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Mutual Aid Networks as Catalysts for Social Change in Post-Industrial Pittsburgh

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the nature of social welfare, focusing on Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a microcosm of broader post-industrial challenges and transformations. While informal social welfare networks served as a prominent means of community assistance for most of human history, modern post-industrial societies now rely almost entirely on government welfare structures. This research investigates how these formalized social support mechanisms have evolved in response to industrialization, urbanization, and societal changes. It assesses the consequences of formalized welfare systems, exploring how they have disrupted traditional communal bonds and perpetuated societal disparities. Pittsburgh's historical and contemporary struggles, particularly in neighborhoods like the Hill District, exemplify the persistent inequalities our social welfare systems fail to resolve, and even perpetuate. Drawing on anthropological insights and spatial analysis, this thesis advocates for a reinvigorated approach to social welfare—one that champions community-centered care, mutual aid, and systemic reforms aimed at tackling the underlying causes of socioeconomic disparities. By uncovering the limitations of traditional welfare models and proposing adaptive strategies rooted in principles of equity, autonomy, and collective well-being, this research contributes to academic discourse and offers practical pathways for reimagining social support in post-industrial societies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The story of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, epitomizes both adversity and remarkable resilience. Originating as a single military outpost, it burgeoned into a steel industry hub before grappling with its eventual decline. The city's residents first struggled with the adverse effects of steel production and then with the repercussions of its demise, leaving many facing health issues, food insecurity, and poverty (Hawes, 1986). Welfare programs were expanded in the city during this period, mirroring the rest of the United States. However, despite these initiatives, stark disparities in wealth and well-being persist across regions of the city, suggesting that social welfare systems have failed to provide adequate support. Symbolizing America's post-industrial transformation, the story of Pittsburgh prompts us to scrutinize the effectiveness of contemporary social welfare measures in addressing ongoing socioeconomic challenges.

Social welfare can be defined as the collection of efforts toward increasing the well-being and quality of life in a society (Greve, 2022). It seeks to ensure that people have access to essential social services, live in safe and healthy environments, and enjoy a decent quality of life. This thesis follows the historical evolution of social welfare mechanisms, with an emphasis on the resurgence of communal care in post-industrial societies such as Pittsburgh. Before the advent of governments or corporate entities, people relied solely on mutual aid from their fellow community members during times of hardship. The core principle of mutual aid, rooted in reciprocal support among community members, served as the foundation of social welfare (Kinna, 1995). However, with the onset of industrialization in the United States, communities increasingly transitioned from reliance on informal mutual aid to formalized systems of government welfare (Walmsley, 1980). There have been widespread cultural consequences of

this transition, including the disruption of traditional communal bonds and the perpetuation of societal inequalities (Monnat, 2010). This thesis advocates for the revitalization of community-centered care and mutual aid practices in post-industrial settings like Pittsburgh. It is motivated by the belief that, amidst contemporary economic and social challenges, understanding social support systems is not only intellectually enriching but also essential for the well-being of communities.

The decision to approach this topic from an anthropological perspective is deliberate and strategic. While the study of welfare traditionally falls within the domains of social policy and economics, there has been a growing interest in exploring alternative approaches to understanding welfare (Langer and Højlund, 2011). Anthropology, with its people-centric methodology, offers a broader lens through which to examine social welfare, transcending its political and financial dimensions. It provides a unique vantage point for analyzing social structures and cultural dynamics. This perspective is invaluable for comprehending the reasons behind the transformation of social welfare systems and the impacts of these changes. By employing this anthropological approach, this thesis aims to uncover nuanced insights into the intricacies of human connections, the resilience of social networks, and the transformative potential of collective support in driving societal change.

The methodology of this thesis integrates both classical and contemporary research techniques. Traditional methods form the basis of the study, including extensive literature reviews to capture diverse academic perspectives on mutual aid, industrialization, and formalized welfare. Additionally, archival research was conducted to collect the datasets utilized in the case study of Pittsburgh. Furthermore, this research utilizes modern technological approaches, particularly spatial mapping through the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software

ArcGIS Pro. This software enabled the creation of detailed visual representations of Pittsburgh's demography, facilitating an exploration of the distribution and experience of social support across different regions of the city. By combining these historical and technological methodologies, the research achieves a layered understanding of social welfare, tracing its evolution and examining its contemporary manifestations.

This thesis begins with an exploration of social welfare's earliest form: mutual aid. It then traces the trajectory of formalized welfare, examining the influence of industrialization. Using a critical lens, it addresses the shortcomings of contemporary welfare systems and explores the potential of community-centered care to address these deficiencies. Pittsburgh, with its rich industrial history and contemporary challenges, serves as an exemplary case study for this investigation. The city's transition from an industrial powerhouse to a post-industrial landscape provides a compelling backdrop to analyze these shifts. Using spatial analysis, this study then examines how these transformations have shaped Pittsburgh's current socioeconomic landscape. The insights gained from this research will inform recommendations for reimagining modern welfare through a paradigm shift towards horizontal relationships over hierarchical ones.

This inquiry is not just an academic pursuit; it is rooted in my personal experiences and observations in my hometown of Pittsburgh. The wealth disparities within the city are not only shocking but also deeply troubling. As a future social worker, I am committed to advocating for systemic change to address these inequalities. Through this research, I aspire to provide insights that address the shortcomings of Pittsburgh's social safety nets. Ultimately, this research is driven by the imperative need for inclusive communal care systems in urban environments, ensuring that no member of our community faces adversity alone.

Chapter 2

Anthropological Insight into the Paradigms of Social Welfare

While the mention of social welfare often makes us think of government assistance programs, it is essential to recognize that people cared for others in their community long before the existence of governments. Mutual aid, an informal system of social welfare, has roots as old as human civilization itself. It involves the people within a community uniting to aid, resources, and support to each other without relying on formal institutions or government intervention. This system is regarded as a horizontal framework of social support because it operates on principles of reciprocity and solidarity between equals within a community (Kinna, 1995). For instance, consider a hunting society in which families instinctively share excess food with other families, knowing they will receive the same support in return when needed. There is no formal debt owed by the receiving family; instead, there is an implicit understanding of reciprocal support. In contrast, formalized welfare systems are hierarchically structured and governed by centralized institutions or government agencies. These entities have the authority to determine eligibility criteria, allocate resources, and control the distribution of all forms of assistance (Langer and Højlund, 2011).

Throughout a significant portion of human history, reciprocal social support stood as a prominent means of assistance within communities. However, in modern Western post-industrial societies like the United States, this horizontal sharing mindset seems to be less instinctive. For instance, consider a single mother residing in Hazelwood, one of Pittsburgh's poorest neighborhoods, struggling to provide enough food for herself and her children. While most would advise her to seek assistance from local social service organizations for programs like SNAP or WIC, it would not be expected of a wealthier resident from a neighborhood like

Squirrel Hill to offer direct support. If our hypothetical single mother did expect as little as $20, she would likely be perceived negatively, seen as feeling entitled to resources not rightfully hers. Despite significant income disparities between neighborhoods like Hazelwood and Squirrel Hill, the notion of receiving even minimal support from a stranger in the affluent area may seem absurd to many. Thus, it becomes clear that mutual aid is not the default response to scarcity in these societies; instead, formalized social welfare systems have become the primary avenue for receiving assistance within communities. This thesis does not oppose governmental welfare initiatives, but it warns of the consequences of eroding horizontal bonds within society.

To understand modern governmental welfare, it is imperative to explore the historical paradigm shifts in social welfare. However, to avoid oversimplifying human history it is crucial to recognize that the progression from mutual aid societies to institutionalized welfare systems was not linear in any sense. Recall that mutual aid operates on horizontal social bonds, whereas formal welfare can only exist in hierarchal structures. The historically blurred lines between mutual aid and formal welfare societies can then be attributed to the fact that there was also no unidirectional transition from egalitarian societies without hierarchical structures to ones with them. Except for industrialized societies, human communities typically appear to undergo a continuous cycle of transitioning between various social structures, alternating between the establishment and dissolution of hierarchies (Graeber and Wengrow, 2023). Consequently, societies also tend to alternate between reciprocal support mechanisms and centralized welfare systems. For instance, the circumpolar Inuit were seen practicing two distinct modes of social organization: one during summer and another during winter (Davis and Mauss, 1980). During the summer, they dispersed into smaller bands. During this period, property was possessively marked, and patriarchs exercised coercive, even tyrannical, power within their small bands. The

patriarch held the sole power of resource distribution, and they were responsible for sustaining their band. However, in the prolonged winter season, characterized by the influx of seals and walruses to the Arctic shores, the Inuit congregated to construct large communal meeting houses. Principles of equality, altruism, and communal living prevailed, with wealth shared among community members, aligning with the tenets of mutual aid.

Archaeological findings suggest that our ancient ancestors as far back as the ice age, exhibited behaviors like the circumpolar Inuit, fluctuating between different social arrangements rather than adhering strictly to hierarchical or egalitarian structures (Graeber and Wengrow, 2023). Across western Eurasia, in regions such as the Moravian basin, isolated burials have been discovered containing individuals and small groups adorned with elaborate ornaments, sometimes accompanied by children, indicating a system of inherited wealth. Remarkably, these burials date back between 34,000 and 26,000 years ago, challenging the notion that centralized power and inequality are exclusive to modern society (Marian and D'Errico, 2005). These ice age burials appear sporadically over centuries and across hundreds of miles, raising questions about the absence of typical hallmarks of centralized power, such as fortifications and palaces. These grand burials instead suggest brief episodes of influence rather than long-term power over their communities.

Philosophers and anthropologists alike have long been engaged in the classical debate: Are humans innately hierarchical or innately egalitarian? Advocates for the innate hierarchical nature of humans might argue that hierarchical arrangements arose early in human evolution as a natural consequence of competition for vital resources. They may argue that any semblance of egalitarianism in past societies was merely due to a lack of cognitive capacity to develop complex power structures in the first place. Conversely, proponents of humans' innate egalitarian

tendencies often idealize hunter-gatherer and prehistoric societies as embodiments of "natural" egalitarianism. They may argue that modern societies have only recently deviated from this egalitarian state, succumbing to the perversion of social hierarchy. Can we resolve this debate?

