

WELFARE AND CITIZENSHIP: The Effects of Government Assistance on Young Adults' Civic Participation

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Recent scholarship and public discourse highlight an apparent waning of civic engagement in the United States. Although the welfare state is generally thought to support democracy by reducing economic inequality, it may paradoxically contribute to political disempowerment of some groups. We examine the effects of state interventions on civic participation among young adults, hypothesizing that involvement with stigmatizing social programs, such as welfare, reduces political engagement, while receipt of nonstigmatizing government assistance does not dampen civic involvement. Using official voting records and survey data from the Youth Development Study (YDS), a longitudinal community sample of young adults, a series of regression models suggests that welfare recipients are less likely to vote than nonrecipients, whereas recipients of non-means-tested government assistance participate similarly to young adults who do not receive government help. These effects hold even when background factors, self-efficacy, and prior voting behavior are controlled. Welfare receipt is not associated, however, with suppressed participation in nonstate arenas such as volunteer work. Intensive interviews with YDS welfare recipients are used to illustrate and develop the analysis.

Over the past few decades, social science and public discussion have increasingly focused on changes in civic engagement and citizenship in the United States. Declining voter turnout rates, an increase in single-issue, self-interested politics, and a retreat from associational ties and community involvement, among other trends, have signaled to many the weakening of American democracy (Bellah et al. 1985; Putnam 1995, 2000; Etzioni 1996). Such concerns carry particular significance in the United States, where the

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strength of the nation and its democracy historically has been thought to rest in the active civic life of its citizenry (Tocqueville [1835] 1966).

Compelling evidence suggests that the United States has witnessed a general decline in civic participation over the past few decades. Voter turnout rates have decreased from a high of 63 percent in the 1960 presidential election to a low of 49 percent in 1996 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008). Moreover, citizens have expressed higher rates of cynicism and disengagement from the political process, and appear to be retreating from shared public life and civic involvement (Putnam 1995, 2000; Etzioni 1996). These trends are particularly disturbing among young Americans who have comparatively low voting rates and who may be establishing patterns that will persist into the future. Even with the recent rise from 2000 to 2004, only 41 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds and 42.5 percent of 21- to 24-year-olds reported voting in the 2004 presidential election.

Such changes have been viewed as posing a threat to the overall well-being of American society. Research suggests that civic engagement benefits society and individuals, as it is associated with decreased crime, drug abuse, and joblessness and increased educational attainment, occupational achievement, life satisfaction, and health (Wilson and Musick 1997; Uggen and Janikula 1999; Putnam 2000; Thoits and Hewitt 2001; Oesterle, Johnson, and Mortimer 2004). Disengagement from involved citizenship, particularly among young people, may carry long-term consequences for those who do not participate, and more broadly, for American society as a whole.

The development and recent transformation of the welfare state may play an important if unexplored and potentially paradoxical role in these developments and dynamics. On the one hand, liberal democratic nations, including the United States, have developed welfare state measures to ensure the provision of minimal living standards needed for the populace to function as citizens and workers. By reducing the extremes of inequality, the welfare state is intended to protect its citizens and promote the possibilities for active engagement. On the other hand, some critics from very divergent perspectives explain the current decline in democratic involvement by contending that the welfare state curtails active citizenship and promotes passive dependency (Murray 1984; Mead 1986, 1997; Habermas 1991). Indeed, some empirical evidence suggests that welfare recipients are a particularly politically quiescent group compared with others, despite their large stake in government policies (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Others argue that it is not the receipt of government assistance itself that cultivates "passivity," but that state policies can either promote or discourage civic participation depending on the program design and implementation. From this perspective, stigmatizing programs such as welfare are thought to have deleterious effects, while programs that valorize citizenship, such as veteran's benefits or Social Security, are thought to have mobilizing effects (Pierson 1993; Soss 1999, 2000; Campbell 2003; Mettler and Soss 2004; Mettler 2005).

In this article, we investigate the relationship between the welfare state and civic engagement. Do welfare state programs help integrate recipients into, or alienate them from, civic life? Considering the wide variation in design, delivery, and stigmatization, do different programs have different impacts?

We assess the effects of the welfare state on democratic participation by comparing the civic activity—operationalized as voting and volunteering—of those who have had direct contact with welfare state programs and those who have not. Further, we examine the political consequences of policy design by comparing the civic participation of young adults involved with two differently structured programs: (1) those that are means-tested, stigmatizing, and administered at the discretion of a caseworker primarily consisting of welfare (Aids to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC] at the time) and food stamps, which we refer to here as “welfare”; and (2) other less stigmatizing forms of government assistance, such as unemployment insurance, social security disability insurance, and worker’s compensation. These are sometimes described as “first-tier government assistance” (e.g., Nelson 1990), although we label them here as “other government assistance.” To do this, we analyze survey and intensive interview data from the Youth Development Study (YDS), a longitudinal community study of young adults supplemented by administrative data from the Minnesota Secretary of State’s Office on YDS respondents’ actual voting history (Minnesota Secretary of State 2006).

The article proceeds in three parts. First, we describe trends in civic participation and review literature that suggests that involvement with welfare state programs may affect civic activity. Next, we analyze survey and voting data from a sample of young adults and consider how involvement with two differently designed and administered welfare state programs affect civic participation in the forms of voting and volunteering. To further illustrate these relationships, we supplement our analyses with intensive interview data with YDS welfare recipients. We conclude by discussing broader implications of this work, suggesting avenues for future research.

INEQUALITY, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE STATE

Much sociological research on political participation examines the way that civic engagement corresponds with demographic factors such as age, education, race, gender, or social class. This line of scholarship examines group differences in civic participation, views, and interests, finding unequal participation among differently positioned groups and actors (Jacobs et al. 2004; Verba et al. 1995). Although many formal impediments to political participation have been removed through the passage of laws, such as the 19th amendment and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, group disparities in participation persist in voter turnout, protest, and other forms of civic activity (Verba et al. 1995).

Of the many factors affecting differential participation, socioeconomic status in particular is clearly associated with citizen engagement. The wealthy are more likely than the poor to vote, to work for political campaigns, and to participate in other political activities (Verba et al. 1995; Lawless and Fox 2001). Significantly, in an era when campaign contributions play an increasingly critical role in elections, those with greater financial resources have greater power to affect politics through their purse (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1997; Jacobs et al. 2004). Other forms of inequality are also associated with civic involvement. For instance, the more educated are much more likely to vote and participate in other forms of political activity (Putnam 2000), and voter

turnout rates for the college educated have remained fairly constant, while low-education groups have significantly declined over time (Verba et al. 1995).

Given these trends, welfare reform associated with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, which required work over full-time education, may have an unanticipated long-term effect on civic participation. In addition, feelings of political efficacy and opportunities to develop civic skills contribute to systematic class differentials in citizen participation (Teixeira 1992; Goren 1997; Soss 2000; Skocpol 2004; Mettler 2005). Age is also an important factor in civic engagement, with young adults having much lower voter turnout rates than older people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008). Indeed, Verba and colleagues argue that the lower voting rates of welfare recipients can be explained by preexisting characteristics associated with voter turnout, specifically, that welfare recipients come from poorer, less educated, and younger segments of the population who already are less likely to vote.

Yet other empirical research suggests that even when taking into account background variables such as income, education, age, race, gender, and region of the country, welfare recipients vote at lower rates than other Americans. For example, using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Bruch, Feree, and Soss (2008) found that recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/food stamps exhibited significantly lower levels of voting, political, and civic participation, even after controlling for a host of demographic factors, social marginality, and economic, political, and social conditions. While this could be an artifact of false self-reported voting more frequently found among the highly educated (Abramson and Claggett 1992), it may also indicate that there is something about the welfare experience itself that dampens civic behavior, beyond the characteristics that recipients bring with them to welfare (see also Soss 1999, 2000). We therefore turn our attention next to the ways in which the state itself may affect political behavior.

The Welfare State's Role in Facilitating or Diminishing Citizenship

As described above, broader social inequalities are associated with lower political participation in disadvantaged groups. Thus, it would seem that welfare state interventions aimed to alleviate inequities could potentially promote more widespread civic involvement. Marshall's (1965) and Tocqueville's (1835) classic works on citizenship suggest that this would indeed be the case. Marshall (1965) theorizes that state policies can potentially foster inclusion into the citizenry, creating abilities to participate as full members in society. According to Marshall, modern citizenship includes three main and interrelated dimensions—civic, political, and social rights and responsibilities.¹ Social rights, such as the right to education, material necessities, and social security, strengthen citizens' abilities to enact their civil and political rights. By ensuring social rights and material well-being, welfare state policies can enable all to participate as citizens (Marshall 1965). Tocqueville, too, assumed that citizens need a basic level of material resources and economic independence to fully participate in the public realm (Goldberg 2001). The growing acceptance of social rights during the 20th century has legitimated

state involvement in promoting and securing the economic well-being of its citizens through the rise of the modern welfare state.

