

The Impact of Justice Principles on Policymaking:
The Case of Public Welfare at the Local Level

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Abstract

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Theory: Urban officials play a larger role in developing redistributive welfare policies than suggested by prevailing theories of urban politics. While such theories infer that officials' attitudes and actions regarding public welfare are largely determined by calculations about how such policies serve (and fail to serve) various interests, ethical considerations may be more important influences on their support or opposition to welfare.

Hypotheses: As determinants of officials' attitudes toward public welfare, contextual variables addressing the various interests that bear on officials are less important than the principles of justice they hold. Officials will be hostile toward welfare when they are committed to libertarian principles calling for the retention of market allocations and they will be most supportive of welfare when they hold a variety of more liberal and redistributive justice principles.

Methods: Data collected during interviews with 118 city council and school board members in 12 cities were coded and analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

Results: Urban officials are more supportive of public welfare than normally recognized, largely owing to their often strong allegiance to various redistributive principles of justice. The principles of allocating public goods on the basis of need, of providing rights, of establishing floors, and of establishing ceilings each contribute independently to support for welfare among urban officials, and such principles provide a moral basis to different, identifiable aspects of a public welfare system.

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The conventional wisdom maintains that city governments in America play little or no role in providing public welfare for their citizens (Peterson 1981; Kantor 1988). According to the *Public Welfare Directory*, state governments and, to a lesser extent, county governments have primary jurisdiction over most welfare programs in most states, with municipal and local governments having responsibilities for only a small number of programs in a few states. Standard sources of local governmental expenditures, such as *County and City Extra*, report that most cities spend little if any local dollars on welfare programs. For example, Baltimore and Austin (Texas) -- two cities included in the present study -- are listed as among the top 25 American cities in local welfare spending (Fisher 1992), yet the \$1-2 million that their municipal governments spend annually on welfare comprise less than two-tenths of one percent of their budgets and amount to less than \$3 per resident.

The conventional wisdom and the supporting jurisdictional and expenditure data may, however, understate the extent to which local governments historically have been involved in public assistance programs and mask their possible increasing future involvement in welfare. Prior to intense industrialization and urbanization, welfare was primarily a local function, and only in this century have state and federal governments assumed major roles in the provision of welfare (Henig 1985, 97-104). Recent efforts to "devolve" welfare programs from Washington to the states and their local governments could make urban officials much more active policy makers in the area of public welfare. The Personal Responsibility and

* All data and documentation necessary to replicate this analysis can be attained from the first author one year after publication. The data were analyzed using SPSSX.

Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 -- the welfare reform bill that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with block grants to the states for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) -- allows states to reduce funds spent on welfare and shift welfare responsibilities to local governments (Bane 1997).

While TANF is likely to increase the involvement of local officials in welfare policy, such officials have addressed welfare issues even before its passage. When public welfare is conceptualized as any kind of governmental policy that aids the relatively disadvantaged by providing them goods and services that they have not purchased in the marketplace, it is clear that urban officials have long been involved in delivering welfare. City council members have allocated funds from various federal (and state) grant programs, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), in ways that are often supportive of social services and programs targeted toward impoverished citizens. School board members have overseen a large number of special education and federally-financed programs to meet the educational, nutritional, and social needs of students having learning disabilities and various socioeconomic disadvantages, often committing local resources to them. In many cities, local governments have exercised at least partial control over city hospitals and health facilities, setting policies and contributing locally generated revenues to finance health care for indigent persons. Many city governments have been involved in low-income housing projects and shelters for the homeless. Both city council members and school board members have been required to allocate resources and services among upper-, middle-, and lower-income neighborhoods, and they have often done so in ways that recognize a need and obligation to invest more in the poorest parts of the community. Such officials have regulated the prices charged by utilities and other industries in ways that reduce costs for the poor. They have created partnerships with other private and public entities to provide various programs for the disadvantaged. And they have acted as lobbyists on other

governments seeking policies that will aid their more impoverished urban constituents. In short, urban officials have had, and continue to have, many opportunities to shape welfare programs and policies in their communities, and recent efforts to devolve such programs away from the national government is likely to increase the extent of their involvement in welfare.

Because the policy preferences of urban officials are strong determinants of urban policies (Schumaker 1991, 146-50), analyses of local welfare policies should include assessments of the extent to which local officials support welfare. However, because of the prevalence of the conventional wisdom among political scientists specializing in urban politics, the attitudes and actions of local policy makers in this area have received little scholarly attention. The well-known constraints on urban governments that have limited their involvement in public welfare have prompted most urbanists to fear that the devolution of welfare from Washington will have dire consequences for the poor. But such concerns have not taken into account the possible willingness of urban officials to be advocates for the disadvantaged.

This paper addresses these concerns by describing and analyzing the attitudes and actions regarding public welfare of 118 elected officials in 12 American cities. The next section, as well as a methodological appendix, describe the study. Part II describes the extent of support among urban officials for public welfare. Part III analyzes the determinants of their attitudes toward public welfare, providing evidence for the major theoretical argument of the paper -- that the contextual factors emphasized by leading urban paradigms are less relevant to understanding the receptivity of urban officials to welfare than are the ideals -- or justice principles -- that urban officials bring to policy making.

I. A Study of Urban Officials' Attitudes Concerning Public Welfare

As part of a larger study, 120 elected officials were interviewed between March and August 1993. These interviews focused on understanding officials'

conceptions of justice and how they have applied various principles of justice to policy decisions. The interviews were conducted in twelve cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Green Bay, Kansas City (MO), Minneapolis, Orlando, Pasadena, Providence, Salt Lake City, San Jose, and Seattle. The cities are generally in the 100,000 to one million population range -- large enough to comprise major urban centers yet small enough to allow travel from one interview to another in a reasonable amount of time. These cities were also selected to try to capture the diversity of urban life in America. Beyond obvious regional variations, these cities differ greatly in their racial and ethnic composition -- ranging from largely white communities (Green Bay and Salt Lake City) to cities that have strong black majorities (Baltimore and Atlanta), substantial Hispanic populations (Pasadena, San Jose and Austin), and a large number of Asian-Americans (Seattle). While poverty and homelessness are significant problems in all of our sample cities, such problems are much more prevalent in Atlanta and Baltimore than in Green Bay and Salt Lake City.¹ Of course, no claim is made that these cities constitute a random sample of American cities, but they are sufficiently diverse to capture the range and general tendencies of how urban officials think about welfare.

Interviews were sought with about five or six city council members and another five or six school board members in each city. Persons who had served in these capacities since 1980 were randomly called and asked if they would be willing to participate in two-hour long interviews concerning the distributive aspects of policy making. Depending on the availability of potential interviewees and the logistics of getting from one interview to another, between ten and twelve interviews were scheduled in each city. Thus, the sample is composed of the first ten

¹ The characteristics of this sample of cities are described in more detail in Schumaker and Kelly (1998).

to twelve people in each city who agreed to the interviews.² The resulting sample was evenly split between members of the city council and the school board: 59 persons had served on city councils, 56 had served on school boards, and 5 had served in both capacities. Ninety-four persons (78 percent) were white, 21 black, two Hispanic, and three were Asian-Americans. Women comprised 47 percent of the sample. More participants identified themselves as liberals (31 percent) than as conservatives (23 percent), and many respondents preferred to give themselves other labels, such as "moderates" (19 percent), "fiscal conservatives and social liberals" (13 percent), and "radicals" or "socialists" (8 percent).

Data concerning officials' attitudes about welfare were attained by reviewing the interview transcripts, listing those comments and compiling those stories dealing with public welfare issues, and coding their degree of support for public welfare programs. Methodological details are provided in the appendix at the end of the paper. The sample size for analyzing urban officials' attitudes regarding public welfare generally is 118, rather than 120, because two officials failed to address public welfare throughout their interviews.

In this study the focus is on officials' overall attitudes toward welfare, rather than their attitudes about the role of local government in the provision of welfare, for two reasons. First, during the interviews only about ten percent of the officials differentiated between federal, state, and local welfare policies in ways that suggested that their support for welfare was conditioned by the level of government

² This procedure may have contributed to an unrepresentative sample in two ways. First, the topic of the interviews was understanding "how urban officials think about fairness," and this topic may have intrigued some types of people more than others. Second, the requested length of the interviews may have deterred participation among those with hectic schedules.

providing the assistance.³ Second, in an era of great flux and uncertainty about the roles that various levels of government should and will play in the welfare system, measures of general receptivity of urban officials to welfare programs may be particularly important. For example, officials who support extensive federal programs but have reservations about local ones may be more supportive of local welfare when the federal role is reduced. Measures of officials' overall support for welfare may better predict their future receptivity to local programs than do measures of their support for local welfare programs based on data gathered in 1993, before extensive changes in federal welfare policies were enacted.