Primates, including humans, do exhibit innate tendencies toward dominance-submissive behaviors. Just as a gorilla might beat its chest to assert dominance over others, a human hunter may boast about a successful hunt to establish power within their community. Such displays of power have the potential to culminate in the formation of social hierarchies. For instance, the hunter may dictate who receives a portion of the meat or compel others to perform tasks in exchange for their share. However, humans have demonstrated the unique ability to consciously act against the centralization of power, thereby influencing the format of social hierarchies (Boehm, 1999). Ethnographic records of extant egalitarian foraging bands in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia provide insights into tactics commonly used to humble domineering individuals, effectively preventing the formation of hierarchies. These tactics encompass ridicule, shame, ostracism, and, in extreme cases, even direct elimination (Graeber and Wengrow, 2023). For example, while gorillas do not mock each other for chest-beating, foraging groups often systematically belittle and mock their most skilled hunters. This is a well-thought-out strategy, and forager societies engage in it deliberately. They mock dominant hunters because they comprehend what their society might look like if they did not. If a hunter were to refuse to yield to the group and hoard the spoils of his hunt, he would likely face ostracism from the community, diminishing his chances of survival. Humans are neither inherently geared toward egalitarian societies nor hierarchical ones. However, we possess the capacity to consciously contemplate different societal directions and make deliberate decisions regarding which path to pursue.

Throughout millennia, societies have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to oscillate between different social structures, consciously choosing to participate in hierarchical systems at times and then dismantling them. Since at least the last Ice Age, we have observed societies exhibiting authoritarian social hierarchies, as well as those characterized by strictly egalitarian bonds. We have established that neither type of social organization can be seen as instinctual. Both egalitarian and hierarchical systems are decisions that societies make. They require effort to build and maintain. In our everyday lives, we witness the considerable effort it takes to maintain hierarchical social systems, from enforcing authority through policing to negotiating power dynamics. Similarly, egalitarianism is not a natural state but a deliberate and purposeful decision. Sustaining egalitarian structures demands constant vigilance against the emergence of hierarchies and a steadfast commitment to promoting equality among individuals (Guenther, 2007). Thus, whether hierarchical or egalitarian, the functioning of social structures ultimately relies on human agency and collective action. Societies have successfully implemented and maintained egalitarian systems for millennia. Just as it takes a conscious decision to build and maintain a hierarchical system with centralized power, such as our government, creating institutions that work to maintain egalitarian bonds is a deliberate, effortful choice. One is not easier or more natural than the other. Both require ongoing effort and commitment from individuals within society. With the right kind of work, egalitarian systems remain attainable in the modern day.

Throughout the history of social welfare systems, one consistent theme emerges: the constant alteration of communal bonds, indicating an innately human awareness of various societal possibilities. With such institutional flexibility comes the ability to step outside of the boundaries of any given structure and reflect, reimagining paradigms of power and resource allocation (Graeber and Wengrow, 2023). While our ancestors found it easier to envision and

purposefully reject domination that was not serving them, imagining our modern society without our familiar, permanent centralized power seems difficult for many of us. In the United States, at least, we have become entrenched in a singular mode of social organization: centralized government power that controls a hierarchical welfare system. This has profound effects on the efficacy of our government welfare system. For example, the bureaucratization of welfare often causes delays in processing applications, administrative errors, and high administrative costs. These inefficiencies undermine the effectiveness of welfare systems, leading to frustration among recipients and administrators alike (Gillette, 2022). In the following chapter, we will further critique the state of modern welfare. But if we can learn from our evolutionary history, we must step outside of the existing hierarchical structure to reflect on it. We must harness our unique ability as humans to assess the various possibilities of social organization and social welfare available to us, depending on the actions that we take. To escape the confines of our current welfare paradigm, we must remember our ability to care without hierarchical structures. We must reestablish horizontal bonds within our community and value the well-being of its most vulnerable members when formalized welfare systems fail to do so.

Chapter 3

The Modern Condition of Communal Care

The roots of the modern welfare system in the United States can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period marked by industrialization, urbanization, and social reform movements. This era witnessed a shift from agrarian-based economies to industrial economies, bringing about significant social and economic transformations (Blumin, 2006). Hazardous working conditions, extended work hours, meager wages, and inadequate safety regulations led to widespread poverty and social unrest. The rapid expansion of industries spurred mass migrations from rural to urban areas in pursuit of employment opportunities, resulting in many individuals being disconnected from their former tight-knit rural communities. In the absence of traditional community support networks, these burgeoning urban populations increasingly relied on government intervention to address workers' needs and alleviate poverty (Garland, 2014). Social activists and labor unions fervently advocated for legislative measures aimed at providing social protections for workers and their families.

The Great Depression of the 1930s marked a watershed moment for the American welfare state, prompting unprecedented expansion. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal introduced pivotal measures such as Social Security, unemployment insurance, and public works projects to address widespread unemployment and homelessness (Samuelson, 2020). The Social Security Act of 1935 laid the foundation for economic security by providing retirement benefits, unemployment insurance, disability benefits, and aid for dependent children and the elderly. Subsequently, the Great Society initiatives of the 1960s further broadened welfare programs, introducing Medicare and Medicaid and expanding food assistance programs. Today, the modern

U.S. welfare system encompasses a comprehensive array of federal, state, and local programs aimed at supporting vulnerable populations.

While the American welfare system offers vital support to many, it also perpetuates harmful dynamics. Formal welfare mechanisms have shifted reliance away from informal networks of mutual aid towards government agencies and charities, weakening community bonds. This increased dependency on highly centralized bureaucratized systems undermines the egalitarian principles of mutual aid and collective responsibility (Langer and Højlund, 2011). Government agencies administer welfare programs with limited community input, fostering disconnection and distrust. Activist groups point out how the welfare system fails to address historical colonialism and systemic racism, providing temporary solutions without tackling root issues. For instance, homelessness disproportionately affects Black residents in cities like Pittsburgh, yet welfare responses often overlook systemic racism's role in creating the crisis. Instead, they offer temporary shelter with stringent eligibility criteria, neglecting basic human rights to food and shelter while perpetuating systemic inequalities.

Centralized social welfare also exists on smaller scales than government welfare. Many communities have smaller, yet still centralized systems of support, such as non-profit organizations and charities. These local initiatives possess unique advantages compared to larger welfare systems, such as a greater degree of community involvement, flexibility in addressing specific needs, and a more intimate understanding of local community dynamics. These organizations often step in to address issues in their local communities, such as poverty, homelessness, or hunger. They play a crucial role in providing services and support to their communities, filling gaps left by government programs. However, their operations still reflect the innate issues with hierarchical social support. For instance, nonprofits must compete for

funding in a competitive market environment, often relying on donations and grants to sustain their organization. They also must navigate legal and regulatory frameworks put in place by the government, which can shape their governance structures and operational practices. While nonprofits strive to address social or environmental challenges, their ability to do so is constrained by the broader hierarchical system in which they operate and must comply with.

Decentralized, community-supported reciprocity persists despite our growing dependence on highly centralized welfare systems. Mutual aid organizers adopt a distinct approach to social welfare compared to nonprofits, particularly regarding their reliance on state and private funding. They assert that the very government systems contributing to wealth disparity are ill-equipped to effectively address it. Instead, mutual aid initiatives prioritize solidarity and empowerment through the cultivation of direct community care networks. While mutual aid may address immediate survival needs, its broader goal is to empower communities, fostering collaborative efforts to challenge existing institutions that fail to serve the people effectively. In contrast to charities and nonprofits, which often focus on immediate needs without addressing systemic issues or involving aid recipients in decision-making processes, mutual aid endeavors to tackle the root causes of resource disparities. Operating horizontally with rotating collectives of participants, mutual aid networks are inherently adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs and desires of local communities. Unlike many nonprofits or state agencies constrained by bureaucratic structures and stakeholder interests, mutual aid groups enjoy the flexibility to establish direct relationships with and organize around the specific needs of those they serve.

One notable example of a mutual aid organization in recent history is the Black Panther Party's Breakfast for Children Program. The Party's programs addressed hunger, class division, and racism while raising the community's awareness of political issues. The Free Breakfast for

School Children program started in 1969 in Oakland, California, and was founded on the notion that all children deserve access to a nutritious breakfast before school (Harris, 2001). It quickly grew into a nationwide initiative, with some locations serving more than a thousand children weekly. However, unlike our ancestors who constantly fluctuated between various methods of social organization, today's mutual aid organizers often face opposition in attempting to create egalitarian support structures, especially from governmental authorities. The FBI abruptly shut down the Breakfast for Children Program, viewing the Black Panthers as a threat to national security and being particularly concerned with the public support they garnered through the breakfast program. About a decade later, Food Not Bombs (FNB) was created in Cambridge, MA alongside the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s. Presently consisting of chapters across the globe, FNB provides free food to all who show up at their distributions. Founded amid the anti-war movement, FNB chapters have also frequently faced harassment and arrest from law enforcement over the years (Davies, 2019). This opposition from the government shows a reluctance to support horizontally structured community assistance programs, perhaps because the government recognizes its loss of power and authority when it does not control resources and welfare implementation.

However, when the implementation of welfare efforts does remain in the hands of the government, it often becomes wrapped up in broader political discourse. For instance, earlier this year, Republican governors in 15 states declined to participate in a newly funded federal program aimed at providing food assistance to hungry children during the summer months. The governors cite various reasons for their refusal. Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds expressed skepticism about allocating additional funds to aid food-insecure youths amidst concerns over childhood obesity rates. Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen (R) simply stated his disbelief in welfare

programs. These political leaders face criticism for politicizing support for vulnerable children; however, they argue against high welfare spending in the context of considerable national debt and ongoing budget negotiations in Washington. These governors are more beholden to their position in the hierarchical government system than they are to the hungry children in the communities that they are supposed to be serving.

Rather than relying solely on hierarchical approaches to social welfare, mutual aid initiatives empower community members to support each other based on principles of cooperation and collective responsibility (Kinna, 1995). They excel not only in addressing immediate material needs like hunger but also in tackling systemic issues such as housing insecurity, food justice, healthcare access, and environmental justice. By addressing the root causes of social and economic inequality and advocating for systemic change, mutual aid initiatives empower communities to collectively challenge inequitable systems. As our society shifted to becoming more dependent on centralized welfare, they did not take on this role. Welfare systems continue to fall short in addressing systemic issues that marginalize groups and impact vulnerable community members, and it is evident that change is needed. In the upcoming chapters of this thesis, we will explore this concept further by analyzing the transformation of welfare in Pittsburgh and conducting a spatial analysis of its demographics, industrialization, and social support mechanisms, aiming to envision the city's social welfare through a communal lens.

