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Welfare and Child Care: The Intricacies of Competing Social Values

PUBLIC commitment to the support and protection of indigent mothers and their children has taken many forms over the course of this century. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was once a welfare program that focused on children's needs. Yet the program has been transformed over time. The approach to welfare in the early 1900s reflected strong social values that encouraged women to remain at home and raise their children. Now, as national values shift toward a call for welfare recipients to work, much of the original concern for children has diminished. Although the success of a welfare-to-work program depends considerably on the appropriate care and supervision of children, child care services under present welfare strategies are not designed specifically to meet the needs of children and families.

This transformation in AFDC policy is, in part, a reflection of changing values in American culture. Values have been altered in response to shifting demographic patterns within the welfare population and to different beliefs about what activities are appropriate and reasonable for all families. These changes, however, have not progressed smoothly. Rather, they are representative of competing ethics within the American community that support home life on the one hand and work on the other and that have played themselves out on the welfare population. Indeed, some of the policies are themselves contradictory, mirroring the ambivalence within society at large.

Policies defining AFDC receipt parallel contemporary values that encourage work outside the home for both men and women. This article takes a brief look at the historical development of AFDC in an attempt to clarify the ideological shift that has taken place.

Jill Duerr Berrick

Welfare reform has been a subject of heated debate for years. The Family Support Act of 1988 is the latest attempt at overhauling the American welfare system. The act represents a significant departure, both programmatically and philosophically, from the original intent of such welfare programs as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The early approach encouraged women to remain at home and raise their children, but the emphasis is now on moving adult welfare recipients into the labor market. This article provides a brief historical development of AFDC, along with specific policy recommendations that address the child care needs of the working AFDC population.

Focus on Families: Government's Response to Poverty

In the early part of the 20th century, women who raised their children alone because of the death of, abandonment by, or divorce from their husbands were viewed as one of the groups classified as the "deserving poor" (Leiby, 1978). These women were caught in circumstances beyond their control. Many of them were unable to meet the demands of both work and home life. The social attitude toward this group was not to stigmatize and punish, but rather, primarily, to aid and assist. Support for these women came under the rubric of "mothers' pensions" or "widows' pensions." These pensions were established at the state and county level and provided a minimum income for families in need. Pensions were enacted so that

women without a husband or other provider would be able to raise their children in their own homes. Child care was the overriding feature of the pension policy. The role of the woman as mother, nurturer, and child rearer was central to the development of mothers' pensions (Rothman, 1978); the policy reflected these functions. Women's employment outside the home was seen as adversely affecting children. Social worker Grace Abbott (1938) said that mothers' pensions

constituted public recognition by the states that the contribution of the unskilled or semi-skilled mothers in their own homes exceeded their earnings outside the home and that it was in the public interest to conserve their child rearing functions. (p. 229)

Although much discretion was used in qualifying women for mothers' pensions, this was the principal means of survival for many families facing hardship.

Aid to Dependent Children: The Social Security Act of 1935

The values that were articulated during the establishment of mothers' pensions also were prominent in the development of Title IV of the Social Security Act of 1935. This historic shift in domestic policy ushered in a new model for federal action on behalf of poor people. Spurred by an economic crisis, mass unemployment, and social unrest (Cloward & Piven, 1971), the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program was one of several policies initiated under the Social Security Act. Families who met the programmatic qualifications and whose income and assets did not exceed a specified amount were eligible for assistance.

One can see the antecedent of the mothers' pension program in the ADC

policy (Chambre, 1980). ADC was crafted to foster the value of the mother as child rearer; the importance of supervising children in the home was maintained. The official policy stance at the time stated that ADC was

designed to release from the wage-earning role the person whose natural function is to give her children the physical and affectionate guardianship necessary not alone to keep them from falling into social misfortune, but more affirmatively to make them citizens capable of contributing to society. (U.S. Committee on Economic Security, 1935)

Women covered under ADC were ostensibly given the same opportunity as wives in two-parent families to care for their children in the home. Despite the high value placed on motherhood, the interesting feature of the ADC program was its emphasis on children; the mother was excluded from the program's provisions. Mothers were not included in ADC payments until 1950. A decade later, the program was renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children to focus on the importance of the whole family.