II. Support for Public Welfare

Table 1 presents an ordinal scale of support for public welfare generally. Only two officials in our sample declared themselves strong opponents of public welfare. One reported voting against projects that targeted "the most needy neighborhoods" for extra assistance, because that was just "pouring money down a black hole." The other opposed cash assistance to the poor because such assistance, "only allows people to dig themselves into deeper holes." However, such opposition to assistance to the poor did not reach Social Darwinist proportions, as they allowed that it might be appropriate for private charities to aid such disadvantaged people as the homeless.

³ Three officials seemed more supportive of local welfare programs than federal ones, largely because of their distrust about the efficiency and responsiveness of federal programs. Ten officials claimed that local governments should play a lesser welfare role than state and federal governments, usually because they thought that equal federal welfare benefits across cities alleviated the problem that generous local welfare programs can attract the poor and repulse those with mobile wealth (Peterson 1981). But the vast majority of officials were either supportive or opposed to public welfare overall, and it was this overall attitude toward welfare that could best be assessed from the interview data.

Thirteen officials were coded as moderately opposed to public welfare. Such officials typically expressed their opposition to an extensive welfare state, but allowed that "there might be times when government should provide the poor certain goods that they cannot afford to buy." Such officials thought that the present welfare system was overly generous; significant spending cuts were needed, and new regulations were required that force recipients to earn welfare benefits, rather than providing welfare benefits as a right. Most strong opponents viewed current welfare programs as "unfair to the ordinary taxpayer" who must support those without the discipline to take care of themselves. But, again, moderate opponents believed that "we can do better than survival of the fittest" and supported some welfare, especially for children and people with severe disabilities.

Ten persons were coded as wanting small or incremental reductions in public welfare. Weak opponents of welfare stressed two concerns. First, they pointed to "abuses" in various welfare programs -- to the programs being used by those who were not truly needy. Second, they felt that the balance between rights and responsibilities had tilted too far towards rights -- that the right to welfare had to be balanced by recipients accepting greater responsibility for themselves and to society. Compared with moderate opponents, weak opponents did not question the legitimacy of some welfare rights, and they did not envision huge reductions in welfare spending.

Ten officials were coded as generally supporting the status quo with respect to welfare policies. They believed that the poor had the right to basic necessities -- such as food and shelter -- but they saw no need to expand welfare. Health care -- which was being heatedly debated in 1993, at the time of the interviews -- typically provided the most difficult welfare issue for the supporters of the status quo. While such officials thought the poor had a right to minimal health care, they were uncomfortable with extensive and expensive initiatives in the area. Most supporters

of the status quo emphasized that limited economic resources must always constrain what can be communally provided, and, from their perspective, public resources were unavailable for new welfare initiatives. Some such officials said that municipal governments should continue to subsidize private organizations that assist the poor, but that such governments should not themselves provide goods and services to the needy.

Twenty-five officials -- over 22 percent of our sample -- were coded as supporters of small increases in welfare spending and services. Such officials often spoke enthusiastically about their opposition to efforts to cut welfare spending, and supported some modest new welfare initiatives. Sometimes these initiatives involved ensuring that existing welfare programs and services were readily available to all who were eligible for them, for example by using Spanish to notify Latino residents of certain programs or by ensuring that day care or other services that were provided in some neighborhoods were available in other needy neighborhoods as well. At other times, officials supported specific but limited initiatives in areas where there was widespread community support. Adopting a perspective on communal provisions discussed most cogently by Michael Walzer (1983, 64-83), they rejected that the poor had any absolute or natural right to a particular level of welfare, but that communal provisions of welfare must be democratically determined and reflect citizen conceptions of the "goods necessary to our common lives." For example, most citizens are offended when they learn that some children are inadequately fed before arriving at school; thus, providing free (or reduced fee) school breakfasts and lunches is supported as a socially-recognized need of all students. However, weak supporters of increased welfare services stress minimal increases in welfare; they believe governments -- including local governments -- "must discharge their responsibilities toward the needy" but they should do so in

ways that do not attract the poor to generous welfare programs and that provide incentives for the poor to take responsibility for their own lives.

Thirty-seven officials -- 31 percent of our sample -- were coded as moderate supporters of welfare programs. Such officials proclaimed that one of the main responsibilities of government is to assist the poor, that governments should provide essential goods and services to those who lack the resources to pay for them in the marketplace or who pay less in taxes than they receive in welfare benefits. They believe that some redistribution is necessary to solve social problems, but they also stress that there must be some limit on redistribution as governments must serve all citizens -- the well-off as well as the disadvantaged. Such officials typically took pride in supporting a number of new welfare initiatives in their communities and schools, but they insisted that the poor had "no absolute right" to such things as health care and that communities had to establish *minimal* levels of basic needs at levels that their citizens could readily afford. Still, these officials often said they were "willing to pay higher taxes to establish higher levels of basic necessities" that were provided to the needy.

Finally, twenty-one officials -- 18 percent of the sample -- were coded as strong supporters of increased welfare. Such officials emphasized the (extensive) needs and problems of the disadvantaged, and often defined their primary role as public officials to be advocates for the poor. If these officials recognized financial limitations on welfare spending, they thought that the great wealth of some Americans or the overall aggregate wealth of society was such that the real financial constraints had yet to be approached. Only the greed of the (wealthy) few and the neglect of the (comfortable) many accounted for the failure of American governments to provide more adequate public welfare. Such officials sought much more extensive programs benefiting the disadvantaged through such measures as imposing more progressive taxes on the wealthy, redirecting governmental

spending from such areas as downtown redevelopment to social service centers in low-income neighborhoods, and reallocating resources from schools in affluent districts to those in poor districts. Perhaps the overriding ideal of strong supporters of welfare is that "the disadvantaged must be served first by government."

III. Explaining Variations in Support for Public Welfare

Theory and Hypotheses. This section will first examine a number of conventional explanations for variations in support for public welfare, explanations based on "realist" theories of political behavior. Then, some alternative explanations, based on more "idealist" conceptions of politics, will be explored. This distinction between realistic and idealistic explanations reflects ancient yet thoroughly contemporary controversies in political theory about the role of interests and ethics in politics (Stoker 1992).

Most explanations of support for welfare at the national level focus upon assessments by policy makers and citizens about how their own interests are served by welfare policies or their cognitions about the "deservingness of recipients" and the effectiveness of welfare programs (see, for example, Cook and Barrett, 1992). Such a theoretical approach is thoroughly realistic, because it focuses on factual and empirical matters: how am I served? who are the beneficiaries? how well do the programs work? Another relatively realistic approach highlights the influence of racism on support for welfare (Gilens 1995). Here, existing fears, emotions, and prejudices are seen as unfortunate but nevertheless very real explanations. In these realist approaches to explaining welfare preferences, idealistic factors involving beliefs about "the good society" and "people's rights" are either ignored or introduced as factors that are expected to have little or no explanatory power.⁴

⁴ Gilens (1995) introduces "egalitarianism" as a normative factor in her analysis, but she finds that it has no significant impact on support for welfare. In the analysis below, the norm of equal treatment is introduced as a

While urbanists have failed to study the attitudes of urban officials regarding public welfare, their theories about local welfare spending reflect similar "realist" assumptions. In the most recent and thorough examination of cross-community differences in local welfare activity, Sharp and Maynard-Moody (1991) report that four types of explanations of such activity dominate the literature. The first -- a "need responsiveness" explanation -- is the most idealist in the limited sense that welfare activity is seen as a well-intentioned response to such problems as poverty, unemployment, and homelessness. The purpose of introducing need as a potential explanation of support for welfare spending, however, is to dismiss it as based on naive normative expectations. In his earlier work, Peterson (1981, 46-65) found measures of need to be only weakly correlated with redistributive expenditures, and Sharp and Maynard-Moody find that "welfare policy is *less* expansive in places with greater levels of poverty." The inference is that scientific theories that are realistic will give scant attention to the "normatively based expectation that government's welfare efforts should be a function of the needs for these efforts" (Sharp and Maynard-Moody 1991, 947). In short, conventional "realistic" approaches would lead to the null hypothesis that indicators of community need will have no impact on urban officials support for welfare.

