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## Moynihan's Strategy

The Moynihan Report is clearly not an article prepared for a learned journal nor an ordinary position paper prepared by a political executive. Rather, it is a hybrid that seeks to present certain social science facts and at the same time to argue a particular and rather unusual policy position. As such, it reflects some of the intellectual difficulties of each one of the elements that go into making the hybrid and some additional ones that come from the combination of the two approaches. In order to fully understand the document we need to know something of the man who wrote it, the office he held, the problem he sought to deal with, and the strategy he developed.

### The Man

Daniel Patrick Moynihan joined the New Frontier in 1961 as special assistant to Secretary of Labor Goldberg and by 1963 was appointed Assistant Secretary of Labor in charge of the Office of Policy Planning and Research. He was one of a new

breed of public servants, the social scientist-politicos, who combine in their background both social science training and experience and full-time involvement in political activity. He had attended the City College of New York and Tufts University and received a Ph.D. in political science from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1961. He had attended the London School of Economics on a Fulbright fellowship. From 1955 to 1959 he had worked as an assistant to Governor Harriman of New York. From 1959 to 1961 he had been the director of the New York State Government Research Project at Syracuse University. His particular interests in political science, coupled with his experience in New York politics, had moved him in the direction of an increasing emphasis on the sociological study of urban life; his work in the Department of Labor was to sharpen further his sociological bent.

### *The Office*

An Assistant Secretary of Labor and Director of the Office of Policy Planning and Research, with an additional over-all responsibility for the work of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Moynihan was concerned with the development of information from which the effectiveness of the Department's activities could be assessed and with the development of programmatic ideas and policy goals in line with the Department's responsibilities. As an assistant secretary his constituency involved most naturally the higher level members of the Department of Labor and the White House staff. Cabinet officers and their assistants stand between the Presidential Government of each administration and the Permanent Government of civil servants and appointed officials who serve for longer periods of time than the elected administration. Moynihan's political experience and personal conception of public service pointed him very strongly in the direction of the Presidential Government. He clearly defined himself over the years of his service in Washington as a member of the "Presidential party." In addition to the normal privileges of his office, Moynihan had close personal relationships with the White House staff, relations that grew out of the Kennedy period and antedated his appointment as Assistant Secretary.

He had conceived President Kennedy's study of selective service rejectees (the Task Force on Manpower Conservation), that had been part of the groundwork for planning the War on

Poverty. The Task Force on "The Negro Family in the Urban Slums," which produced a four-man team of proposals (the one of which was adopted by the Kennedy administration) and James Sundquist's study of the urban poor, were all concerned to strengthen the anti-poverty program.

The office that Moynihan had set up was written from the beginning with an understanding of the nature of the Government who would have to carry out the program. The nature of the Government who would have to carry out the program would have to ensure that it recouped the cost of this position would be relatively equal for a person who would be in the Government would be under the pressures that would be felt by the report on the programs.

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### *The Problem*

Moynihan's experience as to acquaint himself with the nature of that would deal with the problem of poverty, a

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Poverty. The Task Force had produced a report, "One-Third of a Nation," which provided Moynihan a model as he began to work on his Negro family report. Moynihan had been a member of the four-man team that developed the War on Poverty legislative proposals (the others were Sargent Shriver, Adam Yarmolinsky, and James Sundquist). In his effort, he had been particularly concerned to strengthen the employment aspects of the poverty program.

The office that Moynihan held is of crucial importance in understanding the report and the controversy. The report itself was written from the standpoint of a member of the Presidential Government who has the right to suggest policy of the sweeping nature that Moynihan had in mind. Only a person in this position would have been able to write a report relatively free of the long review process typical of government reports or to ensure that it received high-level distribution. Only a person in this position would have been able to speak directly and on a relatively equal footing with the White House staff. Finally, only a person who was defined as solidly part of the Presidential Government would have a chance of resisting the counterpressures that would come from other departments who might feel the report had policy implications inimicable to their programs.

Once the existence of the report became public knowledge, the fact that its author occupied such a high position meant that it must be taken seriously. The government produces thousands of reports every year, many of which have implications that considered on their merits alone deserve consideration by the public and by representatives of organizations and interest groups likely to be affected. However, very seldom are such reports given the kind of public notoriety and serious attention that was given the Moynihan Report. The attention reflected the seriousness implicit in its authorship as much or more than it derived from the content of the report itself. This is, of course, one of the reasons why "nothing new" caused a controversy.

