Housing works: welfare, work, and leisure in America

Joshua Seawell

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Advised by Zephyr Frank

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The scholars whose interest in these subjects long precedes my own

Survey respondents who answer a lot of questions, especially with Yes or No
“Industriousness has served as America’s unofficial religion since its founding.”


ABSTRACT

Americans living in poverty have been the subject of political discussion among policymakers since the inception of the United States, and the poor have often found themselves sorted into categories of “deserving” and “undeserving.” In this paper, I review the pertinent history and economics regarding anti-poverty policy, demonstrating that work has been the primary fulcrum by which to determine deservingness. In Part 1, I ask: does housing assistance affect work and non-work behaviors? Using multivariate regression, I discover a negative relationship between the receipt of housing assistance and hours worked.

The importance of work to American culture and politics also raises questions about a potentially work-scarce future. In Part 2, I ask: how do welfare and greater leisure time correspond to behaviors and attitudes? Based on similar analysis, I speculate that a work-scarce or “post-work” future, or any future in which Americans have greater access to leisure, may entail and encourage greater participation in the arts while threatening participation in religious, political, and motor vehicle-based activities.
PREFACE

Positivistic social science is ‘value-free’ or ‘ethically neutral’; it is neutral in the conflict between good and evil, however good and evil may be understood. This means that the ground which is common to all social scientists, the ground on which they carry on their investigations and discussions, can only be reached through a process of emancipation from moral judgments, or of abstracting from moral judgments: moral obtuseness is the necessary condition for scientific analysis. For to the extent to which we are not yet completely insensitive to moral distinctions, we are forced to make value judgments. The habit of looking at social or human phenomena without making value judgments has a corroding influence on any preferences. The more serious we are as social scientists, the more completely we develop within ourselves a state of indifference to any goal, or of aimlessness and drifting, a state which may be called nihilism.¹

I am not strongly inclined to this form of social science.

This thesis may be construed as justification for the reduction of government benefits to the poor. In fact, based on cultural attitudes I review below, I predict that a more widely circulated paper with its same contents would serve such a purpose.

I came to this subject with the understanding that my discoveries might reinforce narratives that have long corralled citizens against the welfare state. I do not feel that it is my place, as a researcher (and a democratic citizen) with access to immense educational resources, to shy away from the creation of knowledge that does not meet my political goals.

I am, however, deeply concerned with the state of the American poor, and believe that any reader of this paper should critically consider the American obsession with work (especially as it relates to welfare policy). Early in our history, genuine scarcity motivated this fixation.

What now?

If Americans continue to hold work as a chief measure of their fellow citizens’ deservingness, perhaps housing vouchers and public housing should be redesigned to encourage it. But should they, in the face of a new wave of automation, choose to emancipate themselves from the religion of salary, the poor and out of work in America might well be better off for it.
1: WELFARE AND WORK

Roughly 40 million people in America live in poverty.² Media, big business, and government have struggled to respond equitably to the existence of these Americans in the modern era.

Popular media, for one, has often favored a racialized and stereotypical image of the poor. Take just magazines: an analysis of news magazines between 1988 and 1992 found that two of every three depictions of poor Americans were black Americans, double the moment’s actual rate. In a study from media in the late 90s, blacks were found to be disproportionately featured in negative, pathologizing articles about poverty and criminality.³

Savvy businesses and entrepreneurs have often exploited the American poor. In some cases, this has meant Americans in poverty have paid more for the same goods and services.⁴ Payday lenders, who cluster in low-income neighborhoods with low education and minority populations, are an especially insidious example.⁵ The industry has been widely accused of intentionally predatory lending; the head of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has asserted that “[t]he business model for payday and auto title lenders is built on miring people in debt.”⁶

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³ Rosalee A. Clawson & Rakuya Trice, “Poverty as We Know It: Media Portrayals of the Poor,” The Public Opinion Quarterly 64, no. 1 (2000): 53. There is much reason to believe this pattern continues.
Then there are the political responses to the American poor; the exploitation of the poor by major American institutions perhaps underscores the importance of governance. Though the Great Depression provided an important basis for social welfare policy, American government most aggressively responded to American poverty in the mid-20th century, in the form of Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” In the ensuing years, Johnson (and occasionally his more conservative successors) signed into law large new investments in civil rights, healthcare, and housing, including the Voting Rights Act and statutory authorization of Medicaid and Medicare. By credible measure, this “war” halved the poverty rate.7

Generally, the anti-poverty structures that emerged from this “war” have produced much success in ameliorating poverty. But critics and supporters alike acknowledge some disappointed expectations and byzantine bureaucracies. In some cases, frustrated welfare beneficiaries depart from these programs altogether, eager to “just say good riddance to the bureaucracies.”8 And, of course, the poverty rate remains stubborn for the other half.

I have chosen to dissect these political responses to American poverty and their policy implications. As I will discuss below, poverty in America is tied intimately with issues of race, housing, and work. First, I review the historical and economic literature on work, poverty, and housing. Then, I conduct a preliminary data analysis to better understand the relationship between welfare benefits and work. There are outstanding questions, surrounding the structures that effectively perpetuate and alleviate poverty, that make poverty a rich field for academics to explore. In this paper, I discuss the enduring legacies of the 20th century anti-poverty policies, finding that rental subsidies likely decrease work hours.

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THE POLITICS OF WORK AND POVERTY

The history of anti-poverty policy in the United States is about deservingness. From its earliest days, American conceptions of deservingness have largely discussed work and the capacity for work.

American public assistance policy originates with colonial history. In the Elizabethan era, “poor laws” required neighborhoods to financially assist their poorest members. These laws proved hard to effectuate, especially given limited resources, and an administrative bureaucracy sprung up to separate decided worthy recipients, like the disabled and elderly, from the unworthy. These unworthy -- mostly able-bodied men -- were largely excluded from the providence of the poor laws. Though the laws evolved significantly, this worthy/unworthy binary survived the era.

