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The Report Becomes Public

The fact that the report existed, and was being considered in high places, as well as the nature of its contents slowly became public over the summer and the early fall. The process of becoming public can be conveniently considered in three phases. First there was the discussion of the report's ideas as these were reflected in the President's Howard University speech and in background briefing about it. Later, in mid-July and early August, came the first fairly full summaries of the report. Finally, after the Watts riot came background articles that drew in one way or another on the report's contents.

Press Coverage of the Howard University Speech

From the beginning, in the background stories on the President's speech, two somewhat contradictory themes that were to plague the Moynihan thesis in the coming months were apparent. The *New York Times* coverage picked up one of these themes; a column by *The Washington Star's* Mary McGrory picked up the second.

The conference . . . will have as its mission the development of an action program as crucial for the country as it is for the Negro.

On the other hand, Mary McGrory of *The Washington Star*, also drawing on "White House aides," told quite a different story. Her views could not be taken lightly by Washingtonians since she was regarded as one of the most influential Washington columnists, with good access to the President and his staff. McGrory's story said that in the speech "President Johnson suggested that the time had come for them [Negroes] to come to grips with their own worst problem, "the breakdown of Negro family life.'" *Self-improvement* was said to be the key to the announced next stage in civil rights; Miss McGrory noted that the NAACP and James Farmer of CORE had both been concerned "about the necessity for efforts within the Negro community to make life better." This was a delicate subject because of the risk of being called an "Uncle Tom." But, with the President's encouragement and approval, more Negroes were expected to speak out on this hitherto most delicate subject. His aides are quoted as saying that the President was determined "that the unprecedented White House Conference he has called for next fall will not turn into a seminar for reliving old woes and grievances or generate only new demands for help from the federal government." Rather he hoped that Negroes would find solutions of their own. McGrory's emphasis, sometimes referred to as the "they-should-pull-up-their-own-socks" school, counterposed "self-improvement" to "new demands for help from the federal government."

Thus the speech that *The New York Times* saw as legitimating massive federal programs which would make present ones seem incredibly puny was put in a very different light by Miss McGrory. *The Washington Post*, in its editorial of June 6th, reported a very subdued version of the latter line:

Implicit in his discussion is the fact that the government cannot reach all of these sources of maladjustment, except in a remote way. In addition to all the government can do there is need for human understanding, individual and group efforts and a general improvement of the social, moral and intellectual environment in which people live.

You could pay your money and take your choice. The President sought to encourage Negroes to pull up their socks and stop asking the government for so much money or he was building toward massive federal programs to bring about equal results by dealing with the social and economic plight of Negro citizens.

In a *New York Times* story of June 5th, "White House sources" are quoted to the effect that the Howard speech was the first major-*Presidential* civil rights speech conceived independently of the direct pressure of racial crisis. Mr. Johnson's target was not the South but "the whole nation and the total social and economic plight of its Negro citizens." Further, the speech was said to have been under study for about two months: "Much consultation with civil rights leaders and experts in the social sciences went into its preparation."

The White House sources said that there would be two specific steps following up the speech. One involved the conference that was "to produce specific ideas and to chart programs for implementing them." Also, "each government agency will be asked to review its programs in the light of the speech and to see what can be done by the government to carry the Negro beyond 'legal equity.'" The speech's emphasis on Negro family breakdown "could ultimately affect federal, state, and local administration of a number of existing welfare programs, particularly as they relate to unwed or abandoned mothers and their dependent children." Thus the White House sources were playing back to the press one of Moynihan's main concerns, that the effect of federal programs on Negro family stability be systematically evaluated. Finally, the White House sources were quoted as telling a favorite Johnson story which illustrated his feelings on the matter—a little boy tells his mother that he has received a new toy from a friend in return for a favor; the favor was that he stop hitting the other little boy over the head. "Mr. Johnson's view is said to be that it isn't enough for white people to 'stop hitting the Negro over the head.' Their problem now, he believes, is to help the Negro reach the point where the only thing different about him is the color of his skin." The following day a *New York Times* editorial, taking as its point of departure the President's speech and some recent remarks by Bayard Rustin, made the following programmatic suggestions:

The cures for the social afflictions that hold the Negro in thrall lie in public and private programs that make the present War on Poverty and all its related undertakings for expanded education, urban renewal and improved welfare services seem incredibly puny. In the absence of much more massive action to engender full employment, clear the slums and make more schooling available to more people; the chief effect of these programs may be to confront the United States with problems not unlike those of the "revolutions of rising expectations" in Africa and Asia.

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An interesting and perhaps prophetic treatment of the President's speech appeared in James Reston's column of June 6th. He juxtaposed the problems of peace in Vietnam and racial equality at home and suggested that there was an anxiety in the country about many of the Administration's policies and much of its evangelic rhetoric. People had begun to doubt

that the Administration is willing or able to provide the means to achieve the exalted aims it proclaims . . . It is well and good for the President to say that the inequality of the American Negro is intolerable . . . How this is to be done, however, without a massive public works and public housing policy is not clear. Again the objectives are expressed in eloquent words, but not carried out in public policy. . . . On this question, as on Vietnam, the disparity between ends and means is startling and disturbing. . . . [The means proposed are clearly inadequate and] "this is what creates the uneasiness over what is said in Washington and what is done."