### The Problem

Moynihan's experience in Washington, then, had been such to acquaint him with the problems of formulating programs that would deal effectively with unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and the like. Although he had a strong belief

that modern government is capable of formulating policies and programs to deal with problems before there is a surge of popular demand or well-formulated political pressure, he had strong misgivings about the extent to which the vast range of federal activity designed to cope with problems of poverty was likely to be effective.

His own views on social welfare were strongly influenced by Catholic welfare philosophy, which has emphasized the idea that family interests are the central objective of social welfare and of social policy in general. He had observed that most European nations and Canada had adopted family-allowance programs to cope with difficulties of income maintenance at low-income levels. Early in his career in Washington he had tried to work up some interest in such a policy, but with no success. As the Kennedy Administration managed to stimulate the national economy, Moynihan felt he saw interest in unemployment problems declining; he came to the conclusion that the "unemployment rate was simply a shorthand for the gross national product." As the War on Poverty was put together, he felt that its main emphasis on community action programs contributed little in terms of support of families. Increasingly, he had come to feel that the idea of family welfare could provide both a focus for working out social and economic programs to deal with the problems of those cut off from the great society and a standard by which to evaluate the success of the programs. Thus, he told a conference on poverty in America held at the University of California, Berkeley, in February of 1965:

... it is very clear that after only a year of general discussion the question of poverty is leading us to a major reassessment of the effect upon family structure of the way we do things in this country.

Several things emerge. First it becomes more obvious that the primary function of community welfare programs is to provide surrogate family services. The logic of this relationship has taken us well beyond the original provision of food and clothing and money to far more complex matters of providing proper attitudes toward work, reasonable expectations of success and so forth. Obviously these are matters which for most persons are handled within the family system, and most of us would risk the speculation that the traditional family arrangement is probably the more efficient one.

It also emerges, however, that in general our arrangements do not pay much heed to this fact . . . .

We are beginning to see something of the relation of unemployment to family structure . . . . It may be that this line of inquiry will enable

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us to redefine the problem of unemployment — so easily viewed as a matter of economic waste, and therefore of relatively marginal importance in an age of economic abundance — and cast it in terms of the problem of delinquency and crime and welfare dependence and such, which by and large are problems the nation knows it has and would like to see dealt with [emphasis ours].

In any event, I would think it is becoming clear that the discussion of poverty is leading us steadily towards a much more realistic view of the importance of maintaining a stable family structure at all levels of society — and more importantly, of the ease with which well-meaning or unthinking social policies can work against that objective . . . .

The next great social issue raised in America ought to be the question of how to insure a decent family income and a decent family setting for the working people of America, as we have already done — and as a result of no inconsiderable intervention of the Federal Government — for middle class Americans.

Thus Moynihan saw the War on Poverty as a logical outgrowth of the success of the early Kennedy years in getting the economy moving again. But he was concerned that the policies worked out to achieve these goals might actually be "counter-productive" or at least inadequate to the problem. For his part, he wished to use the notion of family welfare as a reference point by which to evaluate the desirability and the success of particular poverty programs. Using that standard, he had considerable doubt about two of the main lines of attack, community action programs and welfare services. Instead, he felt there should be greater emphasis on employment, income maintenance, and education. (It is not clear to us the extent to which Moynihan's general views on poverty were widely known within the government; if they were, this would help to account for some of the negative reactions to the report by those in the Permanent Government.)

Therefore when Moynihan turned his attention to the situation of Negro Americans, it seemed clear to him that the question of Negro family welfare should be central. Early in the 1960's he had collaborated with Nathan Glazer on a book, *Beyond The Melting Pot*,\* which dealt with the role of ethnicity in New York City. In 1964, the book won a *Saturday Review of Literature* Amisfield-Wolf Award as a significant contribution toward im-

\* Nathan Glazer, and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1963).

proving race relations. One section of the book, written by Glazer, dealt with Negroes. The concern with family stability and pathology that was later to loom so large in the report had been foreshadowed in the short discussion of the Negro family in this book.

In addition, Moynihan remembered his own childhood. He had grown up in a broken family in Hell's Kitchen in New York City and had become a shoeshine boy when he was thirteen. On the corners that he worked, his companions were Negro shoeshine boys. He got to know something of their world and they something of his; and he was impressed by the fact that these seemed to be much the same worlds. This led him much later to work out systematically some of the parallels between the "wild Irish slums" of the late nineteenth century and the Negro ghettos of today. His work with Glazer reinterested him in these issues; and the interest deepened during his time at the Department of Labor as he observed that the various programs designed to increase the employment level of Negroes seemed to have very uneven success.