Based on these developments, we would expect the welfare state to increase civic engagement by moderating the inequality that results from capitalism. Yet cultural commitments to individualism and the free market have limited or reversed the growth of the welfare state in the United States, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Thus, social citizenship, as Marshall conceptualized it, may be limited in the U.S. context. As we have seen from the scholarship discussed above, the decline in civic participation in the United States appears to be linked to lower levels of participation among economically and educationally disadvantaged groups. From this point of view, persistent social inequality and the retrenchment of welfare state programs threaten democracy and active citizenship.

Yet other observations on the welfare state suggest political participation is not only suppressed by persistent inequality, but that state involvement may affect civic involvement in other unanticipated ways. In his grand critique of the public sphere in contemporary Western democracies, for example, Habermas (1991) argues that modern Western welfare states provide citizens with the civic, political, and social rights needed for full membership in society and a vital public sphere—but that these rights are only a rudimentary start.² What is needed is an active, reflexive, participatory citizenry who engage with one another to serve the common good. For Habermas, however, contemporary states managed by large bureaucratic apparatuses and dense laws may actually promote passive client citizenship. While this is a society-wide phenomenon that involves macrostructural and cultural changes, the impact would be exaggerated among recipients of particular welfare state programs. According to Habermas, targeted welfare state clients are depersonalized as they are defined as “disabled,” “elderly,” “unemployed,” and so forth, resulting in negative consequences for the individual’s self-image, as well as alienating them from other citizens. With very different concerns and remedies, some conservative critics have argued that assistance from the welfare state encourages dependence and passivity and diminishes recipients’ motivation to work and be involved in politics (Murray 1984; Mead 1997, 1986). In this study, we empirically test whether the welfare state promotes a passive client citizenry and suppresses active citizenship by examining if direct involvement with the welfare state through the receipt of any government assistance affects engagement in the public sphere.

Other scholarship demonstrates how state policies contribute to the stratification of groups by race, gender, and age (Mink 1990, 1995; Quadagno 1994; Mettler 1998; Campbell 2003) by defining who is included within the boundaries of the political community (Shklar 1991; Mettler and Soss 2004). Based on these studies, we might expect those categorized as “deserving” or who are perceived to have “earned” benefits will be viewed as full members of society and thus more likely to remain engaged in the body politic. Conversely, those who are defined outside of the boundaries of citizenship, and whose assistance is viewed as “unearned” and perhaps even “undeserving” may be more likely to reject participation.

Two Tiers: The Bifurcation of Social Programs in the United States

Extending from this, it seems reasonable to suggest that the design, administration, and policy feedbacks of social benefit programs may have implications for the citizenship behavior of recipients (Skocpol 1992; Soss 1999, 2000; Mettler and Soss 2004). Scholars who analyze gender and the state (Nelson 1990; Piven 1990; Fraser and Gordon 1994; Quadagno 1994; Haney and Rogers-Dillon 2005), as well as those using the political institutional framework (Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988; Skocpol 1992), argue that the U.S. welfare state has a two-tiered provision system, one channel offering generous nonstigmatizing benefits, and the other channel providing stigmatizing, punitive, and meager benefits. Those programs in the first tier, including social insurance benefits such as unemployment insurance, social security, and Medicare, are generally understood to be contributory with “universal” criteria for benefits and administered in objective ways, with recipients viewed as “deserving” and therefore retaining their full membership in the citizenry. These programs initially served primarily white male laborers, excluding dependent women and people of color who were more likely to work in agriculture and domestic labor. The second tier, including welfare and other supports for the poor such as general assistance and food stamps, are means tested and administered through discretionary case management, with recipients viewed as “undeserving” and whose full citizenship is viewed as suspect. These programs developed out of the poor laws, utilized “destitution” and moral fitness criteria for benefits (Fraser 1990; Nelson 1990; Pearce 1990; Piven 1990; Fraser and Gordon 1994). Several studies historically trace this second tier’s social control features of delivery as well as the ways that women experienced welfare receipt as demeaning and difficult (Abramovitz 1988; Mink 1990, 1995; Gordon 1994, 1990, 1988).

Research on welfare today supports the assertions that bureaucratic case management continues to be experienced as stigmatizing and controlling (Edin and Lein 1997; Soss 1999, 2000; Hays 2003). For instance, Hays (2003) finds that rather than welfare assistance promoting feelings of integration into society, welfare mothers are regularly reminded, through the administration of services and through wider cultural messages, that they are not full members of society until they become self-sufficient workers. Furthermore, experiences with social service policy implementation shape political efficacy and activity, as recipients view interactions with state workers to represent the government overall (Soss 1999, 2000; Lawless and Fox 2001).

Some research, largely from political science, has begun to empirically investigate potential influence of state program design and implementation on civic engagement. Using a political learning perspective, this research suggests that citizens learn lessons from their experiences with public programs about the relationship between citizens and government and about their own political empowerment or disempowerment. Those who encounter the government through non-means-tested programs from the first tier learn that they are valued as full citizens in the political community, and that their participation is both desired and influential. For instance, GI Bill recipients experienced benefits as generous, accessible, and an appropriate recognition of their service to the country. In response, they became more active citizens than those who did not

receive GI Bill benefits (Mettler 2005). Likewise, Social Security for the elderly, also non-means tested and viewed as recognizing lifelong productive work and contributions to society, has been found to boost civic participation (Campbell 2003). Other first-tier programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), while not being means tested or stigmatizing, stop short of valorizing recipients individually or as a group, and have been found to have no effect on the political engagement of recipients when compared with nonrecipients (Soss 1999, 2000).

This stands in contrast with second-tier means-tested, stigmatizing programs administered at the discretion of caseworkers, where recipients learn that they are viewed as marginal and problematic to government, and that their actions or voices have little effect on government actors or priorities. Soss and colleagues (Soss 1999, 2000; Bruch et al. 2008) argue that experiences with hierarchical and paternalistic welfare institutions and agency representatives diminish welfare recipients' "external political efficacy," or beliefs that the government will be responsive to them, dampening their political activity. For example, through interviews with 25 welfare and 25 SSDI recipients, Soss (1999) found that welfare recipients were much less likely than SSDI beneficiaries to believe that their individual actions could affect government decisions, or that government officials listen to people like them (p. 370). These feelings of alienation from government were not rooted in self-doubts about their own political abilities, or "internal political efficacy," but rather in what they had learned about government unresponsiveness to them. Interestingly, some researchers have found the possibility that even means-tested, stigmatizing programs can cultivate external political efficacy and active citizenship if delivered in a positive, empowering manner (Soss 1999, 2000; Lawless and Fox 2001).

None of these findings are particularly surprising given the perception of welfare in the larger culture. As scholarship on the welfare experience shows, welfare receipt carries with it a potent stigma in the contemporary United States. Over 70 percent of Americans believe that welfare recipients both abuse the system and become overly dependent on it (Hays 2003). Public discussion concerning welfare often portrays recipients as lazy, immoral, and undeserving of government help. For instance, in their study of media portrayals of welfare versus social insurance recipients, Misra, Moller, and Karides (2003) found that the contemporary media depict women who receive welfare as illegitimately dependent, and suggest that the welfare system increases government dependence and weakens families. This animosity toward, and stigma associated with, receipt does not appear to be uniform across government beneficiaries. This same study found that social insurance recipients are less likely to be portrayed in a negative way. Similarly, Campbell (2003) found that Social Security and Veteran's benefits recipients enjoy support from the general population, while welfare and its recipients lack such support. In exploring the relationship between government assistance and civic participation, these studies suggest it is important to attend to differences between kinds of assistance, how they are administered, and the stigma associated with them. Thus, in addition to the demobilizing effects of poverty, it is likely that encounters with government and experiences of stigma may also work to suppress civic involvement among welfare beneficiaries.