In modern American history, the categorization of the poor continues to overlap significantly with work and the capacity for it. In the 1980s, the conservative obsession with the undeserving poor, ruled in popular imagination by a racist and highly gendered “welfare queen” caricature, reached fever pitch. This (black) welfare queen was the image of government dependency, exploiting the gullible bureaucracy and never working. She was based loosely on a real woman, known to some as Linda Taylor, whose other crimes (like kidnapping) were far more serious, and whose race was actually unknown. Still, she served publicly as justification for the Reagan administration’s severe curtailing of the welfare state, though the millions cut from program rolls also included many working families. In the 20th century, writes Michael Katz, “[m]ore than any other goal, conservative welfare policy stresse[d] workfare.”

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9 Michael B Katz, The undeserving poor: From the war on poverty to the war on welfare. (Pantheon Books, 1990), 12.
10 Shipler, The working poor: invisible in America, 180.
12 Michael B Katz, The undeserving poor, 73.
Among populist conservatives, the conflation of work and deservingness is still popular today. With regard to welfare, writes Republican party elder David Frum, “the distinction between ‘workers’ and ‘people who don’t work’ is fundamental to Tea Party ideology.” Even liberal anti-poverty rhetoric revolves around work; Bernie Sanders, a Vermont senator best known for his dogged economic leftism, has insisted only that “[w]e must ensure that no full-time worker lives in poverty.” This intellectual legacy is just that: legacy.

Among most liberals, employment among the poor was once also considered essential, if for different reasons. During mid-century Democratic hegemony, “the most influential analyses of poverty stressed its roots in unemployment.” Most important was the Moynihan report, an influential analysis by a liberal Labor Department official on the state of the black community that attributed black poverty chiefly to matriarchy, unemployment, and welfare dependency.

In some cases, the liberal stress on employment was indistinguishable from conservatism. Fulfilling a campaign promise, President Bill Clinton in his first term passed the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996,” ending the previous dominant welfare scheme, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In its place, this legislation instated Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which decreased benefits, increased state flexibility, and demanded states put a share of recipients to work.

Aside from in its preface, this paper does not investigate or need to investigate the morality of conservative or liberal ideology, the accuracy of the Moynihan report, or the

15Ibid, 91.
“correct” policy approach toward the American poor, though all of these are worthy (and well-trod) subjects. Instead, I highlight the history of anti-poverty policy to demonstrate the importance of my own research, which investigates the relationship between welfare and work, in its relation to ideology and policymaking. Political ideologies matter; among other factors, like economic self-interest, political attitudes regarding the welfare state are dictated by ideology.¹⁸

THE POLITICS OF HOUSING

Housing policy constitutes an important facet of welfare policy. In the modern era, the federal government has heavily subsidized the construction and pursuit of housing for the poor.

Perhaps the most important program is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which helps private and nonprofit developers finance developments affordable to local renters (based on Area Median Income). The credit has helped finance 90% of affordable housing units in the United States.¹⁹ ²⁰

But rental subsidies, which constitute a more direct form of welfare, are especially important to this analysis. The term “rental subsidies” may refer to both government-run “public housing” and “Section 8” vouchers.²¹ Given that poor Americans rent at a higher rate than their higher-income peers (who disproportionately own their homes), this rental policy is especially germane to poverty policy.

Beginning in 1937, public housing programs originally served as a federal response to the construction shortage spurred by the Great Depression. Initially, the residents were required to have stable work, and the jobless were relegated to the tenements. Over time, these economic standards were relaxed and, amid white flight to suburbia, public housing became poorer and blacker.\(^\text{22}\)

As public housing’s stigma grew, President Gerald Ford and Congress greatly expanded an alternative: Section 8.\(^\text{23}\) These vouchers, formally known as Housing Choice Vouchers, may be either project-based (only applicable to one property or set of properties) or tenant-based (mobile between homes). Section 8 vouchers, infamous for their long waiting lists, prioritize applicants by income-category. Those with incomes equal to or under the poverty line constitute the lowest and most prioritized category, “Extremely Low Income.”\(^\text{24}\) Voucher recipients are required to pay no more than 30% of their income in rent; the rest is billed to the federal government.

Today, public housing serves approximately 2.1 million Americans. But Section 8 vouchers constitute the largest share of the housing assistance budget. Approximately 5 million Americans, or 2.2 million households, benefit from the program.\(^\text{25}\) Notably, when asked to describe their housing before attaining a voucher, recipients frequently discuss unsafe conditions regarding domestic violence or sanitation, or undesirable conditions regarding space.\(^\text{26}\)

**THE ECONOMICS OF WORK AND WELFARE**


\(^{23}\) Ibid.


\(^{26}\) Shipler *The working poor: invisible in America.* (New York: Knopf): 228
There is debate surrounding the relationship between work and welfare. Theoretically, most economics subscribe to two explanatory models called the *income effect* and *substitution effect*. These effects provide a useful framework for understanding policy debate and evaluation.

First, the income effect dictates that as incomes rise, consumers will purchase more costly goods rather than “inferior goods,” like purchasing FIJI Water instead of Nestle. In this case, salaried work is the inferior good and leisure, where no salary is earned, is the more costly good. As a result, workers are generally likely to work less as their incomes rise.27

On the other hand, the substitution effect dictates that as the relative cost of a good increases, consumers are more likely to opt for cheaper goods. For example, if FIJI Water raises its prices by 5%, and Nestle only raises its prices by 2%, consumers are comparatively more likely to purchase Nestle. In this case, if wages rise, then the “cost” of leisure (or, the cost of not working) also rises. As a result, workers are likely to work more as their incomes rise.

Generally, these contrary effects complicate the prediction of whether increased incomes will increase or decrease hours worked. However, consuming welfare dollars is not mutually exclusive with working or leisure. In effect, welfare increases income without penalizing leisure. Intuitively, and empirically, this suggests that the consumption of work will experience an income effect, and recipients will work fewer hours.

