There are several of our structure numbers that relate to one another, and assist in defining our social structure. Two numbers that stand out to me are, the $477 billion dollars the federal government spent on programs working towards fighting poverty in 2006, and the 7.8 million people in America that are considered “working poor.” The working poor being those who “have an income below, the poverty level despite having been engaged in the labor force for at least 27 weeks, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics.” (Shannon Petree, USD). It is also overwhelming to think that 58.4% of those who are considered “working poor” are employed full time, are living in poverty. (Shannon Petree, BLS).

As these numbers are both individually eye opening, together they form an interesting comparison. As Bess Rives states in her paper, “there are some people who should not be receiving benefits but somehow find a way to receive aid. However, there are also people in the United States who are eligible for various government programs who do not receive the benefits.” Those people who are not receiving government funding are more likely to be the ones carrying a full time job. Employees with full time jobs and that are still living in poverty, are paying for those who are not working, and those who are receiving government funds. It is expected that with minimum wage you are “able” to live, and do not “qualify” for government assistance.

As Shannon refers to the experiment done by Barbara Ehrenreich in 2001, this is a prime example of how these numbers are important and how government funding is wrongly distributed. Ehrenreich was in the 7.8 million people who are labeled “working poor,” and she was also paying and supporting through her taxes the $477 billion dollars
used for those who were not working and receiving government funding, regardless. She
was not receiving health insurance, she paid for all her food and she also was in charge of
paying for her housing.

How is that those who are working full time jobs, are just as poor as those who
are unemployed? I think that what Bess Rives says, “We need to reexamine the programs
we have to address the issue of poverty and see what could be done better,” is an
understatement. These numbers need to be taken into more consideration and seriousness.

# 7.8 million(USD, BLS)
# $477 billion