

Introduction

By signing the welfare reform bill, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, President Clinton changed welfare as we know it. The act reformed the entitlement program Aid to Families and Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), a block grant. Although the main concern with the bill was getting poor families off of welfare and into the workforce, an inherent concern was how these reforms would affect the children in these families. The number of families that have left the welfare rolls has been unprecedented. However, has welfare reform had a positive affect on adolescents of low-income parents? Some believe that PRWORA has had a positive affect; others conclude that these adolescents' well-being is in danger. Numerous recent empirical studies on the well-being of these adolescents have discovered that welfare reform has had a negative affect on post-pubescents in several areas: academic progress and cognitive development, behavioral and emotional adjustment, and health and safety. Furthermore, studies have shown that welfare reform has caused low-income girls to have increased teenage pregnancy, childbirth, and school dropout¹. By reviewing crucial research of this developmental stage in youth, I hope to discover why adolescents are faring the worst out of any age group as mothers are moving from work. This paper aims to show how welfare reform has caused a decline in adolescent well-being, posit

¹ Zaslow et al. 81

theories as to why these adolescents are faring worse, and recommend some public policy reforms that may increase the well-being of these young adults.

Affects of Welfare Reform on Adolescents

The following excerpts from interviews with mothers forced to enter the workforce, illustrates positive and negative effects of welfare reform on low-income mothers and their children:

The first case is Denise, a 32-year-old African-American mother living in Philadelphia who had sons aged 9 and 12 when the interviews began. When she first enrolled in the study, Denise was working two part-time jobs without benefits during the school year – one at the school board and the other at a local university – and was unemployed during the summer. Denise stayed at these jobs for the first two years of the study, at which time she quit both for a full-time job with benefits. Around the same time, Denise married a man she had been living with for a while, so two incomes were supporting the household.

Denise felt positive about working because she felt she was setting an example for her sons. She believed her working would give them an incentive to work themselves when they became adults. In her words, “[They’ll think,] ‘Oh, well, she got up and she went out here, and she did what she had to do and...she’s not out, hanging out, running the streets, you know, doing drugs and parties and all that.’” She also thought her sons felt “happy” because she felt good about herself when she worked. At the same time, Denise expressed concern throughout the study about how her working severely curtailed the amount of time she spent with her children, saying that she would only “see them in passing.” Moreover, her work schedule prevented her from attending parent-teacher conferences at her oldest son’s school. She said: “A lot of times the meetings is at night, and I can’t make them. Like, my older son, I haven’t met his teachers yet. And I feel kinda bad about that.” Additionally, she could not be with her children when they came home from school to help them with their homework.

Denise’s shift at her new, full-time job, from 3:30 P.M. to 11:30 P.M., also affected her ability to monitor her sons in the neighborhood. She reported that when they returned home from school, her sons would hang out with their friends or go to their grandfather’s house down the street. They were responsible for dinner preparation (unless they ate at their grandfather’s), their homework, and other chores. Denise worried about negative activities that her sons could get involved in as a result of her not being around to monitor them: “By me working at night, a lot of things is happening out here and I have boys. You know, so I’m leery about that...I worry at times when I be at work.” Her concern seemed well founded, as she and her sons lived

in an extremely poor neighborhood struggling with drug trafficking and violence. Ultimately, concern about her sons' hanging out on the corner convinced her to change her shift to 12 A.M. to 8 A.M., so that she could be around to monitor them more. Despite her concerns about monitoring, Denise claimed that working full time did not have as negative an impact on her sons as it might have had had her sons been younger.

Many aspects of Denise's case appear to confirm welfare reform proponents' positive expectations regarding how new work requirements would affect adolescent children. Like many other women in the ethnographic study, she subscribed to the idea that work enhanced her self-esteem and that by working she served as a positive role model for her children. The time crunch she mentioned is familiar even to more advantaged parents, although in her case it resulted in a potentially risky amount of unsupervised time for her children and a lack of connection between her and her children's teachers. Still, Denise felt that her employment was not harming her sons overall.

Gayle, a 38-year-old white single mother living in Cleveland, was not happy with how her employment was influencing her only child, Jane. Although Gayle had an associate's degree in administrative assistance from a community college when she entered the Urban Change study, she was unable to find a job in that field and began working at a local thrift store for minimum wage between the first and second interviews. Gayle was not satisfied with this job but took it because of welfare reform's work requirements, and she later left welfare. Ultimately, she lost the job and cycled back onto welfare for a while.

