvenile delinquency also influenced the War on Poverty by asserting that subcultures developed when blockages to opportunity prevented groups of people from succeeding in life and forced them to adapt to a life of poverty. Finally, an interdisciplinary theory of Third World development, known as modernization theory, developed and proposed that the underdevelopment of the Third World stemmed from traditional cultural values that conflicted with modern industrialization. In short, when a country industrialized, the institutions of the society mattered less than the attitudes and values of its people toward areas including education, work, change, and planning.

Mead's and Benedict's concept—that cultural values and specific personalities accounted for nations' present states of development and their individuals' behavior—challenged previous intellectuals' arguments based on biology. Scholars' explanations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often relied on the concept of Social Darwinism.<sup>113</sup> British philosopher Herbert Spencer was the chief proponent of Social Darwinism. Born in 1820 and influenced by Sir Charles Lyell's discussion of million-year-old fossils in *Principles of Geology* (1830), Spencer sought a way to understand the development of humans from the ancient past to the present.<sup>114</sup> After reading Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Spencer published the *Principles of Biology* (1864) in which he applied Darwinism to human societies. In his book, Spencer coined the term “survival of the fittest” and proposed that by studying human biology he could explain the transformation from earlier forms of life to present-day humans.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 109-118, 126-127, 132.

<sup>114</sup> Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1835).

<sup>115</sup> Peter. Watson, *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century* (New York: Perennial Press, 2001), 41.

Accordingly, Spencer argued that people, as biological organisms, acted based on their physical make-up with little ability to overcome their genetic inheritance. Spencer's understanding of humans led him to an uncompromising position toward the poor. He claimed: "The whole effort of nature is to get rid of such, to clear the world of them, and make room for better."<sup>116</sup>

Expanding on his opinion of the poor, Spencer contended that the differences among nations resulted from a struggle in which the strongest survived and the weak perished. Accordingly, Spencer advocated European imperialism over non-Western nations as the inevitable result of biologically based superiority. To Spencer, the economic development of non-Western nations was futile because their biology would always prevent success.

Other scholars proposed theories based on biology that resembled Spencer's Social Darwinism. In his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1854-1856), French nobleman Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau argued that race completely determined each human's potential.<sup>117</sup> He advocated the scientific measurement of physical characteristics such as skin color, bone structure, nose shape, and cranial capacity to determine the corporal dimensions that produced races he deemed superior. He explained that Europeans' biology made them "intelligent, noble, and morally superior," Africans were "unintelligent and lazy," Asians "smart but docile," and Native Americas were "dull and arrogant."<sup>118</sup> Gobineau claimed that biology and race were innate and ineradicable.

Spencer's biologically based theory of the survival of the fittest influenced Americans as well. William Graham Sumner, an American academic and the first professor of sociology at Yale, discussed the importance of struggle in laissez-faire economics, business competition, and immigration in industrial society. Throughout the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s, he contended that the white race's triumph in the global struggle over colonization, imperialism, national expansion, and industrialization revealed that whites were biologically more "fit" than the "degenerate" races of other colors.<sup>119</sup> Because biology, race, and evolution changed only gradually, Sumner proposed that the current state of the world occurred naturally and could not be altered in the short-term.

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<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press: 1944), 41.

<sup>117</sup> Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (New York: GP Putnam and Sons, 1856).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 577.

<sup>119</sup> Watson, 41.

Spencer's biologically based theory influenced some Europeans and Americans. However, over time, others came to dispute that biology determined the relative success or failure of humans and their societies. In 1904 and 1905 German sociologist Max Weber published a series of articles that were gathered into a book called *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber argued that humans cannot be studied with scientific tests in the same way that scientists examine the biology of animals and environmental occurrences in nature. He claimed: "While we can 'explain' natural occurrences in terms of the application of causal laws, human conduct is intrinsically meaningful, and has to be 'interpreted' or 'understood' in a way which has no counterpart in nature."<sup>120</sup> In Weber's opinion cultural and psychological matters influenced the world more than biology and economics.

He proposed that successful industrialization in Europe stemmed less from the biology of the continent's inhabitants than from the cultural values of its people. Weber described those cultural values as the Protestant Ethic. According to historian Peter Watson, the Protestant Ethic, dating back to the Reformation, holds the "idea that the highest form of moral obligation of the individual, the best way to fulfill his duty to God, is to help his fellow men, now, in this world."<sup>121</sup> Although people all over the world throughout history have wanted to be rich, Weber claimed that only Protestants viewed helping others through a sober, industrious career as morally sanctioned and religiously virtuous. The Protestant Ethic inspired adherents to diligently work, reinvest accumulated profits in additional capital, and to help others through private initiative. Accordingly, the cultural values of the Protestant Ethic led to industrialization in Europe. In short, cultural factors rather than economic conditions or biology explained the emergence of capitalism, and they were the reason for the Industrial Revolution in Europe and Europeans' successful imperialism around the world.

In 1899, American Thorstein Veblen contributed to the view that cultural values determined the condition of individuals and nations with the publication of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Rather than biology or economic conditions, Veblen viewed cultural values such as pride in workmanship and physical industriousness as the sources of industrialization in America. Despite the benefits afforded by such cultural values, Veblen contended that the

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<sup>120</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

resulting “money culture” in America contained the seeds that could eventually destroy American industry.<sup>122</sup> Veblen identified “conspicuous consumption” and “pecuniary culture” as threats to American industry because each subtracted from the frugality and physical industriousness that originally helped start industrialization in America. Now, he contended, the conservative values of the upper class intended to preserve their wealth and social standing threatened to arrest further industrialization by blocking innovation that could lead the rich to lose their coveted position. Furthermore, those people aspiring to be wealthy would adopt the rich’s conservative values and lose the initiative that could help propel industrial innovation. Accordingly, Veblen viewed poverty and affluence as the result of cultural values, but feared that that same culture could hold the seeds to its own destruction.

Weber and Veblen influenced anthropologists who were forming their intellectual positions in the early twentieth century. Arguably the most significant among those who were influenced by Weber and Veblen were Franz Boas, Benedict, and Mead. Started by the work of Boas, the culture and personality school, sometimes referred to as psychological anthropology, challenged biology-based theories by showing the way in which cultural values shaped societies and individuals. Boas, Mead, and Benedict all wrote accounts of “primitive” societies and cultures in order to show that diversity in people’s cultural environment accounted for differences in behavior. Boas studied the Pacific Northwest, Mead examined Samoa, and Benedict looked at Pueblo tribes in the American Southwest. Watson writes: “The aim of Boas, Benedict, and Mead was to put beyond doubt the major role played by culture in determining behavior and to argue against the predominating place of biology.”<sup>123</sup> Watson continues that Boas’s book *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) “made clear his loathing of nineteenth-century ideas that took for granted the inherent superiority of white westerners.”<sup>124</sup> Watson claims that Boas considered anthropology “a giant rescue operation to show the importance of culture”<sup>125</sup>

Boas, Benedict, and Mead contended that societies were not better or worse, simply different based on their cultural values. Mead, Benedict, and Boas challenged Herbert Spencer’s

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<sup>122</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 57.

<sup>123</sup> Watson, 281.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 288



theory of Social Darwinism in which he claimed that a given country's success or failure stemmed from the biology or race of its citizens. Born into a distinct race, non-Western people had little chance of overcoming their biology and achieving the level of civilization experienced in Europe and the United States. Mead, Benedict, and Boas disputed that biology determined the ultimate success or failure of anyone. They emphasized the need to examine the local cultural context and to abandon theories that credited certain groups of humans with superior biological characteristics. Pueblos might emphasize restraint, the Japanese obedience, Americans achievement, and Indians hierarchy; but one is not necessarily better than the other. In certain circumstances each has value. Japanese obedience and Indian hierarchy might provide better social stability than American achievement, but achievement may more likely lead to innovation. Makers of policy in the War on Poverty would use similar logic to identify certain cultural values suited to upward economic mobility and other values that sacrificed a professional and productive life and that trapped people in poverty.

Psychologist Philip Bock contends that “Margaret Mead must be considered *the* major figure in the culture and personality school.”<sup>126</sup> Mead was internationally known for her work on Samoa and she served as the curator at the American Museum of Natural History from 1946 to 1969. Mead's advancement came in putting forth a dynamic model of cultural processes that explained the way in which cultural patterning and expectations shape behavior. Her explanation would be used by liberal policymakers in the 1960s when they discussed the culture of poverty—with values such as immediate gratification, a lack of future planning, a low priority given to education—developed in an environment of poverty and then was passed down to children.

Mead discussed the way in which a child's social interaction with his or her parents and peers passed down cultural values and determined his or her personality. Social interaction determined a person's expectations of what his or her role should be in the community and shaped his or her actions to achieve that role. Actions that led to punishment would be avoided, such as disobeying filial piety in Japan. Actions that were rewarded would be repeated, such as sharing with others in British culture. In short, expectations of rewards and reprimands shaped

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<sup>126</sup> Philip Bock, *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology: Continuity and Change in the Study of Human Action* (New York: Waveland Press, 1999), 53. (Emphasis in original)

behavior. A person's biological makeup or economic situation did not determine how he or she acted; social interactions and cultural expectations did.

Mead famously stated that adolescence does not necessarily need to be full of anxiety and stress. No biological reason existed for humans to experience stress during those years. Rather, it was the specific turn in Westerners' cultural values that caused the stress. Western society requires at that time that adolescents choose a career that will determine the remainder of their lives. This cultural expectation created stress and anxiety, not changes in the teenagers' bodies. Mead demonstrated that, by contrast, in Samoan society adolescence was a time of ease and relaxation.

Mead further explained her theory in a film entitled *Four Families*. The National Film Board of Canada released the film in 1950. Written and produced by Ian MacNeill, the film was intended to examine the way in which various cultures' style of childrearing created distinct personalities with behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations that manifested in nations' adults. MacNeill asked: "Does the way a baby gets its bath affect his character when he grows up? Making him too timid or aggressive? Can we take that a step further? Is the way a nation treats its children reflected in the national character of that nation, making it too timid or too aggressive? Or is it fair even to talk about national character?"<sup>127</sup> MacNeill interviewed Mead throughout the film and relied on her insights to answer his questions.

In the opening sequence of *Four Families* Mead explains:

Human beings are born with the ability to be a member of any society. Be it an Eskimo, or a Russian, or a Hottentot, or Japanese, or a Frenchmen, or Canadian. At birth, they are equally able to be any type of person. It depends on the way they are trained or taught, loved and punished, whether they turn into one type of person or another. So if we make a study of this. To find out the steps by which each baby becomes one type of grown-up person instead of another, we learn a great deal about it. But still the details of a bath, or the way the baby is fed, the way it's punished or rewarded, gives us a great many clues about the way character is formed.<sup>128</sup>

In *Four Families*, MacNeill used footage of families' childrearing styles in four nations, India, France, Japan, and Canada. Through the footage and discussions with Mead, he intended

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<sup>127</sup> *Four Families*, film, directed by Fali Bilimoria, William Novik, John Buss, Richard Gilbert. (Ottawa, Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 1959).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

to uncover the way in which different childrearing styles created distinct personalities, ultimately determining the nation's economic structure, political system, and social relations.

First Mead discussed the way in which an Indian mother gave her baby a bath. Mead claimed that the “mother was warm, took great care of the baby, but somehow didn't expect the baby to respond to her movements. She did things to it and for it. And it remained rather passive.”<sup>129</sup> Based on her observations of the bath, Mead suggested that adult Indians maintained the same relationship with the Indian government. They remained passive, waiting for policies to be done to them rather than independently and actively working to change their situation. Next, MacNeill and Mead observed a French family. Mead pointed out the French family's “emphasis on food, and the delights of eating and drinking, and later talking, [are] combined with a pattern of living in which the children are led to carry out obediently and precisely.”<sup>130</sup> She ascertains that this fascination with activities that involve the child's mouth are directly responsible for why adult Frenchmen and Frenchwomen possess superior oratory skills and a refined sense of taste for fine foods. Third, the Japanese family displayed an “alternation between discipline and indulgence” where the boy adhered to Spartan discipline at school but leniency at home.<sup>131</sup> In Japanese adults, this treatment manifested in a strong sense of duty and yielding to command, but also in a desire for impulse in private life. Lastly, in Canada Mead saw a “great deal of interest in the children being active, independent, self-reliant, learning not to show pain. Not to expect a lot of indulgence [and to] respect each other rights.”<sup>132</sup> She identifies these tendencies in childrearing to account for the same characteristics in Canadian adults.

Mead's contention that cultural values shape children's personalities, thereby creating characteristics in adults that are responsible for the nations' economic structure, political system, and social relations, presages an understanding and approach that would become of major importance to American liberal policymakers during the rediscovery of domestic poverty in the 1960s and the economic development of Third World nations during the Cold War. Mead and the school of culture and personality within postwar anthropology influenced several American liberals who began to understand the economic status of people and groups as being rooted in

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

their cultural values and personality rather than in biology, economic condition, or political system.

Those who addressed poverty in the 1960s used Mead's theories in a way that she never intended. Mead asserted that a researcher could compare cultures, but that all cultures must be understood based on their local context.<sup>133</sup> A researcher cannot equally apply oedipal fantasies, rejecting mothers, castration fears, initiatory rites, inner directedness, or mesomorphic emphases to all cultures.<sup>134</sup> A cultural value such as aggressiveness may be a strength in a competitive, individualistic society while a liability in a communal society. Men and women in the 1960s directly judged cultures as bad—the culture of poverty—or good without considering the local context. More, Mead argued that there should never be a single model used to evaluate all people around the world. Social Darwinists had done that using biological categories. Men and women who addressed poverty in the 1960s argued that all societies could be understood based on a single set of criteria. That is, based on a search for certain values, a single culture of poverty could be found in all societies around the world.

In addition to anthropology, psychologists in postwar period began to embrace a cultural understanding of psychological development. Mead earned a Master's degree in psychology in 1925. She argued in her thesis that Italian-American children's cultural and linguistic differences explained their lower scores on intelligence tests. Mead continued to use psychological insights in her work on anthropology. Her most influential book was *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (1928).<sup>135</sup> Anthropologists embraced insights from psychology and psychologists embraced anthropological insights. Watson claimed that by the late 1940s an international network of psychologists and anthropologists had formed including Mead, Benedict, Boas, Erik Erikson, Geoffrey Gorer, Gregory Bateson, Harry Stack Sullivan, and Meyer Fortes.<sup>136</sup> Throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s psychologists regularly encountered anthropologists' insights in articles published in the

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<sup>133</sup> Margaret Mead, "Theoretical Setting—1954," in *Childhood in Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1928).

<sup>136</sup> Watson, 277.

*Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, and *Character and Personality*.<sup>137</sup>

Erik Erickson was arguably the most influential psychologist in postwar America. He incorporated anthropological insights into his work and proposed a cultural understanding of how personality developed. Historian David Hollinger notes: “Never was psychoanalysis more popular among educated Americans than in the twenty years after World War II, and no psychoanalyst won a greater following during that era than Erik Erikson.”<sup>138</sup> Sociologist Robert Bellah confirmed that view: “If there is one book you can be sure undergraduates have read, it is Erikson’s first one. You can’t always be sure that they’ve read Shakespeare, but you know they’ve read Erikson.”<sup>139</sup>

Bellah was referring to Erikson’s first book, *Childhood and Society*.<sup>140</sup> Erikson’s book came out the same year as Mead’s *Four Families*. Mead and Erikson discussed their work with each other often.<sup>141</sup> Mead’s insights provided Erikson with a way in which to explain how personalities develop from their surrounding cultures. Erikson argued that a child’s cultural environment, including the style of parenting he or she experienced and the influence of peers, determined who the child would become as an adult. Social and cultural influences would shape the child’s personality, including his or her values, behavior, aspirations, and expectations. For example, a child who had a disciplinarian for a father might be forced to submit to harsh and capricious discipline, experience affectional deprivation, and suffer from feelings of rejection. He or she might develop hostility and aggression, which, if poorly channeled, could lead to hatred toward the world and the people in it. He or she might never develop the ability to openly share feelings, negotiate solutions with others, or benevolently solve a social problem. Conversely, Erikson explained, a different child with a disciplinarian for a father might develop the opposite personality. He or she might end up becoming an adult who valued compromise and

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<sup>137</sup> Bock, 58

<sup>138</sup> David Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds. *The American Intellectual Tradition 4th ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 298.

<sup>139</sup> Lawrence Jacob Friedman, *Identity’s Architect: A Biology of Erik H. Erikson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 396.

<sup>140</sup> Erik Erickson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1950).

<sup>141</sup> Erikson, 108, 320, 359, 417.

tolerance. He or she might not be inclined toward harshness and discipline toward his or her own offspring. Erikson's point was that parents' style of childrearing shaped the attitudes and behavior of their child throughout the rest of his or her life. The personality that resulted from specific childrearing styles could not be exactly predicted, but Erikson was sure that biology was not responsible.

Social scientists and makers of policy working on poverty in the 1960s used Erikson's insights to understand the way in which parents and peers acculturated children into the culture of poverty. His theories helped to explain the mechanism by which the culture of poverty passed down from generation to generation. In short, how the children of people in the culture of poverty could learn from their parents to distrust authority, value immediate gratification, seek personal gain over community needs, find planning for the future useless, doubt the value of education, and seek illegal routes to get money rather than follow lawful measures.

But, like Mead, Erikson had to overturn the prevailing theories that relied on biology to explain personality. Between about 1920 and 1950 the debate among psychologists whether biological makeup or cultural values accounted for each individual's personality reached an unprecedented level. Historian Richard Pells explains that psychology as a discipline attained a higher degree of authority in the decades immediately following WW II than at any previous time in American history.<sup>142</sup> Intellectuals and lay people alike trusted psychologists to explain behavior and action. In a way similar to the way in which the leading theories of development moved from the biologically based theories of Spencer, Gobineau, and Sumner to the culturally based theories of Weber, Veblen, Boas, Benedict, and Mead, the most influential theories in psychology explaining personality progressed from being biologically based before WW II to being culturally based after WW II.

One of the chief proponents of the influence of biology in psychology was Sigmund Freud. Freud, the most influential psychologist in America before WW II according to historian Ellen Herman, claimed that biology explained human behavior.<sup>143</sup> Psychologist David McClelland—who would be an influential expert in the Peace Corps—pointed out that “Freud

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<sup>142</sup> Richard Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*, 2nd ed. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 136-137.

<sup>143</sup> Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 115.

himself started out as a biologist and would, according to [serologist Hans] Sachs, have been a great research worker in this field, had his interest not turned to psychology.”<sup>144</sup>

Freud asserted that humans’ most powerful internal drives came from the biological instincts of sex and aggression. Freud dismissed the cultural and social impacts of personality as “latent,” and instead focused on biological drives. Freud called the source of the most primal and original of the biological drives the Id. Synonymous with untamed, raw animal instinct, the Id sought total physical gratification regardless of social and cultural circumstances. He acknowledged that humans did not simply conduct themselves like ferocious animals; people had internalized social and moral codes (which he named the Superego) that restricted humans’ biological drive. The world served as the battleground between the Id and Superego, in which the Ego (somewhere between the Id and Superego) attempted to mediate the two. Accordingly, Freud saw humans’ inner biological drives and the attempt to control them as the basis of psychology. He claimed: “Psychoanalysis is the instrument destined for the progressive conquest of the Id.”<sup>145</sup> He also viewed the attempt to control the Id as the rationale for people’s behavior and the basis for explaining their personality. Freud’s theory about stages of psychosexual development—including the stages of oral, anal, phallic, and genital—depended completely on a biological understanding of humans.<sup>146</sup>

Although Erikson was Freud’s last pupil in Vienna, Erikson remained unconvinced by his biological explanation that the Id accounted for some part of a person’s behavior. After WW II, Erikson used Mead’s insights to put forth a systematic theory of how personalities develop from infancy to adulthood.

Like Freud, Erikson developed universal normative stages of childhood development which some children timely met, thus maintaining “normal” development, while others fell behind. Erikson expanded Freud’s five-stage theory of psychosexual development into an eight-stage psychosocial theory of personality development. Mead’s influence on Erikson led him to emphasize the larger social and cultural forces, as well as the deeper psychological pressures, that children faced when growing up and trying to adapt to the world in which they lived. In each

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<sup>144</sup> David McClelland, *Personality* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), 12.

<sup>145</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Id and the Ego* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1923), 5.

<sup>146</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (Psychopathology of Everyday Life, the Interpretation of Dreams, and Three Contributions To the Theory of Sex)* (New York: Modern Library, 1995).

of his eight stages, he outlined conflicts that all humans must face. Children confronted the issues of “trust vs. mistrust,” “autonomy vs. shame,” “initiative vs. guilt,” and “industry vs. inferiority.”<sup>147</sup> Adolescence dealt with “identity vs. diffusion.”<sup>148</sup> Finally, as adults, humans faced “intimacy vs. isolation,” “generativity vs. stagnation,” and “integrity vs. despair.”<sup>149</sup>

In the first stage, trust is achieved by realizing that a person or item continues to exist although it may not directly be visible. Hide and seek exhibits this process. The baby must trust that a person’s face still exists although it temporarily disappears behind his or her hands. More importantly, the baby must trust that his or her mother will return although she may not always be visible. Erikson writes: “The infant’s first social achievement, then, is his willingness to let the mother out of sight without undue anxiety or rage, because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability.”<sup>150</sup> In the second stage, a person achieves autonomy by recognizing that he or she is separate from other people and can act based on his or her own will. Once an infant establishes autonomy, he or she attains initiative by learning to plan, act, and complete a task outside of others’ control. If the mother prevents the child by controlling him or her, or siblings complete the task first, a child feels guilt. Guilt comes from either not completing the task first or contemplating action without the mother’s permission to act alone. As with previous stages, all depends on upon interacting with other people, not controlling inner biological drives.

In the fourth stage, occurring between ages six and eleven, the child attains industry over inferiority by producing things outside of personal play. Children learn skills at school from teachers and older children to become industrious. Erikson writes that “this is socially a most decisive stage: since industry involves doing things beside and with others.”<sup>151</sup>

Erikson asserted that adolescence was the pivotal moment in a person’s psychological development, not early childhood as Freud argued. In Erikson’s pivotal stage of identity versus role confusion adolescents share “primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 247-260.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 261-263.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 264-268.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 260.



roles and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day.”<sup>152</sup> A youth must ensure that “the inner sameness of continuity prepared in the past [is] matched by the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others, as evidenced in the tangible promise of a career.”<sup>153</sup> In short, a child must align previously developed skills and abilities with a career available in society so that he or she can fulfill others’ expectations. For example, if a girl possesses the skill to compute numbers superior to all other children in her class, she may become a mathematician or physicist. Others know her as talented at math and expect her to choose a career that aligns with her skill set. By comparing herself with others, she recognized her mathematical abilities and searches for a career that satisfies her self-identification and expectations she feels from others.

Erikson’s final three stages, which occur in adulthood, also depend upon social interactions. An adult achieves intimacy by fusing “his identity with that of others” through concrete affiliations and partnerships.<sup>154</sup> Marriage is an example. In the seventh stage generativity is achieved by “establishing and guiding the next generation.”<sup>155</sup> In the final stage an adult acquires ego integrity by accepting his or her role in the world and continues to fulfill that role until death.

What is important to note is that Erikson agreed with Freud that humans’ common biological development determined the onset of each stage, but Erikson’s major advancement was to assert that a positive or negative resolution to the crisis of each stage was determined by a person’s social and cultural environment. Erikson’s emphasis on culture and personality led him to highlight the benign and malign cultural forces impinging on a person’s psychological development. Erikson stated: “What the regression and growing, rebelling and maturing youths are now primarily concerned with is who and what they are in the eyes of a wider circle of significant people as compared with what they themselves have come to feel they are; and how to connect the dreams, idiosyncrasies, roles, and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational and sexual prototypes of the day.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 307.

Whereas Freud wrote about inner biological drives in books about the individual such as *The Id and the Ego* (1923), Erikson wrote on a person's interaction with others within his or her community in his major work *Childhood and Society* (1950). In short, Freud focused on the inner Id and Erikson on the outer society. Directly contrasting his theory with Freud's, he continued: "To condense it into a formula: the patient of today suffers most under the problem of what he should believe in and who he should—or, indeed, might—be or become; while the patient of early psychoanalysis suffered most under inhibitions which prevented him from being what and who he thought he knew he was."<sup>157</sup>

A person's behavior stemmed not from conquering biological drives in the form of the Id; rather they came from a person's attempt to satisfy others' expectations of who he or she was and should become. Expectations came from the larger cultural values. A person in a culture that valued violence might act violently to satisfy the expectations of others and align behavior with what he or she sees in the larger community. Violence is not to conquer others and attain the power needed to satisfy the Id; rather a response to the larger cultural expectations on which a person models his or her behavior.

Within the War on Poverty in the 1960s policymakers used Erikson's insights to explain how a person acquired his or her personality from the culture in which he or she lived. In *The Other America*—the book that Kennedy read to start a paradigm shift—Michael Harrington explained that "within the slum, violence and disturbance are often norms, everyday facts of life. From the inside of the other America, joining a 'bopping' gang may well not seem like deviant behavior. It could be a necessity for dealing with a hostile world."<sup>158</sup> In short, violence and aggressiveness became norms in the jobless culture and environment of the ghetto.

Accordingly, if a person lived in a culture of poverty, his or her child was born into the environment. Over the course of the child's life, he or she got exposed to parents and peers (each potentially with values from a culture of poverty) and adopted the values of those groups. Parents actually passed the culture of poverty, with all its behaviors, values, and methods of dealing with the world, down to the next generation. They instilled values and behaviors that handicapped the next generation from escaping poverty. Children would acquire the cultural perspective and way

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Touchstone, 1962), 127.

of life from their parents that there was little chance of future success. Parents would not preach the need for a full high school education, much less college. Those avenues to opportunity would not open up. Instead, parents would model the behavior they developed from poverty and blockages to opportunity. More than children living in a culture of poverty and acquiring its values from their parents and peers, the children actually developed personalities distinctly shaped by poverty and antithetical to prosperity and upward mobility.

The postwar conception of culture and personality convinced American liberal policymakers that they could direct change. Conceptions of personality that relied on biology left little room for short-term change, psychosocial theories using culture to understand difference made rapid change seem possible.<sup>159</sup> Accordingly, debates about the relative power of culture and biology were not completely new. However, the debate became particularly important in the 1960s because it shaped the way in which liberal policymakers attempted to achieve their political goals of spurring economic development in the Third World and alleviating poverty in America by shaping individuals' cultural values and developing their personalities.

In addition to the intellectual shift in anthropology and psychology toward seeing culture as the main determinant of individual and social values, the embrace within sociology of the theory of subculture would prove vitally important to social scientists' understanding of the culture of poverty in the 1960s. Anthropologists looked at cultures as a whole, psychologists looked at the impact of culture on the individual, and sociologists looked at the power of groups to create and maintain distinct subcultures. For psychologists' studies, the subculture formed the cultural environment with influences that determined a person's personality. For the anthropologist, a subculture marked a distinct manifestation of the national culture that determined behavior and expectations. The theory of subcultures would validate an enduring culture of poverty—itsself a subculture—that existed separate from America's middle- and upper-class cultures.

Several attributes could distinguish a subculture, including age (e.g., a gang of juvenile delinquents), sex (e.g., men), religion (e.g., Catholics), occupation (e.g., lawyers), class (e.g., the super-rich), and ethnic group (e.g., Italian Americans). Each subculture could hold unique

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<sup>159</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, "From Social Darwinism to Current Theories of Modernization: A Tradition of Analysis," *World Politics* 21:1 (Oct 1968): 75.

values. For example, money was important to various subcultures for different reasons: juvenile delinquents could look at money as something to steal and immediately spend; men could see it as a sign of status; Catholics as something to donate; lawyers as reparations for unlawful behavior; the super-rich as a distinguishing feature; and Italians as something worth saving.

The emergence of attention to subcultures was also important to the War on Poverty. The concept of subcultures explained that groups held tenacious sets of alternative values that were not easily changed. Men were unlikely to lose their masculinity, delinquents were unlikely to start valuing the law, Catholics were unlikely to stop valuing piety, and the poor in the slum were unlikely to adopt the cultural values of the affluent in the suburbs.

Sociologists created the concept of subculture to define groups based on a psychological mindset rather than the typical methods used in national censuses, including income, age, race, and gender. For example, sociologists focused less on the ethnic make-up of men in a community and more on the behavior of those men when interacting with others in the community. How did these men view family compared to work, religion to social groups, and violence to legal recourse. Sociologists cared less about the number of Italian-Americans, and more about their values, behaviors, and attitudes. How did second-generation Italian-Americans simultaneously function in the social world of their immigrant parents and the new country? Accordingly, sociologists breathed new life into old categories by conceiving of them in a new and unprecedented way. More than that, they created and studied new categories such as the ghetto, the gang, and the organized-crime family.

The concept of subculture rapidly gained academic influence after WW II. In 1947, sociologist Milton Gordon pointed out that the term subculture “has apparently not been extensive enough to merit it a place in the Dictionary of Sociology”<sup>160</sup> He claimed: “A great deal could be gained by a more extensive use of the concept of the sub-culture, a concept used here to refer to a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations such as class status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residence, and religious affiliation, but forming in their combination a functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individual.”<sup>161</sup> However, by 1960, sociologist J. Milton Yinger could

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<sup>160</sup> Milton M. Gordon, “The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Oct., 1947), 40.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

claim: “Current sociological work makes extensive use of the concept of subculture—in the analysis of delinquency, adolescence, regional and class differences, religious sects, occupational styles, and other topics.”<sup>162</sup> The two quotations illustrate that the theory of subcultures gained influence within a few short years after WW II.

As Gordon saw it, the theory of subculture challenged studies of national character by uncovering the myriad of distinct cultures within any given national culture. In WW II anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, historians, political scientists undertook the task of uncovering national characters. They sought to determine the common values, expectations, attitudes, and behaviors shared by all members of a particular nation. For example, Germans required strong authoritarian leaders, and British specialists on Asia referred to the Japanese as the “obedient herd” who lacked individuality and self-direction.<sup>163</sup> According to historian Ellen Herman, studies claimed that, since “Individuals embodied their culture and cultures embodied the collective personality of their people, national character offered a way or turning psychological insight into policy directives.”<sup>164</sup> In the context of WW II, the material on national cultures could be used to emphasize allied nations’ strengths and exploit Axis nations’ weaknesses.

Studies of national character were not limited to foreign countries. Margaret Mead, in *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*, used the same anthropological techniques that she had developed in Samoa and New Guinea to examine American character. She concluded that Americans had a “cult of success,” fluid class structure, a high level of mobility, and “willingness to tackle any new task, learn any new skill, quickly, easily, without deep involvement.”<sup>165</sup>

Mead’s description of the average hard-working, versatile, and upwardly mobile citizen appeared to Americans to have great merit as the United States won WW II and emerged into an age of affluence. But the characterization did not last unquestioned for long. By the mid-

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<sup>162</sup> J. Milton Yinger, “Counterculture and Subculture,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (Oct., 1960).

<sup>163</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 218.

<sup>164</sup> Herman, 34.

<sup>165</sup> Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America, Volume 2* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 141.

1950s a national wide-spread panic over juvenile delinquency gripped American.<sup>166</sup> Movies such as *On the Loose* (1951), *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) *Live Fast, Die Young* (1958), *High School Hellcats* (1958), and *Date Bait* (1959) portrayed the dangers of delinquency. Music stores sold out of Elvis Presley with his gyrating hips and bookstores copies of *Catcher in the Rye* with its phony-disparaging Holden Caulfield.<sup>167</sup> Social critics feared that juvenile delinquents were not hard-working, balked at versatility, and never moved up socially. They appeared to enjoy their low status, shun professional lives, and embrace violence and immediate gratification.

Within sociology, descriptions of “the” American culture became logically unacceptable as sociologists began to examine subcultures. Juvenile delinquents formed a subculture and appeared to live by a distinct set of values. Sociologists often compared and contrasted delinquents’ culture with that of the American middle class. The subculture of delinquency inhabited the same geographical region and shared many of the same values as the middle-class culture, but it differed markedly in its goals and the methods to achieve them. Both the middle-class culture and a culture of gang delinquency valued money, but the subculture of delinquency viewed it as an occasional luxury to spend immediately, not as a steady income. Both middle-class culture and subculture valued youth, but the mainstream did so for beauty, health, and promise, whereas the subculture of delinquency did to recruit, socialize, and exploit. In short, sociologists came to accept subculture as a useful concept.