ADC payments were minimal, initially set at \$18 per month for the first child and \$12 per month for each additional child. Abramovitz (1988) and Cloward and Piven (1971) suggested that part of the reason why ADC benefits were maintained at such a low level was to create a deterrent to dependency. Minimal assistance was offered to widows and their children, but the income was not so generous that women might choose to receive a pension rather than to remarry. AFDC policy has always encouraged women—either indirectly through stigma or directly through economic desperation—to join the labor force. Yet early ADC policy reflected not only economic interests but also, more significantly, the ideological value of motherhood. Women were encouraged to look on ADC only as a temporary benefit; ADC was not designed to substitute for a woman's obligation to find a primary provider.

With such low benefit levels, children were given little protection from poverty, and women found it difficult to raise their families relying solely on ADC. Although the rhetoric of the policy

was family centered, raising children on the benefits provided was not very feasible. Therefore, many women worked. Cloward and Piven (1971) suggested that these women made up the marginal labor force, taking job opportunities when they were available. Black women in the South were especially likely to accept seasonal employment at very low wages. Yet no studies document the child care patterns of women using ADC; it is unclear who was caring for the children of these poor working mothers. Although women were forced to work because of economic circumstances, the issue of a work requirement for families receiving ADC was never debated seriously among policymakers at that time. The intent of the program guarded against this debate, but so too did the small number of ADC recipients. As long as very few families took advantage of ADC, few questioned the provisions of the program. Even into the late 1940s, ADC was considered a small program under the larger umbrella of the Social Security Act. Indeed, in 1949, an official in the Truman administration stated,

This public assistance is a residual program to help needy persons who are not adequately protected by the various forms of contributory social insurance. . . . In time the residual load of public assistance would become so small in this country that the states and the localities could reasonably be expected to assume that load without federal financial participation. (Congressional Record, 1958, as cited in Joe & Rogers, 1985)

Social Security, it was assumed, would eventually cover the needs of widowed women. In 1939, a major amendment to the Social Security Act, Survivors Insurance (SI), provided a type of life insurance plan for families whose primary earner died prematurely. Under the contributory plan of Old Age Insurance (OAI), survivors could claim benefits from the federal government. With the assumption that many of the women claiming ADC were widows, it was expected that these families would soon transfer to SI status; ADC would thus become a residual program used by very few families. Also, it was assumed that other families who were not covered

by Social Security would be assisted by the states.

In the 1950s, the number of ADC families rose slowly but steadily. In the 1960s, the AFDC caseload rose sharply. The unemployment rate at the beginning of the decade was approximately 7 percent (Levitan, Rein, & Marwick, 1972); it dropped to 4 percent in 1965 and remained there until the end of the decade. Yet 2.9 million families were collecting AFDC in 1960; by the end of the decade, that number had increased to more than 7 million (Levitan et al., 1972; Rein, 1982). Examined in another light, AFDC recipients accounted for 2 percent of the entire population in 1960. By 1969, the percentage had doubled (Murray, 1984). Not only did the caseload rise, but the philosophical approach to welfare shifted as well.

In the 1960s the federal government entered into fields of public service on a massive scale. With the launching of the War on Poverty under the Johnson administration and its array of community action, education, and training programs, poverty began to be viewed differently. With appropriate services and retraining, AFDC recipients could be taken off welfare and placed into the labor market. The expectation that women might be able to raise themselves and their children out of poverty became very appealing to policymakers and to the public.