Although political scientists have begun to investigate the relationship between welfare state programs and civic involvement, empirical research on this issue has only begun to enter the sociological literature. Further, it is important to note that to date, the best available evidence on the relationship between welfare receipt and voting has relied on self-reported voting data (Soss 1999, 2000; Bruch et al. 2008). Yet self-reported data have known biases. Verification studies have found higher rates of false reports of voting among those with greater education (Abramson and Claggett 1992; Soss 1999), which may account for findings of lower voter turnout among a group who is less educated than the general population. Research comparing the actual or official voting behavior of welfare recipients and nonrecipients is clearly needed to advance knowledge on the questions posed in this article.

These ideas take on greater significance if we consider that many welfare recipients are young adults, developing their own civic life trajectory—if they are drawn into or alienated from political life early, will this continue throughout their lives? Early civic engagement is associated with greater civic participation through the life course (Youniss and Yates 1997; Flanagan et al. 1998; Yates and Youniss 1998), therefore it is possible that early alienation might lead to longer-term disengagement. Drawing from the findings discussed thus far, we next pose four hypotheses about the relationship between citizenship and the state.

HYPOTHESES

In this analysis, we investigate whether welfare state involvement is associated with diminished civic participation among young adults, beyond that associated with poverty. Testing theories that suggest the contemporary welfare state reduces active citizenship, we anticipate lower political engagement among those who have participated in government assistance programs. However, drawing on literature positing two-tiers of government assistance, we expect stronger effects among those receiving more stigmatizing welfare benefits (e.g., AFDC, food stamps), but weaker or no effects for those who receive less stigmatizing “first tier” forms of government assistance (e.g., unemployment insurance, worker’s compensation). Given the stigma associated with welfare in the United States, we anticipate that receiving welfare will diminish feelings of self-efficacy and increase feelings of exclusion from full citizenship (diminishing political efficacy).

We test four specific hypotheses. Drawing on theories positing that modern welfare states reduce active citizenship and encourage passive clientelism, our first hypothesis predicts that government assistance will be negatively associated with political participation measured as voting.

Hypothesis 1: Suppressed voting for recipients of government assistance relative to nonrecipients.

In line with theories of a bifurcated two-tiered welfare state, we predict that different types of government assistance will have different effects on recipients’ political

participation. We expect the strongest effects when assistance is means tested, using discretionary criteria for eligibility, and administered by a professional with the authority to decline benefits.

Hypothesis 2: Stronger effects on voting for those receiving poor support benefits such as welfare (AFDC in this period) and food stamps relative to those receiving first-tier government assistance such as unemployment insurance, SSDI, or worker's compensation.

Consistent with research on the stigma associated with welfare and the political learning perspective that posits that experiences with welfare teach recipients lessons that are then generalized to views of government in general, we predict that welfare recipients' feelings of self-esteem and control (self-efficacy) will decline, as will their perception of themselves as full members of society who can effectively impact the public worlds around them (political efficacy).

Hypothesis 3: Welfare recipients will have depressed feelings of self-efficacy associated with the stigma of welfare as compared with those receiving less stigmatizing government assistance and those who have not received any public assistance.

Hypothesis 4: Welfare recipients will express lower levels of political efficacy relative to those receiving less stigmatizing government assistance and those who have not received any public assistance.

Drawing on the work of Putnam (1995, 2000), Bellah et al. (1985, 1991), and Habermas (1991), civic participation involves more than voting. We therefore investigate the effects of government assistance on volunteering as an additional measure of civic engagement. This approach is consistent with recent scholarship on the civic engagement of young people that looks beyond voting to young adults' civic activity (Keeter, Zukin, and Jenkins 2002; Youniss et al. 2002). Considering our previous hypotheses about differences between welfare and first-tier government assistance recipients, one might expect to find the same patterns with volunteering—that is, effects may be stronger for those receiving stigmatizing, discretionarily administered poor support benefits. Prior research on poor women's activism, however, suggests that welfare recipients may in fact volunteer more, particularly in areas addressing the needs of their children and local communities (Naples 1992, 1998). Further, the political learning perspective suggests that the lessons learned through welfare are generalized to views on government but not necessarily nongovernment realms (Soss 1999, 2000). Because the literature in this area points to several possibilities about differences between welfare and first-tier government assistance recipients, we do not offer a directional hypothesis about the relationship between receipt of government assistance and volunteering.

DATA

We analyze data from the YDS, a prospective longitudinal investigation of public school students in St. Paul, Minnesota. The YDS began in 1988 with a random sample of 1,010 ninth graders who were surveyed annually in school until 1991 and have since been surveyed repeatedly by mail. Seventy-four percent of the sample are white, 10 percent

African-American, 5 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent Asian. Although this sample well represents the St. Paul community (Finch et al. 1991; Mortimer 2003), Minnesota represents an exceptional case in some respects. Nevertheless, these longitudinal data are well suited for comparing public assistance recipients with nonrecipients with respect to civic engagement, since welfare receipt and other important covariates are available to predict both voting and volunteering. To determine actual voter turnout, we relied upon official voting records from the Minnesota Secretary of State's (2006) office. YDS data were matched and cross-referenced with the Minnesota Voter's registration file using name and birth date to construct variables pertaining to voting history.³ Because these data provide multiple waves of voting information, we are able to employ a lagged dependent variable method of analysis, in which voting in 2000 is predicted by receipt of assistance in 1996, net of the effects of voting in 1994. Such models are well suited to making inferences about the effects of receipt of assistance on voting, because they adjust assistance effects for the stable individual characteristics that predict both voting and receipt of assistance.

Because some YDS respondents may have voted in states other than Minnesota, it might make sense to restrict the sample to Minnesota residents. When we do, our findings are similar and robust, but turnout rates are higher than in the total sample, particularly in the 2000 elections. Restricting our sample to Minnesota residents only may also introduce selectivity bias in our estimates, as receipt of welfare is likely correlated with interstate mobility. Instead, we address this limitation by including a measure of state residency in our multivariate analyses. We believe this enables us to take into account the limits of relying on official voting records specific to Minnesota, while minimizing biases that may be associated with more mobile populations. As a test of robustness, we conducted two sets of supplemental analyses: one described above using Minnesota residents only, and the other using self-reported voting for the full sample of respondents. All of these analyses yielded similar results for the principal variables of interest (not shown, available from authors). We report analyses of actual voter turnout of the full sample here because we believe that it is the best measure of voting available given the known biases in self-reported data and the likely association between welfare receipt and mobility.

Although our primary focus is testing our hypotheses using the survey and voting data, we also draw on intensive interviews conducted with 20 of the YDS welfare recipients to help illustrate and interpret the findings throughout. Interview respondents were initially recruited in 1999 as a part of a study on welfare recipient experiences (Grabowski 2002).⁴ Twenty of these women were reinterviewed in 2002 to 2003 as part of a study on young adulthood conducted by the Research Network on the Transitions to Adulthood. The interviews covered broad topics relevant to young adult lives, including politics and civic engagement. The in-depth interviews lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours each, and took place in respondents' homes or a public setting. All of the interviewees were mothers, ages 29 to 30, and had received welfare prior to 1997 (before age 24–25). With regard to race-ethnicity, 15 were white, 1 Native American, 3 black, and 1 black and white mixed race.

Minnesota Exceptionalism

Civic Participation

As Garrison Keillor has popularized in his radio program “A Prairie Home Companion,” Minnesotans are “above average”—at least when it comes to voting. Minnesota often has the highest rate of voter turnout in the nation—67 percent in 2000 and 74 percent in 2004, compared with national participation rates of 50 percent and 56 percent in these elections (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008). Turnout rates in Minnesota are closer to national averages among young adults. Respondents in the YDS participated at rates similar to their young adult peers across the country, with 30 percent voting in 1996 (when they were 22 years old) and 43 percent voting in 2000 (when they were 26 years old), compared with the 33% of 21- to 24-year-olds in 1996 and 44% of 25- to 34-year-olds nationally who voted during those elections (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008).⁵ YDS respondents volunteered at comparable rates as other American young adults in their age group, about 22 percent of both groups, reported having volunteered in the past year (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006b).

Welfare

On the whole, Minnesota welfare recipients enjoy higher benefits and more services than their counterparts in other areas of the country. Before the large-scale welfare reforms of 1996 (when our sample had received welfare), Minnesota’s welfare program offered education and training to those receiving welfare, most notably through its Success Through Reaching Individual Development and Employment (STRIDE) program. While in school, welfare recipients qualified for subsidized child care, and were able to keep this subsidized care for 2 years after gaining employment. Also notable was the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which provided wage supplements, removed marriage penalties, provided child care subsidies to all eligible families, and were more generous and less stigmatizing than programs in other states. This study analyzes the effects of welfare receipt prior to “welfare reform.” Although consequences of welfare policy changes are not clear, we anticipate that changes associated with reform would increase the punitive experience of welfare receipt, particularly with regards to “sanctions” and time limits.