All of these issues were brought into sharp focus in April 1964 when Moynihan attended a planning conference for a study on the Negro in America to be sponsored by *Daedalus* and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Seventeen persons were assembled to discuss the current state of knowledge in this area and to develop a plan for a major work that would be at once scholarly and relevant to policy.\* Moynihan listened to the early discussion, making a few comments about labor-force projections; and then, as the discussion centered on the transmission of social science ideas into public policy, he pointed out that one of the most important issues of race relations policy at that time was the question of preferential or compensatory treatment for Negroes. He said that there was resistance to the idea from such organs of the Establishment as *The New York Times*,

"And I was thinking that the Academy might do a great service if it were to look into the question . . . were to come to a conclusion that if you were ever going to have anything like an equal Negro community, you are for the next thirty years going to have to give them

\* The other participants, in addition to *Daedalus* editor, Stephen Graubard, were Daniel Bell, Eric H. Erikson, Rashi Fein, Paul A. Freund, Clifford Geertz, Oscar Handlin, Everett C. Hughes, Carl Kaysen, Edward H. Levi, Jean Mayer, Robert Merton, Thomas F. Pettigrew, Talcott Parsons, Arthur Singer, and William M. Schmidt.

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The introduction of a great deal of other things, or were various kinds of the position of sociologist, with and applied ar

If we summarize or so, we have rent activities . . . think we ought phasis. . . . If th on the value of the sources of by those who contained and if you really st ricted and lin emphasize the an imbalance in understood. It almost a plot t we could be p emy who are future status [q

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unequal treatment. I think the possibilities of thus legitimizing such treatment might have some relevance to public policy right now.

The introduction of this specific programmatic idea stimulated a great deal of discussion pro and con, which focussed, among other things, on the whole question of the extent to which there were various kinds of restraints on policy that sought to improve the position of Negro Americans. This led one distinguished sociologist, with a record of contributions in both theoretical and applied areas, to make a prophetic comment:

If we summarize a part of the discussion of the past fifteen minutes or so, we have shifted our attention to the restraints on some current activities that have been initiated to deal with the problem. I think we ought to perhaps consider the implication of such an emphasis. . . . If this volume . . . were inadvertently to have an emphasis on the value constraints, the moral constraints, the social constraints, the sources of resistance, so that the volume could be read in effect by those who read it selectively [to say] that "the Negro must be contained and that the Negro movement is getting out of hand, and if you really stop to think about it, the alternatives are severely restricted and limited." . . . If we in an effort to diagnose [the] realities, emphasize the obstacles and the restraints and so on, there could be an imbalance in the resulting volume which might be very easily misunderstood. It could be interpreted as an effort to sap the energies, almost a plot to sap the energies, of the grass roots movement. Thus we could be presented as the white liberals of the American Academy who are engaged in rationalizing not the status quo, but the future status [quo].

Much of what was said by the conference participants seemed to reinforce for Moynihan his twin concern with employment and the family. Thus, toward the end of the conference he said, "The biggest question is, will the Negro community itself get pulled apart by the problems of employment? It would seem to us to be absolutely devastating, and they are not Negro problems, they are American problems generally, but their differential effect on the Negro is potentially disastrous." He then quickly summarized what were actually to become the main points of the first part of his Negro family report, the differentials having to do with wages, with unemployment, with illegitimacy, with family breakup.

Toward the end of the conference, he was asked what kind of information the government needed from the scholarly community.

He emphasized the problem of the family, saying:

I think that the problem of the Negro family is practically the property of the American government. I mean we spend most of our money on this, in one form or another, in health, in welfare, and on employment, and yet we know nothing about it, or not much about it, and one of the reasons is that we are not supposed to know anything about it. It's none of your business that 40 per cent of the kids are illegitimate (a reference to the figures from Harlem) and don't, for heaven's sake, try to get it published, you can't. And if it is getting worse, that's even less of your business. All you're supposed to do is keep on supplying welfare, and if we knew something about the dynamics of that and if we could, for heaven's sake, find something besides the inheritance from slavery, which sort of leaves you there — that's it, that's it — but if there is something that is new, if it's getting worse because of reasons that are new, then there is a possibility of public policy reacting to it.

