

**Working Paper**

**The Project on Devolution and Urban Change**

**The Next Generation Project**

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**My Children Come First:  
Welfare-Reliant Women's Post-TANF Views  
of Work-Family Trade-offs and Marriage**

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*The authors welcome comments and discussion.*

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# **The Project on Devolution and Urban Change**

## **The Next Generation Project**

This working paper is a joint production of the Project on Devolution and Urban Change and the Next Generation. Urban Change is a project designed to understand how devolution and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grants play out in four large urban areas. The Next Generation is a project that examines the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

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## Introduction

Moving into the workforce for welfare-reliant women, most of whom are single mothers of young children, entails a variety of work-family trade-offs. These are the same trade-offs faced by more affluent Americans and adults in two-parent, dual-career families; however, single parents (mostly mothers) and the poor experience work-family conflicts very differently from married couples and the financially secure (Bianchi & Spain, 1996; Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Oliker, 1995; Polakow, 1993). Just as working women in dual-career households continue to do most of the child care and housework (i.e., “the second shift”) (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Hochschild 1989), working women who have recently moved off welfare or are temporarily combining work and welfare must devise strategies for maintaining work and taking care of their children and households. Working single mothers face substantial (and under-recognized) conflicts between their worker and mother roles.

The effects of mothers’ transitions from welfare to work on their children are likely to be complex (and possibly countervailing). If moving from welfare to work results in increased financial well-being, long-term growth in wages, and upward mobility, then women will likely be able to better provide for their children and move away from substandard housing and dangerous neighborhoods. In addition to financial gains, there are other potentially valuable benefits associated with work that might accrue to women and their children and families. These include such things as enhanced self-esteem for the women, reduced stigma, and the ability to claim and model for their children values associated with self-sufficiency and work (see Iversen & Farber, 1996). Although it is not yet possible to know if these outcomes will result from welfare reform, there is substantial reason to expect that the future will not be quite so bright for many women. If the benefits of work do not materialize, the potential costs associated with their welfare-to-work transition may be quite significant for their children.

There is considerable evidence that women who leave welfare for work are in worse shape than when they were on welfare, and that many ultimately return to cash assistance (Edin & Lein, 1997; Friedlander & Burtless, 1995; Harris, 1996; Hershey & Pavetti, 1997). Wages tend to be low and to grow slowly (Pavetti & Acs, 1996). Recent evidence does not indicate a positive effect of welfare reform on income (Cancian et al., 1999; Primus et al., 1999). Results from the second wave of the Women’s Employment Study suggest that women who had accumulated labor market experience, even through intermittent employment, were better off financially and subjectively in their first two post-TANF years (Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger, and Heflin, 2000). However, serious economic and subjective difficulties persisted: 37 percent of respondents who worked in at least 90 percent of the months (i.e., the fully-employed) still received cash benefits; two-thirds received Food Stamps; and nearly 20 percent reported two or more hardships, such as being uninsured or having insufficient food for their children. Given that these outcomes were achieved in a strong economy when jobs were abundant, there is reason to believe that financial gains may be lower in the future (assuming the economy will ultimately weaken) and that hardships may increase. If financial gains are low, or women are unable to sustain work, their ability to improve the life circumstances of their children and families will be compromised.

There is substantial consensus that children growing up in two-parent households fare better than those reared in single-parent families, although what accounts for these better out-

comes remains less clear (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; Garfinkel, Hochschild, & McLanahan, 1996; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). If women marry (or otherwise partner) with men who are financially and otherwise stable, in addition to going to work or as an alternative to it, then marriage may offer welfare-reliant women a route out of poverty and a means to care for their children in circumstances that are better than those typical for women receiving welfare or those who are working in low-wage jobs. Again, however, there is reason to question the likelihood of this outcome because there is little evidence that welfare receipt influences women's decisions about marriage (Moffitt, 1998). If marital decisions have little to do with welfare, they are unlikely to change as a result of welfare reform.

In this chapter, we focus on how welfare-reliant mothers view work-family trade-offs and marriage in the age of welfare reform. We currently know little about how women who are facing work requirements and cash assistance time limits imposed by PRWORA think about the potential costs and benefits of moving from welfare to work or marrying, or the ways that they think they will resolve the various trade-offs that the choices they face entail. In a recent report issued by the National Research Council, Maynard, Boehen, Corbett, Sandefur (with Mosley) (1998, p. 169) stated:

Now more than ever, it is critical that trained social scientists conduct systematic, in-depth evaluations to further our understanding of the economic and social welfare of highly at-risk families; of the behavioral choices these families face and the decisions they make; and of the family, community, and social services they draw upon to meet the challenges faced by those living near or in poverty.

We concur with this view that in-depth studies are critically needed now to help us better understand how welfare reform is playing out in the lives of welfare-reliant women. Such studies will yield invaluable data on both the intended and unintended consequences of devolution and welfare reform.

### *Data and Methods*

The data in this chapter come from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change, which is being conducted under the auspices of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (see Quint et al., 1999 for additional details about the study). These data were drawn from baseline interviews conducted with approximately 80 welfare-reliant women in Cleveland and Philadelphia in 1997-1998, long before the implementation of time limits in either city and prior to substantial caseload declines. This sample reflects welfare recipients at the time that welfare reform was being implemented.

The women were recruited for participation in the study from six census tract clusters, or "neighborhoods" (three in each city), with moderate to high concentrations of poverty (at least 30 percent of families living in poverty) and welfare receipt (at least 20 percent of families receiving welfare). In each city, we selected two predominantly African American neighborhoods and one predominantly white neighborhood. The white and an African American neighborhood in each city were "moderate poverty" neighborhoods (where between 30 and 39 percent of the population lived below the poverty line in 1990). The additional African American neighborhood in each city was a "high poverty" neighborhood (where more than 40 percent were officially poor in 1990).<sup>1</sup>

In each neighborhood, we recruited 10-15 welfare-reliant women using various strategies, including referrals from community-based organizations, posting flyers, going door-to-door, and referrals from women already enrolled in the study. We did not recruit through welfare agencies. We chose respondents to ensure that each neighborhood sample included diversity along particular dimensions (e.g., age, education, work experience, length of welfare receipt, number and age of children). We purposefully did not recruit from housing projects, and we tried to minimize recruitment of women who received Section 8 or other forms of subsidized housing.<sup>2</sup>

In the 3–8-hour baseline interviews (which were often conducted over the course of several visits), we collected detailed life history data and asked women to tell us what they knew about welfare reform and how they thought it might influence their lives. We tape-recorded and transcribed each interview verbatim for coding and analysis. The themes discussed in this chapter emerged from inductive analysis of the narrative data. All mentions of women’s concerns about work, welfare, and their children’s well-being were coded for analysis. These include innumerable spontaneous mentions about these issues throughout the lengthy interviews, as well as some responses to specific questions. In qualitative analysis, spontaneous mentions are especially valuable because they signal the salience of particular issues for the respondents. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the women with whom we spoke.