It is also important to mention the relatively homogenous racial composition of Minnesota in comparison to other states, with 88 percent of residents being white (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006a). Since Minnesota has a smaller proportion of racial minorities than many other regions of the country, especially large metropolitan areas, we expect the dynamics of race and racism may be different in this context. While nationally, black and Hispanics are overrepresented in the welfare system (38 percent of welfare recipients are black, 25 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent white) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1999; U.S. House of Representatives 2000), welfare recipients in the YDS are 38 percent nonwhite and 62 percent white. We believe it is possible that welfare recipients in Minnesota are shielded from some of the most insidious problems associated with racist stereotypes of welfare recipients.

Taken together, these conditions offer a more benign setting for welfare receipt in Minnesota compared with many other places in the contemporary United States. This is especially so when we consider the liberal and progressive political legacy in Minnesota. Given the more positive context for welfare receipt in Minnesota, we speculate that any effects of welfare receipt on voting that we see in Minnesota would be even greater in other states with lower payments, more control, and greater stigma.

Strategy of Analysis and Measures

First, we present descriptive statistics and *t*-tests to compare voter turnout rates and social psychological and political orientation measures across groups receiving different kinds of assistance (public assistance, social welfare, and financial assistance from family). We then estimate a series of regression models predicting voter turnout, volunteering, and self- and political efficacy. To provide a framework for understanding these results, we include excerpts from the interviews with welfare recipients. We chose passages that both contextualize the quantitative findings and represent broader patterns across the interviews. Our aim here is not to present a full-scale qualitative analysis of the interview data, but rather to help draw out key findings from the quantitative analysis.

We measure our dependent variable, civic participation, primarily as having voted in the presidential elections in 1996 and 2000 when the participants were 22 and 26 years old. Overall, 30 percent of YDS respondents voted in 1996, and 43 percent voted in 2000. These percentages were higher among the subset of in-state Minnesota residents, at 34 percent in 1996 and 50 percent in 2000. Because voting increases from young adulthood toward middle adulthood, the increase in voting between elections was not surprising. In addition to voting, we also measure civic participation as having volunteered in the past year. About 22 percent of respondents reported that they had volunteered in the last year when asked in the 1997 wave. Descriptive statistics for these and our additional measures are presented in Table 1.

We measure government assistance in two ways, reflecting theories of a two-tiered welfare state and program details in the Minnesota research setting. In 1997, respondents were asked if they had received government assistance in the last year and/or the past 5 years (1991–1996), and if so, to check which program(s). If a program was not listed, respondents could fill in the name of the program. Our first measure includes respondents who indicated that they received AFDC or food stamps any time between 1991 and 1996. In addition, we also include the few respondents who did not report that they received AFDC or food stamps but wrote in that they were beneficiaries of other poor relief programs that were structured and administered in similar ways (including Women, Infants, and Children [WIC], Section 8 housing, and MFIP). Throughout the following discussion, we refer to these forms of assistance as “welfare.” Based on prior scholarship, the programs in our “welfare” variable represent the “second tier” poor relief-type programs that are means tested, administered at the discretion of caseworkers, require monitoring, and believed to carry a stigma. As indicated in Table 1,

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Coding	Mean	SD
Civic participation				
% 1996 turnout	Voted 1996 presidential election Minnesota residents only	0 = No; 1 = Yes	29.88%	
% 2000 turnout	Voted 2000 presidential election Minnesota residents only	0 = No; 1 = Yes	34.28%	
% Volunteered	Volunteered 1996	0 = No; 1 = Yes	43.15%	
Dependence			49.84%	
Welfare	Received food stamps or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), 1991–1996	0 = No; 1 = Yes	21.54%	
Other assistance	Received unemployment insurance, medical assistance, or other government assistance, 1991–1996	0 = No; 1 = Yes	18.64%	
Welfare 1996	Food stamps or AFDC, 1996	0 = No; 1 = Yes	9.08%	
Other assistance 1996		0 = No; 1 = Yes	12.54%	
Demographics		0 = No; 1 = Yes	6.21%	
Nonwhite	Self-reported race	0 = White; 1 = Nonwhite	26.35%	
Female	Self-reported sex	0 = Male; 1 = Female	51.98%	
Background (1996)				
Working full time	Employed full time, past 12 months	0 = No; 1 = Yes	56.58%	
Income	Income during past 12 months	Thousands of dollars	\$18.78	\$10.92
Education	Years of education completed	9 = Elementary or jr. high 18 = Ph.D. or prof. degree	14.01	1.79
Married	Married at time of survey administration in 1996	0 = No; 1 = Yes	21.27%	
Social psychological				
Self-efficacy 1988	Belief that the future depends on them, they can do anything, and they control their own destiny	21.29 = High efficacy 6.31 = Low efficacy	14.79	2.58
Self-efficacy 1995		21.29 = High efficacy 7.73 = Low efficacy	16.26	2.61
Self-efficacy 2000		20.84 = High efficacy 7.37 = Low efficacy	16.39	2.57
Political efficacy 2000	Belief they have no say about what government does, the average person gets nowhere by talking to public officials, and elections are a bad way of making the government pay attention to what people think	10 = High efficacy 1 = Low efficacy	6.06	1.62

19 percent of those in our sample received welfare at some point between 1991 and 1996, and 13 percent received welfare during 1996 only.

Our second measure of government assistance includes recipients of programs that others have labeled as first-tier programs (Nelson 1990; Soss 1999, 2000), and includes respondents who indicated they received unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, SSDI, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veteran's benefits, health care assistance, or other government assistance (excluding food stamps, AFDC, and programs for the poor coded as "welfare").⁶ In line with previous research and theoretical conceptualization, we refer to this as less stigmatizing or first-tier "other government assistance." Fewer respondents, only 9 percent, received this form of assistance between 1991 and 1996.

While it is possible to receive both welfare and first-tier assistance, respondents who reported having received both were coded as having received welfare but not other assistance because of the presumed greater social stigma associated with welfare receipt. Unfortunately, the YDS Questionnaire did not distinguish between types of government assistance programs after 1996, so we are unable to make this distinction between types of government assistance after this point in time. This limits our ability to assess the effects of welfare receipt during the TANF program of postwelfare reform.

Table 1 also shows descriptive statistics for our other independent variables. In the regressions we control for ascribed characteristics including race (26 percent nonwhite) and gender (52 percent female) along with several background variables from the 1996 survey. At that time, 57 percent of participants were working full time and their average annual income was \$18,780. On average, participants had completed 14 years of education, and 21 percent of participants were married.

In addition to the background variables, we consider the relationship between social psychological factors—self-efficacy and political efficacy—government assistance, and voting. Our self-efficacy measure comes from three questions about whether participants believe that the future depends on them, that they can do anything, and that they can control their own destiny (see Mortimer 2003 for details). We measure self-efficacy at three points in time: 1988 (the first wave of the study), 1995, and 2000. We first consider the effect of 1995 self-efficacy on voting. In this year, participants' average efficacy score was 16.26, with a score of 21 representing high self-efficacy, and 8 representing low efficacy (standard deviation = 2.61). We then use our social psychological indicators from 2000 as dependent variables to determine how receipt of government assistance influences self-efficacy and political efficacy. Self-efficacy scores from 2000 were similar to our 1995 measure, averaging 16.39 (standard deviation = 2.57). Political efficacy was measured using three questions about respondents' beliefs that they do not have any say about what the government does, that the average person gets nowhere by talking to public officials, and that elections are a bad way of making the government pay attention to what people think. Because these questions were only available from 2000, we do not control for this variable in our models predicting voting behavior in 1996 and 2000. Scores on political efficacy ranged from 1 (low efficacy) to 10 (high efficacy), with an average of 6.1.

RESULTS

To test our first hypothesis about voting and receipt of government assistance, we compare those who had received government assistance of any kind and those who had not. As shown in Table 2, those who received assistance voted at significantly lower rates than those who did not. In the 1996 presidential election, only 24 percent of YDS respondents receiving any government assistance voted, compared with 33 percent of those not receiving assistance. This gap remained in 2000, when 37 percent of assistance recipients and 47 percent of nonrecipients voted. When looking at Minnesota residents only, these trends remained similar, although voter turnout rates were higher for both groups. In 1996, 26 percent of those receiving government assistance voted compared with 39 percent of those who did not. In the 2000 election, turnout rose to 39 percent and 56 percent for recipients and nonrecipients, respectively. Note also that recipients were more likely to be nonwhite, female, and married than nonrecipients, and to have lower incomes, less education, and lower levels of political and general efficacy.