Demographic Shifts and the Policy Response

In the 1960s, changes were spurred by enormous demographic shifts taking place within the AFDC population. In 1960, and even more significantly by the end of the decade, the AFDC population no longer resembled the "deserving poor" of the early 20th century. ADC had been conceived as a safety net primarily for widowed women; however, most of these families were expected to be absorbed into the SI program within a few short years. But by 1961, the proportion of widows counted among AFDC recipients was only 6.8 percent (Rein, 1982). By 1967, that proportion dwindled even further to 5.5 percent; it was 4.3 percent in 1971 and 2.6 percent in 1977. Who were the heads of

these households? Rein (1982) showed that many AFDC families were headed by divorced, separated, deserted, and unmarried mothers:

In 1950, 37 percent of the cases were in this category, but by 1961 the proportion had risen to 57 percent. In 1967, 70 percent were in this category and by 1971, [there were] 73 percent. By 1977 the proportion had risen to 81 percent. (p. 7)

Unmarried mothers rapidly became the most visible and controversial group of AFDC recipients. Whereas widows could not help their circumstances, women who never married yet had children had more choice in determining their situation. There was less public sympathy for these women and more strong criticism.

The status of single parenthood, however, was not confined to the welfare population. Single parenthood was on the rise for all groups. In 1960, 5 percent of white children were living in female-headed households (Ellwood, 1988). That percentage tripled by 1980 to approximately 15 percent (Ellwood & Summers, 1986). For nonwhite children living in female-headed households during the same period, the percentage increased from 15 percent to 45 percent. Divorce rates soared for all groups; between 1960 and 1980, the annual number of divorces tripled from approximately 400,000 to nearly 1.2 million (Besharov & Quin, 1987). Also, more women, especially teenagers, were bearing children out of wedlock. Increasing numbers of teenagers reported sexual activity. During this period, the overall rate of teenage pregnancy remained fairly constant; however, the rate of births to teenagers who were not married increased significantly.

A change in the labor force led to changing attitudes toward welfare recipients. Until the mid-1960s, the participation of women in the labor force hovered around 30 to 40 percent. After the mid-1960s, women's participation in the labor force increased dramatically. By 1983, more than 70 percent of women were either working or looking for work (Ellwood, 1988).

With the entrance of female non-welfare recipients into the labor force, work

for women on welfare also grew more widely accepted. If women all over the country were juggling home life with work, perhaps welfare families also could manage both activities. Data on women's participation in the work force, however, often neglected to clarify the amount of time that women worked; not all women were employed full-time and year-round. Ellwood (1988) showed that as recently as 1983, only 27 percent of women in two-parent families worked full-time all year long. Another third worked only part-time, citing family responsibilities as their reason for limited employment. Another third chose not to work at all, again because of household duties (Ellwood, 1988). Ellwood's tabulation of work patterns for single parents showed that 41 percent worked full-time year-round; 25 percent worked part-time or for a part of the year; and another 20 percent chose not to work at all because of family obligations. Another 10 percent of women did not work because of illness, disability, or retirement, and 4 percent were unable to find work. Thus, although more women entered the labor force, they did not do so at the same level of commitment as their husbands. These differences in employment patterns point to the diversity of family choices. They also clarify the level of difficulty in playing the role of full-time provider and full-time nurturer. The fact that two-thirds of married women chose to stay in the home at least part-time to care for their children indicates that the effort involved in child rearing cannot be viewed as inconsequential. For single parents, the task of playing dual roles is even more challenging.