## Results

### *The Costs and Benefits for Children of Mothers' Welfare to Work Transitions*

“My kids are my first concern.” This sentiment was echoed repeatedly in the interviews that we conducted with welfare-reliant mothers in Cleveland and Philadelphia. In the face of mandatory work requirements and time limits, women expressed tremendous ambivalence about what they thought working outside the home would entail for their children and families. Although women saw work as potentially beneficial, in our baseline interviews, they repeatedly discussed the tensions and dilemmas that working motherhood (mostly working single-parenthood) would pose in their lives. As they talked about various work-family trade-offs, the women consistently focused on what they thought working would mean for their children.

### *Benefits: Financial and Material Gain*

National data collected during the 1980s indicate that mothers who exit welfare and remain working gain only a few cents per hour per year (Burtless, 1995; Harris & Edin, 1996; Spalter Roth et al., 1995). The low-wage jobs obtained by most who exit welfare provide very limited opportunities for upward mobility, at least in part because low-wage employers do not reward experience. More recent data suggest that this story has not changed much with the economic boom of the 1990s (Cancian et al., 1999; Primus et al., 1999).

Despite prior experience to the contrary and realistic expectations about the kinds of jobs they could likely obtain (see Scott, London, & Edin, forthcoming, for a discussion of these women’s job aspirations and expectations), the women anticipated that moving from welfare to work would result in considerable financial gains and improvements in material circumstances for themselves and their children.<sup>3</sup> Our respondents’ expectations for future earnings were quite high, especially in the long run. In the short run, most mothers thought they would be at least a little better off financially once they started to work. This expectation was not entirely unreason-

able given that mothers who moved from welfare to a part-time job under TANF were allowed to keep a portion of their earnings and deduct a portion of their child care and transportation expenses from the amount that was “taxed” by welfare.<sup>4</sup> Although time-limited, this was a much more generous set of supports than under the old system, and the women in this sample generally understood these new rules (Quint et al., 1999). However, these gains would be offset by the loss of income from unreported work in the informal economy that would have to cease when women took full- or near-full-time jobs in the formal economy (see Edin & Lein, 1997).

In discussing what they thought would happen after they were no longer eligible for welfare and no longer had the option of combining work and welfare, women said many different things.<sup>5</sup> Some women said they simply did not know what they would be doing or how life would be. Others expressed fear about losing Food Stamps and Medicaid but were generally optimistic about obtaining employment (Scott, London, & Edin, forthcoming). Usually, however, there was ambivalence. Women often expressed various concerns and uncertainties about the future, while in the same interview they often expressed confidence that they would be better off financially. Perhaps one reason why women believed that they would benefit materially from working is that they believed they now had no other choice.

In the short term, most women wanted to use the money that they expected to gain from working to pay the bills and have enough to cover the “basics.” They wanted to better provide for their children and get them what they needed and wanted without undue delay. Thinking about the future, when her child would be a little older, East Cleveland resident Jonetta, an African American mother of a 7-month-old child, told us:

I think that working . . . will improve my family life. Because I’m sure my son will enjoy going shopping and getting a little candy money. And I’m sure that if [I work I will have that]. I’m on welfare and I’m always telling him “well, no, mommy doesn’t have it. You have to wait. I don’t have it. I can’t do it right now.” Whereas if I’m working, if I’m telling him to wait, he won’t have to wait long. He won’t have to wait a whole month. He’ll probably only have to wait a couple days. And he can get a lot if I’m working . . . If I’m working, I can give him more and I’m sure he’ll like that.

Marcia, an African American resident of Philadelphia's Germantown section, hoped to see the end of the material deprivations that her children have been experiencing while she has been on welfare. She told us that going to work meant:

A better way of living—bills paid. We [will] not worry about that heat being cut off, that electric being cut off. [My son] not wearing dogged-out shoes where his feet almost touching the ground. They can get that bigger coat because the coat they wearing is too tight. Oh girl, it is really deep.

Women often told us that their children suffered social repercussions, like teasing, as a consequence of the material deprivations. As a result, mothers hoped to be able to provide their children with better clothing and shoes as a means to buffer their children from the stigma of poverty and welfare receipt (see also Seccombe, 1999).



In general, mothers wanted enough money to live an “average” life and provide the normal set of experiences that they believed every American child ought to have. They knew that welfare would not get them there, but they hoped that work would. Twenty-three-year-old Marcy, an African American respondent from Cleveland’s Glenville neighborhood, had two children, a GED, and was in her second year of community college. We asked her what she thought things would be like for her financially when she went to work. She said:

Well, they would still be low because, you gonna want to catch up on your bills and stuff . . . But I guess as time goes on, it’d be better. You would have... you would have money to be able to do something...go on family outings, you know... Get yo’ family and go out to eat, or something like that. Yeah. You save up enough vacation...and, you know you be able to travel—I mean you can do things that you wanna do . . . We would be able to go to the movies, occasionally go out to eat, you know . . . go to the mall together as a family. You know, go out and just be out . . . Don’t gotta stay in the house or, stay in the neighborhood . . . go out! Be able to get out and be together as a family, and able to do something. Just go . . . even if you don't have enough money to buy a lot of things from the mall, we’d be able to go to the mall and [talking to her children] y’all would be together.

In the longer term, many women said they wanted to use the money to move from shared housing arrangements to their own apartments, from their economically and socially distressed neighborhoods to better neighborhoods in the city or suburbs, or from Philadelphia or Cleveland to other less violent cities. Some hoped to send their children to private or parochial schools where they would be safer and would be “pushed harder.” As was the case when they talked about the short-term, when they talked about improving their financial situation in the long-term, the central theme women voiced was how they would use additional money to make things better for their children.

#### *Benefits: Respect*

Beyond material gain, respondents also hoped to gain psychological and social benefits from working. They anticipated increased self-respect and confidence, gaining a sense of being part of the social mainstream, and increased respect from their children. We asked Kitina, a 20-year-old white mother of one child, what things she thought she would gain by working. She responded:

My self-respect for one. I won’t feel like all that I am is just a welfare recipient trying to collect. I’m going to be someone, no matter what anybody says. And then, in a couple years from now, I’ll see where they’re at and where I’m at.

Mothers often became very enthusiastic when talking about how it would feel to be a worker. They imagined that work would energize and motivate them to take on new challenges. Denise, an African American resident of Philadelphia’s North Central neighborhood, had a high-school degree and was in training for word processing and data entry. She was from a stable, working-class background and had an extensive work history, although she had periodically relied on welfare between jobs. She said she was planning to start work again soon, but worried

about losing “time with my children.” However, she also thought that by going to work again, she would gain self-esteem:

Well, that’s a part of it. I gain more about myself, more self-respect, for me. It’s just the energy to strive, to do more. You know, just that incentive, okay “well you can do this, take another step. You done did that, take another step.” And that’s what I gain by it. You know, I had a part-time job, “oh, well [Denise] take another step.” And then I did it. And then something else, “go ahead, go for it.”