Chapter 4

Pittsburgh as a Microcosm of Post-Industrial Social Support

Pittsburgh's industrial roots date back to the 19th century when the discovery of coal, iron ore, and limestone in the surrounding hills fueled the rapid expansion of the region's steel industry. The advent of steamboats played a pivotal role in transporting goods and raw materials, contributing to massive industrial growth. Renowned as the "Steel City," Pittsburgh saw the rise of major companies like Carnegie Steel Corporation and U.S. Steel Corporation, led by industrial titans Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan respectively. The city's steel mills and factories churned out vast quantities of steel, essential for constructing skyscrapers, bridges, railroads, and ships nationwide (Hawes, 1986). This industrial boom attracted waves of immigrants from Europe and migrants from rural areas seeking employment opportunities in the thriving industrial economy. Lack of access to affordable housing, inadequate sanitation, and limited public services made life in Pittsburgh difficult for the previous and new residents of Pittsburgh. These new urban inhabitants found themselves distanced from their traditional communal support networks, amidst a fractured social environment.

The steel industry posed numerous risks to city residents, as the lack of established social welfare infrastructure left them vulnerable. Pollution from steel facilities degraded air and water quality, increasing health risks for nearby residents. Steelworkers endured hazardous working conditions and layoffs, exacerbating conditions of poverty. This rapid urbanization strained housing infrastructure, leading to overcrowding and substandard conditions (Hawes, 1986). During Pittsburgh's industrial peak in the mid-20th century, federal social welfare programs expanded, offering vital assistance. Simultaneously, efforts to combat racial and economic disparities gained momentum through civil rights initiatives and anti-poverty campaigns.

However, the decline of the steel industry in the late 20th century brought new crises to Pittsburgh's social services system. Massive job losses and widespread unemployment resulted from the closure of steel mills, straining existing support systems. Government assistance proved insufficient, exacerbating economic insecurity for displaced workers and their families. Minority and low-income neighborhoods, already burdened by industrial pollution and economic marginalization, bore the brunt of deindustrialization's impact (Rees, 1997). The failure of social services to address poverty, discrimination, and environmental degradation showed their inadequacy. Unlike previous economic downturns, deindustrialization represented a long-term structural shift, leaving communities grappling with entrenched poverty and unemployment (Hawes, 1986). As traditional manufacturing jobs disappeared and new industries failed to emerge, social services struggled to meet escalating demand amid declining public infrastructure. Former industrial hubs were abandoned, leaving neighborhoods destitute without local industries to sustain them.

Following deindustrialization, Pittsburgh embarked on revitalization efforts to adapt to its new post-industrial identity (Allen, 2012). Former industrial sites were repurposed for offices, residences, and recreational spaces. However, these revitalization endeavors often overlooked marginalized areas while favoring affluent neighborhoods. Historical redlining and urban renewal policies marginalized Black communities, leading to neglect and disinvestment. Consequently, revitalization initiatives prioritized predominantly white neighborhoods, exacerbating disparities (Logan, 2015). Gentrification further marginalized Black communities, displacing residents, and eroding affordable housing. Environmental racism compounded challenges, with industrial pollution disproportionately affecting minority neighborhoods (Hawes, 1986). Despite advocacy efforts, environmental hazards persist, worsening health

disparities. Community activists advocate for inclusive revitalization strategies, but challenges persist for Black communities. Calls for affordable housing and racial justice prompt city officials to reassess community needs. In response to post-industrial challenges, Pittsburgh has seen the rise of mutual aid initiatives. Steel City FNB, a local chapter of Food Not Bombs, distributes essential items multiple times weekly, operating from private properties with permission to avoid legal issues. The Pittsburgh Center for Autistic Advocacy ensures disabled individuals in Allegheny County receive the necessary funding and fosters community support through social media groups. Various funds like the Greater PGH Restaurant Workers Fund and PGH Artist Emergency Fund target specific communities. The residents of Pittsburgh have demonstrated a remarkable propensity for building horizontal relationships and caring for one another, yet the formalized welfare systems within the city lag, both in efficacy and equity (Gillette, 2022).

In the upcoming chapter, we will analyze Pittsburgh's demographics at the census block group level, focusing on household income, unemployment rates, and participation in government nutrition assistance programs. Additionally, we will examine the proximity of each census tract to historical steel mill sites and food aid locations to assess the effectiveness of Pittsburgh's post-industrial revitalization efforts and social support systems. Drawing on the findings from this spatial analysis and insights into adaptive social support mechanisms, the thesis will conclude by proposing recommendations for expanding non-hierarchical social welfare strategies to enhance the well-being of Pittsburgh's residents and those in other post-industrial societies across the United States.

Chapter 5

Echoes of Industry: Mapping Pittsburgh's Socioeconomic Inequality

To gain insight into the status of social welfare in Pittsburgh, we will now look at a series of maps illustrating historical industrialization and redlining patterns, contemporary demographics, usage patterns of social services, and other relevant variables. The geospatial data utilized for crafting these maps was sourced from publicly accessible datasets and then imported into ArcGIS Pro software. Datasets were standardized to a common coordinate system, and attribute data underwent formatting to ensure compatibility with analysis tools. The process of spatial analysis encompassed a spectrum of GIS techniques, including spatial overlay and proximity analysis, to discern meaningful patterns from the geospatial data. Map design considerations included the selection of suitable symbology, color palettes, and labeling aimed at effectively conveying patterns and trends. This chapter will showcase nine distinct maps, each accompanied by descriptions explaining their contents for the reader, and the subsequent chapter will further interpret the findings of the generated maps in conjunction with the study's objectives to draw insights into Pittsburgh's potential social support trajectory. To begin, we will look at a key component of this project: industrialization.
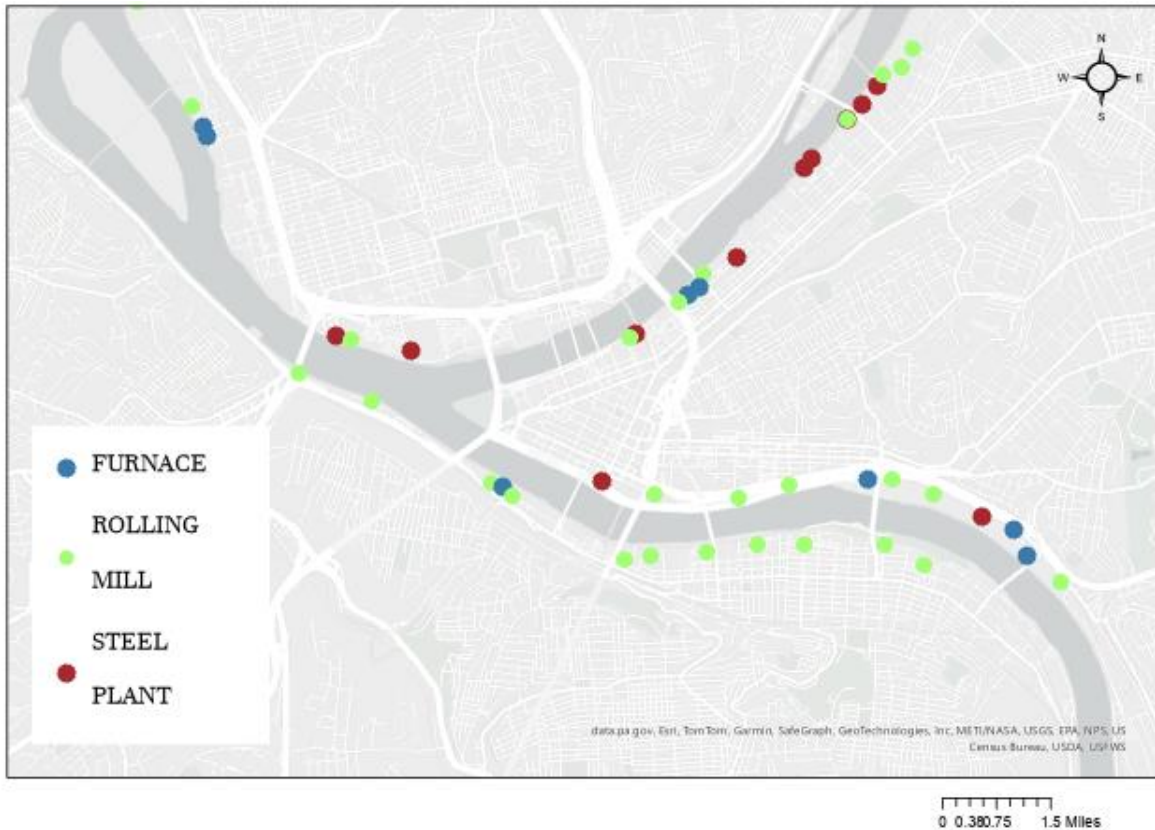
Figure 1. The Locations of Active Steel Facilities in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1879