The events of the following six months could hardly have shaken Mr. Reston's confidence in the correctness of his views.

Press Coverage of the Early Conference Planning

On July 11th, three days after the preplanning group had met with psychiatrist Robert Coles and two days after they had met with Kenneth Clark, Mary McGrory broke the story of the planning activity. Though the self-help emphasis of her column following the Howard speech was not as strong in this article, it was still present. She noted that in the Howard speech the President had "urged black Americans to forgive and forget and to look frankly at their own failures." Further, the President wanted to hand the civil rights movement back to Negroes and to enable them to speak out on the overwhelming problem that faced them — "the breakdown of the Negro family structure." So that the conference would not be just another rehearsal of Negro woes, followed by pledges of federal help, a staff of four of the President's brightest young men had been appointed for careful planning — Richard Goodwin, Harry McPherson, and Lee White of the White House staff and Daniel P. Moynihan. She wrote that these men would come up with specific proposals for presentation to the 500 or 600 delegates expected. Then there was mention of a series of two-hour conferences with individual sociologists, writers, psychiatrists, churchmen, and civil rights

leaders. These sessions were for discussing specific

The following week she broke the first story of the Moynihan Report. Her intention was to read and write the report in her own authorship. Instead she formed a "study group" which made an attempt to revive the report. It was said to be the key to solving the equality

Pomfret's selection of its content. The report's sections concerning "fundamental" questions of family structure and the Negro community were completely ignored. The report's section on unemployment, particularly the Aid to Dependent Children, was suggested that since the unemployment rate has been going up despite the fact that the economy has been going down. The report's section on the unemployment rate which Moynihan pointed out the fact that the unemployment rate with experts to explain that later the group and experts in other meetings did not say was said to have been a failure of the family coping somehow with the lack of a strong answer when the slum and the initiative for the problem and

leaders. These sessions were to lay the intellectual groundwork for discussing specific questions of concern.

The following week, John D. Pomfret of *The New York Times* broke the first story to deal specifically with the contents of the Moynihan Report. Pomfret had specific White House authorization to read and write about the report but not to describe its authorship. Instead he was asked to write about a "White House study group" which was "laying the groundwork for a massive attempt to revive the structure of the Negro family." This was said to be the key to the next phase in achievement of Negro equality.

Pomfret's selections from the report gave a distorted impression of its content. There was a rather full presentation of statements concerning Negro family disorganization including both "fundamental" quotations — "the fundamental problem" is that of family structure and "the fundamental source of weakness of the Negro community is the deterioration of the Negro family." The report's section on the roots of the problem, however, was completely ignored so that there was no discussion of the effects of unemployment, low income, or of urbanization and past history. Finally, there was mention of Moynihan's point that ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) rates, no longer seem tightly related to the unemployment rate, but with an unfortunate misprint that suggested that since 1952 the number of aid cases opened has been going up despite the fact that the unemployment rate has been going down. Note also, that the reference here was to the unemployment rate rather than to the Negro male unemployment rate which Moynihan had used. Finally, there was a discussion of the fact that the White House study group had been meeting with experts to explore the dimensions of the problem. It was said that later the group would meet with a number of economists and experts in other fields. (So far as we can determine, these meetings did not materialize.) The programmatic ideas the group was said to have been considering involved (1) not denying welfare aid to families with an able-bodied man in the house, (2) coping somehow with the psychological impact on children of the lack of a strong father figure, (3) whether more education was the answer when children went from the classroom back into the slum and the broken home. Finally, the article noted that the initiative for the hoped-for breakthrough in civil rights has come largely from the Administration which was convinced that the problem and the need for fast action are great and that it

must take the lead. This was a break with past patterns in that the Administration was no longer working as a broker for proposals put forward by pressure groups.

The Pomfret leak apparently triggered a decision to make the report available to those who asked for it. Within two days, the White House, in consultation with the Labor Department, decided to release the report as written. Apparently no special consideration was given to this decision; it just seemed a good idea. The White House felt it had a hot property but apparently was sufficiently ambivalent about the report to let Labor handle its release alone. No press announcement was to be made about its availability and no press release was to be prepared stating the government's conception of what the report contained. Pursuant to these decisions, on July 21st the Secretary's office instructed Labor's public information officer to arrange with the Government Printing Office for a supply of copies to be stocked at Labor and given to individuals requesting them. The initial order was for 500 copies; these were delivered in mid-August.