The substitution effect, however, is also pertinent, at least to Section 8 vouchers. If tenant-based voucher recipients are free to move to previously unaffordable neighborhoods, and

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27 In many instances, reality may deviate from the predictions of this effect. “New social mores” and the class stratification of engaging jobs has expanded leisurely experiences at work for some occupations, especially among the rich, increasing work time. Other occupations (medical especially) are required to work long hours for idiosyncratic reasons; in the case of doctors, for example, to reduce patient handover; “Nice Work If You Can Get out,” *The Economist*, April 22, 2014, https://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21600989-why-rich-now-have-less-leisure-poor-nice-work-if-you-can-get-out.
these neighborhoods have available jobs with higher wages, the “cost” of not working will increase for this recipient.

The literature is indecisive about which effect is stronger, though generally it suggests an overriding income effect. One review of TANF recipients demonstrated that they worked fewer hours than their non-recipient socioeconomic peers. Among rental subsidy recipients, “[s]ubsidies substantially reduce hours worked…” a previous quantitative evaluation suggests, noting “a substantial income effect on labor supply.” An analysis of Chicago voucher recipients similarly notes a reduced labor force participation rate, and decreased earnings. This effect may be multiplied by the declining benefits provided as income increases (recipients must pay 30% of their income, after all, even if it increases). It may also be multiplied for women, who generally put in many more hours of unpaid, household work, for a person taking care of a home, in theory, being at home provides benefits and the cost of not working may be lower.

There is also some evidence of substitution effects, however. In a survey of California women, Section 8 voucher recipients worked more than their non-voucher peers. And housing voucher recipients may experience a smaller income effect than project-based voucher recipients or public housing tenants.

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Further, while the income effect and substitution effect are the primary lenses through which I conduct analysis, I acknowledge other environmental incentives that may be at play. For instance, Matthew Desmond’s *Evicted* suggests that work may be easier to sustain with secure housing.\(^3^4\) These factors further complicate the prediction of work hours.

The large dataset that I use in this dataset has not been previously used to answer this question. Thus, I look to answer a key questions: How do these housing assistance programs affect work behavior?

**METHODOLOGY**

To analyze the relationship between hours worked and rental subsidies, I use nationwide Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey data and use panel data from the National Survey of American Families (NSAF), collected by the Census Bureau and the Urban Institute respectively. From the CE survey, which annually measures expenditures, income, and demographic characteristics among participants, (and is used to determine the level of price inflation from year to year) the pertinent data was under the “Interview” category. I aggregated annual data from 1997-2013, when the Census Bureau stopped asking the questions necessary for my analysis. From the NSAF survey, which measures welfare, income, family composition, and many other factors, I used the most recent data – from 2002. These datasets are both representative national samples.

Though this question could be answered qualitatively, either through embedding in a household or through interviews with recipients, I believe my method of analysis is most appropriate. The large sample size made possible by large datasets much improves its reliability over any comparable qualitative project. Secondly, quantitative methods allow me to estimate the

size of the relationship between rental subsidies and hours worked -- impossible to measure precisely with qualitative methods.

I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to determine the strength of the relationship between the two, working to eliminate mediating variables (namely, the condition of poverty and work requirements under another welfare program) in successive tests. Results are provided in the Analysis section.

For the purposes of my analysis, I make blackness and whiteness dummy variables, perhaps at disservice to multiracial respondents. The dataset codes sex/gender as a binary, and gives 4 regional values (Northeast, West, Midwest, South). In addition to these variables drawn from the data, I add the variable “Liberal,” which represents the political leanings of a state. This variable was intended to capture both self-sufficiency ideologies (and behaviors) and the generosity of welfare programs in a given state, both of which I expected would encourage more work in conservative states. I code this as a dummy for simplicity’s sake, based on 1) gubernatorial control since 1997; if there is ambiguity (>60% control by any one party), I use 2) presidential vote since 1997; if there is further ambiguity, I use 3) legislature control since 1997. This sorting yields 17 Democratic/liberal states and 33 Republican/conservative states.

I use the American federal poverty line as my definition of poverty. Under this guideline, in 2018, a family of four making roughly $25,000 or less counts as poor, as does a single childless person making roughly $12,000 or less. The measure has been widely criticized as arbitrary and for ignoring assets and in-kind services. However, given that the Section 8 waiting list system also applies the federal poverty line standard\textsuperscript{35}, using it makes sense for this analysis.

\textsuperscript{35} In addition to an Area Media Income standard, but applicants under the federal poverty line are always in the highest priority category.
For simplicity’s sake, I reduce the sample to single-earner households, though in early work I did find some evidence that multiple-earner households respond to subsidies more modestly.

**ANALYSIS**

| Significance key: \( P \leq .05 \, *; \, P \leq .01 \, **; \, p \leq .001 \, *** \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOURS WORKED</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>-1.36 (.771)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-2.03*** (.478)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-4.04*** (.467)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (South)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region (West)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>31.45*** (.202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 ), Adjusted</td>
<td>.006, .004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>4,809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During these analyses the primary interpretive problem that emerged was the potential for the work requirements of TANF to interfere with the results. According to Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) analysis, 23.5% of TANF households receive rental subsidies (again, this includes public housing).\(^{36}\) Given that 32% of poor households in general receive rental subsidies, it may be that TANF households are overrepresented in the control sample, and that the difference in hours worked may be because of the disproportionate number of control

households bound by those requirements. Of course, the CBPP data derives from the early years of the TANF program, and some poor households may have exhausted benefits since then.