Similarly, Jonetta, an African American woman from East Cleveland, thought she would:

Gain a sense of responsibility, independence, and, like, more motivation. Because I know that I’m doing the right thing. That it’s helping me build my career. It’s helping me at home, save money. So I think working will be very beneficial.

We were surprised by how often mothers mentioned that their own children “disrespected” or “teased” them because they were on welfare. Women experienced the stigma associated with welfare in their relationships with their children and saw work as a means to improve their children’s view of them, as well as a means to increase their own self-esteem and confidence. We asked high-school graduate Lisa, an African American Germantown resident and 31-year-old mother of six children, what she would gain from going to work. She said:

I think I will gain more respect from my children . . . and I will probably respect myself even more. I would probably have more confidence in myself because I would be a part of things, not just watching things. I would be a part of things. That is about it I guess.

Other respondents also believed that working would increase their children’s respect for them and enhance the pride of the entire family. For example, East Cleveland resident Janelle said that working outside her home would improve her children’s estimation of their mother:

Oh, what do I gain? A sense of self worth, I get paid more money (laughs) money. You know, it’s a funny thing, kids seem to respect you a little more when you’re doing something. “Mommy’s got to go to work. All right mom!” You know. You send them to school, and they know you’ve been here all day, you know, they kinda treat you differently. Well, “Mommy’s been working.” My oldest daughter, when I wasn’t working, you know, she was, she come home from school, she didn’t want to do nothing [to help around the house]. When I’ve been working, she don’t mind. You know, I cook, and she’ll do the dishes. You know, stuff like that, you can see . . . So yeah, kids kinda respect you a little more. They won’t be like, “she sit around the house all day, and when I come home she gonna want me to do something. She coulda did it herself, she was home all day.”

Mothers generally thought their children would understand that the sacrifice of time with them was necessary for these financial and emotional gains. High-school graduate Mary, a 28-year-old North Central Philadelphia resident and mother of three, had worked jobs in both the service sector and the drug trade. We asked Mary: “What do you think your children might lose from you going back to work?” She said:

I won't be home a lot, spendin' time with them, but they'll understand. "Mommy has to work and pay these bills and clothe y'all and feed y'all." My kids'll understand. [When people] ask them, "Where's your mom at?" "Oh she at work." They like to say that. To know that they mother's working. Ain't sitting home on her ass, watching TV and stuff like that . . . They'd be proud of me. That I ain't sitting around. That I'm doing something with my life. In order to take care of them . . . financially.

Women often said they thought their children would welcome their employment because it would improve their status among friends. Even in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, children have peers with parents who work, and these peers enjoy a clear social advantage over the children of nonworking parents because of the stigma associated with welfare receipt (Secombe, James, & Walters, 1998; Secombe, 1999). Germantown resident Lorraine, a 33-year-old mother of three who has been living on welfare for nine years in a neighborhood that contains both workers and welfare recipients, said of her children:

They will be happy . . . Because this is what they want me to do. They don't like me on welfare. . . . I think I will gain more self-esteem because they get mad [at me for not working]. The other kids [are teasing them] . . . because the other kids are not [on welfare].

Janice, a white, divorced, 32-year-old mother of five from Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood, is the daughter of factory workers. She has a ninth grade education, very little work history, and has been on welfare for nearly a decade:

Well, you know, like when they start school or something, like that you know how the kids tease other children, they could say: "Not my mom, [she's not on welfare]." You know, they could have enough esteem to say, you know, "We don't worry about [money]." You know, things like that.

### *Benefits: Role Modeling*

The women with whom we spoke not only thought that working would increase their own and their children's emotional well-being by removing the stigma of welfare receipt, they also thought that working would allow them to model for their children important values. For many women, modeling these values was important because they thought they were relevant for their children's academic success, future employment, and upward mobility. Mothers in our sample worried that their children would "make mistakes" or even "fail" as they believed they themselves had done. Many respondents believed that if they worked, they would provide a positive role model that would counteract the example that they had set while on welfare. Glenville resident Ophelia said:

Each and every last one of my kids going to do something, because they're not going to be on no welfare. . . . Get you education, go to college, stay in school, get your good education, make them good grades, them B's and them A's, and get you a scholarship. . . . Don't make the mistake that I did, getting pregnant and then go jump on welfare. Uh-huh. I ain't going for that.

Janice, from Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood, told us about the advice she frequently gave her son:

Like I told him: "Do you want to have to live the way I do?" And he said "Mom, no, I don't want to have to be on welfare." I said: "Then you need to go through school, son. You need to get your education. I quit because I was stupid. I didn't know any better."

North Central resident Dorothy, a long-term welfare recipient with unusually successful children, told us "see, just because your mother failed doesn't mean that you have to fail. You can rise above your environment." She continued:

I stress education...I don't know how important it is to the next guy, but when I see children, I want you to strive, be the best—you do not have to be a product of the environment. You can overcome those obstacles. Because your mother failed doesn't mean that you have to fail.

Most respondents were convinced that they could model success through work. Wanda, from East Cleveland, was 25 and had one child and a GED. Wanda hoped that her children would "gain responsibility from it, learn how to go out and get a job away from welfare." Similarly, Rube, a 23-year-old mother of three from Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood, said:

It ain't nice [raising my kids on welfare]. That's how I feel. I don't want my kids to see me have to just getting a check without doing nothing. I want to be able to show my kids it ain't right. I don't think it's right. I really don't. I'm gonna try to do something about it. That's what I wanna do.

Tina, a mother of five from Germantown, was a second-generation welfare recipient with a tenth grade education. She, too, wanted to model the day-to-day "structure" of going to work for her children. She believed that this experience would change their expectations about their own futures:

In a sense, I hope that it brings about a change where my kids will see [the] structure of me going to work, having to be in a job and a certain amount of hours, not being here. . . . It just gives them something they get to look forward [to]. . . . "[T]his is something that I will have to do when I get older. I am going to have to go out to work, I am going to have to be on time and prioritize myself and my bills."

Some mothers, such as North Central resident Denise, worried that if they and others like them did not go to work, their children simply would not know that work was the norm for most Americans. Denise had recently begun working when she told us that her work was already having a positive impact on her children and on others in the neighborhood:

It's...set an example for my children. It's set an example for . . . a lot of people to see, you know, people get up and go to work everyday, instead of just sitting around in front of the televisions or . . . on the corner, you know.

She talked about how her work would create an incentive for her children. When Denise was asked what her children would gain from her working, she replied:

The incentive to have that . . . to strive to do it too. [My children can say]: “Oh, well she got up and she went out here, and she did what she had to do and . . . she’s not out, hanging out, running the streets, you know, doing drugs and parties and all that. But she’s out . . .” Positive thoughts. Positive things.