Work Incentives for Welfare Families

With the increased participation of women in the labor force, many people called for welfare recipients also to become employed. In 1962, Congress expanded AFDC eligibility to include unemployed fathers. The implementation of the Unemployed Parent Program of AFDC (AFDC-UP) symbolized a pro-family effort on the part of the federal government because it discouraged the dissolution of families due to welfare eligibility requirements. For those

states that implemented AFDC-UP, the government built new incentives into the program to encourage fathers to work. Substantial philosophical and programmatic shifts also took place at this time. Until AFDC-UP was implemented, welfare recipients had been considered "unemployable" (Levitan et al., 1972). However, with the entrance of men into the AFDC program, the concept of unemployable welfare recipients became untenable. The emphasis on work was not focused solely on fathers; mothers also were urged to move into the labor market to support their families. Incentives were written into the AFDC program to encourage women to work. Along with incentives to work came disincentives to remain on welfare. Although there have always been deterrents related to the AFDC program, the new disincentives were unlike those under the old program. In the ADC program, women implicitly were discouraged from rejecting an offer of marriage if one was made. By the late 1960s, it became less important for a woman to stay at home with her children than it was for her to escape the net of poverty through work. As such, the new deterrents were designed to keep a woman from rejecting an offer of employment.

The Work Incentive Program (WIN) was enacted in 1967. The program called for AFDC clients to register with their state employment department, to take part in job search activities, and to accept a job if one was offered. Although by 1971 it was mandatory for AFDC recipients to register for WIN, few recipients participated because funding was often insufficient (Caputo, 1989). Financial incentives to work also were written into the law in 1967. AFDC recipients who had located work before 1967 had essentially been penalized by an equal reduction in their welfare grant for every dollar earned. The former policy did little to encourage recipients to work, but the new regulations allowed AFDC recipients to keep much of their income while retaining a partial grant. What came to be called the "thirty plus one-third disregard" allowed AFDC recipients who worked to keep \$30 plus an additional one-third of their gross earnings before calculating the welfare benefit. This amendment was particularly beneficial

for families who were trying to work their way out of poverty.

About 1967, the central interest in children's well-being significantly diminished. The new emphasis on work incentives led AFDC away from its original charter to a new focus on employment and self-sufficiency for the AFDC parent. Children, it was assured, ultimately would benefit if the family had more resources and if the child had role models who were employed. There was little controversy that these eventual goals were better for children. However, the short-term concerns of caring for children while parents were being trained or employed were given little attention.

Other welfare reform packages were attempted in the 1970s. President Nixon's proposal for a guaranteed income under the Family Assistance Plan included work incentives and some funding for day care (Burke & Burke, 1974; Moynihan, 1973). But this welfare reform, along with President Carter's Program for Better Jobs and Income, failed to pass in Congress. For a number of reasons, including mixed research results, political considerations, and cost—projected costs for adequate day care were especially high (Zigler & Gordon, 1982)—neither measure was accepted.

The Reagan Administration and Welfare Reform

In the 1980s, there were several changes in welfare policy. Because of requirements at the federal level, AFDC moved in a new direction. Significant changes were made in 1981 after President Reagan came to office. The changes in 1981 were ushered in by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA).

Although there were several changes initiated by OBRA, the regulation that had the most direct effect on children was the standardization of the child care disregard (Joe & Rogers, 1985). Child care expenses for working AFDC families were capped at \$160 per child per month. By imposing a flat rate on the working AFDC client's allowable expenses, caseworker discretion was minimized, administrative costs were reduced, and the propensity for errors

was lessened. For some families, this change and others included in the act had no effect. But for families with heavy child care bills, the incentive to work was diminished, and the quality of children's care may have been compromised. The cap on child care was set at a level below high-quality costs of care in some states. The new regulations did little to recognize different median costs for child care in separate regions of the country. AFDC parents who wanted to place their child in a high-quality day care center would be hard-pressed to find care at \$160 per month. Instead, day care choices were limited to low-cost options, family, or friends. If no care was found at that price, parents would either pay the difference with their AFDC grant or would become disinclined to work, instead caring for their children at home.

