

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Reflections on the American Social Welfare State

*The Collected Papers of James R. Dumpson, PhD, 1930–1990*

*Then they said, "Let us start building!" So they committed themselves to the common good.*

—*Nehemiah 2:18*

When the country entered into the 21st century, ideology driving social welfare policy in the United States had come full circle from the landmark 1935 Social Security Act, which signaled the birth of the American social welfare state, to the enactment of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which all but ended federal participation in safety net programs for the poor and returned the country to a philosophy of social welfare closely aligned with its poor law heritage.

This book examines events of public policy development in social welfare over this period through the lens of the public papers of Dr. James R. Dumpson, whose social work career parallels the emergence and decline of public welfare in the United States. Dumpson began his career in the early years of the 1930s, a decade that saw a fundamental shift in American social welfare philosophy as the federal government assumed shared responsibility with states for the costs and provision of social welfare services. The "federalization" of services elevated social welfare to institutional status in which people were now entitled to benefits and services as a right of citizenship and were no longer dependent upon the largesse of charitable giving. Dumpson's career grew in prominence over the intervening years that saw an increase in social spending throughout the 1950s and 1960s with a corresponding rise in cost and size of the system and an ever expanding role of the federal government. The growth of the system during these years was influenced by social movements and reforms that promoted a greater democratization in eligibility requirements and the increased participation of people of color. The 1970s and 1980s were decades that saw the advancement of a conservative ideology, the beginning devolution of responsibility for social welfare back to the states, and the dismantlement of entitlement programs for the poor along with the increasing racialization of the welfare debate. The retreat from what had been the "safety net" philosophy established under the New Deal of the Roosevelt administration culminated in the enactment of the 1996 welfare reforms that saw the country returning to a 19th century philosophy of volunteerism, and a view of social welfare as an enterprise of the private sector and faith-based organizations. By this time, Dumpson held high visibility in the field and was widely acclaimed for a career of substantive accomplishments as a public servant, administrator, social work educator, and advocate.

Papers in the James R. Dumpson Collection housed in the Fordham archives and those in his private collection chronicle his work over half a century. These were decades of significant developments in social welfare policy and the professionalization of social work. The papers in the collections document for the public record Dumpson's substantive contributions to the profession of social work, social work education, and social policy development at the national level and in New York City. Over the years of Dumpson's career, changing ideology contributed to the creation of an ambivalent and paradoxical system, consistent only in the wide margin between stated policy intent and programmatic outcomes.

Despite the equivocations of the system, and at times the profession of social work, the papers capture Dumpson's philosophical approach that did not waiver from the belief that the federal government alone had the "imminence of power" to promote the common good and his steadfast

commitment to the core values of the social work profession. During periods of regressive policy developments, not only did Dumpson stay the course, but his was a constant voice of encouragement for social workers to remain true to the founding principles of the profession amid increasing trends of professionalization and preferences for the use of psychotherapy as a method of intervention that was increasingly favored by a growing number of social workers.

### **A Career in Service**

Punctuated by returns to appointments in academia and philanthropy, between the years of 1959 and 1990, Dumpson served as a government official in five New York City mayoral administrations. He served two separate terms as commissioner of the city's department of welfare, first under Mayor Robert Wagner and second under Mayor Abraham Beame. He also served as a member of the mayoral transitional team for John Lindsay, was the chair of two foster care task force groups established by Edward Koch, and was appointed acting president and CEO and chairman of the Health and Hospital Corporation (HHC) by David Dinkins. At the national level his government service included appointments to two national task force groups established by presidents Kennedy and Johnson to study juvenile gangs and youth narcotic involvement. His academic appointments included an associate deanship and full-time faculty appointment with Hunter College School of Social Work, now named the Silberman School of Social Work, and dean of the Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. Dumpson's philanthropic work was carried out in executive appointments with the New York Community Trust, one of the largest and oldest community foundations in the United States.

Documents in the James R. Dumpson Collection in the Fordham archives at the Rose Hill Campus and in the private collection illuminate how social welfare policy over the period of Dumpson's career spawned programs that were at times progressive and generous, and at other times regressive and punitive. Yet, on some issues of public policy making, the papers document that seemingly the more things change the more they remain the same. This is especially apparent when examining the history of policy development for the poor and child welfare, which are fields of practice that were of central concern to Dumpson over the full term of his professional career.

### **Advocate for the Poor and Dependent Children**

Much of Dumpson's government work and social activism focused on advancing policies that promoted the well-being of children and families and the fair and equitable treatment of the poor. The Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) and child welfare services are both programs for children that validate the nation's recognition of the importance of home life for the well-being of children and for society. These two programs stand as a reflection of the country's valuing of children and the formal acceptance of the nation's collective responsibility for the care and protection of all of its children. Despite this stated intent, neither of these programs has been carried out in a manner that has had significant impact on reducing child poverty or promoting the family stability of at-risk children. For example, the Dumpson papers provide extensive documentation that income assistance programs for poor children and child welfare services for at-risk children were highly controversial programs that have fallen far short in achieving stated program goals. These programs have also become increasingly controversial within the context of the changing caseload demographics.

Relative to the Aid to Dependent Children program, for example, the 1950s and early 1960s saw a number of states instituting reforms intended to reduce the welfare rolls that were increasingly comprised of single African American mothers. Suitable home laws put in place by states in the 1950s that allowed for the closer scrutiny of parental behaviors and resultant justification for closing the cases of needy families with children, the largest number of which were African American (M. K. Brown, 1999). Although never implemented under threat of loss of federal funds, one of the most highly publicized of these efforts was attempted in Newburgh, New York.

Government officials in Newburgh crafted a welfare reform plan that criminalized the poor in the proposed regulation requiring public assistance recipients to pick up their checks at the local police precinct. Other strategies of the Newburgh Plan included denying benefits to able-bodied men who refused workfare jobs, and terminating benefits of unmarried women who gave birth while on public assistance (M. K. Brown, 1999; Trattner, 1999).

