

European Forum

**Ending the Entitlement of Poor Mothers,
Expanding the Claims of Poor Employed Parents:
Gender, Race, Class
in Contemporary US Social Policy**

ANN SHOLA ORLOFF

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This Working Paper has been written in the context of the 1998-1999 European Forum programme on **Recasting the European Welfare State: Options, Constraints, Actors**, directed by Professors Maurizio Ferrera (Universities of Pavia and Bocconi, Milano) and Martin Rhodes (Robert Schuman Centre).

Adopting a broad, long-term and comparative perspective, the Forum will aim to:

- scrutinize the complex web of social, economic and political challenges to contemporary European welfare states;
- identify the various options for, and constraints on institutional reform;
- discuss the role of the various actors in promoting or hindering this reform at the national, sub-national and supra-national level;
- and, more generally, outline the broad trajectories and scenarios of change.

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**Ending the Entitlement of Poor Mothers,
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Gender, Race, Class
in Contemporary US Social Policy**

ANN SHOLA ORLOFF

Northwestern University, Evanston and
Jean Monnet Fellow, European Forum (1998-99)

This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, 21-25 August, 1998, in the Thematic Session on "Gender and Welfare State Restructuring".

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

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The 1996 reform of the welfare system is widely recognized as a turning point in American social policy. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRA) of 1996 eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replaced it with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), thus ending the entitlement of poor single parents to social assistance, only firmly established in the 1960s and 1970s. What is the significance of this change? What forces might account for this policy shift? As a historical sociologist, I am well aware that the owl of Minerva flies at dusk - and it's still light out, metaphorically speaking, for welfare reform. There has been no dearth of commentary on the meaning of welfare reform for our public life, as liberals and feminists have decried the shredding of a public safety net, linking welfare reform to the despised political status of welfare recipients and poor single mothers and children of color. Others reserve judgement until the next economic downturn hits, with greater or lesser degrees of pessimism about the possibilities. Conservative commentators, however, proclaim that "welfare reform is working," pointing to the precipitous decline in the welfare rolls - the number of people on welfare has declined by 27% since the legislation was signed into law in August of 1996 (Pear 1998). They assume that former recipients have found employment or, at least, family members to help them out. It is this outcome - shifting responsibility for citizens' and residents' welfare to the private spheres of labor market and family - that they intended to achieve, whatever else it may do in terms of former recipients' standards of living and well-being. They contend that this privatization of responsibilities ultimately will prove beneficial to all, even if by preventing the formation of some families in the first place. But as yet, there have been few analyses of the significance of welfare reform in terms of gender relations. I take such an analysis - however preliminary - to be my charge. I will offer an assessment of the character of the changes, and their significance for gender relations, as well as assessing some possible explanations for the timing and character of these policy developments.

I want to note that welfare reform is but one part of what is happening politically to gender relations, to women, and to poor mothers, even within the system of income support, in the United States. Of particular importance within income support is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is having noticeable and positive effects on the incomes of poor employed parents, especially single mothers. Unlike AFDC, the EITC has been expanded several times over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. The EITC offers assistance to employed parents through the tax system rather than the welfare system. It also differs from AFDC in that claims for support to families are not based on caregiving and low income (so low as to preclude employment), but on low wages from employment coupled with parental status. Thus, families are supported principally through employment, and only secondarily through social

transfers.¹ In this paper, I will not go into why the EITC has been expanded (but see Myles and Pierson 1997; Weaver 1998). However, I will make reference to the ways in which the EITC and associated employment-related policies are affecting poor mothers. One can note that the factors behind the collapse of AFDC are not entirely the same as those responsible for the expansion of the EITC, although of course there are general contextual factors in common, such as the pressures of a balanced budget. The politics of EITC expansion have differed considerably from the politics of welfare reform, but are also distinct from the politics associated with the post-World War II expansion of welfare state programs. In contrast to the heat of the welfare debates, EITC was expanded largely through a "politics of stealth," in which change has been carried out in the course of complicated budget packages not easily accessible to public scrutiny (Myles and Pierson 1997).

Before I go any further, let me clarify for non-U.S. readers some of the terminology used in these political debates. U.S. politics is correctly seen as heavily focused on rights. Yet political and civil rights have been more prominent in U.S. political discourse than have "social rights," a term which is not widely used outside of some academic discussions of welfare states. Indeed, the term "welfare state" is not used in popularly (or even in many academic discussions - those of economists, for example). Rather, Americans differentiate between "welfare," meaning means-tested social assistance, particularly AFDC, and "Social Security", near-universal contributory retirement and medical coverage for retired elderly workers and their dependents - Old Age, Survivors' and Disability Insurance and Medicare (Orloff 1993a, chap.1; Skocpol 1988). While Social Security has much of the positive connotation attaching to social rights elsewhere, welfare has been politically vilified, particularly over the last two decades, and is a very unpopular set of programs. Many conservatives have been opposed to any sort of social spending. However, elite attempts to deprive Social Security of its legitimacy as a part of a drive to privatize retirement provision have been less successful than attempts to scale back social assistance for the working-aged population. One aspect of their campaign has been to popularize the term "entitlement" to refer to legislated government commitments to particular constituencies. Conservatives blame "entitlements" for causing budget deficits current and projected, and for threatening the bankruptcy of Social Security by giving benefits to middle-class people who do not need support, at the cost of high (and "unfair") payroll taxes on younger people (Skocpol 1995). But while Social Security's popular support has not been substantially undermined, the

¹ While in reality many AFDC recipients worked, this was unofficial (Edin and Lein 1996) - and wages did not account for as great a proportion of family income as would be the case for most EITC recipients.

term "entitlement," with its whiff - however faint - of "undeservingness," has come to be the preferred term for all benefit programs in which spending is automatic, based on legislated criteria, rather than being subject to Congressional approval in each budget cycle (as is so-called "discretionary spending"). Finally, let me note that reformers interested in rolling back the role of the state in social provision are called "neo-liberal" in many places, but are usually referred to as "conservatives" in the U.S. Those defending some role, albeit a residual one, for the state in alleviating market failures or pursuing public purposes outside national defense and crime control are "liberals" in the U.S., while elsewhere they would likely be referred to as "social liberals."