During the fourth interview, Gayle indicated that Jane, who was 9 when her mother entered the study, was having serious problems in school – in particular, she was skipping school frequently. Formerly a student who got Cs or better, Jane was now getting Ds and Fs. Partly because Gayle had been working, she didn't know exactly how much school Jane had missed. Gayle was afraid to confront her daughter or ask the school about the problem: "It's all gonna come down on me and I'm not ready to deal with it. I don't think I should be punished for that." Gayle was also frustrated because she believed Jane would go to school every day if Gayle were home more often and were more available to monitor her daughter's whereabouts.

Unlike Denise, Gayle clearly felt that work interfered with her ability to parent. Whether work itself was really to blame for Jane's declining school performance is difficult to determine. Disengagement from school is widespread among adolescents in all social strata, and Jane might have started having problems in school even if her mother hadn't gone to work. Nevertheless, work most likely limited the amount of time Gayle could monitor her daughter's behavior and perhaps also Gayle's ability to seek help with Jane's problems in school.

The third case study features Tina, a 35-year-old African-American mother of six living in Philadelphia. Tina's experiences highlight a different set of employment-related problems encountered by parents who receive welfare. Because of Tina's work schedule, the three oldest of her children who were still living at home had to take care of her two youngest children. This added responsibility cut into her older children's free time and appeared to hurt the school performance of Tamara, her eldest daughter.

Tamara was responsible for waiting with the younger children for the van that took them to their daycare center. Because the van typically came late, Tamara was usually 20 to 30 minutes late for school. As her mother put it: "She's late every day for her school, every day. And what the school says to me is...they gotta do what they, what's their policy. She's gotta stay after school, do her detention... or she'll lose her credit out of her, out of that morning class 'cause she didn't get there on time. So she feels sad and I feel bad because I gotta be at work at 7. She can't be at school by 7 – she can't. We all can't be at the same place at the same time." Tina suffered tremendous guilt for imposing on her older children a responsibility that she felt was properly her own.²

These are just three examples of welfare mothers transitioning to work, however, the cases display the complex effects resulting from welfare reform that can amount for the adolescents in these families. Lack of parental monitoring in Gayle's case may have caused behavioral problems from her daughter Jane. In Tina's case, an inflexible work schedule caused her daughter Tamara to take on a parental responsibility for her younger siblings and ultimately, her frequent absenteeism from school. However, Denise's case shows that positive effects can and do occur from welfare reform.

Pre-PRWORA, there were two opposing views on how sending welfare mothers to work would affect the well-being of children. Proponents of welfare reform theorized that sending mothers to work would have positive affects on their children's cognitive and emotional development. Their rationality was that when welfare mothers became employed their lives, along with their families', would gain structure, particularly as their household incomes would rise. Furthermore, these researchers believed that a working mother was a role model to her children, and as her children observed her rise early every morning for work, they would, in turn, inherit a similar

² Genettian et al. 23-25

work ethic. Moreover, choosing work instead of welfare will improve these mothers' mental health and self-esteem. This would translate into the mother enhancing her parental abilities, which would ultimately increase the well-being of her children. Thus, the advocates of work over welfare argue that maternal employment is associated with more positive child development, and this proposition has credence if we consider Denise's case.

The opposing view considers that these mothers will only be able to obtain low-paying jobs, and that these jobs will increase the already stressful lives of these low-income families. Furthermore, they purport that employment will decrease the opportunity of mothers spending quality time with their children, and much of their new income would be lost because of work-related expenses, such as transportation costs and childcare. Therefore, these mothers are not increasing their income, and not able to enjoy and supervise their children. Some mothers may forego parenting altogether, opting to turn over the responsibility to relatives or possible adoption. All of these situations may associate with negative cognitive and emotional development for children. These children, mainly from single-family homes, are now left to raise themselves as their mothers are working. Furthermore, the lack of supervision could increase the likelihood that adolescents choose delinquent behavior, substance use, and sexual activity. Essentially, the critics of welfare reform deemed that maternal employment generates negative consequences for the well-being of the children in

these families, and the vignettes from Gayle and Tina suggest that these negative effects occur.