A study of working AFDC recipients in Minnesota found that one year after the implementation of OBRA, the number of recipients who were dissatisfied with their children's day care had doubled (Center for Health Services Research, 1983). This dissatisfaction was primarily because most parents had changed child care arrangements to account for changing costs in the interim year. The results of the study corroborate information from a Massachusetts report, as pointed out by Kahn and Kamerman (1987):

Within six months after AFDC benefits were terminated, 40 percent of a population sample changed their day care arrangements for at least their youngest child above 2. The main reason for the change was the financial burden created by having to pay full costs of child care. Within 18 months of AFDC termination, formal day care arrangements shifted largely to less formal and less costly arrangements, and the percentage of children left with older siblings or alone increased substantially. Many people moved to arrangements that involved no costs at all. A good number reported that the new situation affected their employment status in the sense that work had to be missed, they were frequently late for work, they had to reduce work hours, or, in the instance of 10 percent, they had to quit their jobs. (p. 105)

The current cap on day care, although increased to \$175, regulates the type of

day care options available to families receiving AFDC. These studies show that without a flexible or more generous payment system, AFDC children may be relegated to lower standards of care.

OBRA policy, which encouraged work on the one hand and took away incentives on the other, illustrates the changing values surrounding the welfare debate. Work incentives were reduced, but work requirements were encouraged. States were urged to develop employment programs for AFDC recipients. In the six years that followed the implementation of OBRA, 32 states implemented job search programs, 29 implemented their own WIN demonstration projects, 27 required some clients to perform community-service jobs, and 22 states subsidized on-the-job training programs (Wilcox, 1988).

The outgrowth of such a wide variety of experimental programs led to a national consensus that work and work training were acceptable activities for AFDC recipients—both men and women. At the turn of the century, it was a mother's social obligation to care for and raise her children well. Yet the social value of full-time motherhood diminished with time. In the 1980s, the language of "social obligation" was still central to the welfare debate, but the nature of social obligation had changed. President Reagan's Domestic Policy Council (1986) report stated, "Just as society has a moral obligation to help its most needy citizens, those who are able-bodied and receive assistance have an obligation to make some contribution to their local community in turn." Abiding by the social constructs of reciprocity, Mead (1986) suggested that welfare gave too much money to people without asking for repayment. He wrote, "A more even balance of benefits and obligations seems critical for the success of the programs" (Mead, 1982, p. 23). Therefore, the belief that AFDC recipients were obligated to work came to be widely accepted in the 1980s.

When the character of social obligation changed, the focus of the AFDC program shifted. Formerly, the program's primary emphasis was on the protection of poor and destitute children. Yet little of the policy debate in the 1980s centered on children. Welfare

policy in the 1980s essentially concentrated on adults; it reflected the chief goal of moving adult welfare recipients into the labor market.

Family Support Act

The Family Support Act (FSA), passed in October of 1988, mirrored the value issues of the 1980s. The bill was a departure from previous federal initiatives because it expanded the scope of welfare services. Its provisions also were not that far from the original intent of the Social Security Act. The 1935 bill was initiated

for the purpose of encouraging the care of dependent children in their own homes or in the homes of relatives by enabling each state to furnish financial assistance and rehabilitation and other services . . . to help maintain and strengthen family life and to help such parents or relatives to attain or retain capability . . . for maximum self-support. (Social Security Act, 1935, p. 627)

FSA's attempt to strengthen the family was featured primarily in its expansion of benefits to unemployed fathers in all states and in the enforcement of child support payments.

Other features of FSA are more specific to the value of self-sufficiency. FSA contains an education and training component—the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program (JOBS)—that includes supportive services for families who participate. For example, child care services, transportation costs, and other ancillary expenses (for example, books, tools, or uniforms) are paid while a client is enrolled in JOBS. JOBS also provides transitional child care and medical benefits for 12 months after the participant is working and ineligible for AFDC.

Provisions for child care are not incidental. Indeed, the new law demonstrates an effort to acknowledge the need for child care among working parents. Parents cannot participate actively in education, training, or employment programs if their children are not supervised in some way. But FSA policy does not include provisions to assess or monitor standards for quality care or address considerations such as the avail-

ability or adequacy of care and the effects of child care on children of different ages. Furthermore, FSA does not deal with the child care options available to AFDC families once they are employed full-time in the private sector.