Below, I use the NSAF dataset to address the TANF question, limiting my results to those who affirmed incomes not more than 2 times the federal poverty line.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Worked</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>-1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF</td>
<td>9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>36.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.770)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R², Adjusted</td>
<td>.0024,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.0024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.1179,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

The first regression in Table 1 examines the relationship between the receipt of subsidies and work hours. This analysis is susceptible to biasing influences that I control for in later tests, like the tendency of people who are working lower hours to make less money, and thus to be more heavily represented among subsidy recipients. In any case, this analysis demonstrates that the relationship approaches conventional measures of statistical significance (P>|t| = .074), but does not achieve it.

---

In the next tests, I build more variables into my regression model. The second test, for instance, controls for state politics, making the receipt of subsidies a statistically significant predictor of hours worked. The results in this test and successive tests show with relative consistency that workers in liberal states work fewer hours.

In the second, third, and fourth test, I include gender and race variables, and both demographics questions are highly significant predictors of hours worked. Across tests, women appear to work less than men, black people more than their non-black counterparts, and whites less than their non-white counterparts. In the fourth test, which includes blackness, gender, and the receipt of subsidies, subsidies again approach significance (P>|t| = .088), though this is the last time.

Finally I include a regional variable. With this variable, I hope to root out the economics of states from the politics of states. That is, perhaps economies in the South are growing slower than those in the Northeast, and this depresses work hours in the more conservative South. With the inclusion of only the state politics variable, the results might imply that political processes are behind the depression. By controlling for region, we can compare blue and red states within the same region and perhaps avoid erroneous conflations.

Of the 4 regional tests, I include the most and least influential instances of regionality. Residing in the South is a positive significant predictor of work hours, and negates the significance of state politics, but neither is true of residing in the West. While the regional variables did boost $R^2$, I was generally not impressed by the predictive power of my model, which at best accounts for 3.93% the variance in hours worked.
Subsidies are not significant predictors of work hours in any tests with regional variables, but in each of the nine tests (seven included) the relationship between subsidies and work hours is negative.

While the number of observations in Table 2 is far too small to assert any conclusive findings, and there was not a significant relationship between subsidies and hours worked ($P > |t| = 0.480$), this data suggest that the relationship between subsidies and hours worked is more significant and more negative after accounting for TANF ($P > |t| = 0.323$). In other words, TANF recipients may bias the relationship toward positive infinity by working more than their non-recipient peers, suggesting that poor voucher recipients are disproportionately on TANF. In other words, these findings improve the credibility of a causal relationship between rental subsidies and decreased hours worked, though further exploration is clearly necessary.

The consistent negativity of the subsidy coefficient, its frequent significance or near-significance, and the preliminary evidence that TANF leads to an understatement of the relationship between subsidies and work hours leads me to believe that there is an underlying negative relationship between the two. But, especially given that I do not anticipate a more robust dataset emerging to answer either of these questions in the future, a qualitative approach to these questions may be in order to resolve the ambiguities.

The Consumer Expenditure dataset’s worth lies in its cumulative large sample size, and unfortunately not in its detail. I was not able to draw out relationships between project-based vouchers, tenant-based vouchers, and public housing and hours worked, though all are worthy subjects. Another worthy subject, if only for rhetorical sake, is the work effects of the federal government’s large housing investments in the middle class, including the proliferation of large below-market-interest-rate (BMIR) mortgages from the Federal Housing Agency (FHA) in the
World War II and postwar era. Researchers have observed that middle-class federal expenditures have conformed to similarly anti-black patterns.  

1: CONCLUSION

American policymakers, especially conservatives, are prone to understanding some poor Americans as “deserving” of help, and others as “undeserving.” Those who work, having the capacity to do so, have historically been understood as deserving, though anti-black bias (among other demographic biases) has also influenced this sorting and the provision of services. In this paper, I have evaluated whether housing assistance affects work behavior. I believe, for these reasons, this question is important to American politics and policy.  

To some, this research may seem backwards; isn’t deservingness a function of whether someone works before receiving assistance, rather than whether they work after? But Ronald Reagan’s welfare queen wasn’t longitudinal; she had no causal origin story. The state of dependency is disqualifying from deservingness, regardless.  

This chapter’s results suggest a negative relationship between subsidies and hours worked in single-earner households, though subsidies do not hold much predictive power, providing few definitive answers to questions in the literature.  

Still, I suggest that this result may decrease the program’s sustainability, especially among conservatives. Some policymakers will likely construe the evidence of an income effect as a weakness of the program.  

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Of course, their effect on hours worked is only one way to measure the effects of housing vouchers. In the next section of this thesis, I will evaluate other externalities of housing assistance and decreased work, in light of a possible post-work future I also discuss.
2: WELFARE AND LEISURE

The idea of a post-work future or work-scarce future has historical roots in 20th century Western imagination. John Maynard Keynes, who fathered the highly influential school of Keynesian economic thought, predicted “a 15-hour workweek, and abundant leisure, by 2030,” a prediction that has clearly soured over time. Keynes had some reason to expect this. In 1930, the time of the quote, the United States was in the midst of a long and consistent decline in work hours that began in 1870. Ushered in by productivity gains, the Great Depression, and other economic factors, this era precipitated ambitious modernist predictions. Less than twelve years out from 2030, in an era in which work hours have largely stabilized, the extent of Keynes’ theories still ring as highly futuristic.

Perhaps for the best. In areas where work has departed most jarringly from the United States, the results are not suggestive of utopian liberation. Reporting from Youngstown, which has experienced an economic depression starting with the loss of manufacturing jobs in the 70s, Derek Thompson observes: “when an entire area, like Youngstown, suffers from high and prolonged unemployment, problems caused by unemployment move beyond the personal sphere; widespread joblessness shatters neighborhoods and leaches away their civic spirit.” Analysts

39 Other accounts say he predicted this would occur by 2028.
42 Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work,” The Atlantic, August 2015.
have related such declining economic opportunities for white middle-aged workers without college degrees to a troubling increase in “deaths of despair” -- suicide, alcoholism, drugs. Urban black communities also experienced well-explored social debilitation after the evaporation of reliable manufacturing jobs in the same period.