The second -- fiscal capacity -- explanation for welfare activity discussed by Sharp and Maynard-Moody is also drawn largely from Peterson (1981), but unlike the naive and idealistic "need responsiveness" explanation, the fiscal capacity explanation is presented as thoroughly realistic and valid. It realistically assumes that urban policy makers and citizens are self-interested and will only pursue expansive welfare programs when they have the affluence to do so without

potentially important normative ideal, and like Gilens, egalitarianism is found to have little impact. However, we argue that egalitarianism is less important than other ethical ideals as explanations of welfare support.

threatening "the city's overall attractiveness to investors" (Sharp and Maynard-Moody 1991, 937). It is scientifically valid, as both Peterson and Sharp and Maynard-Moody report that certain measures of fiscal capacity are strong predictors of increasing welfare activity. Thus, drawing from realistic models, one would hypothesize that the greater is the fiscal capacity of a city, the greater will be officials' support for public welfare.

The third -- social disturbance -- explanation of support for public welfare is also based on a realist theoretical model. Drawing upon the work of Cloward and Piven (1975), this explanation posits that officials increase welfare programs and spending to reduce the threat to social order from urban violence. When cities are ravaged by riots and violent crime, officials use welfare programs as a means of buying off grievances and restoring social order. A more elaborate social disturbance thesis developed by Cloward and Piven claims that urban violence combined with large black constituencies is particularly volatile, and support for welfare will be particularly influenced by the interaction effects of high violence and the presence of substantial black populations. Each of these hypotheses are tested in the analyses below.

A fourth explanation examined by Sharp and Maynard-Moody -- the community homogeneity thesis -- is also based on a consideration of interests. According to Schneider (1987), heterogeneous communities will have higher levels of conflict in which relatively advantaged citizens will resist redistributions to the disadvantaged. Accordingly, this thesis would lead to the hypothesis that urban officials in communities that are mostly middle class (and perhaps mostly white) will be most supportive of public welfare programs.

These realistic theses examined by Sharp and Maynard-Moody view local welfare activity -- and, by extension, the support of local officials for welfare -- as shaped by the economic, social, and political contexts of cities that influence the

calculations of urban officials about whether welfare spending serves the interests of their communities and their constituents. These theses imply that officials would understand their own interests in re-election or advancement as dependent on their responsiveness to community and constituency interests. Other contextual factors, emphasized by both older and more recent theses from the state and local politics literature, can also be identified as potentially having similar influences.

Perhaps the most venerated thesis about the influence of political context on support for public welfare concerns the role of party competition. According to V.O. Key, Jr. (1949), party competition is a necessary condition for elected officials to pay attention to the preferences of disadvantaged groups for more welfare programs. Key's realist theory suggested that, by supporting public welfare that appeals to disadvantaged voters, officials can further their interests in getting re-elected, but such "purchases" are only necessary when officials are subject to significant party competition. Over time, Key's thesis has been modified and expanded to view party dominance and the social group basis of party coalitions as being as influential as party competition on support for welfare (Brown 1995), suggesting that a number of party characteristics may be influential aspects of the political context on local welfare activity. Thus, this paper examines the hypotheses that urban officials will be most supportive of public welfare when their communities exhibit extensive party competition and/or when the Democratic Party is dominant.⁵

⁵Of course, most elections for the city council and the school board are formally nonpartisan, making partisan factors more indirect and problematic in local politics than in state governments. However, urban officials may be most aware of their own electoral vulnerability in cities having more party competition in gubernatorial, senatorial, and other non-local offices. And urban officials may be aware of their need to serve the interests of relatively disadvantaged voters in cities having electorates that are more strongly Democratic in nonlocal elections.

Another long-standing theory that deals with the effects of context on welfare is the ethos theory of Wilson and Banfield (1971), which claims that communities differ in their political cultures and subsequent forms of government in ways that affect their receptivity to demands for welfare programs. Communities with more individualist ("people-helping" or "private-regarding") cultures -- as opposed to more unitary ("community-serving" or "public-regarding") cultures -- were theorized as being more inclined to support welfare programs. To help insulate officials from individualist influences for more welfare programs, cities with unitary cultures -- such as the moralistic and traditionalist cultures identified by Elazar (1972) -- have adopted reformed governmental institutions providing professional city management, at-large representation, and nonpartisan elections. The ethos theory has its idealistic elements -- as it recognizes that the broader cultural values of a community play significant roles in shaping welfare programs -- but it remains realist in its insistence that the dominant ethos in a community reflects the interests of its citizens,⁶ and in its suggestion that political institutions are adopted because of their strategic value in furthering or resisting particular interests and values. In any event, the ethos theory provides the basis for additional hypotheses about the contextual factors that influence urban officials' support for welfare. Officials should be most supportive of welfare when their cultures contain more individualist values and when they have unreformed governmental institutions such as district elections and mayor-council systems.

More recent theses about the influence of context on welfare activity deal with minority and female representation and organization. Theories on political

⁶ According to Wilson and Banfield, cities with more immigrants, minorities, and lower-class residents who might benefit from "people-helping" welfare policies are most likely to have individualist cultural values that support welfare.

incorporation (e.g., Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984, 1997), and regime theory (Stone 1989) suggest that the greater inclusion of minorities in governing coalitions provides a context where minorities and their allies -- who are often women with relatively liberal values (Clarke, Shaeheli, and Brunell 1995) -- can more readily support and achieve programs to benefit disadvantaged groups. Additionally, urban officials may be more likely to support welfare demands when disadvantaged citizens are better organized to articulate redistributive demands and exert pressure on behalf of such demands (Santoro 1995). Hence, this paper also explores the hypotheses that officials will be most supportive of public welfare in communities having higher levels of minority (and female) representation in public offices and having more organizations composed of minorities.

It is necessary to examine the many contextual factors discussed above, because the theoretical goal of this paper is to emphasize the relative importance of the normative ideals of urban officials as determinants of support for public welfare. Analyses showing that normative ideals are more important than a limited number of examined contextual factors will remain inconclusive if other important contextual factors remain unidentified and unexamined. The same logic compels an examination of the effects of certain personal characteristics of officials on their support for public welfare. The theoretical distinction between factors pertaining to interests or ethics is also helpful here, although some such characteristics can be examined that are not well classified in this regard. For example, support for welfare may be a function of the office that officials hold (whether they are city council or school board members) and the length of time they have served in office, and so it is useful to consider such factors.

Theoretical perspectives that assume that welfare preferences are shaped by interests direct attention to several characteristics of urban officials. Those who serve districts comprised largely of minorities and poorer citizens presumably have

incentives to serve these interests by being relatively supportive of public welfare.⁷ Officials who are minorities, who have various characteristics indicating lower socio-economic status, and (perhaps) who are women may also be advocates of the interests of those citizens whom they descriptively represent; thus, such officials may also be most supportive of public welfare.⁸

Theoretical perspectives that suggest that welfare preferences are shaped by ethical ideals directs attention to different personal characteristics of urban officials. Most obviously, the self-defined ideologies of officials can provide broad, shorthand labels addressing a variety of normative concerns. Support for welfare should be greatest among those officials holding more liberal and radical ideologies. The partisan identification of officials is based on a combination of factors including officials' allegiance to the ideological orientation of the party and the kinds of interests that the party has historically represented. Support for welfare should be greatest among those officials who identify with the Democratic Party, because Democrats tend to be liberal and represent relatively disadvantaged interests.

Partisan identification and ideological orientation are, however, very broad and sometimes crude indicators of the normative ideals of people. Ideological orientations are, for example, based on people's beliefs about how politics works in practice as well as their ideals. And the principles of ideologies address not only the

⁷ Whether or not an official serves in a city having district elections is a *contextual* factor that may influence her attitudes because the presence of districts defines the setting of all officials serving in that city. Whether or not an official serves a "disadvantaged" district is a *personal* factor that may influence her attitudes because that district is specific to the particular official.

⁸ The role of women as office holders is particularly interesting in this regard. Even though most women officials seem to come from relatively advantaged backgrounds, feminist theory holds that women are more likely to empathize with the plight of women and children in poverty (Jones 1993).

just distribution of material goods but a number of other "great issues" of politics concerning the legitimate roles of government, the distribution of power, the appropriate roles of citizens, and the best way of structuring governmental institutions (Schumaker, Kiel, and Heilke 1996). Thus, in order to examine the effects of the ethical ideals of officials on their support for public welfare, more refined measures of these ideals are needed than are provided by summary measures of their ideological (or partisan) orientation.

This paper focuses on the principles of justice held by officials, as such ideals seem particularly relevant to welfare policy. Because officials' receptivity to welfare is probably influenced by additional ideas they have about human nature and the characteristics of a good society, any analysis limited to justice principles captures only a portion of the total effects of ideals on political attitudes and behavior. However, justice principles are sufficiently numerous and complex to constitute a good starting point for an exploration of the role of ideals in politics.