I will argue that welfare reform should be understood as incorporating at least three distinct components: it eliminates a social right; it eliminates caregiving as a base for making claims within the U.S. welfare state; and it marks a shift in institutionalized expectations about mothers' employment. First, the Personal Responsibility Act accomplished a shift in institutional relationships. By replacing an entitlement, or social right, to assistance, however encumbered with restrictions, with benefits granted on a discretionary basis, the state forces citizens and residents toward reliance on "private" sources of support, the labor market, families and charities. This withdrawal of social rights affects all citizens, but especially groups which historically have depended disproportionately on public assistance: single mothers with poor earnings capacities and heavy caregiving burdens, and racial and ethnic minority people, who suffer from relatively high rates of poverty and unemployment. The EITC does offer public support to families in a non-discretionary manner, but only to those who are in the labor market and earning wages.

Second, the new policy arrangements eliminate support for caregiving and reproduction when they are not linked to participation in the labor market. Caregiving has been shifted to an even more marginal status within the US policy regime, as claims based on the status of family caregiver have been eliminated. While funding for child care services has been expanded, it remains insufficient to meet demand, and support for high-quality services has not yet been forthcoming. Moreover, political understandings of the demands of caregiving are rather thin - responsibilities for caring for children are usually relegated to the status of barriers to labor market participation. Because the only public support to caregiving and reproduction is now linked to employment, those groups with disproportionately high rates of non-employment are disadvantaged by this shift. For those who cannot get the limited public support for care services, the availability and quality of care depend on market resources - thus disadvantaging those with jobs paying poorly. This clearly has a bearing on race relations as it means less support for

families of color; both men and women of color have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than do whites. But although driven partly by racial politics, welfare reform operates to affect race relations through a formally race-neutral legal apparatus that eliminates social rights and support to full-time caregiving for all and imposes work requirements on all who apply for state assistance.

Third, this round of welfare reform accomplished a shift in the institutionalized expectations about the gender division of labor, in that women - or, more to the point, mothers - as well as men are now to be subject to the requirement of employment or work activities in claiming social assistance. Thus, the end of an entitlement to social assistance is coincident with a shift in formal expectations about women's employment and a withdrawal of (residual) support to full-time caregiving. While some see work requirements for single mothers as indistinguishable from ending the social assistance safety net, one can imagine social rights based on employment for mothers as for all citizens and encompassing protections for caregiving, as for example, in Scandinavia or France (Hobson 1994). (This is not to say there are not other features of the gender order in these countries about which a gender-egalitarian might be concerned - high levels of occupational sex segregation, for example.) But in the US - as in the other predominantly English-speaking countries often called "liberal" regimes - there has been emphasis on the importance of "choice" for women, not just in the arena of reproduction, but *vis-à-vis* arrangements for employment and caregiving. And clearly, these policy changes have brought about an end to publicly-subsidized choice for poor mothers as to their employment and caregiving arrangements in the United States.

These shifts have pushed the United States further down a distinctive trajectory of policy development, in which: (1) social spending is skewed toward the elderly, and social rights for working-aged population and families with young children are relatively undeveloped, while market provision is both politically supported and quite extensive, albeit uneven in coverage and quality; (2) public financial support for caregiving, either by mothers in the home, or by publicly-provided child care, is very limited; and (3) there is a high degree of "gender sameness" in the institutionalized expectations about men's and women's employment, and public policies have helped to open substantial employment opportunities for many women. (Since caregiving is left to the private sphere almost entirely, continuing gender imbalances in the division of caregiving and domestic work are usually not understood as matters for political intervention.) Thus, while welfare reform represents a reaction by U.S. policymakers to factors similar to those experienced elsewhere, and is fed by currents of neo-liberal thinking that are fashionable in many places, it remains a quite distinctive set of developments - at the extreme of reliance on private support

to caregiving, and of employment as the basis for claims for social support.

How can we explain this set of changes? One might examine electoral and legislative politics. We can attribute all three shifts to the 1994 Republican victory in the House of Representatives which followed then-candidate Bill Clinton's popular 1992 promise to "end welfare as we know it," itself developed in response to Republicans' successful use of welfare as a "wedge issue" to divide Democratic constituencies in the 1980s. Clinton's stance opened the way for consideration of radical reforms of social assistance, including time limits on welfare receipt and the requirement that mothers be engaged in work activities, which even President Reagan had been unable to accomplish, while the Republicans' 1994 victory allowed them to press forward in their quest to legislate deterrent welfare reform, embodied in the Personal Responsibility Act. Looking at the problem historically, we could trace the development and growing political power in the 1970s and 1980s of a group of conservatives for whom ending welfare and cutting back government spending were central preoccupations; important pieces of their program were adopted - in different forms - by important actors in the two major parties in the 1980s. I am interested in exploring more structural explanations, and do not go into a detailed analysis of party politics and legislative maneuvering around the welfare bill, as has been done recently and ably by Weaver (1998). Here, it is important to say that the factors responsible for eliminating entitlement are not exactly the same as those which might be invoked to explain the shifts in expectations about women's work, and the ways in which support to reproduction and caregiving has come to be more tightly linked with employment.