Perhaps not. What if, as many post-work theorists suggest, an expansion of entitlement benefits and revamp of culture could provide an economic floor and foster new forms of community? What if, for instance, the federal government provided a universal basic income, and/or firms and local governments developed new creative centers for leisure? Below, I explore the plausibility of a creative new post-work future, and examine the leisure attitudes and proclivities of welfare recipients. I use the receipt of subsidies, which Chapter 1 reveals as correlated to decreased work hours, as framework to explore a possible future outlined in present practice.

THE ECONOMICS OF AUTOMATION

In recent years, authoritative economic commentators have issued dire predictions concerning the future of work in the United States in the face of automation. The McKinsey Global Institute has projected the loss of up to 73 million American jobs by 2030, though other factors deriving from a relatively strong U.S. economy could decrease this number. Obama White House economists have projected that an average $20/hour or less job has an 83 percent likelihood of automaton replacement in coming years.

44 Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work,” The Atlantic, August 2015.
47 Middle-skill, higher-income jobs appear to be safer, especially jobs that require “flexibility, judgment, and common sense,” likely providing a floor against any employment cataclysm among the non-poor for the foreseeable future.
Some economists, especially postmodernists, have inveighed against the picture of an American future with decreasing employment opportunities. They argue that these predictions are belied by present high employment rates, the apparent end of the trend toward fewer working hours in the 90s, and a previously low correlation between new labor-saving applications and decreases in work hours.\(^48\) Much of these trends can be explained by rising household consumption, which, even as the country has grown wealthier, has incentivized firms to retain the traditional work week, and might well continue to rise.\(^49\)

The first groups of economists and their supporters, with whom I concur, suggest that the evidence for a coming reformation of employment is stronger than that against. While unemployment is currently in the low single digits, having trended almost unfailingly downwards in the last ten years, the labor force participation rate has also steadily decreased over the same period. The decrease in labor force participation, by most estimates, is explained only partly by an aging workforce; the rest of the decrease can reasonably be attributed to structural unemployment\(^50\) — that is, a fundamental mismatch between skills and jobs.

Further, our understanding of automation’s employment effects should not be limited to the present or to speculation. Though some new scholarship has underlined the importance of


trade to 20th and 21st century job loss,\textsuperscript{51} most analysis suggests that automation had a considerably larger disemployment effect than trade.\textsuperscript{52} And most economists believe that the largest technological changes have increased inequality in recent decades.\textsuperscript{53} Whether or not postmodernists are convinced that its effects are structural (long-lasting) and broad-based rather than cyclical (temporary) and narrow, economists have all but reached consensus that automation’s employment power is considerable.

There are, of course, important differences between previous waves of automation and the present one. The skeptics’ argument, for instance, that the wealth generated by automation will manifest in jobs elsewhere, redeeming its own negative effects (as it arguably has in the past), is belied by the labor-efficiency of new and/or expanding sectors of the American economy.\textsuperscript{54}

If some non-trivial degree of these structural disemployment predictions comes to pass, those who experience job loss will have more daily time at their disposal. This effects of this time per day, however many hours a day, multiplied by hundreds of thousands or millions of newly unemployed, warrants investigation. How will Americans spend leisure time, leisure here defined as “free time, those phases of our life when we act not from necessity -- for example, to earn a living -- but on the basis of unforced choice”?\textsuperscript{55} Previous literature on leisure culture has investigated the economics of leisure, the categories of leisure that divide its participants, and the


\textsuperscript{52} Michael J. Hicks and Srikant Devaraj, "The myth and the reality of manufacturing in America," Center for Business and Economic Research, Ball State University (2015): 4.

\textsuperscript{53} GPO and the Council of Economic Advisers: Economic Report of the President242.

\textsuperscript{54} Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work,” The Atlantic, August 2015.

\textsuperscript{55} Alison Pedlar et al, “Community,” In A Handbook of Leisure Studies, 523.
identity intersections in leisure. Here, I briefly review the relevant findings and highlight pressing questions that remain unanswered.

**THE (REINFORCING) POLITICS OF WORK AND LEISURE**

Skeptics and believers in automation’s economic power should not necessarily count on political processes to preserve mass employment.

Even if automation does not subsume the traditional American work experience, policymakers should anticipate voters demanding decreased work hours. American workers are unhappy, and increasingly feel overworked. 70% feel dissatisfied in their jobs.\(^\text{56}\) A majority would prefer to work fewer hours; in one recent study, “only 24 per cent of the sample responded that they rarely or never experience any [...] feelings of overwork…”\(^\text{57}\)

In this case, I consider public choice especially important in linking economic trends to policies. According to public choice theory, “voters support, in a self-interested way, political parties which offer them more of what they want,” not unlike consumers choosing products in a market. Public choice theory may explain the retention of the current retirement age over a generational period characterized by dramatic increases in life expectancies for non-poor Americans, as voters signal a preference for less work.

If automation does result in a large disemployment effect, political processes may accommodate rather than resist these trends. Aside from that of a few Silicon Valley titans, there is little support for restraining automation through aggressive political processes (i.e. taxes).\(^\text{58, 59}\)

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56 Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work.”
During the Great Depression, which constituted the most abrupt decline in employment in U.S. history, policymakers responded by further reducing work hours (responding to union pressure)\(^{60}\) and vastly increasing the size of the welfare system. My analysis will paint the most vivid portrait of welfare-supported leisure, but its relevance exceeds that.