In 1879, the Pittsburgh steel industry was on the cusp of a rapid expansion, poised for significant growth and laying the foundation for its future prominence. Figure 1 shows the locations of active Pittsburgh steel facilities in 1879, distinguished by type: furnace, rolling mill, or steel plant. The steel facilities are clustered around the rivers for several reasons. The rivers facilitated the transportation of raw materials such as coal, iron ore, and limestone. They also provided water for industrial processes, allowed mills to harness waterpower for machinery, and offered a means of waste disposal. Specifically, areas like the Monongahela River Valley, Allegheny River Valley, and Ohio River Valley were home to numerous steel mills. Rolling mills, used for shaping and reducing the thickness of metal sheets, are more concentrated along the more southern Monongahela River, while steel plants, which transform hot metal into steel,

are concentrated along the more northern Allegheny River. These riverside locations formed the backbone of Pittsburgh's steel industry.
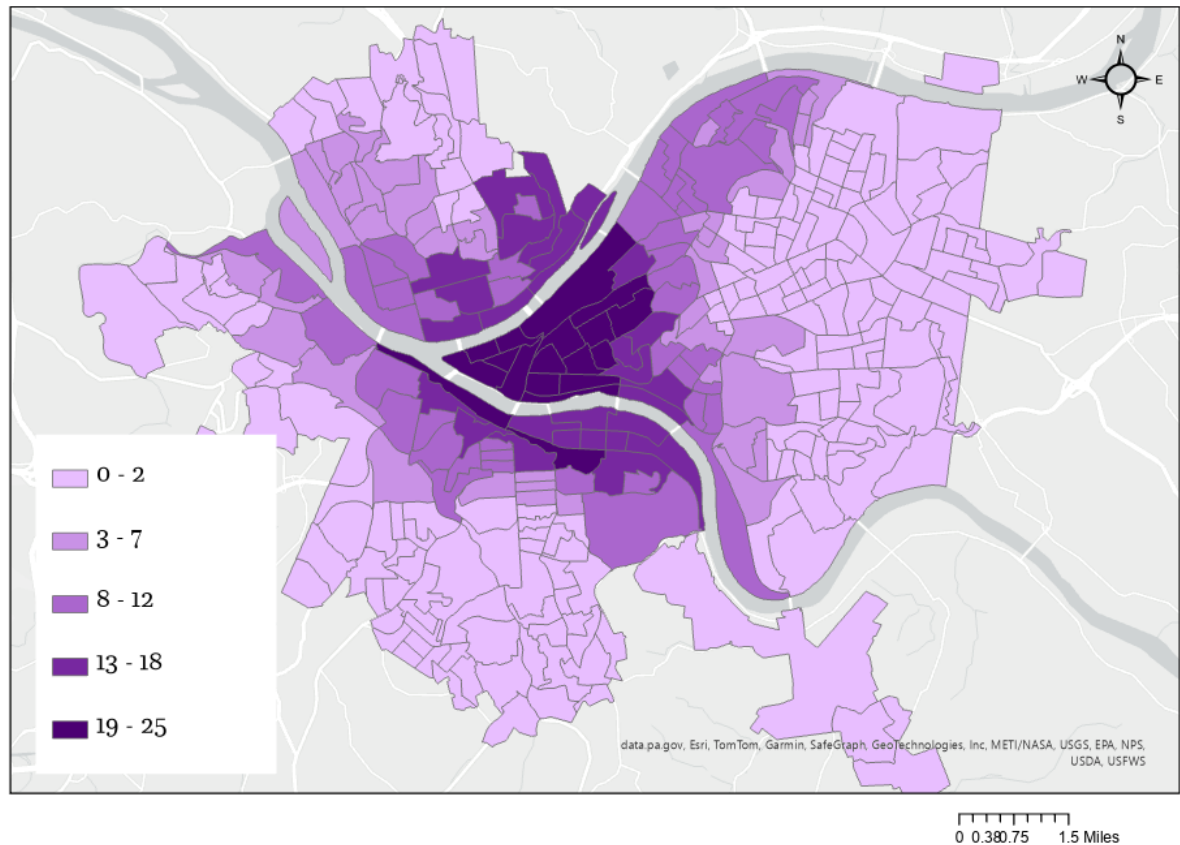

Figure 2. Count of Historical Steel Facilities Within 1 Mile of Block Groups

In Figure 2, we see a visualization of the count of historical steel mill facilities within one mile of each census block group, based on the locations marked in Figure 1. Darker purple shading indicates areas with a high density of steel facilities, while lighter shades suggest few or no steel facilities nearby. The concentration of steel facilities around the junction of Pittsburgh's three rivers is evident from the map. Specifically, the Central Business District (the Point) and adjacent neighborhoods like the Strip District, Bedford Dwellings, Crawford Roberts, Bluff, Middle Hill, Terrace Village, and parts of West Oakland have the highest proximity to historic

steel mills. South of the rivers, areas like the South Shore and South Side Slopes were also heavily industrialized, with surrounding neighborhoods showing significant proximity to steel facilities as well. As one moves away from the Point, the density of steel facilities along riverfront areas decreases. This thesis focuses on industrialization and its role in the development of Pittsburgh, but countless other historical factors have played a role in shaping the socioeconomic landscape. In the next map, we will take another factor that has drastically influenced the current socioeconomic landscape of Pittsburgh: redlining.
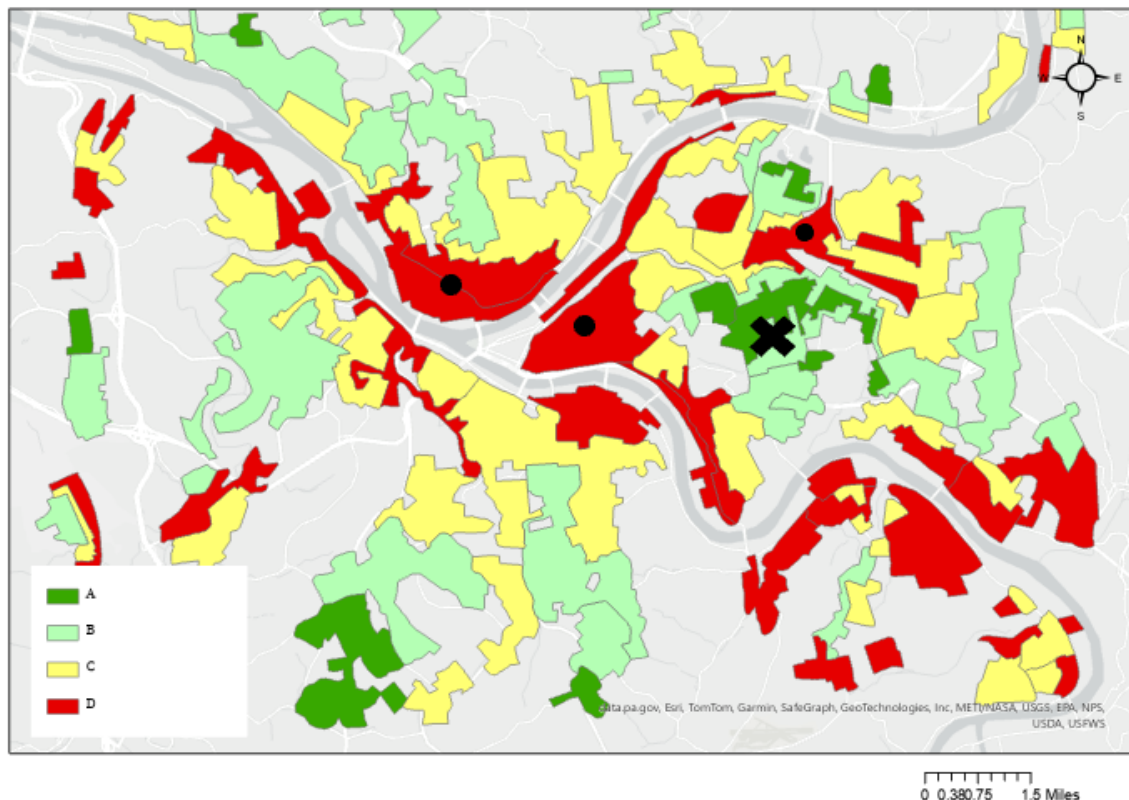

Figure 3. 1937 Home Owners Loan Corporation Redlining Map of Pittsburgh

In the 1930s, the federal government transformed the mortgage market with the introduction of 30-year mortgage packages, making homeownership more accessible. The term "redlining" arose from mortgage lenders marking areas on maps, typically in red, as too risky for

loans. This discriminatory practice, rooted in pervasive racial bias, led to the denial of loans to African American, immigrant, and Jewish communities, regardless of their creditworthiness. The data presented in Figure 3 originates directly from a 1937 map produced by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). Although not officially used by bankers and appraisers for lending decisions, these HOLC maps significantly influenced biased appraisals by providing tools, rationales, and examples for banks to create their maps. Figure 7 illustrates the HOLC's evaluation of Pittsburgh neighborhoods in 1937, with each neighborhood graded A, B, C, or D based on perceived investment value, where "A" is desirable, "B" is good, "C" is declining, and "D" is hazardous.

Due to the discriminatory practice of redlining, areas with the highest proportions of African American residents consistently aligned with red and yellow zones. Three primary "hazardous" neighborhoods highlighted in Figure 3 include the Hill District (situated at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers), Manchester (north of this junction), and Homewood to the east. Historically undervalued by redlining practices, these areas experienced economic disinvestment and enduring consequences. In contrast, communities labeled as "desirable" enjoyed unrestricted access to the mortgage market. Squirrel Hill, marked with a black "X" in Figure 3, exemplifies one such community. The redlining policies of the 1930s in Pittsburgh have left a lasting imprint on neighborhood wealth, with areas historically labeled as "undesirable" experiencing persistent economic challenges and lower property values compared to those designated as "hazardous."
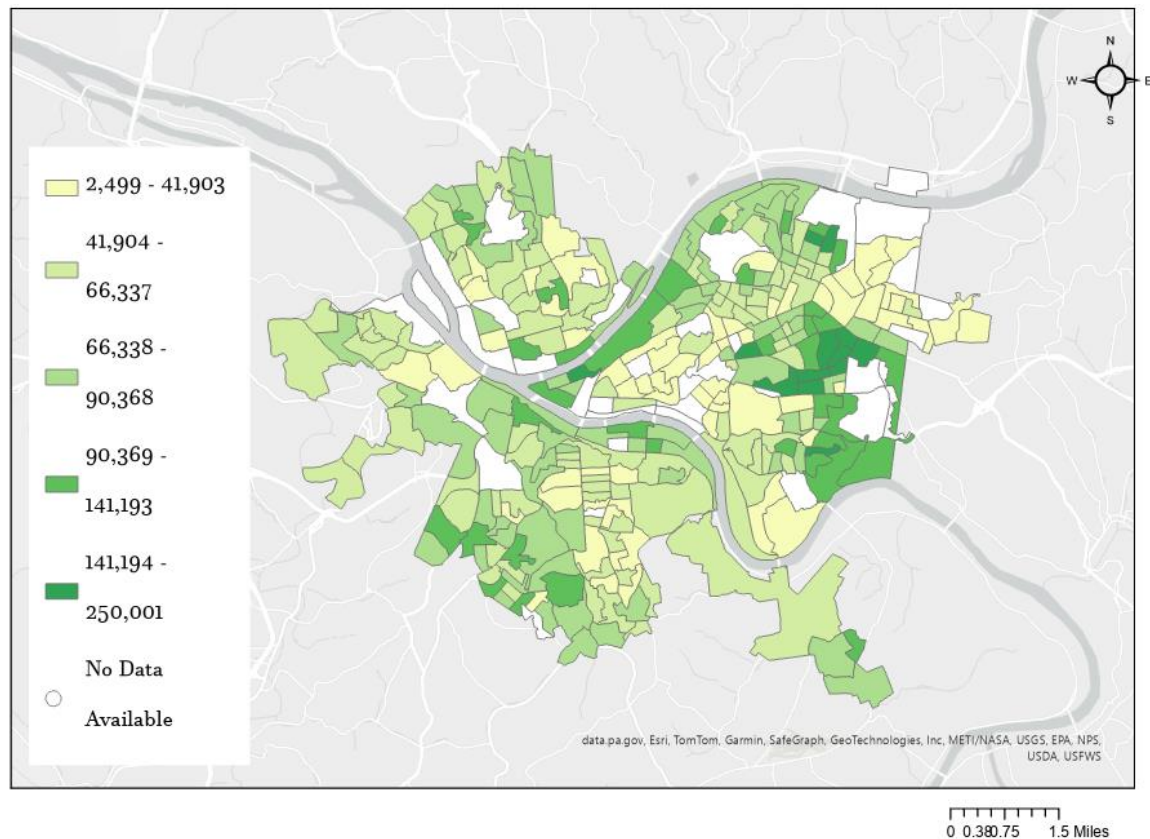
Figure 4. Mean Annual Household Income by Block Group ($)