New York City, historically distinguished for progressive social policy development, followed an approach reminiscent of the Newburgh plan in its initial implementation of the welfare reform legislation under PRWORA. The city's new Republican administration's social welfare chief had achieved national recognition for overhauling Wisconsin's welfare system and for instituting reforms that had cut the welfare rolls of that state virtually in half. He set about pursuing a course of action that would do the same for New York City and eliminate public welfare despite the city's high poverty rates. Under the newly elected mayor's promise to abolish public assistance in the city by the end of the century (Giuliani, 1998b), public welfare officials set about implementing the mandate to transform what had been a cash assistance program for children in needy families into a jobs and public works program. Attempts to discontinue assistance to the poor, which were allowable under federal welfare reforms, were halted only because the New York state constitution mandated the continuing provision of income assistance and services to needy families and individuals including those who were no longer eligible for federally funded benefits. Further, welfare ideology that can be traced back to principles established by the English poor laws was reflected in the emerging policies of this administration that threatened to place the children of homeless families in foster care if they failed to meet work demands.

The child welfare system provides another example of policy development in which reform efforts have had somewhat dubious effects. The stated intent of the Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997 was to ensure a permanent and loving home for every child in need of one. This act was intended to strengthen the provisions of its parent legislation, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Reform Act of 1980. Modeled after the 1979 New York State Child Welfare Reform Act, the 1980 law was considered a landmark reform legislation and was met with a good deal of optimism among child and family advocates. The law established a new policy thrust that redirected entrenched child welfare practices favoring out-of-home placement, by providing new financial incentives to states to encourage the use of preventive services to children in their own homes and communities. Despite the promise of improved outcomes, the legislation fell short of its goal of reducing the number of children coming into the system at the front end; nor were children moving out of foster care quickly enough.

The Adoptions and Safe Families Act was legislated as an effort to strengthen the preventive thrust of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Reform Act, and speed the rate at which children were achieving permanency and moving out of the system. One of the strategies for doing this was the restructuring of traditional practices favoring parental autonomy to allow states to terminate the parental rights of those parents whose children had not been returned to their care after being in the system for a specified number of months. There was, however, little cause to believe that the child welfare system would be more successful in finding permanent homes for newly freed-for-adoption children than it had been for the long list of those already waiting for adoptive homes. Consequently, in the early stages of implementation, the Adoptions and Safe Families Act saw a swelling of the number of children in foster care, with the only difference being that more of them were now freed for adoption.

Further complicating matters was the soon-to-be-felt interactive effects of efforts to reform these two programs at the same time of rising child poverty rates and the increased demands for foster care services in the wake of the crack-cocaine epidemic in inner city communities in the 1980s. These developments threatened to overwhelm the child welfare system relative to both costs and capability, and slowed reforms that were legislated under the Temporary Assistance to

Needy Families (TANF) that had replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program.

Policies to aid the poor and protect children from abuse and neglect were also influenced by politics. Old, and often incorrect, beliefs were recycled to promote political agendas. Harking back to the poor law tradition of "rescue and punishment," the discussion of orphanages entered into the social welfare discourse. The cover of Newsweek (December 12, 1994) posed the question: "The welfare debate: The Orphanage: Is it time to bring it back?" The New York Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan predicted in the article that the drug crisis would result in the "no parent child" as a new social problem, and suggested the establishment of the orphanage as a possible solution. Echoing Moynihan's call for a resurrection of the orphanage, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who had played a central role in crafting the Contract with America (Republican National Committee, 1994), proposed a plan that would allow states to use federal funds to establish orphanages.

Too often the politics of social welfare create a covert agenda that offset stated policy goals. Moreover, subliminal messages that are intentionally or unintentionally embedded in these political process can reinforce conventional wisdoms and empirically untested assumptions about the behavior of the poor and people of color that create a fertile ground for stereotypes about people in need of government support, and racial minorities to grow and flourish.

Critical race theory, as advanced by legal scholar Derrick Bell (1992), posits that the legal system plays a central role in perpetuating the racism that is woven into the social fabric and institutional life of American society. The term "intersectionality theory" was initially introduced by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), who examined the politics of identity oppression from a black feminist perspective. Subsequently, the concept has been expanded to facilitate an understanding of the ways in which socially constructed stigmatizing conceptualizations of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other personal identities associated with oppression do not act independently, but interact to produce cumulative and multiple layers of injustice and inequality.

Dumpson, when speaking directly to the circumstances of African American children who were disproportionately represented on the child welfare and public assistance caseloads, asserted,

Social policies that create social programs and shape practice methodologies are more often a reflection of our values and beliefs than of the objective facts of social problems they aim to solve. Similarly, the challenges that we face in problem solving efforts in the interests of African American children are more related to moral and ethical choices than they are to technical decisions concerning what interventions will work best for which families and under what circumstances. (Dumpson, 1997, p. 17)

Frances Fox Piven and Mimi Abramovitz, activist social work academicians, examined the factors that shaped the historical development of American social welfare from a race and gender perspective. Using race as the critical lens, Fox Piven (2003) argued that America's racial hierarchy is reflected in the structure of the country's labor system and in the structure of the social welfare system. The analysis provides an explanation for the lower representation of blacks and Hispanics in the more generous, nonstigmatizing social insurance programs that are tied to workforce participation and considered to be earned benefits. Accordingly, the racial structuring of the workforce accounts for the overrepresentation of minorities in the stigmatizing public assistance programs considered to be the "dole" that Fox Piven asserts are deliberately designed to encourage the systematic harsh treatment of poor. Abramovitz (1996, 2000) considered the implications of gender in the examination of conventional thinking about the welfare state and the history of its treatment of women and children. Her writing documented the historical exploitation of the labor of women since the colonial period, the punitive and harsh

treatment of poor women by the welfare system, and the impact of the 1996 welfare reforms that, she asserted, left many women at risk of hunger, homelessness, and further exploitation by leaving them with no other option but to take on low-paying jobs (Abramovitz, 2000).

The theories and analysis set forth by these scholars provide an understanding of how structural, social, and economic inequalities contribute to the overrepresentation of women and minorities on the public assistance caseload and the ways in which race, gender, and class have operated together to influence and distort the welfare debate.