A recent national study of parental needs for child care found that 57 percent of nonworking, low-income single mothers stated that they would seek employment if child care was acceptable and available (Hofferth, 1988, 1989). Other studies show that the determining factors in selecting child care are related primarily to quality, location, and price (Kisker, Maynard, Gordon, & Strain, 1989). Cost is an issue of critical concern. Hofferth's (1988) study showed that families who are living below the poverty line and who are headed by an employed female spend approximately 32 percent of their income on child care. The study highlights the fact that if a low-income mother pays for child care without some form of public assistance, she will spend a very high proportion of her income for that care (double the national average). Yet the majority of AFDC recipients who complete the JOBS program secure employment that pays very low wages. In California, which has had experience with the Greater Avenues for Independence welfare-to-work program, the average starting wage of an AFDC client after participation in the program is \$6.00 per hour, without medical benefits. Because of their limited income, parents may compromise the quality or stability of their child care arrangement in their efforts to remain self-sufficient.

With a new policy orientation that encourages work above all, children's needs may not be addressed adequately. In some cases, women's employment may bring financial gains to the family. In many cases, however, women's work will result in less buying power for the family than what was available previously on aid. Therefore, if children are not specifically targeted in the design of welfare policies, some may fall through the cracks.

The Workfare/Child Care Dilemma

American values surrounding the welfare debate have changed dramatically

this century. Because values are inextricably tied to the formation of policy, it is important to understand them and the conflict they generate within the social framework. Some of the dominant tenets of American culture are work, independence, individualism, and self-sufficiency, each of which is shrouded in controversy when it comes to welfare. Welfare reform under FSA strongly encourages these values. The act advises AFDC recipients that they are bound by a social obligation to the state to work in exchange for monthly support. But self-sufficiency may be hard to realize unless AFDC recipients obtain jobs that pay a good deal more than their welfare grant. Independence also may be hindered by lack of day care. Without an adequate, accessible, and affordable child care system, AFDC recipients may be unable to participate fully in self-sufficiency-oriented activities. They also may have serious difficulties maintaining their independence after completion of the program.

The answer to the day care debate, as Kaus (1986) suggested, is simple: "If the government is going to expect poor mothers to work, then it will have to provide day care for all those who need it" (p. 32). However, specific policy recommendations that address the day care needs of the working AFDC population also are necessary.

The Child Care Disregard

Regulations regarding the child care disregard should be modified so that they reflect AFDC policy before OBRA changes went into effect. Previously, AFDC recipients were allowed to use the disregard until their wages raised them above their state's standard of need (the disregard may only be used for four months under present regulations). A reinstatement of the original policy would assist many clients in their search for a more secure level of self-sufficiency.

Standardizing the disregard at a flat rate may be inappropriate. Regulations that minimize discretion are important to the administration of the AFDC program, but there may be other ways to approach the issue of establishing flat rates for the disregard. Instead, the

amount of the disregard should be varied based on different market rates for different regions of the country. The system should account at least for urban and rural differences; the most sensitive system would rely on the median rate for child care in each county. This new system would generate a few obvious benefits. First, using the market rate per county, AFDC recipients would not be relegated to low-cost and possibly low-quality care. Instead, they would have an equal opportunity to place their child in the same care arrangements used by other community members. Indeed, a number of studies have documented the benefits of high-quality care for educationally disadvantaged preschoolers (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikart, 1984; Darlington, 1980; Zigler & Gordon, 1982). Parents of these children should have several options available to secure a high-quality environment for their child. Second, if the rate varied by county, AFDC recipients who live in high cost-of-living environments would not be penalized for their residence. Third, instituting a system such as this would require an annual nationwide update on market rates per county. The reporting system would formalize an informal day care network and would provide closer monitoring of day care services for children.