Before welfare reform was implemented in 1996, there were ten experimental programs in various areas of the country and Canada that undertook efforts featured in PRWORA, “such as ‘work-first’ strategies, time limits on welfare receipt, and financial incentives to work”³. The studies which focused on adolescents were the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), Canada’s Self Sufficiency Project (SSP), and Florida Family Transition Program (FTP). All three of these studies were experimental, which means the programs “randomly assign families to either an experimental group that can participate in the program, or a control group that is not eligible to participate”. The attribute of an experimental study is that the differences that occur can be assured to come from the program itself and not extraneous factors. Furthermore, the studies are beneficial to examine the impact on children because they are similar to the welfare-to-work policies that are currently in place. With respect to the impact on children, the effects were divided into three areas: “academic progress and cognitive development (academic/cognitive); behavioral and emotional (behavioral/emotional); and health and safety”.

MFIP and SSP were similar programs because they both gave substantial financial incentives for these women to go to work. MFIP “streamlined receipt of cash

³ Zaslow et al. 79

assistance and food stamps, and [gave] direct payments to child care providers”, and SSP offered the financial incentive while only requiring mothers to work 30 hours a week and leave welfare. FTP was different from the other two because FTP “included a time limit of 24 months of welfare receipt in any 60-month period for most applicants (36 months in any 72-month period for the least job-ready), along with a small financial work incentive and parental responsibility mandates”. Although there may be differences in these programs, all three reflect the current policies in PRWORA.

All three of these studies were that the programs were having adverse affects on adolescents in these families. In the MFIP, mothers of these adolescents rated their children as having less academic achievement as opposed to the control group, and this result was for both families who were recent applicants and long-term welfare recipients. Furthermore, these mothers were more likely to be contacted by the child’s school about behavioral problems. Similarly, in SSP, mothers reported their adolescents having less academic achievement and more school behavioral problems. The adolescents, themselves, reported “more frequent smoking, drinking once a week or more, and drug use, compared with adolescents in the control group, and older adolescents reported more delinquent activity”. The FTP program had the same results as the adolescents were reported as more likely to have been suspended and mothers rated their children as having less achievement. The affect of these programs on

adolescents are negative across the board, and welfare reform policymakers must be weary about these possible consequences.

Interestingly, researchers expected that welfare-to-work programs would have the least affect on adolescents, but the data seems to find that this age group is the most affected. In many of these examples, the adolescents' younger counterparts were having positive cognitive and emotional development from these experimental trials. Surprisingly, the data shows that adolescents from families who have traditionally been at lower risk for long-term welfare, such as families who are new to welfare and families who have received welfare for less than two years, seem to be faring even worse than adolescents from families who have been long-term recipients. Ultimately, considering these experimental trials, which are similar to welfare reform, the data concludes that adolescents of the experimental group are functioning worse than the control group with respect to academics and behavior.

The data from studies done post-welfare reform have been inconsistent. Chase-Lansdale et al. conclude welfare reform has had positive affects on the well-being of adolescents. Their research states there were significant associations between mothers' entry into the labor force and improvements in adolescents' mental health. Furthermore, they discovered increased behavioral problems when mothers left employment. However, their research conceded that they were unable to control for unmeasured characteristics of the mother. For example, they were unable to control

for maternal motivation. Also, the model they used did not include time-varying characteristics of children, like personality characteristics.

Comparing cohorts of adolescents, pre-welfare reform to post-PRWORA, data concludes analogous results to the experimental trials. A study viewing teenage girls from all socioeconomic backgrounds soon after the implementation of welfare reform compared to girls right before welfare reform display results that there have been no significantly different affects with respect to school dropout, pregnancy, and childbearing. However, when the study specifically measured girls from welfare families, they discovered “teenage girls in welfare families were more likely to have births in the reform era than those in the prereform era, and girls in low-income families were more likely to drop out of school”. Moreover, welfare reform had an important subsidiary goal, which was to “change the behavior of adolescents in families with high risk of welfare receipt,”⁴ and considering these adolescents had similar teen pregnancies, school dropouts, and childbearing statistics, welfare reform did not accomplish one of the goals it set out to achieve. Finally, another important affect of welfare reform that policymakers should be leery about is that adolescents, especially those who are susceptible for these risky behaviors, are spending much of their afterschool hours and evenings unsupervised because their mothers are working during these periods.