Models of policy analysis can be effective tools for illustrating the ways in which social welfare policies may pursue both latent and manifest goals. Income assistance programs, for example, are intended to protect children from the effects of poverty. Yet, upon critical appraisal it is revealed that reform strategies more often are targeted to changing parental behaviors than they are to protecting children from the effects of poverty. Systemic inequalities contribute to this disproportionate representation of women of color on the public assistance caseload, which in turn fuels the racialization and feminization of the welfare discourse. These dynamics of the welfare discourse under-score the need for responsible leadership to be transparent and clear about the underlying values that inform their policy positions.

Dumpson was characteristically clear about the values stance from which he was operating when putting forth his policy positions. Dumpson's value stance is integrated throughout the papers in the collections as he expresses his views on varied social welfare issues. He draws frequently upon themes in his conceptualization of a "caring society," and applies these in a 1976 presentation entitled "Social Welfare and Social Justice" at the time he was a senior consultant with the New York Community Trust (Dumpson, 1976). Frequently referred to by Dumpson as "tenets of my profession," he held to what for him were the core values of social work and principles of a democratic society. This was reflected in the positions that he would take when he was called upon at times to find humane means for implementing governmental policies that for him were morally indefensible. In reflecting on his career when in retirement, Dumpson expressed regret that the "man in the house rule" was carried out "on his watch." It required unannounced home visits by welfare workers to the homes of families receiving support under the ADC program as a part of a super surveillance strategy to ferret out fathers who may have been living in the home.

### **Staying the Course in a Changing System**

Always strongly identified with his professional discipline of social work, Dumpson consistently linked his public policy work in government with practice through his affiliations with schools of social work. He was dedicated to the tripartite mission of the academy of teaching, research, and service. A practicing Catholic, despite disagreeing with what he sometimes referred to as "church dogma," Dumpson anchored his responses to the complex assignments undertaken in his public life in the most basic of religious teachings. He envisioned creating his conceptualization of a caring society for all Americans, the themes of which were outlined in a talk given at the 1980 Annual Program Meeting of the CSWE:

First an acceptance of the responsibility to integrate all of its members into the total social fabric; second to make all members functional in its socio-economic structure and a certain degree of power, in the decision making process to allow each person to experience a sense of belonging; and third to plan fully on the short and long term to build a society in which there is an equitable distribution of goods and services to guarantee equal access to basic necessities. (Dumpson, 1980)

Dumpson's values underlying his vision of a caring society were anchoring principles throughout his career. This is reflected in his statement when taking the oath of office in 1959 to become

New York City's first African American commissioner of public welfare: "My concern will be with all people . . . and the quality of living for those who seek our help cannot be separated from the quality of life of those who do not." This orientation was essential to his unwavering commitment to social justice and the development of the social work profession in the face of an ever-changing philosophy of social welfare. He was, however, ever mindful of the bureaucratic culture of city government and shared governance as an essential component of the culture of academia that required flexibility and political skills of negotiation and compromise.

Personal communications and memoranda in the Dumpson Collection reveal that he used his extensive personal influence and the power of his governmental offices to have off-the-record discussions with those of opposing views in an effort to persuade them to his point of view, or to find the most desirable alternative when his preferred choice was not feasible. Although he accepted that race more often than not provided the subliminal context for the welfare debate and that social problems exacted a higher cost from minority communities, and accounted for the disproportionate use of the public assistance programs by people of color, he avoided a reductionist stance that obscured the multidimensional personal and environmental factors that were essential for understanding the causes and solutions to complex social problems.

Often the first black appointed to high-level positions in government and academia, Dumpson was able to successfully use his race as a means for bringing people together as opposed to what has been called "playing the race card," which can have the effect of fueling racial discord and polarization. In reflecting on his experiences in academia, Dumpson observed that one of his major accomplishments as dean of the Fordham University Graduate School of Social Services was reducing the apprehension among faculty when the announcement was made of his appointment to the deanship:

Here I was a black man being asked by a major white University—Catholic to be sure—to come and be dean. And at that point, in all of social work education—with the exception of the two traditionally black colleges, namely Howard and Atlanta Universities, out of the sixty or seventy graduate schools of social work at that time in the United States—not one had a black man or woman as dean. . . . I had been the associate dean at Hunter for a relatively short period of time. I hadn't really made a mark in social work education. I was known as a change agent, focusing on social policy in the public sector and people who have little options in their lives. Plus the fact, frankly, that I was a black man, and I was a man among this predominately female faculty. And I will never forget the apprehension that was on their faces and in their voices as they greeted me. . . . One of my highlights of my professional life . . . within a year, the apprehension and the anxiety about who I was disappeared and almost to a person that faculty granted me the greatest amount of support that I think I have ever had in an administrative spot. (Mullen, 1991, pp. 5–7)

In commenting on his experiences with advancing the diversity agenda with deans and social work educators when serving as president of CSWE, he observed,

I guess I became known as someone with whom people would like to work on this new idea of change in social work education. . . . I wasn't a radical you see, I wasn't forcing people to look at this, but with some rather good social work understanding of and skills in attitude, behavior and institutional change, faculties and deans around the country began to develop a sense of confidence: Yes, he wants change but he is willing to move in a constructive way of achieving change and not ramming it down our throats because he believes it. (Mullen, 1991, pp. 8–9)

Dumpson was always the statesman and diplomat. Yet, both the persistence of racial and ethnic disparities across virtually every field of practice and challenges reported by schools of social work in the recruitment and retention of students and faculty of color caused him to shift from a centrist position of moderation and appeasement. As reflected in a talk given at a faculty

seminar at Simmons College School of Social Work on the historical roots of racism and lingering effects on societal institutions and on the individual (Dumpson, 1973a), he had always been an uncompromising voice against all forms of discrimination. The papers, however, give some indication that over the years he was becoming less willing to move at a pace that was comfortable for some of his conservative colleagues, which he seemed to be coming to view as complicit in perpetuating the status quo. In his later years, as reflected in some of the documents in the collections, he became increasingly more proactive in addressing the effects of racial inequities. For example, in his appointments with the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and as chair of the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS he dealt squarely with the disproportionate impact of AIDS on the black community and insisted on equity in the distribution of resources. And as senior consultant with the New York Community Trust, he undertook a major project that addressed the plight of the urban minority elderly.