Applying the analysis of the bifurcated welfare state and our own view that the two channels will differently affect citizenship, our second hypothesis predicts that the effects of government assistance will vary by program type. That is, recipients of means-tested, stigmatized and discretionarily administered programs will be affected more profoundly than those who receive assistance from less stigmatized, contributory, universal programs. Indeed, results from our *t*-tests reveal that those who received welfare are less

TABLE 2. Bivariate Relationship between Government Assistance and Political Participation

Variable	No GA (1991–1996)	Any GA (1991–1996)
Voter turnout		
% 1996 turnout*	32.99	24.31
(MN residents only)**	39.27	26.22
% 2000 turnout*	46.82	36.93
(MN residents only)**	56.31	39.39
Social psychological factors		
Self-efficacy (1995)**	16.60	15.71
Political efficacy (2000)*	6.17	5.84
Demographics		
% Nonwhite**	18.10	30.19
% Female**	51.40	71.12
Background variables		
% Working full time**	62.29	40.82
Income**	20.41	13.95
Education**	14.36	13.18
% Married**	18.84	27.59

*Significantly different at .05 level (two-tailed test). **Significantly different at .01 level (2 tailed test).

GA, government assistance; MN, Minnesota.

TABLE 3. Bivariate Relationship between Welfare/Other Assistance and Political Participation

Variable	Welfare		Other Assistance (OA)	
	No welfare (1991–1996)	Any welfare (1991–1996)	No OA (1991–1996)	Any OA (1991–1996)
Voter turnout				
% 1996 turnout (MN residents only)	33.39**	17.80**	30.03	36.51
% 2000 turnout (MN residents only)	47.36**	28.95**	43.43	51.61
	56.04**	31.13**	51.00	54.24
Social psychological factors				
Self-efficacy (1995)	16.56**	15.41**	16.37	16.26
Political efficacy (2000)	6.15*	5.75*	6.09	5.99
Demographics				
% Nonwhite	17.88**	37.68**	21.98	16.22
% Female	51.10**	82.05**	57.69	48.68
Background variables				
% Working full time	61.66**	32.56**	56.42	56.72
Income	20.34**	10.71**	18.65	19.82
Education	14.25**	13.08**	14.11**	13.36**
% Married	19.82*	27.56*	20.63	27.63

*Significantly different at .05 level (two-tailed test). **Significantly different at .01 level (two-tailed test).

MN, Minnesota.

likely to vote than nonrecipients or first-tier government assistance recipients, as shown in Table 3. Voter turnout among welfare recipients in 2000 was 29 percent, compared with 47 percent of those who did not receive this form of assistance. For Minnesota residents only, the number of welfare recipients who voted remained similar, but for nonrecipients, the percentage grew nearly 10 percent. While these differences are statistically significant, the turnout difference between first-tier government assistance recipients and nonrecipients are nonsignificant. As noted below, we also observe only small differences on other characteristics between first-tier government assistance recipients and nonrecipients. These findings suggest that the two welfare state tracks may differently affect political engagement.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predict that welfare recipients will have lower feelings of both self- and political efficacy compared with the other groups. Indeed, results in Table 3 indicate that this is the case. Whereas differences between first-tier government assistance recipients and nonrecipients are generally nonsignificant, we observe striking differences with regard to welfare receipt. First, welfare recipients had lower self-efficacy scores than nonrecipients, indicating that they believed less strongly that the future depends on them, that they can do anything, or that they control their own destiny. Welfare recipients also had lower political efficacy scores, indicating that they believe less

strongly that they have a say about what the government does, that talking to public officials makes a difference, or that elections are effective. Welfare recipients' remarks during their interviews illustrate these feelings of political inefficacy. Alicia, a biracial homeless single mother of three children, expressed this mentality when she said: "I'm only one person, how am I going to change anything?" Likewise, Lucia, a white single mother of two children who works as a cashier, said, "I've never voted . . . I just figured mine wouldn't make a difference."

Lowered feelings of self-efficacy and their sense of political disempowerment may be due, in part, to the discretionary and punitive administration of welfare programs. In interviews, women stated that they experienced welfare as punishing, controlling, and demeaning. For example, while discussing voting, Sheila recalled that she felt "I'm being penalized [by my social worker], that's just how I felt." Amber felt helpless when she encountered bureaucratic rules and a social worker that required her to move out of the security of her sister's home to qualify for means-tested assistance (that would count her sister's income, which she did not have access to) when she was homeless: "I was very frustrated when I was homeless because I couldn't find anyone to help me with this crap. . . . I think at that point I felt pretty helpless. . . . They made me feel that I had no power." Lawless and Fox (2001) found that social service policy implementation shaped feelings of political efficacy. The welfare recipients in this study, on the whole, may have also experienced the discretionary nature of welfare program administration as demeaning and disempowering.

The stigma associated with welfare receipt may have also contributed to lower self-efficacy among this group. Many of the women interviewed discussed experiences in their everyday lives when they were looked down upon by others because of welfare receipt, even when they did not think of themselves as undeserving. Angie, for instance, noted accusations by cashiers when she used food stamps: "The cashiers are kind of snotty to me, and you know 'You are taking the taxpayers' money.'" Similarly, Rosie described how negative stereotypes are unfairly applied to all welfare recipients, including her:

The bad apples always get the media's attention and it makes everybody categorize welfare people on assistance as the bad apples . . . all those bad apples. There's hundreds like me who have done stuff with their lives and there's always going to be people who take advantage of freebies. . . . I'm a nurse now, I'm working. I am paying back through taxes all the help I received.

The common charge that welfare recipients took tax money without paying their part reveals the perceived illegitimacy of noncontributory systems. These women realized that the public culture and individuals that they encountered in their daily lives viewed them as outside the American mainstream and challenged their status as full members of the community. Indeed, welfare recipients do appear to experience the stigma associated with receiving welfare in a way that those receiving first-tier government assistance may not, given that fewer stereotypes persist about recipients of social insurance and less stigmatizing programs.

It is important to note that the *t*-tests in Table 3 also show significant demographic and other background differences between those who receive welfare and those who do

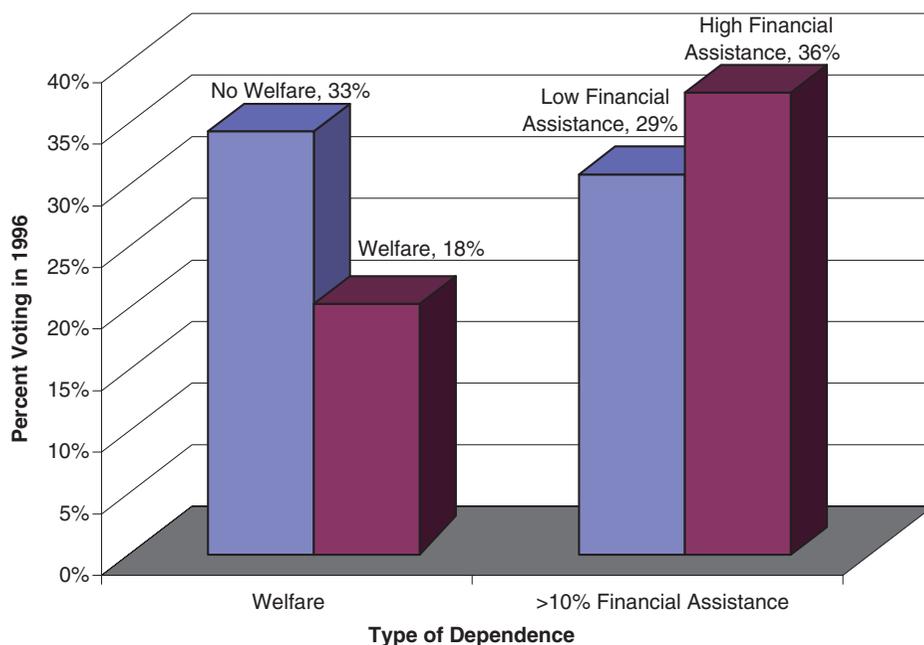


FIGURE 1. 1996 Voting by Welfare Receipt and Financial Dependency.

not. For example, 38 percent of the welfare recipients are nonwhite, as compared with 18 percent of nonrecipients. Recipients have also attained slightly fewer years of education (13.1 years) than nonrecipients (14.3 years). Knowing that the disparity in civic participation parallels other forms of socioeconomic inequality, it is possible that our bivariate results can be explained by factors other than government assistance, such as class, education, and race.