A few days later, in a perhaps unrelated background article, *The Wall Street Journal* reviewed the "new stage in civil rights" and after throwing cold water on demonstration tactics, poverty wars, and public works and commending the NAACP for limiting itself to the immediate task of helping enforce the newly passed laws announced that "promoting self-help must realistically appear as a large part of the ultimate answer. . . . Isn't the next task to enlighten even the most downtrodden Negro to the middle class outlook?" It warned that civil rights leaders could impede progress if "they meet the new stage with the facile answer of intensifying the militancy of the old."

Shortly, *The New York Times* editorialized on the subject of the Negro family, making reference to the study "recently released by the Department of Labor." Using a slightly longer selection from Frazier's prophecy of the experience of the Negro in "the city of destruction" had been vindicated in the ensuing twenty-five years. Paraphrasing the paragraph of the report that followed this Frazier quote, the editorial noted: "Whatever the index of social pathology . . . it is apparent that the Negro family in the urban areas of this country is rapidly decaying." Although emphasizing the destructive effect of the slavery heritage, the editorial noted that viable Negro family structure did develop in rural areas "but it has not been able to withstand the pressures exerted by the great urban migration." Though some Negroes have established themselves in cohesive social units

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"because of the barriers imposed by poor education, discrimination and apathy, the ascent to middle class family stability is very slow." The President's White House Conference would consider these problems; something must be done but there were no clear prescriptions yet.

Then on August 9th, several days before the Watts outbreak, the full report was surfaced by *Newsweek* in a two-page article which provided a full summary of the report's main points and included three charts. The report was said to have "set off a quiet revolution in the basic White House approach to the continuing American dilemma of race." *Newsweek* was aware of the touchiness of the issue: "The Negro family problem was scarcely news to social scientists. But its very intimacy has excluded it from the public dialogue of civil rights; it reaches too deep into white prejudices and Negro sensitivities."

For the first time, Moynihan is listed as "among the authors" of the report; *Newsweek's* editor decided to do this although the White House apparently still preferred that the report be identified with it.

Unlike some of the earlier articles, *Newsweek* raised the issue of self-help only to suggest: "Yet the very size of the problem today imposes limits on what Negroes alone can do." Roy Wilkins was quoted as saying that "President Johnson has given a frank recognition to a big problem, a delicate problem... he has put (responsibility) at the white man's door and he's right." The article went on to note that though the report proposed no solution, "its findings suggest that jobs remain a principal part of the solution," though Moynihan's findings about recent trends of unemployment rates and ADC cases suggest that "the disintegration of Negro families may have fallen into a self-sustaining vicious circle." Therefore, conventional economic remedies were unlikely to be enough. Instead, Whitney Young was quoted as calling for an immense public works program and a massive "domestic Marshall Plan." What course should be followed was uncertain; therefore, White House staffers were studying the problem further and consulting with social scientists and Negro leaders for fresh ideas.

Explaining Watts

On August 16th, while sporadic sniping and arson continued on the last day of the Watts riots, *The Wall Street Journal* news roundup looked behind the riots to find that "Family Life Break-

down in Negro Slums Sows Seeds of Race Violence — Husbandless Homes Spawn Young Hoodlums, Impede Reforms, Sociologists Say." In a background article quoting sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists (Frank Hartung, Sidney Copel, Leo A. Despres, Philip Hauser, Seymour Leventman, and Herbert Blumer), "a just released government study" was quoted as indicating that in 20 percent of nonwhite homes no husband is present. The article quoted no further from the Moynihan Report but drew instead on interviews with social scientists, an HEW study of ADC families, and population figures for Watts. The article concentrated on the pathology of the ghetto dealing, in addition to family disorganization, with problems of crime, venereal disease, hopelessness, and so on. These were, in turn, the result of high population density, dilapidated housing, unemployment, low income. The article ended with a quote from Herbert Blumer:

The violence in Watts over the weekend was physical [but] the real violence that brought it out was done to the social fabric of the community long ago — and continues to be done to it here and in practically every other big city in the country.

The next day in a very similar background article, Chalmers M. Roberts in *The Washington Post* laid the riots to feelings of "nobodiness and frustration" that result from the deprived lives the Watts citizens are forced to live. Quarreling with the notion of Watts as an area of separate homes, green lawns, palm trees in backyards, Roberts noted that it was a ghetto nonetheless in which few people own their own homes, many of the houses are dilapidated, many of the residents illiterate, the unemployment rate probably well over 10 percent and job-hunting difficult because the industrial areas are far away from Watts. A Negro psychiatrist, Dr. Harold W. Jones, was quoted as saying that the rioters "see their insurrection as an opportunity to achieve dignity and self-respect. It is as if they are saying, 'It's better to be feared than to be held in contempt.'" Dr. Jones and his colleague, Dr. Silber, were said to have agreed that "the breakdown of the Negro family structure is a principal reason for a lack of respect for authority." The two doctors were then quoted as presenting essentially the same picture of family disorganization as Moynihan had outlined.