The sociological focus on the subculture of juvenile delinquency was vitally important because it most directly contributed to the War on Poverty. Assistant Director of the Community Action Program Frederick Hayes succinctly stated: “What essentially happened was that the juvenile delinquency program thinking was subsumed into Community Action thinking by subsuming the main thinkers of the juvenile delinquency program.”<sup>168</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s sociologists including Walter B. Miller, Richard Cloward, and Lloyd Ohlin wrote pioneering studies about subcultures of delinquency. Those studies formed the intellectual

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166 James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6.

167 Ibid.

168 Michale L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 87.

foundation for Mobilization for Youth, a governmental program to combat delinquency. Cloward served as the unit's Director of Research while both Ohlin and Miller served as subject-matter experts. In 1963 Kennedy called on Cloward and Ohlin to help to create a national war on poverty. Cloward and Ohlin expanded their program from solely focusing on juvenile delinquency to combating all forms of poverty.

Studies of juvenile delinquency as a subculture were vitally important to the War on Poverty in the 1960s for many reasons. First, as with other studies of subcultures, sociologists argued that the subculture of delinquents shared similarities to the middle-class culture but differed in important ways. Delinquents' attitudes toward money and youth demonstrated these alternative values. Second, the subculture of delinquency had tenacious values that were unlikely to change easily. A six-month sentence in jail, seven-month probation, or class on being self-sufficient would not likely transform the delinquent into a law-abiding citizen. The problem resided deeper in the psychology of the delinquent. Third, and most importantly, sociologists' studies of juvenile delinquency influenced the War on Poverty by providing an explanation of how subcultures develop. Social scientists and policymakers in the War on Poverty took as a given that a subculture of poverty existed, but they did not immediately recognize how that culture had developed. Studies of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s provided that answer.

In brief, sociologists argued that the structure of the economy prevented certain segments of the population from gaining economic mobility, and hence they formed certain cultural values as adaptations to their situation. In the case of delinquents, they shared the American values of upward mobility and success. However, they often suffered from a poor education in run-down inner-city schools. If he or she earned a degree—which fewer than 50% did in the 1950s—few jobs awaited.<sup>169</sup> As more people fled to the suburbs, the inner city became increasingly dilapidated and void of jobs. The inner-city kid competed for increasingly difficult-to-attain jobs with a sub-par education. Accordingly, he or she could not attain the valued upward mobility or success. He or she more likely worked a low-paying, part-time job. Without the ability to obtain their goals legally, a person might give up and accept his or her fate in poverty. Or he or she might try to acquire money and success through illegal means, including stealing cars,

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<sup>169</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 67.

racketeering, robbery, burglary, defrauding, and swindling others. When people lived and worked with others in these illegal ventures, a subculture of delinquency developed that indoctrinated newcomers and fixed those who had succeeded in the alternative lifestyle of crime.

The major point was that the decision to commit crime was a personal choice, but the situation that led the person to that crux was not. The structure of the economy—including few well-paying jobs—created an environment that blocked opportunities to escape poverty. Stuck in that environment, an alternative set of values developed from each person's adaption to his or her situation. An alternative culture, or subculture, developed that might have shared the same values as the middle-class (such as the quest for financial success, social distinction, and upward mobility) but sought to attain them in limited number of possible ways. A delinquent was a person who developed a distinct lifestyle from high aspirations but limited opportunities.

This situation was not limited to inner-city kids. Rural Americans, too, often suffered the same fate of poor education and few career options. In the 1960s, when the concept was universalized in the worldwide fight against poverty, policymakers saw the same situation abroad. The poor in Manila and in the countryside of Luzon suffered from limited opportunities and adapted their lives, values, and behaviors to survive in an economically static region.

As with the emphasis on culture in anthropology and psychosocial development in psychology, the theory of subcultures resulted from intense academic debate over several decades. Fellow sociologists proposed opposing explanations of delinquency that conflicted with all three of the areas that would be crucial to the War on Poverty—that subcultures resulted from blocked opportunities that created a tenacious set of alternative values.

In the 1930s, Chicago-based sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued that poverty and crime resulted from disorganization suffered by communities attempting to integrate new groups of people—such as immigrant groups or African Americans heading north in the Great Migration for job opportunities during World War I.<sup>170</sup> Frazier asserted that the movement of these new groups into the community pushed the population up faster than jobs could be created for the new arrivals. Those without jobs fell into poverty and committed crimes, and their children took part in juvenile delinquency. No subculture or alternative set of values existed. All crime and poverty came only because the economy had not yet adjusted to reintegrate

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<sup>170</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (New York: Dryden Press, 1939).



newcomers. The situation was purely economic. Herman writes that Frazier “consistently attributed causal status to economic over psychological processes....Personal and even cultural factors were, in comparison, relatively insignificant.”<sup>171</sup> The economy needed to adjust, not the people. The people did not form alternative systems of values as an adaptation to a life of poverty. Those values were not the source of their continued poverty and lawlessness. Rather, Frazier viewed the best remedy as creating employment so newcomers could function as reliable breadwinners and contributing members of the community. Once the newcomers secured jobs, they would easily become productive members of society, shed delinquent behavior, and conduct their lives by the working community’s shared values.

Sociologist Frederick Thrasher wrote a major study of juvenile delinquency prior to World War II.<sup>172</sup> In his 1927 study, entitled *The Gang*, Thrasher explained delinquency as boys satisfying needs within an environment weakly controlled by adults. Thrasher claimed that, like everyone else in society, delinquent boys wanted security, response, recognition, and new experience.<sup>173</sup> In an environment that suffered from disorganization and weak family and neighborhood controls, young boys spontaneously organized into play groups. The groups participated in new and exciting adventures. Sociologist David Bordua points out that “they swipe fruit from peddlers, turn over garbage cans, stay away from home all night and steal milk and cakes for breakfast, [and] play truant from school.”<sup>174</sup> As the boys grew older and came into conflict with other play groups in areas with a high concentration of people and limited community resources, the boys formed gangs. Thrasher claims that the boys viewed delinquency as fun and excitement compared with the dull and boring lifestyle of proper schoolboys. Their acts did not come because they had no opportunities or because they were in a subculture with a tenacious alternative set of values. The actions came because the boys in the gangs wanted to have fun. Their excessively open environment enabled the boys to fulfill their desire for action, adventure, and delinquency.

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<sup>171</sup> Herman, 188.

<sup>172</sup> Frederick M. Thrasher, *The Gang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927).

<sup>173</sup> David J. Bordua, “Delinquent Subcultures: Sociological Interpretations of Gang Delinquency,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 338 (Nov: 1961), 123.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

After World War II, sociologists started to incorporate psychological and anthropological insights into studies of delinquency. Many sociologists, including Albert Cohen, had worked with psychologists and anthropologists during the war.<sup>175</sup> Cohen, in *Delinquent Boys*, argued that lower-class boys suffered from a sense of inadequacy and low self-esteem because they could not meet the “middle class measuring rod” of their teachers and community members.<sup>176</sup> According to Cohen, the middle class’s pattern of values “places great emphasis on ambition as a cardinal virtue, individual responsibility, the cultivation and possession of skills, the ability to postpone gratification, rationality, the rational cultivation of manners, the control of physical aggression and violence, the wholesome and constructive use of leisure, and respect for property.”<sup>177</sup> The lower-class boy’s parents projected their failed aspirations onto him and failed to socialize him into these values. More than that, the lower-class boy could not economically compete with his middle-class classmates and repeatedly experienced failures while watching others experience success. When a number of lower-class boys with common problems and issues of adjustment interacted with each other, a subculture developed. The individual failure, sense of inadequacy, low self-esteem combined into a collective way of life of the lower-class group. Cohen argues that the delinquent subculture developed with alternative values. Its members were

more likely to show restricted aspirations, a live-for-today orientation toward consumption, a moral view which emphasizes reciprocity within the kin and other primary groups and correlatively less concern with abstract rules which apply across or outside of such particularistic circumstances. In addition, the working class child is less likely to be surrounded with educational toys, less likely to be trained in a family regimen of order, neatness, and punctuality. Of particular importance is the fact that physical aggression is more prevalent and more valued in the working class milieu.<sup>178</sup>

Compared to Frazier’s unemployed immigrants seeking work and Thrasher’s carefree kids looking for adventure, Cohen sees a destructive, malicious, and self-deprecating group of social misfits. Cohen views delinquency as the result of psychological issues that are transformed through the medium of a group into an alternative set of values. Neither jobs nor adventure could

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<sup>175</sup> Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), 25, 26.

<sup>176</sup> Cohen, 88.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

stop such delinquency. The issues resided deeper. It was in the psychology of the individual and the culture of the subgroup.

The values within Cohen's subculture of delinquents were nearly identical to those social scientists and policymakers would associate with poverty in the 1960s. Whereas Cohen determined that delinquents valued immediate gratification, lacked punctuality, and resorted to violence, social scientists in the 1960s considered all poor people to hold such views. However, Cohen also identified low-self esteem as the causal factor leading to the subculture, but social scientists and policymakers in the 1960s identified blocked opportunities as the root of the problem.

Sociologist Walter B. Miller first linked a lower-class system of values to blocked opportunities.<sup>179</sup> Miller, in "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," argued that the values of the poor developed from the local community, not from a feeling of inadequacy when being compared with the middle class.<sup>180</sup> Miller asserted: "In the case of 'gang' delinquency, the cultural system which exerts the most direct influences on behavior is that of the lower class community itself—a long-established, distinctively patterned tradition with an integrity of its own—rather than a so-called 'delinquent sub-culture' which has arisen through conflict with middle class culture and is oriented to the deliberate violation of middle class norms."<sup>181</sup> Rather than simply an aberration of the American middle-class culture, Miller argued, it signified a "set of practices, focal concerns, and way of behaving that are meaningfully and systematically related to one another."<sup>182</sup> He continued: "From these extremely diverse and heterogeneous origins (with, however, certain common features), there is emerging a relatively homogeneous and stabilized native-American lower class culture."<sup>183</sup> The focal concerns of

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<sup>179</sup> Another major sociologist was Robert Merton, "Social-Cultural Environment and Anomie," in *New Perspectives for Research on Juvenile Delinquency: A Report on a Conference on the Relevance and Interrelations of Certain Concepts from Sociology and Psychiatry for Delinquency*, U.S Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Children's Bureau (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1955).

<sup>180</sup> Walter B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1958): 5-19.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>182</sup> Quoted in Gilbert, 137.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted in David Bordua, "Delinquent Subcultures: Sociological Interpretations of Gang Delinquency," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 338, *Teen-Age Culture* (Nov., 1961): 127.

trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy made up lower-class culture. Trouble is what life gets you into. Toughness is physical prowess, masculinity, fearlessness, bravery, and daring. Smartness is the ability to “con” others. Excitement comes from fighting foes and fleeing cops. Fate is the belief that life is controlled by forces out of your control. Finally, autonomy is the ability to remain free of legal sanctions.<sup>184</sup>

Such behavior stemmed from lower-class female-centered households in which children lacked a masculine role model who could guide them through what Erikson explicitly called their adolescent “identity crisis.” Confused teenagers often turned to gangs for structure and guidance. He concluded that delinquency was not itself a subculture. Rather, it was the product of the all-embracing lower-class culture. Lower-class culture remained deep inside “tenement holes of the big, dirty, and deteriorating city, so recently abandoned by those who have escaped to suburbia.”<sup>185</sup> Thus, he argued, juvenile delinquency was the manifestation of values inherent in the lower-class cultural milieu that Americans were anxious to shed as they moved to the suburbs and embraced middle-class values.

In the 1950s anthropologists came to embrace culture over biology to explain human differences in the world, psychologists supported social influences over biological drives, and sociologists focused on the subgroup over the national or mainstream. Scholars seeking to explain the development of the Third World also experienced an intellectual shift. Their new approach became known as modernization theory. The men and women who created the theory, known as modernization theorists, asserted that lesser-developed nations resulted from traditional cultures rather than biological or economic reasons. In short, when a country industrialized, the institutions of the society mattered less than the attitudes and values of its people.

Modernization theory was the intellectual foundation for the Peace Corps. In 1961 Kennedy started the Peace Corps to help Third World countries industrialize. After reading Dwight Macdonald’s review of Michael Harrington’s book, Kennedy initiated the paradigm shift by inviting members of the Peace Corps to meet with experts on domestic poverty and delinquency. Together, they completed the paradigm shift by unifying foreign poverty and

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>185</sup> Miller, 15.

domestic poverty within a single concept. Previously the experts on domestic and foreign poverty separately believed that their problems resulted from cultural values, but together they came to realize that they both were addressing a single issue, the culture of poverty. A single phenomenon, the culture of poverty, manifested in juvenile delinquency and poverty in America and in a lack of industrialization in the Third World.

As with the triumph of culture over biology in anthropology, social factors over biological drives in psychology, and subcultures over national character in sociology, the cultural explanation within modernization theory had to displace previous models. The Point Four Program immediately preceded the emergence of modernization theory and the founding of the Peace Corps. In his inaugural address on January 20, 1949, President Harry S. Truman announced “a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”<sup>186</sup> It signaled the first time that U. S. policymakers championed the economic development of the Third World as a strategy within the Cold War.

The policymakers who shaped Point Four, including Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and U.S. Ambassador to India Chester Bowles, were convinced that Germany’s interwar economic tribulations had caused World War II. Truman, Acheson, and Bowles believed that economic stagnation was the principle cause of war. Acheson articulated the program’s aim as the “use of material means to a non-material end.”<sup>187</sup> He thought that global peace and democracy could be achieved if the United States successfully used the Point Four Program to spur economic improvement and raise the standards of living within Third World nations.

They designed the program based on the economic ideas of John Maynard Keynes, who had argued that government spending in agriculture, education, and health would stimulate and

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<sup>186</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Inaugural Address,” 1949; available from <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1030&st=inaugural&st1=>; Internet; accessed February 4, 2008.

<sup>187</sup> Dean Acheson, “Transcription of Extemporaneous Remarks by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Concerning Point 4 of the President’s Inaugural Address, at His Press Conference, January 26, 1949,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Vol. 1, National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1976), 758.

improve the economy. All projects within Point Four focused on improvement in each of these areas to lay the foundation for industrialization.

Those who shaped Point Four intended the program to provide technical assistance to improve the quality of food, health, and education in a given Third World nation. American experts would provide the training and education so that workers could effectively build modern structures and manage modern techniques and operations. Activities varied widely from exhibitions to expose the Bolivians to the current literature on growing corn in their region and projects meant to offer an elementary-level education to Iranians living in rural areas, to building a medical school in Burma and demonstrating the way in which to use DDT to kill Anopheles mosquitoes and control malaria in Indonesia.<sup>188</sup> Typically each project focused on a single field, such as education or agriculture. Policymakers agreed that an investment in agriculture, education, and health and sanitation would accelerate Third World nations toward industrialization by creating literate workers, healthy citizens, and money for developers from selling agricultural surpluses.

Truman, Acheson, and Bowles failed to recognize the cultural and psychological dimensions of development, which put them out of line with emerging trends in psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The Point Four program had moderate success, but President Eisenhower ended it. During the interim period between the end of Point Four in 1953 and the inauguration of the Peace Corps in 1961, social scientists created modernization theory.

Modernization theory became an important analytical tool to conceptualize change in the Third World. As opposed to rebuilding societies that had already attained industrialization, as was done with the Marshall Plan, or focusing exclusively on economic factors, as with Point Four, modernization theorists concentrated on creating a total theory that encapsulated the entire arc of economic, political, social, psychological, and cultural changes that occurred during development from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial one. Aware that a colonial relationship subordinating nations on the periphery to the West was impossible in the

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<sup>188</sup> Jonathan B. Bingham, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomacy: Point 4 in Action* (New York: The John Day Company, 1953), 86, 109, 114; Department of Public Affairs, "The Importance of Scientific and Technical Books and Magazines in the Point Four Program" (College Park, MD: Dec. 1951), in *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, Vol. 27, The Point Four Program: Reaching Out to Help the Less Developed Countries*, ed. Dennis Merrill (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1999), 705-726.

post-colonial setting that emerged after World War II, modernization theorists sought to create an amicable bond based on consent. Among the ranks of modernization theorists were political scientists such as Lucian Pye and Cyril Black, sociologists including Daniel Lerner and Talcott Parsons, university presidents such as Clark Kerr, and economists such as Walt Rostow and Max Millikan. Although each modernization theorist constructed a distinct theory of development, they all centered on the same fundamental principles. All posited that societies develop along a common path from an agrarian-based traditional society to an industrial-based modern one. All agreed that the transition entailed change in technology, bureaucratic institutions, and social and political structures. More importantly for the paradigm shift initiated by Kennedy, all modernization theorists agreed that cultural and psychological differences primarily accounted for why some nations were poor while others were rich.

Theorists who were convinced that all societies develop along a common path and converge at the exact same final model, known as modern society, were interested in what modernization theorist Daniel Lerner called “the historical sequence of Western growth.”<sup>189</sup> Lerner argued in 1964 that the “same basic model reappears in virtually all modernizing societies on all continents of the world, regardless of variations in race, color, creed.”<sup>190</sup> Only culture differed.

Modernization theorists divided the world into categories of countries with traditional cultures and countries with modern cultures. They claimed that people with traditional cultural values modeled their behavior on their parents and local ways rather than on universal standards. They adhered to religious precepts when making both individual and collective decisions rather than relying on secular “rational” choices. They were unable or unwilling to adapt to any changes—professional or personal—in their lives. Traditional society was stratified along social and gender lines and respected age over merit. Few members of society participated in politics.<sup>191</sup> In contrast, people within modern cultures were open and willing to change, sought

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189 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, with an introduction by David Riesman (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1958; The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 46.

190 Ibid.

191 C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 9-25; Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 19-32.

technological advancement, respected achievement over ascription, adhered to universal standards of conduct, and actively participated in the political system.

Modernization theorists argued that cultural values determined the success of industrialization. Although industrialization could be imposed on traditional societies, modern cultural values could not. Modernization theorists claimed that previous theories about development—including those of Truman, Acheson, and Bowles—lacked a method to account for cultural values and non-rational individuals. Talcott Parsons and Walt Rostow argued that non-rational cultural propensities existed within each society and that these propensities dictated the penetration and effectiveness of industrialization. According to Rostow societies without the propensities to consume, accept innovations, seek material advance, or apply science for economic ends had little chance of achieving economic modernity.<sup>192</sup> Historian Nils Gilman has explained that Rostow believed that “the economies of these largely peasants societies were inseparable from local cultures, social structures, and political institutions.”<sup>193</sup> Theorists agreed with neo-classical economists that economic growth was vital to development, but, if they were to confidently direct growth, they required a theory that would account for non-economic factors that hindered or stimulated growth.<sup>194</sup> Lucian Pye explained that “economic criteria are not unimportant and certainly should not be casually disregarded, but they are not adequate for. . . . our policy toward the underdeveloped areas.”<sup>195</sup> Theorists required an omni-disciplinary approach to measure modernity, one that understood development as a conceptual whole including cultural, psychological, economic, and social factors.

Psychologist David McClelland was a modernization theorist who placed particular emphasis on the impact of personality traits on economic development. In *The Achieving Society*, McClelland searched for a universal characteristic that could explain each country’s level of economic development. He studied Germany, Japan, England, India, Brazil, and the United States and argued that each country’s level of economic development directly corresponded to

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<sup>192</sup> Kimber Charles Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 40; Gilman, 162.

<sup>193</sup> Gilman, 82.

<sup>194</sup> Neo-classical economists include Neo-classical economists such as W.S. Jevons, Carl Menger, Leon Walras, Friedrich von Wieser, Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk, and J.B. Clark.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.



its citizens' need for achievement or "*n* Achievement."<sup>196</sup> He asserted that democracy, self-reliance, success, competitiveness, and entrepreneurship directly derived from the achievement-oriented type of personality. If a given country's citizens had enough *n* Achievement, the country would prosper; without it, the country would become impoverished and even risk slipping backward into underdevelopment. McClelland located the source of *n* Achievement in childrearing practices and the mother-son relationship. Mothers who balanced warmth and high expectations and applied just the right amount of pressure to achieve would create the proper competitive and acquisitive economic drive. For McClelland, everything revolved around the formative period of childhood. He wrote: "It may come as something of a shock to realize that more could have been learned about the rate of future economic growth...by reading elementary school books than by studying such presumably more relevant matters as power politics, wars and depressions, economic statistics, or governmental policies governing international trade, taxation or public finance."<sup>197</sup>

A modernization theorist who directly used Erikson's psychosocial model was political scientist Lucian Pye. In *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya and Politics* (1956), and *Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (1962), Pye argued that the Malaysian and Burmese leaders lacked a clear national identity, a deficiency that made them emotionally unstable and therefore susceptible to communist subversion.<sup>198</sup> Equating the leaders with at-risk American adolescents suffering an identity crisis, seeing them as being vulnerable to bad influences, Pye asserted that the United States should serve as a role model, similar to a teenager's family, to guide Third World leaders in forming a strong and healthy national identity. Pye was not alone. Several fellow theorists argued that the colonial "mother" country or Western family of nations could properly guide and "raise" newly independent nations—treating them like adolescences—and avoid Third World revolution and rebellion, akin to domestic juvenile

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<sup>196</sup> David McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961).

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>198</sup> Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: Its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956); Lucian Pye, *Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

delinquency.<sup>199</sup> For Pye, gaining the advantage in the Third World entailed more than economic development; it required the emotional management of nation's leaders and citizens to ensure proper psychological development and well-being to thwart communist subversion which fed on psychological insecurity and concomitant aggression and frustration.

McClelland and Pye placed more emphasis on psychological factors than the majority of their fellow modernization theorists. However, their ideas served as examples of the shift in the approach to the development of the Third World that came to embrace cultural and psychological factors as the chief cause of difference in the world. Modernization theorists' ideas aligned with the shifts occurring in other social sciences. Anthropologists embraced culture over biology. Psychologists focused on social influences over biological drives. Sociologists studied subcultures rather than national characters. Taken together, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and interdisciplinary theories of development made possible a new way to understand people's behavior and why difference existed around the world. Although each area influenced the others to a certain degree, all four would not be brought together until Kennedy initiated a paradigm shift. The new ideas in the social sciences independently filtered into separate programs. Modernization theory formed the intellectual foundation for the Peace Corps. The new theories in sociology and psychology shaped the Mobilization for Youth. Anthropology, psychology, and sociology informed the Gray Areas Program. Once Macdonald's review of Harrington inspired Kennedy to address poverty, Kennedy brought together policymakers from foreign and domestic programs as well as social scientists from anthropology, sociology, and psychology. As all of these men and women began to discuss the problem of poverty, they realized that they had all been addressing separate manifestations of a single culture of poverty. The paradigm shift initiated by Kennedy unified the conception of poverty all over the world. The cultural approach

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<sup>199</sup> Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, with an introduction by David Riesman (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1958; The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, eds., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); C.E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966); Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, with a forward by Ian Buruma (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).

would serve as the logic and foundation of several programs that would directly influence the War on Poverty and the universal approach to poverty that Kennedy started, Johnson continued, and Shriver fulfilled.

## **Chapter 3 - “Substitute Hope for Hopelessness”: Mobilization for Youth, Peace Corps, and the Gray Areas Program**

As the Democratic candidate in the Presidential election of 1960, John F. Kennedy promised to “get America moving again.” Once he became President, Kennedy promised to act on the most pressing issues facing Americans. Three of those issues were the expansion of communism, juvenile delinquency, and the economic decay of urban centers. Kennedy’s administration created a program to address each issue. Kennedy, Sargent Shriver, Walt Rostow, and Max Millikan created the Peace Corps to develop the Third World and prevent the expansion of communism. Robert Kennedy, Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin, and Walter Miller designed the Mobilization for Youth (MFY) to reduce juvenile delinquency. Finally, Paul Ylvisaker, Kermit Gordon, and Adam Yarmolinsky intended the Gray Areas Program to revitalize run-down inner-city neighborhoods. This chapter argues three things. First, all three programs developed independently from each other. Second, those who shaped all three programs explained the plight of their target groups by using the social scientific theories that had developed in the 1950s. Third, and arguably most important, those setting policy for each program, even though working independently, created community development projects intended to change people’s cultural values as the means for them to overcome their respective problems.

Policymakers created and developed each program independently in 1961 and 1962. In February 1962, after reading Dwight Macdonald’s review of Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*, Kennedy started to bring together members of each program to discuss poverty. As these men began to discuss poverty, they realized that they had all been addressing separate manifestations of a single culture of poverty. The traditional values of people within the Third World were international examples of the culture of poverty. Juvenile delinquents’ values of immediate gratification, physical aggression, and restricted aspiration came less from a subculture of delinquency envisioned as something that was not simply economic and more from an overall culture of poverty. Inner-city residents’ unemployment stemmed from the culture of poverty and the correlated lack of long-term planning.

The policymakers and social scientists worked together and came to the agreement that the culture of poverty equally explained their respective issues. They also realized that each program (Peace Corps, MFY, and Gray Areas) had been using community development projects

to overcome their corresponding problems. Once brought together by Kennedy, those people, altered their distinct forms of community action to form a single unified approach that aimed specifically at addressing the culture of poverty. In short, because they believed the culture of poverty was the root of all their issues, the same community action approach to end it could stop juvenile delinquents, empower residents to revitalize their inner-city neighborhoods, and help foreign people develop their countries.

The policymakers of the Mobilization for Youth defined juvenile delinquency using the social scientific theories that had developed in the 1950s. The program was important because it was the first one in which culture-based theories were incorporated into a governmental program to alleviate poverty. The policymakers also created a community-wide model to combat delinquency, orchestrating several different agencies at the same time with the intention to motivate youth and open up opportunities for economic success. Co-Director of MFY George Brager and Chief of Training Francis Purcell stated that “Perhaps the major contribution of the Mobilization program, and its primary source of innovation, stems from the rather simple idea that if services are to be organized meaningfully, social-class variables must be systematically taken into account in program planning.”<sup>200</sup> The Mobilization for Youth Program served as a model for community action in the War on Poverty.<sup>201</sup>

The President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (PCJD) funded Mobilization for Youth. Attorney General Robert Kennedy headed the PCJD. With a mentality in line with sociologists of the late 1950s, Robert Kennedy was deeply concerned that limited opportunity in the community created the conditions for juvenile delinquency. On February 19, 1963 Kennedy explained the plight of youth when he testified before the General Subcommittee on Education of the House Education and Labor Committee. He explained: “Our country from the beginning has been a land of opportunity. Above all, it has offered success to the man who is willing to work and opportunities to work in the United States have been unlimited. Throughout our history all

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<sup>200</sup> George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell, ed., *Community Action Against Poverty: Readings from the Mobilization Experience* (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), 18.

<sup>201</sup> Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), 95-97.

that has been needed has been a proper mixture of aspiration and ambition.”<sup>202</sup> He continued: “[B]ut our nation’s prosperity has created a new condition. From a rich and virgin land has grown a vast, complex industrial civilization. The opportunities to work are just as great and challenging today as ever before. But to get the same chance today, requires greater knowledge and greater skill.”<sup>203</sup> Robert Kennedy was concerned that “A whole new Lost Generation is growing up in our country, with no skills and little hope. Many of its members are turning to crime to get the things other youngsters get by hard study and work.”<sup>204</sup> Accordingly, Americans needed a program to change the conditions of struggling communities, eliminating those conditions that led to delinquency. Kennedy viewed the situation as particularly dire because he estimated that of the 26 million young people who were forecasted to enter the workforce in the 1960s, 7.5 million would not finish high school. He stated that in 1962 alone 700,000 youth between ages 16 and 21 were out of work and out of school.<sup>205</sup> Few skills and limited opportunities to work created the conditions for crime and vice.

The Juvenile Delinquency Act of 1961, which authorized the PCJD for three years, empowered Robert Kennedy and the PCJD to fund six to eight major demonstration projects aimed at changing the conditions that led to delinquency.<sup>206</sup> The projects were to be spread around the country in both urban and rural communities. The project that was both the largest and most influential to the War on Poverty was Mobilization for Youth. MFY operated in the Lower East Side, a sixty-seven-square-block area in New York City. In an effort to coordinate

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<sup>202</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Testimony by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy before the General Subcommittee on Education of the House Education and Labor Committee on H.R. 1890,” February 19, 1963. Folder: 2/19/1963-2/27/1963, Box 1, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, John Fitzgerald Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts. Hereafter listed as JFK.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Members of the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, Delinquency Notebook, Folder: Delinquency Notebook 1963, pp. 1-42, Box 12, Attorney General Correspondence, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

federal, local, and private efforts, MFY received funding from the PCJD, the government of New York City, and the Ford Foundation.

Sociologists Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin, and Walter Miller were three leading intellectual contributors to MFY. Cloward served as the unit's Director of Research while both Ohlin and Miller served as subject-matter experts. All three men had worked with Robert Merton at Columbia while in graduate school. Merton pioneered the theory of subculture in the 1930s.<sup>207</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s Cloward, Ohlin, and Miller focused specifically on delinquency as a subculture. Their use of subculture eased the transition to viewing delinquency as part of the subculture of poverty. MFY was founded and directly operated based on their sociological theories.<sup>208</sup>

As discussed in Chapter Two, Miller explained delinquency subculture by seeing it as a part of a more comprehensive general culture of poverty. Cloward and Ohlin expanded upon the idea that poverty was a large subculture. They attempted to explain the way in which the subculture of delinquency as part of the culture of poverty had developed. Historian Alice O'Connor has explained that Cloward and Ohlin introduced a key concept into "community action and poverty knowledge: the idea that poverty and delinquency stemmed not simply from community 'disorganization' but from 'systemic' barriers to legitimate opportunity that kept lower-class neighborhood residents from realizing their middle-class aspirations."<sup>209</sup> Cloward and Ohlin, who would both become members of the Poverty Task Force in 1964, explained the theory of community action in their book published in 1960 entitled *Delinquency and Opportunity*.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Robert Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 3: Issue 5 (Oct., 1938): 672-682.

<sup>208</sup> Members of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, *Delinquency Notebook*, Folder: *Delinquency Notebook 1963*, pp. 1-42, Box 12, Attorney General Correspondence, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>209</sup> Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 127.

<sup>210</sup> Cloward and Ohlin, 127.

Cloward and Ohlin offered two different explanations of juvenile delinquency: one, delinquency was actually lower-class culture by another name; two, delinquency was a structural problem that stemmed from youths' aspirations and their limited means to achieve them. The authors claimed that the youth in poverty had two avenues, a nearly insurmountable legal route and more easily accessible illegal path. Juveniles committed delinquent acts when they chose the illegal route.

Cloward and Ohlin suggested inspiring youth to take action, thereby creating their own opportunities. The first step was to create jobs. Jobs could provide opportunities for the youth to earn money while working toward their aspirations in life. Next, using a phrase that would permeate discussions during the War on Poverty, Cloward and Ohlin asserted that communities needed to have "maximum feasible participation" of their members.<sup>211</sup> They argued that participation would teach youth the value of community. Relying on their first definition of delinquency as a subculture, they argued that participation would break the "cycle" of generational poverty by replacing the poor people's values of apathy and passivity with entrepreneurship and hard-work.<sup>212</sup> They argued that youths' perspectives on community, work, opportunity, and the future had to change if they were to secure employment and escape poverty. Participation, they contended, would instill these values in the delinquency-prone youth and break them out of their long-run fate while providing the jobs for them to move into after the slum was transformed. Cloward's and Ohlin's prescriptions entailed both neighborhood and personal transformations to change the values from a culture of poverty.<sup>213</sup>

Without mentioning them by name, Robert Kennedy used Cloward and Ohlin's argument when speaking to the House about MFY. He said: "In my work as Chairman of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, I have been impressed by the need to see these problems of youth unemployment, school failure, and delinquency as related but different

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211 O'Conner, 127-128.

212 Cloward and Ohlin, 127.

213 Ibid., 199.



reactions to barriers to opportunities.”<sup>214</sup> He explained that “submerged populations. . . soon discover the decreasing market for unskilled labor, which is usually all they have to offer. Their hope turns to apathy and despair.”<sup>215</sup> He continued: “It is especially devastating for the youth in urban slum areas. Many come to share the apathy and indifference of their parents, while other rebel in a variety of ways.”<sup>216</sup> The youth, he claimed, dropped out of school and often unsuccessfully sought work as unskilled laborers.