The elimination of a social right or entitlement can be linked to social balances of power. Among social scientists, there has long been a tendency to understand the relative weakness of social rights and the lack of generosity of American social programs for non-elderly people and the tight linkage of benefits to employment with reference to the political and organizational weakness of working-class forces and the concomitant strength of employers vis-a-vis workers and states (e.g. Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1987; Korpi and Palme 1998). Others have emphasized the significance of liberalism as an ideological and cultural force - a preference for private provision and for minimizing state interventions, reflected in relatively low social spending and pressures to keep taxes low. Many analysts see such forces gaining ground with the liberalization of financial markets and increased capital mobility often referred to in shorthand as "globalization" (Rhodes 1996; Esping-Andersen 1996). More recently, as racial and gender factors have come to be understood as significant for policy outcomes, the strength of racism and gender discrimination as part of the overall constellation of power resources have

figured in explanations for the character of US social policy. Thus, for instance, in *The Color of Welfare*, Jill Quadagno (1994) has described the ways in which racism and the competition for favorable positions and access to public resources undermined struggles for racial justice and weakened public support for the welfare system in the 1960s and 1970s, as that system came to be understood as a system for minorities (a process she calls the "racialization" of welfare). And today, there is little doubt that welfare politics has served as a mechanism for some whites' expression of racial antagonisms toward African Americans (Gilens 1996). Racism - in combination with the residual character of social provision for working-aged families and the fact that AFDC was understood as subsidizing undesirable behaviors - has contributed to the weakness of welfare beneficiaries as a political constituency.

It has become commonplace to mention women's increased labor force participation and changing family and household forms as relevant for policy outcomes, specifically the fact that social assistance for mothers has increasingly been conditioned on work activities or employment.² These are certainly important factors, even if they are typically understood outside the context of gender relations. Women's increased employment is usually seen simply a non-problematic aspect of modernization and "progress". What changes in expectations about employment may mean for women's caregiving responsibilities are usually dealt with by referring to the need for enhanced child care services.

Feminist analysts have given greater attention to the links between the gender division of labor within households, in which women have the bulk of responsibility for caregiving and domestic work, and patterns of women's labor force participation (e.g., their overrepresentation in part-time or irregular employment). They also have been concerned with the ways in which activities associated with women - particularly caregiving - are both socially necessary and institutionally denigrated. (For reviews of this literature, see Orloff 1996; O'Connor 1996.) For some feminist analysts (e.g., Mink 1998), the elimination of AFDC and the associated requirement for mothers to be employed coupled with the elimination of caregiving as a recognized basis for claiming social assistance is the ultimate act of institutionalized gender discrimination. Others - myself included - are more sympathetic to the notion of expecting work from

² Changing family forms spark social-scientific debate and concern, reflecting conflict about women's household autonomy and gender power, yet most analysts concede that single-parent families and other household forms are here to stay, whatever their moral and ideological evaluation of them. This implies that such households will have to be supported - by mothers working more, fathers contributing increased child support, or government continuing to offer benefits. Conservatives, however, hope to use welfare reform as a lever against "illegitimacy."

all adults, but remain concerned about the inattention to real dilemmas of caregiving and employment, the lack of support to caregiving work, and the poor quality and inadequate funding afforded child care services. Yet in both cases, the unequal valuation of caregiving and employment as embodied in welfare reform's inadequate guarantees for quality child care services or parental leave is understood as reflecting a gendered imbalance of power. And it is clear that increasing employment among mothers, particularly in the context of a low-wage labor market, has caused some of the rethinking of the bases for social assistance, even if there is disagreement about how greater demands for mothers' employment should be evaluated.

I do not wish to argue that these forces are not significant in the recent ensemble of changes - for clearly they are. But welfare reform is not simply a reflection of social and political powerlessness of women, the poor, and people of color; nor is it a straightforward adaptation to the realities of mothers' employment. Gender relations and race relations affected policy developments in other ways as well, including through the political mobilization and economic successes of some women of all races and some men of color, and the political responses these encourage. For example, there is not just the "backlash" phenomenon of right-wing talk-show hosts or politicians complaining about "feminazis", "unfair" racial preferences in affirmative action, or welfare-supported "illegitimacy." Other politicians attempt to win the votes of "soccer moms" or Christian housewives through welfare and other social policies. Democrats want to keep African Americans tied to their party, while some Republicans may try to carve out social policies which will give at least the appearance of racial fairness (probably more significant for not alienating white moderates than winning black votes). Recent developments in social theory recognize heterogeneity within social categories, with important implications for the politics of social policy. As Pringle and Watson (1992, p.69) put it, "If we include a perspective of heterogeneity of women and of feminist response, no one policy will be a gain for all women"; the same could be said for other categories, including (but not limited to) those based on race or class. The greater divergence of interests and identities among women, and, to a somewhat more limited degree, among people of color, which has followed the ending of *de jure* discrimination and expansion of employment opportunities in the 1960s through 1980s has mattered for welfare politics in the 1990s.