### Challenges of Defining an Ambiguous Concept

Since the enactment of the Social Security Act of 1935 that introduced the American social welfare state—broadly defined here as the allocation of a portion of the country's gross national product to the financing of programs to provide for the social and economic security of citizens that are paid for by the redistribution of income through government's power of taxation—a consensus among Americans around the definition and role of government in social welfare has yet to be achieved. Similar to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, the constitutionality of the Social Security Act was challenged by the conservative opposition and finally ruled upon by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Then, as now, a primary basis for opposition to both the 1935 Social Security Act and the ACA, signature legislations of two Democratic presidents, is related to values essential to the American way of life. These values are defined in the Bill of Rights that preserve personal rights of citizens, limit the power of government, and ensure that government remains the collective voice and servant of the people.

Opponents of both the Social Security Act and the ACA believed that these legislations were an overreach of the authority of the federal government and the prelude to socialism in a country premised in democratic ideals and values of a representative government as set forth in the Bill of Rights. Conversely, with unemployment rates of approximately 25 percent at the height of the Great Depression, and with 15 percent of Americans being without health insurance in 2010, supporters of these legislations believed that it was the social responsibility and obligation of the federal government to act in ways that benefited all members of society, and it is, in fact, only the federal government that is invested with the imminence of power to protect the general welfare and promote the common good.

These competing views about the role of government contribute to challenges of defining American social welfare and are a consistent theme of scholars writing on the subject. There is, however, agreement among scholars that social welfare is a reflection of prevailing ideologies shaping the culture of the host society at any given point of its history, and the collective vision of the electorate as to what makes for a good and just society and how this vision is best achieved. An understanding and definition of the social welfare state as it has emerged in the United States, therefore, requires an understanding of the dominant political, economic, and social ideologies that are woven together into a single fabric that shapes American culture and reflects the nation's diverse and often muddled views on the American social welfare state.

Conservative views of a definition of the social welfare state are informed by the concept of a "strict interpretation" of principles established by the founding fathers in writing the Constitution that are summarized in the Bill of Rights. A liberal perspective, on the other hand, views the Constitution as a living document that should be interpreted within the context of the times and

the evolving and changing nature and circumstances of living in the host society. Both conservative and liberal views are rooted in American democratic ideals of fairness, equity, and equality. But those ascribing to a conservative or liberal view part ways in their thinking about the best approaches for achieving the goals of a just society in a democratic capitalistic society, and the legitimate role of government in social welfare.

Conservatives argue that the easy availability to government programs undermine values of self-reliance, individualism, and personal responsibility, and encourage a diminution of the work ethic essential for the successful operation of the nation's capitalistic economic system. Thus, conservatives advocate the restriction of these services to those perceived to be deserving of governmental assistance, meaning those who are unable to work because of age or disability; and are accepting of providing temporary support during periods of crisis to those who are able to work. Further, support offered to the able bodied is, by design, meager and stigmatizing to encourage a speedy return to the workforce.

For liberals, social welfare is viewed as essential for the successful operation of a capitalistic economic system by providing a safety net of services to those who fall victims to the cyclical nature of the free enterprise system through no fault of their own. Thus, those ascribing to a liberal perspective, advocate a broad array of services that protect all citizens from the vulnerabilities that are a natural by-product of a capitalistic economic system and the inevitable disservices accompanying societal progress and change. Liberals also view social welfare services as essential to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and therefore the right of every citizen and not reserved as a privilege for the few. This explains the resistance of liberals to proposals for the privatization of social welfare benefits where they would be subject to the unpredictable forces of the market and based on one's ability to pay. Further, since it is likely that everyone will be in need of these services at some point of the life cycle, for those ascribing to a liberal view, it makes sense that the costs of providing these services should be shared.

Conservative and liberal views are at opposite ends of the continuum of a broad range of views held by Americans on the social welfare state and the role of government in meeting the social welfare needs of citizens. Therefore, at the same time that excellence in scholarship requires the definition and operationalization of key terms and concepts under consideration, the study of social welfare requires an ability to tolerate ambiguity, and even frustration when confronting the reality that fundamentally opposing and divergent views are reasoned from the same principles and values that are integral to the American way of life. Moreover, this also requires the recognition that given its nature there can be no widely accepted, consistent, or agreed upon definition of social welfare policy at any specific time or one that endures over context, time, and place. Social welfare is neither a value free nor value neutral undertaking, nor can it be understood in absence of a consideration of dominant ideologies that shape American culture. Given the history of the United States, the treatment of ethnic and racial minorities and others perceived as different at various points in the nation's history must be a part of this consideration.

In a presentation entitled "The State of Black America—1978" given at the National Urban League when Dumpson was assistant director of the New York Community Trust, he set forth his liberal perspective on the government's responsibility to promote the common and special concerns of vulnerable populations:

This perspective must be emphasized, loudly and clearly, that the government of these United States, in terms of its social welfare thrusts and policies must intervene in the market place to ensure that there are contingencies present for the protection of vulnerable population groups—the underprivileged blacks, the aged, children, and those adults who are being made superfluous



by advancements in technological automation and the flight of industry from the central cities where these groups must live to the suburbs that ring the city. (Dumpson, 1978c)

In speaking to the special situation of African Americans at the same Urban League presentation, Dumpson quoted from an article written by historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the Pulitzer Prize-winning scholar who had written extensively on 20th century American liberal theory:

Without the national government, for example, black Americans would still be fifth class citizens; actually without the national government, most blacks would still be slaves. It is the national government that has protected the Bill of Rights against local vigilantism. It is the national government that has protected natural resources against local greed. It is the national government that has civilized our industry, that has secured the right of labor organization, that has defended the livelihood of the farmer. Only the national government can relieve such problems as racial injustice, unemployment, inflation, urban decay, environmental protection, and the nation's need for health care, education and welfare. (Schlesinger, 1977, p. 26)

### **The Ongoing Quest for a More Perfect Union**

Social justice is a central concern of social welfare and is a consistent theme throughout the papers in the collections. Dumpson believed that social work's central role was to advance social justice, because it was the helping discipline with the highest visibility within the field of social welfare and is the only professional discipline that specifically identifies a concern of the poor and oppressed in its mission statement.