**IDENTITIES AND CLASSES IN LEISURE**

Leisure studies, at their own expense, have often neglected intersectional discussion concerning how various identities shape leisure. This is especially true of race, due to a “hegemony of thinking of leisure as an experience of a ‘race-less’ individual.”\(^ {61}\) Indeed, in some activities, there are not significant differences in preference (like playing basketball). Significant differences, however, exist between racial groups on many other activities, like shopping and church-going (which African-Americans prefer comparatively), and nature-based activities like camping and hiking (which whites generally prefer).\(^ {62}\) Furthermore, African-Americans partake in a broader array of leisure activities than their white counterparts, perhaps because blacks have become more adept at “negotiating constraints,” especially regarding welcomenes, “and thus have developed strategies of resistance to empower themselves in life and leisure.”\(^ {63}\) Additional evidence suggests that whites are more engaged in leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) during leisure than their non-white counterparts, even after controlling for a host of demographic variables.\(^ {64}\)

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\(^{60}\) AJ Veal, “Economics of Leisure,” in *A Handbook of Leisure Studies*, 144.


\(^{63}\) Kimberly J. Shinew, Myron Floyd, and Diana Parry, “Understanding the Relationship,” 191.

Gender also plays a role in leisure experiences, especially in influencing the quantity leisure time. Pew Research operationalizes an intuitive (academically disputed) distinction between “free time” and “leisure time,” under which framework women had 5 fewer hours of leisure time per week on average. This is not directly explained by an uneven division of unpaid/household labor, as accounting for such demonstrates only that women work virtually as much as men. Instead, Pew conjectures that this hours gap exists because the free time of women (especially mothers) is more frequently interrupted, and due to less discrete boundaries between free time and work time for women; of course, both of these observations may still be explained by sexist expectations regarding household labor.\textsuperscript{65} In general, this gender leisure gap comprises perhaps the most key finding regarding sex and leisure.

But class is perhaps the most essential feature for understanding and predicting leisure. Generally, class groups live together (wealthy with wealthy, poor with poor), this geographic concentration leads to social cohesion and political alliances via shared schools and opportunities, finally resulting in similar lifestyles. (While some near-random individual preferences shape leisure activities, leisure scholars largely consider the role of idiosyncrasy in leisure overstated.)\textsuperscript{66}

Class (and a highly covariant education factor) also matters independent of geography. Per household, more disposable income is directly correlated with more leisure spending, including on transport. General Social Survey (GSS) data suggest that those living above the poverty line are more likely to spend time at sports, arts, and outdoors activities.\textsuperscript{67} Disposable income

\textsuperscript{65} Kim Parker and Wendy Wang, “Chapter 6: Time in Work and Leisure, Patterns by Gender and Family Structure.”
and access explains some of the difference; in Britain, researchers found that the top economic quintile spends 19% of its income on leisure on average while the bottom economic quintile spends 13%. The role of intergenerational “cultural capital” in shaping taste may explain some of the difference as well; that is, without inherited knowledge necessary to fully inhabit some spaces, such as the opera, where the non-poor are more frequent guests, many among the poor may experience these spaces as “spectators” rather than “participants.”

In many cases, immigrant status (i.e. operationalized for instance as present length of stay in a country) and age also shape leisure preferences. For lack of good data and deep familiarity with that literature, I do not consider these variables at length here.

THE CATEGORIES WITHIN LEISURE

Policymakers have a compelling interest to learn about what types of leisure people are engaged in, and perhaps incentivize some types of leisure over others. I am not here referring to the historically rigorous policing of welfare-recipients by policymakers in the interest of enforcing a moral code; rather, policymakers (especially at a local level) may have an interest in stimulating some leisure habits over others in the interest of improving a community or polity.

Consider, for example, the legacy of leisure activities based on vehicular travel. Classic urbanists like Jane Jacobs and Louis Mumford have warned that car culture is an adversary to vibrant urban communities. Others have discouraged car culture in leisure for its environmental

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69 Saloner, “Leisure Inequality – What Do the Poor and Non-Poor Do For Fun?” This speculation somewhat contradicts Shinew’s findings about black negotiation of leisure constraints and welcomeness.
70 Freysinger and Harris, “Race and Leisure,” 258-259.
71 Alison Pedlar, “Community,” 523.
effects. If policymakers can anticipate growth in car usage based on economic trends and leisure analysis, they might invest in better forms of public transport or differently plan the urban form to accommodate or obviate vehicles.

Conversely, some forms of leisure can strengthen community and/via individual “citizenship.” Leisure scholar JL Hemingway points to “participation, communication, autonomy and development” as characteristic of leisure that does such. One illustrative example, from Robert Putnam’s work, might be a public arts project among collaborative peers, though community celebrations and festivals are also oft-cited.

Some important jargon is important to understanding leisure, especially longstanding academic distinctions between serious leisure and casual leisure. Though the exact contours of what constitutes “serious” leisure are disputed, its seriousness is intended to reflect “earnestness, sincerity, importance, and carefulness, rather than [...] gravity, solemnity, joylessness, distress and anxiety.” In other words, scholars mean the mentioned seriousness to reflect that of the participant -- not the subject. Casual leisure, then, is generally made up of “play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation, and sensory stimulation” -- channel-surfing and napping, for example. While serious leisure could glibly be understood as everything else, and is indeed thought to take diverse forms, it is thought to be demonstrated by all or some combination of six qualities: a need for perseverance, “points and stages of achievement,” necessary knowledge or skills, feelings of self-enrichment, self-actualization, and/or lasting physical

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74 Freysinger and Harris, “Race and Leisure,” 258.
products, strong identification with the pursuit, and finally participation in a “social world” that springs up between enthusiasts in the field.\textsuperscript{75}

For some, this sort of enriching leisure is the most enchanting promise of a workless future. Twentieth century inventor and public intellectual Buckminster Fuller described the “idea that everybody has to earn a living” as “specious,” preferring a society in which people were more intellectually engaged.\textsuperscript{76} He was echoed by other notable twentieth century thinkers, from Keynes to Bertrand Russell.\textsuperscript{77} They uniformly had \textit{serious} types of leisure in mind as a replacement to work.