Transitional Care

Providing 12 months of transitional care is a first step in easing the burden that accompanies a change from welfare receipt to full-time employment. But even the regulations under FSA may not guarantee the independence of welfare recipients. In a major departure from other attempts at reforming welfare, the Massachusetts' Employment Training Choices program tries to assist families with transitional care for as long as they are in need (Atkins, 1988). Hosni's (1979) work showed that two years of child care benefits are especially helpful to AFDC parents. Further studies are needed to verify the average length of time necessary to assist clients toward self-sufficiency. The results of such studies can aid in implementing policies that reflect client needs more accurately.

Child Care Tax Credit

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit could be revised to assist low-income working families with child care expenses. Presently, parents who earn at least \$10,000 annually are eligible for a tax credit of up to 30 percent on \$2,400 in child care expenditures. This credit is deducted from the family's tax liability, assuming the family pays taxes. Families who do not pay taxes because of low-income status are not eligible for the credit. Because the child care tax credit is not refundable, it is of no use to many low-income families. The primary beneficiaries of the policy are, instead, middle-class families. In fact, spending under the child care tax credit has tripled in the past decade, totalling nearly \$4 billion in assistance to middle-income families (Besharov & Tramontozzi, 1989; Robins, 1989). Although it may be important politically to offer middle-class families a significant tax break, the policy does little to assist those who bear the greatest financial burden for using child care services.

A more equitable policy was devised in the 101st Congress with the passage of federal child care legislation (Public Law [P.L.] 101-508, the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Reconciliation Act). Although the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit has not been altered, the Earned Income Tax Credit (a tax credit available to low-income working families) has been expanded. The maximum credit for a family with one child is \$1,852, and \$2,013 is the maximum for families with two or more children. This refundable credit can be applied to child care or other family expenses and is designed to assist families in or on the edge of poverty.

Grubb (1989) suggested that relying on a tax credit to solve the day care problem is not sufficient. Large numbers of low-income women are employed in jobs that are not attached to the federal tax system. Any changes made in the tax structure designed to accommodate low-income families will not affect these workers. Instead, subsidies for the direct delivery of care to low-income families should be included in any package of reforms.

Increasing the Supply of Subsidized Care

The limited space available in publicly subsidized programs is a significant obstacle for low-income parents. Although spending under the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit has significantly increased in the past 10 years, federal funding for direct child care services has diminished (Blank, Savage, & Wilkins, 1988). With the passage of P.L. 101-508, a new Child Care Development Block Grant has been authorized that allows states to expand their child care services. Another \$1.5 billion was allocated to be used over the next five years to provide child care assistance for working families who are poor. Unfortunately, the new legislation does not provide sufficient funding to meet the demand for child care in the low-income community. Grubb (1989) concluded that in California—one of the most generous states in the nation in terms of child care support—only 17.9 percent of eligible children ages three to five years receive subsidized care. Therefore, a policy that addresses the vast need for services will require a great deal of commitment from policymakers and community members.

Conclusion

Each of the proposed measures is costly. They should be viewed, however, in the context of the values espoused by the struggle to reform welfare. Recent efforts constitute an attempt to move welfare recipients into the labor market, but children also should be an integral part of welfare policies. Grubb and Lazerson (1982) suggested that in practice society does little to support children:

The saccharine myth of America as a child-centered society, whose children are its most precious natural resources, has in practice been falsified by our hostility to other people's children and our unwillingness to support them. (pp. 51-52)

Elkind (1981) and Zelizer (1985) also noted the ambivalence in American culture toward children as valuable resources. But if child care for low-income families is not supported financially at a level where parents can work and

children can be cared for well, then the values of current welfare reform bills will be undermined and their ultimate success jeopardized. Currently, employment is regarded highly under FSA, but there is a limited commitment to the ancillary costs of child care. The challenge of the 1990s is to integrate the values of work and parenthood so that women can be encouraged to take part in the work force without letting the needs of children go unmet.

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