

Welfare Reform, Poverty, and Families with Young Children¹

by

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

We approach the study of welfare reform from a developmental-contextual (Lerner & Fisher, 1994), life span (Elder, 1997), and ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1997) theoretical perspective that has applicability across a broad range of scientific and policy issues in human development. Perhaps the most widely understood aspect of this overall theoretical orientation is the concept of life span development as it applies to *individual* growth and change. However, it is important to observe in the study of welfare (as in other areas) that families also have developmental trajectories. It is clear that life span (family) development does not occur in a vacuum. The ecological concept helps focus on the relevance of the contexts of development that include individuals, groups, physical and constructed environments, and institutions. For example, from an ecological or systemic perspective, the needs of families that use welfare are part of a larger system of family needs and ways to meet those needs.

Finally, *developmental-contextualism* emphasizes the fact that neither individual (or family) behavior nor the ecology of development is static. That is, both families and environments continuously change and there is reciprocity in influence. The focus of developmental-contextualism is on the *relations* between persons (families) and their ever-changing contexts. Family behavior in one set of circumstances may well be quite different than in another situation or even in the “same” situation at a different point in time. For example, specific child care needs may vary depending on the ages of children needing care as well on the nature of parents’ work activities.

Given this theoretical perspective, the present research project had two major emphases. The first was to help provide a focus on young children and their families. Welfare reform issues are likely to be quite different for families with infants and toddlers than they are for families with only older children, or those with no children. For example, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (i.e., federal welfare reform policy) requires parents to participate in employment, training, or other “work activities” as early as six weeks after a child is born in order to receive cash assistance. Earlier welfare policies, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Family Support Act of 1988, allowed mothers to stay home with their young children (Hofferth, 1989). Now, however, replacement of the AFDC program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) means that poor parents must place their infants and toddlers in a variety of child care arrangements while they participate in welfare-to-work programs. Given the current condition of child care for infants and toddlers, this policy has potentially alarming implications for the well being of infants, toddlers, and their families. The potential differential impact of welfare reform on families with children of different ages has been virtually ignored in research as well as in public policy debate about welfare reform.

The second emphasis of the present project was to contribute to providing a “voice” for parents who are being directly affected by relatively recent changes in federal policy on welfare. Until recently, families who rely on welfare have had little or no voice in the debate (for recent exceptions, see Burton et al., 1998; Edin & Lein, 1997; Holloway, Fuller, Rambaud, & Eggers-

Pierola, 1997). We believe this is one of the reasons that policy discussions about welfare are often framed in terms which are closer to caricature than to accurate characterization.

In order to pursue these lines of inquiry, we conducted a two-stage, multi-method project. The first stage involved secondary analysis of national data on over 2,800 families with children under six, including more than 200 families who received AFDC in 1993. The results of this stage of the project are reported in the present paper. The second stage of the project is currently underway, and focuses on in-depth interviews with a small group of families who have recently received cash assistance under the current welfare system (i.e., TANF). These interviews have been completed and preliminary qualitative analyses have been carried out. Final analyses of the interviews will be presented in a subsequent paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The U.S. child care situation has been described as a “perpetual emergency” made worse by the increased demand resulting from welfare reform (Rimer, 1997, p. A1). In general, child care is plagued by problems of availability, affordability, instability, and poor quality. These problems are particularly acute in regard to care for infants and toddlers and poor children of all ages.

Child care for children under three years of age is in very short supply (Phillips, 1995). For example, only five percent of Ohio’s spaces in child care centers are available for infants, and only 12 percent for toddlers (CDF-OH, 1997). Although the availability of infant/toddler care varies widely and is much lower in some areas of the country than others, nationally only about half of child care centers serve infants (Hofferth, 1993). A shortage also exists in subsidized care. For example, in 1995 the state of California had a waiting list of 225,000 children for its subsidized child care slots (Twentieth Century Fund, cited in Schorr, 1997).

Further, infant/toddler care is typically more expensive than preschool care because of the higher adult-child ratios required for this age group. For example, the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study (CQO) found the average fee for full time infant care to be \$451 per month compared with \$372 for preschool care (Helburn et al., 1995). In addition, although working poor families pay less for child care than higher-income families (with the expected poorer availability and quality), they spend a greater percentage of income on child care. Hofferth (1997), for instance, found that poor families spent 33% of their household income on child care compared to middle class families who spent 6%.

Poor families also are often forced to change their child care arrangements, due to irregular work shifts, marginal employment, and financial necessity (Bridgman & Phillips, 1996). A national survey found that 41% of working poor mothers had rotating schedules, and 33% worked weekends (Hofferth, 1997). Another factor in the instability of infant care is the use of multiple arrangements. The majority of employed mothers with infants and toddlers use more than one child care arrangement (Hofferth, 1993). By the time they are one year old, nearly one third of infants have been in three or more child care arrangements (NICHD, 1995). This results in instability for infants and toddlers, who depend on stable relationships for healthy emotional and brain development (Haith, Benson, Roberts & Pennington, 1994; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996; Shore, 1997; White 1995; “Your child,” 1997).

Finally, although the average child care in the U.S. only minimally meets children's needs for warm relationships and learning, child care for children under three years of age is of even poorer quality. In the CQO study, 12% of preschool classrooms were rated as "less than minimal" quality, whereas 40% of infant/toddler classrooms received this rating. This means that a large number of infants and toddlers are in settings that fail to meet their basic needs for health and safety, let alone for relationships and experiences that promote healthy emotional and cognitive development (Helburn et al., 1995). In addition, among infants and toddlers in family child care and relative care, the majority are also in care characterized by inadequate quality and absence of regulation by state agencies (Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn, 1994; Kontos, 1992)

The risks posed by this child care situation for the well being of infants and toddlers is illustrated by the multi-site NICHD Study of Early Child Care (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996). This study found increased rates of insecure attachment among infants who experienced both insensitive care at home and out-of-home care that was low in quality as well as unstable. Further, recent research on the brain development of infants and toddlers highlights the direct effect of insecure attachments and lack of stimulation on brain development during the first three years of life (Nash, 1997; Shore, 1997; "Your child," 1997).

Looking beyond the perceived political imperative to "reduce the welfare rolls," discussion among experts in child care and welfare research has pointed to the need for research in several specific areas. Among the important issues are the potential effects of parents' efforts to move into the labor force on their ability to ensure the well-being of their children, and the effects of child care on parents' ability to move into and remain in the labor force (Bridgman & Phillips, 1996). Several empirical findings do demonstrate the effects of child care on parents' participation in work activities. First, work and child care schedules often conflict for poor families, creating a barrier to participation in work, training, and related activities. For example, one third of working poor mothers work weekends, with 41% working rotating schedules (Hofferth, 1997), and child care programs (especially center-based programs) typically operate only weekdays (Hofferth, 1993). Parents' concerns about other aspects of child care also hinder work participation. Higher child care costs have been associated with decreases in employment rates of mothers (Hofferth, 1989). Hofferth (1997) hypothesized that these problems with childcare constrain mothers' work participation, which limits their work skills and experience, and ultimately the wages they are able to earn. Availability and stability of care also influences work patterns. A study of California's welfare reform program found that the concerns single mothers had about the availability, instability, and quality of their child care arrangements increased the likelihood that mothers would drop out of the program (Meyers cited in Hofferth, 1997).

Work also has effects on parents' use of and satisfaction with child care arrangements. For example, low-wage jobs impede parents' ability to pay for quality child care, especially for infants and toddlers (Helburn et al., 1995; Hofferth, 1989; Phillips, 1995 cited in Bridgman & Phillips, 1996). As discussed previously, child care expenses account for a large proportion of family income in low-income families, and infant/toddler care is more expensive than that for older children (Helburn et al., 1995; Hofferth, 1997).