Pittsburgh showcases a diverse socioeconomic landscape marked by enduring disparities, as depicted in Figure 4 displaying mean annual household income across census block groups. Darker shades of green represent higher average incomes and lighter shades indicate lower mean incomes. Areas like the Point and the Strip District, situated within the river fork, exhibit higher mean incomes compared to surrounding regions. Conversely, the Hill District and Homewood, both designated as "hazardous" in Figure 3, display lower average incomes. As depicted in Figure 2, these regions have a rich industrial history, suggesting a potential correlation between past industrialization and contemporary economic challenges.

Neighborhoods such as Shadyside and Squirrel Hill, graded as "desirable" in Figure 3, demonstrate considerable prosperity in the eastern part of the city. As seen in Figure 3, these

regions have been historically less industrialized than other areas of Pittsburgh. Income levels vary both along the riverside and inland, with clusters of high-income groups juxtaposed with other affluent clusters, while clusters of low-income groups are similarly grouped together. Certainly, the correlation between redlining and contemporary wealth will be explored in depth in the subsequent chapter. For the present, recalling the historical industrialization patterns evident in Figures 1 and 2, we will shift our attention to examining contemporary industrial patterns   in   Pittsburgh.
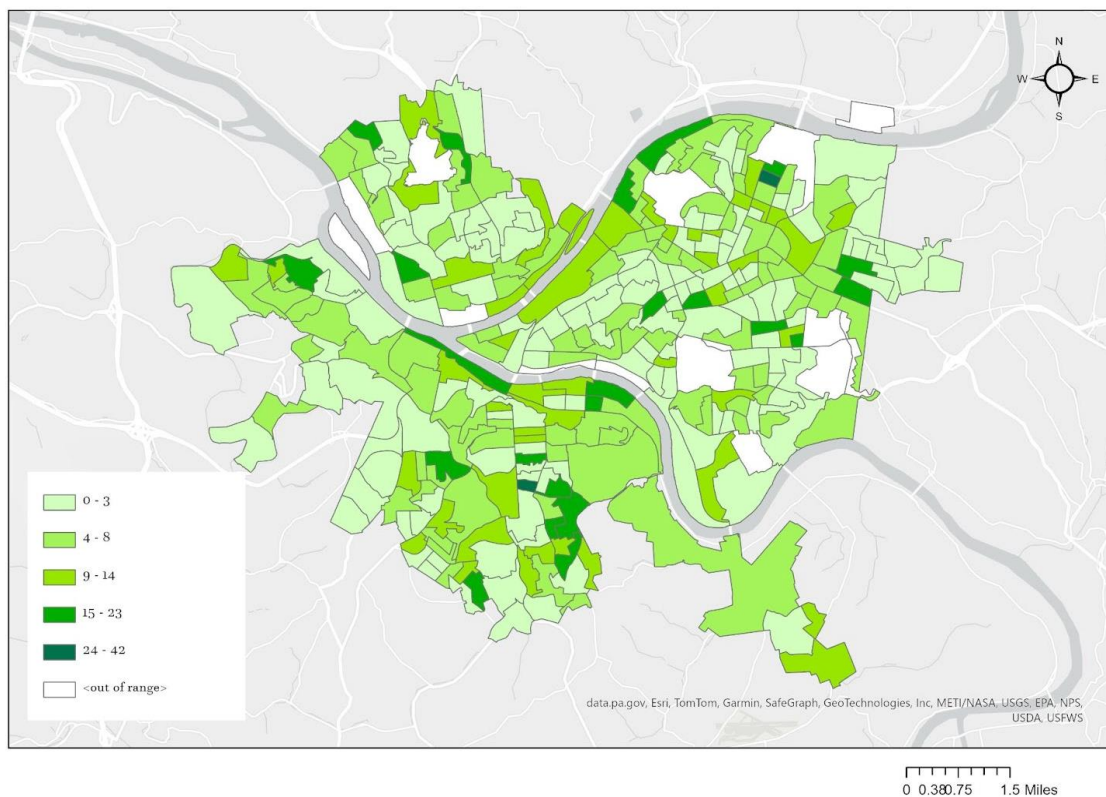

Figure 5. Percentage of Residents Employed in Manufacturing by Block Group

Figure 5 displays the percentage of residents employed in manufacturing industries across census block groups. The map is shaded in varying intensities of green to represent different percentage ranges. A key observation is Pittsburgh's general transition away from its

industrial past, with only a small portion of its residents now working in industrial occupations. Areas such as Western Homewood on the eastern side of the city and the South Shore and Southside Flats, located south of the river junction, show higher concentrations of manufacturing jobs. As evidenced in Figure 2, the South Shore and Southside Flats were historically very industrialized, but Homewood, on the other hand, has only become so industrialized in more recent years. Central parts of the city which were previously the most industrial areas of Pittsburgh (see Figure 2) now have much lower percentages of residents employed in manufacturing. This likely indicates a more diverse job market in those regions, possibly with a larger presence of service-oriented or technology-based employment. The gradation of color from the darkest greens to lighter greens throughout the city suggests there are central hubs of manufacturing, with the percentage gradually decreasing as you move away from these hubs.
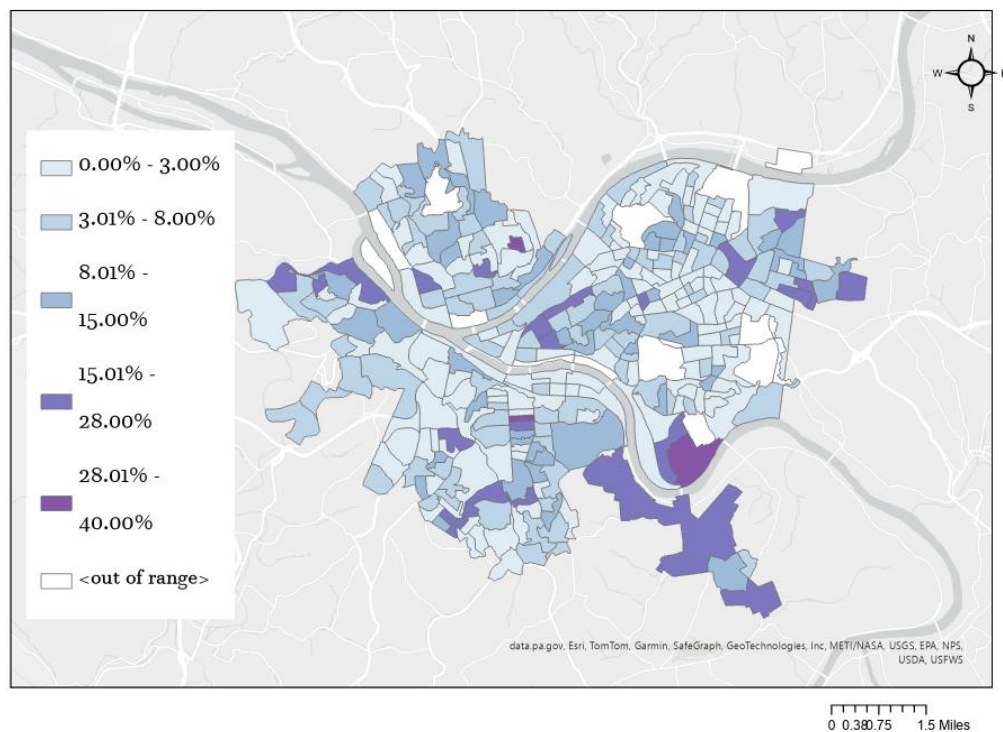

Figure 6. Percentage of Residents Unemployed by Block Group

Figure 6 illustrates unemployment rates by census block group within the Pittsburgh area, using shades of blue to represent the percentage of residents unemployed, with darker shades indicating higher unemployment levels. The central areas of Pittsburgh exhibit a moderate level of unemployment, suggesting a relatively stable job market in the city's core. However, certain patches, particularly in the southeastern corner of the map (such as New Homestead, Hazelwood, and Glen Hazel), experience significantly higher unemployment rates, ranging from 28% to 40%. As evidenced in Figures 2 and 3, these areas had a moderate level of industrialization historically and were labeled as "hazardous" or undesirable during redlining practices. Under the bend in the northern Allegheny River in the Lawrenceville neighborhood, unemployment rates are low. This area, as depicted in Figure 5, has a higher proportion of residents employed in manufacturing compared to many other parts of the city. Overall, there is considerable variability within Pittsburgh itself, with no consistent patterns of unemployment. This variability implies that economic influences on employment are highly localized.