Three weeks after speaking to the House, Kennedy explained to the Advertising Council: “I’ve walked through the New York City slums and talked to idle youth who think the cards are stacked against them. Quite often they’re right.”<sup>217</sup> Using Cloward and Ohlin’s argument again without attribution, he stated that the young people either give up and surrender to apathy, or “think that the only way they can ever achieve any success is by getting into the rackets. Their heroes are mobsters and racketeers.”<sup>218</sup>

In line with both the theories of sociologists about subcultures and the theories of psychologists about the influence of parents and peers, the policymakers of MFY explained that conditions in the community created a distinct subculture with an alternative set of values. Staff members of MFY asserted that schools were overcrowded, poor children were ignored, and teachers knew little about the neighborhood of the Lower East Side. Assistant Executive Director of MFY Charles F. Grosser argued that the people in the neighborhood distrusted the possibility of improvement. Grosser conducted a survey and found that residents of the Lower East Side thought that local government would not become more efficient, schools would not further

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<sup>214</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Testimony by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy before the General Subcommittee on Education of the House Education and Labor Committee on H.R. 1890,” February 19, 1963. Folder: 2/19/1963-2/27/1963, Box 1, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Remarks by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to the Advertising Council,” March 12, 1963. Folder: Advertising Council Washington, D.C. 3/12/63, Box 1, Attorney General’s Files, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

education, race relations would not improve, and juvenile delinquency would not decrease.<sup>219</sup> Grosser also found a shared pessimism among residents. They thought that “people can’t be trusted,” and residents were unwilling to take a risk for the chance of a better job.<sup>220</sup> Grosser also found that the residents’ long-term lack of power made them more accepting of authoritarianism.

The Co-Director of MFY, George A. Brager, and Assistant Chief of Services to Individuals and Families Sherman Barr believed that local residents had a distinct perception of reality and set of values. People in the Lower East Side viewed themselves as victims of society who were not to blame for their predicaments. Residents viewed the world as dangerous, full of “social booby traps” set to “snare depressed, desperate, and unaware people.”<sup>221</sup> Locals thought that all legal, law-making, and law-upholding institutions were corrupt, staffed by people interested only in self-protection and self-preservation. Residents believed that all people could be “bought” or corrupted. More, “A double standard of morality exists—one code for ‘uptown’ and another for ‘downtown.’”<sup>222</sup>

Those who turned to delinquency in an attempt to break out of the community’s conditions embraced the distinct set of values corresponding to the lifestyle of mobsters. They robbed, stole, attacked, swindled, and conned others in the pursuit of money. People of the Lower East Side suffered from a violent and pessimistic culture with few opportunities to escape seemingly endless poverty.

Kennedy, Cloward, Ohlin, Grosser, and fellow members of MFY sought to change the conditions in the neighborhood by recruiting locals to conduct projects to develop their neighborhood. Members of MFY called these community development projects. On the June 4<sup>th</sup> 1962 *Today Show* on NBC, host Martin Agronsky helped Robert Kennedy pinpoint the purpose

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<sup>219</sup> Charles F. Grosser, “Middle-Class Professionals and Lower-Class Clients: Views of Slum Life” in *Community Action Against Poverty*, eds. George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967,) 68.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>221</sup> George A. Brager and Sherman Barr, “Perceptions and Reality: The Poor Man’s View of Social Services,” in *Community Action Against Poverty: Readings from the Mobilization Experience*, eds. George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), 73.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

of community development. Agronsky asked Kennedy, “So you substitute hope for hopelessness—is the secret?” Kennedy responded: “I think that’s the answer to a large part.”<sup>223</sup>

Policymakers at MFY intended that its projects would coordinate every service in the community in order to open opportunities and simultaneously improve all areas of the residents’ life, including the prevalence of juvenile delinquency. In short, MFY worked to create new economic opportunities by inspiring residents and coordinating local services.<sup>224</sup> Samuel Merrick, a staff member with the Senate Labor Committee, explained: “The key feature of the juvenile delinquency program was that there’s no point in giving money for schools alone unless you do something about housing and jobs and health and family structure, [which] are important deficiencies and all interrelated. But there’s no point in throwing money at one without dealing with the spectrum of social ills. The other key thing was being sure that you just didn’t have the established political heads but that you had community groups putting in their vision, their perception as to what is wrong at the local level.”<sup>225</sup> Christopher Weeks, later the first member of Sargent Shriver’s Poverty Task Force, stated it slightly differently. He explained in an oral interview with historian Michael Gillette:

The juvenile delinquency program found that the employment agencies and the probation agencies and the police agencies and so on in cities quite frequently were completely separate and not only didn’t work together but were sometimes warring with each other to see who could get responsibility. Before a juvenile delinquency grant could be made, the groups had to get together and form an umbrella organization to demonstrate that they would in some way work cooperatively together to eliminate juvenile delinquency, supposedly. That thesis—the umbrella thesis, a collective action thesis—carried specifically over into community action [in the War on Poverty].<sup>226</sup>

Robert Kennedy made it clear that MFY would have a wide range of programs. He claimed that “The problem of juvenile delinquency—and this is so extremely important—is not just better policemen or better prisons—it’s a wide range of things. It’s more opportunities for

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<sup>223</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Attorney General Kennedy Re. Problems of Juveniles,” June 4, 1962. Folder: Problem of Juvenile Delinquency, NBC, 1962, Box 1, Attorney General’s Files, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>224</sup> Quoted in O’Connor, 159.

<sup>225</sup> Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 85.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

housing. It's better education; it's recreation; it's family. It deals with law enforcement, deals with opportunity."<sup>227</sup> Accordingly, MFY attempted to orchestrate services from each area to create a broad attack on the sources that limited opportunities and led kids to delinquency.

MFY staff attempted to address all sources of delinquency by mobilizing over twenty new services for a massive, community-wide campaign. The MFY staff created a subsidized urban work corps. The corps employed over 200 boys and girls in a variety of tasks. The kids repaired settlement house roofs, swept city streets, collected trash, cleared vacant lots, painted playgrounds, and repaired damaged floors and walls inside apartments. In 1962, a supervisor of the program was surprised to discover that he had former war counselors from three separate street gangs all working peacefully together repairing a roof.<sup>228</sup> He declared with pride that the program's emphasis on community unity was working.

MFY also created the Homework Helper Program (HHP). HHP paid over 300 kids from New York City's Lower East Side High Schools to tutor local elementary students who had failing grades. In the effort to instill community unity and understanding, the MFY staff initiated a program to bring school teachers together with students' families. The staff believed that a cultural disparity existed between middle-class teachers and lower-class students. Accordingly, teachers visited the homes of their students to learn more about their family dynamic, background, and distinct problems. MFY staff believed that the program would simultaneously build residents' trust in the schools and understanding by teachers of the students' hardships. The conduct of a misbehaving student would make more sense when the teacher realized that the boy or girl had no supervision at home and never experienced rules for conduct.<sup>229</sup>

Gertrude Goldberg co-supervised the Visiting Homemaker Program. She described it as an effort to mobilize women from the East Side to teach their less-experienced neighbors to

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<sup>227</sup> Robert Kennedy, "Attorney General Kennedy Re. Problems of Juveniles," June 4, 1962. Folder: Problem of Juvenile Delinquency, NBC, 1962, Box 1, Attorney General's Files, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>228</sup> Robert Kennedy, "Remarks by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to the Advertising Council," March 12, 1963. Folder: Advertising Council Washington, D.C. 3/12/63, Box 1, Attorney General's Files, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

cook, sew, budget, and care for their children.<sup>230</sup> Goldberg found that “the middle-class professional worker has difficulty both in developing rapport with lower-class clients and in offering them practical help with the everyday problems of slum life.”<sup>231</sup> Consequently, the Visiting Homemaker Program (VHP) changed its approach and, rather than bringing in professional social workers from outside of the slum, employed fifteen women from the Lower East Side to teach skills to their fellow low-income neighbors. The women visited the homes for several full or half days each week and offered not only practical advice but also companionship and psychological support. MFY sought candidates to fill these jobs who were neither “upwardly mobile slum dwellers who tended to shun their less-striving neighbors” nor too deprived to be able to offer help to others.<sup>232</sup> Several women who worked for VHP had close relatives (such as sons or brothers) who suffered from drug addiction, desertion, delinquency, or maladjustment to school. The workers faced a variety of experiences. Kennedy explained to the Advertising Council: “One of them recently encountered a 16-year-old mother who fed her baby bacon and eggs. She thought that was that the doctor meant when he said ‘solid food.’”<sup>233</sup> Despite the problems they faced, the workers typically succeeding in helping their clients. The workers lacked training, not skill. The visiting homemakers showed families how to stretch leftovers, ways to cook canned meat, where to purchase inexpensive material to use when sewing attractive clothes, how to identify a bargain, which barber schools gave free haircuts, and who offered free health services.

Another program in MFY helped residents of New York’s Lower East Side to improve their skill at writing and reading comprehension. MFY staff found that many locals could not complete a job application. Oscar Ornati, a professor of economics at New York University,

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<sup>230</sup> Gertrude Goldberg, “Nonprofessional Helpers: the Visiting Homemakers,” in *Community Action Against Poverty: Readings from the Mobilization Experience*, eds. George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), 175-208.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>233</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Remarks by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to the Advertising Council,” March 12, 1963. Folder: Advertising Council Washington, D.C. 3/12/63, Box 1, Attorney General’s Files, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

explained that “filling out questionnaires, passing tests, using the proper words are more the requirements for continuing participation in the economy” than physical prowess.<sup>234</sup> Using concepts that would be central to the War on Poverty, Ornati described the goal of MFY as motivating, enabling, encouraging, persuading, enticing, and mobilizing the poor to better their situation.<sup>235</sup> The program therefore attempted to teach residents not only how to accurately complete a job application but also how to gain confidence in their ability to learn and accomplish meaningful tasks.

A final program set up an advocacy center at 199 Stanton Street. The staff painted “Neighborhood Service Center” on the front window and “WALK IN!” on the door. The center was accepted walk-ins and the staff allowed anyone to seek assistance for any matter. MFY intended to enable locals to identify their own grievances and seek solutions. Most people who entered the advocacy center sought help with paperwork pertaining to welfare. Richard Cloward and Program Consultant Frances Piven reported that the staff believed that the people who came to the center felt isolated and genuinely appreciated any help they received.<sup>236</sup>

Although many of its programs appear to have had little to do with juvenile delinquency, the policymakers and staff of MFY contended that delinquency was part of a larger problem that must be holistically assessed and treated. In a statement to the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Kennedy explained that “we do not believe that isolated programs that deal with one small part of the problem can seriously affect this picture. We do believe that an intelligent, concerted, hard-hitting effort by local communities with help from the Federal and State governments can accomplish this job.”<sup>237</sup> Ornati confirmed that, “According to the mobilization

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<sup>234</sup> Oscar A. Ornati, “Poverty, Affluence, and Opportunity,” in *Community Action Against Poverty: Readings from the Mobilization Experience*, eds. George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), 37.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>236</sup> Richard Cloward and Frances Piven, “The Storefront on Stanton Street: Advocacy in the Ghetto,” in *Community Action Against Poverty: Readings from the Mobilization Experience*, eds. George A. Brager and Francis P. Purcell (New Haven: College & University Press, 1967), 37.

<sup>237</sup> Members of the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, *Delinquency Notebook*, Folder: *Delinquency Notebook 1963*, pp. 1-42, Box 12, Attorney General Correspondence, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, JFK.

philosophy, broadly conceived, poverty may be viewed as the problem, and power, in the hands of those suffering the consequences of poverty, as the solution.”<sup>238</sup> The conception that delinquency was a problem that encompassed all of juvenile’s life and his or her surrounding slum made MFY’s community development projects amendable to the War on Poverty once President Kennedy began to bring together experts to discuss the issue. As previously stated, Cloward, Ohlin, and David Hackett, Robert Kennedy’s special assistant for the PCJD (and roommate while in college), all joined John Kennedy’s and Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty from working on MFY.

MFY was not the only governmental program that used social scientific theories from the 1950s to understand a problem in the slum and community development as a solution. The Peace Corps did too. The Peace Corps is arguably Kennedy’s best-known program. It signified the effort to change the United States’ foreign policy in the Cold War. President Dwight Eisenhower sought to maintain U.S. supremacy over the Soviet Union in the strategic sphere to deter conflict. His policy toward the Soviet Union had given consideration to nuclear competition, alliance building, covert operations, and psychological warfare.<sup>239</sup> Eisenhower intended to reduce costly conventional military forces, balance the national budget, and end expensive open-ended foreign aid programs. He viewed programs to end poverty globally as financially wasteful. Eisenhower claimed that “it is not easy to convince an overwhelming majority of free people, everywhere, that they should pull in their belts, endure marked recessions in living standards, in order that we may at one and the same time develop backward countries and relieve starvation, while bearing the expenses and costs of battle in the more fortunate countries.”<sup>240</sup>

Kennedy disagreed with Eisenhower’s policy because he thought that it proved inadequate in dealing with global conflicts that required less-than-nuclear warfare. Economist and later Special Assistant for National Security Affairs for Lyndon Johnson, Walt Rostow explained: “There was a good deal of thought in that period about the inadequacies of the so-

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<sup>238</sup> Ornati, 20.

<sup>239</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; revised and expanded edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144-156.

<sup>240</sup> Gaddis, 131.

called Eisenhower great equation, that is to say, a preponderant reliance on the nuclear threat. And a great many people were saying that in a world which the Soviets shared with us, thermonuclear weapons was not a very satisfactory stance and counseled a building up of our conventional forces.”<sup>241</sup>

Kennedy implemented a policy of “flexible response” that could deal with all global crises ranging from decolonization in Africa to nuclear warfare in Europe. Kennedy wanted to keep a big military and to make it bigger in some areas while reducing some reliance on certain aspects of the nuclear force. In short, Kennedy sought to maintain balanced forces in the military. Also, differing from Eisenhower, Kennedy created programs to aid decolonizing countries. In his inaugural address Kennedy pledged: “To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right.”<sup>242</sup>

To achieve his goals, Kennedy took an active stance toward nations in the Third World, launching the “development decade” and programs such as the Peace Corps and Alliance for Progress. The Kennedy administration designed both programs to develop the economies of Third World nations in order to create democratic capitalist countries that would thwart the spread of communism.

The idea for the Peace Corps came directly from the Point Four Program. In 1957, explicitly citing the connection between the two, Wisconsin Representative Henry S. Reuss secured passage of legislation to evaluate the feasibility of a “Point Four Youth Corps.”<sup>243</sup> Reuss’s idea gained popularity and Hubert Humphrey, a Democratic Senator from Minnesota, introduced a bill for a “genuine people to people program” to be known as the American Peace

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<sup>241</sup> Transcript, Walt W. Rostow Oral History Interview II, 1/9/81, by Ted Gittinger, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 2.

<sup>242</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "Inaugural Address "; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 December 2013.

<sup>243</sup> Colorado State University Research Foundation, Final Report: The Peace Corps, Folder: Peace Corps – General, Colorado State University Final Report, Ch. 1-6, Box 6, White House Staff Files of Harris Lewellyn Wofford, Jr., JFK.



Corps.<sup>244</sup> When Humphrey ran for President in 1960, he promoted his idea for an American Peace Corps. He eventually withdrew from the Presidential race, but upon his withdrawal, he sent his ideas to Kennedy, his fellow Democratic Presidential candidate.<sup>245</sup> Kennedy liked the idea and sent a letter to Rostow asking him and economist Max Millikan “to take on the responsibility of working up a Peace Corps idea into something I could implement in the winter of ‘61.”<sup>246</sup>

Both Rostow and Millikan were leading modernization theorists. They connected the social scientific theories that had developed 1950s to the issue of decolonization and economic development. Together, in 1957, they authored *A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy*.<sup>247</sup> Russell Edgerton, a political scientist and Rostow’s and Millikan’s contemporary, explained that “nothing else on the scene in Washington rivaled the grand scale of the Millikan-Rostow proposal nor the sophistication of its presentation. . . .As the different parts of the Executive and Congress launched reappraisals of aid in different directions with different motives, Millikan and Rostow supplied them all with a common theme.”<sup>248</sup> Rostow and Millikan wrote that “there is emerging from the intensive work of social scientists on the development problem recognition that there are common elements in the patterns of development of different countries which have implications for development policy everywhere.”<sup>249</sup> The common elements were cultural values suited to economic development. Rostow and Millikan identified, as good for development, people who valued self-discipline, a commitment to education, the use and advance of science, participation in politics, saving money, and planning for the future. People who hinder development, they contended, valued immediate gratification, violence, rigid

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<sup>244</sup> Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 113.

<sup>245</sup> Transcript, Henry Ruess, Oral History Interview I, 12/12/65 and 12/15/65, by Ronald J. Grele, Copy, JFK.

<sup>246</sup> Cited in Latham., 115.

<sup>247</sup> Walt Rostow and Max Millikan, *A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

<sup>248</sup> Cited in W. W. Rostow, *Concept and Controversy: Sixty Years of Taking Ideas to Market* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 198.

<sup>249</sup> Rostow and Millikan, *A Proposal*, 43-44.

class distinctions, and had a laid-back approach to time and schedules. John Kenneth Galbraith, an economist and adviser to Kennedy, explained: “First of all, we must see development not as a simple matter of investment in dams, irrigation ditches, power plants and fertilizer factories, however important these may be, it is, rather, a part of a larger social process.”<sup>250</sup> He continued: “First, need effective government administration. Second, education to open men’s minds. Third, equal opportunity.”<sup>251</sup>

In 1960, Rostow clarified his position by refining and expanding the argument of *A Proposal* and publishing his most influential study, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*.<sup>252</sup> He explained that “the tasks of the preconditions period (e.g., in Black Africa) remain as they have long been: the buildup of infrastructure, the education of a generation of modern men, the creation of institutions which can absorb technology and mobilize capital; the expansion of agriculture to permit the growing cities to be fed; and the generation of increased export earning capacity.”<sup>253</sup> But he added that these elements no longer could be separated from cultural values. Rostow proposed that six national cultural propensities determined the relative success or failure of economic development. Rostow identified: the propensity to develop fundamental science; the propensity to apply science to economic ends; the propensity to accept innovations; the propensity to seek material advancement; the propensity to consume; and the propensity to have children. Not all could be simultaneously maximized, and asymmetry could hinder development. That is, the propensity to have children could prevent one from attaining material advancement. In short, development required specific cultural values.

Modernization theorists who worked with Rostow and Millikan helped explain the influence of cultural values on development. As discussed in Chapter Two, all modernization theorists agreed that developing a given country’s economy from being based on agriculture to being based on industry required specific cultural values and psychological dispositions.

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<sup>250</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, Folder: Remarks at the 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference on International Economic and Social Development, 06/16/61, Box 35, President’s Office Files, Speech Files, Papers of President Kennedy, JFK.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

<sup>253</sup> Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, 182.

Sociologists Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith identified specific values that they believed led to economic development. Inkeles earned his Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University—attending when Richard Cloward and Walter Miller were also students and when Robert Merton was on the faculty. Inkeles and Smith created the Overall Modernity Scale (OM Scale) to measure the presence or absence of the cultural values that were needed to create and maintain a modern industrial society.<sup>254</sup> Among the many values they examined, they claimed that modern men and women were open to new experience, ready for social change, exposed to a wide variety of information, adhered to schedules and time, planned for the future, controlled their environment, trusted others, valued technical skill, aspired both academically and professionally, held respect for others, understood production, and participated in politics.<sup>255</sup> For Inkeles and Smith, the building a modern industrial factory in a traditional (non-modern) country could instill all of these values.

But whereas Inkeles and Smith created the OM Scale, Sargent Shriver determined the methods were used in the Peace Corps to create the values needed to produce and sustain a modern, industrial society. John Kennedy's brother-in-law, Shriver organized the Peace Corps and served as its first director. After Shriver had served three years as director, Lyndon Johnson appointed him in 1964 as the head of the President's Task Force in the War on Poverty and subsequently as the head of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). From 1964 to 1966 Shriver simultaneously served as the top official in the international Peace Corps and in the domestic War on Poverty. However, back in 1961 he focused exclusively on moving legislation to establish the Peace Corps through Congress and then administering the program. In February 1961, Shriver started contact with Rostow and Millikan on international development in order to

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<sup>254</sup> Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1974).

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-35.

create a report for Kennedy on the proposed Peace Corps.<sup>256</sup> On March 1, 1961, Kennedy officially established the Peace Corps.

Shriver designed the Peace Corps to focus on three primary areas—agriculture, education, and health and sanitation. Rostow and Millikan had identified the same three areas as the primary determinants of whether a society based on agriculture would start to industrialize. Shriver believed that agriculture, in addition to feeding the population, played a key role in development as a source of capital. The immense cost of launching the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society could not be met by profits from a nascent industrial sector but only through improvements in agriculture. He argued that the most efficient way to acquire the capital needed was to apply quick-yielding changes in agricultural productivity, including new seeds, fertilizer, and irrigation techniques. All would promptly increase crop yield and create exportable surpluses. He continued, claiming that permanent material prosperity could not be exported whole; education and the technical skills needed to maintain self-sustained prosperity must also be acquired. Accordingly, volunteers in the Peace Corps started by teaching reading with the hope of progressing to advanced training in subjects such as engineering, medicine, administration, and economics. Third, Shriver designed the Peace Corps to include programs to improve health and sanitation. Diseases—such as malaria, yellow fever, yaws, and dysentery—hindered development because they drained the physical and mental energy of the population and reduced their ability to work a full day.<sup>257</sup>

Volunteers in the Peace Corps worked to increase crop yields, advance education, and improve national health, but the aspect of the Peace Corps that proved most influential to the War on Poverty was the concept of community development. Journalist Roy Hoopes estimated that about 25 percent of all Peace Corps volunteers worked on assignments to develop

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<sup>256</sup> Enrique Carrillo, Letter, February 20, 1961, Folder: Peace Corps General Reading File 1961-1962, Box 6, White House Staff Files of Harris Llewellyn Wofford, Jr., JFK; Sargent Shriver, "Report to the President on the Peace Corps," February 28, 1961, Peace Corps Digital Library, accessed June 24, 2011, <http://collection.peacecorps.gov/cdm/fullbrowser/collection/p9009coll120/id/4/rv/compoundobject/cpd/15/rec/17>

<sup>257</sup> Sargent Shriver, "Peace Corps: Shriver Report and Recommendations," February 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, accessed June 29, 2011, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-085-014.aspx>.

communities.<sup>258</sup> While the Peace Corps operated all over the world, the vast majority of Community Development Projects (CDs) took place in either India or South America. Volunteers working on community-level development addressed agriculture, education, and health, but they also were instructed to help the local population recognize a common need, coordinate collective action, and help the people complete self-help tasks. Tom Scanlon, a volunteer working on community development in Chile, explained the process. He claimed:

The term “community development” is an extremely important one which is frequently not understood. . . . It is the development of the most important resources a country has—its personal resources. . . . [the people’s] attitude of acceptance, lack of education and tradition of poor living conditions mean that they need a stimulus to work as a group for progress, and yet we must find a way to lead them to a solution without giving it to them, for it is the experience of a progressive step engineered by the community itself which is the important thing.<sup>259</sup>

He continued: “I am convinced that the most important meaning of the word ‘underdeveloped’ when applied to a segment of a country’s population is that the people themselves don’t realize their own potentialities. Community development is an attempt to get a very long process started. In this case, the first step is always the most difficult.”<sup>260</sup>

When trying to build trust, inspire cohesion among members of the community, and motivate locals, the volunteer often found him or herself performing unexpected and unorthodox tasks. Scanlon detailed his experience at a dance on a hot afternoon at a local centro. He had to “Rock ‘n’ Roll” with every female under 40 and answer questions for six hours about Brenda Lee. His recently learned Spanish and microbe-filled intestines made it difficult, but he succeeded in gaining the trust of the community. A few weeks later, a local “jitterbug” from the

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<sup>258</sup> Roy Hoopes, ed. *The Peace Corps Experience* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. 1968), 152; Historian Gary May also estimated that the percentage of Peace Corps volunteers who worked on community development projects was 25 percent: “Passing the Torch and Lighting Fires: The Peace Corps,” in *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 288.

<sup>259</sup> Tom Scanlon, “Chile’s Volunteer’s Concept of Community Development,” December 1962, Folder: Speeches: Material for Use in Speeches; Anecdotes from Returning Peace Corps Volunteers, Box 23, Peace Corps: Writings, Sargent Shriver Personal Papers, JFK.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

dance recognized him in Osorno and approached Scanlon about helping the community build a new school.<sup>261</sup>

A brochure for community development in the Peace Corps attempted to capture the social and psychological social dynamics of development. Put succinctly, community development was a matter of “individuals getting together talking, suggesting, discovering and then utilizing their resources in an effort to achieve an objective.”<sup>262</sup> The author of the brochure claimed that community development was also about converting a house into a home.<sup>263</sup> Everyone in the family must learn to manage the home’s appliances and equipment. Accordingly, the volunteer in the Peace Corps must explain the basic elements involved, including cooking, nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene. A home needed a head of the family who worked and earned money. That entailed learning a new trade and incorporating his or her service into the larger community. In this way, the entire family was to become “integrated into the pattern of society as a responsible social unit.”<sup>264</sup> In a sense, volunteers functioned simultaneously as social workers, family educators, health assistants, sanitation experts, construction workers, and teachers of vocational arts. Through the joint efforts of the volunteers and the community members, locals were to learn to recognize the available resources and then to use them to improve their surroundings on a do-it-yourself basis.

The process of community development was not just a matter of a man or woman getting a job and making some money. It was a matter of people coming to value in the community itself. If they did value community, they could work to improve it by maintaining parks, cleaning streets, forming neighborhood associations and watches, and working together to improve the place in which they live. Shriver designed the Peace Corps to develop entire national economies in the Third World. That could not occur with a population that valued only individual wants or distrusted change. National development started with motivating individuals to improve their communities. Together, hundreds of community development projects would create a nationwide

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Office of Public Affairs, *Community Development—Opportunities for Junior College Graduates in the Peace Corps* (Washington D.C.: Office of Public Affairs, 1961), 2.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

effort and help develop the entire country. Developing Third World nations did not begin with installing a large steel mill. It began by motivating individuals to improve their communities and helping them overcome fatalism and fear of change. Valuing change, valuing community, and valuing self-motivation had far more significance than building a massive steel plant. The volunteer in the Peace Corps who helped locals change their values set the foundation for long-term, self-sustained, and irreversible change. A factory could be shut down, but motivated people could not. Kennedy's pledge in his inaugural address to "help people help themselves" held this message.

The community-level approach held many similarities to the approach used in Mobilization for Youth. The staff of both intended to motivate locals to improve their entire community. The key to improving the community was to change the cultural values and the psychology of its residents. The same logic applied to a Visiting Mother who taught a neighbor to sew in order to prevent juvenile delinquency as to the volunteer who danced the jitterbug in order to create a democratic, industrialized nation. Once staff created trust, motivation, and community spirit, they could be put to any purpose.

Those who set policy for the Gray Areas Program also designed the program using the same logic of the need for individual motivation, community coordination, and local leadership. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the Ford Foundation funded a series of community-based programs to end juvenile delinquency and to combat the deteriorating conditions in American urban areas. The projects included both MFY and Gray Areas Program. Historian Alice O'Connor explained: "Based on ideas drawn from sociology and urban planning, these experiments combined institutional reform, citizen participation, and social scientific planning in an attempt to develop models for comprehensive, coordinated social intervention in poor urban communities."<sup>265</sup> Through the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Robert Kennedy, President John Kennedy devoted federal money to start Gray Areas Projects in Philadelphia, Boston, and New Haven.

Economist Raymond Vernon coined the term "gray areas" to refer to the "zone[s] of deterioration," or neighborhood slums, between the central city business district and the suburbs.

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<sup>265</sup> Alice O'Connor, "The Ford Foundation and Philanthropic Activism in the 1960s," in *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 169.

These areas consisted neither completely of business and manufacturing sites nor of residential homes. New immigrants (e.g., African Americans, Latinos, and white Appalachians) occupied these areas as they struggled to gain a foothold in the larger city. However, abandoned by both industry and the white middle class, these gray areas no longer were staging grounds for assimilation and upward mobility as they had for generations of European immigrants. Instead, the areas became stagnant backwaters, not completely commercial or residential, easy to move into but difficult to rise out of. In a sense they were areas in transition without the internal ability to complete the transformation. They were stuck in the middle, not black or white, but an in-between shade of gray.

Director of Public Affairs Paul Ylvisaker designed the Gray Areas Program to enable people within the “gray areas” to complete this transition. In 1948 Ylvisaker earned a Ph.D. from Harvard in political economy and government. After graduation he worked as aide to Philadelphia Mayor Joe Clark. By the mid-to-late 1950s Ylvisaker became disillusioned by the power struggles within schemes for redevelopment by metropolitan governments. When Joe Clark became a U.S. Senator in 1954, Ylvisaker moved on to work for the Ford Foundation and start a new approach to urban development.

With little confidence in the ability to change the urban power structures, Ylvisaker focused on the people who lived in the “gray areas.” He believed that the best catalyst for change were the people themselves. To understand the people’s plight, he applied the sociological interpretations that had been developed in the 1950s about ways that cultural values prevented escape from poverty. In line with Cloward and Ohlin’s theory explaining juvenile delinquency, Ylvisaker believed that schools, social welfare agencies, and political institutions in gray areas monopolized power and blocked the opportunities for poor people to reform the slum. He claimed that this process caused a “crisis of metropolitanization.”<sup>266</sup> According to Ylvisaker, the concentration of poor people who had little power to change the slum formed an alternative set of values from the adaptations made to survive in their situation. At their most basic level, limited opportunities sapped the motivation of people in the gray areas to fight for a better life.

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<sup>266</sup> Quoted in O’Connor, *Philanthropic Foundations*, 172.



Ylvisaker believed that the solution was to “perfect the process of assimilation and make these culturally backward new migrants into first-class citizens.”<sup>267</sup> Historian O’Connor stated that Ylvisaker defined the problem “in terms of a very traditional philanthropic concern: changing the culture and behavior of the poor.”<sup>268</sup>

To accomplish his task, Ylvisaker organized monthly sessions in New Haven and invited a wide range of experts on poverty. Two key officials who attended the meeting were Kermit Gordon, an economist with the Bureau of the Budget, and Adam Yarmolinsky, an analyst in the Department of Defense. Both would eventually be members of the Poverty Task Force created by Lyndon Johnson. Through them the methods of the Gray Areas Program were incorporated into the War on Poverty. Ylvisaker, staff members of the Gray Areas Program, and experts who attended the monthly sessions determined that a lack of coordination between residents, community resources, and institutions in the neighborhood created barriers to opportunity. For example, in New Haven the police did not coordinate with the schools, which did not coordinate with the social workers, who did not coordinate with the local government.

As with MFY and the Peace Corps, policymakers of the Gray Areas Program sought a method that could coordinate all of the community’s resources. The project sent social workers to demonstrate job skills to the poor. Workers also helped to organize local poor people into committees that could design programs to help poverty-stricken people to improve their neighborhoods.<sup>269</sup> However, unlike MFY and the Peace Corps, the Gray Areas’ policymakers followed a much more top-down approach that afforded little power to the local people. Charles Silberman, editor of *Fortune* magazine, explained that “the notion that citizens conceivably might want to speak for themselves obviously never occurred to the academicians, government officials, and ‘civic leaders.’”<sup>270</sup> The top-down approach that limited local people’s power quickly compromised the program’s effectiveness among residences. One of the most noteworthy incidents occurred when Mitchell Sviridoff, the director of New Haven’s Gray Areas Project, refused to support efforts by the community to arrange a team of lawyers to defend three

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<sup>267</sup> Quoted in O’Connor, *Philanthropic Foundations*, 174.

<sup>268</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 174.

<sup>269</sup> O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 131-132.

<sup>270</sup> Charles Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1966), 353.

African-American men accused of raping a white nurse. Members of the community accused the program of being racist and antagonistic to the grassroots leadership of African Americans.

Despite the issues that surfaced once the Gray Areas Program began to operate, the overall methodology of the program would eventually be incorporated into Johnson's War on Poverty—albeit with more power afforded to the locals. Ylvisaker's attempt to coordinate locals, community resources, and institutions in the neighborhood and to fund the operation with local, state, and federal funds resonated with officials and social scientists in the War on Poverty.