The idea of preferential treatment, which the participants discussed in considerable detail, highlighted the ambiguities of that idea in relation to traditional American political thought. The participants all agreed that the situation of Negro Americans required special treatment, but they were very unclear as to how this could be rationalized in traditional political rhetoric. It would seem that in the course of the following year Moynihan worked out what he believed to be one solution. This solution involved an emphasis on equality and particularly the introduction of the standard of "equal results," which Moynihan incorporated into his report and which was subsequently incorporated into the President's Howard University speech:

We seek not just freedom but opportunity — not just legal equity but human ability — not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and a result. For the task is to give twenty million Negroes the same chance as every other American to learn and grow, to work and share in society, to develop their abilities — physical, mental and spiritual — and to pursue their individual happiness.

If this were the national goal, then, and if it were to follow that this goal could be achieved only by special efforts on the behalf of Negroes, the logic of the argument of "equal results" would justify them.

Even so, Moynihan came to recognize that as a political slogan or program direct preferential treatment was not feasible. At

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### *The Strategy*

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a subsequent *Daedalus* conference in May 1965, he said:

... in order to do anything about the Negro Americans on the scale that our data would indicate, we have to declare that we are doing it for everybody. I think, however, that the problem of the Negro American is now a special one and is not just an intense case of the problem of all poor people . . . Congressmen vote for everyone more readily than they vote for anyone . . . . In terms of the working of the system we are trying to influence by our thinking here, it will be done for "everybody," whatever may be in the back of the minds of the people who do it.

As the *Daedalus* volume was planned, Moynihan himself was selected to write the article that dealt with problems of employment, income, and the Negro family, and so, beginning in the fall of 1964, he started to think more seriously about the issue.

### *The Strategy*

Over the fall, Moynihan mulled the question of Negro poverty and the family and began to examine some of the data already in his office on unemployment rates and rates of marital disruption over a fifteen year period. At the same time, he thought he sensed in Washington a tendency on the part of some administration officials to think that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had solved a good part of the civil rights problem. He was concerned with the credence given public opinion polls that showed that a majority of Negroes in Harlem felt that the Civil Rights Act would make a "very great difference" in their lives. The sharp contrast between this optimistic mood and the depressing figures on social and economic status disturbed him. Late in November of 1964, he decided to write a report on the Negro family for internal use in the government:

I woke up a couple of nights later (that is, after one such conversation with a highly placed optimist) at four o'clock in the morning and felt I had to write a paper about the Negro family to explain to the fellows how there was a problem more difficult than they knew and also to explain some of the issues of unemployment and housing in terms that would be new enough and shocking enough that they would say, "Well, we can't let this sort of thing go on. We've got to do something about it."

He organized a small working staff and through them began to collect government statistics that in one way or another had

bearing on the problem. He had available to him not only the vast range of published and indexed government statistics but also the services of Labor Department economists and of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to pull together information that was not already in published form. The basic paradigm he worked with was that of the social and economic analysis that had laid the ground work for the poverty program, except that he was doing this on his own and on a much smaller scale. From December through March, then, Moynihan and his staff put together the document and in the process worked out a strategy of placement and presentation. At the same time, he laid the groundwork for the reception of the report by speaking from time to time to those he wished in the end to persuade. In March, the document was formally cleared by Secretary of Labor Wirtz and one hundred nicely printed and bound copies run off in the basement of the Department of Labor. Despite its small audience he wanted a handsome, finished-looking document. No more than eighty of the numbered copies of the report were distributed by July, when it was decided to make the document public and turn it over to the Government Printing Office.

Moynihan was writing for a very small audience. His concern was to have adopted at the highest levels of the administration the view that family welfare provided a central point of reference in evaluating the effectiveness of programs to deal with disadvantaged groups. He sought to achieve a basic redefinition of the civil rights problem at the highest level of the administration as a preliminary to a broader redefinition by the government as a whole. In order to do this, he wanted to formulate a clear diagnosis of the problem, to acquaint officials with facts that he felt they either did not know or of which they did not see the full implications.

While the document was to be an unusual one for government policy papers, it must at least have some kinship with them. Therefore, there was heavy emphasis on government statistics, since these are the "authoritative data" with which high level officials are accustomed to working. Though it sought to present a complex argument, the document must be short and sharply focused. Although early in his planning Moynihan had thought of suggesting solutions as well as defining a problem, he finally determined not to include any reference to solutions in the report itself in order to force his readers to focus their attention on understanding the problem qua problem.