Comparing this map to Figure 4 reveals a noticeable inverse relationship between average income and unemployment, indicating that areas with lower incomes tend to have higher unemployment rates. Furthermore, many areas closer to historical steel facilities, as depicted in Figure 2, exhibit both lower mean annual household incomes and higher unemployment rates. This suggests a lasting economic impact from the decline of the steel industry, leading to decreased incomes and elevated unemployment levels. However, numerous locales deviate from this pattern. For instance, The Point, situated directly inside the junction of the rivers, was once a hub of industrial activity. Yet, it now exhibits low unemployment rates and higher average household incomes than much of the city, as evidenced in Figure 4. This could suggest successful revitalization or gentrification, with new industries or residential developments taking

root (Gillette, 2022). Further investigation into this phenomenon will be conducted in the next chapter. For now, we will explore maps detailing the current state of Pittsburgh's formalized welfare systems.
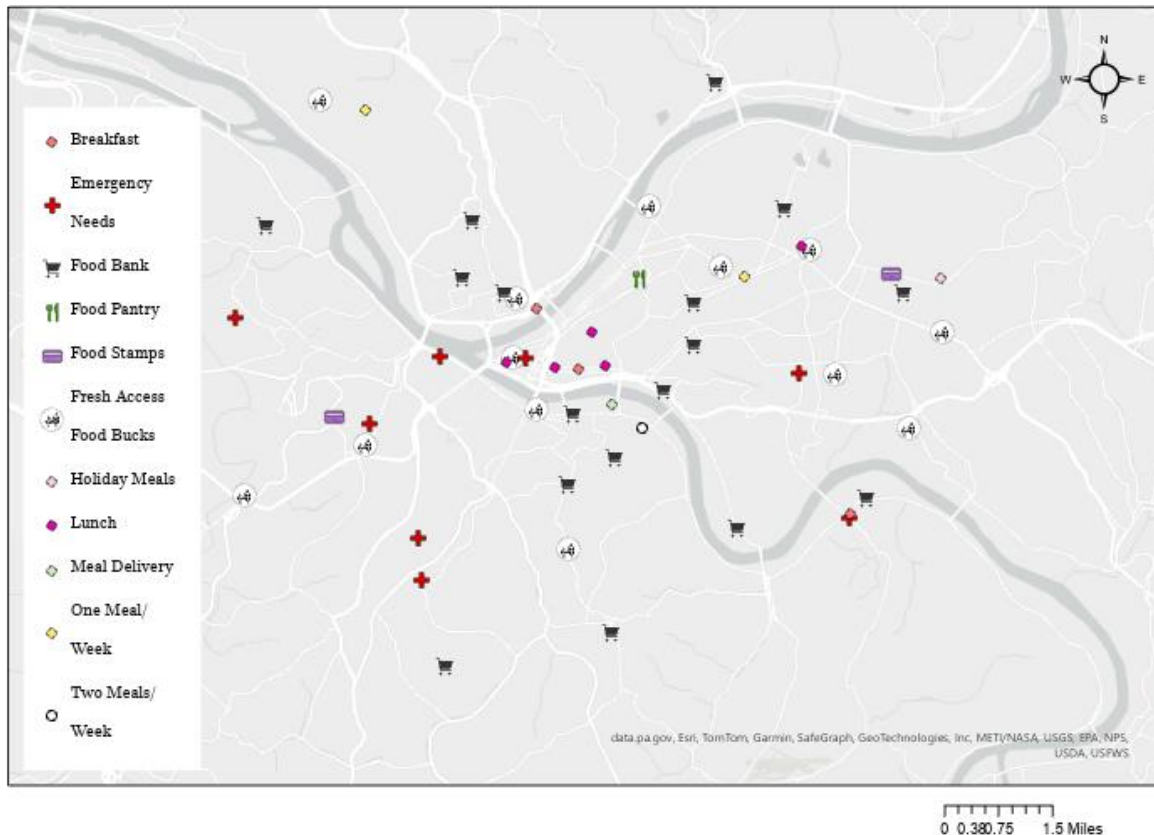
Figure 7. Locations of Available Food Assistance Services

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of various types of food assistance services throughout the Pittsburgh area. Each service is marked with a specific symbol and color that corresponds to the type of assistance offered, allowing viewers to easily identify the locations and types of services available. For example, emergency assistance services are marked with a red cross, food banks with an orange square, and soup kitchens with a black bowl and spoon icon. While there

appears to be a high concentration of services available near the junction of the rivers, services are spread across the city.

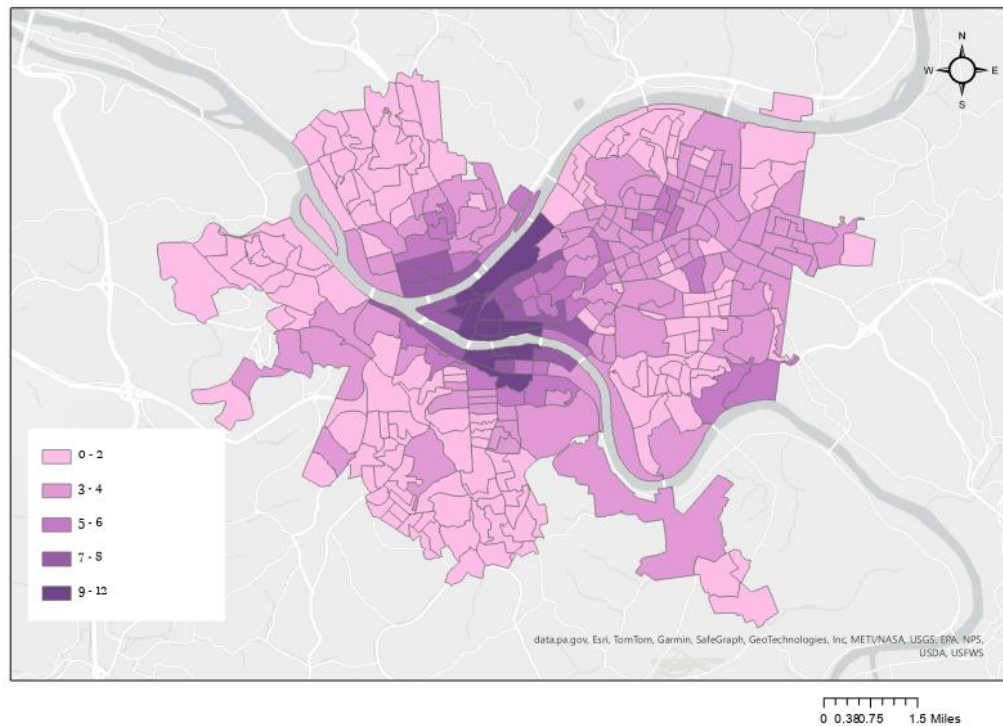
Figure 8. Count of Food Assistance Services Within 1 Mile of Block Groups

Figure 6 depicts Pittsburgh Census Block Groups by the number of food assistance locations within a 1-mile radius. The darkest purple areas, indicating the highest concentration of food assistance services, are located within the central parts of Pittsburgh. There is a noticeable corridor of medium to dark purple shades following the river and the downtown area, suggesting that food assistance services are more centralized.

Areas that have a greater number of food assistance locations in this map often coincide with areas with moderate to high unemployment rates in Figure 6. This makes sense, as areas with higher unemployment might have a higher demand for food assistance services. The outlying areas that showed lower unemployment rates in Figure 6 also tend to have fewer food

assistance locations in this map, which could indicate either a lower need for such services or possibly less access to them. Moreover, areas with higher mean annual household income as seen in Figure 4 tend to have fewer food assistance locations nearby. Conversely, areas with lower income levels have more food assistance locations.

In comparing Figure 6 to Figure 2, the map of each block group's proximity to historical steel facilities, it appears that there is a correlation between historical industrialization and areas with a higher concentration of food assistance locations, possibly suggesting a lingering socioeconomic impact from the time when steel mills were major employers.
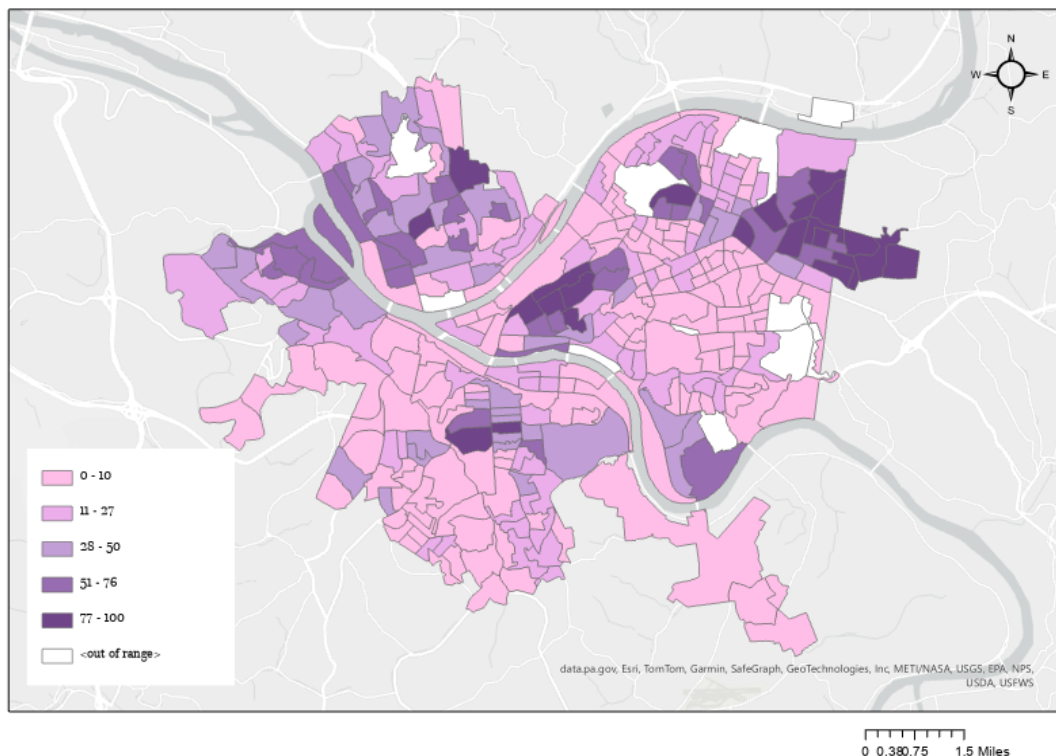

Figure 9. Percentage of Residents Receiving SNAP Benefits by Block Group

This map shows the census block groups by the percentage of residents receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. Areas with a higher percentage of SNAP beneficiaries are shaded more darkly, such as Homewood to the northeast, the Hill District

within the fork of the rivers, and Hazelwood above the southern bend of the Monongahela River. These areas are heavily reliant on government welfare support to meet their food needs, with over 77% of residents dependent on SNAP benefits to eat.