Taken together, the Mobilization for Youth, Peace Corps, and Gray Areas Program set a number of justifications and methodologies about poverty and how to alleviate it that would become incorporated into the War on Poverty. Each program was created independently for separate causes. Robert Kennedy, Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin, and Walter Miller created MFY to reduce juvenile delinquency. John Kennedy, Sargent Shriver, Walt Rostow, and Max Millikan created the Peace Corps to develop nations in the Third World into capitalist democracies. Paul Ylvisaker, Kermit Gordon, and Adam Yarmolinsky intended the Gray Areas Program to enable locals who lived in an urban "site of deterioration" to achieve upward economic mobility. All three programs were the first to incorporate into governmental programs social scientific theories developed in the 1950s. In short, all three explained their specific issue as a problem of cultural values; locals lacked motivation and needed an outside intervention to inspire self-help. Finally, all three programs used community development as the methodology to resolve their issue. Community development involved orchestrating local residents and community services to create a broad attack on the cultural values among the locals that limited opportunities to economic development. The full set of methods needed in community development entailed securing funding from local, regional, national, and occasionally international sources. In all three programs, makers of policy intended community development to grant power to the local people so that they could independently gain confidence and motivation, form committees, create plans, utilize community resources, and carry out self-help projects. In short, policymakers intended community development to inspire locals to carry out self-help projects with limited government funding. Put another way, it was supposed to help people help themselves.

After reading MacDonald's review of Harrington's *The Other America*, Kennedy initiated a paradigm shift by bringing together governmental officials and social scientists from

each program. Together, they would unify the concept of foreign and domestic poverty. The men and women who ran the War on Poverty viewed poverty and all of its manifestations (such as delinquency, limited industrialization, and urban decay) as products of cultural values such as a propensity toward violence, political apathy, fear of change, and low valuation of education. Also, policymakers and social scientists in the War on Poverty incorporated elements of each model of community development into anti-poverty programs of the Great Society.

## Chapter 4 - “Absolutely Sort of Normal”: The Paradigm Shift

As president, John F. Kennedy represented many firsts. He was the first president born in the twentieth century, the first Roman Catholic president, and first president to not regularly wear a hat. Kennedy cultivated his youthful image and portrayed his administration as representing a new, modern America. In his Inaugural Address, as his first message to Americans as president, Kennedy described his administration as “symbolizing an end, as well as a beginning—signifying renewal, as well as change.”<sup>271</sup> He continued by claiming that “the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.”<sup>272</sup> Kennedy called his administration’s foreign and domestic programs the New Frontier. During the Democratic Convention of 1960 he had explained that “beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.”<sup>273</sup>

Kennedy consciously sought change. Dwight Eisenhower celebrated America’s affluence; Kennedy came to focus on its citizens’ poverty. Poverty was the 71<sup>st</sup> word Kennedy spoke as President, and he identified it as a major issue of the New Frontier.<sup>274</sup> This chapter argues that Kennedy initiated a paradigm shift by bringing together those who made policy so that they could discuss poverty and shape a solution for the poor. Together, after discussing issues of poverty over the course of a year, they formed a single mentality that explained poverty and all of its manifestations as the result of cultural values. They came to see the psychology of the poor and the culture of the slum as responsible for creating and perpetuating poverty, juvenile delinquency, urban decay, limited industrialization, illiteracy, unemployment, political apathy,

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<sup>271</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “Inaugural Address”; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2012.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “The New Frontier”; available from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfk1960dnc.htm>; accessed 6 June 2012.

<sup>274</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “Inaugural Address”; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2012.

bad housing, poor diets, and drug use. As Bertrand Harding, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity from 1968 to 1969, explained:

Being poor today is having many problems all at once. It is not just that a man is unemployed temporarily. He is, let us say, the child of a broken home in a slum, a functional illiterate, and a despairing personality. If the Government improves his housing, but leaves his literacy, unemployment and pessimism where they were, then perhaps the housing project will become dangerous, even slum-like, or it will be found then a manpower training program can't reach him because he can't read, and that even if you teach him to read, the values of the slum are constantly motivating him to drop out of the very program which is trying to help him.<sup>275</sup>

Although Kennedy did not live to see the full extent of the process he started, his actions led to the War on Poverty, one of the largest governmental efforts on behalf of the poor in American history. More than just a large effort by the government, in light of Kennedy's openness and hope for change, the efforts to alleviate poverty were within the new mentality that attributed people's financial plight to their cultural values. As Harding stated, makers of policy in the War on Poverty viewed the poor person's "despairing personality" and the "values of the slum" as responsible for perpetuating poverty generation after generation and ensuring that all governmental aid was in vain.

Accordingly, scholars should not view the renewed emphasis on poverty in the early 1960s as just a matter of more governmental attention to the poor—although this was part of it—but rather as entailing a new paradigm used among those who made policy that led them to understand poverty as the effect of a despairing personality and as the embodiment of the values of the slum. Their understanding that cultural values caused and perpetuated poverty led those who made policy to identify distinct sources of poverty and methods to end it.

The new paradigm and mentality had precursors. Elements of the mentality had existed before February 1963—the date when Kennedy read Dwight Macdonald's review of Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and instructed the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Walter Heller, to investigate the problem of poverty in America. Notably, makers of policy for Mobilization for Youth (MFY), the Peace Corps, and the Gray Areas Program all

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<sup>275</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, "The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969," Folder: Vol. II – Documentary Supplement; Chapter 1 [2 of 2], Box 2, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume II, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, 5. Hereafter listed as LBJ.

founded their programs on the logic that cultural values accounted for their respective issues—such as juvenile delinquency, limited industrialization, and urban decay. As men and women from these seemingly disparate programs came together at Kennedy’s and Heller’s prompting, they came to believe that they had all been working on separate manifestations of the same larger problem, the culture of poverty. The culture of poverty included poor people’s despairing personalities and the values of the slum. Those who made policy concluded that the need to eliminate the culture of poverty unified all of their programs’ aims. Accordingly, community action—the method developed in MFY, the Peace Corps, and the Gray Areas Program—could work for every one of their programs as well as for the War on Poverty. As Sargent Shriver stated after speaking with domestic makers of policy about community action in America, “In fact, community action—which the people in community action thought was so revolutionary—was something that we had been running in the Peace Corps for four years before it ever got into the War on Poverty. So I thought community action was absolutely sort of normal. To me it was routine; to them it was a giant revolution.”<sup>276</sup>

Kennedy’s prompting allowed all members of the task force to see their respective efforts as parts of a larger process. Makers of policy experienced a gestalt shift. They came to reconceive their past efforts and as well as their current experiences within a new paradigm that explained poverty as the result of cultural values. Historian Peter Novick explained that, “with a new paradigm, not only what counted as an explanation but what counted as facts could change, along with the meaning of key terms.”<sup>277</sup> He continued: “It was a quite unselfconscious and unquestioned conviction about the way things are. Paradigms were not just constitutive of science; they were, in an important sense, constitutive of nature as well.... The paradigm defined both what were relevant soluble problems and what, within the assumptions and of the paradigm, constituted universally satisfactory solutions.”<sup>278</sup> Now, the programs that had seemingly been designed for different issues—juvenile delinquency, foreign economic development, and urban

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<sup>276</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 36.

<sup>277</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 531.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

revitalization—were all part of a single overarching effort to end the culture of poverty around the world – which meant at home as well as abroad.

Kennedy first developed his interest in poverty during the Democratic presidential primary race in West Virginia. While there, Kennedy witnessed the human face of poverty. He spoke with people who had suffered the hardships of poverty for decades. Kennedy was struck by the sight of people with chronically poor health, bad diets, poorly constructed housing, little warm clothing, and scant education.

Kermit Gordon, the director of the Bureau of the Budget during Kennedy’s last two years as President, attributed Kennedy’s concern for poverty to the weeks he spent in West Virginia. Gordon claimed: “Kennedy had developed a deep concern about the poverty he himself had observed in the hills of West Virginia during the presidential primary of 1960.”<sup>279</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Presidential adviser and historian, agreed with Gordon that Kennedy’s interest in poverty stemmed from his time in West Virginia.<sup>280</sup> Kennedy’s first executive order as President doubled the federally provided rations of surplus food to needy people across America.<sup>281</sup> Schlesinger stated that “this was a response to his memories of West Virginia.”<sup>282</sup>

For the first two years of his presidency Kennedy did not understand poverty to be the result of despairing personalities and the culture of the slum. Kennedy’s own paradigm shift did not occur until early 1963. Between January 1961 and February 1963, Kennedy subscribed to policies based on Keynesian economics, which were intended to grow aggregate national wealth rather than to address directly poor people’s personalities and cultural values.

Kennedy mainly attempted to grow aggregate national wealth through tax cuts and training programs intended to reduce unemployment. Kennedy and the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) designed the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961 (ARA) and Manpower

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<sup>279</sup> Quoted in Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>280</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 1007.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

Development and Training Act of 1962 (MDTA) to reduce unemployment.<sup>283</sup> The Secretary of Labor, Arthur J. Goldberg, explained that advances in technology increasingly automated the process of industrial production, thereby eliminating low-skill jobs. As their jobs were eliminated, workers with few skills applicable to the new economy were forced to compete for scarcer manual-labor positions. Hundreds of thousands became “structurally unemployed.”<sup>284</sup> Regions of the country that had a large number of unemployed low-skill laborers became “depressed areas.”<sup>285</sup> The Labor Department used the ARA and MDTA to retrain these laborers so that they could gain a new skill set, transition into new fields of work, and secure a job.

Kennedy and Heller also designed a tax cut to grow national wealth. Historian Alice O’Connor explained that, for the Kennedy administration, the tax cut became the “centerpiece of its growth agenda.”<sup>286</sup> Kennedy and Heller proposed to grow the national economy by raising personal incomes, increasing private consumption, and encouraging capital investment. Kennedy and Heller designed the bill to reduce the tax rate for the top income bracket from 91% to 65%, the lowest income bracket from 20% to 14%, and the rate of tax on corporations from 52% to 47%. Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1964 after Kennedy’s assassination, including these provisions.

The training programs and tax cut were based on older conceptions of how to reduce poverty. During the New Deal, President Franklin Roosevelt had mainly created programs to put Americans to work and reduce unemployment. To Roosevelt, poverty was caused simply enough by unemployment. After WW II, Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower sought to increase national prosperity by stimulating consumption. As noted in Chapter Two, both presidents intended to increase consumption to grow the American economy and benefit all Americans—including the rich and poor, men and women, African Americans and whites, and the young and old. Kennedy’s initial policies toward poverty aligned with these older methods to

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<sup>283</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, “Chapter 6: Eras of the New Frontier and the Great Society, 1961-1969,” History at the Department of Labor, United States Department of Labor, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/dolchp06.htm>.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 146.



help poor people. He intended the ARA and MDTA to reduce unemployment. He designed the tax cut to spur consumption. In short, none of the policies directly or indirectly addressed poverty in Kennedy's first two years concentrated on the issues of despairing personalities or of the values of the slum.

Once put in practice, the ARA and MDTA—the tax cut passed through Congress only after Kennedy's assassination—failed to produce the desired effect and satisfy Kennedy and his administration. Schlesinger explained: “The decline in joblessness from 6.7 per cent of the labor force in 1961 to 5.6 per cent in 1962 left the level far above the 4 per cent economists were willing to tolerate; and the re-employment rate was slower than in any comparable post-recession period since the Second World War.”<sup>287</sup> Schlesinger also asserted that Congress appropriated too small of a budget for the ARA. Only 150,000 Americans were in training under the MDTA, a number far below what was needed to help the 4 million Americans who were out of work and 3 million who worked only part-time.<sup>288</sup>

Members of Kennedy's administration doubted that consumption and training would help poor people. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith, then the U.S. Ambassador to India, told Kennedy that he believed that a consumption-based economy exacerbated the problem of poverty by neglecting public services that helped poor people.<sup>289</sup> Galbraith sought to inform others who made policy that the U.S. government faced a “New Poverty.” Galbraith explained the New Poverty in a book he published in 1958 entitled *The Affluent Society*.<sup>290</sup> Historian Lizabeth Cohen explains that Galbraith “blamed the voracious American pursuit of private consumption and the engines of corporate advertising that fed it for neglecting ‘social consumption’—the roads, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure needed for a humane society.”<sup>291</sup> She continued that “with the overwhelming sense of economic insecurity gone from people's lives, and with the truce on inequality, ‘we are left with a concern only for the

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<sup>287</sup> Schlesinger, Jr., 1005.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> O'Connor, 147.

<sup>290</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

<sup>291</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 10.

production of goods.”<sup>292</sup> Galbraith described the circumstances as “private opulence amid public squalor.”<sup>293</sup> In short, he thought that Kennedy’s attempt to help the poor by cutting taxes, increasing consumption, and growing the national economy would be ineffective. Consumption would not help poor people; rather it would further exacerbate their situation by creating overcrowded schools, under-strength police, dirty streets, and inadequate public transportation.<sup>294</sup>

In light of limited gains in training and the unchanging unemployment rate, others within the administration began to reevaluate their efforts. Heller came to focus on areas of the United States where governmental efforts proved least effective, such as Appalachia. Heller deemed such areas to be “pockets” of “hardcore poverty.”<sup>295</sup> Structural policies intended to reform the system of taxes or retrain workers for new jobs seemed not to reach the person within hardcore poverty. A member of the CEA, Robert Lampman, stated in an oral interview in the late 1960s that Heller devoted a great deal of attention to “special problems of the people passed over, left out, somehow remaining in Depression-like conditions even though we’d had this great period of prosperity after World War II.”<sup>296</sup> Heller’s focus made him open to new literature on poverty that could possibly explain the plight of people in these pocket of hardcore poverty. Charles L. Schultze, the assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget, recorded that Heller said to Kennedy: “Look, the next logical step in this, since we have gone after the aggregate economy, is to find ways of going after the pockets of poverty, not in the depressed-area sense of rural areas which you can bypass—or not *solely* them—but rather just poor people who full employment will help in part but won’t fully cure.”<sup>297</sup> Historian Scott Stossel asserted that “Kennedy began to think differently about poverty: Maybe rather than merely investing in industry and tinkering with macroeconomics through a tax cut, he should be investing in ‘public

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Richard Parker, *John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005,) 289.

<sup>295</sup> O’Connor, 146.

<sup>296</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 5.

<sup>297</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 2 (Emphasis in original).

services and human beings.”<sup>298</sup> Heller found Macdonald’s 31-page review of Harrington’s *The Other America* in the *New Yorker* and passed it along to Kennedy. Macdonald’s review primarily focused on Harrington’s work, but it also brought in relevant pieces on poverty from governmental studies, social scientists’ articles, and popular publications.

In the review Kennedy learned of Harrington’s ideas. Harrington argued that blockages to opportunity created a structural barrier that the poor could not overcome. As a result, the poor adapted and developed a way of life, a culture, suited to a life of poverty. To Kennedy, Harrington’s ideas might have appeared new and innovative, yet still in line with policies already in existence. In a sense, Harrington combined the structural form of retraining and cutting taxes with the emphasis on cultural values within MFY, the Peace Corps, and the Gray Areas Program.

Macdonald explained that the culture of poverty had many aspects. Not only were poor Americans “fatter” and less healthy, they were also psychologically different. He explained that the “poor now tend to lack what the sociologists call ‘motivation.’”<sup>299</sup> Macdonald quoted Harrington: “The structure of the society is hostile to these people. The poor tend to become pessimistic and depressed; they seek immediate gratification instead of saving; they act out....The depression has become internalized. The poor are not like everyone else.... They think and feel differently; they look upon a different America than the middle class looks upon.”<sup>300</sup>

Macdonald pointed out that Harrington also quoted researchers of a study at Cornell University who claimed that the poor “are rigid, suspicious, and have a fatalistic outlook on life. They do not plan ahead. . . .They are prone to depression, have feelings of futility, lack of belongingness, friendliness, and a lack of trust in others.”<sup>301</sup> The poverty of that time was complex, Macdonald explained, because “these characteristics are as much the result of poverty as its cause.”<sup>302</sup> In short, the poor’s cultural values and poverty were self-perpetuating.

As that culture became increasingly entrenched and poor people passed down values to each succeeding generation, it became more difficult to change someone’s values in order to help him or her escape poverty. Macdonald explained that “those left behind tend more and more to

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<sup>298</sup> Scott Stossel, *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 339.

<sup>299</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “Our Invisible Poor,” *The New Yorker*, January 19, 1963.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

be the ones who have for so long accepted poverty as their destiny that they need outside help to climb out of it.”<sup>303</sup> He lamented that “Children born into poor families today have less chance of ‘improving themselves’ than the children of the pre-1940 poor. Rags to riches is now more likely to be rags to rags.”<sup>304</sup>

Even if economic opportunities now opened to gain upward mobility, such as a new job opportunity, poor people’s psychology and the values of the slum kept them from escaping poverty. This reveals what Bertrand Harding meant when he said that, “even if you teach him to read, the values of the slum are constantly motivating him to drop out of the very program which is trying to help him.”<sup>305</sup> Macdonald quoted Harrington’s book, saying: “The character of poverty has changed, and it has become more deadly for the young. It is no longer associated with immigrant groups with high aspirations; it is now identified with those whose social existence makes it more and more difficult to break out into the larger society.”<sup>306</sup>

Macdonald explained that the problem was greater than just the plight of the poor. He asserted that “every citizen has a right to become or remain part of our society because if this right is denied, as it is in the case of at least one-fourth of our citizens [the poor], it impoverishes us all.”<sup>307</sup> Macdonald agreed with Galbraith that general prosperity did not necessarily help the poor.

The numbers of poor were also frightening to Harrington and Macdonald. Macdonald claimed that Roosevelt had inaccurately estimated that one third of the country was ill-clad and ill-fed. Rather, the number had more likely been two thirds of Americans during the Depression. The percentage of poor people in America had decreased since the 1930s, but Harrington estimated that one fourth of Americans—40 to 50 million—qualified as poor in 1961.<sup>308</sup> As the

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Vol. II – Documentary Supplement; Chapter 1 [2 of 2], Box 2, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume II, LBJ, 5.

<sup>306</sup> MacDonald, “Our Invisible Poor.”

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Harrington defined poverty as “the minimal levels of health, housing, food, and education that our present stage of scientific knowledge specifies as necessary for life as it is now lived in the United States.”

overall portion of the population who were poor decreased, those who remained poor were increasingly more resistant to programs designed to help them. In short, although fewer Americans were poor in the 1960s compared with the 1930s, the poverty of the current poor was more tenacious. Poverty in the 1960s penetrated the poor person's psychology.

In the review, Macdonald quoted Harrington and several others whose studies castigated Kennedy for not doing enough to help poor people. Addressing Kennedy directly, Macdonald asserted: "The federal government is the only purposeful force—I assume wars are not purposeful—that can reduce the numbers of the poor and make their lives more bearable. . . . The Federal Budget is the most important single instrument available to us as a free people to induce satisfactory economic performance, and to reduce poverty and deprivation."<sup>309</sup> He argued that the federal government needed to intervene and directly help poor people. Macdonald asserted that earnings, political power, and social unity should not be requirements for aid. Rather "the governmental obligation to provide, out of taxes, such a minimum living standard for all who need it should be taken as much for granted as free public schools have always been in our history."<sup>310</sup> Macdonald ended the review by stating "Until our poor can be proud to say '*Civis Romanus sum!*,' until the act of justice that would make this possible has been performed by the three-quarters of Americans who are not poor—until then the shame of the Other America will continue."<sup>311</sup>

Although Kennedy never wrote down his thoughts about the many details of Macdonald's review, four months later he used the same phrase "*Civis Romanus sum!*" as the centerpiece of his famous speech, "Ich bin ein Berliner." This could have been coincidence, but others in the administration did directly record Kennedy's response to Macdonald's review. Lampman wrote that "Heller got a favorable response again from President Kennedy sometime after that, and that as they began to gear up for thinking of at least beginning to explore possibilities for the 1964 campaign for reelection, one of those possibilities might be something about poverty, something about depressed areas, something about the disadvantaged."<sup>312</sup> In May

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<sup>309</sup> MacDonald, "Our Invisible Poor."

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 5.

1963, Kennedy asked Heller to form an informal group in Washington to discuss the meaning of an attack on poverty. Heller created the Saturday Group.<sup>313</sup>

According to Lampman, Heller created the Saturday Group to “pick brains and get suggestions and criticism of the idea.”<sup>314</sup> Every few Saturdays the Group met in a small conference room in the Executive Office Building from 12:00pm until 2:30pm or 3:00pm. Whereas the core members of the Group were at the level of assistant secretary, Lampman recalled that political scientists, statisticians, lawyers, and other Ph.D.s attended the meetings.<sup>315</sup> The setting compared to an academic seminar with long philosophical conversations where people freely shared their ideas. Lampman explained that

We would get into discussions about the definition of poverty....Some people would say poverty obviously means lack of money income....But other people said that’s really not what poverty means; poverty is more or sometimes even less than money. It’s a spiritual concept; or it’s a participation-in-government concept; or it’s a lack of some kind of self-esteem, sort of a psychological or image problem that people had....Still others would say it really has to do with lack of opportunity.<sup>316</sup>

Based on Ted Sorensen’s and Bill Cannon’s prompting, the Group attempted to come up with an emphasis and work it into a possible theme for future legislation and a campaign slogan for 1964. Members of the CEA discussed expanding current programs to help those poor people who had not yet been reached by governmental aid. Others discussed whether to use the Agricultural Extension Service to direct aid to depressed rural areas. Daniel Patrick Moynihan proposed using the Department of Defense to “recover” kids from disadvantaged backgrounds deemed ineligible for the draft.

Lampman recalled that an emphasis on the power of a cultural environment to shape a person’s behavior was one of the main themes that came out of the discussions. Bill Capron

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<sup>313</sup> As stated, the group was informal. Historian Michael Gillette later named the gathering to be the Saturday Group.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> The Saturday Group included: Walter Heller (Chairman of Council of Economic Advisers); Daniel Patrick Moynihan (assistant secretary of Labor); Ted Sorenson (Adviser to the President); Ken O’Donnell (Adviser to the President); William Capron (Staff member of the Council of Economic Advisers); Robert Lampman (Staff member of the Council of Economic Advisers); Ida Merriam (policy analyst of Social Security Administration); Phil Arnow (special adviser in Labor Department); Wilbur Cohen (undersecretary of the Health, Education, and Welfare Department); Bill Cannon (Budget Bureau); Mike March (managed HEW and Labor budgets).

<sup>316</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 6.

explained that poverty “wasn’t a problem. It was a whole constellation of problems with very different sources.”<sup>317</sup> The members meant cultural environment in the anthropological sense. They used it in the same way that Erik Erikson and Margaret Mead did to explain the fact that a person’s family and peers shaped his or her personality and values. Capron claimed that members of the Health, Education, and Welfare Department (HEW) had presented information on what came to be called the culture of poverty. Members of HEW explained during a meeting of the Saturday Group that poverty was neither a temporary state nor a condition of unemployment caused by disability or age. Poverty was a deeply-rooted affliction that spanned generations.<sup>318</sup> There were families who had been in poverty for generations. Capron asserted that “Trying to break the cycle of poverty became one of the themes that some of us tried to build into some of the specific program suggestions.”<sup>319</sup> Capron recalled that the group had many discussions about the works of Dwight Macdonald and Michael Harrington.<sup>320</sup>

Lampman explained that the Group had not discussed community action or Robert Kennedy’s programs to combat juvenile delinquency, but they made clear to President Kennedy that poverty was a much larger problem than previously thought and that it was different in nature than it had been in the past. In late summer 1963, Kennedy directed Heller to move forward with the idea of a federal program to combat poverty and set up an informal task force comprised of governmental officials. Kennedy intended the task force to gather suggestions from departments and agencies for items that could be included in a possible federal anti-poverty program of 1964. The task force included Heller, Capron, Cannon, Kermit Gordon, and Burt Weisbord, staff member of CEA. Capron recalled: “The results were perhaps predictably disastrous. That is, Heller got a lot of junk. These were warmed-over revisions of proposals that had been around for a long time, coming up out of the bureaucracy, programs that had been already rejected by the Congress.”<sup>321</sup> Capron also thought that the various proposals were completely unintegrated and piecemeal. The members of the task force hoped to develop a comprehensive program that could inspire the country.

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>318</sup> Gillette, 1.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 12

Cannon might have been disappointed or frustrated with the piecemeal ideas that had been tossed in, but he was happy that at least something else – something different with other people – was working more positively. Cannon made a connection in October 1963 with men who had been designing a nation-wide program that included programs to alleviate poverty. At the prompting of President Kennedy—and his sister Eunice—Robert Kennedy, David Hackett, and Richard Boone had been attempting to create a National Service Corps since January 1963. Inspired in many ways by the popularity and success of the Peace Corps abroad, Kennedy, Hackett, and Boone attempted to design a domestic Peace Corps to help several underserved populations including Native Americans, the elderly, residents of tenement houses, the chronically sick, the maladjusted, and the mentally ill.<sup>322</sup> Historian Sheyda Janhanbani explained that “the domestic Peace Corps program that eventually became VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America] looked to provide the same kind of transformative example to impoverished peoples at home that the Peace Corps offered to those who lived in the ‘huts and village’ across the globe to which John Kennedy referred in his inaugural address.”<sup>323</sup>

Robert Kennedy had been in contact with Heller, Gordon, and Shriver and used many of their ideas that they had been working on when he discussed with Congress the bill to create National Service Corps.<sup>324</sup> Kennedy explained: “This bill is a call to service. It is a challenge to people of all ages to follow the example of those who are in the Peace Corps—to serve their nation by helping other citizens to help themselves.”<sup>325</sup> In line with Heller’s description of “pockets of poverty,” Kennedy declared that volunteers “would concentrate on the ‘pockets’ of need where there are not sufficient people or resource.”<sup>326</sup> However, volunteers addressed more than only the pockets of poverty. Kennedy explained: “Abundance, we would like to think, is the

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<sup>322</sup> The President’s Study Group on National Voluntary Services, “A Report to the President,” January 14, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps; Domestic Peace Corps; Home Peace Corps; Executive, Box 213, Papers of John F. Kennedy, White House Central Files Subject File, John Fitzgerald Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts. Hereafter listed as JFK.

<sup>323</sup> Sheyda Jahanbani, “A Different Kind of People: The Poor at Home and Abroad, 1935-1968,” (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 2009), 202.

<sup>324</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Speech on H.R. 5625,” May, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps, CA 5/1963, Box 2, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, 1, JFK.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.



normal condition of our nation and, whatever poverty prevails, occurs only in little islands within our affluent society. This is not true.”<sup>327</sup> He continued that volunteers needed to be willing “to take on the toughest kind of job in this country, whether it be in a city slum, an Indian reservation, or a mining town.”<sup>328</sup> Kennedy proposed that the National Service Corps, must be just that, national and not regional.

Kennedy used language directly out of Harrington’s *Other America* when discussing people in need of assistance. Kennedy claimed that “poverty is not merely an aspect of their life. It is their life.”<sup>329</sup> In the *Other America*, Harrington wrote “Being poor is not one aspect of a person’s life in this country; it is his life.”<sup>330</sup> Kennedy described those in need as the “invisible millions.”<sup>331</sup> Harrington explained that “its millions [the Other America] are socially invisible to the rest of us.”<sup>332</sup> Kennedy continued by explaining that “They live in a kind of prison from which they cannot free themselves without assistance. The impoverished American sees life not as an opportunity, but as his fate—as an endless cycle from which there is no relief. We must bring to this problem a new and creative movement.”<sup>333</sup> Harrington had described poverty as a prison and as a cycle. He also explained that poor people were fatalistic and needed a concerted movement to changed their psychology and values.<sup>334</sup>

Kennedy used the example of six hypothetical Corpsmen on the reservation of the San Carlos Apache Tribal Council to explain volunteers’ tasks to Congress. Two volunteers would be general construction workers, constructing and maintaining the plumbing, wiring, carpentry, and masonry of homes. A third Corpsmen who was trained in agricultural assistance would teach

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Touchstone, 1962), 162.

<sup>331</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Speech on H.R. 5625,” May, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps, CA 5/1963, Box 2, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, 3, JFK.

<sup>332</sup> Harrington, 3.

<sup>333</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Speech on H.R. 5625,” May, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps, CA 5/1963, Box 2, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, 1, JFK.

<sup>334</sup> Harrington, 78, 9, & 15.

“techniques of animal husbandry, family gardening, small machinery maintenance and repair.”<sup>335</sup> Two more volunteers would have teaching experience and work with adults to improve reading, writing, and accounting skills. The final Corpsman would “work with families on nutrition, infant care, preservation of food, and home medical care.”<sup>336</sup> In time, Kennedy proposed, each volunteer would be able to pass the responsibility on to the tribal members and they could continue self-help programs.

The contours of the paradigm started to come together as the National Service Corps was a nation-wide attack on poverty, created by members of MFY and the Gray Area Program, inspired by the Peace Corps. Social scientists came to embrace a cultural model for explaining differences in the 1950s. In the early 1960s that model became incorporated into the governmental programs of MFY, the Peace Corps, and the Gray Areas Program. Now, the National Service Corps began to bring together the people and ideas involved with MFY, the Peace Corps, and Gray Areas. Policies that had been used to alleviate foreign and domestic poverty, juvenile delinquency, and urban decay were coming together under a single program.

But the fusion was not fully completed under the National Service Corps. Members of the international Peace Corps had not fully embraced the domestic effort. Stephen J. Pollak, a lawyer for Kennedy’s task force explained that “the Peace Corps was not a big booster of the domestic Peace Corps. I never thought that it was created out of the overseas Peace Corps. Really the idea was developed and launched more from the Committee on Juvenile Delinquency; and Robert Kennedy, Dick Boone, Dave Hackett, [were] the ones that I associate with the idea.”<sup>337</sup>

The disconnection between members of the Peace Corps and the domestic effort came partly from their lack of time to devote to other programs. That is, the Peace Corps had existed for just over a year when Kennedy began to design the domestic program. Shriver and others in the Peace Corps devoted all of their time and effort into starting, expanding, and running the new international program. They had little time to devote to a domestic effort.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Robert Kennedy, “Speech on H.R. 5625,” May, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps, CA 5/1963, Box 2, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, 4, JFK.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 284.

<sup>338</sup> Eunice Kennedy Shriver, recorded interview by John Steward, May 7, 1968, 20, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Another part of the disconnection came from a debate over whether domestic and foreign poverty were the same. Was a person in Guatemala poor for the same reason as a person in Georgia? Were the causes, manifestations, and consequences of poverty the same in Boston as in Botswana? Robert Kennedy equated domestic and foreign poverty. He claimed that “[poor Americans] may not be as poor as the poor of underdeveloped nations. But in a meaningful sense, they are at a disadvantage compared to those needy people.”<sup>339</sup> Shriver disagreed. In 1964 Shriver would experience the paradigm shift and equate foreign and domestic poverty, but not before. He explained that in 1963 John Kenneth Galbraith “was agitating with me that I ought to reach out and make . . . [a domestic corps] a part of the general Peace Corps effort. I was saying, ‘No, it’s a different thing. The Peace Corps is working very well in the area for which it is structured to work, and it’s a success. What we don’t want to do,’ I said to Ken Galbraith, ‘is to attach to it something that looks the same but is different, and injures the success of the Peace Corps by attaching to it something which is not the same thing except superficially.’”<sup>340</sup> In his 1961 book, Harrington claimed that foreign and domestic poverty were different. Harrington explained that “the other American is not impoverished in the same sense as those poor nations where millions cling to hunger as a defense against starvation.”<sup>341</sup>

This debate and disagreement revealed that not all who made policy had experienced the paradigm shift yet in 1963. Many people in the Kennedy administration agreed that specific types of personalities and cultural values produced both foreign and domestic poverty, but not all agreed yet that foreign and domestic poverty were the same. This lack of unity partly explains why in 1963 the Peace Corps—widely popular among the American public—failed to become replicated in America. The National Service Corps passed in the Senate but failed to pass in the House. Pollak attributed its failure to pass to the bill’s lack of coherence. He explained that the bill lacked an overarching organizing principle. Instead, in different areas it emphasized attention to the mentally ill, Native Americans, dwellers in tenement houses, farmers, the illiterate, and those in depressed areas. Later, in the War on Poverty the concept of a culture of poverty unified

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<sup>339</sup> Robert Kennedy, “National Service Corps,” May, 1963, Folder: National Service Corps, CA 5/1963, Box 2, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Attorney General’s Files, Speeches, 1961-1964, 4, JFK.

<sup>340</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 29.