Justice principles comprise that subset of all principles about desirable political communities that are based on moral considerations of fair treatment of citizens, especially in the distribution of goods. There are many justice principles, although Walzer (1983, 13-26) stresses four basic kinds of principles. The principle of equality seeks non differentiated treatment and similar shares. The principle of free exchange says fairness is achieved when distributions of goods and opportunities are based on agreements that are freely made by the parties to them. The principle of desert claims that greater goods and opportunities should be available to those who have earned more, perhaps because they have contributed more to the community or perhaps because they have more moral merit. The principle of need claims that greater goods and opportunities should be available to those who will be most benefited by their receipt. Within these broad categories of justice principles, a variety of more specific principles can be identified, and many

have been discussed at length in contemporary political philosophy (see, for example, Miller 1976, and Kymlicka 1990).

An idealistic theoretical perspective does not claim that any particular justice principle should or does most influence decision makers. Instead, it holds that officials will be influenced by the principles of justice they hold and/or are dominant in their communities. Thus, those who oppose and those who support public welfare can be equally influenced by justice principles, but opponents and supporters would invoke different justice principles in forming their attitudes toward public assistance. To provide a general guide to expectations in this regard, it is hypothesized that urban officials will be most supportive of public welfare when they hold liberal, redistributive justice principles and they will be least supportive of public welfare when they hold libertarian principles of free exchange. Beyond examining this broad and fairly obvious working hypothesis, however, the analysis below seeks to show the importance of justice principles (reflecting officials' ideals) relative to contextual factors (reflecting interests and power), and it seeks to identify those specific justice principles that most further and hinder support for public welfare among urban officials.

The impact of context on support for welfare. Table 2 shows relationships between the urban context and support of urban officials for public welfare . The first column shows the zero-order Pearson correlation coefficients between each contextual variable and support for public welfare. The other columns report the results of a stepwise multiple regression model that included those contextual variables having significant zero-order correlations with support for welfare.⁹ The

⁹ Both ordinary least-square (OLS) and stepwise regression models were examined in all of the analyses reported here, and for the most part, the results of these models were substantively similar. However, on a couple of occasions, variables that just missed significant associations with support for welfare using the OLS models did achieve significance in the more

table reveals that several contextual variables are related to officials' support for public welfare as hypothesized, but that the overall predictive power of these contextual variables is very limited. Only six percent of the variation in support for welfare is explained by these contextual variables.

The zero-order correlations show that officials are more supportive of welfare when unemployment is high and new business construction has slowed, when crime is high, when women comprise a relatively large percentage of the community, when officials are elected at-large, when minorities are well-represented on the city council, and when there are more black-owned newspapers giving voice to minority concerns.¹⁰ However, only a few of these factors seem to have a significant independent impact on officials' support for welfare.

Contrary to expectations generated by the ethos theory, urban officials were somewhat more supportive of welfare programs in communities with at-large elections than in cities with district representation. While the conventional wisdom in urban politics has stressed that the presence of wards helps insure the election of officials who represent the welfare interests of citizens in low-income neighborhoods (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, 12-15), this finding suggests that the presence of wards currently facilitates the election of some officials from more

parsimonious stepwise models that deleted from analysis those factors with no apparent independent predictive power. In short, using results of the stepwise model justified the retention of more contextual and personal characteristics than did the OLS model. Such retention seemed prudent because our goal is to show the independent effects of justice principles on welfare attitudes after all relevant (if only minimally important) factors have been considered and controlled.

¹⁰ Other contextual factors emphasized by previous theory -- involving measures of fiscal capacity, community homogeneity, and partisan context -- had no significant impact on support for welfare.

affluent districts who oppose the welfare state.¹¹ In contrast, it may be difficult for officials who are elected at-large to ignore the presence and needs of disadvantaged citizens within the community. Indeed, many officials made statements during the interview to the effect that "programs that benefit the least advantaged citizens are always in the interests of the overall community, because the entire community suffers when its poor and disadvantaged citizens suffer." Such widespread sentiments stand in marked contrast to the claims of ethos theory that policy makers must choose between serving the interests of poor people or serving the interests of the broader community, and that at-large elections are key elements to focus officials on the broader community. Our data provide limited support for the opposite contention -- that at-large elections provide a context where officials are likely to respond to the interests of the disadvantaged who comprise a significant element of their constituency, and they see the fate of the city as a whole as bound up with the fate of their disadvantaged constituents.

The second -- and more important -- contextual factor that appears to affect officials support for welfare is the extent of minority representation on the city council. Higher levels of minority representation on the city council appears to increase support for public welfare among public officials generally. This finding seems consistent with -- and perhaps extends -- the theory of political incorporation that holds that policy responsiveness to redistributive demands depends on the existence of an ("almost") majority coalition of racial minorities and "racially liberal whites" (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1997, 24-25). In such cities as Seattle, Atlanta, and Baltimore, minorities were well represented on the council, and the additional presence of white liberals on the council resulted in biracial or multiracial coalitions that were supportive of public welfare and other redistributive programs. Using the

¹¹ Table 3, to which we will turn shortly, provides some evidence for this proposition.

theoretical distinction between interests and ethics that frames the present research, incorporation theory suggests that increased minority representation enhances support for welfare for two reasons: (1) because dominant biracial coalitions reflect and respond to the interests of minority and disadvantaged constituents (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984), and (2) because the presence of such coalitions create a political climate where liberal ethical principles are the basis of public policy (Sonenshein 1997, 45). The further development of incorporation theory requires more precise specification of the relative importance of interests and ethics as the basis of the redistributive policies achieved by minority representation. The present finding that minority representation enhances support for welfare (independently of the racial and class composition of the community) suggests that biracial coalitions help create a climate where liberal ethical principles are important contributors to redistributive policies.

The impact of the personal characteristics of urban officials on their support for public welfare. Table 3 examines the relationships between various personal characteristics of urban officials and their support for public welfare and reports the same sorts of correlation and regression statistics presented in Table 2. The data reveal that, overall, personal characteristics are stronger determinants than contextual variables of officials' support for welfare; the adjusted coefficient of determination for these variables is .30, suggesting that personal characteristics have five times the explanatory power of contextual factors in the analysis of officials' welfare attitudes.

Three personal characteristics concerning the interests of urban officials have significant zero-order correlations with their support for welfare. As predicted by interest theory, representatives of districts serving larger minority and low income populations are most supportive of welfare, and minority officials are more supportive of welfare than whites. Respondents who are employed in the public

sector are also more supportive of welfare, a finding that may reflect that the employment interests of some officials contribute to their seeking a more expansive welfare state. However, none of these relationships remain significant in the multivariate analyses.

More strongly associated with officials' attitudes about welfare is their partisan and ideological orientations. Not surprisingly, welfare supporters tend to identify with the Democratic Party, and officials with more conservative outlooks oppose welfare while those with more liberal and radical outlooks are more supportive. Indeed, ideological orientation seems to be the strongest predictor of welfare support that we have encountered thus far. These findings, of course, support the contention that the ideals of policy makers are important determinants of welfare support, but the broad and ill-defined meanings behind partisan and ideological labels leave unclear the precise nature of the ideals that most encourage liberal Democrats to support welfare.

Various justice principles of urban officials and their support for welfare.

Table 4 employs the same statistical procedures used in Tables 2 and 3 to examine relationships between the extent to which urban officials hold 11 principles of justice and their support for public welfare. Taken together, these justice principles explain 53 percent of the variance in officials' support of welfare, and thus seem to be more important in this regard than either contextual variables or various personal characteristics. Eight of the principles are significantly related to welfare support. Only the principles that officials should treat everyone equally (by distributing goods and services equally to all citizens), that officials should promote equal opportunity, and that officials should reward moral virtue have no significant relationship with welfare support.¹²

¹² Ten other principles that were presented to officials in the larger study had no significant relationships with welfare preferences, but these

Although egalitarianism is often invoked as a concept to justify welfare, it is not surprising that the principle of treating everyone equally is unrelated to welfare support. As Rae (1981) and others have pointed out, equality has many meanings, and a conceptual analysis of these meanings reveals that providing equal treatment is distinct from achieving equal outcomes. Many officials who supported welfare strongly opposed the principle of treating everyone equally because they recognized that many welfare programs would entail providing extra benefits and services for the poor and disadvantaged.