I want to incorporate both social balances of power and constellations of interests within an historical and institutionalist argument. Relations of race, class and gender shaped welfare reform, to be sure - but as mediated by the policy legacy and the larger political-institutional context. The particularities of the policy change represented by the passage of the Personal Responsibility

Act, and its timing, cannot be understood without reference to the policy legacy, and the political processes it has engendered (Weir, Orloff and Skocpol 1988; Pierson 1994, 1996; Esping-Andersen 1996). Analysts agree that one must examine existing policy regime characteristics to understand how countries respond distinctively to forces for change, which may be similar cross-nationally (e.g., internationalization of labor markets or liberalization of financial markets in the current era). Of particular significance, they note that the entire regime - including the role of private provision - must be taken into account in understanding policy developments. All note that the restricted character of public social provision and the large role of employer provision for the working-aged population in the U.S. undermine popular support for the residual public programs. Yet to date, analyses based on path dependency and policy feedback have tended to ignore gender. Thus, for example, in his discussion of AFDC and the British Income Support, Pierson (1994) never discusses the impact of national differences in expectations about women's employment - a significant aspect of the gender division of labor - as relevant for the fates of these programs (this is one of the issues taken up in O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999).

I build on this type of institutionalist analysis to consider the gendered and racialized characteristics of policy regimes, and of the politics that emerge around them. To explain the gendered aspects of policy outcomes, one must take into account the whole set of state interventions around gender relations. In the analysis I present here, I draw on the recently-completed book, *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States*, which I have co-authored with Julia O'Connor and Sheila Shaver (1999). We present an analysis of the larger gender policy regime in the U.S. and other "liberal" states, assessing policies in the areas of income support, employment, and regulation of reproduction. In the present effort, I go into greater analytic depth about the specifics of welfare reform and gender relations.

Many aspects of the U.S. gender policy regime - the interventions around employment and reproduction especially - are based on the fact that women as well as men are employed (even if patterns of employment differ). The significant policy successes in the realm of opening employment opportunities to women, along with rising real wages and employers' demand for women's labor, have amplified the forces, including women's own aspirations, leading to women's increased rates of paid employment. Furthermore, many women - especially single mothers - have benefited over the last decade from the enhanced economic possibilities of employment due to the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the rise in the minimum wage (Kilborn 1997). How does this matter for income support? A number of feminist analysts (e.g.,

Nelson 1984, 1990; Mink 1998; Fraser 1989) have highlighted the bifurcated form of the U.S. welfare state, in which women are the principal clientele of the "lower", social assistance tier where claims have been based on caregiving. The implicit assumption is that because women are disproportionately responsible for care and domestic work, all women should have had an interest in preserving and improving the treatment of such claims. But these analyses, while highlighting the significance for social policy of the gender division of labor and the concomitant unequal valuation of caregiving and employment, fail to attend to the overall shape of the U.S. social policy regime - particularly neglecting the ways in which the large role of private provision and the market shape social politics. (Thus, the inadequacies of this mode of analysis are roughly the mirror of those of the institutionalists). For most mothers, even single ones, are employed, and they must get by without significant public support - in these circumstances, the tightly targeted character of public income support combined with its explicit support for full-time caregiving and non-employment (even though many recipients in fact were employed) left the constituency depending on welfare a very limited one. (The racialization of AFDC, meaning the ways in which it has been politically linked to racial politics, further undermined political support among some white elites and voters.) Finally, to the extent that state interventions are tied to equality projects, they are informed by understanding of women's equality as tied to employment and economic independence rather than to rewarding women based on their distinctive caregiving activities (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999). Thus, it was at best difficult and, more often, not politically compelling, for many political actors generally committed to women's equality to defend AFDC strongly.

Both the generally market-supporting and - enhancing character of the US policy regime and the particular articulation of gender equality projects with women's labor market participation helped to create a context within which welfare reform was likely to take a form which would support employment. But this did not necessarily imply that social assistance had to lose its status as a (conditional) entitlement. The neo-liberal thinking in favor among political elites helped to ensure that welfare reform would encompass some shift of responsibilities from state to labor market, and tie assistance to work activities or to employment - so as to support, rather than undercut, the low-wage labor market. But again, this did not necessitate an end of entitlement. Here, we must look to the specific political and policy dynamics of the Congress and Presidency in the 1990s.

WHAT KIND OF WELFARE REFORM?

Welfare reform - which since at least the Reagan administration has meant increasing restrictions and work requirements, occasionally with enhanced child care services or training, or even abolishing AFDC (Murray 1984) - has been a politically popular proposal among Republicans and many Democrats. Politicians and policymakers tended to agree about the problems to which welfare reform could be a solution - "illegitimacy", worklessness and long-term "welfare dependency". They agreed as well on solutions when pitched at the most general level - restore "family values", promote employment, and lower rates of nonmarital childbearing, especially among teens. Even time limits came to be a point of agreement at the general level when then-Presidential candidate Bill Clinton embraced Harvard economist, later undersecretary of Health and Human Services, David Ellwood's (1988) proposal for a two-year limit on spells of welfare receipt without some type of work activity - a limit that in Ellwood's proposal was to be combined with significant supports to mothers undertaking employment, health insurance and public employment jobs of last resort.³

There were considerable differences between the parties, and within them, over how time limits and work requirements would actually work, some of which may be characterized in shorthand as "hard" versus "soft". The "hardness" of time limits and work requirements reflects the ease and extent to which recipients might be exempted from the requirements, for example, by virtue of good-faith efforts to find employment. There were also differences in terms of how the program would deal with non-marital childbearing; "hard" provisions would bring lifetime exclusions of benefits to children born out of wedlock to mothers under 18 while "softer" provisions would require only that teen mothers on benefits live with a "responsible" adult. The question of how much caregiving would be accommodated in demands for recipients to be employed - including whether women (or male caregivers) on social assistance should have a choice to stay at home full time to care for young children - was a core part of the debate.⁴ (While social conservatives extolled housewifery for married women, this did not extend to unmarried women.) Whether the

³ I remember serving on an "Author Meets Critics" panel on Ellwood's book at the 1989 meeting of the American Sociological Association when my fellow panelist Fran Piven predicted - correctly - that it would be only the time limits in Ellwood's proposal that would survive.