<sup>341</sup> Harrington, 1-2.

all these areas under a single concept of the culture of poverty. But in 1963 the bill for the National Service Corps did not state that all of these various issues resulted from deleterious cultural values. Pollak explained that the domestic program did not get “impressed with the heavy poverty input until spring of 1964, when it was added to the antipoverty bill.”<sup>342</sup>

But John Kennedy and others did not give up the effort to create a domestic program to alleviate poverty. During a cabinet meeting on October 29, 1963, Schlesinger recalled peeking at Kennedy’s yellow-lined pad for notes and seeing “the doodles show the word ‘poverty’ half a dozen times, encircled and underlined.”<sup>343</sup> Schlesinger added that, “One day in November, musing about the 1964 State of the Union message, he [Kennedy] remarked to me, ‘the time has come to organize a national assault on the causes of poverty, a comprehensive program, across the board.’”<sup>344</sup> Schlesinger claimed that Kennedy planned to make poverty at home “the centerpiece of his 1964 campaign.”<sup>345</sup> Heller recalled Kennedy telling him on November 19, 1963, to “Keep your boys at work” on the plan to create a nation-wide federal program to combat poverty to be initiated in 1964. Two days later, Kennedy was assassinated.

Once he became President, Lyndon Johnson continued the process started by Kennedy by creating a new, larger task force to study poverty and by making the topic the centerpiece of his administration. Kennedy’s death stunned the nation, including those in government who had been working on a program to deal with poverty. Bill Cannon recalled talking on November 23 with Heller, Capron, Sorenson, Gordon, Paul Ylvisaker, and Mike Sviridoff and then deciding to continue to meet about poverty and community action.<sup>346</sup> Later that day Heller met with Johnson for forty minutes. Heller explained to Johnson that “the very last substantive conversation that I had had with Kennedy was about a poverty program.” Heller continued that “his reaction immediately was, ‘That’s my kind of program. I’ll find money for it one way or another. If I have to, I’ll take money away from things to get money for people.’”<sup>347</sup> In his State of the Union

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<sup>342</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 283.

<sup>343</sup> Schlesinger, 1012.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Gillette, 19.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 15.

Address on January 8, 1964, just 47 days after Kennedy's assassination, Johnson declared that "This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America."<sup>348</sup>

Johnson had a longer concern about poverty and a more personal experience of it than Kennedy had had. Johnson's father, Samuel Ealy Johnson, Jr., suffered terrible bouts of alcoholism that Lyndon attributed to the poverty he suffered from failed business ventures. He never forgot how alcoholism had strained Samuel's relationship with the rest of the family and the fact that poverty forced them to suffer hardships that he believed had been unnecessary.<sup>349</sup> His family had always relied on the good will and charity of neighbors in Johnson County, Texas when Samuel went on alcoholic binges and disappeared for weeks at a time.

In addition to his childhood experience, Johnson worked with poor people when he was a young teacher. In the summer of 1927, Johnson took a break from attending classes at Southwest Texas State Teachers College to teach at a school in Cortulla, Texas. Johnson wanted to get teaching experience. Located in Brush County, just south of San Antonio, Cortulla was a poor town. Historian Robert Caro claims that at Welhausen School, where Johnson taught, over ninety-five percent of students identified themselves as Mexican.<sup>350</sup> Johnson was exposed first-hand to the hardships experienced by Mexican-Americans. Years later, in a speech arguing for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Johnson recalled: "They knew in their youth the pain of prejudice....They never seemed to know why people disliked them. But they knew it was so, because I saw it in their eyes....All I knew was to teach them the little I knew, hoping that it might help them against the hardship that lay ahead.... Somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see the scars on the hopeful face of a young child."<sup>351</sup> The experience invigorated Johnson's desire to help the less fortunate. In 1964 Vernon Alden, then president of Ohio University, had a conversation with Johnson in which Johnson tried to get Alden to head planning of the Job Corps. Alden recalled that "President Johnson reminisced

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<sup>348</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, "State of the Union"; available from

<http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>; Internet; accessed 5 November 2009.

<sup>349</sup> Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>350</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Vintage Press, 1990), 168.

<sup>351</sup> Lyndon Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise"; available from

<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650315.asp>; Internet; accessed 5 November 2009.

about his youth, his teaching experiences, and his very early concern for poor people. He said that he had been dirt-poor himself, that he had always wanted to do something for poor folks.”<sup>352</sup>

Finally, from 1935 to 1937 Johnson served as the Texas Director of the National Youth Administration (NYA) as part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal. As Director he worked to provide vocational training for unemployed youth and also part-time work for needy students attending colleges and universities in Texas. Heller later recalled that, “In the poverty program, [Johnson] was extremely demanding...he kept referring time and again to his National Youth Administration experience in the thirties. He liked the idea of learning while doing, learning through doing.”<sup>353</sup>

Kennedy started the paradigm shift, Johnson continued it, and Shriver completed it. Johnson created a more extensive task force on poverty than Kennedy had and appointed Sargent Shriver as its head.<sup>354</sup> Within a year, Shriver and his task force created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and launched the administration’s War on Poverty. For three years Shriver simultaneously served as the head of the international Peace Corps and domestic War on Poverty. As the head of the Peace Corps, Shriver unified the concept of foreign and domestic poverty by bringing together, under the same task force, members who had been working separately on either foreign or domestic poverty. Once together and in conversation, the members came to believe that they had all been working on separate manifestations of the same

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<sup>352</sup> Gillette, 115.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>354</sup> The official Task Force members were the following: Andrew Brimmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce; William Capron, Staff Economist, Council of Economic Advisers; Ronald Goldfarb, Justice Department; Richard Goodwin, International Peace Corps Secretariat; David Hackett, Justice Department; Harold Horowitz, Associate General Counsel, HEW; Frank Mankiewicz; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Assistant Secretary of Labor; Anne Oppenheimer, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Norbert Shlei, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice; Milton Semer, General Counsel, CFA, HHFA; James L. Sundquist, Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture; Christopher Weeks, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Stephen Pollak, Office of the Solicitor General; Eric Tolmach, Labor Department; and Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 28, LBJ.

issue, the culture of poverty. Specific types of personalities and values seen in the slum also manifested in rural poverty in Appalachia, a stagnant national economy in Peru, juvenile delinquency in inner-city New York, lawlessness in Micronesia, political apathy in Chicago, low educational achievement in Ghana, and broken families in Oklahoma City. In short, the members of the task force experienced a paradigm shift that unified their previous efforts under a new intellectual framework. Now, juvenile delinquency was an aspect of the culture of poverty. The culture of poverty created urban decay. The culture of poverty led to limited development and industrialization. The culture of poverty unified foreign and domestic spheres and had caused all their respective issues.

If the cause was the same—the culture of poverty—the cure could be the same, too. In 1963 Shriver had told Galbraith that foreign and domestic poverty were only similar superficially. Within a year of becoming the head of the War on Poverty, Shriver experienced a change in mindset, a paradigm shift. During an oral interview in 1980, Shriver described what his mindset became in 1964:

Now in fact, doing community development in Ecuador is, philosophically and substantially, no different than doing the same thing in some West Virginia hollow. Now I'm not trying to say West Virginia hollows are like Ecuador, but the concept of going into Ecuador to try to help people decide their own problems, and to energize them, motivate them, assist them to be able to handle their own problems themselves, is no different than the psychology you take into West Virginia or to the South Bronx. In the Peace Corps one called this process community development; in the war against poverty, we called it Community Action.<sup>355</sup>

He continued: “when we started to organize the War on Poverty, the domestic voluntary movement was germane to that. It was smack dab on the point, you might say. As a part of the War on Poverty, it was like hitting the nail on the head with a hammer. So I didn't have any inhibition whatsoever about putting it into the War on Poverty.”<sup>356</sup>

In short, both community development in the Peace Corps and the voluntary movement under MFY, Gray Areas Program, and proposed National Service Corps came together as one concept under the War on Poverty. The paradigm shift made the two become one in both philosophy and action.

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<sup>355</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

Johnson appointed Shriver over his objection. Shriver was in Pakistan on the day of Johnson's State of the Union Address and declaration of an unconditional war on poverty. Three weeks later, when Shriver returned to Washington D.C. on January 31, he found a car waiting to take him to the White House. Johnson wanted to see him right away. Once he arrived at the White House, Shriver started to report to Johnson on the state of the Peace Corps. Johnson said: "That's great, Sarge, that's really wonderful. Let's go for a walk."<sup>357</sup> Johnson took Shriver to the Rose Garden near the south lawn of the White House. Johnson told Shriver that he would like to get started on the program to alleviate poverty in the United States. Johnson explained to Shriver that "we are learning that the poor inhabit a nation within the nation, locked into a cycle of despair by lack of skills, poor health, and inadequate education."<sup>358</sup> He continued: "Now you know we're getting this War on Poverty started, Sarge. I'd like you to think about that, because I'd like you to run that program for us."<sup>359</sup>

The next day Johnson called Shriver at home and told him, "Sarge, I'm gonna announce your appointment at the press conference."<sup>360</sup> More, Johnson said that the press conference was that afternoon. Shriver responded: "Oh God, I think it would be advisable, if you don't mind, if I could have the weekend. I wanted to sit down with a couple of people and see what we could get in the way of some sort of plan."<sup>361</sup> Shriver told Johnson that he feared that he would be unable to answer reporters' questions. Johnson informed Shriver that "I want to announce this and get it behind me, so I'll quit getting all these other pressures."<sup>362</sup>

Shriver had two major reasons to object. First, he feared that the Peace Corps would suffer if Johnson appointed him as the head of the War on Poverty in America. Shriver feared that all his work creating, running, and expanding the Peace Corps would be at risk if the word got out that he was going to leave. Shriver told Johnson that "this will be a bombshell" for the people in the Peace Corps.<sup>363</sup> In his characteristically coarse style, Johnson explained: "it'll be a

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<sup>357</sup> Quoted in Stossel, 346.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Transcript of conversation in Gillette, 36.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 40.



promotion! You've got your identification with the Peace Corps. You've got everything you ever had there plus this. I don't know why they would object to that. Unless you've got some women that you think you won't have enough time to spend with them."<sup>364</sup>

Shriver's second reason to object was that he thought that he knew nothing about poverty in America. He explained to Johnson that he "didn't know beans about it, because I've been overseas."<sup>365</sup> Johnson demanded: "Well, you don't need to know much.... You'll have an international Peace Corps—one abroad and one at home.... I'm going to make it clear that you're Mr. Poverty, at home and abroad."<sup>366</sup>

Johnson had political reasons to appoint Shriver as the head of the War on Poverty. Johnson believed that Kennedy's assassination had made Congress more receptive to his proposals, but only for an unknown but limited amount of time. He needed to seize this window of opportunity to start the War on Poverty and appoint its head.

Second, Johnson wanted to maintain a connection to the Kennedy administration while still creating a program that was distinctly his own. Shriver perfectly fit this criterion. The Peace Corps had given Shriver experience alleviating poverty. More, Shriver was not associated with any domestic programs to combat poverty. Therefore Americans and Congress knew him as a confidant of Kennedy, someone who had successfully created a program to combat poverty, but also as someone who was still new to poverty in America. Johnson could use this to tap into favor among Americans toward the deceased President, while also creating a domestic program separate from the past administration.

Appointing Shriver also helped Johnson arrest the power of Robert Kennedy. Johnson had disliked Robert for years. Although Robert was associated with John Kennedy and had already created the bill for a National Service Corps, Johnson thought that appointing Robert to run the War on Poverty would sacrifice his own power over the program. It would also make Americans look at the War on Poverty as a product of Kennedy's administration and not Johnson's. Johnson wanted power and recognition. Appointing Shriver best enabled Johnson to accomplish both.

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<sup>364</sup> Stossel, 349.

<sup>365</sup> Quoted in Gillette., 349.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

Lastly, Johnson wanted to prevent any public criticism from Robert. Johnson believed that because Americans associated Shriver with the Kennedys, Robert, or any of his close associates, would be unable to publicly criticize the program.

Johnson's appointment of Shriver was important to the paradigm shift because it brought together people who had been working separately on foreign and domestic poverty. In short, the appointment intellectually unified several existing programs that had been created individually and run separately. Robert Kennedy, David Hackett, and Dick Boone connected juvenile delinquency and urban decay to nationwide poverty when developing the National Service Corps. Now Shriver brought in people who added input from the overseas Peace Corps. Taken together, a paradigm shift occurred that unified the conception of and remedy for foreign and domestic poverty, juvenile delinquency, and urban decay.

Shriver's first undertaking as the head of the War on Poverty was to create a task force to research the subject, create programs, and implement them. Shriver had ideas from his experience in the Peace Corps, but he was at first unsure whether they would be applicable to the domestic effort. He knew and liked community development as it had been run in the Peace Corps. But he did not know if community development would be a large enough program to use the entire \$500 million that Johnson had earmarked for the War on Poverty. Shriver recalled:

I called Dick Lee, who was the mayor of New Haven. I called him because New Haven had been one of the cities selected by the Ford Foundation and by the juvenile delinquency operation for a community action program. I said, 'Hey, Dick, you've been running this Gray Areas Program up there in New Haven for a couple of years now. Is that right?' He said yes. I said, 'well, how much are you spending on it?' I think he told me it was something like \$3.5 million. So I said to him, "Dick, you've got a city of 150,000 people. Tell me, how much money could you spend in New Haven, if there were no restriction whatsoever, to combat poverty and you could do whatever you think is necessary?' My memory is that he said, 'Well, we could probably spend \$9 or \$10 million.'<sup>367</sup>

Shriver listed out all of the cities in America with 150,000 people or more (the size of New Haven in 1964). He then calculated that if each city spent \$9 to \$10 million, the total budget

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<sup>367</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 52.

would come to \$300 million. This was far below the \$500 million that Johnson had set aside for the program.

In addition to the financial aspect of community development, Shriver was unsure if poverty in America was the same as poverty in foreign countries. So he directed his task force to study poverty in America. Shriver could not recruit any members of Johnson's staff. When Shriver requested that Bill Moyers or Mike Feldman join the task force, Johnson yelled at him, "No, now don't go raiding the White House! Go on and get your own damn talent."<sup>368</sup> Shriver did. Cut off from the Johnson's personal staff in the White House, Shriver recruited members from programs all over America and the world.

Bertrand Harding described the process and meetings as "a beautiful hysteria."<sup>369</sup> Shriver had an ad hoc organizational style. The task force had permanent members, occasional contributors, and invited guests. Shriver contended that poverty defied rigid institutional boundaries so he cultivated an intellectual free-for-all where people could openly share and discuss their ideas.<sup>370</sup>

First, Shriver recruited Adam Yarmolinsky as his top deputy. Yarmolinsky was the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and had helped Paul Ylvisaker design the Gray Areas Program. Next, Shriver enlisted Frank Mankiewicz. Mankiewicz was the representative of the Peace Corps in Peru. Mankiewicz happened to be in Washington D.C. to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee about the Peace Corps' actions in Latin America. Mankiewicz also was friends with Michael Harrington, whom he introduced to Shriver and invited to the task force's meetings.

Shriver also spoke with Heller, Gordon, Cannon, and Charles Schultze, who informed him, Yarmolinsky, and Mankiewicz about what had already been done by the Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers. Stossel explained that Schultze had told Shriver and his task force that the War on Poverty should get at the "root causes of poverty, not simply to

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<sup>368</sup> Transcript in Gillette, 45.

<sup>369</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, "The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969," Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 28, LBJ.

<sup>370</sup> Gillette, 30.

mitigate its effects.”<sup>371</sup> The program would be one that “sought to improve education and family living environments, so that residents of poor neighborhoods would develop the skills and self-assurance to lift themselves out of poverty.”<sup>372</sup> Schultze identified the PCJD, MFY, and the Gray Areas Program as examples of how community action should work. Heller and Gordon explained to Shriver that the entire \$500 million should go to a nationwide network of agencies that helped local people develop their communities.

Shriver listened to Heller’s and Gordon’s ideas, but remained unconvinced that community action would exhaust the entire budget. Cannon explained that “he was just not listening to us, as hard as we kept trying to sell him.”<sup>373</sup> So Shriver and his team continued to seek out people who had studied poverty or had worked on anti-poverty programs.

When starting the Peace Corps, Shriver had set up a suite in the Mayflower Hotel and hosted an on-going seminar to generate as many ideas as possible. He replicated the process for the War on Poverty. Starting on February 4, 1964, Shriver set up a hotel room in Washington D.C. and held meetings for twelve straight days. Shriver explained: “I decided that in the brief time we had, we would read everything that had been written about poverty; listen to anyone who had anything to say; accept advice from any source.”<sup>374</sup> Shriver, Yarmolinsky, and Mankiewicz invited anyone whom they thought had ideas that could contribute to the War on Poverty. Robert Lampman provided what he thought to be a complete bibliography of every worthwhile book or article on poverty.<sup>375</sup> It was less than two pages long.<sup>376</sup> The team read the pieces, and, if they liked any, they would find the author, invite him or her to the headquarters and then discuss instituting the idea or concept in the War on Poverty. Shriver would sit the author down and tell him: “The president has given me an assignment to eliminate poverty in this

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<sup>371</sup> Stossel, 357.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>374</sup> Quoted in Stossel, 360.

<sup>375</sup> Books included: Harry Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberland: A Biography of a Depressed Region* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963); Ben Bagdikian, *In the Midst of Plenty: The Poor in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1964); Herman Miller’s *Rich Man, Poor Man* (New York: Crowell, 1964), and James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

<sup>376</sup> Stossel, 360.

country. What would you do if you had to eliminate poverty in this country? Where would you start? Give me some ideas.”<sup>377</sup>

Many people visited the room and discussed poverty in those twelve days. One person said: “[T]here were suddenly a lot of guys in funny shoes running around the corridors.”<sup>378</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an original member of the Saturday Group and an employee of the Labor Department, visited. Dave Hackett and Dick Boone from the PCJD, MFY, and National Service Corps discussed the concept of community action. Lloyd Ohlin, who had helped create MFY, discussed the work he wrote with Richard Cloward in which they argued that blockages to opportunities created subcultures. Shriver invited Michael Harrington and asked him how to abolish poverty.<sup>379</sup> Activist Saul Alinsky from Chicago joined in on conversations. Heller, Capron, and Lane Kirkland from CEA stopped in and discussed Community Action. Paul Ylvisaker, who designed and administered the Gray Areas Program, discussed the mobilization of the poor. John Kenneth Galbraith discussed the “New Poverty.” Others who visited included Louis Marin, Harris Wofford, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, Under Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Wilbur Cohen, Richard Goodwin, and dozens of other cabinet secretaries, undersecretaries, academics, foundation officers, business executives, college presidents, and mayors.<sup>380</sup>

Shriver tried but failed to include Robert Kennedy. Together, Shriver, Mankiewicz, Harrington, Moynihan, Hackett, and Boone visited Kennedy at his house. Mankiewicz recalled

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 29, LBJ.

<sup>380</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 29, LBJ.

“He looked awful. He just sort of sat there. He was still in shock. He asked if what we were doing was what President Kennedy had in mind, and Hackett and Boone assured him it was.”<sup>381</sup>

In an interview for an oral history in 1980, Shriver explained:

The answer is nobody knows now or knew then *exactly* how to do that [abolish poverty]. The next reality was that everybody thought that some different way of dealing with poverty would be beneficial. Some people were devotees of giving people jobs; others of providing them with an education; others saying it was all a question of health; or another one saying it was all a question of whether they could speak English or not; another would say it was simply a question of “unleashing the free enterprise system. So the immediate reality was if you asked ten people how to go about eliminating poverty, you’d get ten different answers.”<sup>382</sup>

From these meetings Shriver created the official Task Force on Poverty within the Executive Office of the President.<sup>383</sup> Connecting it to Shriver’s international efforts, the press dubbed the group the Poor Corps. Within three weeks the Task Force completed the bill to create the War on Poverty. The bill included two major components of the new paradigm: first, the cultural values of the poor created and sustained poverty, and, second, community action could change those values.

Although the answers to how to eliminate poverty differed at first, the group all agreed that, at its core, the main problem was poor people’s cultural values and personalities—that is, the culture of poverty. The changing structure of the economy might have blocked poor people from opportunities to secure well-paying jobs, but the cultural environment created by those people who had to adapt to a life of poverty was now the major issue. The behaviors needed to

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<sup>381</sup> Nicolas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 155.

<sup>382</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 45.

<sup>383</sup> The official Task Force members were the following: Andrew Brimmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce; William Capron, Staff Economist, Council of Economic Advisers; Ronald Goldfarb, Justice Department; Richard Goodwin, International Peace Corps Secretariat; David Hackett, Justice Department; Harold Horowitz, Associate General Counsel, HEW; Frank Mankiewicz; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Assistant Secretary of Labor; Anne Oppenheimer, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Norbert Shlei, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice; Milton Semer, General Counsel, CFA, HHFA; James L. Sundquist, Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture; Christopher Weeks, analyst, Bureau of the Budget; Stephen Pollak, Office of the Solicitor General; Eric Tolmach, Labor Department; and Adam Yarmolinsky, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

survive a life of poverty were now responsible for sustaining that poverty. Poverty was a cycle. When passed down to children, the culture of poverty impacted generation after generation. Shriver explained that “many people just blame them. They say they’re lazy, they want to take narcotics, they’d rather rob, they’d rather play the numbers racket, they’ve got a cultural hang-up especially if they’re [from the] Appalachians. It’s the easiest thing in the world to slough onto the poor responsibility for the fact they’re not working. But it’s much harder to say--I know it’s much harder to say--`Look, it’s *our* fault that *our* society is producing these people.”<sup>384</sup> So despite the fact that the structure of the economy might have originally created the situation, the culture of poverty was now the issue. Shriver continued: “I believed then, and I still believe, that a great deal of unemployment, particularly what they call structural unemployment, that is people who can’t hold a job, comes from the fact they’ve been in an environment, in a culture—they used to call it the culture of poverty.”<sup>385</sup> Mankiewicz explained: “It was a thought that we had had for some time. It went to the whole question of the fact that the establishment, in a sense, was responsible for a lot of the problems of poverty, and one of them was that people who didn’t fit the established culture didn’t tend to get jobs. We thought that one thing could be done: there should be some money for an educational program to, in effect, teach people how to apply for a job. If you can’t beat them, join them. We called it a ‘charm school,’ which was unfortunate.”<sup>386</sup>

Men from the Peace Corps, MFY, Gray Areas Program, PCJD, National Service Corps, CEA, and Bureau of the Budget all agreed and now viewed the issue from within the same paradigm. They asserted that the culture of poverty created all of the various problems that each identified. Poor people placed little value on education, creating a work force of unskilled labor. Rarely attending school or even dropping out minimized young people’s chances to acquire verbal and oral language skills, and this was especially true of those for whom English was a second language. Poor people’s low-skilled, physically demanding jobs and low income led them to eat inexpensive foods, which were higher in fat, causing poor health. The poor lacked

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<sup>384</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 10.

<sup>385</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 17-18.

<sup>386</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 106.

motivation. The “free enterprise system” attracted few poor people, who pessimistically viewed life as disappointing and beyond their control.

While Shriver had once thought that poverty in America and poverty in the Third World were separate and different, he now viewed them as the same. His view, his new paradigm, unified foreign and domestic poverty. When discussing the poor in America, he explained: “Well, the instinct of the poor people is such that they’re instinctively unable to hold the kind of jobs that society can offer. Now, if you took them all and put them in Somalia, they’d do just as well as anybody else in Somalia because it’s a rural, agricultural, nomadic existence. Therefore you can survive there. You can’t survive in New York or Chicago--and you sure as hell can’t get out of an Appalachian hollow. You’re just stuck there.”<sup>387</sup>

Because the cultural values and personalities of the poor were now the issue, just creating jobs could not solve poverty.<sup>388</sup> Yarmolinsky recalled that when Shriver presented to Johnson an idea for a program to create jobs, “the president just ignored him. It was a shocking demonstration of the way Johnson sometimes handled things. He didn’t even bother to respond; he just went on to the next item of the agenda.”<sup>389</sup> Yarmolinsky explained that “one of the choices we said we had to make was whether to concentrate on preparing jobs for people or preparing people for jobs. We decided for the latter.”<sup>390</sup> The latter, which Mankiewicz had described as “charm school,” mainly took the form of community action. Historian Alice O’Connor notes that “the community action idea held considerable appeal: It kept program responsibility out of the hands of any single one of the ‘old line’ federal agencies, it offered a way to cut through bureaucratic inefficiencies, it had an attractive air of localism while asserting a strong federal role in community change, and it would not require major new spending. It also seemed innovative, a major selling point as the administration tried to construct its domestic

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<sup>387</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 52.

<sup>388</sup> A few members of the Poverty Task Force—notably Willard Wirtz and Moynihan—continued to argue in vain that creating jobs should be the main focus of the War on Poverty.

<sup>389</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 107.

<sup>390</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 107.



program in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination—and to come up with something distinctive for President Johnson to propose.”<sup>391</sup>

The form of community action in the War on Poverty was created based on experiences of community development in the Peace Corps, Gray Areas Program, and MFY. From the Peace Corps, the members of the Task Force on Poverty took that the entire community should be involved (e.g., the community of Dallas or the community of Rochester). Members from the Gray Areas contended that the federal and local governments should retain a degree of power over the programs. Finally, from MFY, members of the Task Force thought there should be a wide variety of programs that on the surface might not directly appear to be related to poverty and that the poor should have maximum feasible participation.

From his experience in the Peace Corps, Shriver believed that community action in the War on Poverty should include all members of the community. Shriver explained: “I wanted the local Community Action agency to be composed of distinguished people at the local level, private businessmen, private philanthropy people, poor people, and government people.”<sup>392</sup> Shriver had to convince Johnson of the merit of including all members of the community. Johnson imagined that community action in the War on Poverty would be like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or National Youth Administration (NYA) during the New Deal. In both programs the local government was in control and travelled around to develop the communities' resources. Shriver wanted to include all members of the community so that each project would be tailored to that specific region and people. In short, what would be done in Omaha would differ from what would be done in Atlanta, or what was done in Atlanta would differ from what was done in Miami, and in Miami differ from that done in Boston.

Shriver and members of the Task Force planned to include everyone in the community in the planning, but, based on experiences in the Gray Areas Program, they wanted to keep the ultimate authority in hands of the local government. In meetings of the Task Force, Saul Alinsky advocated fully empowering the people while leaving the local government and business leaders out. Alinsky claimed that the way in which the community was structured, so that it benefited a

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<sup>391</sup> Alice O'Connor, “The Ford Foundation and Philanthropic Activism in the 1960s,” in *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 184.

<sup>392</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 76.

few but alienated many, was itself truly responsible for making people poor. He claimed that cultural values had nothing to do with poverty. Alinsky asserted that placing the power exclusively in the hands of the poor people to design and carry out the War on Poverty would alter the structure of the community and end poverty. In short, he wanted to end the master-servant relationship by altering the capitalist system of owners, employers, and employees. Shriver explained: “That was Saul Alinsky’s idea. I knew Saul Alinsky very well...I was not opposed to his idea as part of the totality, but I was opposed to it as being the only approach; and I still am.”<sup>393</sup> Shriver and other members wanted to include the poor people of the community in designing and carrying out neighborhood projects, but not to the extent advocated by Alinsky. To strike this balance, Shriver advocated using from the Gray Areas Program an administrative structure that retained ultimate power of decision in the hands of the local government.

The members of the Task Force wanted to include all community members, keep power of decision ultimately in the hands of the local government, but include the people in planning and decision making as much as possible. In the phrase of the time, the members wanted to give the people maximum feasible participation. The term “maximum feasible participation” originally came from MFY. Within the War on Poverty the ambiguity of the term led to several charged arguments between people in government, local leaders, and people who were poor.<sup>394</sup> Harold Horowitz, a member of the Task Force, explained that maximum feasible participation meant “that you made all good-faith efforts to have participation of the people involved in the programs, and that going farther than that just wouldn’t make much sense.”<sup>395</sup> Another member of the Task Force, Norbert Schlei, explained that maximum feasible participation simply meant that community action should include people in the community, the target population. Put in practice, this would mean that there would be advisory committees made up of poor people in the community who would alert the administrators to issues that needed to be addressed. The Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development and Conservation, John Baker, claimed that it meant “starting with the most downtrodden. It meant that women ought to have an equal say-so with men. It meant that poor black folks ought to have equal say-so with upwardly

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>394</sup> The debate inspired Daniel Patrick Moynihan to write *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1970).

<sup>395</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 98.

mobile, upper-middle-class [people]. . . . At the community level, everybody that perceived themselves to have a unique concern or contribution should be geared into the decision-making mechanism.”<sup>396</sup> In short, maximum feasible participation had many meanings that were not completely worked out prior to implementing the programs within the War on Poverty.

In addition to the concept of maximum feasible participation from MFY, members of the Task Force liked the focus within MFY on having a wide diversity of programs. The same concept existed in the Peace Corps, so Shriver was familiar with it. In the Peace Corps, whereas 30% of volunteers worked on community development—mostly in South America—the other 70% worked on a projects designed for the local circumstances. For example, in Ghana—and most of Africa—volunteers in the Peace Corps acted as teachers in schools. They did not address local government, agriculture, sanitation, or infrastructure. In MFY, volunteers worked for over twenty different projects, including the Visiting Homemakers Program, Homework Helpers Program, and the Neighborhood Advocacy Center. When drafting the bill for the War on Poverty, the members of the Task Force wanted to create a diversity of programs to match the practices within MFY. Accordingly, within the bill they included Community Action, the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Upward Bound, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The bill also included a provision to create the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), which would administer the War on Poverty.

Kennedy did not live to see the full extent of the process he started, but his actions led to a paradigm shift and to what became one of the largest governmental efforts in American history on behalf of the poor. After reading Dwight Macdonald’s review of Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*, Kennedy instructed Chairman of the Economic Advisers, Walter Heller, to investigate the problem of poverty. Heller formed an informal group of governmental officials. The group agreed that poverty stemmed from environmental conditions, notably the cultural values of the slum. The informal group grew into an official CEA-led Poverty Task Force charged with creating a National Service Corps to alleviate poverty in America. Men who planned the National Service Corps, including Bobby Kennedy, Dave Hackett, and Dick Boone, linked previous programs to end juvenile delinquency and urban decay to the effort to end poverty. Specifically, they believed, poor people’s cultural values manifested in unlawful

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<sup>396</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 99.

behavior. Although the National Service Corps failed to pass Congress, Lyndon Johnson continued the governmental effort to end poverty. He appointed Sargent Shriver, who created a more extensive Task Force on poverty. Shriver connected foreign programs, such as the Peace Corps, to domestic efforts to end poverty. In short, Shriver's actions unified the understanding of poverty so that distinctions between foreign and domestic poverty were not important. This was the core element in a paradigm shift that led makers of policy to view a host of problems—including juvenile delinquency, urban decay, illiteracy, high levels of violence, poor diets, child neglect, promiscuousness, drug use, low educational achievement, one-parent households, unemployment, and political apathy—as manifestations of a culture of poverty. Shriver and the members of his Task Force wrote the bill to create Office of Economic Opportunity, which launched the Administration's War on Poverty.

## **Chapter 5 - “Whether its name is Bombay or New York”: The Global War on Poverty**

John Kennedy started the War on Poverty, Lyndon Johnson continued and expanded it, and Sargent Shriver ran it. Included in this governmental attention to poor people was a new paradigm. Those who subscribed to the new paradigm viewed all poverty, at home and abroad, as the result of cultural values. All poverty stemmed from an all-encompassing system of cultural values—which anthropologist Oscar Lewis called a culture of poverty—that prevented poor people from seizing opportunities to escape their condition. This chapter argues that a common paradigm about the causes of poverty and the best method to remedy it equally shaped programs at home and abroad.

Officials in the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) expressly created all programs in the War on Poverty to change the cultural environment—in an anthropological sense—of poor people. Those who created and ran the Job Corps, for example, attempted to help the poor by replacing the negative influences on them coming from people who lacked motivation, opposed change, and distrusted that a better future would come through education and planning. Instead, workers in the Job Corps sought to expose the poor to people who valued education, change, planning, and community.

Another program, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), held the same goals as the Job Corps and tried to carry out the process through community action. Under the influence of the new paradigm, officials who were given the role of creating the form of community action in the War on Poverty relied heavily on previous programs that now, within the new paradigm, appeared to constitute a logical coherent set of ways to end poverty. Included among these programs were the Peace Corps, Mobilization for Youth (MFY), and Gray Areas Program. Influenced by the example of the Peace Corps, VISTA workers attempted to change the cultural environment of entire slum by including all members of the community in the planning of their future. From the Gray Areas Program, administrators in VISTA ensured that all final decisions would be made by governmental officials. From MFY, projects in VISTA took a variety of forms for a diversity of purposes.