The map is indeed a visual representation of the distribution of SNAP benefits across different census block groups in Pittsburgh. The darker shaded areas, such as Homewood to the northeast, the Hill District nestled within the rivers' fork, and Hazelwood above the southern bend of the Monongahela River, stand out with a particularly high percentage of residents receiving SNAP benefits. In these areas, a significant portion of the population relies on government assistance to meet nutritional needs, with over 77% of residents depending on SNAP benefits. The contrast between these areas and those with lighter shading is indicative of the disparities in economic well-being across Pittsburgh. As depicted in Figure 2, all three of the aforementioned areas (Homewood, the Hill District, and Hazelwood) were moderately or extensively industrialized. Additionally, all three were delineated in red in Figure 3, signifying they were redlined as "hazardous" neighborhoods.

These maps have made clear the interconnectedness between historical industrialization, discriminatory redlining practices, contemporary socioeconomic status, and the establishment of formalized social support structures in Pittsburgh. In the forthcoming chapter, we will further analyze these connections, examining how they have shaped the city's landscape and impacted its residents across generations. Additionally, drawing upon the insights gained from these maps and our previous anthropological examination of social organization, we will uncover potential avenues for redressing systemic inequalities and nurturing the development of more equitable urban environments.

Chapter 6

Inequitable Social Welfare in Industrial and Post-Industrial Pittsburgh

The socioeconomic and social support landscape in Pittsburgh is diverse and complex. In exploring how these landscapes have been shaped and discussing their modern divide, our focus will narrow to two neighborhoods: the Central Business District and the Hill District. Through their unique and contrasting stories, we will investigate how economic development, the steel industry, and social policies interact, as demonstrated by the spatial analysis conducted in the previous chapter. This approach will not only explain the differences between the development of the Central Business District and the Hill District but also explore the cultural resilience inherent to Pittsburgh.
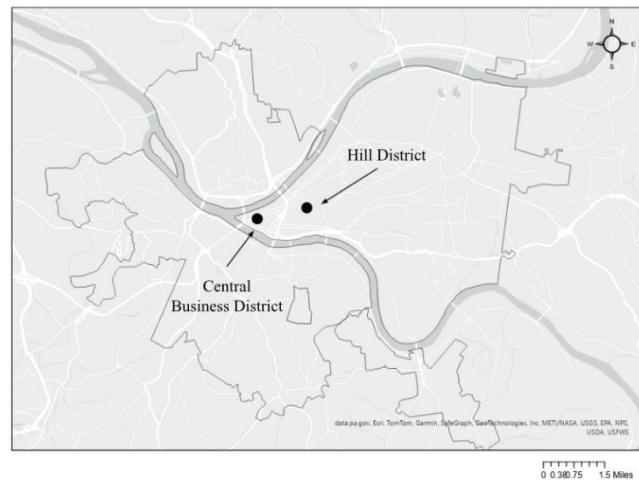
Figure 10. Location of the Central Business and Hill Districts

Reflecting on the insights garnered from the previous chapter, we noted that during the zenith of Pittsburgh's steel era, both the Central Business District and the Hill District lay at the heart of the city's industrial zone. According to Figure 2, these neighborhoods bore the densest clusters of steel production facilities, signifying their pivotal roles in the industrial landscape. Figure 3, showcasing a 1937 Home Owners Loan Corporation redlining map, intriguingly omits

the Central Business District, likely due to its industrial rather than residential nature. In stark contrast, the Hill District was starkly delineated in red, unjustly deemed unworthy of investment, a designation rooted in racial discrimination.

The Hill District emerged as a beacon for African American migrants fleeing the oppressive Jim Crow laws of the rural South from the 1910s onward. By 1920, the neighborhood's African American population surged from approximately 10,000 in 1890 to over 37,000, with a demographic largely composed of young, single men. (Grantmyre, 2016) The prevailing harsh racial segregation forced these newcomers almost exclusively into the Hill District, where overcrowded boarding houses often necessitated sleeping in shifts. Despite grappling with the challenges of steel smog and subpar housing conditions, the Hill District thrived culturally, transforming into a hub of Jazz music. Iconic performers like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington graced its venues, and the neighborhood flourished with nightclubs, bars, and gambling dens operated by Black entrepreneurs, establishing a vibrant social and cultural scene (Harper, 2024).

The Hill District was a neighborhood vibrant with cultural richness and home to numerous successful Black-owned businesses. However, much of its housing stock was outdated and in poor condition. In the aftermath of World War II, as part of a nationwide initiative to improve housing standards, the federal government targeted 95 acres of the Hill District for redevelopment. In the summer of 1956, this plan led to the demolition of over 1,300 housing units, displacing more than 8,000 residents, most of whom were Black (McClain, 1957). This drastic action paved the way for the construction of the Civic Arena, later known as Mellon Arena. The displacement forced many of the Hill District's Black residents to relocate to other neighborhoods like East Liberty and Homewood-Brushton. Those who stayed found themselves

increasingly isolated, as the redevelopment severed the neighborhood's direct connections to the city's core. Streets that had once been vital thoroughfares to downtown Pittsburgh became dead ends, contributing to a significant economic downturn in the area. This period marked a turning point for the Hill District, leading to a profound and lasting impact on its community and economic landscape (Grantmyre, 2016). Nonetheless, the steel industry of the Central Business District and Hill District continued to produce great quantities of steel. That is only until the 1970s when US steel was thrust into a deep depression due to international conflict. By 1983, over 245,000 Pittsburgh steel mill workers were laid off. As a result, by 1990, half of the population of the Pittsburgh region disappeared (Rees, 1997). Pittsburgh had lost its identity as the Steel City, and along with it, its entire economy. A manufacturing hub had to turn into something else. Pittsburgh began its revitalization efforts soon after the collapse of its steel industry.

Pittsburgh's transformation following the decline of its steel industry is a testament to strategic reinvention, economic diversification, and systemic racism. Central to this revitalization was the city's focus on the robust presence of educational and medical institutions. Universities such as the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University became catalysts for economic growth, fostering innovation, research, and development that attracted technology companies and startups (Hawes, 1986). The healthcare sector, anchored by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, expanded significantly, becoming a leading employer in the region. This shift towards a knowledge-based economy was complemented by investments in cultural and recreational infrastructure, further enhancing Pittsburgh's attractiveness to businesses and residents alike. The Central Business District was transformed into the economic heart of the city, hosting the headquarters of major corporations like PNC Financial Services and Heinz. It is

also the social nexus of Pittsburgh, offering an array of attractions such as Market Square, a lively public space known for its dining and entertainment options, and Point State Park, a park at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. However, these revitalization efforts largely concentrated on areas deemed ripe for investment and growth, overlooking historically marginalized neighborhoods like the Hill District (Hawes, 1986).

Today, the Hill District still faces higher levels of poverty and unemployment than many other parts of the city. It has struggled for decades with poverty, with about 40 percent of the Hill District's residents living below the poverty level. Pittsburgh's social services historically and continually fail neighborhoods like the Hill District due to a combination of systemic neglect, the aftermath of discriminatory policies, and resource allocation that doesn't match community needs (Grantmyre, 2016). The legacy of redlining led to decades of economic disinvestment, exacerbating poverty, and limiting access to quality housing, education, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the concentration of poverty created by such policies has made it difficult for residents to access essential services, as social support systems are often overwhelmed or underfunded in areas with high demand. Additionally, the geographic and social isolation stemming from urban renewal projects, like the construction of the Civic Arena, severed the Hill District from surrounding areas, making it harder for residents to access services located outside their immediate community. These factors, coupled with a historical mistrust between marginalized communities and institutional services, have led to a disconnect that hinders effective service delivery and exacerbates social and economic disparities. In essence, the failure of social welfare systems to support the Hill District is not just a matter of resource scarcity; It is an issue rooted in historical injustices and systemic biases that require targeted, community-led solutions to address effectively.

Chapter 7

Cultivating Equity through Community Care Strategies

The formalized social welfare system within Pittsburgh undoubtedly does good work to support its residents. The systems encompass a wide range of initiatives from healthcare to education, playing a pivotal role in supporting the city's populace. Numerous organizations extend essential services like food assistance, housing support, and more. Residents grappling with food insecurity can tap into SNAP benefits or frequent any of the city's numerous food pantries and soup kitchens. Yet, despite these efforts, in many communities such as the Hill District, residents are often still lacking necessities such as food and healthcare. It seems that the predominant social challenge within post-industrial Pittsburgh is not simply poverty, but instead, pervasive inequality. Critiquing traditional government welfare is imperative for understanding its limitations, especially in post-industrial environments like Pittsburgh, where inherent social, political, and economic inequality leads to social turbulence. In response to these challenges, communities may resort to four maladaptive strategies, as identified by Walmsley (1980). Despite their negative consequences, it is evident that these strategies are heavily relied upon by our government welfare systems.

Table 1. Maladaptive Strategies for Resolving Post-Industrial Social Turbulence

Strategy	Reasoning	Example
<u>Centralization</u> is the concentration of resources and decision-making capacity into a smaller group of people.	It seeks to simplify the social turbulence in the environment to a simple matter of scale. However, giving decision-making power to a smaller group can make social turbulence even more volatile.	A government agency oversees the distribution of food assistance programs, providing standardized food packages. They may not consider specific cultural preferences and needs, resulting in the recipient community's food needs not being met.

Authoritarianism-segmentation attempts to compartmentalize people and issues into discrete categories.	Segmentation limits policy choices for welfare providers, focusing their efforts narrowly. Coupled with large, centralized organizations, this can lead to authoritarianism, hindering user participation. Governments claim exclusive access to crucial information, justifying their centralized decision-making.	A government separates social assistance programs into categories like unemployment benefits and disability support. However, this limits welfare providers' ability to effectively assist individuals needing both, as their efforts are narrowly focused on specific needs within each category, and they are not given permission to assist with multiple needs.
Dissociation occurs when people, organizations, and governments, overwhelmed by turbulence, turn inward, prioritizing self-interest. Nonconformity is marginalized, excluding certain groups from welfare systems.	It leads to a decrease in the average individual's sense of responsibility for coordinating their behavior. Each reduction in responsibility necessitates the creation of specialized and extensive social regulatory institutions, either newly established or expanded from existing entities, to fulfill duties once handled by mutual support networks within the social fabric.	A government focuses on maintaining a stable economy and neglects to care for marginalized groups such as the homeless. This neglect reduces the public feeling of responsibility for supporting diverse members of the community, and self-interest is highly prioritized. Consequently, specialized institutions are established to compensate for the lack of mutual support networks.
Superficiality occurs when the deliverers of welfare services choose to avoid real and fundamental issues and to look instead at surrogate issues, particularly those that can be easily measured in quantitative terms	Society's fixation on quantitative measures oversimplifies social well-being, ignoring its complexity. Despite warnings about the limitations of measuring welfare, governments persist in relying on metrics like consumer price indices and unemployment rates. This approach reduces welfare to monetary terms and creates a superficial relationship with welfare systems.	A government focuses solely on reducing unemployment rates as a measure of welfare success, overlooking fair wages and job quality. Policymakers prioritize numerical targets over addressing systemic inequalities. This superficial fixation creates a disconnect between policy goals and the real needs of individuals and communities.