In summary, with regard to child care, “Welfare-to-work programs must be prepared for a greater demand for child care than most had expected. They must be prepared to make special efforts to help families make provisions for care of infants, for care during evenings and weekends, and for care of sufficiently high quality that it will not harm the future prospects of young children” (Schorr, 1997, p. 177). Unfortunately, the conclusions of Zaslow, Tout, Botsko, & Moore (1998) and the research reviewed in this paper do not combine to produce optimism about long-term favorable developmental trajectories for either the youngest children in families that use welfare or for their families.

Specifically, Zaslow et al. (1998) assert that positive effects of welfare reform on children will depend on increases in jobs and economic resources for parents, and placing children in safe, stimulating and supportive child care settings. Negative effects are likely if mothers are less likely to find stable employment, if benefit eligibility decreases without compensating increases in income (e.g., due to time limits), and if child care is of poor quality. As Schorr (1997) makes clear, the choice between these two very dissimilar scenarios on long-term outcomes is *clearly* more a matter of political will and the (un)willingness to put well-researched knowledge bases into practice than it is a matter of not knowing what to do.

PURPOSES, QUESTIONS, AND HYPOTHESES

Purposes

A major goal of this research is to contribute to new areas of inquiry on the relationships among poverty, welfare reform, and families with young children. Specifically, the present research distinguishes families with children under three from those with preschool age children. Although some research on poverty has examined differential effects of poverty as a function of children’s age (e.g., Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997), previous research on welfare has focused exclusively on families with preschool children or has not differentiated families with younger children from those with older children. Additionally, the present study responds to Bridgman and Phillips’ (1996) call to examine the concurrent and reciprocal relationships between child care and work patterns among poor families.

Questions and Hypotheses

This study attempted to provide information on the following issues related to welfare, work, and child care:

- What is the contribution of AFDC reciprocity to understanding parents’ work and child care patterns? To what extent does welfare have an effect, independent of poverty, on families?
Hypothesis #1: Parents who receive AFDC will be more likely to use informal, unregulated child care arrangements (such as relatives) than formal arrangements (such as child care centers).
- What is the contribution of the age of child to parents’ work and child care patterns? Which work and child care characteristics are specific to families with children under three?
- What is the contribution of child care characteristics to understanding parents’ work patterns?

Hypothesis #2: Parents who spend a high percentage of their income on child care will be less likely to participate in work-related activities (such as work, school, or job hunting).

Hypothesis #3: Unstable arrangements will be associated with low wages, low work participation, and irregular work schedules.

Hypothesis #4: There will be an inverse relationship between child care cost and work participation.

- What is the contribution of work-related characteristics to understanding the child care arrangements parents use for their young children?

Hypothesis #5: Parents with higher earnings and regular work schedules will be more likely to use formal child care arrangements and to use stable arrangements.

Hypothesis #6: Higher earnings will be associated with a lower proportion of income spent on child care.

METHODOLOGY

SIPP

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a longitudinal, multi-stage, stratified sample survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It includes the resident population of the U.S., excluding persons living in institutions and military housing. The data set includes information on income, labor force participation, government program participation, and demographic characteristics. Data are also available on a wide array of household characteristics, child care, transportation, and other features of day-to-day living conditions for poor and non-poor families. All data reported in this paper are weighted using the “person weight” created by the Census Bureau to correct for differential attrition over the course of the study. Based on the recommendation of the Census Bureau this variable was standardized using the mean person weight for the sample.

The first SIPP was carried out in 1984, with an ongoing series of national panels introduced each February from 1984-1993. A new four-year panel was introduced in April 1996. Beginning with data from 1992, current plans are to gather 10 years of data to assess the impact of “welfare reform.” Sample sizes range from 14,000 to 36,700 interviewed households, with the duration of each panel being 2 ½ to 4 years. The SIPP includes a “core” of content on basic variables of interest (e.g., labor force and program participation) and a set of “topical modules” that focus on particular topics (e.g., child support, child care, disability). Unlike the “core” data that are collected in every panel, the topical module data are collected only as part of selected waves. Additional information about the SIPP and access to the public use data can be found on the Internet at www.census.gov (Lloyd, 1997).

Analyses of the SIPP data were planned to help shed light on the work and child care issues faced by families with young children that are currently experiencing welfare reform. Therefore, we used the most recent public use data available at the time the study was initiated (1993 panel), and included data on AFDC reciprocity and work participation. The SIPP is well-suited to examination of these issues because it includes: (a) a large number of households with parents and young children from across the country, representing a wide range of demographic

characteristics; and (b) data on a wide range of variables related to work, child care, and welfare reciprocity.

In order to focus on the child care and work patterns of AFDC recipients, data were used from the core interview, the section on reciprocity history from the wave 1 topical module, and the work schedule and child care sections of the wave 3 topical module. Although the SIPP contains longitudinal data on many of the variables of interest, we chose to focus on the cross-sectional data due to the difficulties involved in linking topical modules from one wave to another, as well as from one panel to another. This necessary practical and methodological choice was not optimal from the perspective of our overall theoretical orientation, which would have been better served by longitudinal data analyses.

SIPP Study Sample

The sample included all parents or guardians of children under the age of six ($n=2827$). Limiting the sample to this group allowed us to focus on families that used child care arrangements for their preschool children while their parents engaged in work, study, or job-hunting and to exclude families that used arrangements only for school aged children. We were particularly interested in comparing the work and child care issues faced by parents with infants and toddlers to those faced by parents of preschoolers. As previously noted, these age groups are frequently combined in studies of work and child care patterns. Further, the existing literature suggests a number of unique and difficult issues for families with very young children. For example, an issue of particular salience for families who use cash assistance (TANF) is the requirement that parents participate in work-related activities as early as six weeks after a baby is born in order to continue receiving benefits.

Demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 1. With regard to major focuses of the present study, it should be noted that eight percent of the sample ($n=237$) received AFDC at the time of the core interview and 49 percent ($n=1388$) had a child under the age of three. It is also important to note two major limitations of the “race/ethnicity” variable. First, the largest group of parents (53%) were categorized as “other/don’t know,” due to both the construction of the survey items for race and ethnicity and the complexities of self-identification. More importantly, current perspectives urge caution in the interpretation of these variables, given that the constructs of race and ethnicity are markers for a myriad of social, cultural, political, economic, and historical factors.

Work-Related Variables

In order to assess the interrelations among work and child care for families who did and did not receive AFDC, we examined a range of work-related variables from the core interview and topical modules of the SIPP. **Percent worked** is defined as the percentage of parents who worked full- or part-time during the four months prior to the interview. **Earnings** is the parent’s total income from wages and salary for the month prior to the interview. **Number of jobs** is whether the parent worked no jobs, one, or two jobs. **Work hours** is the total number of hours worked per week. **Work schedule** is the percent of parents who worked a regular daytime

schedule vs. an evening, night, rotating, split shift, or irregular schedule at their job (first employer if more than one job).

Because attending school and looking for work are included in the activities that can be used to meet the work requirement for TANF, we also included these variables in some analyses. *Percent in school* is whether the parent was enrolled in school part- or full-time. *School hours* is the number of hours per week the parent attended school in the last month. *Percent looked for work* is whether the parent spent any time looking for work. *Job hunt hours* is the number of hours per week spent looking for work in the last month. Table 2 provides descriptive data on these work-related variables.

Child Care Variables

All child care variables were derived from the questions on child care in the wave 3 topical module. These variables describe the arrangements used by parents who worked, were enrolled in school, or were looking for work during the four months prior to the interview and who had at least one child under six. Child care variables available in the 1993 module primarily address the type, cost, number, and hours of care used by families. Data were not available on the critical features of child care subsidies and quality of care, which prevented us from examining the relations of these variables with family and work patterns.

Type of care is a composite of the person who provided care during most of the time the child was in care and the setting in which care was provided. Type of care includes: (a) organized child care facility (day care center, nursery school, or preschool); (b) relative (sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin); (c) child's other parent or stepparent; (d) family day care (nonrelative caring for child in provider's home); (e) babysitter (nonrelative caring for child in child's home); and (f) parent caring for child while she works at or away from home. Based on preliminary analyses that showed a high frequency of relative care among parents who received AFDC, we recoded type of care for the bivariate analyses. *Relative care* was defined as the percentage of parents using relatives (parent, other parent/stepparent, or other relative) vs. non-relatives (in-home babysitter, family day care provider, or organized child care facility).