In summary, many of our respondents expressed confidence that their entry into the labor force would enable them to be role models for their children, increase the family’s sense of pride, as well as their own self-esteem, and give them material advantages. However, despite the financial and psychological benefits women hoped to gain from becoming employed, they also expressed considerable concern about the costs they imagined that working would present to their families. The women with whom we spoke were carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages to entering the workforce, and they were not clear where the balance was. To them, the anticipated costs of work and the potential effects on their children of their increased absence were very worrisome and, to a large degree, uncertain.

#### *Costs: Child Care and Supervision*

Mothers in our sample knew that obtaining adequate child care would be one of the most critical obstacles they would face. This was of concern to them because they generally did not trust the professional child care services available to them, and they were uncertain how they would pay for them given that they would probably have no choice but to use them. Furthermore, and of greater concern, they believed that they would lose the ability to guide and supervise their children adequately. Women in our sample worried a great deal about the consequences of being less available to help their children get ready for school, to make sure they get to and from school safely, to supervise them with their play and homework, and to be certain that they eat properly and get to bed on time.

Women’s distrust of professional child care varied. At one extreme, Janice, a white respondent from Cleveland, said that she would not take her children to a program because:

You’ve got a lot of workers out here that confirm to be certified on and on like they’re day care centers, a lot of children get hurt and molested and things like that. I’m not taking my children there. You know just like I told them before, if you recommend that you might as well stop my benefits cause I’m not taking my children there.

Many women expressed more moderate concerns about leaving their children with “strangers” for much of the day. However, in general, they acknowledged that this might become necessary, given the pace of reforms and the lack of family and friends available to care for their children.

The affordability of child care was a much-discussed issue during the baseline interviews because many mothers had not been told by their caseworkers that they were eligible for transitional child care benefits (see Quint et al., 1999). Mothers seldom had a relative or friend who could or would watch their children for free. Thus, mothers with preschool children sometimes saw child care costs as a nearly insurmountable barrier to working or to even looking for work.

In addition to the cost of child care, women were worried about the logistics of combining work with child supervision. Most child-care centers are not open at 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning—the time of day many respondents said they would need to drop their children off in order to travel to suburban jobs. Furthermore, neither we nor our respondents could find many child-care centers offering care beyond 6 p.m. or on weekends. Because many mothers contemplated jobs that would require them to work afternoon or evening shifts, they saw this as a barrier to employment. Many women said that it would even be difficult to find a neighborhood babysitter to watch their children. This was particularly true in Philadelphia, where the relatively low reimbursement rate for home-based day care was an obstacle to securing this type of day care. Celena, a white Philadelphian from Kensington, had two children, ages 2 and 8.

Are they going to pay for my baby-sitter? Are they going to find me a baby-sitter?  
A good baby-sitter, no. They are going to pay your baby-sitter, yeah, \$200 a month. There is not nobody out there that is going baby-sit no kid...for the times you have to have [to be away from] your kids, [for] that kind of money. No way. There is no way [they will watch my younger daughter all day] and then pick my [older] daughter up from school and take her [to school in the morning].

Respondents with children in elementary school described similar logistical difficulties with supervision. Janice, a white woman from Cleveland's Detroit Shoreway neighborhood, had five children. Janice had just turned down a job because she would have had to be at work before her children's school bus arrived in the morning:

There's no way I could [take a job] that early in the morning cause I have to get my kids on the school bus, you know, no one is here in the morning...if I get another barmaid job, it would have to be second shift when my kids get out of school and I know they're home.

Janelle, an African American mother of five from East Cleveland, had trained as a home health aide but had a difficult time finding work that fit her children's school hours or allowed her to adequately supervise her children:

I can't work third shift. I don't want to work third shift. Cause I really don't want them here by themselves at night, and I can't work second shift, they're going to total my house up during the evening (laughter). I'll come home and I'll be running up every night, you know. And they're too young to even be here in the evening by themselves.

Janelle even worried about the logistical difficulties of working first shift:

[My 13 year old daughter] will have to pick up [the younger children] sometimes . . . if I'm working 9-5 or 8-5 or whatever, she'll be in charge for at least two hours . . . they know what they could and couldn't do. My phone will be [turned back] on, hopefully next week. So I'll be able to call home and give instructions. Ah, they will be latchkey people, but you know, so (laughs). . . . Even very, you know, well-off people, a lot of their children are latchkey. . . . I trust in the good Lord, to work it out, protect them.

Sunrise, from Germantown, who had been attending Job Search, had to depend on her middle-school-aged daughter to walk her elementary-school-aged daughter to school each day before she caught the bus to the middle school. The older child was late to school nearly every day. Although Job Search classes lasted only a few weeks, Sunrise worried what would happen if her job required her older daughter to be tardy on a daily basis.

Parents with children of all ages contemplated scenarios in which their children would be left unsupervised for various periods of time. They feared being stranded in the suburbs (where most job openings were) if bad weather disrupted public transportation. Mothers worried about missing work during a child's (or a child care provider's) illness, and losing their job as a result. They also worried about handling school holidays and summers. Affordable after-school and summer programs that would cover all of the hours that mothers spent either at work or traveling to and from work were in very short supply. In short, the logistics of child supervision constituted a significant cost that women had to weigh as they contemplated work.

Supervision and the cost of child care were not the mothers' only concerns. Mothers worried about not having adequate time at home to do all of the things that are needed to keep a family and household together. Mothers often described in great detail the time and energy it took to shop, cook, clean, do the laundry, visit the doctor, and otherwise maintain a household. Even more important than having time to get all of the day-to-day chores done, women wanted what they called "quality time" with their children. This involved such things as helping children with their homework, taking educational trips, reading stories, watching family videos, helping them with their day-to-day problems, and teaching them the right "values." "Quality time" was an often-repeated refrain in the baseline interviews.

Women in our sample had high aspirations for their children and saw success in schooling as their best route to upward mobility. Consequently, helping children with their homework was at the top of the list of concerns about lost "quality time." Dorothy, from Philadelphia, said that if she were to work, her son would lose "coming home everyday, having his mom here, you know, and being there with his homework, and just helping him on the math, he would lose out in that area, because he's used to having his mom home everyday." Similarly, Denise said her children would miss out due to "the fact that I can't be here with them, to help them do their homework, or if they have a problem or something, I can't be here, you know, for them." Most mothers worried that if they did not constantly monitor—"stay on" or "stay on top of"—their children, they would not complete homework, would stop attending school, would quit "staying with the books," and would end up "rippin' and runnin' the streets." After all, this is what the women in our sample told us was happening to children all around them. Furthermore, many also expressed concern for their children's safety if they were left alone in dangerous neighborhoods. Mothers predicted safety levels would decline further as a result of welfare reform. Their fears that neighborhood conditions would worsen exacerbated their concerns about not being adequately available to supervise their children.