Like the concept of equality, that of equal opportunity has many meanings. Allegiance to equal opportunity may contribute to support for public welfare if it is understood as "fair equal opportunity"-- as providing those having lesser natural endowments or fewer social advantages with additional resources so that they have more equal prospects of winning desirable positions and other lumpy goods (like governmental contracts) when competing with more advantaged applicants (Rawls 1971, 65-7).¹³ However, if equal opportunity is given a more general and conventional meaning -- as the desirability of eliminating barriers against minorities, women, and other groups that have historically been the targets of

principles are seldom invoked in discussions of welfare and there seem no compelling theoretical or conceptual reasons for presenting and discussing them here.

¹³ Drawing on officials' commentary on the equal opportunity principle presented to them, each official's attitude toward "fair equal opportunity" was also assessed. This measure was significantly correlated with support for welfare ($r = .27$), but, when other justice principles were introduced as controls in a multivariate analyses, this relationship diminished and became insignificant. Because allegiance to fair equal opportunity could only be roughly measured here and because other principles considered below seem to capture many of the same ideals, it is not emphasized or pursued here.

discrimination -- the principle seems to have little relationship to support for welfare ($r = .16$). Defined conventionally, equal opportunity is endorsed by all urban officials, albeit to different degrees, and officials interpret the principle as being much more applicable to other policy areas such as affirmative action (Schumaker and Kelly, 1999) than to welfare issues.

Because opponents of public welfare often claim that welfare weakens the moral character of its recipients (Murray 1984), the principle of rewarding moral virtue was analyzed as a possible influence on officials' support for welfare. However, the weak correlation reported in Table 4 ($r = -.08$) suggests that officials' support for public welfare is little affected by their concerns about the moral character of welfare recipients.

Three justice principles that are prominent in popular and/or scholarly discourse were found to be linked to officials' welfare attitudes in bivariate analyses but these linkages became insignificant in the multivariate regression models. As shown in Table 4, these involved the ideas of maximizing aggregate utility, blocking dominance-based exchanges, and focusing on the disadvantaged.

The utilitarian principle of "providing the greatest good for the greatest number" is widely invoked in American culture, but urban officials were as often opposed as supportive of this idea when it was presented with the (Rawlsian) caveat that this meant ignoring those who are most hurt by policies that maximize aggregate utility. Officials who were most supportive of utilitarianism tended to oppose welfare ($r = -.24$); such officials sometimes equated economic efficiency and growth with maximizing utility, and they believed that welfare programs are economically inefficient and slow economic growth (Okun 1975). However, in the multivariate analysis, the principle of maximizing utility had no significant, direct impact on welfare attitudes.

The principle of blocking dominance-based exchanges has been most fully developed by Michael Walzer (1983, 97-102). It asserts that people with greater amounts of certain highly valued goods like money or political power should be prohibited from using these "dominant" goods to attain certain other goods; for example, the rich should not be permitted to use their wealth to buy social recognition or important public offices. According to Walzer, the principle of blocked exchanges is important for a society that sees no injustice in unequal distributions of wealth and other primary social goods, but that nevertheless wishes to control the effects of these inequalities, to prevent them from being cumulative in a way that "those that have" have everything and "those that have not" have nothing. The urban officials in our study seldom volunteered allegiance to this principle and, when it was presented to them, it was dismissed by about a quarter of them as an idea that they either did not understand or was very remote from their justice concerns. Officials who supported the principle of blocked exchanges also tended to support public welfare ($r = .34$), but this relationship did not persist in the multivariate analysis, when other justice principles were introduced. Support for blocked exchanges is part of a constellation of redistributive justice principles that are held by more liberal officials, but such officials do not directly articulate it as an important justification for the welfare state.

In his monumental *Theory of Justice*, Rawls proposed "the difference principle" as the strongest and (he believed) most justified principle that liberals could present to further the welfare state. The complexity of the difference principle -- which has been given many interpretations by political philosophers -- required that it be reframed in a simple manner while still capturing Rawls' central concerns. Accordingly, officials were presented with the idea that they should focus on the disadvantaged: governments should adopt policies that improve the conditions of the disadvantaged and reject policies that worsen their conditions -- even if these

policies are otherwise beneficial to society. As shown in Table 4, this principle of focusing on the disadvantaged is significantly linked to support for welfare ($r = .34$), but it has no independent impact when other liberal and redistributive justice principles are introduced. This suggests that support for welfare is dependent on other liberal principles, a point that Rawls acknowledges in his more recent work, especially in *Political Liberalism* (1992). What are the family of liberal principles that most strongly support welfare programs among urban officials?

Table 4 shows that four principles have significant positive and independent impacts on support for welfare.¹⁴ The ideal of distributing according to needs may have its origins in Marxism, but most liberal officials (and some moderate and even conservative officials) now endorse the idea and believe that support of public welfare is an appropriate application of it. Of course, distributing according to needs is a vague and incomplete principle because needs are hard to define and because most definitions of needs lead to circumstances where there are more needs than resources to satisfy them (Kymlicka 1990, 183-86). Consequently, needs must be prioritized. For most (but not all) urban officials, the principle means giving priority to the physical and educational needs of those who are disadvantaged in terms of natural endowments and social circumstances. So interpreted, the needs principle becomes one that justifies targeted assistance programs. Distribution according to needs implies people must be eligible for means-tested programs because their incomes are below a designated level or because they have some documented handicap. Because the targets of means-tested welfare programs have deficiencies that hamper their purchasing necessary goods in the market-place,

¹⁴ The correlations among support for these three principles are positive but modest. Only the correlation between providing rights and establishing floors ($r = .38$) is statistically significant. Because these principles are not more strongly interrelated, it is important to understand their distinct meanings and applications.

because such forms of assistance as food stamps, low-income housing, and special education are necessary to their achieving their own conception of the good life, and because a good liberal society believes all citizens must be given a fair chance to pursue their own good, the principle of distributing on the basis of needs helps justify those kinds of welfare programs that provide special assistance to eligible disadvantaged citizens.

The ideal that governmental officials should provide everyone certain basic rights is a second redistributive principle that is widely held by urban officials and enhances their support for welfare. While distributing according to need is a principle that implies targeting goods and services to the disadvantaged, providing equal rights is a principle that calls for government to distribute certain goods universally, equally, and free of charge (Dworkin 1977, 90-94).¹⁵ Many rights that are universally provided are political goods -- the right to vote, the right to oppose government, and so forth -- and their universal provision is considered essential by all officials in polyarchical democracies such as American cities. Providing material goods and services universally is much more controversial, and urban officials are very much divided in their attitudes about the appropriate extent of welfare rights and the specific goods that ought to be provided as welfare rights. Many officials claim that all citizens have a right to minimum food and shelter, but clearly their intent is not for these goods to be taken out of the marketplace and be equally and universally provided by government. Claiming that citizens have a right to such goods is probably a way of giving emphatic expression to the idea that people need food and shelter (Glendon 1991). The principle of providing rights should be reserved for distributing specific goods or services to all people, independently of

¹⁵ Accordingly, advocates of a more universal welfare state -- like William Julius Wilson (1987) and Theda Skocpol (1990) -- should stress the equal rights principle.

their ability to pay for them, because having (or having access to) these goods or services is an indispensable aspect of being a full and contributing citizen of a community. According to Walzer (1983, 64-67), welfare rights arise when communities decide democratically that all citizens need a particular good and commit themselves to providing it universally and paying for it through tax revenues rather than any sort of user charges that mimic market transactions and make consumption of the good dependent on people's ability to pay for it. Police services and public education are the most important universal provisions of local governments, and people's right to police protection and general education are viewed by most urban officials as redistributive because relatively poor people consume these goods in equal or greater amounts than the rich, but contribute less to their provision. Health care, public transportation, and child care are sometimes advocated as rights by urban officials, and some cities have provided or subsidized certain services in these areas so that they are more universally and equally available at no charge to residents.

The ideal of establishing floors -- or minimal levels of the goods that people need -- is the third principle of justice that has an independent impact on support for welfare, as shown in Table 4. At first glance, the floors principle seems very similar to the needs principle and the rights principle. Like the needs principle, the floors principle limits welfare benefits to those at designated levels of need. But like the rights principle, the floors principle provides these benefits universally to all people who fall below the established floor. Thus, while the needs principle directs officials to locate the most needy and compensate them for their deficiencies, the floors principle implies that anyone could become needy, and it establishes a safety net for all. But the floors principle does not maintain that people who fall below the floor have a *right* to welfare. Instead, the floor or safety net is provided as an act of generosity. Thus, while allegiance to the rights principle comes out of an

individualist strain in our culture which regards individuals as having a right to their fair shares, allegiance to the floors principle derives from more social and compassionate strains in our culture which assert that an affluent society, and the more affluent people within it, have a responsibility to help the unfortunate (Kuenne 1993, 19-23).