On the same day, *The New York Times* presented its background article quoting historian Oscar Handlin and sociologists

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Philip Hauser, Stanley Lieberman, Lewis M. Killian, and Melvin Seeman. Handlin seemed to belittle the riots as a racial manifestation, viewing them as mostly hooliganism. The other social scientists, however, took a broader view, emphasizing feelings of frustration and despair at the growing gap between Negroes and whites and between their own expectations and what they actually received.

On August 18th, by far the most influential news story connecting the report with the postriot atmosphere appeared. This was Roland Evans and Robert Novak's column "Inside Report" which was headlined simply, "The Moynihan Report." The article purported to tell the facts of an intense debate within the Administration on how to handle the Moynihan Report — "A much suppressed, much leaked Labor Department document which strips away usual equivocations and exposes the ugly truth about the big city Negro's plight." The report was said to bring up a taboo subject: preferential treatment for Negroes. The writers went on to say that Moynihan began working on his report because he was deeply disturbed by the big-city Negro riots of the summer of 1964. Their "inside" view of how Moynihan came to write the report continued: "He wondered, for instance, why in a time of decreasing unemployment, the plight of the urban Negro was getting worse — not better. His answer: a 78-page report (based largely on unexciting Census Bureau statistics) revealed the breakdown of the Negro family. He showed that broken homes, illegitimacy, and female-oriented homes were central to big city Negro problems." Secretary Wirtz was quoted as opposed to the release of the report because it would become grist for racist propaganda mills. Other officials believed "Moynihan's Report would stir up trouble by defining insoluble problems." Further, the Moynihan report data had been used by Theodore White, Newsweek, and UPI so that it had by now become more or less public.

The writers implied that Moynihan "leaked" his report over Wirtz's head to Bill D. Moyers, who was fascinated, thus producing the Howard University speech. "Using the Moynihan Report as a source, the President for the first time discussed the degeneration of Negro family life and called a White House Conference this fall to deal with it." Since then, experts and Negro leaders had been in and out of the White House to prepare for the conference. Evans and Novak's inside report, presumably based on White House sources, went on to say that the

White House planning group had found it easier to define problems than to solve them. For example, though they saw the basic need for male-directed discipline in the ghettos, they did not know how to get it. The heart of the problem, however, was tougher than that: "Moynihan believes that the public erroneously compares the Negro minority to the Jewish minority. When discriminatory bars were lowered, Jews were ready to move. But the implicit message of the Moynihan Report is that ending discrimination is not nearly enough for the Negro. But what is enough? Returning to the difficulties of preferential treatment and the fact that Administration officials hoped the White House Conference would not even mention it, the writers noted that the report inevitably led to posing this question. Therefore the internal debate on the report "is infinitely more than a mere intra-bureaucratic tiff. It may determine whether this country is doomed to succeeding summers of guerilla warfare in our cities."

This column seems to have been tremendously influential in the negative reaction to the report which was then beginning to build outside of the government. Its influence stemmed from the prominence of the writers whom many regard as having "the hottest column in Washington," one which exposes sensitive issues within the Administration and which provides authoritative "inside dope." Readers in Washington and New York could find their worst fears confirmed in the column. The government was seriously entertaining a wild report that placed the causes of ghetto problems in the Negro family and not in unemployment or any of the other institutional sources of deprivation.

In the main, Evans and Novak seem to have been correct in their statements about what was going on within the Administration. There was intense debate about whether the family thesis should become central to civil rights thinking; but Secretary of Labor had not stood in the way of the White House learning of Moynihan's ideas although others in his department were deeply suspicious of whether the report would lead to constructive results. However, the debate does not seem to have been carried on primarily in terms of preferential treatment or not, and Moynihan did not write his report primarily because he was disturbed about the 1964 summer riots (though he might well have believed that the report would be more likely to be attended to because of the fear of continuing riots).

In this context of presumably authoritative inside information, the one statement about the report's contents — that in a time

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of decreasing unemployment the plight of the urban Negro was getting worse because of the breakdown of the Negro family — was highly incendiary, misleading, and (from the response of Dr. Benjamin Payton) highly disturbing to those in the civil rights field. From the Evans and Novak column it would be impossible to tell that the brunt of Moynihan's argument was that underemployment and related poverty produced family breakdown. In short, the Evans and Novak column neatly reflected the growing pall over the report — the emphasis on the riots, on a controversy about a sensitive issue, and the isolation of the Negro family as a problem divorced from more traditional issues of employment, housing, education, poverty, and so on.

On August 24th, the President addressed the conferees of a White House Conference on Equal Employment Opportunities. He used the occasion to condemn the rioters of Watts and restated the main points of his Howard University speech, that ten years of private civil rights and federal activity had produced legislation guaranteeing equal rights but that this was just a key to open gates, not to provide the ability to walk through them. He mentioned that he had talked individually with Dr. King, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Roy Wilkins, and A. Philip Randolph about "the great meeting that we would have here later in the fall, because the cities of this nation and the Negro family are two of our most pressing, more important problems. Well, the bitter years that preceded the riots, the death of hope where hope existed, the sense of failure to change the conditions of life — these things no doubt lead to these riots. But they do not justify them."