For example, it may be that any kind of financial dependence during young adulthood inhibits full engagement in the polity, rather than this only being associated with government dependence. As discussed earlier, conservative welfare state critics argue that dependence itself fosters passivity (Murray 1984; Mead 1997). We therefore compared the voting rates of those who received some welfare prior to 1996, those who received no welfare, those who received less than 10 percent of their annual income at age 22 from their family of origin, and those who received 10 percent or more of their income in 1996 from their family of origin. We find that dependence on the state and dependence on one's family are associated with very different levels of political participation. Those who received welfare had the lowest voter turnout rates in 1996 (18 percent), while those who received financial assistance from their parents as young adults had the highest voter turnout (36 percent), as shown in Figure 1.⁷

To better understand how these additional characteristics and experiences alter the estimated effects of assistance on political participation, we estimated a series of logistic regression models predicting voter turnout and volunteering. Table 4 shows results for voting in 1996, and Table 5 shows results for voting in 2000.⁸

TABLE 4. Multivariate Logistic Regression Predicting Voter Turnout in 1996

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Type of assistance					
Welfare 1991–1996	-.817*** (.258)	-.839*** (.291)	.280 (.277)	.340 (.294)	-.810*** (.295)
Other assistance only (1991–1996)					.194 (.297)
Demographics					
Other race (versus white)		-.072 (.243)		-.193 (.238)	-.068 (.244)
Female		.140 (.190)		.033 (.186)	.143 (.191)
Background					
Working full time		-.049 (.218)		.030 (.216)	-.040 (.219)
Income		.000 (.011)		.001 (.011)	-.001 (.011)
Years education		.189*** (.060)		.233*** (.061)	.196*** (.062)
Married		.059 (.223)		.007 (.222)	.048 (.224)
Out-of-state residency		-1.972*** (.331)		-1.933*** (.331)	-1.968*** (.332)
Social psychological factors					
Self-efficacy (1995)		.041 (.037)		.047 (.036)	.041 (.037)
Constant	-.682*** (.091)	-3.750*** (1.011)	-.834*** (.090)	-4.637*** (1.005)	-3.891*** (1.036)
Number of cases	654	654	654	654	654
-2 Log likelihood	797.321	740.022	807.591	747.670	739.598

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

TABLE 5. Multivariate Logistic Regression Predicting Voter Turnout in 2000

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Type of assistance				
Welfare 1996	-.978*** (.302)		-.965*** (.305)	-.946*** (.326)
Other assistance only 1996		.233 (.290)	.087 (.293)	.114 (.312)
Demographics				
Other race (versus white)	-.329 (.237)	-.436* (.232)	-.329 (.237)	-.143 (.249)
Female	.380** (.188)	.287 (.185)	.381** (.188)	.338* (.201)
Background				
Working full time	-.406* (.218)	-.311 (.214)	-.402* (.218)	-.462** (.231)
Income	.013 (.011)	.017 (.011)	.013 (.011)	.014 (.012)
Years education	.200*** (.058)	.231*** (.058)	.203*** (.059)	.134** (.062)
Married	.198 (.224)	.154 (.221)	.193 (.224)	.100 (.238)
Out-of-state residency	-3.711*** (.531)	-3.657*** (.531)	-3.706*** (.531)	-3.341*** (.538)
Social psychological factors				
Self-efficacy (1995)	.049 (.037)	.049 (.036)	.049 (.037)	.044 (.039)
Past voting				
1994 Election				2.406*** (.345)
Constant	-3.527*** (.976)	-4.131*** (.976)	-3.582*** (.994)	-2.855*** (1.054)
Number of cases	649	649	649	649
-2 Log likelihood	743.667	754.183	743.579	671.067

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

The results in Tables 4 and 5 generally support our hypothesis that the strongest effects on voting in the two-tiered welfare state will be for those receiving welfare rather than other assistance. In Table 4, model 1 shows diminished participation among welfare recipients in 1996: The odds of a welfare recipient voting were 56 percent lower than those of nonrecipients ($e^{-.817} = .44$). Even after controlling for background and other characteristics in model 2, the odds of voting in the 1996 election were 57 percent lower than for nonrecipients ($e^{-.839} = .43$). Receipt of first-tier government assistance, however, is not associated with turnout in model 3 or model 4. The final model in Table 4 includes both welfare and first-tier government assistance receipt, along with all other independent variables. In this model, the odds that a welfare recipient will vote remain about 56 percent lower than those of nonrecipients.⁹ Thus, welfare receipt appears to discourage civic engagement in the form of voting above and beyond the effects of other independent variables. In model 5, education and state residency are the only other significant predictors of voting.

Results for the 2000 election are shown in Table 5. For this election, we take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the YDS data to estimate a model that includes a lagged dependent variable—in this case, voting in 1994. We therefore change our government assistance measures from receipt in 1991 to 1996 to receipt in 1996 only. In this way, we can estimate the effects of receipt in 1996 on 2000 voting, after statistically controlling for the influence of 1994 voting. This model assesses change in voting behavior, providing an effective control for all stable, person-specific characteristics (traits such as sociability, initiative, or passivity) that may influence both voting and receipt of assistance.

In model 1, the odds that a welfare recipient would vote were 62 percent lower than those of nonrecipients net of the other variables in the model. As was the case for the multivariate model of the 1996 election, turnout among first-tier government assistance recipients was not statistically different from nonrecipients in 2000, as shown in model 2. Model 3 considers both forms of government assistance simultaneously, and model 4 adds the lagged voting indicator. In both of these equations, the effect of welfare receipt remains strong and significant. The lagged dependent variable is a strong predictor in the final model, with 1994 voters being 10 times more likely to vote in 2000 as those who did not vote in 1994. Even net of this strong control, however, 1996 welfare recipients remained 61 percent less likely to vote than nonrecipients in the 2000 election. Full-time work status and educational attainment also remained significant predictors of voter turnout in 2000.

In line with previous research, we interpret the persistent effects of welfare experience on later voting as resulting from the institutional structure and cultural meanings associated with this form of government assistance, including means-tested criteria, caseworker discretion, surveillance, and stigma associated with welfare receipt that teach young adult recipients that they lack power and influence in their interactions with government. However, our qualitative interviews suggest that this is not the only lesson that can potentially be learned from experiences with state programs for the poor. Some qualitative research has found that the way in which social service programs are implemented can have an important effect on whether recipients will turn toward or away

from political activity (Soss 1999, 2000; Lawless and Fox 2001). For example, Soss (1999:374) found that Head Start programs, which encouraged participation from parents, sometimes had “spillover” effects that resulted in enhanced feelings of political empowerment and greater civic involvement, which could mitigate the demobilizing effects of welfare. Even though our quantitative findings point to a general pattern of disempowerment, and many former welfare participants confirmed these feelings of continued disempowerment during interviews, it is important to note that some former welfare recipients talked about how their experience with welfare mobilized them toward political participation, and for some, even activism. In our interview sample, we found those who turned toward political involvement came mainly from a subset of recipients who benefited from a welfare education program called STRIDE. Not only did these women gain education, but their economic situation changed as they attained middle-class professions, becoming teachers, nurses, and social workers. Thus, perhaps because the welfare state helped alleviate economic disadvantage for these women, it also promoted their political inclusion and activity once they had moved out of the program. This in itself is something noteworthy, and a promise that the welfare state holds for benefiting both economic and political equality (although this might only be the case for those that experience upward mobility). But hearing what these women had to say about their welfare experience, it may be more than a demographic change that encouraged greater political involvement. Positive experiences of welfare for some women, coupled with the politically charged atmosphere of “welfare reform,” may have mobilized a more successful group to be more attentive, participate politically, and for some, take further action. Sarah, for instance, said that her positive experience with welfare was important in her political decisions, as she wanted to be sure to vote for politicians who will maintain the program for others in need:

In general, I’ve had a good experience with assistance programs. . . . I couldn’t vote for somebody who wanted to get rid of that because it has been there for me in the past, and I just think that people sometimes fall into hard times and they need that, but I think that if you take that away that is a sad, sad thing.