Policymakers may have other interests in the types of leisure people are engaged in. According to Richard Florida’s iconic rendering, a talented, productive, generally young “creative class” are particularly interested in creating and moving to creative communities and leisure experiences. If the location choices of this class is comparably important to regional economies as those of firms, as he posits, policymakers may have an incentive to foster and attract this class and these communities.\textsuperscript{78} In turn, they may wish to incentivize forms of leisure that are more social and collaborative, less home-driven and more community-driven. In other words, association with generally more \textit{serious} leisure activities may be an economic boon for many cities and regions. No literature has yet seriously delved into the growth and environmental implications of various forms of leisure and what incentive structures may encourage them. (Of course, some skeptics think Florida has understated the harm that the immigration of the creative class can do

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\end{thebibliography}
to community and the risk that wealthy and/or educated American they may be too self-absorbed or skeptical of public goods to participate in much community-building.)

**METHODOLOGY**

To analyze the relationship between rental subsidies and leisure attitudes and behaviors, I use the nationally representative biennial American Housing Survey (AHS), collected by the Census Bureau. Because the questions posed by the AHS differ significantly from two years to two years, I did not attempt to aggregate the data. From the 2015 dataset, the relevant questions were found under the “household” and “person” question sets/files. From the 2013 dataset, the relevant questions were found in the “topical” and “newhouse” question sets/files. In both cases I merged files based on respondent IDs.

For the Attitudes section, all questions relate to the importance or benefits of art. I code the receipt of subsidies, gender, and blackness and whiteness all as binary variables, code education as a 5 tier scale according to highest degree held, and leave income as a relatively continuous variable. The dependent variables in the Attitudes section are all dummies, except for the rating of the importance of having art nearby, which respondents answered in 3 ways and is consequently coded 0-2. The original text of the questions is available in the AHS codebook.

For the Behavior section, all questions relate either to likelihood that a household member has participated in some organization in the last twelve months or belongs to some organization, or transportation. The only (somewhat pedantic) exception is the politics question, which asks respondents if any household member has spoken to a politician about a local issue recently. I removed all the respondents who did not know or did not answer, creating dummy

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variables of Yes and No. The transportation questions are relatively intuitive, representing amounts on a continuous dollar scale, but the last (Table 13) is a dummy variable.

Unfortunately, some differences in questions asked from one Survey to another prevented me from using the same models for the Attitudes questions (which derive from 2015) and the Behaviors questions (which derive from 2013). For example, I could not use the Urban variable (which I recoded into a dummy from 5 responses) for 2015 analysis, but chose to include it in the 2013 analysis to test competing social theories of urban and rural settings.

The notes in my previous Methods section regarding qualitative and quantitative questions stand here. I again use multiple regression to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables, but believe that qualitative methods will help scholars understand many of the ambiguities I wrestle with in my discussion section. Raw results are provided in the Analysis sections, below.

I again use the American federal poverty line as my definition of poverty. In this analysis, to preserve the size of the sample and perhaps expose broader trends, I simply control for income (operationalized as yearly income in dollars divided by 100,000) rather than eliminate all non-poor respondents from the sample.

### ANALYSIS Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Table 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides impt. social opps.</td>
<td>Coefficients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>.008 (.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.013* (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.027***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Significance key: $P\leq.05$ *; $P\leq.01$ **; $p\leq.001$ ***
### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impt. to have nearby</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
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### Table 6

<table>
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<th>Improves awareness b/wn groups</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.004 (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.021*** (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.003 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackness</td>
<td>-.019*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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</tr>
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<td>( R^2 ), Adjusted</td>
<td>.0075, .0069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>8,279</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION** *Attitudes*

There is some evidence of a significant relationship between the receipt of housing assistance and attitudes about art, after controlling for race, sex, education, and income, especially
given a robust sample size. On questions about the importance of art to a community’s identity and on its capacity to increase intercultural awareness, recipients were more significantly more likely to respond affirmatively. On questions of the importance of having it nearby, however, and its provision of social opportunities, the receipt of subsidies was not a statistically significant predictor of responses.

Among the controlling variables, education had by far the most predictive power. While I included an education variable anticipating that it would simply be highly covariant with class, and the consequent statistical noise would decrease the adjusted R², the inclusion of the education variable consistently increased R² (adjusted and not). Somewhat surprisingly, I found a persistent negative relationship between educational achievement and attitudes toward art in the community. This finding suggests a previously understated negative relationship of education, independent of class, to leisure and art. Of course, it may be that one incremental variable value leap, for instance representing the jump between a bachelor’s degree and a professional degree, is very negative, and overwhelms a generally positive relationship between education and art. It may also be that higher degree holders maintain more individualistic, rather than communitarian, views regarding art (or lifestyle generally) on average.

Income was also fairly significant in the regression. Consistently, after controlling for all other included variables, higher incomes also predicted more skeptical attitudes toward art. My speculations on this finding run along similar lines.

Gender and race were overwhelmingly not strong or significant predictors of attitudes. The lone exception: black respondents were more skeptical than non-black respondents regarding the ability of art to foster intercultural awareness.
Generally, I was not impressed by the predictive power of my model, which at most predicts 1.7% of the variation in attitudes. The low $R^2$ returned by my model suggests that neither housing subsidies nor broad demographic considerations are highly predictive of attitudes. That said, there is some evidence of a positive relationship between the receipt of subsidies and ratings of art’s importance and capacities, hinting at the possibility of a future with more serious leisure.