Number of current arrangements is whether the child is in one or two child care arrangements during the week. *Total number of arrangements* is the number of child care arrangements used for the child during the 12 months prior to the interview. For the bivariate analyses, the two variables pertaining to number of arrangements were combined to create a measure of *stability*: This is a dichotomous variable where stable care is defined as using only one arrangement during the week and only one or two arrangements during the past year. *Child care hours* is the total number of hours per week the child is in care. *Cost* is the total cost per month for child care. This amount includes the cost for more than one child for some families. *Cost: income* is the ratio of the cost of care to the family's total income for the month. Descriptive data for these variables are provided in Table 3. For a description of the child care patterns for the entire SIPP sample in 1993, as well as some longitudinal comparisons, see Casper (1995, 1996).

RESULTS

The following sections describe results pertaining to multivariate modeling of work-child care relationships in the context of AFDC reciprocity, child age (infant/toddler vs. preschooler), and other relevant family characteristics. Analyses were planned to identify two sets of multivariate models: First, models to predict work-related patterns from family and child care variables, and second, models to predict child care patterns from family and work-related variables. These models were intended to address several research questions: (a) Are parents who have a child under three different in their work and child care patterns compared with parents of preschoolers? (b) Do parents with family incomes at or below the poverty line and those who received AFDC differ in their work and child care patterns compared to other parents? (c) Which child care characteristics are associated with parents' work-related characteristics? and (d) Which work-related characteristics are associated with parents' child care characteristics?

Main Effect Relationships

The following four sections summarize the bivariate relationships among four sets of variables: (a) Family (child and parent) characteristics; (b) poverty-related characteristics (income-to-needs ratio and AFDC reciprocity); (c) work-related characteristics; and (d) child care characteristics. Tables 4 through 10 summarize the bivariate relationships among these sets of variables. Due to the strong likelihood of finding significant relationships given the sample size and number of tests conducted, a probability level of .01 was selected for reporting significance in both the text and tables.

Work-related Variables

The first set of bivariate analyses that will be reported examined the effect of parent characteristics (age, education, marital status, race/ethnicity), child age, and poverty-related variables (income-to-needs ratio and AFDC reciprocity) on work-related variables. Six work-related variables were included in this set of analyses: % worked, earnings, work hours, work schedule, % in school, and % looked for work. Table 4 shows the results of these analyses for the dichotomous work variables (work, work schedule, school enrollment, and job hunting).

As shown in the first column, all four of the parent characteristics, but not child age, were related to whether or not parents worked. Specifically, working parents were older than non-workers, $t(2825)=11.07$, $p<.00001$. They had higher educational attainment compared with those who didn't work, $X^2(2)=125.54$, $p<.001$. Working parents also differed from those who didn't work in marital status, $X^2(3)=200.25$, $p<.001$. In addition, there was a significant main effect of race/ethnicity, $X^2(3)=63.31$, $p<.001$. In terms of poverty, working parents had a higher ratio of income to needs, $t(607)=20.99$, $p<.0001$ and were less likely to have received AFDC compared to non-working parents, $X^2(1)=422.37$, $p<.001$.

The next work-related variable to be examined was work schedule. Parent age, education, marital status, and race/ethnicity were all significantly associated with whether parents worked a regular or irregular schedule; however, parents with a child under three were no more or less likely to be working a regular schedule than parents of preschoolers. Parents who worked regular schedules were older than those with irregular schedules, $t(2181)= -9.90$, $p<.0001$. They also had

higher educational attainment, $X^2(2)=61.75$, $p<.001$. Parents with regular work schedules also differed in marital status, [$X^2(1)=47.25$, $p<.001$] and in race/ethnicity, $X^2(3)=12.98$, $p<.005$. Work schedule was also associated with poverty and AFDC. Parents who worked a regular daytime schedule had a higher ratio of income to needs (poverty threshold) compared to parents who worked irregular schedules, $t(2705)= -12.47$, $p<.0001$. Similarly, parents with regular schedules were less likely to receive AFDC than those with irregular schedules, $X^2(1)=155$, $p<.001$.

Next, main effects on parents' school enrollment were examined. All the family characteristics except children's age had significant relationships with whether or not parents attended school. Parents in school were younger, $t(193)=7.96$, $p<.0001$. They had lower levels of educational attainment, $X^2(2)=73.03$, $p<.001$. In addition, marital status ($X^2(3)=111.99$, $p<.001$) and race/ethnicity [$X^2(3)=27.92$, $p<.001$] each had an effect on whether or not parents were enrolled in school. School enrollment was related to both poverty, [$t(243)=13.97$, $p<.0001$] and AFDC reciprocity, $X^2(1)=377.20$, $p<.001$.

The final set of relationships shown in Table 4 is for job hunting. Having a child under three did not differentiate parents on job hunting. However, all four parent characteristics were significantly related to whether or not parents spent time looking for work. Parents who looked for work were younger than those who didn't, $t(2767)= -3.72$, $p<.0002$. They differed on educational attainment, $X^2(2)=49.37$, $p<.0001$. Parents also differed in whether or not they spent time job hunting by their marital status [$X^2(1)=41.07$, $p<.001$] and race/ethnicity, $X^2(3)=20.95$, $p<.001$. Regarding poverty, parents who spent time looking for work differed in the income-to-needs ratio [$t(119)= -15.36$, $p<.0001$] as well as their AFDC reciprocity, $X^2(1)=116.30$, $p<.001$.

Table 5 summarizes the findings for the continuous work variables, earnings and work hours. As shown in the first column, parent age, education, and marital status showed significant bivariate relationships with earnings; child age and parent race/ethnicity were not associated with earnings. Parents' age was positively related to earnings, $r=.32$, $p<.001$. Parents with different levels of education differed significantly on earnings, $F(2826)=272.50$, $p<.0001$. Earnings were also significantly different between parents who were married vs. single, $t(1769)= -9.22$, $p<.0001$. Parents' earnings were also associated with poverty and AFDC. The ratio of total family income was positively related to parent earnings, $r=.68$, $p<.0001$. Also, parents who received AFDC earned significantly less than those who did not receive AFDC, $t(569)= -26.79$, $p<.0001$.

As seen in the second column of the table, only one family characteristic was significantly related to the total hours worked per week. Marital status had a main effect on hours, $t(951)=3.76$, $p<.0002$. Poverty and AFDC were significantly related to parents' work hours, in the expected direction. Income-to-needs was positively related to work hours, $r=.09$, $p<.0001$. Similarly, parents who received AFDC worked fewer hours than those who did not receive AFDC, $t(2499)= -2.96$, $p<.003$.

Child Care Variables

Given the literature demonstrating the relationship between family characteristics and child care patterns (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997), we next examined the

bivariate relationships of child care characteristics with parent characteristics, with child age, and with poverty. Five child care characteristics were included in this set of analyses: Type of care, stability, hours, cost, and cost-to-income ratio. The results pertaining to the dichotomous variables (type and stability) can be found in Table 6.

Regarding type of child care arrangement, ages of child and parent, as well as parent education were associated with the frequency of relative care (parents, grandparents, or other relatives) compared to non-relative care (in-home babysitters, family day care, and organized child care facilities); marital status and race/ethnicity were not related to the type of care parents used. First, parents who used relative care more likely to have children under three than those who used non-relatives, $X^2(1)=52.80$, $p<.001$. Parent age was also associated with type of care, $t(2710)=8.15$, $p<.00001$. Educational level was related to type of care, $X^2(2)=46.16$, $p<.001$. In regard to poverty, parents who used relative care had a smaller income-to-needs ratio than parents who used non-relative care, $t(2693)= 9.86$, $p<.0001$. Parents who received AFDC did not differ significantly from other parents in their use of relative care.