⁴ It is arguable that a consensus around the necessity of single mothers' employment was reached by the time of the 1988 Family Support Act, which made some significant changes in AFDC (Naples 1997). But for various reasons, not least of which was the rise in the welfare rolls after the FSA was implemented, this reform was not sufficient to slake the thirst for welfare reform, and pressures for further change continued unabated into the 1990s.

program would continue to be an entitlement, albeit one subject to increased requirements, was also at issue. Which version of welfare reform prevailed - Clinton's, liberal Congressional Democrats', or Republicans' - was determined in the course of the partisan maneuvering during the Clinton's first administration, the 103rd and 104th Congresses. In the end, entitlement was eliminated, and hard time limits and work requirements were enacted, with very little accommodation to caregiving responsibilities. However, the "hard" anti-"illegitimacy" provisions were not included in the final bill. One might simplify somewhat and say that in the clear shift from public to private responsibility, it has been the labor market part of the "private" which is being emphasized politically more than is family.

Welfare was a key "wedge issue" used by Republicans against Democrats throughout the 1980s. (One welfare politics in the 1980s and 1990s, I have relied especially on Weir (1998) and Weaver (1998). Republican politicians were able to blend facts and fiction successfully to cast welfare recipients as undeserving evaders of work and family responsibilities in the minds of many voters (Gilens 1996). Republicans campaigned "against welfare" - calling for sanctions, spending limits and an end to "fraud" - for years, with great electoral success but little to show in the way of policy changes that actually did more than tinker at the margins of social policy. Democrats were put in the unenviable position of defending a deeply-flawed welfare program in order to defend poor people and a safety net, and lost support among traditional white working-class constituencies, among others, because of it. Democrats, particularly those associated with the Democratic Leadership Council, including then-Governor Bill Clinton, wanted to "inoculate" their party on welfare (and other wedge issues) by adopting a different approach. And Clinton did manage to turn around his party's vulnerability among white voters in his famous 1992 campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it". Democrats were split by Clinton's approach, though in the end most felt they had to go along with it; the electoral power of this approach is reflected in Republicans' complaint that Clinton had stolen his welfare reform ideas from them. And it may well have made outright elimination of AFDC more likely as Republican congressmen moved even further to the right to differentiate themselves from Clinton, who was already embracing many "tough" provisions (Weaver 1998, p.379).

The key aspect of Clinton's approach to welfare was to require welfare recipients to work, or engage in work-like activities, training or education, after two years of receiving benefits, although with various guarantees of child care and public employment if jobs were not to be found (Ellwood 1996). While Clinton administration officials evidenced some concern about poverty, particularly among children, they did not focus on lessening poverty through

raising benefits, but on getting everyone - including mothers - employed and then improving pay and employment conditions. In essence, Clinton Democrats wanted to make AFDC more like unemployment insurance or active-labor-market programs - a short-term benefit to help claimants "get on their feet" but pushing all into the labor market through the stick of short benefit duration and the carrot of job training, day care subsidies and health insurance. In fact, this is how many women were using the program, although the formal rules obscured this. This policy orientation complemented other policies designed to "make work pay" (the phrase was originally Ellwood's [1988]), such as enhancing the Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing the minimum wage, expanding training and educational access and creating universal health insurance access. Two components of the Clinton plan were novel: time limits, and employment requirements that applied to mothers as well as fathers among all segments of the population. Yet it is worth noting that Ellwood (1988) had proposed half-time, rather than full-time, work for single parents, in recognition of their specific caregiving responsibilities; this feature was carried over into Clinton's proposed bill - which also allowed for mothers to remain out of employment while caring for infants.

The policy preferences of the Democrats looked like a less generous and residual version of Sweden's or France's supports for single mothers, which also require paid work after children reach age three, although in the context of far greater public support for all employed parents and for caregiving generally (Eardley et al 1996, pp.150-51; Lewis 1997; Duncan and Edwards 1997; Siim 1990; Leira 1992). Their approaches are all premised on the idea that most citizens are earners, some are caregivers, but to combine employment and caregiving, state support, such as parental leave, child care and supplemental income, is needed, particularly for vulnerable populations such as poor single mothers. Yet the Democrats' proposed programs were distinctively liberal in the sense that state support was to be residual - for the majority of the population, services are to be privately purchased and leaves are to be financed through savings or employers, while public supports were to be limited to the welfare population and the working poor. (In this way, they are somewhat less residual than the Republicans, who want everything targeted on the poorest as tightly as possible).