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Thus, the report was distributed to only a few persons within the Department of Labor and the White House. As time went on, particularly as the reputation of the report spread within the Administration and demands for it increased, the circle of distribution grew wider. But at least from April through most of June only a handful of persons outside the White House and the Department of Labor had seen copies. During April and May, with the report as the formal basis for his views, Moynihan pursued his goal in personal conversations and with briefer memoranda. The events of the first week of June provided the first indication that his report had found its target.

In the meantime, Moynihan had completed a slightly different version of the same ideas for publication in *Daedalus*; the draft of this paper was discussed at a *Daedalus* conference on May 14th and 15th. Though the essential points contained in the report are also found in the article prepared for publication, some of the issues that were to prove sensitive when the report made its way into the press are much subdued in the paper — there are a scant two sentences dealing with illegitimacy and no discussion of slavery and other historical factors.

On May 4th, Secretary Wirtz forwarded to the White House a memorandum for the President that summarized the report and added several recommendations. Secretary Wirtz indicated that the memorandum had been prepared by Moynihan but that he agreed with the analysis and concurred in the recommendations. The memorandum was sent to Presidential Assistant Bill Moyers; it is not clear whether the President in fact ever read it (apparently he did not read the report), but the effect of the memorandum was to place the report and several recommendations on the White House agenda.

Moynihan sought to present a sharply focused argument leading to the conclusion that the government's economic and social welfare programs, existing and prospective ones, should be systematically designed to encourage the stability of the Negro family. He sought to show, first, that the Negro family was highly unstable (female-headed households produced by marital breakup and illegitimacy). This instability resulted from the systematic weakening of the position of the Negro male. Slavery, reconstructions, urbanization, and unemployment had produced a problem as old as America and as new as the April unemployment statistics. This problem of unstable families in turn was a central element of the tangle of pathology of the urban ghetto, involving

problems of delinquency, crime, school dropouts, unemployment, and poverty. Finally, Moynihan wanted the Administration to understand that some evidence supported the conclusion that these problems fed on themselves and that matters were rapidly getting worse.

In the report, in conversations, and in memorandums, Assistant Secretary of Labor Moynihan sought to persuade his peers and his superiors in the Presidential Government that they were confronted with a crisis situation no less dangerous than that of Birmingham, Selma, or Mississippi for all that it might be somewhat drawn out. Though he did not deal with the summer riots of 1964 in the report, he was quite willing to point out to anyone who was interested that these riots had at their core Negro youth who knew how bad off they were and that there would be more such riots.

In the May 4th memorandum to the President, he sought to emphasize the necessity for planning. The first step in the solution of these problems was simply that the government must acknowledge the problem and its urgency — agencies and key individuals must be brought together, focus on the problem, and agree that the basic strategy must be to strengthen the family. There must be a stop to decision-making processes in which policy makers rush off after solutions before really agreeing on what the problem is. Once the focus was on the stability of the family, the government would have an absolute measure of whether or not its efforts were producing any results. The government would not be able to tell itself that it had changed anything until it really had; that is, until the proportion of Negro marriages that break up begins to decline and the proportion of Negro families with male heads begins to increase. Moynihan believed that should the government be able to create the conditions in which this would happen, other indices of disorganization would also show improvement — more children would complete school and they would do better in school, there would be less crime and delinquency, less dope addiction, and so forth. In short, the mutually reinforcing tangle of pathology would begin to unravel.

Though he had decided not to include recommendations in his report — for fear that all of the attention would go to the recommended programs rather than to the definition of the problem and also that there would be premature budget estimates of the cost of the recommended programs — in the memorandum he

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suggested several steps as a start. These reflected two kinds of concerns, one administrative and the other programmatic.

The first had to do with institutionalizing the kind of policy-assessment approach he had sought to essay in his report. He felt a group should be appointed to review all the programs of the federal government with a view to determining whether they were helping to strengthen the Negro family or simply perpetuating its weaknesses. In line with this, the government should establish a place at which relevant data on the changing situation of Negroes could be brought together, organized, and made available to other agencies. Such an information center would provide a better means of measuring the success or failure of programs than the present widely dispersed source of information allowed.

In the area of concrete programs, Moynihan felt that jobs had primacy and that the government should not rest until every able-bodied Negro man was working even if this meant that some women's jobs had to be redesigned to enable men to fulfill them. He felt that housing programs should be initiated that provide decent family housing and, in particular, that the housing in suburbs must be planned so that families could escape the ghetto.

In addition, birth control programs were sorely needed so that Negroes could limit their families in line with their needs and desires and the illegitimacy rate could be reduced. Then, finally, Negro youths should be given a greater opportunity to serve in the Armed Forces. It would be possible to set up training programs to allow more Negroes who volunteer for the services but are rejected to qualify on the standard tests and thus be accepted.