Next, we examined bivariate relationships with stability of care. Age of child and parent education were the only family characteristics that differentiated parents who used stable vs. unstable care; parent age, marital status, and race/ethnicity were not related to stability. Parents of infants and toddlers were more likely to use stable care arrangements compared to parents of preschoolers, $X^2(1)=71.09$, $p<.001$. Educational level was significantly related to stability, $X(2)=17.22$, $p<.001$. In terms of poverty, parents who used fewer arrangements (more stability) had a somewhat lower income-to-needs ratio than those who used multiple arrangements, $t(2719)= 2.90$, $p<.004$. AFDC reciprocity was not related to stability of care.

Table 7 shows the results for the continuous child care variables. As seen in the first column, only child age and parent education were significantly related to the number of hours children were in care; parent age, marital status, and race/ethnicity were not related to hours. Infants and toddlers were in child care for slightly more hours per week compared to preschoolers, $t(2719)=2.51$, $p<.01$. In addition, children whose parents had higher levels of education were in care longer than other children, $F(1,2719)=30.25$, $p<.0001$. Both poverty and AFDC were related to child care hours. Income-to-needs was positively related to hours of care, $r=.16$, $p<.0001$. In addition, parents who received AFDC used fewer hours of care than other parents, $t(267)= -10.39$, $p<.0001$.

Finally, main effect relationships between family characteristics and cost of child care (both cost per month and the proportion of family income spent on child care) were examined. All of the family characteristics except race/ethnicity were significantly related to monthly cost of care. As expected, parents of infants and toddlers paid more per month for child care than parents of preschoolers, $t(2718)=5.58$, $p<.0001$. In addition, parent age was positively related to cost of care, $r=.14$, $p<.0001$. Educational level was significantly related to child care cost, $F(1,2825)=87.30$, $p<.0001$. Marital status was also related to cost, $t(1395)=3.44$, $p<.0006$. Parents whose family incomes were above the poverty threshold spent more per month on child care ($r=.33$, $p<.0001$) whereas those who received AFDC paid significantly less per month for care than other parents, $t(281)= -6.82$, $p<.0001$.

In regard to the proportion of income spent on child care, only marital status had a significant main effect. Single parents spent a greater proportion of family income on child care, $t(737)=6.07$, $p<.0001$.

Work-Related and Child Care Variables

The final set of bivariate analyses address the question, “Are there main effect relationships between work-related and child care variables?” These analyses will examine the relationship between the five child care variables (type, stability, hours, cost of care, and cost-to-income ratio) and the six work-related variables discussed above (% worked, earnings, work hours, work schedule, % in school, and % looked for work). We will first report relationships between the child care variables, the percentage of parents who worked, and parents’ work schedule (see Table 8).

All the child care variables except the ratio of cost to family income were significantly related to parents’ employment status. As seen in the first two columns of Table 8, parents who worked were less likely to use relatives for care [$X^2(1)=32.07$, $p<.001$] and to have stable care arrangements [$X^2(1)=23.44$, $p<.001$]. They also used more hours of care per week [$t(471)=18.65$, $p<.0001$] and paid more for care, $t(602)=13.03$, $p<.0001$. However, they did not pay a significantly different proportion of family income for child care compared to parents who did not work.

The last two columns of Table 8 compare the child care characteristics of parents with regular and irregular work schedules. These results show that parents who worked regular daytime schedules were less likely to use relatives [$X^2(1)=164.39$, $p<.001$], they used more hours of care during the week [$t(2719)=-17.70$, $p<.00001$], and paid more for child care [$t(2766)=-13.63$, $p<.0001$], compared to parents who worked irregular schedules. These groups of parents did not differ significantly in the stability of their care arrangements, nor in the proportion of family income they spent on care.

Table 9 shows similar comparisons by school enrollment and job hunting. From this table, it is clear that parents who attended school were less likely to use relatives [$X(1)=7.05$, $p<.008$], used fewer hours of care [$t(212)=6.82$, $p<.0001$], and paid less for care [$t(240)=7.96$, $p<.0001$] than non-student parents. They did not differ in the stability of care or proportion of income spent on child care. Similarly, parents who spent time looking for work were also less likely to use relative care [$X^2(1)=16.56$, $p<.001$], used fewer hours of care during the week [$t(132)=-28.04$, $p<.0001$], and paid less for care than parents who did not look for work, $t(112)=-9.04$, $p<.0001$. In addition, parents who engaged in job hunting were more likely to have stable arrangements than non-job-hunting parents, $X^2(1)=14.17$, $p<.001$.

The last set of bivariate relationships between work and child care variables is shown in Table 10. This table shows the main effects of child care variables on parents’ earnings and work hours. As seen in the first column, higher earnings was associated with non-relative care [$t(2819)=-11.28$, $p<.0001$], with more stable care [$t(2719)=-4.08$, $p<.00001$], more hours of care ($r=.39$, $p<.0001$), and higher fees for child care, $r=.38$, $p<.0001$. However, parents with higher earnings did not spend a higher proportion of family income on child care, as we hypothesized. As with earnings, more work hours was associated with the use of non-relative care [$t(1977)=-$

5.45, $p < .0001$], with more hours of care per week, and a higher cost for care, $r = .16$, $p < .0001$. However, in this case stability was not related to work hours, and parents who worked more hours were likely to pay a higher proportion of family income on their children's care, $r = .06$, $p < .01$.

Multivariate Models

Variable Selection Strategy

Three criteria were used in selecting variables for inclusion in the multivariate models described below. First, variables that had significant main effects on the predicted work or child care variable were included in the model for that dependent variable. Second, variables that did not have significant main effects, but had a hypothesized relationship with a work or child care variable based on the literature review and research questions were included, in order to examine their contribution to predicting the dependent variables. Finally, variables were excluded from a model when analyses revealed collinearity among predictor variables.

Two sets of models were constructed and tested. First, we developed models to predict the six work-related variables in order to address our research questions regarding the role of AFDC, having a child under the age of three, and child care arrangements in the work-related experiences of parents. Second, we constructed similar models to test the contributions of AFDC, age of child, and work-related factors to each of the five child care variables.

For both sets of models, hierarchical linear regression was used to examine the contributions of the independent variables to predicting continuous variables, such as work or child care hours. Logistic regression was used when the variable to be predicted was dichotomous, as in the case of parents' work schedule (regular vs. irregular) or type of child care (relative vs. non-relative).

Models to Predict Work-Related Variables

The first set of multivariate analyses was designed to address the following research questions: (a) Do parents who received AFDC differ from other parents in their patterns of work, school, and job hunting? Do the effects of poverty account for these differences, or does AFDC make a unique contribution to work patterns? (b) Do parents with infants and toddlers differ from parents with older children in their work, school, and job hunting patterns? and (c) Which characteristics of child care contribute to predicting these work-related variables?

We will begin by discussing the models designed to explain the dichotomous variables of work, work schedule, school, and job hunting. For each of these variables, we carried out a series of logistic regression analyses, adding one or more explanatory (independent) variables in each model. Parent characteristics that were significantly related to the response (dependent) variable were entered first as covariates. Second, the income-to-needs ratio was added to determine the contribution of poverty to the prediction model. AFDC was added in the next step to determine whether it made a unique contribution beyond poverty. Next, child care variables were added to examine their collective and individual contributions to explaining patterns of work, school, and job hunting. Age of child (under three vs. three and older) was added to the model last because it

did not have a main effect on any of the work-related variables, but was a variable of particular interest in this study.

At each step of the analysis model-fitting statistics were compared to identify the model with the best fit for the data. In each case, the model with the entire set of variables demonstrated the greatest explanatory power. Table 11 summarizes the statistics for these four models.

In regard to whether parents worked, parents' age was the only family characteristic that was a significant predictor in the context of the other variables. Both income-to-needs and AFDC reciprocity made a unique contribution to the model. Of the child care variables, hours and cost were significantly related to work status. Finally, age of child improved the fit of the model, but did not make a significant contribution once the other variables were taken into account. Not surprisingly, the model indicates that not working is associated with being younger, living in poverty, receiving AFDC, using fewer hours of child care, and paying less for care. The overall contribution of the explanatory variables was significant, $X^2(11)=719.83$, $p<.0001$. In addition, this model correctly predicted 89% of the responses (worked vs. didn't work), further demonstrating its fit to the data.