Concern with "illegitimacy" has been central to Republican rhetoric about welfare.⁵ Provisions that were seen to crack down on "deviant" family behaviors were considered useful in keeping social conservative constituencies

⁵ Although divorced parents spark their concern as well, policy proposals to curb divorce are largely outside the arena of welfare policy, e.g., in legislation allowing so-called "covenant marriages".

such as the Christian Coalition, attached to the Republican Party, particularly when the party was not delivering policy successes on issues like outlawing abortion (Weaver 1998). The Republicans' initial welfare bill included both hard time limits and hard anti-illegitimacy provisions which would undercut the capacities of poor women to have and support children. Indeed, conservative welfare guru Charles Murray - who had in 1984 issued the call for eliminating AFDC "as a thought experiment" when it was considered politically impossible (Murray 1984) - proposed the idea of funding orphanages from savings gained from cutting off mothers with "illegitimate" children - an alternative which he portrayed as better for the children than their mothers' care (Murray 1994). Deterrent mandates vis-a-vis recipients' reproductive behavior and marital choices were to be imposed on the states. These included the denial of additional benefits for children born while beneficiaries are claiming social assistance - the so-called "family cap," a ban on children for whom paternity was not established and most severely, a lifetime ban on aid to children born to unwed mothers under eighteen unless the mother married someone who would take on financial responsibility for the child (Weaver 1998, pp.384-391. In the end, the hardline Republicans, mostly in the House, could not muster the support to include these provisions as federal mandates, even in their own party. Senate Republicans were somewhat more moderate than their House counterparts, while Republican governors rejected the mandatory character of these provisions, preferring to craft deterrent measures to suit their own electoral and administrative exigencies. Finally, anti-abortion activists voiced concern that such provisions would increase abortions. Thus, these "family values" provisions were left to state option.⁶

Both the initial Republican bills and the finally-enacted PRA ended entitlement to social assistance, eliminating AFDC, and sharply reduced all funding for the non-elderly poor while turning federal welfare funds into block grants to the states. While promoting state-level administration of all welfare programs (for the non-elderly), the Republicans supported strict lifetime limits on assistance, and aimed to make welfare unbearable or unobtainable as a way of enforcing paid work or family ties on poor mothers. (The Democrats initially wanted directly to promote work, e.g., through offering public jobs.) This is gender "sameness" with a vengeance - requiring single mothers to rely on the market without any public supports results in great inequities, given their disproportionate share of the caregiving burden and the ways in which this affects employment prospects. Indeed, this is really a view in which making

⁶ The issue of the link between "family caps" and increased abortions among women on welfare has not gone away. For example, a recent report showing that New Jersey's family cap probably had raised welfare recipients' abortion rates has caused controversy among policymakers and administrators who had supported the implementation of the measure (Lewin 1998).

mothers do paid work is a form of punishment, which helps to explain why these reformers were so uninterested in making paid work a *viable* way for single mothers to support themselves and their children. The point is precisely to make it impossible or extremely difficult to do so; in their view, poor single women really do not have a right to bear children (Jencks and Edin 1995). This is the logic of the poor law, which attempted to use the mechanism of market discipline to curb childbearing by single women and the poor generally. And one might well infer that they are succeeding from the growth in the gap in abortion rates between welfare recipients and other women - a gap that was already quite large: a New Jersey study reported welfare recipients having abortion rates of 29 per 1000 women, while women not receiving assistance have a rate of 3 per 1000 (Lewin 1998).

For some time now, the Republican platform has included provisions that would limit women's decisional autonomy in the areas of sexuality, fertility and family formation. Some would like to prevent motherhood outside of marriage altogether (even for those, who, like the fictional Murphy Brown who won Dan Quayle's opprobrium, can afford to support themselves through employment). But there are differences between these social conservatives who target "legitimacy" as the source of all social ills (e.g., Murray 1994) and "laissez-faire feminists" (the phrase comes from Klatch 1990), who do not want state subsidies or regulation of personal behavior. Yet neither group was (or is) willing to commit state resources to supporting men's wages or women's caretaking work. Rather than promoting state subsidization of the breadwinner family (save through tax cuts), social conservatives - the controlling faction of the Republican Party in the 1990s - have attempted to legislate regulations based on a traditional moral code, emphasizing the restriction of access to abortion. They have also supported eliminating public services and benefits in the expectation that this will prevent women from having children out of wedlock or deciding to divorce. But market discipline is not preventing non-marital births or divorces, a marked shift from the period of the poor law when women's employment opportunities and possibilities for economic independence were far more constricted than they are today. "Laissez-faire feminists" and other social libertarians in the Republican Party are not particularly interested in legislating public interference with the decisions of women and men who are not relying on welfare assistance. For them, the logic of the market includes its capacity to buy personal freedom - with the corollary that reproductive freedom - including the right to have children or not - is available only if one has material resources.

Before discussing welfare reform in analytic terms, let me describe what I take to be some of the important features of the bill that finally succeeded: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

AFDC has been replaced with a block grant, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), for new state-run welfare programs; it is accompanied by a child care block grant. (Information on the PRA is obtained from the *Green Book* published by the US House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means [US CWM] 1996, pp.1325-1417, supplemented by coverage from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.) Under the provisions of the Social Security Act which created the Aid to Dependent Children program, which later became AFDC, the federal government offered matching funds to state-administered programs that meet specific federally-set criteria, including entitlement to assistance if eligibility criteria were met. (On the history of ADC/AFDC, see Bell 1965.) AFDC was available to divorced, deserted, or never-married single parents (or other caretakers) of children under age 18 with few assets and very low incomes - so low that employment was almost always precluded. Indeed, the logic of the program was to allow full-time caregiving of children. The states, especially in the South, initially resisted organizing social assistance as a categorical entitlement, but court decisions in response to welfare activism of the 1960s and 1970s forced them to do so. The new law eliminates this entitlement to social assistance, and mandates that adults receiving assistance be required to engage in work activities (paid or subsidized employment, community service employment, or approved training) after two years (less at state option) and that there be a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits (less at state option); states must also have increasing proportions of their caseloads engaged in work activities over several years after the law's passage (US CWM 1996, pp.1334-35). States decide other eligibility criteria, benefit levels and specific work requirements, but there is no guarantee of assistance even if these criteria are met given that funding is not assured or mandated.