Rosie said she was compelled to express her opinions after learning that the STRIDE education program was under threat by welfare reform. She became an activist and communicated to program administrators and politicians how the program clearly made a difference in her educational and occupational advancement.

I specifically said, “I am a nurse now, I’m working. I am paying back through taxes all the help I received.” I even had a breakdown in how much I was paying in taxes and how much money I received through the system. They were going to cut STRIDE completely out of the picture. Without STRIDE I don’t think I could have done it.

Similarly, Loriann, now a teacher, also became a welfare activist advocating for educational programs like STRIDE, which she credits with enabling her to reach educational and career goals. These interview data suggest that positive experiences with state programs, as well as increases in education, may have combined to alter former welfare recipients’ voting patterns and political participation. Policy changes that fail to offer

TABLE 6. Multivariate Logistic Regression Predicting Volunteering in 1996

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Type of assistance			
Welfare (1991–1996)	-.704** (.294)		-.340 (.335)
Other assistance only (1991–1996)		-1.327*** (.474)	-1.072** (.490)
Demographics			
Other race (versus white)			-.011 (.274)
Female			.367* (.212)
Background			
Working full time			-.241 (.244)
Income			.023* (.012)
Years education			.364*** (.075)
Married			.044 (.257)
Social psychological factors			
Self-efficacy (1995)			.115*** (.041)
Constant	-1.213*** (.099)	-1.222*** (.095)	-8.900*** (1.295)
Number of cases	693	693	693
-2 Log likelihood	709.697	705.198	638.910

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

educational opportunity may not only have detrimental effects on this populations' educational and occupational attainment, but also the inclusiveness of our democracy.

Of course, voting is just one of several ways that individuals engage in democracy. Volunteering is another avenue through which people work for the collective good and build the associational ties needed for a vibrant public sphere. What is more, scholarship suggests that volunteering, whether overtly political or not, has important implications for recruitment into political activity and for building civic skills (Verba et al. 1995). To test whether there are differential effects on volunteering for recipients and nonrecipients of government assistance, we estimate the logistic regression models predicting volunteering shown in Table 6. When considered on their own, both welfare and other assistance recipients were less likely to volunteer than nonrecipients. Once controlling for background characteristics, however, the effect for welfare recipients is no longer statistically significant. The effect for first-tier government assistance recipients remains but is weakened. One potential explanation for lower rates of volunteering among this group is the greater likelihood of disability or health issues that may prevent them from both work and volunteering. We therefore find that receipt of government assistance may suppress volunteering in some cases, but, as with voting, results vary depending upon the type of assistance received. We should note that our volunteer measure does not allow us to distinguish between different types or amounts of volunteer work. It is possible, therefore, that welfare recipients engage in different sorts of volunteer work than nonrecipients. These quantitative results simply show us that there were no significant differences in recipients and nonrecipients having self-reported volunteering in 1996.

As with the voting results, consulting the interview data helps frame our quantitative findings on volunteering. Welfare recipients who may experience alienation from the political culture (as indicated by our findings on voting) appear not to experience similar disengagement from their own communities. During interviews, welfare recipients discussed their volunteer activities, many of which centered on social service organizations that had previously assisted them and to whom they maintained social ties. They expressed a connection to these groups, a commitment to helping others in similar situations, as well as an opportunity to socialize with friends and acquaintances who continue to receive assistance from these organizations. For instance, Darla, a white mother of three, discussed her volunteer activity at a nonprofit social service agency that provides meals and other assistance to homeless and poor people:

I volunteer at the New Day Center. . . . I just wanted to get to know people who were in the same situation . . . I used to be [in], and help them get out of it. . . . I like it because I get to know people and my dad goes there so I can see my dad down there too.

Like other parents, former welfare recipients also volunteered for their children's schools and other children's activities. Children provided them with an opportunity to join in with others in their community for a common purpose. Other former welfare recipients become involved as a way to keep conditions in their communities safe, as was the case with Bridget:

We do have groups out here, different neighborhood groups. Especially when the break-ins were getting bad around here, the community really pulled together with that. They started a night watch where . . . people had different bikes that [they] ride . . . around late at night and keep an on eye on the area. . . . I keep my area safe so I get to know all my neighbors.

It is possible that having some experience with the stigmatizing aspects of the welfare state may in fact serve as a catalyst for subsequent civic engagement. Indeed, Naples (1992, 1998) found that many of the activist mothers she studied were, like Bridget, drawn into community involvement out of a desire to fight against the conditions faced by low-income people. The combined effects of racism and poverty led many of the mothers in Naples's study to practice a form of activism centered on addressing the needs of children and their communities. Likewise, a number of our interview respondents were engaged in such activities. They discussed volunteering for institutions and organizations in their communities, including Head Start programs, local schools, churches, community agencies, and housing advocacy groups.

Our third and fourth hypotheses suggest a link between receipt of government assistance and self-efficacy and political efficacy, respectively. Our bivariate results in Table 3 show that receipt of welfare, but not receipt of first-tier government assistance, is significantly associated with both forms of efficacy. Table 7 shows multivariate models predicting general and political efficacy in 2000, net of government assistance, and the other independent variables included in our voting analysis. We again adopt a lagged dependent variable strategy to show the effects of welfare receipt in 1996 on self-efficacy in 2000, net of 1988 self-efficacy. As is the case for 2000 voting, 1996 welfare receipt

TABLE 7. Ordinary Least Square Regression Predicting General and Political Self-Efficacy in 2000

Variable	General self-efficacy			Political efficacy	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Type of assistance					
Welfare 1996	-1.385*** (.312)	-0.915** (.344)	-0.975*** (.329)	-0.373** (.189)	-0.205 (.204)
Other assistance only 1996		-0.203 (.410)	-0.102 (.393)		-0.186 (.245)
Demographics					
Other race (versus white)		-0.074 (.264)	-0.088 (.252)		-0.190 (.157)
Female		-0.243 (.213)	-0.094 (.205)		.400*** (.126)
Background					
Working full time		.180 (.242)	.266 (.231)		-0.049 (.145)
Income		.018 (.012)	.011 (.011)		.000 (.007)
Years education		.158** (.063)	.128** (.061)		.175*** (.038)
Married		-0.016 (.251)	-0.028 (.240)		-0.116 (.150)
Past self-efficacy					
Self-efficacy (1988)			.297*** (.038)		
Constant	16.513*** (.106)	13.978*** (.922)	9.960*** (1.023)	6.123*** (.066)	3.610*** (.553)
Number of cases	649	649	649	663	663
Sum of squares	128.711	233.909	588.551	9.795	153.324

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests).

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

significantly reduces self-efficacy in 2000, even in models that include prior measures of efficacy. Receipt of welfare is associated with nearly a one-point (or .38 standard deviation) reduction in self-efficacy in model 3, ranking among the strongest predictors in the model. By comparison, each year of education is associated with a .13-point increase in efficacy (or .05 standard deviation). Although longitudinal data are unavailable for political efficacy, we assess the impact of government assistance and other independent variables on political efficacy in models 4 and 5. Welfare receipt is negatively correlated with political efficacy in model 4, although this association is nonsignificant after controlling for background and other characteristics associated with political efficacy (such as gender and educational attainment).

We originally expected self-efficacy to act as a mediator through which welfare diminishes political participation and civic activity. In this conceptualization, the stigma, control, surveillance, and disempowerment associated with welfare receipt reduces general and political efficacy, which in turn reduces voting. Instead, we find welfare has separate effects on *both* efficacy and the likelihood of voting. Table 7 highlights the strong, independent effect of welfare receipt on general self-efficacy, while Tables 4 and 5 show the negative effect of welfare receipt on voter turnout, net of self-efficacy. To further test our expectations on the mediating effect of self-efficacy, we estimated models predicting voter turnout in which we entered welfare first, then the social psychological variable, and then other independent variables. The effect of welfare receipt on voting behavior does not change appreciably across these specifications (not shown, available from authors), in part because self-efficacy has little net influence on official voting behavior in our models.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The welfare system has recently undergone dramatic changes aimed at altering financial dependency upon the state, marital status, and fertility of recipients (Rogers-Dillon and Skrentny 1999; Haney and March 2003; Hays 2003). But how are these programs affecting the citizenship of recipients? Contrary to assertions that any assistance from the welfare state uniformly diminishes civic participation, our research indicates that the effects of government assistance depend on the type of government program. Specifically, those involved with stigmatizing and discretionary welfare programs were significantly less likely to vote than nonrecipients. On the other hand, there were no differences in voting for those who received other forms of government assistance compared with nonrecipients. Moreover, this research shows that these effects on political participation extend beyond those that could be accounted for by poverty and lower levels of education. The statistically significant differences in the voting rates between those involved in different welfare state tiers imply differential consequences on voting of these two channels and provide evidence for the bifurcated welfare state thesis.