As in the first model, age was the only parent characteristic that made a significant contribution to predicting work schedule, and both income-to-needs and AFDC were significant predictors. As in the previous model, child care hours helped predict parents' work schedule, but in the model predicting work schedule, cost of care was replaced by type of care (relative vs. non-relative). Again, having a child under the age of three improved the model's fit to the data, but was not a significant predictor of work schedule. As expected, irregular schedules appear to be more characteristic of parents who are younger, living in poverty, receiving AFDC, using relatives for child care and fewer hours of care. Overall, the final model was significant, $X^2(10)=615.58$, $p<.0001$. This model correctly predicted 77% of the responses for work schedule.

The third model in Table 11 predicted whether parents were enrolled in school. This model followed the same pattern as the previous models in regard to parent characteristics and poverty. In contrast, none of the child care variables made a significant contribution to predicting school enrollment, nor did the age of child. Overall, school enrollment is associated with parents who are younger, living in poverty, and receiving AFDC. The final model was significant, $X^2(10)=299.29$, $p<.0001$ and correctly predicted 85% of the responses.

In the last model in the table, whether parents spent time looking for work was examined. In this case, none of the parent characteristics made an independent contribution to the model, but both the ratio of income to needs and AFDC were significant predictors. Of the child care variables, only hours of care was significant. Age of child did not make a unique contribution to explaining job hunting. The overall model was significant, $X^2(11)=335.40$, $p<.0001$. In addition, this model had the strongest predictive ability of the work-related models: the independent variables explained 93% of the responses (looked vs. didn't look for work). Overall, parents who spent time looking for work were likely to be living in poverty, receiving AFDC, and using fewer hours of child care per week.

Table 12 summarizes the hierarchical regression models designed to predict parents' earnings and work hours. Variables were entered into the model in the same order as described

above for the logistic regression analyses. The model predicting parents' earnings shows that parents' age, educational attainment, and marital status all made significant contributions to the model at step 1. Overall, these variables explained 15% of the variance in earnings. In step 2, the income-to-needs ratio made the largest contribution to the model, with an additional 35% of variance explained. AFDC reciprocity made a small but statistically significant contribution beyond the effect of poverty. Child care characteristics also added a small amount to the prediction of earnings, with hours and cost of care making independent contributions. In the final step, children's age did not prove to be a significant predictor of earnings. The final model indicates that lower earnings are associated with parents who are younger, less educated, single, who live in poverty, receive AFDC, use fewer hours of child care, and pay less for care. Overall, this model explained 56% of the variance in parents' earnings.

In predicting work hours, only marital status was entered as a covariate based on the bivariate analyses. This variable had a significant relationship with work hours, but contributed little to the explained variance. In this model, income-to-needs and AFDC made only small contributions to explaining work hours, but each had independent effects. Finally, child care characteristics made the largest contribution to the model, with 15% of the variance explained by these variables. Type and hours of care each made unique contributions beyond the effects of marital status and poverty. This model accounted for 17% of the variance in work hours. Overall, working fewer hours is more likely among parents who are married, living in poverty, and receiving AFDC. In addition, parents who use relative care and fewer hours of child care are also likely to work less.

Models to Predict Child care Variables

Next we turn to the prediction of child care patterns. These analyses were planned to address the questions: (a) Does AFDC reciprocity differentiate parents in their child care use, beyond the effect of poverty? (b) Which work-related variables are unique predictors of child care features? and (c) Do parents with infants and toddlers differ in their child care arrangements compared to parents with preschool-aged children?

As with the models predicting work patterns, logistic regression was used to predict the dichotomous variables, type of care (relative vs. non-relative) and stability (stable vs. unstable). Variables were entered in the stages described earlier, except for age of child. Having an infant or toddler vs. preschooler was significantly related to the child care variables in the bivariate analyses. Therefore, this variable was entered in the model after AFDC and before the work-related variables to determine the effect of having an infant or toddler after poverty and AFDC are taken into account. Three work-related variables (work, school, and job-hunting) were eliminated from these models due to their collinearity. Therefore, only earnings, work hours, and work schedule were used as work-related predictors.

The results of these analyses are shown in Table 13. In the first model, educational attainment, but not parent age, was a significant predictor of whether parents used relatives for their children's care. The income-to-needs variable also made a significant contribution, but AFDC reciprocity had no effect beyond poverty. Children's age was a significant predictor, along with all three work-related variables. Overall, the model was significant [$X^2(8)=251.34$,

$p < .0001$] and explained 68% of the responses (relative vs. non-relative care). Based on these data, relative care is associated with lower educational levels, incomes near the poverty threshold, lower job earnings, fewer work hours, and irregular work schedules.

In regard to the stability of children's care, parents' education made a significant contribution to the model. Unlike all the models described previously, neither income-to-needs nor AFDC was significantly related to stability. Children's age was again a significant predictor. Neither of the work-related variables made an independent contribution to predicting stability of care. Overall, this model shows that unstable care is associated with having less education and children under the age of three. The final model was significant, $X^2(6) = 95.89$, and explained 63% of the responses.

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to predict the continuous child care variables of hours and cost. These models are shown in Tables 14. In the first of these models, parent education made a small but significant contribution to the explained variance in child care hours. After parent characteristics were accounted for, income-to-needs also made a small contribution, but AFDC was not significantly related to hours of care. Children's age was a significant predictor, although it contributed little to the explained variance. The work variables made the largest contribution to the model, explaining 20% of the variance, with each of the three variables making an independent contribution. The overall model predicted 21% of the variance in child care hours. This model indicates that less use of child care is associated with lower levels of education, living near the poverty threshold, having a child under three, lower earnings, working fewer hours, and working a regular daytime schedule.

Next, the cost of childcare was examined. All five sets of variables explained small proportions of the variance in child care cost. In step one, both parents' age and education were significantly related to cost of care. In the second step, the income-to-needs ratio made a significant contribution, but AFDC did not have an effect on hours beyond poverty. Age of child was also a significant predictor, with parents of infants and toddlers likely to pay more for child care than parents with preschoolers. In the final step, the work variables made an additional contribution, with earnings, work hours, and work schedule each making a unique contribution to the model. Collectively, the predictor variables explained 17% of the variance in the cost of child care. Higher child care costs are more likely among parents who are older, have more education, have incomes above the poverty threshold, and have children under three; higher costs are also associated with higher job earnings, more hours of work, and regular daytime schedules.

As discussed earlier in the paper, previous research demonstrated that families who are labeled as "working poor" spend fewer dollars on child care, but that this expenditure accounts for a larger proportion of their family income compared to middle-income families. In the final multivariate analysis, we examined this issue in the context of families representing a wide range of income levels. This model explained only 6% of the variance in the ratio of child care cost to income. According to this model, parents who spend a larger portion of family income on child care expenses tend to be married, have family incomes above the poverty threshold, and to have children under the age of three compared to those who spend less of their family income on child care.

DISCUSSION

Many of the findings from this study are consistent with previous research and anecdotal accounts of families that rely on welfare. In addition, several of the results highlight issues that have not been examined empirically. In this section, we will discuss the major findings of the study.

First, AFDC reciprocity contributed to the prediction of all six work-related variables after parent characteristics, poverty, age of child, and child care characteristics were taken into account. Not surprisingly, parents who received AFDC were less likely to work or attend school, but more likely to look for work compared to parents who did not receive AFDC benefits. When these parents worked, they were likely to earn less and work fewer hours.