A key difference between the original AFDC and TANF is that the latter makes few concessions to caregiving in imposing work requirements. The original AFDC program was designed to allow single mothers to stay at home to care for minor children; provisions encouraging employment for some segments of the clientele began to appear in the mid-1960s. With changes brought about by the 1988 Family Support Act, all AFDC parents - mothers as well as fathers - with children three years of age and above were required to work or undergo training, and states had the option of imposing the work requirement on parents of children as young as one year. This makes clear that women were expected to combine parenting and paid work, a dramatically different "model of motherhood", to use Leira's (1992) phrase, from that embodied in the original Social Security Act of 1935. This has become clearer still in the new welfare legislation, with the elimination of any exemption for

parents of children beyond the first twelve weeks of life. (Basically, recipients get the time equivalent of the [unpaid] family leave mandated by the federal government on large employers). Parents of pre-school children who cannot find child care are exempted from work requirements, and states may exempt parents of children under age one. However, determinations of what is "acceptable" child care are already at issue (Swarns 1998).

AFDC benefits varied across states, and will continue to do so under TANF. But benefits did not bring recipients up to the US poverty level (about 40% of median income), although in some states, in combination with Food Stamps, they have come closer than in others. Even when benefits are combined with other sources of income, AFDC recipients suffered many material hardships - but, according to one recent study, fewer than do employed poor single mothers (Edin and Lein 1996). State-run programs under TANF can vary more widely, and it is possible that some states' initiatives allowing parents to combine employment, assistance, child support and services for some period of time, will be more likely to bring them above poverty level. But, again, there is no guarantee of this, and states can also allow recipients to remain in poverty on or off the social assistance rolls. If parents can get private employment, however, they will be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which in combination with even minimum-wage earnings will bring many employed parents and their children above the poverty line (Dionne 1998; Corbett 1998).

While the most onerous family-related restrictions and bans were not enacted, provisions to increase child support enforcement and paternity establishment were strengthened, and the law included some symbolic measures such as bonuses to the states which most reduce their rates of nonmarital births without raising abortion rates. Child support and paternity provisions require custodial parents to cooperate with state efforts to establish and enforce child support obligations, and, if necessary, paternity; they attempt to enforce income-sharing on men and women without custody of their children (these provisions are gender-neutral in targeting non-custodial parents, although the majority of these are men). Under AFDC regulations, all child support collected, save for a \$50 pass-through, went to the state to offset benefits paid to the custodial parent and her children, reflecting the overriding concern with social expenditures that has motivated these policies. Many poorer men and women see little gain for their children's well-being from cooperating with authorities, while informal support to mothers from children's fathers has often been an important component of their income (Edin and Lein 1996). Under the new TANF regulations, states no longer have to pass on the first \$50 collected. Most are keeping all child support collected, others are keeping the \$50 pass-through; the state of Wisconsin is alone in experimenting

with passing on the entire amount collected (*Focus* 1998). Feminist critics have pointed out that these provisions (both in the PRA and in earlier legislation) undercut poor women's citizenship rights by forcing them "to surrender basic constitutional rights of associational freedom and reproductive privacy as a condition of receiving economic assistance for their families" (Mink 1998, p.69). While there are exemptions to prevent forced contact with violent partners, these may not be properly enforced, especially given the context of radical devolution of administration and lack of entitlement. And there are sanctions for non-cooperation by clients, but no guarantee that funds will be collected.

Anti-immigrant political sentiments, exploited by Republicans in states such as California, coincided with their budget-cutting objectives in changing welfare provisions to deny many benefits, including Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and AFDC, to legal immigrants. (The PRA had to be at least budget-neutral under the terms of the fiscal requirements imposed by the Budget Enforcement Act, but both the Clinton administration and the Republicans wanted to use welfare reform for budget deficit reduction; see Weaver 1998; Pierson 1998.) Other sources of cost-cutting included striking disabled children from SSI and denying Food Stamps to unemployed childless workers after three months.

Clinton promised when he signed the original PRA that he would work to repeal provisions he had opposed. In the 1997 budget, he was able to make good on part of this (Kilborn 1997) by reinstating benefits for legal immigrants who had been in the country before the legislation was signed; in addition Medicaid was restored to some disabled children. Similarly, the three-month limit on Food Stamps to unemployed childless people even if they were looking for work has been eased. The Clinton administration has also prevailed in mandating that welfare recipients working for the states be paid minimum wage (Kilborn 1997), although they work only for their benefit and do not gain access to other employment-related benefits such as EITC.