Costs such as these were at the forefront of welfare recipients' minds as they evaluated their entry into the labor force. Although most mothers assumed that the costs would be compensated through material and psychological gains from working, the tensions women felt between the costs and benefits of their full- or part-time work were acute. Although in many ways they looked forward to working, they worried that they were risking their children's futures. Women were concerned about the consequences of their absence from the home. How would the house-

hold continue to function smoothly? Who would mind the kids and assure that their homework was done? Most critically, who would attend to their moral development and make sure that they were safe from harm's way?

### *Marriage and Children's Well-Being*

Policymakers and others believe that marriage will allow some of the women who leave welfare to stay home with their children when they are no longer eligible for cash assistance. Increasing marriage is, in fact, an explicit goal of welfare reform. When we talked with women about marriage, we found that some women said they would never marry for any reason, while others indicated that they had been or were already married (some unhappily). For many women in our sample, however, there was considerable ambivalence toward marriage; they thought they might (re)marry in the future, under the right circumstances (i.e., for upward mobility), but were for the most part uncertain about when or to whom (even for those in long-term relationships). The most striking finding emerging from these baseline interviews was that many women put the material, physical, and emotional well-being of their children at the center of their considerations about future marriage. However, in contrast to the view that marriage will improve women's and children's well-being, many of the women with whom we talked rejected marriage because they said it would undermine their ability to take care of their children.

Reflecting dominant cultural values, the majority of women in our sample viewed marriage in idealized terms as a lifetime relationship to a near-perfect partner who could provide a financially and otherwise stable life for the respondent and her children. In this vein, Denise told us:

I think . . . when you get married, your partner's supposed to be your best friend. You best friend, every . . . you know, the best in everything. You know, the best in communication, the best in trusting, the best in . . . the best!

Although most of the women in our sample idealized marriage to some extent, we found that some women also rejected the possibility of future marriage because of bad experiences with former boyfriends and husbands.

Many women identified problems with their partners' alcohol and drug use or inability to financially support the family as reasons for being skeptical about future marriage. Others identified domestic violence as the primary reason for their skepticism about future marriage. After failed marriages and relationships, many women seemed to have given up on men; they saw themselves as independent and were focused on making it as good as possible for themselves and their children. Some women believed that they themselves were no longer marriageable, at least in part because they had children. As Susan from Detroit-Shoreway in Cleveland put it: "It's like, nobody wants someone [with kids]. So, it's just me and my boys for now." Finally, a number of women expressed the concern that marriage would make it more difficult to separate from a man if things were not working out. Gayle from Detroit-Shoreway said of marriage in general:

It would have been nice then, you know, when I was younger and. . . Now, it's no big thing. I mean, people are living together all the time. And it's easier to me. If it doesn't work out, you have no strings, no ties and you don't have to go through no legal bullshit, you know.



Yet, in that conversation, she also affirmed her ideals about marriage and her sense that she would marry under the right circumstances:

Interviewer: Would you consider getting married or is it something that you've pretty much said, I'm never gonna do that?

Gayle: Oh, I don't know. Maybe if the right guy came around and if things were different.

Interviewer: What would a guy have to look like? Not look like, appearance, I mean, what would he be like?

Gayle: Funny, have a job, just somebody that respected me and my daughter, you know, and didn't treat us like shit. I don't know.

This kind of ambivalence was quite typical in our conversations with women about marriage. Marriage was not generally a topic that arose spontaneously in the interviews, which suggests it was not particularly salient for most women. Women tended to respond to direct questions about marriage, and their aspirations and expectations for it, in ways that suggested that marriage was for them an abstract ideal more than a concrete goal.

When they did reflect on the possibility of marriage, one of the most prominent concerns that they expressed was that it was not in their children's best interests. Although expressed in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons, this ambivalence reflected the conflict they saw between their idealized aspiration to marry and their own past experiences with men. Given what they had experienced themselves, and what they had observed among their grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, and women friends, many women understood that their standards for potential husbands excluded most, if not all, of the men with whom they came into contact. The men that our respondents knew were unable to provide the upward mobility desired by most women. Moreover, women said, these men were sometimes violent, cheated with other women, drank, did drugs, or posed a threat to their children.

Germantown resident April told us that the father of her younger three children used to "cheat" on her and "get into trouble." According to April, this relationship "stressed" her so much that she had to see a psychiatrist. Although April acknowledged that it was difficult to be a single parent, she didn't think that having a man in her life was the solution:

I ain't got time for nobody. I just got to focus on me and my kids. I ain't got time for that. Out of all the relationships that I have been in—I wasn't in that many—but the ones I have been in it wasn't worth it, so I got myself out of it. Too much crazy stuff involved—either they deranged, or you find out something wrong with them, [like] they on drugs or something . . . They just crazy, too much don't want to work. It is always something that you are going to find in a man that you just don't like. You might find one that want to argue too much, I ain't down with that. I ain't down with nobody hitting on me, I would have been done killed them and went to jail and I think that is worth it because I ain't going to let nobody hurt me.

Many women thought marriage would impede their ability to be good parents because they felt that men contributed little in terms of household help and competed with their children for their attention. Mothers sometimes reported that men (even those with whom they had had children) were jealous of their relationship with the children. Although some mothers did credit their children's fathers with "being there for them" and "helping out quite a bit," they did not seem to feel that marriage would enhance the bond between the father and his children. Virtually no mother we spoke with felt that she ought to marry for the sake of her children. In fact, many women talked about marriage as something to think about for themselves "in the future," when one's responsibilities as a parent were largely over.

Some women were concerned that men would threaten the safety of their children. Gayle, a white mother from Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood, had one child. She once lived with the father of her child, but said he was an alcoholic and was abusive toward her. At the time of the interview, she did not let him come to her house because she was afraid of him. She said she has not entered into another relationship because she does not want her daughter to see her with a series of partners. She also said that she was afraid of what a man who was not her child's father might do to her child and reflected about future marriage as follows:

Maybe when [my daughter] gets a little older. Yeah, cause one of the reasons that I won't want to have a relationship is because I don't want to bring a whole bunch of men in front of her. 'Cause I don't want her to grow up thinking that's okay. It's not right. Plus you hear of all this stuff about boyfriends and the kids. I just, I wouldn't be able to sleep at night with a man in the house thinking that something was gonna happen to my kid.

Danielle from Kensington feared that men might mistreat children who were not their own or would fail to care for them. She said:

I always thought I would get married. But I didn't though. Can't find the right person to marry me. If somebody's gonna be mean to my kids, my kids come before them.

North Central Philadelphia resident Denise, who plans to marry eventually, but had no current partner at the time of the interview, said:

I would never get married to somebody else to help me raise my children. Because you can't really trust—you know, you can't never really trust nobody coming in your house like that.