After pledging more and better programs to deal with the employment, education, housing, health, and poverty problems, the President went on to extoll the success of the cabinet task force headed by the Vice-President which had so far produced 800,000 summer jobs for poor youth. This wasn't enough, but he was confident that they would reach the goal of providing 1,000,000 such jobs.

Then the President moved on to another preoccupation, that of foreign policy and the difficulties in Vietnam. He pledged that foreign difficulties would not mean neglecting the domestic problems of the deprived, but given the events of the following fall and winter one wonders if he was not expressing a concern as much as or more than making a promise. Moynihan's thesis still seemed very much alive in the White House, though the sharpness of the Howard speech was now diluted by preoccupation with domestic and foreign violence.

On August 23rd, a by-lined article by Jean M. White in *The Washington Post* bore the headline, "Report Finds Negroes' Family Life Crumbling." The article picked up the main ideas of the report and noted that "White House sources" say, "the Los Angeles riots reinforce the President's feeling of the urgent need to help restore Negro families' stability." The article summarized the main facts of Negro family disorganization and noted that "the study traces the roots of the Negro family breakdown back to the days of slavery . . ." For the first time, one particular quote dealing with the position of the Negro man during reconstruction was used: "Unquestionably these events worked against the emergence of a strong father-figure. The very essence of the male animal, from the bantam rooster to the four-star general, is to strut." This apparently was good copy since it was used over and over again in other articles that followed. Although the major emphasis of the article was on the fact of family breakdown and on its historical roots, the writer did, unlike Evans and Novak, Pomfret, and McGrory, include the report's statement that "failure to provide jobs for Negro youth has been the most conspicuous failure of the American social system in the past ten years" and also that the ratio of nonwhite to white mean income had fallen since the late 1950's.

On August 25th, an AP dispatch covered essentially the same points, although emphasizing rather more "a hard new look" at the report because of the Los Angeles riots. There was the same quote about the strutting essence of the male animal. The report was referred to as not officially public and the Department of Labor was said to be unwilling to indicate whether it would ever officially release the report. In this article, the emphasis on slavery and reconstruction as causes, and on illegitimacy, stood out. No mention was made of unemployment or urbanization as roots of the problem.

Though on August 21st the President felt constrained to condemn the rioters, by August 27th he was willing to tell reporters that there could well be riots in other cities where Negroes "feel they don't get a fair shake and justice is not open to them." In what Republicans felt was an effort to use the riots as a club over Congress to pass home rule for the District of Columbia, the President said:

Those of you here in the District of Columbia, I want to warn you this morning that the clock is ticking, time is moving, that we should and we must ask ourselves every night when we go home, are we

doing all that cities of the country is going. Later, meeting President emphasized meant just what . . . before we additional problems meet them which found we could not take rather drastic we have all the scars of years complex problems answers must a

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Later, meeting informally with reporters in his office the President emphasized that he

meant just what I said . . . we ought to face up to these problems. . . . before we have to suffer more serious problems and create additional problems. . . . We have to face up to the economic facts and meet them while we still have time to do it. . . . [In Los Angeles] we found we could not contain the disappointments and frustrations, and it took rather drastic action to get the situation back into focus. Now we have all the problems we had before, plus additional ones. . . . the scars of years of inaction reflected themselves. . . . there are complex problems and the solutions are neither quick nor easy, long-term answers must and will be found.

In his words and actions, the President neatly reflected the political bind in which he found himself after Watts. On the one hand, it was clear to him and his staff that "long-term answers" were required. Yet the political pressures to do something, to show some activity, required the appearance of immediate solutions. He appointed, therefore, a federal study group to draft a federal-state-local program for the Los Angeles area. This program involved essentially a concentration into the Watts area of already existing, but poorly financed and rationalized, federal programs. It is doubtful that the President, given the thinking his staff had exposed him to over the previous months, could really be very confident that this would make much difference.

On August 25th, an AP dispatch covered essentially the same vided some interested New Yorkers with further details on the report. In a story headlined "Report Focuses on Negro Family: Aid to Replace Matriarchy Asked by Johnson Panel," Herbers characterized Moynihan's report as a synthesis of published works reinforced by government statistics that contained little new information. He noted that President Johnson had accepted Moynihan's thesis, made it the basis for his Howard University speech, and the fall White House Conference. Although Moynihan was listed as playing a leading role, the White House sources from whom Herbers got his story characterized it as a report "prepared by a committee appointed by the President to help chart the government's course in race relations. The members came from several agencies of the government." Again, the quote

about the strutting bantam rooster, a quote on matriarchal structure, and mention of slavery appears. However, Herbers did not confine his selections to those dealing with the historical past, noting that "disintegration of the family . . . has been speeded by poverty, isolation, and [urbanization]." This article also noted that the report attracted new attention since the riots and that "it pinpoints the causes of discontent in the Negro ghettos and says the new crisis in race relations is much more severe than is generally believed."