Social justice embraces the concept of distributive justice, which is also a central concern to social welfare. Distributive justice is linked to ethical principles of equity, equality, and adequacy in the distribution of social welfare benefits. These concepts also have implications for American views on personal responsibility of the individual, social responsibility of government, and best approaches for achieving the common good. All of which come together to add to the conundrum of thinking about the nature of the social contract that provides the blueprint for the relationship between citizenry and government as related to social welfare.

The interpretative meaning of social justice and distributive justice in the United States has been informed by both secular and sectarian thinking. Judaic teachings that informed early religious charity saw no differences between the rich and the poor. Therefore, it was the duty of the wealthy to give and the right of poor to receive based on a common humanity. This belief in a shared humanity was carried forth in early Christianity and teachings of the New Testament: "What you have done to the least of my brethren you have done to me." This view of a common humanity is also evident in the teaching of contemporary religious leaders, which is reflected in Martin Luther King Jr.'s global vision of the "beloved community" where all people share the resources of the world, and where human decency will not tolerate the existence of social problems of poverty or hunger in any place on the globe.

The founding fathers in their efforts to establish a republic and representative democracy drew upon civic principles as they endeavored to establish a more perfect union as the preamble of the U.S. Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Although the separation of church and state was of utmost priority for the framers of the Constitution, nonetheless religious ideology exerts a strong influence in American political life.

This is reflected in the Declaration of Independence, which states that people are endowed by their "creator" with certain inalienable rights, and in the language of the Pledge of Allegiance that was amended in 1954 to include "one nation under God."

An understanding of the ways in which religious and political ideology have been knitted together and woven into the fabric of American culture to influence American thinking about the social welfare state and social justice is essential for understanding the inconsistencies and paradoxes of the American social welfare philosophy. Trattner (1999) explained the ways in which Puritanism and Calvinism of the colonial period deified work and equated idleness with sin. They connected work with morality and contributed to a harsh and punitive welfare philosophy and threats of "work or starve" that shaped helping approaches adopted by the Charity Organization Societies that emerged in the United States after the Civil War. Jansson (2009) examined the 19th century concept of manifest destiny as the roots of American exceptionalism, which came together in a belief system that the mission of the United States is to carry out God's will for Anglo-Saxons to develop North America as a laboratory to demonstrate that Americans could build a utopian society or "shining city on the hill," and promote the worldwide flourishing of capitalism, democracy, and the Protestant religion. Scientific racism of the 19th and early 20th centuries used so-called scientific methods as a basis for supporting claims of racial inferiority and superiority. An example of which is a 1904 publication on G. Stanley Hall, founder of the American Psychological Association, which used a biological explanation for the incomplete development of Africans, Indians, and Chinese and their categorization as adolescent races (Thomas & Sillen, 1972). More recent examples are seen in efforts to apply scripture from the Old Testament as a means for the justification for homophobia and discrimination against the gay community. Unfortunately, social injustice rooted in religious ideology has been especially tenacious and has great staying power in the United States as well as continuing effects on certain groups of Americans who for proponents of American exceptionalism are "not like us."

Despite these notable tensions in the field of social welfare, Dumpson had set his compass on a true course and remained steadfast in his commitment to underlying values integral to his framework for social welfare policy development and the public purposes of social work. He was unique in this regard in light of the considerable diversity of opinion about the role of government in social welfare and the interpretation of social justice.

Recent public discourse around strategies for reducing the federal deficit that puts the entitlement programs on the table for potential cuts illustrates fundamental disagreement not only among legislators but also the general public. The discussions revolve around issues of distributive justice as related to what constitutes legitimate unmet social need, what role—if any—should the government play in meeting these needs, if it is right to pay for these services with public tax dollars, and what ethical principles should be used to guide decision making and policy choices that involve taking from one group and giving to another, or making some better off at the expense of others.

Furthermore, relative to social programs intended to improve conditions for the poor, in a country with a national psyche that is deeply seeped in values of self-reliance, individualism, and the work ethic, there has been a predisposition toward suspicions of complicity on the part of individuals confronting personal problems and misfortunes, and the belief that overly generous social welfare programs are a veiled attempt to move the country toward a socialist political agenda. This thinking has been reinforced with the advent of the Tea Party movement that embraces an ethos of American exceptionalism combined with laissez-faire, conservative, libertarian, and populist beliefs emphasizing personal responsibility, a limited role of government, and reduced social spending. Unfortunately, these trends have increased polarization and antagonisms among the American public around issues of race and class that Dumpson believed blurred a national vision of the moral and ethical dimensions of social welfare that was so central to his thinking.

A student who was having an especially difficult time grasping the rationale for a course in social welfare policy in the social work curriculum experienced an “aha” moment and came to the conclusion that it was like a course in applied ethics. A Dumpson perspective on social welfare may well be conceptualized as applied ethics given that the concern is with life in collective civil society, interpersonal relationships among individuals and groups, and organizing life and those relationships that allow for the achievement of the goals and aspirations of all members of a democratic society.

The basic premise of a democratic society is anchored in the amazing durability of principles used by the founding fathers as they endeavored to design a more perfect union—“all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This premise is closely tied to the professional goal of social work, as set forth in NASW’s *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2008), which espouses a belief in the “dignity and worth of the person” and establishes as a primary task of the professional worker that of advancing access to “needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people” (p. 5).