In the current context of welfare reform, work-related patterns are likely to be different than the ones we found because of the new work requirements in PRWORA. Specifically, parents are likely to not only be looking for work, but also to be employed, attending school, or both. However, the available evidence strongly indicates that the increase in work hours will not raise earned income to levels that will extricate these families from poverty (e.g., Edin & Lein, 1997; McFate, 1995; Sherman, Amey, Duffield, Ebb, & Weinstein, 1998; Vartanian, 1999). Further, in the past, low wage jobs combined with lack of affordable child care and lack of health insurance drove many families back to welfare. In the current context of time limits this safety net will be less available to families.

Consistent with other data (Casper, 1996), AFDC reciprocity did not make a significant contribution to any of the models predicting child care patterns. Parents who received AFDC did not differ in the type, hours, stability, or cost of care when compared to parents who did not receive AFDC. Such differences may be more likely in the current context of welfare, however. For a number of reasons, parents who wish to receive cash assistance are being forced to make different choices about their children's care than many other parents. It is true that the number of childcare slots has increased as the demand for care due to the new work requirements has increased. However, a number of factors limit welfare recipients' access to the more formal types of arrangements that have been associated with higher quality of care (Galinsky, 1998; Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn, 1994; Helburn et al., 1995). For example, childcare subsidies may not match the market rate of center-based care, driving parents toward more informal, unregulated arrangements. Similarly, the irregular work schedules of many poor parents make formal arrangements less feasible.

One of our research questions was whether AFDC reciprocity had an effect on families beyond the powerful impact of poverty. The findings that address this question are mixed. For all the work variables, AFDC status had an effect independent of poverty. Therefore, parents' involvement in work, school, and job hunting, as well as their work hours, schedules, and earnings cannot be accounted for solely by their level of poverty. However, AFDC reciprocity did not contribute to understanding child care patterns after poverty was taken into account. In other words, differences in the type, stability, hours, and cost of care can be explained by parents' demographic characteristics, poverty level, age of child, and work patterns.

The results pertaining to age of child are in the opposite direction of those for AFDC. Children's age did not differentiate the work patterns of families, but did help to predict child

care patterns. Consistent with other research (Casper 1995, 1996; Helburn et al., 1995; Hofferth, 1993), the presence of infants and toddlers in families was associated with unstable care, care by relatives, fewer hours of care, and higher cost of care. These relationships were significant even after family selection factors like education and poverty were taken into account.

One of our primary interests in pursuing this research was to increase understanding of the unique issues faced by families who both use welfare and have very young children. Therefore, we were surprised that the combination of AFDC reciprocity and age of child did not contribute to any of the work or child care models. Our data suggest that AFDC recipients who have infants and toddlers do not differ in their work patterns from those who have preschool-aged children. In addition, AFDC recipients appear to use child care that is similar in type, stability, cost, and hours, regardless of the age of their children. It is possible that potential differences in child care use that might be expected because of the differential needs of younger versus older children (Casper 1995, 1996) are suppressed by the constraints of inadequate transportation, irregular work schedules, and limited income.

Another motivation for this study was the desire to understand the reciprocal influence of work and child care characteristics. Our results highlight a number of child care variables that contribute to understanding parents' work patterns. Type, hours, and cost of child care all contributed to the prediction of work-related variables. However, the stability of care and the proportion of family income spent on child care did not relate to work patterns when other variables were taken into account. We also identified a number of work-related variables that helped to predict parents' child care patterns. Specifically, earnings, work hours, and work schedule all made significant contributions to predicting child care variables.

Finally, we will highlight the two multivariate models that showed the strongest predictive ability. Of the hierarchical models, the model predicting parents' earnings explained 56% of the variance. Variables making unique contributions to this model included parents' age, education, and marital status; income-to-needs ratio and AFDC; and the hours and cost of child care. Of the logistic models, the one that provided the best fit to the data predicted job-hunting (93% of responses predicted correctly); variables that made significant contributions to this model included the income-to-needs ratio, AFDC reciprocity, and hours of child care.

In reflecting on the major goals of this study, we come to several conclusions. First, families with infants and toddlers can be distinguished from those with preschool-aged children in their child care patterns, but not in their work patterns. Second, there appear to be a number of reciprocal relationships between work and child care patterns. Namely, the type, hours, and cost of care influence the nature of parents' work-related activities, and the earnings, hours, and schedules of work influence child care features. Finally, our data support the notion that there are independent effects of poverty and welfare participation. However, the pattern of influence may vary, depending on the family outcomes targeted for study.

A CLOSING PERSPECTIVE

In concluding this chapter, we place our investigation into the broader context of welfare reform. We start by noting a prime motivating factor for this research: The apparent gap between a major public policy decision ("welfare reform," as instituted through PRWORA), and

the starkly limited conceptualization of how to assess the likely impact of that decision. In particular, the narrow goal of getting people off welfare was (and seems to remain) the predominant theme, with relatively little attention to assessing the effects on families and children, particularly very young children. By the standard of “getting people off welfare,” welfare reform is a resounding success. For example, more than 1 ½ million families (4 ½ million people) who were on welfare three years ago are no longer receiving assistance (Wellstone, 1999). But, how are poor families *doing*?

Fessler (1999) reported the state of research on the effects of welfare reform. The General Accounting Office (GAO) discovered that, three years after welfare reform, 17 states have attempted some follow-up, but only 7 have useable data. One of the general conclusions by the GAO was that previous welfare recipients seemed to be finding employment, but that pay was extremely low. At the same time, there are ongoing public statements by some elected officials that “welfare reform is a great success, since there are no children sleeping on grates” (Rep. Archer, as reported by Fessler, 1999). Such public statements, and the lack of systematic nation-wide follow-up, evidence a strong desire to *not know* the effects. We are quite certain that both political considerations and psychological issues explain this phenomenon. In any event, the SIPP provided an opportunity to investigate some assumptions and likely outcomes, by analyzing data on a sample of AFDC and non-AFDC families that have some similarities to families now going through welfare reform. In addition, we expect that the qualitative interviews that are being examined in the second stage of this project will provide additional insights into the effects of being in the welfare system on parents’ abilities to meet both their work and family obligations. We believe, along with Holloway and her colleagues (1997), that research that brings parents’ voices to the forefront are necessary “to ensure that mothers and their young children living at the edge of poverty will no longer be faceless strangers” (p. 2). Our next report will focus on mothers’ own perceptions of welfare reform and their experiences with the welfare system under TANF.

We wish to focus for a moment on the work, benefit support levels, and income components of welfare reform. For almost 150 years, policy makers and citizens have hoped that the poor among us would be able to “work themselves to a state of self-sufficiency,” despite decades of data and experience demonstrating that this will not occur. Indeed, all manner of carrots and sticks have been attempted to one degree or another, and the U.S. is far from isolated in its ongoing struggle to effectively address these issues. Among the insights presented by McFate (1995) in her cross-national (United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands, France, Italy, and the United States) study of “labor market policies and social assistance in the 1980s,” several are particularly germane. One is that cross-national data do not support the “stick” approach.

For example, the evidence does not support the argument that unlivable benefit levels encourage workforce participation. For example, Italy, with the most meager short-term assistance for the unemployed, had the highest percentage of people who were unemployed for over a year; and the real value of AFDC benefits in the U.S. plunged by an average of about 40% in most states between 1981 and 1989. Although “sticks” do not work, “carrots” have been in historical short supply in both the U.S. and Italy. McFate points to the fact that there are political

reasons within some countries to create policy on the assumption that the provision of benefits discourages work.

In addition, McFate (1995) has cogently observed that “full mobilization of the labor supply” (the PRWORA of 1996) indicates perhaps a non-modern (our term) perspective in terms of moving people off subsidies to work. Indeed, “It conveniently overlooks the dramatic decline in demand for low-skilled labor that occurred over the last decade and a half in most Western democracies” (p. 631). McFate’s international analysis leads to a very difficult and far-reaching conclusion. Namely even *if* worker job readiness were significantly enhanced through training and education, and *if* high quality, available, and stable infant/toddler care were affordable, two significant and endemic problems remain. One is the *quality of work* available, the emphasis by governments having been on the quality of the workforce. The other is the level of income inequality. In essence, replacement of family benefits and subsidies by earned income is a virtual impossibility for most families on welfare. For example, Edin and Lein (1997) interviewed 165 poor single working mothers in four major U.S. cities. *None* of these families was able to live on earnings alone. All depended to one degree or another on family members, friends, and even strangers to help them with child care (almost always “below-market-rate” situations) and financial assistance to stay off welfare.