We found the effect of welfare on voting to persist over time. In particular, welfare receipt in 1996 continued to have a negative effect on voting in the 2000 elections. This is particularly disconcerting given that our respondents were young adults who are

establishing their civic engagement trajectories and identities as citizens, especially given what we have seen here about the strong influence of prior voting on later voting. If experiences with welfare diminish their voting behaviors and feelings of efficacy during these early years of adulthood, this may have long-term consequences for later well-being and political involvement.

This study goes beyond previous research and contributes to theories of a bifurcated welfare state in several different respects. First, we use a unique data set of official voting records rather than the self-reported measures of previous studies. What is more, this study controls for prior voting behavior—that is, voting habits that preceded the receipt of government assistance—which provides much stronger evidence that the welfare experience itself is what is driving dampened political participation in the more stigmatized government assistance programs. Further, this study examines civic engagement in the form of volunteering.

Importantly, although welfare recipients appeared to have lower rates of political participation as measured by voting, we found no differences in their rates of broader civic involvement in the form of volunteering as compared with others, even when controlling for other independent variables. Thus, it may be that while welfare recipients feel alienated from the larger society and politicians, who they perceive may view them as social pariahs, these women may not experience the same kind of isolation from their own communities. Furthermore, their local communities offer them opportunities to volunteer, cultivate associational ties, and participate in the common good. Social programs that include participatory, integrative, and empowering elements could have important implications for the future civic engagement of recipients.

As other scholars have argued, cultural ideologies concerning “deservingness,” work, and citizenship are institutionalized into the two tracks and thus key to the explanation of these findings (Nelson 1990; Piven 1990). Our findings reinforce and complicate the importance of these cultural dimensions surrounding particular programs in shaping young adult recipients’ perceptions of their inclusion in society. Lower feelings of efficacy, as well as sentiments expressed in interviews, convey the sting of stigma associated with welfare. Our findings also suggest that welfare receipt affects political participation above and beyond its effect on efficacy. Here is where the Minnesota context of our data and analysis is crucial. We would expect these effects to be strongest in states with less benign conditions and where race and racism are likely to play a larger role in anti-welfare discourse. Yet welfare’s deleterious effect on political participation was strong even in Minnesota with its comparatively generous government assistance and long history of public support for social programs.

Importantly, the divergent effects of different types of government assistance show that reduced political participation is not an inevitable consequence of receiving benefits—if programs and policies are designed to encourage civic participation. Our qualitative findings, as well as the work of some others (e.g., Soss 2000), suggest that involvement with welfare programs can potentially lead to two divergent political trajectories, either alienation or integration (the latter sometimes combined with mobilization, as their experience served as a catalyst for becoming more engaged). Both the

quantitative and qualitative evidence with this sample suggests that the current form and meanings associated with welfare lead to the former being the much more common experience. Yet our interviews suggest that positive experiences through differently designed welfare programs—for example, the STRIDE program, which benefited several of our respondents—have the potential to foster civic participation. The widespread elimination of empowering welfare programs such as STRIDE may threaten the current and future political engagement of welfare recipients.

This study reflects welfare experiences prior to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which eliminated AFDC and ushered in TANF. Although we are uncertain of how welfare reform may affect the political participation of recipients, we may speculate similar, if not stronger, effects for those receiving benefits today. As has been found in this work and the work of others, experiences with government social policies and programs affect recipients' civic participation (Lawless and Fox 2001; Mettler and Soss 2004). Welfare reform carries requirements, time limits, and "sanctions" that are more restrictive and punitive than its predecessor. Moreover, cultural messages that suggest welfare to be negative and outside the mainstream are conveyed by regulations and social workers (Hays 2003). Thus, it appears that the stigmatizing, controlling, and punitive aspects of welfare receipt remain. What is more, current TANF work requirements offer fewer opportunities for education, a path that appeared to be important for the economic and political empowerment of some of the respondents in this study.

Further attempts to reform welfare should seriously and more systematically consider the way that social programs and the culture that surrounds them influence civic engagement. Such a line of policy formation could mitigate the negative effects of welfare on civic involvement, as well as the ways that state programs can be constructed to integrate all citizens as full participating members. These analyses and interpretations also have theoretical implications for understandings of citizenship and its relation to the welfare state. Marshall's classic theories suggest that the welfare state holds the potential for inclusive citizenship through ensuring the basic material needs that enable civil and political rights. The findings of this study suggest that offering minimal means, while certainly important, is not enough to foster feelings of full integration into society or civic empowerment for everyone or under all conditions. It is also important to consider how these resources are perceived by recipients and the wider society, as well as how they are administered. While the aim of assistance programs may be to reduce economic hardship, government assistance that is stigmatizing, discretionary, and punitive, positions recipients as outsiders, and hence creates unequal social citizenship. In such cases, welfare programs that provide a modicum of economic equality may actually undermine political equality.

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NOTES

¹Civil rights guarantee protection from the state and individual freedoms, political rights include the right to vote and hold office, social rights guarantee citizens a minimum standard of living and economic welfare according to the standard prevailing in the society, such as rights to education and old age insurance (Marshall 1965).

²Although Habermas’s ideas grow from the Western European experience, and Germany in particular, they can be applied to the United States with its democratic tradition and more limited and punitive welfare programs.

³In addition to the analyses reported here, we also estimated models using self-reported YDS voting data. As expected, rates of self-reported voting were significantly higher than the official reports—65 percent in 1996 and 83 percent in 2000 (not shown, available from authors). The large disparities between self-reports and official voting records highlight the limits of relying solely on self-reported voting and the need for examining patterns of actual voter turnout. While the effect of welfare receipt remained similar in both analyses, the impact of education increased significantly when self-reported voting is the outcome, indicating a correlation between educational attainment and the propensity to overreport voting. While the effects of public assistance are robust to both the self-reported and official voting specifications, we report the latter because of the known biases in self-reported voting data. Full models with self-reported voting are available by request from the authors.

⁴One hundred three female YDS respondents who had received welfare sometime prior to 1997 were invited to be interviewed, of which 31 agreed to an interview. Analysis comparing welfare recipients who were interviewed with those who were not showed they were similar in parental income, education, and family of origin structure, high school grade point average, and self-efficacy in their senior year of high school (Grabowski 2002).

⁵When we exclude YDS participants who were living outside of Minnesota during these elections, voter turnout is higher: 34 percent of residents voted in 1996, and 50 percent voted in 2000. Some non-Minnesota residents were eligible to vote by returning to Minnesota on election day (particularly applicable for those attending college in nearby states) or through absentee ballots. Others, however, may have voted in the state they were living in at the time and therefore not be counted in our data.

⁶Although medical assistance programs in most states are means tested and sometimes carry stigma, we include this form of government aid in the first-tier category because of the relatively more generous programs for state health insurance coverage available in Minnesota. Two main government medical aid programs exist in Minnesota, including “Medical Assistance,”

Minnesota's version of Medicaid which is a means-tested, stigmatized program for the poor, which has implications for access to care, and "Minnesota Care," a less stigmatized program aimed to provide health insurance coverage to low- and modest-income Minnesotans who do not receive insurance from employment or other government programs and has fewer implications for access to care. Because we were not able to clearly distinguish between those who received Minnesota Care and Medicaid, we include both in the first-tier set of programs we call "other government assistance." Those who received the more stigmatized Medicaid for the poor are likely to be captured in our welfare group.

⁷As a test of robustness, we also examined the relationship between voting and receipt of government assistance for Minnesota residents only (not shown, available from authors). In Figure 1, the percentage of welfare recipients voting remained relatively constant, but the percentage voting in all other categories increased approximately 5 percent. The results for Tables 4 and 5 for Minnesota residents only were comparable with the results shown.

⁸The loss of cases in Tables 4 and 5 can be explained by panel attrition and missing values on some of the indicators. Retention rates in the survey waves that we analyze are between 71 and 79 percent.

⁹While children might be presumed to impact individuals' voting and other civic behavior, we do not include having children as a control variable because there is almost no variation on this measure among welfare recipients. That is, in this population, having children is a primary criterion for receiving welfare.

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