The program within the War on Poverty that arguably best captured the MFY’s emphasis on a diversity of programs was the Community Action Program known as Harlem Youth

Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU). HARYOU included programs to help poor children develop skills for school, as well as programs to expose youth to African-American theater and art.

Whereas makers of policy in the domestic War on Poverty took inspiration from foreign programs, workers in the Peace Corps began to align their efforts with domestic programs as well. In short, the concept of a culture of poverty truly became global, crossing all national borders. Upon the ascendancy of the new paradigm, volunteers in the Peace Corps began to describe the cultural values of people in Third World as being equivalent to the lower-class culture of poor Americans. For example, volunteers viewed the cultural values of poor people in Manila as the same as those of poor people in Miami. The program that best exemplified the penetration of the new paradigm among foreign volunteers was the Reverse Peace Corps. Those who designed the Reverse Peace Corps asserted that if all poor people around the world shared the same dynamic within a culture of poverty, those outside of the culture of poverty could provide a positive influence, regardless of where they were from. Accordingly, the Reverse Peace Corps brought middle- and upper-class men and women from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to work with lower-class Americans in cities such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. The new paradigm unified the understanding of poverty at home and abroad as one essentially integrated problem, and the Reverse Peace Corps served as an example of a program inspired by the paradigm.

Shriver experienced the paradigm shift after he became the head of the War on Poverty. After forming the Task Force on Poverty and discussing domestic poverty with every expert he could find, Shriver began to understand poverty in America and poverty around the world as the same. In a speech he delivered in New York on 7 December 1965, Shriver explained that it comes “down to three points: this is one world, the struggles in it are one war, and there is one way to win it....We do live in the same town, whether its name is Bombay or New York. The separation of rich and poor is much the same and the consequences are the same, whether the lack of peaceful change explodes in violence in Vietnam or the Dominican Republic or the district of Watts; whether outside agitators are there to compound the trouble or not.”<sup>397</sup> He

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<sup>397</sup> Sargent Shriver, “Address by Sargent Shriver to the Dinner of Peace Corps: The Experiment in International Living,” New York, New York, 7 December 1965, available from: <http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-to-the-dinner-of-the-experiment-in-international-living>; accessed 3 March 2014.

continued: “So it is one continuing war, this struggle for human rights and economic opportunity and peace, whether it was in Nazi Germany or conquered China or colonial Africa and Asia a generation ago—or is in Santo Domingo, Saigon or Saint Louis today, whether it is being waged by the Indians in the Andes or in the United States—or on the Indian subcontinent—whether it is colored people seeking an end to racial discrimination or poor people seeking an end to poverty.”<sup>398</sup> Shriver explained to his audience that the “phrase ‘cultural equality’ on its face seems to go against the facts of life. But so does the idea of human equality—until you see through the superficial differences to the inner spirit equally present in all men.”<sup>399</sup>

Shriver asked the educated, upper-class Indians in attendance who lived in picturesque homes in Bombay on Malabar Hill and drove to modern office buildings along a beautiful ocean-front highway, “How much of the Other American do you experience first-hand?”<sup>400</sup> The upper-class Indians might have been surprised to be asked about how much of the Other American they saw in Bombay. To them, Shriver’s statement probably made no sense. The Other American in Bombay, India? But to Shriver it made perfect sense. The concept was called the Other American, but the actual person could be anywhere. Shriver quoted Father Daniel Berrigan, who stated: “What if we had the courage to summon that Other America to face the Other World... Would not our mirror show, in comparison with the Other World of Asia or Africa or Latin America, not a contrast, but a horrifying and exact counterpart?”<sup>401</sup> The Other American or Other World meant a person who was stuck in poverty and held a system of values that made an escape from scarcity difficult, if not impossible. Shriver had universalized the concept of poverty and applied it equally to the Other America and the Other World, the War on Poverty in America and the Third World.<sup>402</sup>

Shriver was not alone. The Task Force on Poverty, including Frank Mankiewicz, John Kenneth Galbraith, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Bill Moyers, Paul Jacobs, and Michael Harrington, came to agree after 1964 that the culture of poverty shaped people’s behavior all over the world

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

and needed to be reformed if they were to succeed in eliminating poverty at home and abroad.<sup>403</sup> The Peace Corps operated outside the United States, so the members of the Task Force set out creating a domestic organization to help Americans who lived within the culture of poverty. Mankiewicz, Jacobs, and Harrington expressed to Shriver that “A real program against poverty cannot treat these afflictions in isolation. It must be as integrated and comprehensive as the fact of poverty itself.”<sup>404</sup> Bertrand Harding explained that Americans needed

A multi-pronged comprehensive package, [that] would provide educational opportunities for the millions of underprivileged young, give communities the chance to mobilize their own programs, enable the privileged youth of the nation to redirect the idealism of the Peace Corps type to domestic needs, assist in the destruction of barriers that reduce farmers and laborers to poverty, and combine the nation’s talents and resources under an agency in a concerted attack on poverty.<sup>405</sup>

Earlier in the year, Walter Heller and the Council of Economic Advisers wrote a report offering similar suggestions. Heller called for “new federally-led effort” and in the report “recommended that government should ‘marshal already developed resources, focus already expressed concerns,’ and coordinate the ‘diverse attacks,’ on poverty by the myriad agencies engaged in health, education, housing, welfare and agriculture programs.”<sup>406</sup> The new paradigm enabled policymakers to see poverty in a new light, and therefore to integrate past programs in a comprehensive, concerted attack on poverty that, to them, now made logical sense. Accordingly, the Task Force on Poverty wrote bill PL 88-452 that included the Office of Economic Opportunity.

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<sup>403</sup> Frank Mankiewicz, Paul Jacobs, Michael Harrington, “The Long Term View,” Memorandum to R. Sargent Shriver; Folder: Vol. II – Documentary Supplement; Chapter 1 [2 of 2], Box 2, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume II, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, 5. Hereafter listed as LBJ; Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 34, LBJ.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 20



Shriver, with overt support from Lyndon Johnson, worked hard to ensure that Congress passed PL 88-452, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA). Congress did. In August 1964 the House passed the bill 226 to 185, followed by approval in the Senate with a vote of 61 to 35.<sup>407</sup> The Act included most of the ideas and programs that the Task Force and CEA had discussed and suggested over the previous six months. Title I of the EOA authorized the Job Corps, a program to build centers and rural camps where people could learn new job skills and work habits. Title II called for new community-action programs. Title III included loans for rural development and small businesses. Title IV authorized funding for work-study programs for college students. For youth in the inner-cities, Title V created legislation for work opportunities through the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Lastly, Title VI included VISTA—essentially a domestic Peace Corps—and set up OEO to administer all programs within the War on Poverty. To strengthen and protect the independence of OEO, the act stipulated that the organization was authorized by and operated from within the Executive Office of the President.<sup>408</sup>

Historian Michael L. Gillette explained that after Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, “The War on Poverty became synonymous with OEO.”<sup>409</sup> Within the first year OEO created programs that included Head Start, Upward Bound, Legal Services, National Health Affairs, Older Persons Programs, American Indians, Migrant and Farm Workers, VISTA, HARYOU, and Job Corps. Shriver became the first director of the OEO. In the administrative history of the OEO, Bertrand Harding, the director after Shriver, explained that members of Congress noted that several of the programs created by EOA “incorporated or extended ‘activities that had been operated in large scale or in prototype at some point in the past.’”<sup>410</sup> Many programs also had direct analogies in programs currently operating. Members of

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<sup>407</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 539.

<sup>408</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 1, LBJ.

<sup>409</sup> Gillette, xiii.

<sup>410</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of

Congress pointed out that “VISTA resembled the National Service Corps and the Peace Corps” and that “the National Defense Education Act had failed due to opposition by educators.”<sup>411</sup> In 1963, the House Rules Committee had killed the Youth Employment Opportunity Act, including a job corps and work-training project. The Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act of 1961 already contained community action provisions that were being conducted by MFY and the Gray Areas Program.<sup>412</sup>

Opponents of the EOA identified this as a liability. The fact that many of these programs had either already been turned down, or were currently in operation under different legislation, made the bill redundant and financially wasteful. If the programs had failed to pass in the past, then there was no need to reconsider them. If the programs were already operating, then there was no need for additional programs.

But what opponents failed to recognize was that the new paradigm among men and women studying poverty in 1964 placed these programs in a new light. Now, congressionally denied, old, and current programs could be coordinated and integrated in a novel way that made each make perfect sense as a way to alleviate the new poverty. If opponents of the War on Poverty viewed poverty as only unemployment or exclusively within the domain of macroeconomics in the form of tax cuts, then these programs would appropriately not make sense to them. However, such programs made sense to those who understood poverty from within the new paradigm and the emphasis on understanding poverty as the values of the slum. A recreation and reintegration of these programs made sense to a person who understood poverty as the result of a person’s cultural system.; it started with blockages to opportunity, and, through a person’s adaption to a life of deprivation, acquires a culture of poverty and a vicious cycle that limited the earning potential of generation after generation. As Johnson explained in 1964 in his State of the Union Address, “Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptoms.”<sup>413</sup>

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Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 38, LBJ.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, “State of the Union “; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2014.

From the start, OEO operated according to the new paradigm. Harding wrote: “Analysts discovered beneath the symptoms of delinquency the deeper problems of teenage unemployment, slum schools, ghetto living, and broken families.”<sup>414</sup> He continued, noting that “words like ‘comprehensive,’ and ‘coordinated’ came to be ‘enshrined as the inviolable precepts of the successful poverty program.’”<sup>415</sup> OEO conducted the War on Poverty using as many resources as possible. This consisted of coordinating current programs and including participation from federal, state, and local levels. As Johnson stated it, the war must be “won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.”<sup>416</sup> Harding noted that OEO was “not content to leave education to educators, medicine to the doctors, law to the lawyers, or the community to the politicians.”<sup>417</sup>

The priority given to all-inclusiveness in OEO also dictated that staff focus on all age groups. Unlike the New Deal, which primarily emphasized help to people of working age, the War on Poverty included everyone. Johnson explained that “our joint federal-local effort must pursue poverty—pursue it wherever it exists—in city slums and small towns, in sharecropper shacks, or in migrant worker camps, on Indian reservations, among whites as well as Negroes, among the young as well as the aged, in the boom towns and in the depressed areas.”<sup>418</sup> Harding added that “it is a program which can open for the young the opportunity to learn; for the able bodied, the opportunity to work; and for all, the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.”<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 10, LBJ.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, “State of the Union “; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2014.

<sup>417</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 1, LBJ.

<sup>418</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, “State of the Union “; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2014.

<sup>419</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of

Shriver and others at OEO expressed their goal as making people economically independent individuals, without a need for governmental aid. Shriver, Johnson, and workers in OEO intended to give people opportunities to develop their capacities and share in the promise of the nation by putting those capacities to use in school, work, and life. This all-embracing effort that included all people, all areas of the United States, and all resources often led people to describe the process in equally all-encompassing and generalized language. The EOA stated that the War on Poverty aimed at “expanding choices and enlarging human freedoms” and that it would open the doors “into the main edifice of our economy” to everyone, regardless of skills.<sup>420</sup> Harding expanded by stating that “the principle (sic) hope for the poor was for them to develop sufficient strength and skill to maneuver themselves, largely by their own efforts, out of where they are and into something better.”<sup>421</sup>

To accomplish this task, Congress approved a budget of \$962.5 million for OEO. This \$962.5 million was less than 1% of the national budget. Given the estimate from Bureau of the Budget that 35 million poor people lived in America, OEO’s budget allowed less than \$28 per poor person. This prompted historian James T. Patterson to claim that “It was at best a skirmish, not a war.”<sup>422</sup>

But the budget excited Shriver and fellow members of OEO. Shriver and the Task Force on Poverty had initially requested \$1.1 billion for the budget of OEO. So Congress approved 87% of their request. Shriver explained that “so far as I was concerned it was a colossal sum of money.”<sup>423</sup> In October 1964, within a month of Congress’s approval of the EOA, Shriver introduced 119 OEO-funded projects to help poor Americans. By January 1965, members of OEO had announced more than \$200 million in new spending, including projects in thirty-three states and Puerto Rico.<sup>424</sup> Johnson proclaimed that the agency had provided “nearly 400

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Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 58, LBJ.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>422</sup> Patterson, 540.

<sup>423</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 34.

<sup>424</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 169.

transfusions of new opportunity to disadvantaged Americans in every part of the land.”<sup>425</sup>

Included in the 400 opportunities Johnson identified were funds for Head Start, Follow Through, and eighteen new training centers across fifteen states for the Job Corps.

Members of OEO originally designed the Head Start Program to provide education, social services, and health care to the children of low-income families. An early report pointed out that many poor children “never have used cut-out scissors, looked at a picture book, or scribbled with a crayon, been told a fairy tale, been coaxed into completing a simple task successfully, or been talked to as a human being.”<sup>426</sup> It continued: “Thus they learn more slowly, speak later and less well, and have little curiosity and imagination. Because of this, they think of the outside world and school as threatening places....And so these children of poverty will start building a foundation of failure—and thus a pattern of poverty—which will stretch throughout their lives.”<sup>427</sup> Head Start was to help poor children succeed in school, forming a foundation for success for life.

Follow Through complemented Head Start. According to Harding, Follow Through was a program intended “to salvage the potential talents and academic abilities of youngsters from poor backgrounds who had been shut out from the world.”<sup>428</sup> OEO designed the program to prevent high school students from dropping out of school. The program helped students who were poor complete high school and continue their education after graduation by applying for and enrolling in college.

Members of OEO designed the Job Corps to help poor people on the job market. Because the Neighborhood Youth Corps functioned as a temporary public works program, and the work-study program was for college-bound kids, Gillette explained that “the Job Corps targeted society’s ‘least likely to succeed’: sixteen- to twenty-one-year-old high school dropouts, most of

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<sup>425</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 231, LBJ.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

whom came from troubled homes or impoverished environments.”<sup>429</sup> Shriver and the other members of OEO believed that the best way to help poor people in the Job Corps was to expose them to the cultural environment of the middle class. This is what Frank Mankiewicz referred to as “charm school.” He explained that “people who didn’t fit the established culture didn’t tend to get jobs. We thought that one thing could be done...if you can’t beat them, join them.”<sup>430</sup> Shriver compared the process to training in the army. He claimed:

Because what we were trying to do is exactly what they do in the army. In the army you try to make a soldier out of a civilian. You take him and put him into an environment which is totally different from what he’s been in, and you try to control that environment so you can make him into a different kind of a person. We were trying to do the same thing in the Job Corps: teach or train people to participate as job holders in an industrialized society. I believed then, and I still believe, that a great deal of unemployment, particularly what they call structural unemployment, that is people who can’t hold a job, comes from the fact they’ve been in an environment, in a culture—they used to call it the culture of poverty. You cannot cure that malady by leaving the victim in the middle of the area of contagion, to use a phrase out of medicine. So what you do is you take the person out of that environment, put them in a different environment, and you try to mold them into a different kind of person. Therefore, taking somebody from Georgia and putting them in Idaho is not harmful; it’s helpful. It’s helpful for them as an individual.<sup>431</sup>

Shriver’s statement supported the idea among makers of policy in the War on Poverty that being poor meant more than lacking money or materials. Poverty was a culture, a set of values leading to destructive behaviors, a psychological disposition.

Although members of OEO intended the Job Corps to teach skills for work—such as punctuality and consistent performance—to individual poor persons, the program was also intended to help the community by making its members more qualified and competent. In a sense, the Job Corps was to help the community develop members with attitudes and behaviors better suited to an environment of productive workers. The Job Corps was built on the idea—started in the 1920s by Margaret Mead and fellow anthropologists—that community members share cultural values and acculturate younger members.

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<sup>429</sup> Gillette, 212.

<sup>430</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 106.

<sup>431</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 15-16.

Shriver and Dr. Otis Singletary, the director of the Jobs Corps, developed two methods to break the cycle of poverty that had trapped generations in deprivation. First, they could remove poor people from the harmful cultural environment of the slum and place them in nearby centers to learn new attitudes and behaviors, thereby transforming their cultural values and destroying the culture of poverty that dominated the local poor community. This method was used at Job Corps Urban Training Centers. Often the centers were established on abandoned military bases so that trainees were isolated from the harmful cultural influences of people who lived in the nearby slum.

Second, workers in the Job Corps could completely remove the poor person from the harmful cultural environment of the slum and transport him or her to rural sites, far from the city. Officials placed great emphasis on ensuring that participants were transferred to a new cultural environment without the ability to maintain contact with or return to their old neighborhoods until the cultural transformation was complete. William P. Kelly Jr., a member of the Poverty Task Force and assistant director for management at OEO, asserted: “If you’ve know anybody that went to college and lived at home, he has an entirely different life than the kids who are residents on that campus. He’s kind of an outsider, and that’s exactly what has happened in the Job Corps. The kid who’s a nonresident is a day-hop. He’s an outsider, and he doesn’t get integrated into the program. Pretty soon he just never makes it to the bus stop.”<sup>432</sup> Shriver added that “the mere traveling—perhaps quite a long ways away from your previous existence—is an educational activity, and it has an emotional and cultural impact on the people.”<sup>433</sup> Perfectly describing the dynamics of the culture of poverty and the paradigm he followed after 1964, Shriver noted that “a large number of the poor, unemployed teenagers in America are to some extent victims of their surroundings. They grow up in a certain social environment which is almost conducive to keeping them the way they are. I felt it was important to extract them out of that environment and to put them in a different environment, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, two years, a totally new environment, a new culture. Expose them to a new culture: a culture of work, a culture of discipline, a culture of responsibility, personal responsibility. I thought that to take them away from where they were and to put them into this new culture, the

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<sup>432</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 222.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

culture of the Job Corps, would be profoundly transforming to them and beneficial to them.”<sup>434</sup> So officials in the Job Corps wanted to ensure that participants were isolated from their previous cultures in order to have the experience designed to transform them. John Baker, another member of the Task Force on Poverty and the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development and Conservation, explained: “In the way of psychology instead of logic, this got into the picture too: there was a deep belief on our part, which many of the urban types didn’t agree with, that there was something about just living out in the woods and doing hard work on nature things that helped to rehabilitate the human soul.”<sup>435</sup>

Heavyweight boxer George Foreman was arguably the best known graduate of the Job Corps. While a young adult in Houston, Texas, Foreman lived in abject poverty. His father had left his mother when Foreman was a child. He explained that “the streets were my life”; he regularly robbed drunken people leaving bars at night. However, when he heard football star Jim Brown deliver an announcement on the radio about the Job Corps, Foreman signed up. Foreman said: “Before the Job Corps, I thought Lyndon Johnson was the president of Texas. That’s how ignorant I was.”<sup>436</sup> The Job Corps flew Foreman to a camp in Oregon. Foreman explained that “they gave us new clothes—some for working, some from exercising, and a blazer and slacks for dressing up. I’d never had that many clothes in my life. But most important to me were the three meals a day. I’d never had that before.”<sup>437</sup> More than material items, the Job Corps helped him develop skills. He explained: “The Job Corps teachers—even though I didn’t have a father, even though I didn’t have clothes—they embraced me like I was a rich guy. They taught me how to read. They taught me how to build fences. They taught me how to construct a radio. I was so proud of that.”<sup>438</sup> Foreman’s experience revealed that he changed in many different ways. The safe, constructive, and orderly environment of the camp in Oregon helped Foreman acquire a familiarity with being punctual and productive. The clothes, more than garments for warmth, gave Foreman a feeling of being special that built his confidence and changed the way he carried

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>436</sup> Scott Stossel, *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 400.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.



himself.<sup>439</sup> The teachers' positive treatment motivated Foreman to work hard for others in order to earn that same respect from them.

When discussing poor people like Foremen in the Job Corps, Shriver reiterated:

You can go back to that West Point analogy. When the army says it takes them four years to turn out an army officer, it doesn't mean that it takes them four years to teach a guy how to shoot a gun. But what it does take is four years to get a man to the point where he is sufficiently disciplined, dedicated and motivated to do exactly what he is told in a precise way at a precise time, even if he's going to get killed. . . . You cannot learn to do those things that you have to do almost by rote, you cannot learn them in three months, any more than Doug DeCinces can learn how to play third base in six months. When athletes make those unbelievable plays that they make in baseball or football, it only comes from having done it so damn many times and having been there so often, the job becomes instinctive.<sup>440</sup>

Shriver and Singletary designed the Job Corps to develop those instincts – the instincts to find, secure, and hold a job. Within the paradigm, this was much more than reading newspapers, filling out an application, and showing up each day. It was an entire way of life, a culture of productivity. Singletary explained that they took a “kid who was just a dropout, not necessarily illiterate, but who needed to be turned into some kind of productive guy, such as a welder or an automobile mechanic.”<sup>441</sup>

The program within OEO that arguably best demonstrated an attempt to find a diversity of methods to develop a different cultural outlook and set of behaviors was Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU). Dr. Kenneth Clark, the director of HARYOU and an African American, identified the ghetto of Harlem as a self-sustaining cultural environment that acculturated residents to develop a personality founded on feelings of inferiority to middle-class Americans. In line with the new paradigm, he claimed that poverty was more than just a level of income or a lack of material goods; it was a personality and cultural system. He proposed that HARYOU could provide a solution that not only included new housing but also used methods of cultural and psychological counseling to inspire personal development. In *Dark Ghetto* (1965) he wrote that “in all of Harlem there is no museum, no art gallery, no art school, no sustained ‘little

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid. 401

<sup>440</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 51-52.

<sup>441</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 215.

theater' groups; despite the stereotype of the Negro as artist, there are only five libraries—but hundreds of bars, hundreds of churches, and scores of fortune tellers. Everywhere there are signs of fantasy, decay, abandonment, and defeat. The only constant characteristic is a sense of inadequacy. People seem to have given up in the little things that are so often the symbol of the larger things.”<sup>442</sup>

Dr. Clark identified youth as the pivotal point in which personalities formed based on their cultural influences, and so he designed HARYOU to focus on young people. Clark quoted an interview that he did with a twenty-six-year-old man in Harlem who said: “I don't think that anything can be done to correct it. Me, because I'm too far gone on it, you know. But, I mean, for my brothers and sisters, you know, people that are coming up younger than I, you know, they can do something.”<sup>443</sup> Clark asserted that both proper parenting and positive peer influence could solve Harlem residents' poverty. He proposed to develop healthy personalities by having children participate in cultural experiences.

Clark was a social psychologist, and his emphasis on youth as the period of personality development aligned perfectly with psychological studies of personality and culture that had become dominant in the 1950s. Notably, Clark's description of how young people formed their personalities in accordance with cultural influences matched the progression set forth by Erik Erickson and his stages of personality development.<sup>444</sup> Clark's proposals also worked in accordance with the same logic of acculturation that had been proposed by Margaret Mead. Clark personally knew both Erikson and Mead. In 1950, Clark had discussed the topics of culture and personality with both Erikson and Mead during the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth.<sup>445</sup> He agreed with their research and used it as the basis of HARYOU.

The shared understanding among Erikson, Mead, and Clark about the dynamics of personality development and cultural influence also aligned with the emphasis within the OEO

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<sup>442</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 27.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>444</sup> Erik Erickson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1950), 247-268.

<sup>445</sup> Federal Interdepartmental Committee on Children and Youth, “Report to National Midcentury Committee for Children and Youth,” 16 October 1952; Folder: Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth—Federal Follow-Up, Box 9, White House Conference on Children and Youth: Records, 1930-70; Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. Hereafter listed as DDE.

that childhood was pivotal to developing or preventing the culture of poverty. A report from the OEO stated: “Improving the situation of parents may be critical to providing a home environment in which children have the opportunities and incentives to study and learn, because mental and physical disabilities frequently develop early in life.”<sup>446</sup> Next, the authors claimed, “cultural deprivation lies at the root of much poverty. Children brought up in broken families, children accustomed to living on relief, children reared in family and community environments in which the importance of education is deprecated and hope for escaping poverty is smothered—such children are prime candidates for adulthoods in poverty.”<sup>447</sup> The report continued: “By the age of six to nine years, this receptivity is largely distorted by negative systems (bad image of self and society, discouragement and hatred) built into the personality.”<sup>448</sup> The authors of the report explained that “we suggest as the over-riding objective of a sustained attack on poverty the reduction and eventual elimination of those conditions which condemn our children and youth of today to a state of poverty when they become adults. In short, the principal focus is on the prevention of poverty—and thus on youth.”<sup>449</sup> The authors believed that young people presented a window of opportunity to permanently end poverty in the future; young people acquired either positive or negative cultural values that would guide their outlook, attitudes, and behavior for the rest of their lives. Youth was a period when cultural values were less entrenched and more pliable, and therefore a long-term solution for poverty required that makers of policy impact young people.

Clark designed and used HARYOU to accomplish this goal. He believe that the best way to change the economically debilitating cultural values that dominated Harlem was to have children participate in the arts. He thought that far too often children grew up witnessing adults who distrusted everyone, focused on their interests over of those of the community, caused broken families by abandoning children, saw no value in education, lacked motivation to strive for a better life, and sought immediate gratification over long-term planning. He explained: “Those within the ghetto who are defeated—those who accept the ‘evidence’ of their personal

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<sup>446</sup> Office of Economic Opportunity, “Attack on Poverty,” 1964; Folder: WE 9 Poverty Program (Great Society) (1964-1966), Box 98, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Confidential File, WE/MC, 12, LBJ.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

inferiority and impotence, those who express a pervasive sense of personal failure through stagnation and despair, who drop out of school, who depend on marijuana and narcotics—demonstrate a passively negative and self-destructive solution.”<sup>450</sup> Based on his research and discussions with others in New York, Clark believed that the arts could change all of these values. Hanna T. Rose, Curator of Education at the Brooklyn Museum, wrote that the arts “may offer us one of the most important keys in the history of education for unlocking the doors which prevent the disadvantaged child from responding to the learning process—and which often block our best efforts to reach, to motivate, and finally, to teach him. In fact, this function may well turn out to be a pre-condition of the most fundamental kinds of learning needs for all children.”<sup>451</sup> In line with Clark’s goals for HARYOU, she stated that the staff of the Brooklyn Museum “intends to examine the value of the arts as a force which can change attitudes and motivate people into better jobs, further education, greater civic responsibilities, and richer lives.”<sup>452</sup>

At first, members of OEO hesitated to fund HARYOU because they feared that Clark had designed the program to lead the children of Harlem into careers in the arts. Clark convinced them that he had not designed HARYOU for this purpose. Clark explained that the arts within HARYOU were intended, as Rose pointed out, to motivate kids to study something personally meaningful, to connect the kids to the community of Harlem and the nation, to consider their lives as part of a larger process, and to improve their ability to communicate effectively. Clark pointed out the way in which MFY, which operated nearby at the same time as HARYOU, used a variety of programs to overcome the values leading to poverty. If poverty was an all-encompassing system of values that directed behavior in an economically counterproductive way, then any solution would need to comprehensively address such values. Clark believed that the arts were a unique and effective way to reach youth in order to accomplish this task of changing their system of cultural values. He explained that the process was designed to “provide a new subculture equipped with the symbols of culture—insignia, slogans, rituals, rules—

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<sup>450</sup> Clark, 13.

<sup>451</sup> Hanna T. Rose, “The Role of the Arts in Meeting the Social and Educational Needs of the Disadvantaged,” 2 September 1966; Folder: WE 1 Child Welfare Services, Box 98, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Confidential File, WE/MC, 3, LBJ.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

designed to build an *esprit de corps* and a tradition of effective social participation leading toward constructive rather than self-destructive ego satisfaction.”<sup>453</sup> He continued: “An attractive and imaginative subculture enables a teen-ager to begin to think about a career and advancement.”<sup>454</sup>

Project Up-Lift (PUL) was one of the primary programs within HARYOU that used a variety of services and the arts to transform children’s cultural values. PUL was the product of several community agencies working together, including HARYOU, the Urban League, the Harlem Neighborhood Associations, the Harlem Administrative Council, and the Associated Community Teams. Designed for young people between ages fourteen and twenty five, PUL was a ten-week-long summer program to develop in young people a number of skills, including the ability to identify community needs and to lead an effort to meet those needs. The students’ services were to “provide highly visible community improvement and [to] benefit all of Harlem.”<sup>455</sup> Frank L. Stanley Jr., a project coordinator for HARYOU, explained that “the program will serve as a basis for the development of work skills and work habits which will increase the future employability of many participants. Others are expected to become better achievers in school as a result of this employment and service program.”<sup>456</sup> A cartoon in a newspaper about PUL had an image of a boy who was smoking, saying “I quit school when I were sixteen.” A clean-cut boy and girl standing next to him and holding books responded, “We did too, but Project Up-Lift convinced us to go back.”<sup>457</sup>

Although school attendance and steady employment were always the goals, activities in PUL took a variety of forms. PUL included neighborhood development, remedial reading, public information, day camps, residential camps, emergency homemaker services, and recreational and

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<sup>453</sup> Clark, 98.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Frank L. Stanley, Jr. on behalf of Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, “Questions and Answers About: Project Up-Lift,” 1965; Folder: Juvenile Delinquency, 1965, HARYOU ACT, Box 63, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Senate Legislative Subject File, John Fitzgerald Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts. Hereafter listed as JFK.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> “Activities at PUL Day Camps,” 1965; Folder: Juvenile Delinquency, 1965, HARYOU ACT, Box 63, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Senate Legislative Subject File, JFK.

cultural programs.<sup>458</sup> Although on a smaller scale, the residential camps operated on the same logic as the rural camps in the Job Corps. The emergency homemaker services in PUL operated using the same logic as the Visiting Homemakers Program in MFY. Notably, it was to teach mothers to create a positive, supportive environment for their children.

Also like MFY, the recreational and cultural programs included a variety of services. During the summer of 1965 staff at PUL invited children in Harlem to create pieces of art and either display or perform them at local festivals. For example, on July 20, 1965, PUL hosted a music festival on 114<sup>th</sup> St. and Madison Ave.; a drama festival at 131<sup>st</sup> St. and 7<sup>th</sup> Ave; a creative dance festival at 138<sup>th</sup> St. and Lenox Ave; and an art festival at 139<sup>th</sup> and Lenox Ave. The following day, PUL hosted another round of music, drama, and art festivals, and added a poetry festival. For the next five days—July 22 through July 26—PUL continued to host each festival, moving the location every day to give all children an opportunity to participate in events near their homes.<sup>459</sup>

The staff at PUL found other ways to give children cultural experiences while teaching about the history of their community. Concurrently with the festivals, PUL hosted the Afra-Arts Gallery at the Cultural Center at 47 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem to offer the opportunity for the public to view works of art by African-American artists. Stanley explained: “Harlem has a long and varied history, but most children (and adults) are unaware of the heritage of Harlem and of the important events which had their beginnings in this crowded neighborhood. Familiarization with the history of the Negro in America and with the history of Harlem are (sic) important elements in the development of neighborhood pride of identity.”<sup>460</sup> In short, the program used a variety of methods to help break down the every-one-for-himself mentality of the culture of poverty and connect residents to other members of the community and to their shared history.

Members of PUL believed that they impacted not only kids but the entire cultural system of Harlem. By the end of the ten-week program, the staff at PUL estimated, the program

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<sup>458</sup> Frank L. Stanley, Jr. on behalf of Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, “Questions and Answers About: Project Up-Lift,” 1965; Folder: Juvenile Delinquency, 1965, HARYOU ACT, Box 63, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Senate Legislative Subject File, JFK.

<sup>459</sup> News Briefs: Project Up-Lift, “Summer Festival,” 17 July 1965; Folder: Juvenile Delinquency, 1965, HARYOU ACT, Box 63, Robert F. Kennedy Papers, Senate Legislative Subject File, JFK.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

employed 500 professional staff members and 4,000 volunteers from Harlem between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. The program had over 20,000 youths participating and impacted an additional 25,000 residents. Stanley asserted that “there is a definite agreement in Social Science literature that the cultural gap existing between the middle and lower class cultures interferes with success.”<sup>461</sup> However, he claimed, “Our boys no longer ‘bop’ to the payroll line; the girls are more concerned with helping a ‘kid’ learn to read than being ‘hip.’” Harlem street corners are noticeably empty of gangs of boys—the gang boys are now working. This is a definite indication of a break in the psychological barrier.”<sup>462</sup> In other words, PUL was enabling young people to break out of the culture of poverty.