### Scope and Domain of Social Welfare

In a 1980 talk on issues and trends for human services, Dumpson set forth a definition of social welfare described by his colleagues at Columbia University School of Social Work, Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn (1976):

Social welfare is broken into fields or units: education, health, housing income maintenance, and the personal social services. This last system includes family and child welfare, services to the aged, adolescent social services, information and referral, and community centers. The personal social services address themselves to one or more of the following tasks: contributing to socialization and development; facilitating information and access to services and entitlement in other fields; obtaining a basic level of social care to groups as the frail elderly and handicapped; supporting mutual aid, and integrating the variety of different programs and services in various systems or within the personal social services. As doctors are to the health system, teachers to the schools, lawyers to the courts; social workers are to the personal social services. (Dumpson, 1980)

Richard Titmuss (1959), the preeminent British scholar on the social welfare state, writing in a collection of essays, asserted that social welfare, as is the case for all societal institutions, must from necessity change in relationship to the changing needs of society. The scope of social welfare may be conceptualized as encompassing programs legislated under the Social Security Act and its many amendments that include social insurance, public assistance, and the personal social services. A broader conceptualization of social welfare programs is the umbrella of social policies that include all that government does or does not do that impacts the quality of life and living conditions of its citizens. This conceptualization allows for a view that government actions in all domains may have social welfare components that have implications for the quality of lives of citizens. The often interchangeable use of the terms “public policy,” “social policy,” and “social welfare policy” demonstrates that the boundaries of governmental policies are not always clear, and the interrelatedness of the effects of governmental actions in various policy domains.

For example, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill, was enacted to support the integration of veterans returning from active duty in WWII back into society. The benefit structure included low-cost mortgage loans, low interest business start-up loans, and cash payments for college tuition or vocational training and one year of unemployment compensation. The GI Bill had an impact far beyond the veterans who were the direct beneficiaries and virtually transformed the cultural landscape of the country by putting home ownership and higher education within the reach of the average American (Bennett,

1996). The act not only served to even the playing field for returning veterans, but it also served as a kind of stimulus package that enabled the sustainment of economic recovery and growth in virtually all sectors of American society in the post-Depression years that had been set into motion by programs of the New Deal.

The interrelated effects of governmental actions across multiple policy domains serves as a rationale for Gil's (1976) systemic framework for policy analysis that discourages a conceptualization of social welfare policies as only those governmental actions designed to prevent or alleviate the effects of recognized social problems. In addition to power differentials that influence the speed with which social issues are legitimated and elevated to a status of a social problem that warrants public investment, Gil saw this as a narrow approach that focused on symptoms but did not attack the root cause of inequalities or their interrelated effects and presentation across multiple policy domains.

Even when following the systematic framework espoused by Gil for addressing the root causes of social and economic inequality, it is necessary to consider the limits of social policy. For example, the Supreme Court decided in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. This ruling was the legal foundation of the civil rights movement that challenged the constitutionality of the "separate but equal doctrine" in public facilities and led to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. These acts played a significant role in advancing the rights of African Americans, contributed to the growth of the African American middle class, and substantially improved the quality of life for large numbers of blacks by breaking down residential and school segregation.

Nonetheless, school and residential segregation continues to be fact in American society either by choice, custom, or socioeconomic status. And as remarked by Martin Luther King, in a speech given shortly before his assassination in 1968, the most segregated hour in the nation is Sunday at 11:00 a.m. (Chaves & Anderson, 2008), suggesting that contrary to the teaching of brotherhood that is a universal theme of all religious denominations, the church is the most segregated of American institutions.

Moreover, referring back to the GI Bill and the Social Security Act—even though both of these federal legislations captured many African American veterans, large numbers were left out or failed to meet eligibility requirements because of regional patterns of discrimination that persisted at the state level where these policies were administered. For example, the access of black veterans to benefits provided by the GI Bill was restricted because of banking and residential discrimination and de facto segregation resulting from housing discrimination continues to separate black and white children in public schools. These occurrences illustrate the limits of social policy; many inequalities are sustained and perpetuated by institutional structures that shape socialization experiences, and informal customs and belief systems ingrained by these experiences typically have a far greater staying power and carry more influence on individual behaviors than formal laws and legislation.

Moreover, for Dumpson the greater sharing of political power with China and Asia, the political upheavals and military confrontations in the Middle East, and the greater interaction between Americans and the Muslim world were some of the events and trends that have blurred national boundaries and require a reassessment of paradigms of social welfare policy as being inclusively within the domestic realm. He saw these developments as calling for an expanded view of eligibility determination that was traditionally tied to citizenship in the host society and a broader conceptualization of social justice and human rights, as the nation began to interact on a world stage with nation states that held a different vision of a good and just society. The confluence of these trends may well have implications for the way in which we think about the social control function of social welfare today because of the global interconnections of contemporary social

problems of poverty, environmental pollution, militarism, hunger, sexism, and homophobia that intersect with human rights.

### Social Welfare and Social Control

Dumpson believed that services provided under the social welfare state were both a matter of moral and civic concern. For him these services were a function of government and essential for maintaining social cohesion, a sense of community, and preventing the divisive effects of social injustice and inequality. Moreover, social welfare carried out the essential functioning of promoting the stability of families that in his view is the primary social institution of every society. As his thinking evolved it seemed evident that he believed that the United States had a prominent role of leadership on the world stage in light of current trends. In considering the evolving role of social control keeping pace with the societal change function of social welfare he observed,

Even before human societies began recording their histories, economics and caring were one and the same. In postindustrial America families could be and were expected to be self-sufficient. . . . Suddenly with industrialization families were thrust into a kind of productive labor never before known. The pressures of demographic changes, economic growth, and industrialization soon created tensions and social problems that families could no longer be expected to cope with or solve on their own. The development of social services became imperative . . . and assumed a variety of stabilizing, supportive, and preventive roles to ensure the continuing viability of the family, the basic social unit of all societies. (Dumpson, 1997, pp. 6–7)

Social welfare, like other societal institutions of family, economic, political, and religious systems, engages in some form of social control. Social control as defined by Cowger and Atherton (1974) is frequently referenced in the social welfare literature. These authors define social control from a sociological perspective and assert that it includes all of the interrelated processes engaged in by societal institutions that are necessary for the survival and progressive development of a given society. They identify the following forms of social control: socialization, direct behavior control, and resocialization. *Socialization* refers to normative processes typically occurring in the family, educational, and religious systems that instill and reinforce accepted cultural norms and values as children grow and mature; *direct behavior control* includes those processes that regulate behavior under the formal laws that are overseen by law enforcement agencies; and *resocialization* refers to those activities engaged in by social welfare agencies and other health and human services organized to target for change behaviors determined to deviate from accepted norms.