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A post-welfare reform study by Johnson et al. using a variety of differing models and claiming to be the most comprehensive research to date on the topic yield negative effects of welfare reform on adolescent well-being. They used three different dependent variables for children's emotional well-being: a total behavior problems index, an index of externalizing behavior problems, and an index of internalizing behavior problems. Their various models were able to capture the complexity of how low-income employment can have affects on child outcomes. Their analysis found that children whose mothers worked full-time experienced greater externalizing behavioral problems and more likely to be disruptive in school, relative to children whose mothers only worked part-time. Furthermore, adolescents whose mothers either had fluctuating work hours or job instability had significantly more behavior problems overall, greater internalizing and externalizing problems, more likely to be disruptive, have absenteeism issues, and more likely to repeat a grade or be placed in special education than adolescents whose mothers had standard hours or job stability. It should be noted that mothers who had job instability and fluctuating work schedules were more likely to have lower levels of income, be less educated, more likely to receive welfare, experience food insufficiency, or have been evicted in the past year. However, after controlling for these factors, the study still found that mothers' job instability has relatively negative affects for child well-being compared with mothers who have stable jobs. Furthermore, they discovered that as the source of income is increasingly

comprised of maternal labor earnings, as opposed to welfare receipt, child behavior worsened. They also found that the negative outcomes occurring from longer work hours were exclusive to those mothers who were in jobs that offer limited potential for wage growth. Finally, the data reveals that children's behavior problems were significantly associated with evictions from the house, finding that the associations between job loss and children's behavior problems were reduced by about 15% when eviction were included. Although there are other studies that reveal opposite affects, this study which seems to be the most extensive, reveals considerably negative effects with respect to job instability on child well-being.

Reasons for Adverse Effects on Adolescents

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As we see above, at least some studies of welfare reform has discovered negative consequences for adolescents, and the experimental trials suggest considerable deleterious effects for this age group. What are the reasons that these results are occurring? There are number of possibilities that could cause affects on adolescents: maternal employment, income, lack of supervision, and adolescents having to take on adult responsibilities. Moreover, working adds a new component into these mothers' lives, and they must complete a balancing act between their parental and work responsibilities, which can further add stress on the lives of their adolescents. Addressing any affects between welfare reform and adolescent well-being requires that

we examine why welfare reform has had effects on adolescents' achievement and behavior.

Maternal employment, especially for a single parent, can have considerable effects on all children, especially in a critical stage of development as adolescence. Evidence reveals that a relationship between maternal employment and negative adolescent effects exists, but the data is not conclusive; to illustrate the nuances of this association and how effects vary by household, below is an example of a mother transitioning to work:

Becky, a 40-year-old white single mother with one child, 15-year-old Jill, hoped to take computer courses and had recently begun applying for jobs when she was first interviewed for the Urban Change study in Philadelphia. But when Jill started "going haywire," Becky felt that keeping her daughter safe was her priority. According to Becky, Jill ran with the wrong crowd, skipped school, and stayed away from home for days at a time. She believed her daughter's problems undermined her chances of keeping a job: "It is really hard to go out and work when your daughter is going [down] the wrong path. No employer is going to want somebody on the job when they are getting phone calls all day to come home or you got to get home. I mean, I will be fired like that." She looked to the police and other authorities for help with Jill, but the only assistance she found was from a support group for parents facing difficult situations with their own children.

Within two months of the initial interview, Becky took a cleaning job, but she was soon forced to quit because working all night and dealing with Jill's problems all day left her exhausted. A year later, she had secured work as a babysitter, but her cash assistance and medical benefits were cut off – a consequence, she says, of her daughter's delinquency: "I was telling my caseworker about my babysitting and how it was good that it was so close by... I said that I was having trouble with my daughter going to school. Well, she goes and cuts my welfare because she [my daughter] is missing school." With help from a support group, Becky rearranged her commitments to work and caring for Jill, and she tried to set limits with her daughter. She told the interviewer: "If she wants to come in this house, then she has to follow the rules. That's it." Eventually, Becky found paid employment in a nursing home. When asked whether she could think of any reason why she might leave her job, she said: "Only if my daughter... don't wise the hell up and something pulls me away that she gets in trouble or something. That would be the only way."

Reflecting back on the past three years during her final interview, Becky said that she thought Jill's rebelliousness was a show of independence and concluded that her working had probably not affected her daughter's behavior. She had thought that Jill was an age where Becky's working would have relatively little impact except to make her less available to monitor her daughter. In fact, her daughter's behaviors undermined Becky's ability to focus on her job because she was spending time and effort trying to chase Jill down.⁵

As can be seen from Becky and Jill's story, moving from welfare to work has many more intricate effects that vary from case to case. Although Becky ultimately believes it was just a stage of Jill's life, the inability to monitor her probably exacerbated the situation for both Becky and Jill. Conclusively, single mothers with adolescents have considerably more complex lives, and forcing them to enter the workforce can put even more strain on often tempestuous relationships.