The Job Corps emphasized the cultural environment of poverty, HARYOU developed a variety of ways to help children break out of its cycle, and VISTA used the method of community action to transform community members’ values in order to make them economically independent. Like HARYOU, Shriver explained, “the Job Corps, just as an example, and all the other programs we had, VISTA or Peace Corps, had the philosophy of trying to develop people so that they could take care of themselves. That’s much harder, of course, and it’s much longer term.”<sup>463</sup> Because the new paradigm convinced makers of policy that all poverty around the world was the result of deleterious cultural values, the solution of transforming those values could be used equally in all programs. VISTA was a Community Action Program that operated in a way very similar to the method of changing cultural values used in MFY, Gray Areas Program, the Peace Corps, and the proposed National Service Corps. Shriver explained that VISTA operated just as the Peace Corps did:

Well, you have to understand that in the Peace Corps, which I was running at the same time as OEO, we had a large, large number of volunteers engaged in what we called community development. Now community development is no different than community action. So I had spent the previous five years, 1961-65, trying to get community spirit, community action, community development going in Lima, Peru, or up in the Andes Mountains or in the slums outside of Rio de Janeiro or Jakarta or wherever it might be. So the work we did in community development for five years with the Peace Corps was a complete preparation, so far as I was concerned, for the same kind of work which would

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette,

Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 19.

be done by VISTA volunteers within the United States. So if a VISTA volunteer were sent to an Indian reservation or sent to Phoenix, Arizona, I'd expect him to go out there and become a social action worker. We were not training caseworkers; we were training people who would go out there and assist the people, mobilize the people, encourage, inspire, kick them in the fanny, do whatever was necessary to get them into action to help themselves.<sup>464</sup>

Shriver's reference to mobilizing the people demonstrated his belief in the impact of the culture of poverty around the world and a way to help people overcome it. It also revealed how he could draw inspiration from previous and current programs that operated on this basis, such as Mobilization for Youth and the Peace Corps.

VISTA projects would take a slightly different form at each location, but the volunteers at each always had the goal of motivating the local people to carry on self-help projects, the very undertaking of which would transform their cultural values from apathy to self-motivated productivity. Glenn Ferguson, director of VISTA, explained: "The volunteer was a conduit. The volunteer was an instrument, bringing commitment and skills and maybe insight, but certainly time and concern, to help people make their own judgments with regard to the direction in which they wanted to go in every community, whether it was a migrant camp or an urban complex."<sup>465</sup>

Steve Girton, a volunteer in VISTA whose assignment was in the South End of Boston, explained that "our task is to put the residents in touch with each other."<sup>466</sup> Girton attempted to accomplish this task by creating a newspaper—printed in Spanish, Chinese, and English—to create a denominator of a common language, make all residents aware of each other, and inform people of the services offered at the nearby Shawmut Center. Sandy Anderson, another volunteer in Boston's South End, created a system of tutors for local children. She remembered: "I found that even those who were ten and eleven years old couldn't read or tell time. And no one cared about teaching them. Now when you see them learning, it's beautiful."<sup>467</sup> A third volunteer in the South End, Norman Olshansky, helped to improve the living conditions of the area's residents by

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<sup>464</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 32.

<sup>465</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 293.

<sup>466</sup> Quoted in William H. Crook and Ross Thomas, *Warriors for the Poor: The Story of VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1969), 72.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*



pressing for strict enforcement of the state's housing codes. He detailed how, "in one of [the houses], I had to scare away the rats to see the basement. In another basement, the people there complained that the rats had killed three tough cats."<sup>468</sup> Olshansky spoke to the tenants and the landlords, ensuring that both knew that the law required specific living conditions for rentals, and therefore the situation must be addressed to meet legal codes. Olshansky asserted that "the most important thing I do is to explain the alternative situations to each problem; then I leave the decision up to them. That way, the landlords themselves will come up with alternative solutions in the future."<sup>469</sup> In short, Olshansky motivated landlords and tenants to work together for a common solution that also improved conditions in the community. Harding wrote that "VISTA's experience proved to be remarkably parallel to the communication achieved by Peace Corps Volunteers in foreign lands."<sup>470</sup>

Like Shriver, Ferguson directly linked the Peace Corps and VISTA. Ferguson worked as Shriver's director of training for volunteers in the Peace Corps for three years before becoming the director of VISTA. Shriver was also not the only person who concurrently worked on the domestic War on Poverty and the Peace Corps. For Ferguson's first three months as director of VISTA, he continued to serve as director of training for the Peace Corps. Ferguson explained that, "because I was interested in the potential of creating a domestic counterpart of the Peace Corps, I volunteered to assist with the War on Poverty Task Force. Training, selection, and volunteer support were functions germane to a domestic volunteer program, and I had been responsible for those functions at the Peace Corps."<sup>471</sup>

Ferguson stated that both programs addressed the "poverty syndrome" and were "complementary and not competitive."<sup>472</sup> Recruiters for the Peace Corps and VISTA worked together on campuses of colleges around the country. While the Peace Corps attracted more

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, "The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969," Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 428, LBJ.

<sup>471</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 285.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 288.

volunteers in 1964 and 1965, by 1966 more people were volunteering with VISTA. Edgar May, the author of the *Wasted Americans*, member of the Task Force on Poverty, and deputy director of VISTA, contended that in the same way that service in an exotic foreign country attracted the youth, “the Indian reservations, migrant worker camps, the hollows of Appalachia, Harlem, and the South Side of Chicago, and Watts, all became exciting to American young people.”<sup>473</sup>

VISTA was modeled on the widely popular Peace Corps, and a key part of the evidence for the ascendancy of the new paradigm among policymakers was that Congress, although it had rejected the National Service Corps in 1963, approved VISTA in 1964.<sup>474</sup> Robert Kennedy had designed the National Service Corps to end poverty in the United States, and he had based the design on the Peace Corps. Thus VISTA was in effect the National Service Corps with a different name. Harding wrote that “the essential structure of Volunteers in Service to America was outlined almost step by step in a program prepared by the administration of President Kennedy under the title of the National Service Corps.”<sup>475</sup>

The changed conditions and paradigm shift facilitated Congress’s approval of VISTA. The old way of seeing things had many policymakers still reluctant to accept a transformation of culture as the key to solving unemployment and many other problems. As Harding put it, “Under the stimulus of the Johnson Administration . . . and the increased awareness of the facts of poverty in the country, the situation, only a year later, was entirely different.”<sup>476</sup> Pollack claimed that the bill for the National Service Corps was at times directed toward mental hospitals, juvenile delinquents, the maladjusted, Indian reservations, and depressed areas. Now, the culture

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>474</sup> The Senate passed the bill (S 1321) for the National Service Corps on July 31, 1963 with a vote of 47 to 44. Because of the narrow margin of approval in the Senate, the bill (HR 5625) never made it to the floor of the House and remained in the House Education and Labor Committee. For VISTA the Senate passed the bill with a vote of 61 to 35 and the House passed the bill by a margin of 226 to 185.

“National Service Corps,” in *CQ Almanac 1963*, 19th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1964), 228-31; Patterson, 539.

<sup>475</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, 412, LBJ.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 412-413.

of poverty placed all of these phenomena in a new light. Now, all were seen as separate manifestations of same underlying issue, the culture of poverty. So, given the paradigm shift among them, policymakers were able to justify the domestic program by explaining that the highly popular Peace Corps was already addressing the culture of poverty in foreign countries. Harding recorded that VISTA “went through the House of Representatives and the Senate with virtually no disagreement.”<sup>477</sup>

If Americans came to view VISTA as addressing the same issue as the Peace Corps did, volunteers in the Peace Corps after 1964 came to view their task in light of domestic efforts. The paradigm shift among Americans made people see the culture of poverty as global. Explaining how cultural values shaped behavior and attitudes, resulting in either affluence or poverty, became common practice at home and abroad.

Social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s often described the way of life in foreign countries as stemming from traditional culture rather than a culture of poverty. However, both terms described a culture that came from blockages to opportunity that forced people to adapt to a life of poverty. Each was a way of life with a series of attitudes and values that prevented people in the Third World from escaping poverty. In the 1960s, programs to develop the Third World, such as the Peace Corps, were directed at more than the introduction of a modern industrialized economy. The people who ran the programs aimed at changing the people’s cultural values in each nation. Walt Rostow, National Security Adviser to Johnson, contended: “Capital formation is not merely a matter of profit maximization: it is a matter of a society’s effective attitude towards and response to basic science, applied science, and the risk-taking of innovation and innovational lending.”<sup>478</sup> A modern country could introduce industrialization into a Third World country by building structures such as factories, roads, railroads, harbors, and dams. But the people of that country might nonetheless retain values from a culture of poverty. If this happened, experts such as Rostow explained, industrialization would fail to take root and could never be self-sustaining. Therefore industrialization was measured by people, not factories – how they acted, what values they had toward education, planning, work, money, and saving.

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 417. Harding’s estimate of the amount of disagreement was sanguine. As stated in footnote 470, the Senate passed the bill for VISTA with a vote of 61 to 35 and the House passed the bill by a margin of 226 to 185. In short, disagreement existed.

<sup>478</sup> W.W. Rostow, *The Process of Economic Growth* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), vii.

The paradigm shift unified the conception of traditional culture and the culture of poverty, making them synonymous. All of the components of the culture of poverty had equivalents in traditional culture. Once the paradigm shift occurred in 1964, a single mentality about poverty came to exist among the administrators who ran program to address poverty at home and abroad, not separate explanations of domestic poverty and poverty in foreign lands.

Jack Vaughn, the director of the Peace Corps from 1966 to 1969, demonstrated the shift in his address to the members of the Public Affairs Forum of the Harvard Business School. He explained:

A realistic definition of “deprivation” does not begin with material want—although hundreds of millions of people are in dire material want. It does not begin with lack of learning—although hundreds of millions of people lack the merest rudiments of learning. At bottom, what the deprived of the world have been deprived of by the conditions of their lives are things of the spirit. They have been deprived of initiative and self-reliance; of courage and hope. Until they can begin to believe in the possibility of improvement, begin to trust the usefulness of innovation, the most and best that America—or anybody—offers them in the way of technical assistance, of hardware and the skill to use it, will avail them little.<sup>479</sup>

Vaughn described the culture of poverty. The dynamic of poverty and escaping that life were identical to others’ explanations of poverty in the Job Corps, Head Start, Follow Through, HARYOU, and VISTA.

Lawrence H. Fuchs, the director of the Peace Corps in the Philippines from September 1961 to June 1963, demonstrated the way in which the concept of local culture became equated with the culture of poverty. In a book he published in 1967—after the paradigm shift—Fuchs explained that “most of them [volunteers in the Peace Corp] were pleased with the natural beauty of the Filipino countryside, and were gratified at the personal cleanliness of many Filipinos. But many were truly shocked by living in a culture of poverty for the first time.”<sup>480</sup> It is important to

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479 Jack Vaughn, “The Peace Corps: A Pilot Program for American Development Director of the Peace Corps,” speech before the Public Affairs Forum of the Harvard Business School, 13 February 1968, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Access through Peace Corps Digital Library at:

<http://collection.peacecorps.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/p9009coll13/id/22/rec/4>

<sup>480</sup> Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Those Peculiar Americans: The Peace Corps and American National Character* (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), 109.

note that, rather than describing the culture among poor Filipinos as traditional, he explained it as the culture of poverty.

Fuchs went on to explain elements of Filipino culture as parts of the culture of poverty. Fuchs discussed the Filipino cultural value known as *bahala na*. He explained that *bahala na* means “it doesn’t matter, never mind” or that “the conditions of life are unchanging and unchangeable.”<sup>481</sup> He directly contrasted *bahala na* to the value of achievement in the culture of industrialized nations that led people to try to accomplish something tangible and meaningful in both their personal and professional lives.

Fuchs explained that volunteers in the Peace Corps went out into Filipino villages and discussed measures to solve Filipinos’ most pressing problems. Volunteers noticed that Filipinos denounced poverty, illiteracy, disease, and low agricultural production while admiring higher standards of living in countries such as America.<sup>482</sup> Volunteers believed that Filipinos wanted to change their lives and their communities. Accordingly, volunteers offered to help Filipinos by providing access to resources from the Peace Corps, including health care services, food, and educational materials and instruction. However, despite their denunciations of hardships in the country, Filipinos deeply resisted volunteers’ offers. *Bahala na* led Filipinos to fundamentally accept of the basic conditions of life and death as they knew them. Fuchs asserted that “*Bahala na* could be a helpful response to the minor annoyances of daily life—a missed bus, no fish in the market, a sudden storm—but it also appeared to be a chief obstacle to progress in health, education, and economic development.”<sup>483</sup> Frustrated by the fatalism of *bahala na* in Filipino culture, volunteers sought to instill a will to achieve into Filipinos and Filipino culture, thereby creating the preconditions for improved education, agricultural production, and health care. Rather than an absence of food, medicine, or books, poverty was the lack of will to change and fight to improve those areas. Poverty, at heart, was both personal and cultural

Fuchs explained that values described as *bahala na* in Filipino culture existed in all countries. He connected the concept of *bahala na* to poor people in the United States. Fuchs described the unified and universal concept as the “other culture.” He claimed:

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 67.

Many actions stemming from those values ascribed to Filipino culture could also be found in immigrant subcultures in the United States as well as on the continents of Asia, South America, and Africa. Peace Corps volunteers who have served in other countries or VISTA volunteers who have worked on Indian reservations or in urban ghettos will recognize in Filipinos many of the same values and attitudes which they found their hosts and friends from the “other-culture.” They will be struck particularly by the relative absence of achievement motivation.<sup>484</sup>

Fuchs perfectly described the dynamic of the culture of poverty when blockages to opportunity forced people to adapt to a life of poverty. Then, that culture of poverty became the main obstacle to helping people value education, attain and hold a job, and become economically independent. He asserted: “Those qualities usually are present where people are terribly poor and see no way of becoming richer, whether they live in a culture where traditions are powerful, as in Thailand, or in the Negro ghettos of our big cities. So in large measure the Filipino setting in this book is interchangeable with other settings, because the cultural baggage that middle-class American Peace Corps volunteers carry and their reactions to and their ways of coping with the other-culture are the same in all the counties in which they live.”<sup>485</sup> In short, Fuchs argued that the culture of poverty caused all poverty around the world.

The program that best exemplified the way in which the paradigm shift unified the conception of poverty at home and abroad was the Reverse Peace Corps (RPC). Sometimes called the Exchange Peace Corps or Volunteers to America, the program brought middle- and upper-class men and women from Asia, Africa, and Latin America to work in American neighborhoods and schools in order to help the poor. The logic behind the program was that, if middle-class Americans could alleviate the poverty of foreign people, middle-class foreign people could help the American poor. On February 2, 1966, Johnson enthusiastically endorsed an “Exchange Peace Corps” in his message to Congress. He claimed: “Our nation has no better ambassadors than the young volunteers who serve in 46 countries in the Peace Corps. I propose that we welcome similar ambassadors to our shores. We need their special skills and understanding just as they need ours.”<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>486</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 188.

Because makers of policy viewed all poverty as the result of cultural values that could negatively impact poor people around the world equally, people with middle- or upper-class values could help instill a more productive set of behavior and attitudes—regardless of the country from which they came.

As evidence of the way in which the new paradigm among policymakers made the program possible, the idea of a Peace Corps in reverse was rejected when Shriver first informally proposed it to members of Congress in 1961. The idea suffered the same fate as the National Service Corps when both were proposed before the paradigm shift unified the conception of foreign and domestic poverty.

The initial idea of a Peace Corp in reverse came from Kwame Nkrumah, the President of Ghana. In 1961, on Shriver's first visit to Accra for the Peace Corps, Nkrumah asked Shriver "Why the one-way traffic? Did he want some young Ghanaians to volunteer for service to America?"<sup>487</sup> Caught off guard, Shriver responded "yes." But when he brought the idea up to members of Congress, Shriver was met with rejection.

Undeterred, Shriver brought the idea up again in 1965. In the same address when he asked upper-class Indians about the "Other American" in Bombay, Shriver declared that "tonight I want to propose a new move in this war—a Reverse Peace Corps—under which foreign volunteers would work in our communities or teach in our schools. This idea of an Exchange Peace Corps to America is in the air now the way the Peace Corps was in 1960. It is a natural application, in reverse, of everything we have learned in the Peace Corps . . . they will contribute new ideas and be a source of stimulation, as our Volunteers are abroad."<sup>488</sup> With Shriver's drive and Johnson's support, Congress passed the Reverse Peace Corps in 1967. Just as the National Service Corps had failed 1963 but passed as VISTA in 1964, the Reverse Peace Corps met opposition in 1961 but approval in 1967.

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<sup>487</sup> Quoted in Sheyda Jahanbani, "A Different Kind of People: The Poor at Home and Abroad, 1935-1968," (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 2009), 254.

<sup>488</sup> Sargent Shriver, "Address by Sargent Shriver to the Dinner of Peace Corps: The Experiment In International Living," New York, New York, 7 December 1965, available from: <http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-to-the-dinner-of-the-experiment-in-international-living>; accessed 3 March 2014.

The Reverse Peace Corps operated from 1967 to 1970. In the first summer 34 men and 30 women from foreign countries came to America to work with the poor. The men and women came from countries including Argentina, Ghana, Nepal, the Philippines, Iran, and Israel.

One volunteer, a thirty-year-old man name Renato from the Philippines, volunteered in East Harlem. An author of an article in the *New York Times* explained that Renato worked with VISTA and was assigned to Block Communities Incorporated, which “trains and sends workers to live on New York City blocks to help people organize to help themselves.”<sup>489</sup> Giving support to the idea of a universal culture of poverty, Renato said that “the poverty, apathy and attitudes are the same” on West 111<sup>th</sup> Street and Lenox Avenue as problems he encountered in the barrios of Manila.<sup>490</sup>

Renato’s experience was a prime example of the way in which a common paradigm—started by Kennedy, continued by Johnson, and completed by Shriver—equally shaped programs to end poverty at home and abroad. Renato connected the variety of programs and ideas within the paradigm of the War on Poverty, including working with VISTA, concentrating on the same area as HARYOU, confirming Fuchs’s characterization of the “other culture” in Manila and New York, and Shriver’s belief in the shared culture of poverty assumed by the logic of Reverse Peace Corps. In short, the paradigm shift in the understanding of poverty at home and abroad equally shaped all programs and people in the War on Poverty in the United States and in foreign lands. The paradigm allowed all people and programs to be integrated into a single effort to end global poverty.

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<sup>489</sup> “Filipino Striving To Help Harlem: Reverse Peace Corps Aide Works With Block Group,” *New York Times*, 2 June 1968.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*



## **Chapter 6 - “All of the Negativism Piled Up”: The Paradigm Disintegrates**

By 1964 the paradigm that attributed all poverty around the world to the same set of cultural values had fully come together. Sargent Shriver and others who made policy based the design of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) within the War on Poverty and all of its programs in accordance with their notion of a culture of poverty. By 1980 intellectual, social, and political movements had caused the paradigm to fall apart. Some aspects of the thinking that had been behind the paradigm were integrated into succeeding paradigms—such as the explanatory power of culture—while other aspects lost intellectual credibility—such as cultural universalism. Several reasons accounted for the paradigm’s loss of credibility among makers of policy.

Because Shriver and others had used the paradigm to design the War on Poverty—a major federal initiative—all challenges to programs within the War on Poverty also challenged the underlying paradigm. Between 1964 and 1980 a wide variety of groups and individuals within the United States contested that the programs of the War on Poverty afforded too little power to the poor; gave too much power directly to the poor, were too costly, and lacked funding because of the Vietnam War; misused federal funds, incited violence and riots, increased dependency, made poor people feel entitled, failed to create jobs, or made too little progress in solving poor people’s problems. As the War on Poverty increasingly lost popular and political support in the late 1960s and 1970s, the credibility of the paradigm declined.

However, the paradigm was a worldview that was bigger than a series of domestic programs. The paradigm could have still existed without the domestic War on Poverty. Therefore the most important reason for the paradigm’s collapse was the challenge from conservatives and liberals over its logic. Taken together, they challenged several tenets of the paradigm.

Conservatives such as Republican politician Ronald Reagan, urbanologist Edward Banfield, and political scientist Charles Murray questioned the assumption that people could intentionally and purposefully improve cultural values. Each claimed that it was poor people’s fault for not being able to escape poverty and—perhaps aside from authoritarian measures—the government had little power to help them overcome their deleterious cultural values. They challenged the tenet that the federal government could best produce change. Conservatives did

not object to using the idea of culture to explain how poverty arose, but they inverted the logic of the paradigm by claiming that governmental programs to end poverty caused dependency rather than created self-sufficiency. As Reagan proclaimed in his State of the Union Address in 1988: “My friends, some years ago, the Federal Government declared war on poverty, and poverty won.”<sup>491</sup>

Liberals, including civil rights leaders and activists Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Betty Friedan, and Cesar Chavez discredited claims that marginalized groups suffered from cultural values that enervated their will to fight for a better future. Social and political movements showed the power of marginalized groups who suffered poverty. Rather than victims of blocked opportunities who needed help to change, they were powerful people who fought against the system despite their oppression.

The works of liberal scholars challenged the paradigm from many angles. Some lent support to the social movements. Historians Jules Rawick, Lawrence Levine, and Eugene Genovese demonstrated the power of the historically poor African-American community, not its weakness.<sup>492</sup> Given that subscribers to the paradigm often blamed women and their style of childrearing for passing down the culture of poverty to succeeding generations, scholars of women stressed the positive influence of the group despite their repeated oppression by men.<sup>493</sup>

Liberal anthropologists, such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Mary Douglas, challenged the assumption that a single universal culture of poverty existed by emphasizing cultural relativism. In short, the world’s diverse environment obligated humans to adapt their cultural attitudes and behaviors to survive in areas as different as the Australian Outback and the Alps of Switzerland. Geertz helped shift the focus of anthropology from behavior to meanings and symbols. Culture determined meaning and was relative to time and setting. It mattered less

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<sup>491</sup> Quoted in Annelise Orleck, “The War on the War on Poverty and American Politics since the 1960s,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History: 1964-1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 437.

<sup>492</sup> Jules Rawick, *From Sunup to Sundown: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1973); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976).

<sup>493</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 497.

how the poor in Ghana acted, and more what they understood to be the meaning of their actions within their local context. The experience of poverty by people in different cultures did not conform to any one universal standard.

Americans in the 1970s would come to celebrate diversity, multiculturalism, and ethnic subcultures—not any single American identity. Historian Bruce Schulman explained, when discussing governmental programs, that “the justification for them shifted from integration—including disadvantaged minorities so they could become like everyone else—to diversity—welcoming racial and cultural differences into institutions so that they would reflect the multicultural nature of American society.”<sup>494</sup>

Conservatives first major criticism of the War on Poverty and its underlying paradigm was that poor people’s cultural values could be reformed. Conservatives accepted that the poor had distinct cultural values. In contrast to liberals who believed that the poor were trapped by their cultural values and wanted help to change, conservatives held that the poor deserved their fate in poverty because of their bad life choices and that they had no desire to change. In short, poor people could not be helped by others; they could only help themselves.

In *The Unheavenly City* (1970), conservative urbanologist Edward Banfield claimed that “the lower-class individual lives from moment to moment . . . impulse governs his behavior. . . . He is therefore radically improvident: whatever he cannot consume immediately he considers valueless. . . . [He] has a feeble, attenuated sense of self.”<sup>495</sup> Banfield eventually became an adviser to Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Conservative Senator Barry Goldwater claimed that “the fact is that most people who have no skill have had no education for the same reason—low intelligence or low ambition.”<sup>496</sup> The conservative description of the culture of poverty reached its full maturity in Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground* (1984). Murray argued that people were not inherently moral, hardworking, or responsible. The poor avoided work and were amoral because they tried to escape responsibility for their actions. According to writer Barbara Ehrenreich, Murray argued that “poverty was caused not by low wages or a lack of jobs but by bad attitudes

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<sup>494</sup> Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>495</sup> Quoted in Barbara Ehrenreich “Michael Harrington and the ‘Culture of Poverty,’” *The Nation*, April 2, 2012, 1.

<sup>496</sup> James T. Patterson, *American’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 140.

and faulty lifestyles. The poor were dissolute, promiscuous, prone to addiction and crime, unable to defer gratification or possibly even set an alarm clock. The last thing they could be trusted with was money.”<sup>497</sup>

Conservatives’ second major criticism of the War on Poverty and its supporting paradigm was that governmental programs designed to alleviate poverty were harmful to the American economy and to poor people. Conservatives including Banfield, Murray, and Goldwater argued that governmental programs created and sustained the culture of poverty. This stood in direct contrast to policymakers in the 1960s who claimed that the government was the best instrument to address and end poverty in America.

Makers of policy in the War on Poverty held that limited opportunities, combined with poor childrearing styles and negative peer influence, accounted for the propagation of the culture of poverty. Conservatives held a fundamentally different belief about how the culture of poverty formed and was sustained. They argued that governmental programs only exacerbated the dependency of the poor and therefore must be terminated. Conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s argued that poor people’s situations had been improving in the 1950s and would have continued to get better if the liberals and OEO had not intervened and made things worse.<sup>498</sup> Murray explained that all governmental attempts to help the poor only resulted in deepening their dependency and depravity. In his speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination in 1968, Nixon declared: “For the past five years, we have been deluged by government programs for the unemployed; programs for the cities; programs for the poor. And we have reaped from these programs an ugly harvest of frustration, violence, and failure across the land.”<sup>499</sup> Nixon believed that all governmental programs for the poor stagnated free enterprise and perpetuated poor people’s dependency on the government. In 1982 President Reagan blamed the Great Society for aggravating the problems of the poor, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and dependence on welfare, encouraging illegitimacy, and inspiring hopelessness. He claimed: “With the coming of the Great Society, government began eating away at the underpinnings of the private enterprise system. The big tasters and big spenders in the Congress had started a binge

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<sup>497</sup> Ehrenreich, 1.

<sup>498</sup> Peter Watson, *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century* (New York: Perennial Press, 2001), 654.

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in Orleck, 439.

that would slowly change the nature of our society and, even worse, it threatened the character of our people. . . . By the time the full weight of Great Society programs was felt, economic progress for America's poor had come to a tragic halt."<sup>500</sup>

In addition to creating and sustaining the culture of poverty, conservatives argued that governmental programs wasted taxpayers' money and thereby hurt the American economy. In 1964 Charlie Bartlett of the *Chattanooga Times*—who had been a good friend of John Kennedy during his presidency—wrote a column saying that it cost more to send a person through the Job Corps than it did to send him or her through Harvard.<sup>501</sup> Johnson already knew about the purportedly high cost of the Jobs Corps. He had had several conversations with Bill Moyers, William P. Kelly Jr., and Shriver while they were designing the Job Corps. On August 7, 1964 Johnson asked Moyers, "Can anybody explain to me why the hell it costs \$4,600 a year for a boy?"<sup>502</sup> Moyers responded that "You've got to have more instructors for this, because these boys are more undisciplined. So, per ten boys, you've got to have at least one instructor, until they test it and see whether or not it goes. That adds to the cost. The others things are food and so forth. It's on a twelve-month basis, rather than on a nine-month, basis, which a college education is figured at."<sup>503</sup> Johnson demanded that Moyers and Shriver reduce the cost per enrollee. They did not. From 1964 through 1968 the annual cost per enrollee of the Job Corps stood at \$6,000.

In his article, Bartlett claimed that it cost \$6,900 per enrollee per year. That number made it more expensive than a year at Harvard. Although Bartlett's estimate was higher than the actual cost, his article received much public attention. The article angered Shriver. He said: "That's one of those facile, completely empty comparisons which catch the public attention and are worthless, really."<sup>504</sup> He continued that tuition at Harvard "does not include taking care of him, so to speak, or monitoring or working with him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for

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<sup>500</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Remarks Before the National Black Republican Council," September 14, 1982, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, vol. 18 (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1982), 1154.

<sup>501</sup> Evan Thomas, *Robert Kennedy: His Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 89.

<sup>502</sup> Quoted in Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 344.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview II, 10/23/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 52.

a year at a time. It doesn't take into consideration anything about the son or daughter who goes to Harvard and his or her capacity to take care of themselves, their own independent capacity as a human being versus the dependent, pitifully weak—by comparison—condition of the person who joins the Job Corps.... It's completely irrelevant. But the superficial comparison caught on. It was a catchy thing."<sup>505</sup> Many conservatives seized on the dollar amount to claim that the Job Corps inefficiently spent federal money, hurt the national economy, and needed to be terminated.

More than inefficiently spending too much of the taxpayers' money, conservatives asserted that the programs of OEO violated the typical American system of political and financial authority. The programs distributed money directly to the poor, and poor people misused it. Elected officials thought that their authority to make decisions was being circumvented. The OEO directly empowered local poor people without enabling elected politicians to check that power. Edgar May, member of the Task Force on Poverty and deputy director of VISTA, claimed: "The older we got, the worse we were politically, because they began to understand what the hell we were really about, and what we were about was to make change. And the one thing that scares the living hell out a politician, whether he's a state representative in little Vermont or in Texas or anyplace else, is a lot of unknowns... change."<sup>506</sup>

Money went directly from Washington to the community agencies and the local poor people. Money did not go along the traditional route from Washington D.C. to the state government, to the city government, and then to a local elected board. Shriver explained that "the money gets more quickly and directly from the source of the money to the victim who needs the help which the money can give. That's efficiency, but it's not in accord with the traditional way in which public monies are distributed in our American system."<sup>507</sup> He continued: "when you cut through the state government bureaucracy, and then you cut through the city government bureaucracy, and money—federal taxpayers' money—goes directly from Washington, zip, right smack down to the Community Action agency on the West Side of Chicago or to East St. Louis, and there's no intervening bureaucratic group passing on it, that's somewhat revolutionary. It's

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>506</sup> Quoted in Gillette, 387.

<sup>507</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview I, 8/20/80, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 57.

efficient, but revolutionary.”<sup>508</sup> The revolutionary concept inspired fear in elected officials who thought that they were losing control of their region; this caused many to object to the programs of OEO. Shriver asserted: “It doesn’t make any difference whether the politicians were Democrats or Republicans or whether they were governors or mayors, a huge proportion of them were against OEO for doing that.”<sup>509</sup>

Politicians feared that giving money and power directly to the poor could end up empowering radicals and creating potentially violent outbursts. In short, critics claimed that the programs of OEO funded violence and radicalism. Even President Lyndon Johnson lost a degree of faith in the programs when he heard about the ways some poor communities used the money. Historian Michael Gillette has observed that, “when the beneficiaries of his efforts actually denounced the system instead of joining it, Johnson angrily disavowed the excesses of community action. He undoubtedly felt that their radicalism and the backlash it would arouse made it more difficult for him to achieve his liberal agenda.”<sup>510</sup>

The best example of the radicalism came from the Black Arts Repertory Theatre, part of Project Uplift under HARYOU. Some of the artistic demonstrations went in directions unforeseen by those with OEO. LeRoi Jones (who changed his name to Amiri Baraka in 1968) started the group in 1965 with money from a grant issued by HARYOU. The group’s charter statement read: “To explore, develop, extend, propagate, and preserve the dramatic arts and talents of the Afro-Americans, with particular emphasis on linking such expressions to the African past and present in order that the black community may realize and protect and nourish distinctive aspects of its own historical culture.”<sup>511</sup> In the summer of 1965 the group produced five plays and performed at least one every night on a portable stage that they moved around Harlem.<sup>512</sup> Although the group’s charter appeared non-threatening to the peace of New York, the plays were not. Critics claimed that the plays largely amounted to “anti-whitey” protests. A prepared statement released by an official with OEO in November 1965 detailed that the plays

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>509</sup> Transcript, Sargent Shriver Oral History Interview IV, 2/7/86, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library, 34

<sup>510</sup> Gillette, 375.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>512</sup> The plays were: “The Super”; “The Liberal”; “Black Ice”; “Jello”; and “The Experimental Death Unit.”

collectively “denounced Martin Luther King’s philosophy of nonviolence, advocated rebellion by black people, challenged the liberal rhetoric as hypocritical, exposed white capitalist exploitation of the ghetto, and invoked a quasi-Marxist form of political and social revolution.”<sup>513</sup>

An investigator for OEO later mentioned that the people of Harlem seemed to quite enjoy the plays and taunting the “whitey” of the black-face-in-reverse portrayals. The press reacted differently. James Harris, a local critic, described the plays as “crude and racist...preaching hatred of the white race.”<sup>514</sup> He said the plays portrayed “whitey” as “bungling fools with a monopoly of the human defects of avarice, ignorance, cowardice, and stupidity.”<sup>515</sup> Members of the press seized on the story of the “anti-whitey” activities funded by OEO.<sup>516</sup> Investigations revealed that the OEO had directly given the Black Arts Repertory Theatre \$115,200 to create and conduct their plays. Shriver released his own statement in November 1965 stressing that “it is unfortunate that the Harlem antipoverty program was disgraced this way...It obviously never should have been permitted to occur at all. It will not occur again in the war on poverty.”<sup>517</sup>

For conservatives, it came down to the facts that governmental programs to alleviate poverty actually hurt the national economy by misusing funds, financed radical and violent demonstrations, led poor people to be dependent on governmental aid, and subverted Americans’ system of authority over money and decision making. Because the governmental programs

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<sup>513</sup> The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, 118. LBJ.