Alice, a white respondent from Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood, also viewed marriage as an impediment to good parenting:

...As I got older and started thinking about [my relationships with men], this is not the lifestyle that I want my children to be raised up 'cause I don't want my children out there doing the same thing we doing. So, I left [men] alone. . . . I never honestly was able to feel that way about a man. You know what I'm saying? That this is the man I plan to be with 'til I die . . . That's what it would take. But, I can never see myself being married, 'cause my children come first. And, by my children not being by no man that I'll marry, there would be a difference [in how he'd

treat them], or you'd want me to have a child with you. You know what I'm saying? My children have to come first.<sup>6</sup>

Ophelia, an African American mother of 7 from Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood, was raised on welfare until she was 10, when her mother found stable employment and remarried. Ophelia has never married. She is engaged to one of her children's fathers, who will soon be released from prison, but she is uncertain whether she wants him in her life again. She feels her children would resent the fact that this relationship would shift her attention away from them. Further, she spoke about the potential problems of bringing a man into her house:

I don't know [whether welfare reform will make more people get married], but they got to make sure they know that man and if that man is going to keep a job. I ain't just going to jump up and get married—you know what I'm saying? Yeah, because they can mess around [with] crazy mens if they want to, and the kids get hurt. See, that's a lot of things I think about too, about having mens around when you got a bunch of girls.

She went on to say that she really did not know if she was ready to let her kid's father back into her life, despite their engagement. She felt that the risks were too high.

For a variety of reasons, many women felt that marriage might not benefit their children, and might even harm them. Thus, marriage was sometimes seen as a selfish and irresponsible indulgence. The ambivalence expressed by these women reflects some degree of optimism in that there are prospective marriage partners who can love and care for them and their current children; however, it also reflects reality-based concerns about the influence these men might have on their children and family life. Despite this ambivalence, it is clear that most women are putting the well-being of their current children first, and thereby choosing to postpone or reject marriage.

## Discussion

In this chapter, we have examined how welfare-reliant mothers viewed work-family trade-offs in the context of welfare reform. The women in our sample clearly understood that the rules for the receipt of welfare had changed, and that they would soon be required to work or find other means to support themselves and their children. They also knew that their eligibility for welfare was now time-limited (see Quint et al., 1999, for additional details on what women in this sample knew about welfare reform).

As they contemplated the requirement that they transition from welfare to work, they expressed both optimism and considerable concern about how they would balance work with parenting. The women in our sample believed that there were benefits for themselves and their children associated with transitioning from welfare to work. They assumed that their material circumstances would improve significantly when they worked for a paycheck. Even more striking, they appeared to have accepted the dominant ideology that welfare is bad and work is good. Consistent with the work of Iversen and Farber (1996), we found that our respondents believed that they and their children would be better off if the sole parent in the family was working. Only a working parent could give her children the impetus to “stay with the books” and “strive more” for a “brighter future” and a higher standard of living. Through work, mothers could model re-

sponsible behavior and engender improved self-esteem and self-confidence for themselves and their children.

In addition to the possible benefits of work, women also saw costs. Most women thought that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to find adequate and affordable child care or to properly supervise their children in all the ways full-time mothers can. They also expressed concern that they would lose the time necessary to keep their households functioning smoothly. Most importantly, however, our respondents indicated that working would mean that they would lose “quality time” with their children.

These work-family trade-offs posed a dilemma for women. They wanted the best for their children and saw both work and close supervision and maternal guidance as necessary. These women had high aspirations for their children, and hoped their kids would finish high school, go on to college, and escape the impoverished conditions of their childhood. Thus, beyond women’s fears for their children’s safety and general well-being, the women with whom we spoke were concerned with the moral and intellectual development of their children in the absence of parental supervision. At the heart of this tension between how to be good workers and how to be good mothers was the question of how they could best assist their kids in attaining upward mobility. At the core of their decisions about work was the desire to put their kids first and do the right thing for them.

For current welfare recipients, welfare reform represents a potential fork in the road. If by going to work they attain the financial gains that they anticipate, improve on their self-respect and confidence, and are able to move to better neighborhoods, the road looks good. But, if the financial gains do not materialize, they risk losing their ability to be good parents and supervise their children in ways they see as essential to give their kids different choices. Thus, one of the unanticipated effects of welfare reform could be the risk it poses to children. If single women who exit welfare for work do not realize economic improvement and lose the ability to adequately supervise their children, the real losers will be the children in the immediate future, and our entire society in the longer term.

The well-being of their families was also the central concern for these women as they evaluated the possibility of future marriage; however, their thinking about marriage seemed completely detached from welfare or welfare reform. Contrary to the popular assumption that marriage is a viable path out of welfare reliance and poverty, for a host of reasons, most women in our sample did not consider marriage to be in their best interests or those of their children. Although marriage was held as an ideal by most of the women we interviewed, almost none had concrete plans to marry, and few could even imagine marrying at some point in the future. Tied up with dreams of social mobility and middle class (or at least working class) respectability, their ideal marriage was not attainable in the marriage market available to them. Moreover, many women saw marriage as a distinct threat to the well-being and safety of their children. While policymakers make the assumption that marriage is inherently good for single parents, the women in our sample tended to see it differently. With marriage, they saw the potential for it to be more difficult to get rid of a male who was posing a threat. Finally, while the men in their lives made some financial and in-kind contributions to the families, by and large, they did not provide women relief from the double burden of financial and familial responsibilities.

Although women expressed little interest in marriage, the optimism women expressed about their futures in the world of the paid labor force should be a signal to policymakers that they now have a genuine opportunity to make a difference in the lives of poor women and children. Welfare recipients seem to believe that work is good not only for themselves, but that it is also good for their children. However, their work attitudes are predicated on the assumption that they will be considerably better off financially than they had been in past jobs, and significantly better off than they would be if they continued relying solely on welfare. In short, mothers believe the benefits of going to work outweigh the costs primarily because they will end up with much more disposable income that can be used to improve their children's lives in both the short- and long-term.

Without significant employment supports, this expectation is not likely to be a reality for the majority of those still on the welfare rolls, even if labor markets remain as tight as they are currently. The true success of welfare reform will be if mothers' experiences in the labor market meet their basic expectation that work will give them significantly more disposable income (enough to outweigh the added expenses of working and the loss of health insurance, as well as to make up for the lost revenue from the income generating activities they engaged in while on welfare). As more and more women with children move into work, policymakers might be willing (and states might be persuaded) to spend some of their welfare surplus on ensuring that the work-based safety net is strengthened substantially for all low-wage workers and their families. This can be accomplished by: (1) lowering the costs of work by providing long-term (not transitional) supports, such as sliding-scale child care and adult health care benefits, and increased housing and transportation assistance; and (2) by adding to mothers' incomes by increasing the minimum wage and pegging it to inflation or by expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit further.

This paper reports women's expectations at the time of the baseline interviews in 1997-98. Since this baseline interview, we have re-interviewed the vast majority of these women several times. We have continued to analyze the data to examine how work-family trade-offs played out in the lives of these women as they moved from welfare to work and faced time-limits. Preliminary longitudinal analysis (London, Scott, Edin, and Hunter 2000) suggests that the themes that we identified in this paper continued to be highly salient and have emerged in the lives of women in our sample. Many of the women and their children have experienced both costs and benefits that they expected at baseline. The concerns they anticipated have influenced their decisions. The tensions between their obligations as workers and mothers presented considerable dilemmas for them as they responded to the mandates of welfare reform.