A further consideration of how welfare reform may cause adverse effects on adolescents is that although the mothers may be working, they are not necessarily increasing their incomes. In many of the experimental trials, "earning gains caused by the programs did not necessarily lead to gains in income for the families of adolescents". For these already vulnerable families, a decline in earnings can significantly affect the lives of the entire household. The direct effects that a loss of income can have on adolescents are that these children may have to "go without school-related supplies or activities that promote academic achievement". Data shows that for the programs that did not increase the income of the household there was a reduction in the proportion of adolescents that were performing at an above average

⁵ Gennetian et al. 31

rate in school. Moreover, the study shows that loss of income “increased the rates of grade repetition and receipt of special education services”. Furthermore, the programs that did increase the income of the household did not show positive affects for their adolescents’ school achievement. Thus, not only does decreasing the income of a household cause negative effects on adolescents, the programs that increased income did not even show positive effects.

As noted in the story of Gayle and her daughter Jane and the story of Becky and Jill, one of the main affects of forcing single mothers from welfare to work is the lack of parental supervision and monitoring that occurs. Obviously, when parents have to work, they have less ability to spend time with their children and are more ignorant of their children’s whereabouts. Moreover, when parents are not working during school hours, they are able to make sure that their adolescents are going to school. Research concludes that “closer parental monitoring of adolescents has been linked to better school outcomes and social functioning, and less parental monitoring has been linked to increases in problem behavior and juvenile crime”⁶. Data from the experimental studies shows that when maternal employment was increased, but the children were not in structured out-of-school activities or sports, the adolescents had decreases in academic performance compared with children who were in afterschool activities. Furthermore, a study showing that the adolescents were being supervised by another relative, as in the

⁶ Gennetian et al. 32-34

case of Denise's children and their grandfather, the adolescents did not show significant declines in their academic outcomes. Ultimately, as long as adolescents are somehow supervised while their mothers are working, academic performance will not decline.

A significant concern of maternal employment on adolescents is that these adolescent may have to take on more adult responsibilities, especially if they have younger siblings, as in the case with Tina and her daughter Tamara. Tamara was required to make sure her younger siblings were on the bus to school, and therefore, was late to school everyday. Most of the adolescents that have had to care for a younger sibling have been females, and there has been an association with this added responsibility and negative academic outcomes. Research shows that adolescents with younger siblings compared to those without a younger sibling were less likely to perform above average in school and more likely to repeat a grade, receive special education services, become suspended or expelled, and drop out. Even if adolescents do not have to care for younger siblings, they still may assume other adult responsibilities, such as "doing housework, shopping, cooking or contributing to family income by working outside the home". Research has discovered that adolescents in families where the parents have been forced to work are "more likely to work than are teens in welfare-reliant families and also work longer hours than teens in other income categories". Although these added adult responsibilities may keep these adolescents from engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors, they may decrease their time for

schoolwork or other school activities. Ultimately, maternal employment creates new adult responsibilities for all adolescents, and for those who have a younger sibling the added parental responsibility has considerable adverse effects on the child's academic outcomes.

Three hypotheses purport to explain why these adolescents are experiencing negative effects from these experimental programs. One is that maternal employment erodes parenting quality. Two reasons may result in the eroding of parental quality, which are that the actual employment causes the adverse parenting due to lack of time or that the increased stress from employment is to blame. The second posits that forcing single mothers from welfare to work diminishes the mother's ability to monitor her children. Finally, these adolescents have to take on new household responsibilities due to their mothers' work. They must care for younger siblings, which have affected their academic achievement and their social development. Although these three hypotheses have some data that consider them plausible explanations, there must be more research in order to understand the magnitude of each hypothesis. Furthermore, in order to solve, or at least alleviate these negative effects, more should be known about the causes of these problems.

Remedies for the Affects of Welfare Reform

The following section of the paper examines possible remedies that may assist in increasing the well-being of the adolescents whose mothers are moving to employment. Although more research should examine the affects of welfare reform on adolescents, this section bestows possible recommendations with the information available on how policymakers can attack the root causes of the adverse affects on low-income adolescents. Policy recommendations, discussed below, include increasing household income, decreasing the amount of time adolescents spend unsupervised, limiting the amount of adult responsibility that adolescents must take on as their mothers move into the workforce, and providing more stable employment with standard work hours.