In short, though he felt that the general direction of solutions to the problems he had posed—employment, income maintenance (in the form of family allowances perhaps), better housing and family planning—were clear, he did not formulate specific program proposals. Rather, he hoped that if he were successful in persuading the Administration to adopt his view of the nature and urgency of the situation, working groups would be set up to develop such specific programs.

Moynihan's principal immediate goal was to stimulate a commitment by the Administration to engage in long-range policy planning. At the time he formulated his strategy there were many senior career men in the government (and others outside)

who were desperately trying to elicit from the Administration this kind of commitment and who were trying to put together social science materials of various kinds to demonstrate the value of such policy planning. Moynihan's position as Assistant Secretary and his personal relations with the White House staff allowed him a kind of access that the career men did not have (some had had such access under Kennedy). He had the ear of the White House and the political status and skill to make use of it. One career planner credited him with "making the one main inroad into the White House" to get action, though he noted that Moynihan's goal and ability to use social science data in its services were not unique to him.

That Moynihan was not very successful in his efforts to win White House aides over to the philosophy of careful policy planning before program development and something of the nature of the resistance to such an approach are suggested by the following experience related by one of the nation's best informed experts on ghetto problems. This man had been called to the White House in the summer of 1965 to meet with the President's top aides to discuss what should be accomplished in the fall conference. He found the senior man at the meeting "terribly impatient";

He kept demanding specific proposals for specific programs and specific legislation: "Our job is to legislate." I tangled with him because I saw my function as trying to suggest the complexity of the problem and the need for co-ordination between programs and community organization or social action from within the Negro community. I was terribly conscious of the enormous obstacles in the way of any attempt by government to stimulate authentic social action within a community. I was also terribly aware of what seemed to me then — and still seems — the serious failures of many of the governmental programs that had already been established. I was trying to suggest that we might come closer to a solution of the problem if the government tried to do a few things well instead of doing a great many things badly. He was extremely impatient with any discussion of complexity and disinterested in any critique of weakness of the existing programs. His orientation — stemming, I assume, from the fact that he had to report directly to the President — was "what do we do next?" He just was not interested in anything that did not lead directly to a specific proposal which he could place before the President — and before the Congress.

Other experts have made similar observations about White House aides in the meetings of that summer.

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There is an interesting contrast between the internal policy statement that the report represents and the political statement which the Howard University speech represents. The report is addressed to the concerns of those who manage the nation. That is, it presents a problem rather than an argument about rights and justice. It says that things are going badly in one segment of the society and will continue to go badly until the government sets them right. The argument rests less on moral considerations than it does on a certain kind of high-level administrative rationality. If the nation is to be governed properly, or indeed be governable, national social and economic policy must operate in such a way that Negroes have different life experiences than they now have. The Howard University speech, on the other hand, places the same views in the context of justice and morality and thereby lacks the highly impersonal and detached tone that the report brings to bear. While this latter tone is appropriate and desirable for an internal document, it can seem almost heartless if considered outside of that context.

One other aspect of the tone of the report deserves mention. Moynihan was concerned to demonstrate the extent of family disorganization among poor Negroes and the relation of family disorganization to various social problems in the ghetto. In line with this goal, he emphasized very strongly the destructive potential of disorganized family life much as Frazier, Clark and others before him had done. However, there is another way of looking at Negro lower-class family forms — one concerns oneself with how particular family patterns function to enable individuals to adapt to their depriving lower-class existence and to maintain themselves biologically, psychically, and socially in the one world in which they must live. From this perspective some of the same behaviors that appear pathological (in terms of ability to function in line with the demands of stable working or middle-class norms and institutions) are functional in terms of the ability to make as gratifying a life as possible in a ghetto milieu. Had Moynihan dealt with this aspect of the situation he might have avoided some of the criticism of the report — but probably would have earned other kinds of criticism. As many sociologists have noted, functional analysis tends to appear as rather conservative, bowdlerizer versions of the adaptive quality of "pathological" lower-class patterns could undoubtedly be made to appear to support the view that lower-class Negroes are really not so dissatisfied with their situation. In any case,

this line of argument would hardly be persuasive with high officials for the federal initiatives Moynihan hoped to stimulate. For that purpose, he needed to point to what poor Negroes were deprived of, not to how they managed to make out despite their deprivations.