**ANALYSIS Behaviors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Table 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood watch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Religious engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coefficients</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coefficients</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-.001 (.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>.009 (.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.96*** (.009)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
<th>Table 10</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Civic engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coefficients</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coefficients</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>.004 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.038*** (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.025*** (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>-.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>-.029*** (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.007 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.003 (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Monthly gas budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
<td>-77.56***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>81.424***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-3.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>6.60 (3.60)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Blackness</td>
<td>-6.03</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>-64.101***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(5.49)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>205.74***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.43)</td>
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<table>
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<th>Table 13</th>
<th>No transit because of time?</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subsidies</td>
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<td>-.065***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.016)</td>
<td>(.016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.058*</td>
<td>.059*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.021)</td>
<td>(.021)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackness</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.025</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$, Adjusted</td>
<td>.0328,</td>
<td>.0331,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0298</td>
<td>.0301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs.</td>
<td>1,597</td>
<td>1,597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION Behaviors**

After controlling for income, education, race, and urbanity or rurality, I identify a strong, significant negative relationship between the receipt of subsidies and household involvement in religious organizations, politics, and neighborhood watch organizations. That is, subsidy recipients, who undoubtedly have more economic freedom and likely have more free time, are *less* likely than non-recipients of the same class, race, etc. to participate in these various activities, with high significance. These findings undercut post-workist predictions that robust forms of collaborative community will spring up naturally from more leisure time.

Among the four tests, the only ambiguous relationship in my tests is that between subsidy receipt and participation in civic organizations. Its ambiguity in this context may suggest a special relationship, more resistant to whatever pressures may decrease other participations.

There are some other significant relationships that arise between the included demographic variables and these participation variables, but little pattern. Consider, for instance, that race is an important predictor of political engagement (whites are more likely to talk to a politician about a local issue) but not civic engagement. Income is strongly related to civic engagement, but none other.
Then there are the results regarding transportation. The receipt of subsidies is strongly, significantly related to reduced motor vehicle costs, as is blackness and living in an urban locale. Indeed my regression predicts more than 11% of the variance in gas expenditures. I am inclined to interpret this as an affirmation that recipients are working less, as explored in Chapter 1, and thus have less need to travel. The negative relationship between subsidies and car transportation, which holds after controlling for urbanity, should further, preliminarily, ease concerns that a post-work future provides deep environmental risks via fossil fuels. Both these results, however, could also be explained or partly explained as a result of housing voucher recipients moving closer to work.

I also find that subsidy recipients are significantly more likely not to attribute not using public transit to a lack of time. The question phrasing is unfortunately ambiguous; are respondents suggesting that they do use public transit because they have the time, or that they do not use public transit – but for other reasons? Its ambiguity no doubt leads people to answer “no” for different reasons, and instances like this highlight the importance of complementary qualitative explorations of these questions. But in the context of the two previous tables, in which monthly gasoline expenditures decline significantly among subsidy recipients and public transit expenditures do not, I am inclined to believe the former interpretation is more important here.

2: CONCLUSION

This chapter of my thesis stakes much of its relevance on the possibilities (broadly meant) of a post-work America. That is, what forms of culture and community are especially likely? What should policymakers try to anticipate?
And it attains preliminary answers: *ceteris paribus*, while welfare recipients may demonstrate an increased faith in the arts, they are less inclined to social participation in political, religious, and communitarian associations. (Scholars interested in the post-work future might do well to explore why civic associations stand out from the rest.) These activities, of course, do not fully encapsulate the range of “serious leisure” activities; indeed, an increase in pursuit of secular, individualistic serious leisure activities could explain the decline in associations. Still, there is little evidence in this analysis of emerging “social worlds” characteristic of serious leisure participants. Welfare recipients may simply be engaged in more casual leisure or unpaid household work.

The attitudes analysis reveals a positive relationship between the receipt of subsidies and views of art’s ability to shape neighborhood identity and increase awareness between groups, a trend also worth exploring further. Though the ideal, most precise version of the question (e.g. “have you recently participated in any creative project in your free time”) does not exist in the dataset, the existing questions provide some validation of Fuller and others’ suggestion of a direct correlation between economic freedom and intellectual interest.

But few of my findings are *only* important through a post-work lens. For instance, I am inclined to see an overarching relationship between decreased work (Table 1), decreased transportation costs (11 and 12), and decreased participations (Tables 7, 8, and 10). Conjecturally, it may be that the loss of robust social networks that often result from employment depress participation in religious and community organizations, as described above, and decrease the need for travel. This finding, especially if further validated, is important even outside of the rhetorical stakes with which I foreground my analysis. The transportation analysis should somewhat calm policymakers concerned purely about the future of environmental output. And the finding of a
negative relationship between education and communitarian views of art may belie Richard Florida’s views of the creative class, however, and validate those of his skeptics.

The answers in this paper are clearly preliminary, and will benefit from further exploration, especially of unintuitive answers: why is income correlated with more negative answers to arts questions when scholars have fairly strong evidence that the non-poor engage in those activities more? Can local governments harness increased arts interest among welfare recipients to attract the creative class?80 I look forward to engaging some of these questions myself.

My ambitions with this thesis are many. Firstly, I hope to elucidate the conditions of America’s poor, threatened as they are by unfavorable pressures – cultural, economic, bureaucratic – and an imminent, threatening wave of automation. Secondly, I hope to examine the relationship between rental subsidies and work and demonstrate the evidence that subsidies likely decrease hours worked. Thirdly, I hope to clarify the ways in which race, work, and deservingness have been and continue to be related (often, conflated) in public consciousness, and suggest that the historical framework may be untenable in the future.

Most of all, I hope that this paper will familiarize automation’s skeptics with the literature and analysis suggesting something deep-rooted and unprecedented is afoot in the American economy, and will contribute to a conversation about what our American future will look like. But I am open to the idea that, marshalling the full force of our laws, history, and rising household consumption, Americans could maintain something for most workers that resembles the traditional work week, not unlike France has done. (Though again, I refer back to public choice theory, and the evidence that the public prefers fewer hours, this too could change.)

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80 Derek Thompson’s “A World Without Work” highlights a type of space that might do just that in the Columbus Idea Foundry.
But large economic transitions are never seamless, or victimless, and an economy left to its own devices is likely to produce many more “Youngstown.” Perhaps the question, then, is what could the future of work look like?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