<sup>514</sup> James Harris, “Aids Negro Hate Troupe,” *The Hammond Times*, November 1, 1965.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> “Hatred is Theme of Negro Theatre,” *New York Tribune*, November 30, 1965; “Fatal Confusion in Race Relations,” *Sunday Advocate*, December 5, 1965; “Public Finance for ‘Hate’ School,” *Des Moines Register*, December 2, 1965.

<sup>517</sup> Shriver, quoted in The Office of Economic Opportunity, “The Office of Economic Opportunity During the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 1963 – January 1969,” Folder: Administrative History of The Office of Economic Opportunity, Box 1, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969; Administrative History; Office of Economic Opportunity, Volume I, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, 122. LBJ.



actually made poverty worse, conservatives claimed, they needed to be terminated. Nixon was determined to shut down OEO and end the War on Poverty. Schulman explained that Nixon “sought to dismantle the welfare system and the agencies and programs that administered it, eliminate the social workers who ran them, and starve the liberal networks they nourished. . . . He meant to reverse the Great Society, call for the abolition of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the vanguard of Lyndon Johnson’s war on poverty.”<sup>518</sup> In his second inaugural address, Nixon reversed Kennedy’s well-known call for collective sacrifice, declaring: “Let us remember that America was built not by government, but by people; not by welfare, but by work; not by shirking responsibility, but by seeking responsibility. In our own lives, let each of us ask, not just what will government do for me, but what can I do for myself?”<sup>519</sup>

Nixon intended to transfer authority for programs from the federal to the local government and from the public to the private sector. Nixon made large cuts in the federal budget for compensatory education for poor students, urban renewal, the construction of hospitals, aid for school districts located near military bases, money to farmers for soil management, and funding for mental hospitals. Administrators in OEO lost authority over several programs while Nixon occupied the Oval Office. Nixon oversaw the transfer of the Job Corps to the Labor Department, where it turned from a program to reform cultural values into one that mainly located jobs for the unemployed. During Nixon’s administration Head Start moved to the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Nixon signed the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, transferring the manpower training programs of OEO to local governments. Together the transfers and new departments took away the more sweeping aims embodied in OEO, notably the expressed intention to change the cultural values of the poor.

Reagan ended the War on Poverty.<sup>520</sup> Reagan made dramatic cuts in the budget for food stamps, loans for student, jobs in public service, welfare, lunches for schoolchildren, mass transit in urban centers, and training programs.<sup>521</sup> Large numbers of poor people lost governmental

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<sup>518</sup> Schulman, 34.

<sup>519</sup> Richard Nixon, “Second Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1973; Internet; available from: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixonsecondinaugural.htm>.

<sup>520</sup> Orleck, 444.

<sup>521</sup> Schulman, 235.

assistance: three and a half million children were cut from programs that supplied lunch at school; one million people lost food stamps; three-quarters of a million had their access to Medicaid denied; and three hundred thousand families were pushed out of public housing.<sup>522</sup> During Reagan's presidencies another five hundred thousand people lost funding under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—the largest federal welfare program. Under pressure from Reagan, Congress repealed CETA in 1982, ending the training of nearly three hundred and fifty thousand people.

Citing Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*, Reagan asserted that governmental programs to alleviate poverty compromised free enterprise. More, Reagan warned Americans that governmental aid came at the expense of freedom. He stated that "our natural, unalienable rights are now considered to be a dispensation of government, and freedom has never been so fragile, so close to slipping from our grasp as it is at this moment."<sup>523</sup> He claimed that all programs entailed a degree of coercion and therefore were dangerous to American democracy and capitalism. Reagan proclaimed: "The Founding Fathers knew a government can't control the economy without controlling people. And they knew when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. So we have come to a time for choosing."<sup>524</sup> For Reagan, the choice was to end governmental programs to alleviate poverty.

Liberals challenged the paradigm that supported the War on Poverty as well. While conservatives argued that governmental programs could not solve poverty, liberal critics claimed that the culture of the poor represented strength, not apathy, and that culture was not universal but relative.

A major nation-wide movement that challenged the specific aspect of the paradigm that proposed that poverty was cultural weakness was the Civil Rights Movement. It is important to recognize that the Civil Rights Movement was concerned not only with race but also with poverty. In November 1967 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. started the Poor People's Campaign, directly allying with the poor and their plight. The African-American community suffered the highest rates of poverty in America. King acknowledged that the non-African-American poor suffered similar hardships of discrimination and oppression. On April 4, 1967 King delivered "A

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<sup>522</sup> Orleck, 445.

<sup>523</sup> Quoted in Orleck, 447.

<sup>524</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 447.

Time to Break the Silence,” a speech explaining his inspiration to start the campaign. The principal purpose of the speech was to announce his opposition to the Vietnam War. Among the many reasons for his opposition, he discussed the way in which the war took money and energy away from helping the poor. He stated:

A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated, as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.<sup>525</sup>

In the Poor People’s Campaign King sought jobs for the poor. He allied with leaders from communities primarily inhabited by Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, American Indians, and poor whites. King stated: “This is a highly significant event [and] the beginning of a new co-operation, understanding, and a determination by poor people of all colors and backgrounds to assert and win their right to a decent life and respect for their culture and dignity.”<sup>526</sup>

Other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement did not ally with poor whites, but still fought to demonstrate the power and ability of African Americans. Malcolm X advocated the separation of the races until the African-American community could stand on equal social and economic footing with the white community. Leader of the Black Panther Party Stokely Carmichael proclaimed “black power” to emphasize the strength of African Americans.

The major point of the Civil Rights Movement that challenged the paradigm that explained poverty was that marginalized groups were not weak, apathetic, fatalistic, or apolitical. African-American protesters who endured the spray of high-pressure fire hoses in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 were not resigned to a life of marginalization and poverty. Rather, they showed

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<sup>525</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “A Time to Break the Silence”: available from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2014.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, “Inaugural Address ”; available from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>; Internet; accessed 6 June 2012.

<sup>526</sup> “Martin Luther King Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle,” Poor People’s Campaign, accessed June 10, 2014, [http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_poor\\_peoples\\_campaign/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_poor_peoples_campaign/)

the will to fight for rights and power. Historian Michael Latham explained: “When American cities burned in urban riots and a more radical civil rights movement pushed beyond desegregation and equal rights toward demands for socioeconomic equality and calls for redistribution, the ‘traditionals’ at home also seemed far from passive or apolitical.”<sup>527</sup>

In 1965 Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan published a report entitled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action.” The highly publicized report inspired liberal scholars to join with Civil Rights activists in challenging the assumption that marginalized groups, notably African Americans, women, and the poor, had a weak, apathetic, and damaged culture. Moynihan incorporated into the report the logic and assumptions of the paradigm, including the paradigm with the cultural explanation of poverty that served as the foundation for the War on Poverty. Historian Alice O’Connor noted that “The more immediate impact of the Moynihan Report was to politicize the idea of culture and to shatter any sense of consensus that cultural theorists might have had.”<sup>528</sup> In short, the report inspired challengers who helped break apart the paradigm.

Moynihan claimed that broken and matriarchal African-American families psychologically damaged their children and created a “tangle of pathology.”<sup>529</sup> Begun by discriminatory treatment under slavery, the psychological damage done by the breakdown of the family was “capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world.”<sup>530</sup> Moynihan explained that psychological damage to African Americans gave them cultural values that led to an inability to hold jobs, a desire for immediate gratification, and a proneness to violence and delinquency. Psychologist William Ryan explained: “We’re told the Negro’s condition is due to his ‘pathology,’ his values, the way he lives, the kind of family life he leads.”<sup>531</sup> Nearly all of the logic and assumptions of the paradigm explaining poverty existed in

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<sup>527</sup> Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 215.

<sup>528</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 209.

<sup>529</sup> Quoted in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 482.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 482.

Moynihan's report including that family and peers inflicted psychological damage on children, the poor had a culture with values and attitudes that bred failure, and that the culture of poverty was a self-perpetuating system.

Moynihan's intention was not to disparage African Americans, women, or the poor. Rather it was to advocate for a new governmental program that would create jobs, which he thought would help end the tangle of pathology.<sup>532</sup> However, historian Alice O'Connor explained that "Moynihan's was far more than a flawed strategy for a good cause; it was an expression of a deeply flawed, and for a time anyway, a shared social scientific vision of the dynamics of gender, race, and poverty."<sup>533</sup> She continued: "Moynihan's analysis of the internal 'pathology' gripping the lower-class black family sparked a wide-ranging reaction that served to question if not undermine the much older, liberal sociological tradition it drew from."<sup>534</sup>

Although Moynihan focused primarily on historical causes, his report inspired a highly charged debate about contemporary social policy, including the War on Poverty and paradigm that supported it. A study that appeared before Moynihan's report but inspired several scholars who would challenge the paradigm was British historian E.P. Thompson's 1964 *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson emphasized the strength and collective unity of the lower class, a direct challenge to argument within the paradigm that the poor were disorganized and apathetic. Thompson, using a Marxist interpretation, argued that class was not a static category but a process. Not a stationary machine but "*the way the machine works* once it is set in motion—not this interest and that interest, but the *friction* of interests—the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise"<sup>535</sup> (emphasis in original). To understand the upper class one had to understand the lower, the masters as well as the slaves, and "the ways in which subordinate classes forged their own oppositional postures."<sup>536</sup> In short, the upper class's oppression of the

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<sup>532</sup> Moynihan had been advocating a federal program to solve poverty by creating jobs since his meeting with Heller and the CEA-led Task Force on Poverty in 1963.

<sup>533</sup> Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 208.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 196. O'Connor also noted that "The footnotes and text are crowded with references to the work of such well-known social scientists as E. Franklin Frazier, Kenneth Clark, Thomas Pettigrew, Nathan Glazer, and Moynihan himself."

<sup>535</sup> Novick, 441.

<sup>536</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

lower class did not result in cultural deficiencies; rather it unified and strengthened the lower class in opposition to the upper class.

Thompson's focus on the working class and oppositional postures aligned perfectly with the interpretations offered by African-American historians who studied slavery and sought to support civil rights leaders and challenge Moynihan's thesis that African Americans had "damaged" families with values that led to the abandonment of children and life-long poverty. Historians looked for characteristics of personal and social power outside the white people's control or influence—in short, forms of resistance to white people's hegemony. They studied the African-American community and argued for its collective strength, not the weakness of its individuals. Such studies challenged the paradigm that supported the War on Poverty and its emphasis on dependency, apathy, and social disorganization.

In the late 1960s and 1970s studies of the slaves' power and strength became dominant. Novelist Ralph Ellison explained that "any people who could endure all of that brutalization and keep together, who could undergo such dismemberment and resuscitate itself, and endure until it could take the initiative in achieving its own freedom is obviously more than the sum of its brutalization. Seen in this perspective, theirs has been one of the great human experiences and one of the great triumphs of the human spirit in modern times."<sup>537</sup>

In 1974 Eugene Genovese published *Roll Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, written primarily from black sources. Genovese, like Thompson, offered a Marxist interpretation and focused on the marginalized class. The world the slaves *made* revealed Genovese's interpretation of class as an action like the *making* of the English working class. Genovese argued for the strength and positive aspects of the black experience over Moynihan's argument for damage. He also countered the interpretation that slaves were dependent on their masters by revealing the resistance and autonomous aspects of slaves' lives. He pointed out that slaves did resist, often in cunning ways including breaking shovels and feigning sickness. Genovese acknowledged a degree of dependence and stressed re-humanization, meaning that, although slaves accepted paternalism, they did so on their own terms.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 483.

<sup>538</sup> Norman R. Yetman, review of *Jordon, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, by Eugene D. Genovese, *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 90, No. 4 (Winter 1975): 774-777; Novick, 484.

Lawrence Levine also covered resistance by slaves in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. Levine tapped into slaves' oral tradition and examined "spirituals, folktales, legends, anecdotes, sayings, proverbs, jokes, field hollers, shouts, cries, and calls."<sup>539</sup> Levine contended that through the oral tradition slaves created an alternative world, outside the whites' control, that transcended "the temporal bonds of slavery."<sup>540</sup> He claimed that slaves' music revealed a strong communal consciousness, not disorganization. Although legal slavery existed slaves actively resisted spiritual slavery. Levine's work demonstrates that the forces that eventually broke the paradigm apart came from several angles. Together, politicians, protesters, and social scientists challenged the logic of the paradigm.

If African-American historians of slavery challenged the assumptions of the paradigm that the culture of the poor had values of dependency, apathy, and social disorganization, liberal white scholars challenged the assumption that any single culture could be universal. Those who designed and administered the War on Poverty, including Shriver, Adam Yarmolinsky, and Lawrence Fuchs, claimed that the culture of poverty was universal; the same deleterious cultural values sacrificed the economic success of people in Africa, Asia, South America, and North America. Social scientists started to reconsider their use of this cultural framework. Sociologist Hylan Lewis challenged the assumption of a separate, unified, and universal culture of poverty by emphasizing the tremendous diversity among families living in poor neighborhoods.<sup>541</sup>

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz arguably did the most to discredit the assumption of cultural universalism. Novick claimed that Geertz was "more influential than any other single figure within the discipline, [and that] he is also the anthropologist best known and most cited outside of it."<sup>542</sup> Geertz's most influential work was *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). He claimed that Western scholars since the Enlightenment had operated under a paradigm that sought universals. This desire became particularly strong among anthropologists of the 1950s

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<sup>539</sup> Arnold H. Taylor, review of *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, by Lawrence W. Levine, *The Journal of American History* Vol. 65, No. 2 (September 1978) : 481-483

<sup>540</sup> Peter Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Westview Press, 1989,) 73.

<sup>541</sup> Hylan Lewis, "Culture, Class, and the Behavior of Low-Income Families," in *Culture Class, and Poverty* (Washington D.C.: Crosstell, 1967).

<sup>542</sup> Novick, 551.

and 1960s as they searched for elements of worldwide cultural unity. As discussed in Chapter 2, makers of policy in the War on Poverty were directly under the influence of such scholars. Geertz directly challenged the idea that a universal criterion to evaluate cultural values could exist. He remained skeptical of any cross-cultural generalization because he thought humans had no universal culture; rather, human culture varied based on local context. All values and behavior depended on local symbols and meaning, not on any universal objective analysis. He wrote that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, [and] I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”<sup>543</sup> Cultures around the world cannot be evaluated using Western equivalents, because he claimed that there are no Western equivalents. He argued that “every people has its own sort of depth.”<sup>544</sup> Geertz described the Balinese cockfight and naming customs, North African tribal law, and Azande witchcraft to demonstrate that each had to be understood only by its own signs, symbols, and customs. Each had no exact counterpart in the West. Geertz believed that life consisted of vivid vernaculars rather than “forceless generalities.”

Geertz’s studies held great significance in overturning the paradigm that supported the War on Poverty for several reasons. First, he shifted the study of culture from behavior to meaning. Makers of policy in the War on Poverty detailed the way in which cultural values directed behavior; Geertz challenged that. It mattered less how the Balinese acted, and more what they understood to be the meaning of their actions within their local context. Second, his theories were international in focus and implication. Although challenges to the programs of the War on Poverty largely remained local, the paradigm was a *worldview* that included people and countries around the globe. Breaking apart the paradigm would require a challenger with an international focus because the paradigm applied to people all over the world. Geertz offered that. Third, Geertz discredited the notion of purposeful cultural change directed from abroad. In short, all aims of the Peace Corps could never be achieved because Western cultural values could never be introduced into a Third World nation where they were completely foreign and incompatible to the local context. The terms, meanings, symbols, and customs differed, so it was impossible for people from one culture to purposely transform others from another country into

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<sup>543</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

<sup>544</sup> Quoted in Watson, 675.



completely adopting their values. The two cultures could never come together as one. Geertz wrote: “For our time and forward, the image of a general orientation, perspective, *Weltanschauung*, growing out of humanistic studies (or, for that matter, out of scientific ones) and shaping the direction of culture is a chimera.”<sup>545</sup> Lastly, as Novick noted, his work was widely read, cited, and highly influential.

The shift away from cultural universalism and toward cultural relativism existed outside of academia as well. Schulman wrote: “From World War II until the early 1970s, liberal universalism—a belief in the fundamental unity and sameness of all humanity—had undergirded social activism and political reform in the United States....Beliefs that blacks or Latinos or women possessed distinctive natures or cultures were dismissed as prejudiced.”<sup>546</sup> Integration stood as the principal ideal and objective in the 1950s and 1960s. In the War on Poverty, reformers attempted to integrate the poor from the culture of poverty into the affluent culture. This attempt to transform poor people’s values is what Frank Mankiewicz called OEO’s “charm school.” However, by the early 1970s diversity and multiculturalism had replaced the integrationist ideal.

Some Americans proclaimed difference to make a statement. Frustrated with the lack of social progress made by African Americans, the Black Panthers started the Black Power Movement and emphasized an African-American cultural connection with black Africans, separate from white Americans. However most emphasized the differences between peoples and their cultural values as an advantage from which all could benefit. In this view, unassimilable groups such as the poor appeared to have value. By the late 1980s nearly half of the *Fortune* 500 companies employed full-time staffs to cultivate and manage diversity. Schulman explained: “The ideological shift to diversity led to a reconception of the very nature of America—to see the nation not as a melting pot where many different peoples and cultures contributed to one common stew, but as discrete people and culture sharing the same places—a tapestry, salad bowl, or rainbow....In this view, which became the dominant way of conceiving of race relations in the 1970s and 1980s, there was no such thing as American culture. Instead, there were many American cultures.”<sup>547</sup> Each cultural group had value and should not be forced to assimilate to a

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 676.

<sup>546</sup> Schulman, 58.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 71.

single overarching, universalizing, American culture. Americans in the 1960s did not realize how powerful the notion would become of distinct groups, each with its own unique culture, politics, objectives, and destiny.<sup>548</sup> The shift toward diversity and multiculturalism in American culture challenged the paradigm's ideal of universalism; Americans' celebration of diversity also made it no longer seem advantageous to fully eliminate poverty and the culture of the poor.

Liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith described the conservative movement in the 1970s and 1980s as "a mini-Dark Age of selfishness, greed, and sanctimony," with the goal of getting "the poor off the federal budget, tax system, and the consciousness of the comfortable."<sup>549</sup> But liberals and conservative did not need to agree. Together, their separate challenges from a multitude of perspectives broke apart the paradigm that Kennedy had brought together. Nixon and Reagan ended the War on Poverty politically. More importantly, liberal and conservative causes of the 1970 and 1980s challenged and fragmented the paradigm.

Conservative argued that the government was not an instrument capable of changing poor people's culture. Liberals argued that marginalized groups' values were not only very diverse, they also represented the people's strength. However, the elements that comprised the paradigm did not disappear. Many became incorporated in new paradigms. Since the 1960s every scholar creating a theory in the social sciences has had to address the impact of culture and cultural values. Despite its successes and challenges, Kennedy's paradigm first brought the concept of cultural values to the attention of Americans of all backgrounds and educational levels. Cultural considerations moved beyond academia and from being exclusively matters of argument among intellectuals. Americans living in cities all around the country came to dispute matters such as residential zoning, busing, and employment in cultural terms. In the 1970s and 1980s white conservatives living in the suburbs claimed their rights to live among people with similar values, and therefore blocked African-Americans from moving into their neighborhoods, attending their schools, and working at their place of employment. Although by the 1970s scholars accepted that cultural values were not universal, all agreed that cultural concepts were vital to understanding the world and its people.

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>549</sup> Quoted in Watson, 654.

## Conclusion - The Paradigm after the War on Poverty

Most scholars who have studied the War on Poverty since the 1960s have done so to debate the success or failure of the original programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Historian Annelise Orleck contended that “Historians’ writing about the War on Poverty focused largely on its failures.”<sup>550</sup> Allen J. Matusow, in *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*, argued that the programs of OEO failed to accomplish liberal politicians’ promises to end poverty.<sup>551</sup> Sociologist Jill Quadagno, in *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*, claimed that racism and sexism compromised the potential effectiveness of the War on Poverty.<sup>552</sup> Historian Bruce Schulman considered the programs more successful, contending that the “series of federal programs essentially eliminated want among previously hard-hit populations, like the elderly, and reduced the overall poverty rate from more than 20 percent in the late 1950s to 12 percent by the early 1970s.”<sup>553</sup> Historian Michael Gillette measured the success of the War on Poverty by the fact that most of the programs continue to exist today.<sup>554</sup> The Jobs Corps, Head Start, Upward Bound, Community Action Program (operating as the Community Development Corporation), Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and the Peace Corps all currently operate in the twenty-first century and continue to help millions of people in America and around the world.

Studying the paradigm that explained poverty in the 1960s offers ways to not only evaluate the success of the War on Poverty, it also provides new ways to understand a variety of phenomena in postwar America, including the popular and academic embrace of the explanatory

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<sup>550</sup> Annelise Orleck, “The War on the War on Poverty and American Politics since the 1960s,” in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History: 1964-1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 451.

<sup>551</sup> Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

<sup>552</sup> Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>553</sup> Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), 5.

<sup>554</sup> Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 401-402.

power of culture, the fragmentation of America in the 1960s into different cultural groups, and the emergence of the fields of “History and Memory” and “World History.”

The intellectual movements of the Sixties and the paradigm shift initiated by John Kennedy embodied a key moment that has remained part of American thought and culture. In the twenty-first century the term “Sixties” still provokes strong feelings and opinions for nearly all Americans. People typically describe the graceful John F. Kennedy, malevolent Lyndon Johnson, tricky Richard Nixon, the terrible Vietnam War, the inspiring Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation movements, sobering environmentalism, charismatic youth at Berkeley, tuned-out hippies in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, the treasonous Weatherman Underground, and the iconic Beatles. In June 2004 former President Bill Clinton mused that, “if you look back on the Sixties and think there was more good than bad, you’re probably a Democrat. If you think there was more harm than good, you’re probably a Republican.”<sup>555</sup>

The theory of universalism embedded in the paradigm has impacted and still impacts Americans’ collective memories of the 1950s and 1960s as described by Clinton. Historians in the field of “History and Memory” may find it useful to explore the way in which the paradigm sanitized the collective memory of the 1950s and early 1960s. When asked of their memory of the 1950s, most Americans describe a scenario that could have come directly out of an episode of *Leave It to Beaver* or *Father Knows Best*. They explain the decade as a simpler time when nuclear families dominated, everyone could afford quality suburban homes, and a more coherent “moral order” made the difference between good and bad immediately obvious. Former president of Harvard Derek Bok commented that “There is nostalgia for the fifties because it was stable and we were trying to get back to normalcy. There is something comforting about it, that it wasn’t unsettling in the way that the sixties were.”<sup>556</sup> Historians title chapters on the 1950s in their textbooks “The Golden Age,” “The Affluent Society,” “Grand Expectation,” and “The

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<sup>555</sup> M. J. Heale, “The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography,” *Reviews in American History* 33, no. 1 (March 2005): 134.

<sup>556</sup> Quoted in Bernard von Bothmer, *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 19.

Biggest Boom Yet.”<sup>557</sup> An ongoing Gallup poll asks Americans: “what decade would you most like to relive and in what decade would you most like to raise your kids?”<sup>558</sup> More people choose the 1950s than any other decade.<sup>559</sup>

A person’s perspective on the 1960s has more impact on the way in which Americans view the 1950s than any other factor. The paradigm that explained poverty in the 1960s contributed to the sanitized view of the 1950s. Those who purported and promulgated the paradigm homogenized the world population into a single group seeking a single set of cultural values and a single, middle-class lifestyle. The paradigm contained ideas that a “normal” family was nuclear. It consisted of a father, mother, and two children. They lived in a suburb in a single-family house with four rooms. The father was able to buy the house by working in a profession or in a stable occupation within a market economy. The mother worked part-time at an hourly-rate but primarily devoted her life to emotionally supporting her husband and raising the children. The paradigm supports those who remember the 1950s and 1960s as a stable, peaceful time while muting those, such as civil rights activist Roy Wilkins, who viewed those years as full of oppression and sarcastically stated that in the 1950s “there was order, and you didn’t have to live with uppity blacks, or Hispanics, or uppity women, and if those other people did those ‘nasty things,’ well, damn it, they should do it in secret in dark closets and not talk to reasonable people about. And for God’s sake...our boys are good and the other boys are bad.”<sup>560</sup> In short, the social movements of the 1960s and the seemingly new cultural, social, and ethnic identities appeared to ruin the paradigm’s sanitized image of the “normal” family and the “normal” person’s life experience.

Also, despite his or her memories or political views, nearly every American has been influenced by the intellectual movement in the 1960s to consider the impact of cultural values. The paradigm shift started by Kennedy first brought the concept of cultural values to the

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<sup>557</sup> Alan Brinkley, *American History: A Survey* (Chicago: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2008); James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996);

<sup>558</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America’s Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 34.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> Quoted in von Bothmer, 19.

attention of Americans of all backgrounds and educational levels. The War on Poverty ended, but many of the terms on which it was fought remained part of American public and intellectual debates up to the present. Since the 1960s, people and groups have often defined themselves in cultural opposition rather than political opposition. Categories of Republican, Democrat, and Independent now exist alongside of free-thinker, yuppie, hippie, preppy, redneck, environmentalist, bohemian, and non-conformist. Arguably the best-known group of the 1960s and 1970s was the counterculture. The fact that they were known as the *counterculture* revealed that they defined themselves more in cultural opposition than in any other way. Members of the counterculture rejected the mainstream values of the dominant culture. They practiced an alternative lifestyle that included drugs to open consciousness, freer sexual mores, a more open living experience of co- and multi-habitation, harmony with nature, rejection of materialism and capitalistic accumulation, communal sharing of food, establishment of free clinics, and an alternative work schedule.<sup>561</sup> A member of the counterculture explained that, “if you could not convince the older generation to change its beliefs, to stop the war, you could refuse to participate.”<sup>562</sup> In short, living an alternative lifestyle was a form of political protest. Schulman explained that “political protest and countercultural sensibilities went hand in hand.”<sup>563</sup> Political categories had been replaced by cultural categories.

Since the 1960s most Americans have agreed that cultural values determine a person’s attitudes, behavior, actions, and account for the conditions of the world. An American today may claim that cultural values account for high levels of drug addiction in Brooklyn, the prevalence of technology in Japan, French people’s smug treatment of tourists, political instability in Chile, and even British people’s misaligned teeth. Although liberals’ and conservatives’ challenges to the paradigm’s logic broke the paradigm apart, many of its components have remained by becoming integrated into succeeding paradigms. Since the 1960s, scholars creating theories, trainers in human resources departments, teachers in classrooms, and educators designing national standardized tests—such as the ACT— have had to address the impact of culture and cultural values.

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<sup>561</sup> Schulman, 16.

<sup>562</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

The “breaking up” of America into a diversity of cultural groups, starting in the 1960s, can also be contextualized by studying the paradigm that explained poverty. The paradigm provides a useful way to explain the diverse cultural groups excluded from the ideal image of people in the 1960s and why marginalized people fought to establish their distinct identities.

The disintegration of America in the 1960s has been the dominant historical interpretation since William L. O’Neill’s *Coming Apart* (1971).<sup>564</sup> O’Neill viewed America’s fragmentation into competing social and cultural groups in the 1960s as detrimental to national unity, solidarity, and power. Other historians have followed O’Neill’s lead. John M. Blum’s *Years of Discord* (1991) organized his synthesis of the 1960s around fracture and dissolution.<sup>565</sup> David Burner, in *Making Peace with the 60s* (1998), contended that the splitting apart of liberals and radicals caused destructive effects that compromised the possibility of the two groups working together on progressive causes.<sup>566</sup> Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb argued that in the 1960s American society split into two competing cultures, one moral and the other permissive.<sup>567</sup>

Understanding the paradigm that explained poverty and theoretically unified all people around the world in a single category of a culture of poverty can place this fragmentation in a new light. Rather than a sudden proliferation of cultural and ethnic groups that fragmented American society, the paradigm supports that these groups always existed, but were glossed over in an attempt to unify the understanding of poverty around the world. The fragmentation therefore might have been a realization of the groups that already existed, not the creation of new categories and groups.

The universalism within the paradigm explaining poverty in the 1960s also helps to understand the beginning of World History as a discipline in the 1960s. Historians of World History sought to place all of the people and nations of the world within a single metanarrative.

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<sup>564</sup> William L. O’Neill, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s* (New York: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1971).

<sup>565</sup> John M. Blum, *Years of Discord: American Politics and Society, 1961-1974* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991).

<sup>566</sup> David Burner, *Making Peace with the 60s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>567</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2001).

A single metanarrative requires a single set of criteria that could evaluate all countries in every historical epoch. Arguably the most important first book with the new field of World History was William McNeill's *The Rise of the West* (1963).<sup>568</sup> McNeill details the West's rise to power by discussing the way in which the diffusion of ideas and technology has benefited the West while holding back the historically more isolationist East. This approach aligned with Shriver's, Fuchs', and Harrington's attempts to evaluate all poor people of the world by a single set of cultural values that they accepted as universal. The fact that both the paradigm that explained poverty existed and World History was emerging at that specific moment in the early 1960s reveals insight into the way in which people in that time period thought about the world and how to organize it.

Historians who did not accept the main assumptions behind world history also began to use the concept of culture in the early 1960s to evaluate people in the past. A large transformation in historical interpretation occurred from the fifties to the eighties. Consensus historians of the forties and fifties who emphasized universalism and the "end of ideology" were challenged by scholars of class, race, and gender. Historian David Blight explained that "somewhere back in the seventies and eighties everyone wanted to be a social historians."<sup>569</sup> Scholars in the sixties, seventies, and eighties exposed the supposedly nonexistent ideology for what it really was: elitist, white, and male. Social and cultural history won the methodological struggle over how to study and explain history. Scholars of class emphasized antagonistic relationships between those in power and those marginalized. Scholars of race stressed minority autonomy and strength. Scholars of gender described the previously ignored dynamic women added to all historical events. Intellectual, economic, and religious historians shattered established truths as well. The deluge of attacks on the status quo fragmented the historical profession.

Despite the increasingly nuanced and complex understanding of culture, the study of cultural values has remained and unified various scholars' work. Scholars continued to examine the ways in which values determine attitude, behavior, and outlook on the world. Historians have

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<sup>568</sup> William McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

<sup>569</sup> David Blight, "Homefronts and Battlefronts: 'Hard War' and the Social Impact of the Civil War," lecture, iTunes University, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., 2008.



studied the distinctive culture, identity, aspirations, and objectives of African Americans in the South, upper class women living in Los Angeles, East-Coast vacationers traveling to Yosemite National Park, white men working in factories in Rochester, and the elders of nomadic tribes in the Himalayas. All people and groups were to be studied on their own cultural terms to understand elements such as their fears, aspirations, assumptions, values, ideas, sense of manhood, and ideas of courage.

The paradigm that Kennedy helped propel forward brought the concept of cultural values to the attention of Americans of all backgrounds and educational levels. Liberals and conservatives have challenged the paradigm; but, cultural explanations continue to dominate academia and conversations in coffeehouses. Lest one get too confident that the critical elements of belief about a supposed culture of poverty have disappeared and that moment in American thought and culture is over, sociologist Craig Calhoun explains, most Americans still think poor countries and their people are “irrational, corrupt, inefficient, excessively fecund, technologically inadequate, incompetent, disease-ridden, superstitious, mired in age-old ways of doing things, and so on—always in implicit contrast to the happy success of our own country.”<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Quoted in Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 262.

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