The floors that are set can be quite expansive, but they can also be very minimal. In contrast, the requirements of the needs principle can be very demanding, as the disadvantaged always need more goods and services to enhance the prospects of achieving their life goals. The assertiveness of the rights principle also makes it very demanding, as there is no obvious limit to the goods that should be provided equally and universally as welfare rights. However, the floors principle merely calls on officials to provide minimal assistance to those who have fallen into dire straits.¹⁶ It is for the providers of these goods to determine what constitute essential needs and adequate levels of provisions. The most obvious applications of the floor principle are such things as shelters for the homeless, battered wives and displaced children, emergency medical services for those who cannot afford private care, and crisis counseling for students experiencing a host of personal problems.

In summary, targeting the most needy for special assistance, assuring equal and universal provisions of certain goods, and helping those who have fallen into dire straits are distinct approaches to enhancing the welfare of the disadvantaged. Each of these forms of assistance has a distinct liberal principle, and each principle implies different welfare policies. Thus, allegiance to the principles of distributing

¹⁶ Compared to the needs and rights principles, the floors principles is sometimes interpreted by officials as involving temporary assistance to people who are normally self-sufficient but have temporarily fallen through the floor.

on the basis of need, providing rights, and establishing floors are each influential in enhancing support for welfare among urban officials.

Table 4 shows a fourth justice principle that significantly enhances support for welfare among urban officials: the desirability of establishing ceilings or upper-limits on the goods received by the well off. Unlike the needs, rights, and floors principles, officials did not justify welfare programs by articulating the justice of establishing ceilings. Instead, the influence of this principle seems to be that its limited application is necessary to finance public welfare programs. Overall, urban officials were somewhat more opposed than supportive of the principle of establishing ceilings, and very few officials thought that local governments could or should establish any ceiling on the wealth or income of their residents. However, when presented with the ceilings principle, a common response among liberal supporters of the welfare state was that progressive taxes is its appropriate application. They believed that levels of income and wealth beyond a certain point should be subjected to higher than average levels of taxation in order to generate revenues that could be used to aid the poor. Conversely, officials who most opposed the principle of establishing ceilings often expressed their hostility to confiscatory taxes on successful businesses and individuals, especially if these taxes were used for welfare purposes.

In a same vein, Table 4 shows that officials' support for welfare is significantly but negatively influenced by a fifth justice principle -- that officials should retain market allocations and avoid redistributing those goods that have been distributed according to the free choices of individuals in "the free market." While strongly defended by libertarians (Nozick 1974), this principle is rejected by most urban officials, because they recognize that it is a constraint on their ability to apply more liberal justice principles allowing them to carry out their roles of assisting the disadvantaged. However, about 20 percent of the sample endorsed the libertarian

idea of retaining market allocations, and they sometimes articulated this idea as the basis of their opposition to public welfare.

Because public officials are much more opposed to establishing ceilings than they are opposed to redistributing market allocations, supporters of public welfare would seem to be better served by stressing the general unfairness of market allocations than claiming that justice requires confiscation of the undeserved incomes and wealth of the rich. In our interviews, officials often disliked the idea of establishing ceilings because they feared its application would inhibit opportunity, incentive and the accumulation of capital in ways that harmed economic investment and growth. At the same time, officials often expressed doubt that market allocations are just, and they recognize the need for some redistributions. In this regard, some officials deny the existence of a *free* market, pointing out that many of the wealth-producing transactions that occur in the marketplace are influenced by various sorts of dubious power relationships. Some officials also noted the capriciousness of market rewards. Thus, many officials doubt that outcomes in the market are just, and such doubts seem to enhance support for public welfare. For most supporters of public welfare, the ability to intervene generally in market-generated distributions by collecting taxes is sufficient to their welfare goals; they feel no need to confiscate the wealth of the rich above a certain limit.

In summary, the support of urban officials for public welfare is strongly dependent on the justice principles they hold, but only five such principles have a strong and direct impact on their attitudes toward welfare. Officials' support for welfare depends significantly on their rejecting market justice, their endorsement of progressive taxes, and beliefs that they should distribute goods based on needs, provide welfare rights, and establish floors. While other principles are sometimes articulated as being relevant to issues of providing public assistance to the

disadvantaged, these principles seem to have little direct impact on urban officials attitudes toward welfare.

A final consideration of significant factors. Thus far, some contextual variables, personal characteristics, and justice principles have been identified as influencing the support of urban officials for welfare. However, the analyses to this point have only controlled for variables within designated clusters. Such analyses could be misleading because the effects of some variables thus far thought to be important could be indirect and/or spurious. Consider, for example, the ideological orientation of officials. We have claimed that the self-defined ideologies of officials are important expressions of their ideals that significantly influence their support for welfare. However, there is a distinct possibility that the ideologies held by officials are simply shorthand expressions for their various justice principles. Perhaps officials' ideologies have no direct influence on support for welfare when controls for their justice principles are introduced. To examine such possibilities, Table 5 provides regression coefficients estimating the influence on welfare attitudes of all factors found significant in the previous analyses, after controls are introduced for all other significant factors.

The results show that a parsimonious model of seven variables dealing with the urban context, the personal characteristics of officials, and their justice principles explains 56 percent of the variance in their support for welfare. It also shows that five of the seven significant determinants of welfare support are the justice principles just described. Allegiance to the principles of distributing based on needs, providing welfare rights, establishing floors, establishing ceilings, and rejecting market allocations influence support for welfare independently of other personal characteristics of officials and the context in which they live.

The data in Table 5 require a revision of our previous discussion of the importance of electoral systems on support for welfare. Here, the regression

coefficients show that living in a political context having more at-large representation does *not* seem to have a significant direct affect on support for welfare. Our interpretation of this result is that at-large constituencies are still important, but their effects are indirect. It is possible that at-large constituencies result in the election of relatively principled officials, and these officials -- being aware of the needs of the disadvantaged who inevitably comprise a significant portion of their community -- often hold liberal justice principles which, in turn, enhance their support for welfare.

Table 5 also shows that minority representation continues to have a direct influence on welfare support. When minorities are better represented in biracial coalitions, support for welfare is enhanced (independently of the justice principles held by urban officials). This suggests that biracial coalitions protect and promote the interests of minorities, and they perceive more generous welfare programs as enhancing those interests.

Finally, ideological orientation continues to be a significant contributor to welfare support, even when controls are provided for justice principles. This suggests that ideology cannot be reduced to justice principles (Reeher 1996). When officials declare themselves to be liberal, radical, or some other leftist designation, they usually mean to be opponents of retaining market allocations and advocates of justice principles calling for distribution on the basis of needs, provision of welfare rights, and establishment of floors. But these ideological designations also mean that they subscribe to a number of other political ideals as well. When justice principles are controlled in the multivariate model, the impact of ideology on welfare support is much reduced, but ideology continues to be important. It is not clear what additional ideals beyond justice principles play a role in officials' attitudes toward welfare. Perhaps those with more leftist ideologies simply seek more cooperative and fraternal communities, and believe that more generous welfare programs will both

contribute to and reflect such societies. Perhaps those with more leftist ideologies believe that humans are inherently inclined to be industrious and contributing members of society, and that effective welfare programs can free them from the degradation that inhibits them from being so. The findings in Table 5 suggest that there are ideals concealed within broad ideological self-identifications that have some such impacts, but a precise understanding of these ideals and their impacts must await future research that takes seriously the importance of ideals as determinants of political attitudes and behavior.

Conclusions

The findings and arguments of this paper can be read as unduly optimistic assessments about the prospect of welfare once devolved to the local level. Local officials have been found to be quite supportive of public welfare. The economic, social, and political constraints on local welfare activity emphasized by most urban scholars have been found to have little impact on the welfare attitudes of urban officials. Holding liberal justice principles is presented as the key to increasing support for welfare, and such liberal principles have been found to be much more evident among city officials than is generally assumed by global assertions about the current decline of liberalism. Such findings may be interpreted as a claim that liberal fears about the fate of the poor, in an age of federal retrenchment of poverty policy, are unfounded. Such an interpretation is, however, unwarranted. There is nothing in this paper that asserts or suggests that the disadvantaged have not been harmed by recent federal welfare reforms (see Edelman 1997) or that they are better off if welfare functions are transferred from federal (or state) governments to local ones. While the argument presented here suggests that it might be wise for advocates for the poor to focus their energies on the local level rather than attempt to reconstruct a federal welfare state, the central thesis presented here is a theoretical one.