Several of these stories, then, apparently depended for their information on White House sources and White House leaks. In the main, the content of the articles lend themselves to the interpretation that the White House was primarily concerned to use the Watts riots plus the report's thesis to generate a sense of urgency about federal action in the area of civil rights and a sense of the importance of the coming conference. Herbers' article managed to do this in a way that was roughly consonant with Moynihan's thesis and with the ideas that had begun to be current in the White House over the course of the summer. Evans' and Novak's treatment, on the other hand, forced the issue (by its emphasis on preferential treatment and the "unexplained" family breakdown) in a direction that seriously embarrassed any effort at "consensus building."

Finally, on the last day of August, New Yorkers were again introduced to the report but in a context that related it to its author's candidacy for the City Council President nomination. Barry Gottehrer, in a *New York Herald Tribune* "Inside New York" column headlined "Political Powderkeg," described the report as an explosive and controversial one dealing with the increasing plight of the urban Negro family and the government's failure to cope with it. Mr. Gottehrer indicated that the report "will explode into a major campaign issue in New York City's mayoral race." Noting that the report was the basis for the President's Howard University speech, that Moynihan worked on the speech, and that it was a major factor in the President's decision to call "a White House Conference on the Negro family" in the fall, he stated that Moynihan would make a speech based on the report and an article to be published in *America*. He suggested that "some top city Democrats feel Moynihan is making a serious political mistake by doing so."

By the end of August, the main newspaper coverage of the report in connection with the riots was over. September was

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instead a month for the magazines. First off, in an article apparently unnoticed by his critics, Moynihan himself wrote about the Los Angeles riots in an article subtitled "Jobless Negroes and the Boom." He took up his argument with the aggregationist economists by noting that although the July employment statistics suggested that current economic policies which relate overall economic growth to lower levels of unemployment had been successful little seemed to have been accomplished for the Negro:

In July, amid this unexampled prosperity, the unemployment rate of adult Negro men went up sharply, from 5.7 per cent to 6.5 per cent. The unemployment rate for Negro women rose from 7.8 per cent to 8.8 per cent. At 9.1 per cent, the overall unemployment rate for non-whites is once again double that for the workforce as a whole. It is precisely those adult Negro males—the men who are trying to care for their families, play a part in their community, and provide an example for youth—who are getting worse off. [While over-all unemployment dropped 700,000, that of adult Negro men increased by 32,000.]

Moynihan went on to note that in 1964 the Area Redevelopment Administration conducted a survey of unemployed Negro workers in Watts:

Asked why they thought they were unable to get jobs, only 10 per cent of the males cited discrimination. Over half . . . felt it was because of their lack of skill or the lack of jobs. These are not matters which can be changed by civil rights acts, and they knew it. Surely it is possible by now for responsible persons in private life to recognize that in the midst of unexampled prosperity we are in fact presiding over a catastrophe.

He drew three conclusions:

(1) The United States has two unemployment problems. Massive general prosperity can conceal utter calamity in the Negro world.

(2) The training and education needs of Negro workers are even greater than we have thought. Plain old-fashioned discrimination could not account for the events of the last few months.

(3) The cities of the nation must begin insisting on national programs directed specifically to this issue. I do not believe there is a single serious social problem facing them of which unemployment is not one of the root causes. It is precisely because everyone else is so prosperous that urban leaders must insist on more attention being paid to those whose situation is just the opposite and for that very reason all the more bitter.

The *New Republic* first took notice of the report in its issue of September 11th, commenting that "In the poverty jet set, [the Moynihan Report] is all the rage." As were its daily journalist colleagues, *The New Republic* was unable to resist the "strutting male animal." In two and a half columns, the magazine managed to touch on all of the main points of the report, emphasizing particularly the finding and the implicit recommendation concerning Negroes in the armed forces, with which it was rather unimpressed. Curiously missing from the story was any discussion of its impact in Washington on higher levels than the poverty jet set or the relationship to the Howard University speech which other commentators had routinely noted.

On the same day, Richard Rovere's letter from Washington in *The New Yorker Magazine* (dated September 2) provided the most complete summary so far of the report's findings and discussion of its implications. Rovere started with a pointed and perceptive version of the report, that the conference it stimulated would be "aimed at developing a national policy to strengthen the ego of the Negro male in the United States," but noted that "the White House, of course, could not officially subscribe to any such description of it." He characterized the report as "diagnostic, not prescriptive." Praising its candor, lucidity, insight, and (for a government report) brevity, blending his own knowledge and perceptiveness with the contents of the report, Rovere developed Moynihan's thesis with considerable detail and sensitivity. He was one of the few writers, for example, to extract from the report this statistic: "the fundamental overwhelming fact is that Negro unemployment except for a few years during World War II and the Korean War has continued at disaster levels for 35 years." Again, better than any of the other reporters he communicated Moynihan's notion of a vicious cycle and avoided any connotation of a "mystery" about Negro family breakdown.