Social control has been a natural and evolving function of social welfare and social work as its principle professional agent. Dumpson reflected that early, informal responses were based in humanitarian principles, motivated by a compassionate concern for fellow human beings and acceptance that the possibility existed for anyone to fall upon misfortune and hard times. The growing institutionalization of helping responses reflected a dual concern for protecting both the individual and society. Although social progress resulted in a rising standard of living for the nation as a whole, it also produced "social disservices," a term used by Titmuss (1962) to explain the expected costs of societal progress and change.

United States social welfare policy and the social control function have evolved within the context of increasing societal complexity and institutional specialization. In preindustrial, rural America social welfare needs of the individual could be adequately met by family, neighbors, and church. As the country began the process of transformation to an urban industrial society, this role gradually evolved to private charitable organizations, later to the states during the years of progressive reforms, and to a shared responsibility with the federal government during the Great

Depression when widespread economic and social distress overwhelmed the capability of state governments and private charitable organizations to go it alone.

This change process was supported by a social welfare philosophy rooted in values of early religious humanitarian beliefs. For example, in the beginning public welfare had no place in American life because it would undermine the natural dynamics of the free enterprise system. With increasing specialization, this view evolved into a fundamental redefinition of the role of the federal government in social welfare with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR's) pronouncement that liberty and economic security were inseparable. Hence, it was the responsibility of the federal government to provide these services and people to expect them not as charity but as a right of citizenship. This led to the enactment of the Social Security Act and to the two tier safety net programs that make provisions for the public assistance and social insurance programs.

Two conceptual models, the residual and institutional concepts of social welfare, are useful intellectual tools for understanding and evaluating the opposing assumptions that underlie public assistance and social insurance programs. Both assumptions claim to have the shared goal of promoting societal progress and stability.

The residual model is closely allied with a conservative perspective and the capitalistic values of competition, self-reliance, and individualism. *Selective means-tested* government assistance is seen as being temporary, minimal, and offered to the truly needy or only during times of crisis. Public assistance programs are based on the residual model and, as such, there is a high degree of stigmatization associated with these programs. The institutional model is aligned with the liberal perspective and the democratic values of cooperation, interdependence, and collectivism. In this model, government involvement in social welfare is essential to protect people from the evitable social costs of societal progress and change and the byproducts of capitalism. The social insurance programs are developed from the institutional model and provide universal coverage. Benefits are viewed as being earned, because people pay into them during their working years. Therefore, these programs carry no stigma.

Both models are based in assumptions about human nature and human motivation. The institutional model is based on the assumption that people's need for social affiliation, connection with community, and engagement in meaningful work is what gives purpose to their lives. The residual model takes an opposite view on the matter of work and assumes that when individuals are given the choice of getting something for nothing, or public assistance benefits, they will opt not to work.

Several authors have examined the social control function of social welfare from a historical perspective in an effort to shed light on the complexities of a system as it has emerged over time. Fox Piven and Cloward, authors of *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (1972), established a compelling argument of the social control function of social welfare in its most negative expression. They suggested a cyclical pattern in which social welfare benefits are expanded to quiet social unrest and are reduced to reinforce the work ethic. Jansson (2009) described an ambivalent system or "reluctant social welfare state" that reflects a paradox of generosity and punitiveness dependent upon the context and time, but that consistently metes out oppressive treatment to racial and other marginalized groups. Katz (1996), while eschewing the covert functions of the system, suggested that the only bright spot in the welfare conundrum is the capacity of the poor to survive and to use the system in their own interests. Trattner (1999) concluded that American social welfare is too complex to be described entirely from a social control schema. Although the system may be an expression of paternalism, self-interest, the desire to maintain capitalism, or the covert motives of the wealthy and powerful to maintain the status quo, it is also a product of economic forces, religious beliefs, cultural values, demographic change, and political and institutional developments.

Dumpson conceptualized the social control function of social welfare in a manner that was closely aligned with those who operated from the settlement house perspective of the early social reformers that saw the progress and development of the individual and society as inseparable. Their interventions strived to reform social structures and integrate European immigrants and African Americans migrating from the South into the economic, political, and social structures of mainstream society. The maintenance of the stability of the family was essential to the efforts of white and black social activists during these early years. Dumpson's philosophy was moored in values underlying these early reform efforts, and his view of social work as the anchor profession in the field of social welfare as well as the moral compass of the country. For Dumpson, the profession was obligated by its mission and founding principles to actively promote causes that recognized the inseparable link between the interests of the individual and those of the collective society.

### **Social Workers as Agents for Social Control**

Since its inception, social control has been a key function of the profession of social work. From its earliest days, the profession has also grappled with dilemmas associated with its efforts to achieve a balance in carrying out its social control function as change agent for the reform of unjust institutional structures that impede individuals in their quest for self-actualization. Social work is also tasked with changing what is defined as socially deviant behaviors of the individual that threaten to undermine the well-being of the collective society. Added to this is the "chicken or the egg" quandary relative to teasing out the primary drivers of social problems—for example, is teenage pregnancy driving the poverty rates or are poverty rates driving teenage pregnancy?

Recent years have seen an intensification of the debate around the matter in which the profession is carrying out its social control role and the extent to which it is possible for social work to achieve a balance between micro-level interventions that target the individual for change, and those undertaken at the macro level in the interest of changing unjust economic social and political structures that contribute to behaviors that are defined as socially deviant.

Social justice and cause related activities are the foundation on which the profession was established, at least as carried out by the early social reformers. However, the ambiguity associated with the field of social welfare is also characteristic of the profession itself and has promoted considerable angst as social workers have grappled with issues of "cause and function." Individual social workers ascribe to diverse views, whether liberal or conservative, in carrying out their professional practice; they do not agree on a methodological approach believed to be the most effective for advancing socially just causes, and there is no universally accepted definition of social justice adopted by the profession itself.