Urban analysts have for many years been preoccupied with developing realistic theories of politics that focus on the power and interests of various persons. While such concerns are not unimportant, the prevalence of these paradigms have blinded most urbanists to the important role that political ideals play, or can play, in urban life. This paper has shown that justice principles play a significant and perhaps predominant role in influencing the attitudes of urban officials about welfare. It suggests that other ideals that are embedded in the ideologies of political participants can also be very important. Focusing on political ideals and how they play out in the policy process may provide more valid (i.e., realistic) theories of urban politics as well as providing practical guidance for the better governance of our cities.

Methodological Appendix

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The relatively open-ended format of the interviews yielded extensive qualitative information regarding the welfare attitudes and justice principles of urban elected officials, in a way that was minimally guided by the preconceptions of the researchers. The quantitative data that were derived from such interviews do not meet all of the criteria that are ideal for statistical analysis -- for example, neither the cities in our survey nor the officials interviewed in each city constitute true random samples, and many scales are ordinal rather than interval. Thus, the results must be considered exploratory rather than scientifically verified generalizations about the attitudes of all urban officials regarding public welfare. However, this combined qualitative-quantitative methodology yields important information that is not available from standard sources and that has been collected in a manner to enhance its representativeness and validity. Its 12-city data base improves on the single-city case studies that dominate the field, and the quantitative statistics summarize the tendencies in the data in a manner that complement the perceptions and judgments offered by particular officials.

To attain measures of urban officials' support for public welfare, transcriptions of all components of the interviews were inspected and coded by both co-authors. One source of information was the stories officials provided at the beginning of their interviews about issues, policy areas, or cases that arose while they were in office that exemplified ideas about "fairness," as they understood that term. Such stories were requested because they provide rich research material reflective of human cognitive abilities (Schank 1990) and because respondents are less likely to be influenced by the conceptual frameworks and perceived values of the researcher when they provide open-ended stories than when they respond to

highly structured questions (Van Maanen 1979). By telling stories, officials provide fairly accurate accounts of their beliefs and activities without distortions intended to make attitudes and actions seem socially acceptable.

Respondents usually offered one or two stories at the beginning of the interview. Overall, they told 221 stories. While most stories dealt with other issues like school desegregation, service distribution, and economic (re)development, 21 dealt with public assistance to the disadvantaged. The ten stories offered by city council members in this regard concerned the distribution of federal dollars (such as CDBG funds) for welfare purposes and local funding for such programs as shelters for the homeless, low-income housing, mental health clinics, day care facilities, and social services generally; one story discussed establishing lifeline electrical rates. The 11 stories offered by the school board members ranged from general concerns regarding the need to combat the effects of poverty on student performance and the desirability of allocating more resources to schools serving more disadvantaged children to the importance of free and reduced-fee breakfast and lunch programs, tutoring at-risk students, and funding specific special education programs.

A second source of information regarding officials' attitudes toward welfare was their open-ended responses to a probe at the end of the interview about their central recurrent concerns while in public office and/or those things that others attributed to them as such concerns. Most officials provided comments that were irrelevant to public welfare (e.g., "I supported managed growth") or tangential to public welfare (e.g., "I wanted to help troubled kids"). However, at this point in the interview, twelve officials mentioned either general public welfare concerns (e.g., "I was a spokesperson for the poor") or specific welfare projects. These direct references were taken into account in developing an overall profile for each official regarding his or her comments on welfare.

A third source of information regarding officials' attitudes toward welfare was their open-ended responses to 21 principles of justice, presented to them during the middle of the interview. When interpreting and applying these principles, officials often made comments about providing public assistance to disadvantaged citizens. Such comments were added to the profiles used to assess their overall attitudes toward public welfare.

After reading the relevant stories offered by respondents, the open-ended comments regarding their greatest concerns, and their reactions to the various principles provided to them, each of the co-authors coded each official's attitude toward public welfare using the seven-point scale described in Table 1. The scores that we independently assigned each person were usually identical or involved only minor discrepancies; the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two codings was .94. When discrepancies occurred, the coders' estimates were averaged and rounded toward the extreme values. Thus, if one of us coded an official "6" and the other coded her a "7," a score of "7" was assigned. These scores are reported and described in Part II of this paper, and variations in these scores are analyzed in Part III.

In Part III, support for public welfare generally is shown to be significantly correlated with and/or directly influenced by various principles of justice. During the interviews, officials were presented 21 principles, adapted from the literature dealing with justice in contemporary political philosophy (see author citation for a discussion of these principles and this literature), but presented to officials in fairly non-technical manner. The wordings of the principles discussed in this paper are as follows:

Treat everyone equally. Public officials should distribute goods and services equally to all citizens.

Promote equal opportunity. Public officials should pursue equal opportunity policies to eliminate barriers that prevent minorities, women, and other historically disadvantaged groups from competing fairly with whites, men, and other historically advantaged groups for the most desired positions in society.

Reward Moral Virtue. Recognizing that individuals differ in their moral virtue, officials should reward those whose conduct most conforms to the dominant moral values of the community.

Maximize aggregate utility. Public officials should adopt those policies and programs that serve the overall public interest -- that provide the greatest good for most citizens -- and not be overly concerned about who is most benefited and who is most hurt by policies that best serve the public good.

Block dominance-based exchanges. Public officials should try to prevent the accumulation of inequalities across a variety of goods. Thus, they should seek to prevent those with the most of good X from using that good to acquire unequal shares of goods Y and Z.

Focus on the disadvantaged. Public officials should adopt policies that improve the conditions of the least advantaged citizens, and they should reject policies that make relatively disadvantaged citizens worse off -- even if such policies are otherwise useful, effective, and generally in the interest of society.

Distribute based on needs. Public officials should adopt policies and programs that distribute goods and services to people based on their needs.

Provide rights. Public officials should pursue policies that provide everyone certain basic rights -- like the right to vote, the right to worship as one pleases, the right to essential food and shelter, and the right to basic health care.

Establish floors. Public officials should adopt policies that ensure all citizens a minimal level of the goods they need.

Establish ceilings. Public officials should establish upper-limits on the goods received by the well-off.

Retain market allocations. Public officials should avoid redistributing those allocations of goods that have been made by the free choices of individuals, often through the free market.

Officials were asked to indicate their overall support for these principles on a 5-point scale (strong opposition, moderate opposition, mixed feelings, moderate support, and strong support). Because many officials gave intermediate responses (e.g., "I'd say I'm between a strong and moderate supporter of this idea"), a 9-point ordinal scale was ultimately used to measure their support for each principle.

The methods used to measure support for public welfare and the various principles of justice may produce a certain amount of what Hyman (1955, 179-83) calls "emergent error due to contamination." This problem generally occurs when measures of independent and dependent variables are drawn from the same source, such that strong associations between variables do not derive from the independent variables (in this case, the principles of justice) influencing the dependent variables (in this case, support for public welfare), but rather from their being measures of a single underlying phenomenon. For example, if officials were coded as being strong supporters of public welfare simply because they strongly supported the principle of "providing rights" like essential food and shelter and basic health care to everyone, then the strong association between the rights principle and supporting welfare would be spurious, a simple artifact of a single measurement being used as an indicator of both variables. However, in this research, such contamination has been minimized in two ways. First, during the interviews respondents were asked to indicate their support for each principle prior to discussing their applications; thus,

the measures of support for each principle were distinct scores provided by respondents, and any information they provided about their welfare attitudes were given in follow-up comments. For example, a respondent might indicate strong support for the principle of "providing rights," but in follow-up comments indicate that he interpreted the principle as referring to "constitutional rights," and that he had certain objections to "welfare rights." Here, his strong support for "providing rights" would stand, but his hostile comments about welfare rights would be included in coding his overall support for public welfare. Second, support for welfare was estimated on the basis of all the comments each official made regarding welfare throughout the interview and was seldom based entirely on comments in response to a single principle of justice. In short, efforts were made to derive measures of welfare support that were as distinct as possible from the measures of the justice principles, thus minimizing the problem of contamination.

In the analyses in Part III, the personal characteristics of respondents and the social, economic, and political context in which they reside were also examined for their impacts on public welfare attitudes. The personal characteristics of respondents concerning such matters as their service in office, their race, gender, education, occupations, and their partisan and ideological orientations were derived from the interviews. The specific measures of the various personal characteristics are given as footnotes to Table 3. To examine the effects of the social, economic, and political context in which officials formed their attitudes regarding welfare, each official in our sample was matched to the city in which they held office, and the characteristics of the city were attributed to him or her as possible influences on welfare attitudes. These measures were drawn from several standard sources as indicated in the footnotes to Table 2.