Rovere managed to confront the reality of American standards by which Negro women seem to fare much better than Negro men and at the same time to express his feelings that

There is something melancholy and distasteful about accepting standards such as these and measuring Negro achievement by them. It implies a certain virtue or worth in categories that are perhaps meaningful only in terms of pay scales. It attaches prestige to occupations that may be less honorable than occupations that have no prestige at all. But it is this American society of 1965 — a society in

which there are many factors confined to the Negro group, equal participation, and socially and humiliatingly

Rovere suggested the direction of a "development program, sidy for the entire country even this President could but he stated that the White House Conference President, with nearly satisfied, will put the

On September 17th report, providing a discussion of the problem point, the editor knew to carry a full evaluation suggested that liberate the problems of the by racists to suggest inability to build a posed the Moynihan essential" to confront support for such a view

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which there are many false values and in which squalor is by no means confined to the Negro ghettos — in which the Negro is seeking full and equal participation, and from which the Negro male is more systematically and humiliatingly excluded than the Negro female.

Rovere suggested that Administration thinking was moving in the direction of a "foreign policy" approach — "and aid and development program, an interior Marshall Plan, a long-term subsidy for the entire Negro community." He was not sure that even this President could get Congress to adopt such a program but he stated that there was good reason to believe the coming White House Conference would recommend it and "that the President, with nearly all his other legislative requests already satisfied, will put the full weight of his office behind it."

On September 17th, *Commonweal* took editorial note of the report, providing a brief summary of its main points and discussing the problem posed by the sensitivity of the issue. At this point, the editor knew that some weeks later he would be able to carry a full evaluation of the report by Herbert J. Gans. He suggested that liberal analysts have been reluctant to discuss the problems of the Negro family because "they can be used by racists to suggest the basic inferiority of the Negro and his inability to build a firm family foundation." To this he juxtaposed the Moynihan Report's contention that it was "absolutely essential" to confront these facts head-on and implied his own support for such a view.

In the September 18th issue of *America*, Moynihan wrote about his general interest in the family perspective in an article titled "A Family Policy for the Nation." In this article, he used some of the data on Negroes to illustrate his more general point that the country's tendency to think in terms of individual rather than family welfare had destructive consequences for poor families. He suggested that this was but one example of a general socioeconomic fact, that "many of the processes that are producing prosperity are also producing much of our poverty"; this was the "pathology of post-industrial society."

The United States was unique among industrial democracies in ignoring the family and concentrating instead on individuals without regard to their family status or responsibilities: "Most of the industrial democracies of the world have adopted a wide range of social programs designed specifically to support the stability and viability of the family." Such measures as family allowances, differential unemployment benefits depending on

family responsibilities, differential wages depending on the family status of the wage earner, tax policies that take family size more realistically into account, all have been used by other countries to ensure family welfare.

He argued that the society had an interest in family stability and viability because the family performs important socialization and training functions for the society: "Family patterns can help or hinder efforts to bring people out of poverty and into the mainstream of American life." He did not wish to suggest that there was only one kind of adaptive family pattern but that there was a basic minimum of resources necessary for families to accomplish their functions adequately:

The stability and quality of family life are a prime determinant of individual and group achievement. This is not to argue for any one pattern — any more than to declare that there can be only one form of achievement. But what evidence we do have argues that social conditions ought to enable the general run of families to succeed in whatever arrangements fit their fancy.

The fact that American society does not operate to provide these conditions for many of its members is most clear with regard to the situation of Negro Americans, but this is only the latest in an historical series of failures to provide adequate resources for family welfare:

From the wild Irish slums of the 19th century Eastern seaboard, to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history; a community that allows a large number of men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future — that community asks for and gets chaos. Crime, violence, unrest, disorder — most particularly the furious, unrestrained lashing out at the whole social structure — that is not only to be expected; it is very near to inevitable. And it is richly deserved.

Moynihan argued that as a nation we must "seriously and promptly address ourselves to the issue of what it takes for a working man to raise a family in an American city today, and then see to it that what it takes is available." This means that the nation must have a national family policy. In the beginning, this means that we must inform ourselves more fully about the condition of American families — to this end, Moynihan suggested that the President direct someone, perhaps the Secretary

of HEW, to report on the American far months later, the rank of As

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of HEW, to report annually to the Congress on the condition of American families and their many faceted situations. (Some months later, a new family post was created in HEW carrying the rank of Assistant Secretary.)

A story by *The Boston Herald's* Holmes Alexander on September 23rd provided some interesting insights into the report's reputation in official Washington. Alexander maintained that only twenty-five copies of the report were distributed to government officials. Alexander wrote that House Speaker McCormack was unable, though he hounded the office of Secretary Wirtz, to get a copy of the report in connection with Administration moves to have representatives sign a petition for the Washington Home Rule Bill. Similarly, the minority staff of the Labor Welfare Committee in the Senate could not get copies of the report as late as the second week in September.