Mothers forced to work should be financially better off. Welfare reform fails if families working must deal with lost income. Government can increase the income of these household is by using the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). However, a significant complaint of EITC is that the forms necessary to receive the supplement are extremely complex; therefore, these families have to spend a portion of their income to pay accountants to fill out their EITC forms for them. The government should provide either a service that assists these families with their tax return forms free of charge or refund the money that these families are spending on these tax preparation services. Furthermore, many lose health insurance as they move into the workforce. When these mothers fall ill, they must expend their earnings on medical services and supplies, which then lead to the inability to pay for their adolescents' needs. Ultimately, if welfare

reform expects women to enter the workforce, these policies must entail that work actually “pays” because otherwise the system is flawed, and the victims are the children in these families.

As shown by the stories of Gayle and Becky, many of the adverse effects for adolescents, such as delinquent behavior and decreased academic achievement, are caused by the time spent unsupervised as their mothers are at work. In order to alleviate this problem, states should attempt to implement afterschool programs for teenagers. Research shows that most delinquent behavior from teenagers occurs in the hours between when school dismisses and around dinner time. This delinquent behavior is especially a problem for these adolescents who live in at-risk neighborhoods, where drugs and violence are rampant⁷. Therefore, state governments should fund either schools or private nonprofit organizations to create structured environments where adolescents can participate in activities during this at-risk time period. State governments could also expand existing programs, such as “Big Brothers Big Sisters, Conservation Corps, the Quantum Opportunities Program, and YouthBuild, all of which aim to develop adolescents’ competencies with varying degrees of emphasis on academic achievement, life skills, work, and community service”. These programs would increase employment opportunities for the parents of these adolescents who could work in these programs. Moreover, these programs must stress the importance

⁷ Gennetian et al. 49

of making sure that these adolescents can and will participate. Adolescents either may not want to participate in these types of programs or they may be unable to because of other responsibilities. Essentially, most of the adverse effects that are occurring with these adolescents are due to the increase in the amount of time that they are left unsupervised; therefore, programs should be designed to decrease the amount of time children are left unsupervised in order to prevent delinquent behavior and negative academic outcomes.

In order for adolescents to participate in these afterschool programs, state governments need to find ways to limit the number of adult responsibilities that adolescents have to manage due to their mothers entering the workforce. One of the main responsibilities that must be prevented is older siblings having to parent younger siblings, as in the case of Tamara and her younger sisters. Childcare must also exist for those younger siblings. Therefore, state governments must fund either separate programs for younger children or expand the adolescent programs to include activities for a younger age group. Furthermore, these programs should add a dining component. Considering many of these adolescents are responsible for cooking dinner in the household, this is just another responsibility that would disallow adolescents from participating in afterschool programs. Adding a dining service to these programs, although costly, will be worthwhile because these adolescents would receive nutritious meals, keeping these children healthier and adding another incentive for children to join

the program. Ultimately, in order to persuade these adolescents to participate in structured activities after school, the programs must limit the number of responsibilities that would prevent them from joining the program.

Research from the Johnson study shows how unstable employment and inflexible work schedules have deleterious effects on adolescents. The inflexibility of some jobs exacerbates a single parent's ability to supervise her children, making it a more difficult task to maintain employment and high quality parenting. Policymakers and caseworkers should prevent mothers from encountering these types of jobs by providing them with more stable employment opportunities. Stable employment with standard work schedules creates a more structured environment for the entire household. Furthermore, it assists the mothers' ability to maintain the work requirements of welfare reform and continue good parenting. Essentially, the ability to provide stable employment for mothers may alleviate the negative consequences adolescents are having due to welfare reform.

All of the recommendations proposed should be attempted experimentally in a few states before federal implementation. Experimental trials are a cost-effective way to attempt new policies without expending too much financial resources. Studying the experimental trials will inform policymakers whether these proposals are beneficial or having no affect at all. Furthermore, research on welfare reform's affects on adolescents should continue in order to figure out the root causes of the problem and

whether these deleterious affects are caused by the overall state of the economy. Hopefully, policymakers and researchers can find avenues that will eliminate the negative consequences of mothers' transition to work. To break the cycle of poverty that has endured for generations with these low-income families, we, as a country, should maintain this as a primary focus and take measures to eliminate this societal bane.

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