Table 1

Support for Public Welfare Spending and Programs
Among 118 Elected officials in 12 American Cities

Level of Support	Indications	N	Percent
1. Strong opposition	Mentions goal of eliminating welfare	2	2
2. Moderate opposition	Seeks large reduction in welfare spending or programs	13	11
3. Weak opposition	Seeks small reductions in welfare spending or programs	10	8
4. Maintain status quo	Seeks neither increase nor reduction in welfare	10	8
5. Weak support	Seeks small increases in welfare spending or programs	25	22
6. Moderate support	Seeks moderate increases in welfare spending or programs	37	31
7. Strong support	Seeks extensive increases in welfare spending or programs	21	18

Table 2
Relationships Between Urban Context and
Support of Urban Officials for Public Welfare

Contextual variables	Relationships with Officials Support for Public Welfare				
	r	B	SE B	Beta	Sign. level
Population size, 1990 ^a	.03				
<u>Indicators of Need</u>					
% below poverty line, 1989	.09				
% increase in poverty, 1979-89	-.01				
% unemployed, 1993	.21*			.11	.39
Homeless persons per capita, 1990	.09				
<u>Indicators of Fiscal Capacity</u>					
Median income of population	.08				
% change in median income, 1979-89	.08				
Median value of owner-occupied home	.03				
Business construction per capita, 1993	-.20*			-.14	.14
Municipal govt. expenditures per capita	.07				
<u>Indicators of Social Disturbance^b</u>					
Violent crimes per capita, 1991	.19*			.06	.68
Violent crimes x black population	.18				
<u>Indicators of Community Homogeneity^c</u>					
% middle class	.03				
% white	-.16				
% female	.24*			.13	.21
<u>Indicators of Partisan Context</u>					
Party competition ^d	-.04				
Democratic tilt in partisanship ^e	.04				
<u>Factors emphasized by Ethos Theory</u>					
Individualistic political culture ^f	.09				
Presence of city manager ^g	-.05				
At-large representation ^h	.19*	.49	.28	.16	.09
<u>Indicators of Minority Representation and Organization</u>					
% minorities on city council ⁱ	.23*	.02	.009	.21	.03
% women on city council	.09				
% minorities on school board	.18				
% women on school board	.07				
Number of black groups ^j	.15				
Number of black newspapers	.19*			-.03	.84
Adjusted coefficient of determination		.06			

Footnotes for Table 2

* In Tables 2, 3, and 4, zero-order Pearson correlation coefficients that are significant at the .05 level are indicated with a single asterisk and such coefficients that are significant at the .01 level are indicated with a double asterisk.

^a Population size, the four indicators of need, and the five indicators of fiscal capacity are drawn from *1993 County and City Extra* (Landon MD: Berbam Press).

^b The measure of violent crimes per capita is taken from *1993 County and City Extra*. The two-year time-lag between crime and the measurement of welfare preferences reflects the precedent set by Sharp and Maynard-Moody (1991, 941). The second indicator of social disturbance reflects the argument of Cloward and Piven (1975) that official responses reflect not simply crime but interaction effects involving crime and extensive black populations.

^c The measures of community heterogeneity are taken from *1993 County and City Extra*. Larger middle class populations indicate more homogeneous communities and are measured by subtracting those who are poor (below the poverty line) and those who are well-off (making more than \$100,000 annually) from the total population.

^d Party competition was measured as 100 minus the average margin of victory for the majority party in each locality for those Congressional, Senatorial, and Gubernatorial elections between 1992-94 that are reported in *America Votes 21*, compiled by Richard Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray (Washington DC: Elections Research Center).

^e Democratic partisanship was measured by averaging the Democratic vote as a percentage of the total votes for Democrats and Republicans in each locality during the same 1992-94 elections reported in *America Votes 21*.

^f This measure of political culture is derived from Daniel Elazar's *American Federalism*. Communities with Traditional (T) cultures were scored 1; those with Moralistic (M) cultures were scored 2; those with Individualist (I) cultures, which are believed by Elazar to be most responsive to individual needs, were scored 7. Cities where individualist (I) values were viewed as mixed with T and M values were scored as follows: TI = 3, MI = 4, IT = 5, IM = 6.

^g This dummy variable was taken from *1993 County and City Extra*.

^h Data regarding the constituencies of council and school board members are derived from the interviews. Except for the school board members from Baltimore and Providence, who were mayoral appointments, all officials were elected. All officials elected from districts were scored "0". All officials elected at large or appointed to the school boards in Baltimore and Providence were scored "1".

ⁱ Data regarding minorities and women on the city councils and school boards were derived from the interviews.

^j The measures of black groups and newspapers in each city were drawn from Parts 2 and 15 of the *Black American Information Directory, 1994-95* (Detroit: Cale Research, 1993). The numbers of black groups and newspapers are based on those organizations listed as having addresses in each of the sample cities.

Table 3

Relationships between Personal Characteristics of Urban Officials
and their Support for Public Welfare

Personal Characteristics ^a	Relationships with Officials' Support for Welfare				
	r	B	SE B	Beta	Sign. Level
Served on city council ^b	-.01				
Years served in office	.07				
Served "disadvantaged" district ^c	.19*			.13	.11
Respondent is a minority	.19*			.13	.11
Respondent is female	.15				
Social class of respondent ^d	-.11				
Years of formal schooling	.08				
Employed in public sector	.28*			.09	.25
Occupation of respondent ^e	-.17				
Identification with Democratic Party ^f	.40**	.18	.09	.20	.04
Leftism in ideological orientation ^g	.55**	.27	.06	.42	.00
Adjusted coefficient of determination		.30			

^a Data on personal characteristics of the respondents were derived from the interviews. Unless otherwise indicated, the scales are obvious dummy variables (e.g., white or minority, male or female) or interval-level variables (e.g., years served in office, years of formal schooling).

^b This dummy variable differentiates those respondents who served on city councils from those who served on school boards. The five persons who had served in both capacities were coded here as city council members.

^c During the interviews, officials were asked to indicate whether they were elected at-large or represented a specific district. If they served a district, they were asked to characterize their district in class and racial terms. A 3-point ordinal scale is used here to differentiate affluent, mixed, and disadvantaged districts. All persons elected at-large were coded as serving "mixed" districts.

^d This measure of social class is highly subjective, and is based on the interviewer's perception of whether the official was upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, working class, or lower class, based on such things as their residences, their offices, and their educational and career backgrounds.

^e The current occupations of part-time officials or the occupations that officials had prior to assuming full-time electoral positions were coded using the U.S. Bureau of Census 3-digit occupational scale. These scores were then subtracted from 1000 to achieve a scale of increasing social prestige of occupations.

^f A conventional 5-point ordinal scale, ranging from strong Republican to strong Democrat, was used here.

^g A 9-point ordinal scale -- ranging from very conservative through moderate and very liberal to radical -- was employed here.

Table 4

Relationships between Principles of Justice of Urban Officials and
their Support for Public welfare

Principles of Justice	Relationships with Officials' Support for Welfare				
	r	B	SE B	Beta	Sign. Level
Treat everyone equally	-.04				
Promote equal opportunity	.16				
Reward moral virtue	-.08				
Maximize aggregate utility	-.24**			.03	.72
Block dominance-based exchanges	.34**			.10	.22
Focus on the disadvantaged	.34**			-.08	.38
Distribute based on needs	.37**	.16	.07	.19	.02
Provide rights	.50**	.25	.08	.24	.00
Establish floors	.59**	.35	.07	.40	.00
Establish ceilings	.36**	.08	.04	.15	.05
Retain market allocations	-.43**	-.13	.05	-.17	.03
Adjusted coefficients of determination		.53			

Table 5

The Urban Context, Personal Characteristics and Justice Principles of
 Urban Officials and their Support for Public Welfare:
 A Summary Analysis of Significant Factors

Factor	Relationships with Officials' Support for Welfare			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>Beta</i>	Sign. Level
<u>Contextual variables</u>				
At-large representation			.06	.40
Minority representation	.013	.006	.14	.04
<u>Personal characteristics</u>				
Identification with Democratic Party			.06	.41
Leftism in ideological orientation	.13	.05	.20	.01
<u>Justice Principles</u>				
Distribute based on needs	.15	.06	.18	.00
Provide rights	.19	.08	.17	.02
Establish floors	.31	.07	.34	.00
Establish ceilings	.08	.04	.14	.04
Retain market allocations	-.10	.05	-.14	.04
Adjusted Coefficient of Determination	.56			

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