The "secret" or "public" status of the report during August and September is a strange issue indeed. No announcement had been made of the report's availability; the press routinely referred to it as "still secret," as did many in the civil rights movement. The ambiguity of the report's status was physically embodied in its pages: the title page still carried "For Official Use Only," but on the back page was a GPO number and the statement that the document was for sale at a price of 45 cents! The perpetuation of the "For Official Use Only" tag (some copies carried a sticker indicating that this classification was lifted) was perhaps an oversight, perhaps a touch left in for drama. (It could have been removed however; two errata in the original report had been corrected before GPO printed its copies. In all other respects the GPO copies were identical to the original version — contrary to one rumor that some of the original had been deleted.)

In any case, there was little justification for Holmes Alexander's and others' reference to the report as "still secret"; once the report had a GPO number and price it was in the public domain. And Labor was distributing copies at a fast clip by mid-August; demand for copies built up then in response to the post-Watts press coverage. By the end of August several hundred copies had been distributed, about half within the government and half to the press and other outsiders. The demand was so heavy that on August 30th the Secretary's office instructed the public information officer to explain to those requesting more than one copy that it was possible to give only one to a customer.

Finally, starting on September 24th and continuing through October, *The St. Louis Review*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, began a series of articles on the Moynihan Report by Stephen Darst. Significantly, the editorial note preceding the first article stated: "Since excerpts have been used in periodicals hostile to the Negro cause, *The St. Louis Review* has undertaken this series and will publish long excerpts to balance the picture" even though the report had not been released by the government. In addition, "The possibilities for changes in the direction of social legislation developed in our interview with Moynihan are explored for their effects on white families as well as Negro families."

In his first story, Darst stated that the report "written to be read only by the President of the United States and six other persons has created a sensation in political, intellectual and academic circles which could change the direction of social legislation for years to come." In two articles, Darst provided a very full summary of the contents of the report and in the third took up Moynihan's suggestion in the *America* article of September 18th that a family allowance system might be one element in increasing family stability of poor whites and Negroes.

It is perhaps not surprising that the Catholic press showed by and large the most consistent understanding of Moynihan's point of view and was the most responsive to its implications for the white as well as for the Negro poor. In its October issue, the *Catholic Family Leader*, publication of the Family Life Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, discussed the report and its relation to the White House Conference and notified its subscribers that it had stocked a supply of the now released report as well as reprints of Moynihan's *America* article for readers who were interested.

Taken as a whole, the effect of the press coverage of the Moynihan Report was to subtly exaggerate the already dramatic and sensational aspects of Moynihan's presentation and as a result to considerably deepen the impression that the report dealt almost exclusively with the family, its "pathology" and "instability," as the cause of the problems Negroes have. Only in the longer treatments of the report, or for the careful reader (which no journalist can count on) of some of the shorter articles, was there any clear communication of the vicious cycle with which Moynihan sought to deal.

We would suggest that most of the distortion that took place

was the inevitable result of the way the press handles "social problem" reporting, with its tendency to think in terms of what is wrong with individuals rather than institutions and to concentrate on personal experiences and suffering rather than on the more impersonal forces behind personal experience. In only a few cases can the press treatment be said to be grinding an overtly conservative ideological ax (particularly the articles by Mary McGrory, Evans and Novak, and Richard Wilson). More typically the press treatment reflects the reductionist habits of journalists manifested in the dynamics of headline writing, the need for condensation of complex arguments (and the impatience with complexity because of this), the interest in "human interest" handles, and the desire for reader identification based on sympathy rather than understanding.

Newspapers as they presently operate are a poor medium by which to communicate about public policy, but they are nevertheless the principal medium; and the major participants in the controversy can be held responsible for knowing about these shortcomings and for trying to operate to counteract them. In the following chapter, we will examine the extent to which those who introduced the report to the public took realistic account of press handling of the complex and sensitive issues in first leaking and then publishing the report. In later chapters, we examine the extent to which those who opposed the report took account of the amusement-part mirror through which they saw it reflected.

In any case, with few copies of the report publicly available from which to judge its contents, those who were vitally concerned with the issue it dealt with tended to form a conception of what the report was about, what its "upshot" was that was to a greater or lesser degree not in accord with the facts. It is apparent that by the time they actually read the report many of its critics could no longer see it with fresh eyes but were instead heavily influenced by their exposure to the press coverage, particularly as this coverage tied the report to an official government "explanation" for Watts.

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We have examined the effect of the report and we have an idea of the time of the Hoover report. In the controversy that followed the report, it is our thesis that the public acrimony, press coverage of the report, and the civil rights movement raised the question of the great significance of the report's contents (or its constructive or destructive effect) of the report, without, with no (