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## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Wilson (1987) and Massey, Gross, and Shibuya (1994) define neighborhoods of concentrated poverty as those where 20 percent or more of the residents live below the poverty threshold. The Project on Devolution and Urban Change chose a higher threshold of poverty strategically to target the most disadvantaged neighborhoods where the impact of welfare reform is likely to be most evident.

<sup>2</sup> Nationally, only about 20 percent of welfare recipients live in public or subsidized housing (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, 1998). We excluded persons living in public or subsidized housing because such housing was unevenly distributed in the selected neighborhoods. Additionally, the possible effects of welfare reform on housing stability and other aspects of family well-being might be mitigated by housing subsidies (see Edin & Lein, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> In addition to leveled job expectations (Scott, London, & Edin, forthcoming), substantial unemployment in these counties may also impede their ability to sustain their optimism about employment and income growth. In a very strong economy, the unemployment rate in Cuyahoga County averaged 4.8 percent in 1997, and ranged between 3.9 and 4.9 percent in the first half of 1998. In Philadelphia County, the unemployment rate averaged 6.8 percent in 1997, and ranged between 5.8 and 6.2 percent in 1998 (Quint et al., 1999).

<sup>4</sup> In Cleveland, the earned income disregard was \$250 of income earned in a month, plus 50 percent of the remainder for 18 months. In Philadelphia, it was 50 percent of income earned in a month (Quint et al., 1999, Table 3, page ES-7).

<sup>5</sup> Time limits are different in Philadelphia and Cleveland. The time limit in Cleveland is three years, while it is five years in Philadelphia. In Cleveland, after two years off of the welfare rolls, former recipients who had reached the three-year time limit would be eligible in particular (as yet unspecified) circumstances for two more years of cash assistance.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of the interview, this quote referred to the attitude she had always held toward men and marriage. However, ironically, she met a man who she did feel she could spend her life with and they became engaged. Sadly, he was murdered shortly before this interview was conducted.

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*Promoting Participation: How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities.* 1999. Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener.

*Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs.* 2000. Gordon Berlin.

*Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce.* 2000. Julie Strawn, Karin Martinson.

*Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce.* 2001. Amy Brown.

#### Project on Devolution and Urban Change

A multi-year study in four major urban counties — Cuyahoga County, Ohio (which includes the city of Cleveland), Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia — that examines how welfare reforms are being implemented and affect poor people, their neighborhoods, and the institutions that serve them.

*Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change.* 1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Olis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

*Food Security and Hunger in Poor, Mother-Headed Families in Four U.S. Cities.* 2000. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

*Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations.* 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Johannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

*Post-TANF Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits: Factors That Aid or Impede Their Receipt.* 2001. Janet Quint, Rebecca Widom.

*Social Service Organizations and Welfare Reform.* 2001. Barbara Fink, Rebecca Widom.

*Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring?* 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

*The Health of Poor Urban Women: Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change.* 2001. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

*Is Work Enough? The Experiences of Current and Former Welfare Mothers Who Work.* 2001. Rebecca Widom, Denise Polit, Kathryn Edin, Stan Bowie, Andrew London, Ellen Scott, Abel Valenzuela.

## ***Time Limits***

### **Florida's Family Transition Program**

An evaluation of Florida's initial time-limited welfare program, which includes services, requirements, and financial work incentives intended to reduce long-term welfare receipt and help welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

*The Family Transition Program: Implementation and Three-Year Impacts of Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program.* 1999. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, James Kemple, Nandita Verma.

*The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program.* 2000. Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

### **Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare**

An examination of the implementation of some of the first state-initiated time-limited welfare programs.

*Welfare Time Limits: An Interim Report Card.* 1999. Dan Bloom.

### **Connecticut's Jobs First Program**

An evaluation of Connecticut's statewide time-limited welfare program, which includes financial work incentives and requirements to participate in employment-related services aimed at rapid job placement. This study provides some of the earliest information on the effects of time limits in major urban areas.

*Connecticut Post-Time Limit Tracking Study: Six-Month Survey Results.* 1999. Jo Anna Hunter-Manns, Dan Bloom.

*Jobs First: Implementation and Early Impacts of Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative.* 2000. Dan Bloom, Laura Melton, Charles Michalopoulos, Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

*Connecticut's Jobs First Program: An Analysis of Welfare Leavers.* 2000. Laura Melton, Dan Bloom.

### **Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project**

An evaluation of Vermont's statewide welfare reform program, which includes a work requirement after a certain period of welfare receipt, and financial work incentives.

*Forty-Two Month Impacts of Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project.* 1999. Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

*WRP: Key Findings from the Forty-Two-Month Client Survey.* 2000. Dan Bloom, Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

## ***Financial Incentives***

*Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs.* 2000. Gordon Berlin.

### **Minnesota Family Investment Program**

An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.* 2000:

*Volume 1: Effects on Adults.* Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox, Lisa Gennetian, Martey Doodoo, Jo Anna Hunter, Cindy Redcross.

*Volume 2: Effects on Children.* Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.* 2000. Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, Lisa Gennetian.

*Final Report on the Implementation and Impacts of the Minnesota Family Investment Program in Ramsey County.* 2000. Patricia Auspos, Cynthia Miller, Jo Anna Hunter.

### **New Hope Project**

A test of a community-based, work-focused antipoverty program and welfare alternative operating in Milwaukee.

*New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare.* 1999. Johannes Bos, Aletha Huston, Robert Granger, Greg Duncan, Thomas Brock, Vonnie McLoyd.

### **Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project**

A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients. Reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project are available from: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), 275 Slater St., Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9, Canada. Tel.: 613-237-4311; Fax: 613-237-5045. In the United States, the reports are also available from MDRC.

*Does SSP Plus Increase Employment? The Effect of Adding Services to the Self-Sufficiency Project's Financial Incentives* (SRDC). 1999. Gail Quets, Philip Robins, Elsie Pan, Charles Michalopoulos, David Card.

*When Financial Work Incentives Pay for Themselves: Early Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study* (SRDC). 1999. Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins, David Card.

*The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects of a Financial Work Incentive on Employment and Income* (SRDC). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, David Card, Lisa Gennetian, Kristen Harknett, Philip K. Robins.

*The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects on Children of a Program That Increased Parental Employment and Income* (SRDC). 2000. Pamela Morris, Charles Michalopoulos.

*When Financial Incentives Pay for Themselves: Interim Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study* (SRDC). 2001. Charles Michalopoulos, Tracey Hoy.