Further, the profession of social work, owing its existence and growth to the institutionalization of formal care systems, has not been immune from the influences of what has emerged as a paradoxical and ambivalent system. As the nation has adopted a conservative ideology as illustrated by the 1996 welfare reforms that have effectively left the poor and near poor to fend for themselves, social work has been accused by some of following suit, which is the basis for the metaphor of "unfaithful angels" used by Specht and Courtney (1994). These authors examine practice trends that support claims that the profession has abandoned its mission to serve the poor by leaving agency-based practice to enter private practice and favoring use of the psychotherapies with the middle class and "worried wealthy" who can afford to pay for their services.

Throughout much of the 100-year history of the profession, social workers have grappled with competing concerns related to advocating social reform and interest in professional status. These competing interests have contributed to a false dichotomy and unwarranted polarization around two philosophical approaches. Rooted in what began as the competing ideologies of the Charity

Organization Society and settlement house movements related to the causes and solution of poverty and unmet social need, and despite the subsequent merging of these competing ideologies to inform contemporary social work's integrative person in the environment perspective, the profession seemed unable to set and sustain a steady course. Since the now infamous 1911 Flexner speech pronouncing that social work was not a profession, social workers have been caught up in an ongoing debate around two philosophical approaches that, for Dumpson, obscured the inextricable link between micro and macro practice. The tensions emanating from this ongoing debate are examined in P. R. Lee's (1937) classic analysis, published in *Social Work as Cause and Function*. On the one hand are those who prefer attribution theories that define social problem causation or client presenting problems from an environmental, social justice perspective, who advocate an expanded governmental role in social welfare, and favor broad-based practice interventions. On the other hand are those who attribute cause to personal behaviors and favor treatment approaches based in psychotherapeutic models, who feel less of an obligation to take an activist role in the public promotion of causes for the poor, and are more likely to embrace causes that advance professional interests.

Contemporary social work practice is based in a theoretical perspective that integrates a biopsychosocial person-in-environment approach. The ecological perspective, borrowing concepts from the physical sciences, validates the interdependent and reciprocal nature of the relationship between people and their environments. This approach assumes that people can neither be understood nor helped without a corresponding understanding of societal systems that either support or pose barriers to the goal of self-actualization.

When speaking on the ecology of social work and the relatedness between the micro and the macro, Dumpson made the following observations:

The second position that has immediate relevance to the use of the fulfillment of the mission of social welfare as an instrument of national development and for meeting individual and family needs comes from the field of social ecology. As any imbalance in one of nature's systems "dominoes" throughout the total ecology, so does the failure of any one of our societal systems affect the balance of our entire social ecology . . . The social welfare system, in order to carry out its mission to the poor, the near-poor and those in danger of becoming economically and socially dependent, a disproportionate number of whom are black, must interlock with well-functioning housing, employment, educational, and health care systems. The federal government through a comprehensive, rational, integrated, and humane national policy on the family and on the protection and strengthening of the nation's human resources, must assume primary responsibility for an effective well-functioning balance of our entire social ecology. (Dumpson, 1978a)

This system perspective is widely accepted among social workers and is an anchoring theoretical perspective for the curriculum in schools of social work as set forth in the CSWE curriculum policy statement, but was not fully explicated for social work practice until the 1980s, with the publication of Gitterman and Germain's *Life Model of Social Work Practice*. Using ecology as a metaphor for practice, these authors asserted,

For social work, ecology appears to be a more appropriate metaphor than the older, medical disease metaphor that arose out of the linear world view because social work has been more committed to both helping people and to promoting more humane environments. . . . The ecological perspective provides an adaptive, evolutionary view of human beings in constant interchange with all elements of their environments. Human beings change their physical and social environments and are changed by them through a process of continuous reciprocal adaptation. (Gitterman & Germain, 1980, p. 5)



Despite the wide lens proposed by a systems and ecological perspectives, social workers are attracted to the profession because of their interest in helping individuals. The emphasis of MSW education and training and the focus in professional practice are typically on the individual case. Social workers are predisposed by interest and from necessity to think more about the problems faced by their individual clients and work toward solving these than they are with addressing larger social problems despite an awareness that these are the root causes of individual problems. Social workers also recognize that their resources for solving systemic problems are limited.

Finally, social workers want to be validated and respected for the work that they do, preferably in the form of status, and monetary compensation. However, it may be difficult to achieve this kind of recognition since, as suggested by Bertha Capen Reynolds, one of the profession's more radical thinkers, the ambivalent feelings about the legitimacy of the social welfare system is passed on to its professional representatives. Reflecting on the dynamics that provide the context for contemporary social work practice can offer insights for understanding how these occurrences have clouded a collective vision and consensus within the social work professional community about the public purposes of the profession.

## Summary

This chapter discussed definitions, approaches, perspectives, and key concepts related to social welfare that contributed to the paradoxical and controversial nature of the social welfare state as it has emerged in the United States. Narratives from Dumpson's papers illustrate his perspective on social welfare, the administration of the health and human services, the public purpose of social work, and the role of the profession in social welfare policy development. Dumpson, in the face of considerable ambiguities, remained firmly anchored in his conceptualization about the role and purpose of social welfare in complex modern societies, the central role of government in promoting the common good, and social work as the anchor profession in the field of social welfare. These themes are synthesized in his vision of a "caring society" that embraced the aspirations of all Americans.

The following chapters examine policy developments over selected decades and illustrate the competing ideologies that spawned programs that at times were expansive and generous and at others were restrictive and punitive. In large measure, these themes mirror inherent conflict between democratic and capitalistic ideals that have intensified in direct relationship with increasing industrialization, maturing capitalism, and changing demographics of groups most in need of government programs. Two conclusions can be drawn from Dumpson's thinking as reflected throughout his papers. First, social policy development and social work practice must be flexible and dynamic processes that incorporate an understanding of the problems and needs of individuals and underlying causes of social ills from personal and environmental perspectives. Second, moral leadership and ethical guidelines, combined with a strong social work presence, are essential to interrupt the cycle of costly program failures that have characterized U.S. policy development for most of the past century.