It is very clear that the current economic system cannot absorb the employment needs of families that must move from welfare to work. The focus on employment must shift from a predominant focus on the quality of the worker to the quality of the available jobs. This relates directly to the issue of whether families can replace welfare benefits (including cash assistance, child care subsidies, medical assistance, etc.) with earned income to any reasonable degree.

We believe, and available research supports the view, that the number one problem for poor people is that they are poor! That is, the state of being poor, broadly conceived (e.g., low or no earned income, lack of access to quality child care, lack of health insurance, social ostracizing), dwarfs all other demographic and family variables, particularly for families with younger children. With regard to raising the income of poor families, Duncan & Brooks-Gunn (1997) state in their summary and integration, “Most important appears to be the elimination of deep and persistent poverty during a child’s early years” (p. 608). A study by Families U.S.A. (cited in Wellstone, 1999) estimates that 675,000 low income people (mostly children) do not have medical coverage as a result of welfare reform. In addition, there has been an increase of some 400,000 children in deep poverty since the adoption of PRWORA (Children’s Defense Fund 1999; Wellstone 1999).

With regard to child care, we believe that Rimer’s (1997) characterization of the U.S. child care situation as a “perpetual emergency” made worse by welfare reform is an understatement. The data are overwhelming. Concerning welfare, the concept of the lazy welfare mother who has babies to bring in more money is tiresome and inconsistent with all empirical data on the matter. One searches for metaphors to communicate the extent and seriousness of the problem. It is not easy.

“An accident waiting to happen” comes to mind. But, the future tense does not apply. A different metaphor that seems to apply to both the reality of child care and to welfare reform, is the turnpike accident that authorities don’t clean up. It has happened, and drivers from all walks

of life drive on by, being thankful that it wasn't them. After awhile, however, the highway will become littered with subsequent crash victims as one after another piles into the wreckage. Soon there will be no way for others to pass on that highway. Do we choose to clean up the highway and try to prevent future pile-ups? Or do we take another highway, one where reality isn't so hard on the eyes, the heart, and the soul? Wellstone (1999) quotes the great Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal that, "Ignorance is never random." Senator Wellstone goes on to observe that sometimes we choose not to know, but that, "In the case of welfare reform, we must have the courage to find out." We agree completely.

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Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Characteristic	<u>n</u>	
Child age ^{abc}	2748	31(20.04)
Child sex ^{bd}	2740	.50
Parent age ^{ce}	2827	30(6.04)
Education ^f		
Less than H.S.	373	.13
H.S. grad	933	.33
Beyond H.S.	1521	.54
Marital status ^f		
Married	2067	.73
Never married	538	.19
Sep/divorced	208	.07
Widowed	14	.01
Race/ethnicity ^f		
White/non-Latino	655	.23
Black/non-Latino	355	.13
Latino (any race)	331	.12
Other/don't know	1486	.53
Family size ^c	2827	4(1.37)
Total family income ^c	2827	\$41,348(30,979.98)
Income:needs ^{cg}	2827	2.82(2.15)
Received AFDC	237	.08

^a In months. ^b n does not equal sample size due to missing data for these variables. ^c Mean (standard deviation). ^d

Female ratio. ^e In years. ^f Percentage. ^g Ratio of family's total annual income to family's poverty threshold (based on family size), range=0 (no income) to 21 (income 21 times poverty threshold).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for work-related variables.

Characteristic	<u>n</u> ^a	
Worked ^b	2501	.89
Earnings ^{cd}	2827	\$1,222(1,303.41)
Number of jobs ^d	2827	.94(.41)
Work hours ^{de}	2501	36(16.66)
Regular schedule ^b	1708	.60
In school ^b	159	.06
School hours ^{ce}	159	20(11.12)
Job hunted ^b	92	.03
Job hunt hours ^{ce}	92	9(8.37)

^a n may not equal sample size due to missing data for some variables.

^b Ratio. ^c Monthly. ^d Mean(standard deviation). ^e Weekly.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for child care variables.

Characteristic	<u>n</u> ^a	
Type of care ^b		
Organized cc facility	1004	.37
Relative	618	.23
Other par/steppar	467	.17
Family day care	349	.13
Babysitter	149	.06
Parent	125	.05
No. current arr's ^b		
One	2122	.78
Two	599	.22
Total no. arr's ^b		
1-2	363	.85
3 or more	63	.15
Hours per week ^c	2721	27(15.41)
Cost per month ^c	2827	\$109(156.60)
Cost : income ^c	2802	.04(.11)

^a n's do not equal sample size due to missing data for child care variables.

^b Ratio. ^c Mean (standard deviation).

Table 4. Summary of main effects of parent characteristics, child age, and poverty on employment, work schedule, school enrollment, and job hunting.

	<u>Worked</u>		<u>Schedule</u>		<u>In School</u>		<u>Job Hunted</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Irregular</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Parent age ^{ab}	31(5.83)	27(6.42)****	31(5.62)	29(6.35)***	26(6.93)	31(5.86)***	28(5.84)	31(6.01)**
Education ^c								
<HS	.11**	.32**	.09**	.19**	.33**	.12**	.33**	.12**
>HS	.56**	.38**	.57**	.48**	.51**	.54**	.27**	.56**
Mar status ^c								
Married	.93**	.07**	.64**	.36**	.04**	.14**	.46**	.75**
Single	.74**	.26**	.50**	.50**	.14**	.86**	.54**	.25**
Race/Ethnic ^c								
White	.24**	.17**	.25*	.21*	.19**	.23**	.17**	.24**
Black	.11**	.25**	.11*	.15*	.23**	.12**	.27**	.12**
Latina	.11**	.15**	.12*	.11*	.17**	.11**	.10**	.12**
Child Age ^c								
0-2	.49	.51	.49	.50	.56	.49	.47	.49
3-5	.51	.49	.51	.50	.44	.51	.43	.51
Poverty								
Inc:Needs ^b	3.09(2.18)	1.34(1.28)***	3.27(2.28)	2.30(1.84)***	1.45(1.35)	2.98(2.18)***	1.15(1.07)	2.98(2.18)**
AFDC ^c	.04**	.41**	.03**	.16**	.47**	.06**	.37**	.07**
Non-AFDC ^c	.96**	.59**	.97**	.84**	.53**	.94**	.63**	.93**

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

^a In years. ^b Mean(standard deviation). ^c Ratio.

Table 5. Summary of main effects of parent characteristics, child age, and poverty on job earnings and work hours.

	<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Work Hours</u>
Parent Age ^{ab}	.32***	-.001
Education ^c		
<HS	\$579(705.94)	35(15.87)
>HS	\$1575(1530.59)***	36(16.25)
Marital Status ^c		
Married	\$1353(1408.60)	35(16.99)
Single	\$912(985.85)***	38(15.21)**
Race/Ethnicity ^c		
White	\$1401(1565.18)	35(17.42)
Black	\$969(1102.75)	37(14.06)
Latina	\$922(898.75)	37(13.17)
Child Age ^c		
0-2	\$1188(1239.39)	36(16.72)
3-5	\$1293(1406.46)	36(16.61)
Poverty		
Income:Needs ^b	.68***	.09***
AFDC ^c	\$212(473.70)	30(17.51)
Non-AFDC ^c	\$1326(1340.10)***	36(16.60)*

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

^a In years. ^b Pearson product-moment correlation. ^c Mean(standard deviation).

Table 6. Summary of main effects of parent characteristics, child age, and poverty on type and stability of care.