All four of these maladaptive mechanisms are present in the formalized welfare system of

Pittsburgh and the broader United States. Our modern welfare system does not prioritize deeply

understanding the circumstances and needs of impoverished people. Those who design such systems see their task as simply facilitating and coordinating the distribution of existing resources within the bounds of their agency. As a result, welfare agencies frequently adopt a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to account for the diverse needs of impoverished communities (Walmsley, 1980). For example, some welfare agencies mandate that recipients of support must work a minimum number of hours per week to continue receiving benefits, regardless of individual circumstances such as childcare responsibilities, health issues, or limited job opportunities in their area.

Additionally, our formalized welfare systems tend to view poverty as an individual failure rather than a structural issue. This perspective leads to welfare programs that emphasize personal responsibility over collective action and systemic reform, stigmatizing the suffering people that they aim to help. By not fully understanding or acknowledging the systemic factors that cause poverty - such as wage stagnation, the erosion of labor rights, and the severely skewed distribution of wealth - these systems cannot offer sustainable solutions (Langer and Højlund, 2011). Moreover, the bureaucratic nature of formalized welfare systems often renders them inaccessible to the very people they are supposed to serve. Complex application processes, stringent eligibility criteria, and the lack of culturally sensitive services can create barriers to access, leaving vulnerable populations without the support they need.

If the goal of governmental welfare is to get rid of poverty, it is failing (Kenworthy, 1999). Again, governmental welfare has benefits for many individuals, and this thesis does not argue for its abolishment. It argues for its reinvention and transformation into a system that succeeds in bringing people out of systemic poverty. Fortunately, there are ways communities

can respond to post-industrial turbulence that are adaptive, rather than maladaptive, and can truly

work to promote equity and collective well-being (Walmsley, 1980).

Table 2. Adaptive Strategies for Resolving Post-Industrial Social Turbulence

Adaptive Strategy	Reasoning
Decentralization of control in welfare delivery.	Welfare delivery agencies must be flexible and able to respond quickly to local conditions. This necessitates increases in local autonomy so that decisions can be made that are more in harmony with the varying needs of different communities of interest.
Decreasing specialization of social systems.	Parts must pursue their ends with respect for the total system. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary planning teams are indicative of progress.
Public participation and open planning	They aim to address dissociation by engaging individuals, institutions, and organizations in ongoing education to enhance their understanding and involvement in the welfare system. Citizen action groups have made strides in welfare, yet their impact is often stronger in tangible areas than in abstract ones.

In post-industrial societies marked by social turbulence, mutual aid practices can inform

the development of more equitable approaches, and the three adaptive mechanisms of increasing

local autonomy in welfare delivery, addressing systemic issues, and enhancing individuals'

understanding and involvement in the welfare system all fall within the tenets of mutual aid.

Informed by these principles, there are many changes that we can make to eliminate harmful

welfare systems in Pittsburgh that exacerbate marginalization and foster dependency on

authorities for assistance.

Crucially, advocating for policies that promote economic justice, such as fair taxation and

equitable distribution of resources, is paramount. To dismantle an unjust welfare system, we

must strive for a society where individuals can succeed without reliance on it (Walmsley, 1980).

This necessitates requiring the wealthiest individuals and corporations to pay their fair share of

taxes and implementing a wealth tax on the ultra-rich, with the funds reinvested back into the community. Reflecting on Pittsburgh's industrial history, if the steel barons had reinvested portions of their earnings into the communities where labor was provided, areas like the Hill District might have been able to provide themselves with safe housing. Instead, federal government intervention led to the demolition of buildings, displacing entire Black communities and devastating lives. Perhaps empowering communities themselves to address such challenges would have yielded better outcomes. Another important aspect of economic justice is enforcing fair wages. This involves implementing policies that ensure all workers in Pittsburgh and beyond receive wages that enable them to meet their basic needs and maintain a decent standard of living. This includes raising the minimum wage to a livable level and closing the gender and racial wage gaps. By ensuring fair wages for all workers, we can greatly enhance overall societal well-being.

Next, addressing underlying systemic issues like discrimination is crucial to reducing welfare dependency. Policies aimed at tackling root causes must be implemented. For example, considering monetary reparations for communities directly harmed by government actions could be a radical yet necessary idea (Monnat, 2010). Before the government bulldozed the Hill District, it was systematically marginalized due to racial discrimination, as evidenced by redlining practices. This historical injustice has inflicted enduring economic and social harm on the community. To restore equity, monetary reparations should be extended to the Hill District and other Black communities in Pittsburgh that have historically endured systemic discrimination.

Instead of relying solely on government welfare agencies to address community needs, it is imperative to empower communities to become self-sufficient. This involves granting local

communities their own decision-making authority. Pittsburgh could allocate a portion of the city's budget to a community-led fund, allowing neighborhoods to access resources directly based on their identified needs. Taking the Hill District as an example once more, this funding could support the establishment of a childcare center, easing costs for adults while they work. One might question whether the use of these funds would still be controlled by a centralized authority. By electing a neighborhood council to oversee the allocation of these resources, this centralization would operate on a much smaller scale compared to federal government control. The members of this neighborhood council should be democratically elected by the community. Moreover, all council proceedings must be transparent to the rest of the community, enabling them to hold the council accountable and replace its members if they fail to represent the people effectively. While the council may choose to collaborate with other neighborhood councils voluntarily, the community should ultimately retain autonomy to determine its priorities, as nobody understands the needs of the Hill District better than the community itself.

We must heavily invest in community development initiatives that strengthen social networks, build resilience, and empower marginalized communities. For example, governments should provide funding to establish small businesses in underserved communities. They should also invest in community gardens and urban farming initiatives to promote food security, improve access to fresh produce, and create community engagement. These projects not only provide nutritious food but also create opportunities for skill-building and social interaction. Finally, they must allocate funds towards the development of affordable housing units in low-income neighborhoods. Investing in affordable housing not only improves living conditions but also promotes economic stability and social cohesion within communities. By implementing these targeted initiatives, post-industrial societies can begin to address the root causes of poverty,

inequality, and welfare dependency, creating a more equitable community for its residents (Langer and Højlund, 2011).

Throughout governmental shifts, communities benefit from promoting and utilizing mutual aid practices on the smallest of levels. When someone identifies an issue within their community, they can gather with others to collectively address it, such as by creating a community food garden or pantry to tackle food insecurity. Even on a smaller scale, individuals can extend mutual aid by supporting neighbors who have been laid off or assisting strangers experiencing homelessness with gestures like buying them a gift card or cooking meals. Mutual aid fosters collaboration and solidarity among individuals and groups to collectively address challenges, reducing reliance on formal welfare systems (Kinna, 1995). It allows us to transcend hierarchical care systems and explore alternative possibilities. This chapter advocates for a reimagining of social welfare that centers on direct community engagement and empowerment, recognizing that communities themselves are best equipped to understand their needs. It calls for systemic change that addresses inequality at its root through policies promoting economic justice and equitable access to resources. Prioritizing mutual aid and community organizing is essential in this endeavor. In the pursuit of just and equitable societies where the welfare of all is truly supported, the redistribution of wealth and power is necessary. This approach to welfare acknowledges the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political systems, striving to create frameworks that promote dignity, justice, and well-being for everyone.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this thesis, we investigate the narrative of social welfare within Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, traveling through its history marked by adversity and resilience. Through our exploration, we uncover the profound disparities embedded within the post-industrial urban landscapes of Pittsburgh. Once a bustling industrial center, Pittsburgh now serves as a poignant symbol of the enduring challenges faced by communities navigating the aftermath of industrial decline. This study critically examines the effectiveness of contemporary social welfare measures in addressing Pittsburgh's complex socio-economic landscape, questioning their ability to alleviate disparities and foster authentic community well-being.

Through an anthropological lens, this research looks at welfare beyond the surface of policy and economics to explore the essence of human connection and the pivotal role of communal care in bolstering societal resilience. It uncovers that neither hierarchical nor egalitarian systems of social organization and welfare are inherent to human nature. Instead, our evolutionary journey demonstrates our adaptability and capacity to question, deconstruct, and reconstruct such systems. We are not confined to any singular mode of social organization or assistance, but rather possess the ability to explore diverse approaches. Recognizing the imperative to establish a social welfare system grounded in equality and responsive to the needs of marginalized communities, we are empowered to enact meaningful change.

However, realizing this vision requires concerted effort. When we prioritize the construction of self-sufficient, supportive communities over hierarchical structures, we actively catalyze a revolution in social welfare. By decentralizing decision-making processes, resources, and wealth, we can foster justice and assist communities in reclaiming their autonomy. History

reminds us of the transformative power of small-scale actions; initiatives like the creation of a community garden or neighborhood council have the potential to ignite significant change within seemingly entrenched systems.

The urgency to reimagine social welfare through the lenses of equity, community empowerment, and systemic reform has never been more evident. This thesis sheds light on the historical and contemporary challenges faced by marginalized residents in Pittsburgh, advocating for a future where social welfare systems thrive on principles of dignity, self-governance, and communal resilience. From this exploration emerges a compelling call for the revival of mutual aid and community-centered welfare practices. Despite the scars of industrial decline and the shortcomings of formal welfare systems, there exists a profound opportunity for transformative change. It is time to embrace grassroots, community-driven support networks that prioritize direct, empathetic engagement over hierarchical, impersonal interventions. The trajectory for Pittsburgh, and analogous post-industrial societies, demands a paradigm shift towards valuing horizontal relationships, empowering communities to articulate and address their needs, and reshaping social welfare to authentically serve as a conduit for social justice and equity. As we navigate the path towards equitable and community-centered social welfare, let us heed the call for collective action, guided by empathy and resilience, to pave the way for a brighter future in Pittsburgh and beyond.

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