### *The Results*

The report had sought to establish in the Presidential Government a new view of the situation of Negro Americans and to set in motion program planning in line with that new view. (This, despite the fact that there was nothing at all new to a wide group of social scientists and citizens well-informed in the civil rights area about the views Moynihan advanced.) The strategy seemed to have paid off handsomely. Moynihan's White House constituency was already concerned as to the direction the government should move after the 1965 Civil Rights Bill, and they seemed to understand his contention that purely antidiscrimination programs would not alone solve the problems of the northern ghettos. They were sympathetic to the notion that the family provided a worthwhile focus for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and some of them developed a fairly thorough intellectual sophistication in what all of this implied. Finally, the President decided to use Moynihan's work as the basis for his speech at Howard University. (The facts are unclear to us, but there is some reason to believe that the President decided to accept the invitation from Howard because he wanted a forum at which to test out these ideas concerning "the next more profound stage of the battle for civil rights.") In line with this thinking, the White House decided to call a conference to discuss the problems that would now be confronted in this next stage.

While those in the government who were privy to Moynihan's views saw in them a powerful tool for understanding and planning, they also recognized considerable danger should the report's ideas be communicated to the public in the wrong way. Interestingly enough, some persons in the Administration saw the dangers not so much in a negative reaction from persons concerned with civil rights but rather in the unpleasant prospect of Southern newsmen and public figures seeking to twist the argument to substantiate their views of the inferiority of Negroes. As knowledge of the main ideas in the report became more widespread within the government, however, some individuals began

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to warn of the backlash from Negro leaders who would be concerned about the discussion of such sensitive issues as family instability, illegitimacy, and the like.

In any case, when Moynihan left the country on June 4th to attend a conference in Yugoslavia on multiethnic societies, he had every reason to believe that the initial goals of his strategy had been achieved and that the road was open to the ultimate goal of a revised national strategy for Negro equality. Though he was to be involved in the conference planning that followed the speech, his central role was ended. The staff job of "preplanning" was turned over to an ad hoc group, which used the staff facilities of the President's Council on Equal Opportunity headed by Vice-President Humphrey and staffed by men primarily identified with him. Moynihan returned to Washington late in June and left on July 18th to run in the New York Democratic Primary for the office of President of the City Council.

### *The Follow-Up*

A series of preparatory meetings for the conference were held in a White House conference room during the month of July. At these meetings, social experts presented their views to a group of about ten White House assistants and staff members of the "preplanning" group. The experts came in one at a time so that each man gave his own views but without an opportunity for exchange of views with any of the other experts. Several of the experts found this arrangement a rather uncomfortable one since they felt very much on the spot vis-à-vis the government people; they found it difficult to present their arguments as vigorously or as broadly as they would have liked or as would have been possible working in concert with other experts. From the point of view of the government, of course, this arrangement was desirable since it did not want to be lobbied or instructed but simply informed and left free to decide what to do with the knowledge. It was, of course, also in a very good position to see the extent of spontaneous consensus among the experts since no expert knew what the others were saying.

Those called to the White House for these meetings included a distinguished list of social scientists — Professors Talcott Parsons, Eric Erikson, Kenneth Clark, Robert Coles, Thomas Pettigrew, Urie Bronfenbrenner, and James Wilson. During this period no civil rights leaders attended the preparatory meetings; the

staff had wished to invite John Turner, Professor of Social Work at Western Reserve University and consultant to the National Urban League, and Bayard Rustin, but they were out of the country at the time the schedule was arranged.

The experts scheduled for these meetings could be expected to deepen considerably the officials' understanding of the problems of the Negro family and of ghetto pathology. With the exception of Erikson and Parsons, all of them were men who had devoted a considerable part of their professional careers to studying the impact on individuals and group of living in a lower-class environment. Almost all of the academicians had also participated in the *Daedalus* conferences and reflected its "Eastern Establishment" cast: five were Harvard professors.

It is important to note that these preparatory meetings and the staff work connected with them did not involve an officially appointed planning group for the conference but a preplanning group which was beginning to work out tentative ideas as to what the conference might be like. For a number of reasons the planning staff was not appointed until early October. Nevertheless this preplanning group worked out an over-all design that was to persist through the actual planning conference held in November.