	<u>Relative Care</u>		<u>Stable Care</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Age	29(6.09)	31(5.84)****	30(6.12)	31(5.69)
Education				
<HS	.17**	.11**	.15**	.09**
>HS	.47**	.59**	.52**	.58**
Single	.27	.27	.28	.24
Race/ethnicity				
White	.21	.25	.22	.27
Black	.13	.12	.14	.11
Latina	.13	.11	.12	.10
Child<3	.57	.43**	.53	.34**
Income:needs	2.47(1.79)	3.27(2.31)***	2.84(2.20)	3.13(2.13)*
AFDC	.48	.42	.09	.06

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

Table 7. Summary of main effects of parent characteristics, child age, and poverty on hours and cost of care.

	<u>Child Care Hours</u>	<u>Child Care Cost</u>	<u>Cost:Income</u>
Age ^a	.02	.14***	-.04
Education ^b	30.25***	87.30***	.37
Marital status ^c			
Single	27(15.48)	\$92(141.67)	.08(.20)
Married	27(15.39)	\$114(161.02)**	.03(.05)***
Race/ethnicity ^b	.01	.32	1.81
Child age ^c			
0-2	28(15.06)	\$125(168.06)	.05(.12)
3-5	27(15.70)*	\$93(142.95)***	.04(.11)
Poverty			
Income:needs ^a	.16***	.33***	-.11***
AFDC ^c	19(12.43)	\$54(118.80)	.07(.23)
Non- AFDC ^c	28(15.41)***	\$113(158.49)***	.04(.10)

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001.

^a Pearson product-moment correlation. ^b F ratio. ^c Mean (standard deviation).

Table 8. Summary of main effects of child care characteristics on employment and work schedule.

	<u>Worked</u>		<u>Schedule</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Irregular</u>
Relative ^a	.84	.91**	.46	.70**
Stability ^b	.75	.87**	.76	.78
Hours/wk ^b	29(15.12)	15(11.81)***	31(14.85)	21(14.19)***
Cost/mo ^b	\$118(160.65)	\$38(94.92)***	\$139(166.92)	\$63(126.53)***
Cost :Inc ^b	.04(.09)	.05(.21)	.04(.07)	.04(.15)

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

^a Ratio. ^b Mean(standard deviation).

Table 9. Summary of main effects of child care characteristics on school enrollment and job hunting.

	<u>In School</u>		<u>Job Hunted</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Relative ^a	.08	.92*	.05	.95**
Stability ^a	.82	.76	.92	.75**
Hours/wk ^b	21(12.01)	28(15.52)***	8(6.28)	28(15.06)***
Cost/mo ^b	\$48(100.06)	\$113(158.86)***	\$26(88.19)	\$113(158.32)***
Cost :Inc ^b	.05(.23)	.04(.10)	.04(.22)	.04(.11)

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

^a Ratio. ^b Mean(standard deviation).

Table 10. Summary of main effects of child care variables on job earnings and work hours.

	<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Work Hours</u>
Type of care ^a		
Relative	\$937(1046.11)	33(17.98)
Non-relative	\$1469(1464.14)***	37(15.51)***
Stability ^a		
Stable	\$1215(1342.54)	35(17.04)
Unstable	\$1460(1281.16)****	37(15.89)
Child care hours ^b	.33***	.39***
Cost per month ^b	.38***	.16***
Cost : Income ^b	-.02	.06*

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001. **** p<.00001.

^a Mean (standard deviation). ^b Pearson product-moment correlation.

Table 11. Logistic regression analyses for predictors of employment, work schedule, school enrollment, and job hunting (models with best fit).

	<u>Work</u>			<u>Schedule</u>			<u>School</u>			<u>Jobhunt</u>		
	<u>mle</u> ^a	<u>SE</u> ^b	<u>X²</u> ^c	<u>mle</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>X²</u>	<u>mle</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>X²</u>	<u>mle</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>X²</u>
Par char's												
Age	.07	.01	23.94 ***	.05	.01	38.84 ***	-.08	.12	20.71 ***	-.12	.02	.58
Educ	.06	.108	.37	-.02	.07	.08	.27	.12	5.14	-.39	.16	5.96
Single	.21	.17	1.50	.07	.11	.37	-.09	.21	.16	-.02	.31	.01
Race/eth	.07	.06	1.24	-.03	.04	.85	-.01	.08	.04	-.11	.11	1.12
Inc:needs	.49	.07	47.28 ***	.09	.03	10.77 ***	-.37	.09	19.35 ***	-.76	.15	26.82 ***
AFDC	1.93	.19	99.58 ***	1.30	.19	48.70 ***	-1.93	.21	83.19 ***	-.79	.31	6.53 *
Child care												
Rel care	.10	.16	.34	.81	.10	64.20 ***	.03	.19	.02	-.17	.27	.37
Stability	.07	.21	.13	---	---	---	---	---	---	.24	.42	.34
Hours	.07	.01	117.44 ***	.04	.003	173.75 ***	-.01	.01	3.42	-.16	.02	70.64 ***
Cost	.002	.001	8.24 *	.001	.0003	3.63	-.001	.001	3.06	-.002	.001	2.92
Child<3	.17	.16	1.19	-1.16	.09	2.85	-.19	.19	1.06	-.13	.26	.25

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001.

^a Maximum likelihood estimate of parameter. ^b Estimated standard error of MLE.

^c Wald chi-square with p value (chi-square distribution with 1 df).

Table 12. Hierarchical regression analyses for predictors of job earnings and work hours.

	<u>Earnings</u>			<u>Work Hours</u>		
	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>RΔ</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>RΔ</u>
Par char's			.15			.004
Age	53.41***	4.07		---	---	---
Educ	410.18**	34.11		---	---	---
Single	141.99***	54.48		-2.61**	.80	
Inc:needs	403.97***	9.25	.35	.93***	.16	.01
AFDC	411.41***	69.00	.01	5.84**	1.78	.004
Child care			.05			.15
Rel care	59.69	38.28		1.73*	.70	
Stability	-27.93	40.39		---	---	
Hours	16.61***	1.16		.40***	.02	
Cost	.74***	.13		.005	.003	
Cost:inc	---	---		-4.13	4.20	
Child<3	45.63	35.99	.0001	.50	.64	.0001
Overall R ²			.56			.17
Adj. R ²			.56			.17

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001.

Table 13. Logistic regression analyses for predictors of type and stability of child care (models with best fit).

	<u>Relative Care</u>			<u>Stability of Care</u>		
	<u>mle</u> ^a	<u>SE</u> ^b	<u>X²</u> ^c	<u>mle</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>X²</u>
Par char's						
Age	-.01	.01	.75	---	---	---
Educ	-.19	.07	8.13*	-.20	.07	7.42*
Inc:needs	-.08	.03	7.26*	-.005	.03	.02
AFDC	.48	.22	4.63	-.20	.19	1.05
Child<3	-.48	.09	29.92***	-.79	.09	68.64***
Work char's						
Earnings	-.0002	.0001	7.84*	-.0001	.00005	3.20
Hours	-.01	.003	6.27*	---	---	---
Schedule	.89	.09	92.34***	-.05	.10	.21

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001.

^a Maximum likelihood estimate of parameter. ^b Estimated standard error of MLE.

^c Wald chi-square with p-value (chi-square distribution with 1 df).

Table 14. Hierarchical regression analyses for predictors of child care hours and cost per month.

	<u>Child Care Hours</u>			<u>Child Care Cost</u>		
	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>RΔ</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>RΔ</u>
Par char's			.004			.03
Age	---	---		2.39***	.56	
Educ	1.49**	.45		32.74***	4.82	
Single	---	---		-4.84	7.76	
Inc:needs	.55**	.15	.005	22.80***	1.55	.08
AFDC	1.01	.1.60	.0002	12.55	16.28	.0001
Child<3	-1.73*	.61	.003	-44.65***	6.14	.02
Work char's			.20			.05
Earnings	.003***	.0003		.02***	.003	
Hours	.30***	.02		.75***	.19	
Schedule	-4.73***	.60		-36.01***	6.43	
Overall R ²			.22			.18
Adj. R ²			.21			.17

* p<.01. ** p.001. *** p<.0001.