## **Mandatory Welfare Employment Programs**

### **National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies**

Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

*Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies* (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

*Evaluating Alternative Welfare-to-Work Approaches: Two-Year Impacts for Eleven Programs* (HHS/ED). 2000. Stephen Freedman, Daniel Friedlander, Gayle Hamilton, JoAnn Rock, Marisa Mitchell, Jodi Nudelman, Amanda Schweder, Laura Storto.

*Impacts on Young Children and Their Families Two Years After Enrollment: Findings from the Child Outcomes Study* (HHS/ED). 2000. Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Kristin Moore, Suzanne LeMenestrel.

*What Works Best for Whom: Impacts of 20 Welfare-to-Work Programs by Subgroup* (HHS/ED). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Christine Schwartz.

*Evaluating Two Approaches to Case Management: Implementation, Participation Patterns, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of the Columbus Welfare-to-Work Program* (HHS/ED). 2001. Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

### **Los Angeles's Jobs-First GAIN Program**

An evaluation of Los Angeles's refocused GAIN (welfare-to-work) program, which emphasizes rapid employment. This is the first in-depth study of a full-scale "work first" program in one of the nation's largest urban areas.

*The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: First-Year Findings on Participation Patterns and Impacts*. 1999. Stephen Freedman, Marisa Mitchell, David Navarro.

*The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: Final Report on a Work First Program in a Major Urban Center*. 2000. Stephen Freedman, Jean Knab, Lisa Gennetian, David Navarro.

## **Teen Parents on Welfare**

*Teenage Parent Programs: A Synthesis of the Long-Term Effects of the New Chance Demonstration, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD)*. 1998. Robert Granger, Rachel Cytron.

### **Ohio's LEAP Program**

An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

*LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents*. 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

### **New Chance Demonstration**

A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

*New Chance: Final Report on a Comprehensive Program for Young Mothers in Poverty and Their Children*. 1997. Janet Quint, Johannes Bos, Denise Polit.

*Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study*. 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

## **Focusing on Fathers**

### **Parents' Fair Share Demonstration**

A demonstration for unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare. PFS aims to improve the men's employment and earnings, reduce child poverty by increasing child support payments, and assist the fathers in playing a broader constructive role in their children's lives.

*Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood* (Russell Sage Foundation). 1999. Earl Johnson, Ann Levine, Fred Doolittle.

*Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement*. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cindy Redcross.

*Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment.* 2000. John M. Martinez, Cynthia Miller.

*The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum.* 2000. Eileen Hayes, with Kay Sherwood.

*The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share.* 2001. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox.

### **Other**

*Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring?* 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

## **Career Advancement and Wage Progression**

### **Opening Doors to Earning Credentials**

An exploration of strategies for increasing low-wage workers' access to and completion of community college programs.

*Opening Doors: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers.* 2001. Susan Golonka, Lisa Matus-Grossman.

## **Education Reform**

### **Accelerated Schools**

This study examines the implementation and impacts on achievement of the Accelerated Schools model, a whole-school reform targeted at at-risk students.

*Evaluating the Accelerated Schools Approach: A Look at Early Implementation and Impacts on Student Achievement in Eight Elementary Schools.* 2001. Howard Bloom, Sandra Ham, Laura Melton, Julienne O'Brien.

### **Career Academies**

The largest and most comprehensive evaluation of a school-to-work initiative, this study examines a promising approach to high school restructuring and the school-to-work transition.

*Career Academies: Building Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning Activities Through Employer Partnerships.* 1999. James Kemple, Susan Poglinco, Jason Snipes.

*Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School.* 2000. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

### **Project GRAD**

This evaluation examines Project GRAD, an education initiative targeted at urban schools and combining a number of proven or promising reforms.

*Building the Foundation for Improved Student Performance: The Pre-Curricular Phase of Project GRAD Newark.* 2000. Sandra Ham, Fred Doolittle, Glee Ivory Holton.

### **LILAA Initiative**

This study of the Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) initiative explores the efforts of five adult literacy programs in public libraries to improve learner persistence.

*So I Made Up My Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2000. John T. Comings, Sondra Cuban.

*"I Did It for Myself": Studying Efforts to Increase Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2001. John Comings, Sondra Cuban, Johannes Bos, Catherine Taylor.

### **Toyota Families in Schools**

A discussion of the factors that determine whether an impact analysis of a social program is feasible and warranted, using an evaluation of a new family literacy initiative as a case study.

*An Evaluability Assessment of the Toyota Families in Schools Program.* 2001. Janet Quint.

### **Project Transition**

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

*Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed.* 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

### **Equity 2000**

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

*Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools.* 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

### **School-to-Work Project**

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

*Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work* (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995. Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

*Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs*. 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

## **Employment and Community Initiatives**

### **Jobs-Plus Initiative**

A multi-site effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

*Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. James Riccio.

*Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Program Implementation*. 2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom with Susan Blank.

*Building New Partnerships for Employment: Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 2001. Linda Kato, James Riccio.

### **Neighborhood Jobs Initiative**

An initiative to increase employment in a number of low-income communities.

*The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative*. 2001. Frieda Molina, Laura Nelson.

### **Connections to Work Project**

A study of local efforts to increase competition in the choice of providers of employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income populations. The project also provides assistance to cutting-edge local initiatives aimed at helping such people access and secure jobs.

*Designing and Administering a Wage-Paying Community Service Employment Program Under TANF: Some Considerations and Choices*. 1999. Kay Sherwood.

*San Francisco Works: Toward an Employer-Led Approach to Welfare Reform and Workforce Development*. 2000. Steven Bliss.

### **Canada's Earnings Supplement Project**

A test of an innovative financial incentive intended to expedite the reemployment of displaced workers and encourage full-year work by seasonal or part-year workers, thereby also reducing receipt of Unemployment Insurance.

*Testing a Re-employment Incentive for Displaced Workers: The Earnings Supplement Project*. 1999. Howard Bloom, Saul Schwartz, Susanna Lui-Gurr, Suk-Won Lee.

## **MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology**

A new series of papers that explore alternative methods of examining the implementation and impacts of programs and policies.

*Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Estimating Program Impacts on Student Achievement Using "Short" Interrupted Time Series*. 1999. Howard Bloom.

*Using Cluster Random Assignment to Measure Program Impacts: Statistical Implications for the Evaluation of Education Programs*. 1999. Howard Bloom, Johannes Bos, Suk-Won Lee.

*Measuring the Impacts of Whole School Reforms: Methodological Lessons from an Evaluation of Accelerated Schools*. 2001. Howard Bloom.

*The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy*. 2000. Judith Gueron.

*Modeling the Performance of Welfare-to-Work Programs: The Effects of Program Management and Services, Economic Environment, and Client Characteristics*. 2001. Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, James Riccio.

*A Regression-Based Strategy for Defining Subgroups in a Social Experiment*. 2001. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

*Extending the Reach of Randomized Social Experiments: New Directions in Evaluations of American Welfare-to-Work and Employment Initiatives*. 2001. James Riccio, Howard Bloom.

## About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and San Francisco.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.