Much of the later controversy about the conference and the Moynihan Report had to do with whether or not the conference was going to be "about the family." As best we can determine the answer to this question can be yes or no depending on what "about the family" is taken to mean. It is clear that at no time and in no way was the conference planned as a conference on the Negro family (that is, as a conference that would deal solely with the subject of the Negro family even in the relatively broad way it had been treated in Moynihan's work of Spring 1965). On the other hand, it seems quite reasonable to believe that the White House had in mind that the main overarching theme of the conference would be the welfare of Negro families in the sense in which Moynihan used the idea: as the basis from which to evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to cope with the next stage of the civil rights struggle. From this point of view, then, the discussions in the prospective conference dealing with employment, education, health and welfare programs, and the like would have been subjected to the standard of whether or not they seemed to be likely to pay off in greater family stability and well-being. However, some of the other areas of persisting concern in civil rights — voting, the administration of justice, pro-

tection of civil rights to this concern.

In any case, the emphasis would be on the people involved in the emphasis on the standard of program line of panels for additional subgroups by the U.S. Civil education, voting, it was obvious that with northern and that there should would consider beyond this was broken one on community conference there within the government even one session sons that we truly follow.

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In any case, quite early in the July discussions, government officials in the preplanning group pointed out that the family emphasis would prove a very sensitive and touchy issue with people involved in civil rights activity and argued against heavy emphasis on the subject, even in the form of an overarching standard of program effectiveness. In late July, therefore, an outline of panels for the conference was developed, using a traditional subgrouping around topics that had long been dealt with by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in its hearings — jobs, education, voting, protection of persons, and so on. In addition, it was obvious that some new areas needed to be introduced to cope with northern and urban problems. At one point, it was thought that there should be a panel on "the dynamics of the ghetto" that would consider both the family and the community, but in the end this was broken up into two sessions — one on family and one on community. From this time, late July, until the planning conference there were frequent expressions of concern both within the government and from outside about the existence of even one session dealing specifically with the family — for reasons that we trust will become apparent in the sections that follow.

One final point can be raised concerning the connection between the conference and Moynihan's thesis. This has to do with why there should have been a conference at all. The White House decision to call a conference was apparently not subjected to a great deal of discussion and consideration; it just seemed a good idea in the context of the President's speech, the new issues that he raised, and the Administration's continuing concern about where to go next in civil rights. (Apparently while drafting the speech, Richard Goodwin conceived the idea of the conference and included it in the draft sent to the President, who adopted the idea.) Since the new theme was clearly aimed at a significant departure from previous ways of dealing with the problem (although in line with the War on Poverty philosophy), it seemed a good idea to call together experts, civil rights leaders, and government officials to map out the new territory.

However, White House conferences do not generally serve this function. In the past most, but not all, conferences had served primarily to ratify programs already on the drawing board and to build public support for them. Most of the questions and an-

swers are known in rough outline and the conference provides a stage on which they can be made public in a context that symbolizes their importance. Yet here a conference was going to take on the task of solving the most sensitive domestic issue confronting the country and do so in the full light of publicity. It was this disparity between the goal of the conference and the administrative and political realities of a sensitive issue that caused the fall meeting to be scaled down to a planning conference; nor was the spring meeting able to overcome these obstacles. In a very real sense, it seems that the White House did not understand what it was getting into.

To highlight this point, let us note briefly that there was another frequently used alternative open to the President if he wished to get moving on the next stage and make some kind of dramatic public acknowledgment of his desire in the Howard speech.

This would have involved a President's Commission that could have taken Moynihan's work as an initial proposal and developed its implications, subjecting the thesis to thorough correction and elaboration. Perhaps this route was awkward because there were already three commissions operating in this area — the United States Civil Rights Commission, the President's Commission on Equal Opportunity, and a Commission on Fair Housing. A fourth commission, even a temporary one, would seem to indicate a preference for studying the problem to death rather than doing something about it.

Yet such a commission would also have highlighted some of the inadequacies of the government bureaucracy currently dealing with civil rights problems. The approach of the Civil Rights Commission and other agencies had been heavily dominated by the thinking of the "first stage" of the civil rights struggle: that concerned centrally and single-mindedly with questions of discrimination and segregation. Their staffs tended to be uncomfortable about approaches that departed from this simple, primarily legal, model. On the other hand, the welfare bureaucracy that did exist to deal with the social and economic issues that Moynihan raised was deeply implicated in his implicit critique of the government's approach to the welfare of the disadvantaged. Since one of the main goals of the re-examination that Moynihan was proposing would be to point out the inadequacies and destructive effects of many government programs, one could hardly turn the job over to any of the already existing poverty and

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Thus, none of the alternatives to a conference would seem very attractive from the point of view of the Administration, although subsequent events do suggest that a somewhat less public and longer term inquiry would have been desirable.