In the early phases of the new policy, states have been helped by an unexpected fiscal bonus as block grants were pegged to earlier caseload levels while caseloads have decreased substantially since 1996 (Pear 1998). Many states are experimenting with expanded casework, training and child care services alongside greater efforts to place recipients in jobs or to divert potential recipients by requiring work searches before granting aid; they are also experimenting with varieties of penalties (Pear 1997; DeParle 1997a). Some states have thoroughly overhauled their systems, but others are operating systems similar to the old ones with tougher penalties, and, of course, time limits. For example, Wisconsin has received national and international attention

for initiating a system based on requiring work for all adults - more expensive per recipient than AFDC had been; while adding significant funds for child care subsidies, including to the non-welfare poor, the state has simultaneously weakened regulation of child care (DeParle 1997b, 1997c). New York City has the largest caseload in the country and an unemployment rate double the national average; rather than emphasizing private employment, city officials have elected to increase sanctioning and to institute workfare, in which welfare recipients seem to be taking the place of city workers (Greenhouse 1998; Toy 1998). Few fail to point out that a more rigorous test of the new policy will come when the economic cycle brings recession, for unlike the old AFDC program under which the federal government funding to the states automatically expanded as demand grew during downturns, TANF's block grants are fixed and can only be expanded if Congress explicitly authorizes it.

While the situation for many, though not all, people receiving welfare has declined with welfare reform, the situation of poor employed parents outside the welfare system - including single mothers - has actually improved over the last few years. The economic boom of the mid-1990s has reached many low-income workers, boosting wages and reducing unemployment, even as increased income inequality and employment instability remain problems. And returns to employment for low-income people, both women and men, have been increased by policies outside of the welfare framework. Most significant is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Parents who have (low) earnings - the working poor, mothers or fathers - are eligible for a modest benefit, claimed through the tax system (and operating along lines similar to Negative Income Tax proposals). The EITC, unlike other elements of the US system of social provision, has been expanded several times in the 1980s and 1990s, most recently and significantly in Clinton's 1993 budget package (Myles and Pierson 1997; Weaver 1998).⁷ Indeed, the EITC outpaced spending on AFDC by the early 1990s; in fiscal 1996, EITC expenditures were double what the government spent on AFDC (Weaver 1998, p.398). The EITC bolsters the incomes of those parents in the paid labor force, thus reflecting the Clinton administration's emphasis on employment. EITC expansion along with the increased minimum wage have contributed since 1989 to a 42 per cent increase in the earnings of single employed mothers with two children, and a 27 per cent increase for single employed mothers with one child (Rebecca Blank 1997, cited in Dionne 1998).

⁷ Childless adults are now also eligible for help under EITC, but get less help than do parents. Policymakers are ambivalent about helping the childless - on the one hand, they want to eliminate an incentive to childbearing among the poor, but they also want to target help on the most "deserving" (i.e., children) (Weaver 1998).

THE GENDER EFFECTS OF WELFARE REFORM

The set of policy changes grouped under the rubric of "welfare reform" should be understood as incorporating several components: social rights, especially as they bear on gender power; the institutional arrangements among states, markets and families in delivering income and services to citizens and residents; and gender stratification, that is gender inequality and gender differentiation, especially as this bears on the gender division of labor (Orloff 1993b; O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999).

Social Rights and Gender Power

Most analysts of the PRA have focused on the loss of entitlement to public assistance - the end of social rights for single parents. Social rights are significant in that they provide a basis for citizens' personal and household autonomy and may insulate them from exploitable dependencies in families and markets (O'Connor 1993; Orloff 1993b; Fraser 1997; Goodin 1985). Welfare states are usually understood to be organized on the basis of *social citizenship rights*, that is effective claims on the state for particular benefits or services under specified conditions. But most systems retain varying levels of discretionary social assistance, which bears greater or lesser resemblance to poor relief (Eardley et al 1996). Such aid, while preventing utter destitution, is less effective as a counterweight to dominant social forces in markets and families than are programs that take the form of social rights. Moreover, lack of public provision means that market-generated and other inequalities are not ameliorated; without social rights, inequality among women is intensified as employers unequally reward women with different capacities and social positions.

With the elimination of AFDC and its replacement by TANF, the U.S. has decreased the social rights component, and strengthened the discretionary components in its system of social provision. Policy has moved away from even conditional and categorical entitlement. TANF is unprotected from fiscal and political pressures, and needy single parents have no right to assistance. This puts single parents in the same situation as other poor people - childless or employed - who had not had rights to assistance under the earlier regime in which assistance among working-aged adults was limited to the very poorest non-employed sole parents, and, after 1988, a small segment of two-parent families where both parents were unemployed.

Social rights might be effective against all types of exploitable dependencies; proponents of a citizen's wage have sometimes argued for it in these terms. But more common has been the institution of social rights effective

in different institutional realms, principally the labor market or families/households. Social rights vis-a-vis the labor market are critical for workers in capitalist societies. Access to employment and good jobs in particular, is also an important right, given that not all social groups have equal access to jobs that allow personal independence and entitlement to benefits. Rights may also be effective in subverting familial dependencies - not those that are the result of a need to be cared for because of age or disability, which Kittay (1997) and Fineman (1995) termed "inevitable dependency", but those resulting from the economic dependence - or "derived dependence" - that so often accompanies caregiving. Welfare benefits, provision of services, and the regulation of the labor market and employment affect the *capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household*, a social right which indicates an individual's ability to survive and support their children without being forced to marry or enter into other family relationships (Orloff 1993b).⁸ A key issue for contemporary gender relations is whether women - like most men - are in a position of being able to choose freely whether to enter marital or other relationships, and to some extent, to have a voice in their character. This is a matter of securing women's *procedural* autonomy - their right to make decisions free from coercion, including economic coercion, and does not reflect a preference for substantive autonomy over freely-chosen familial ties of various sorts (on gender issues and autonomy, see Friedman 1997). Such a capacity enhances women's power vis-a-vis men, especially within marriages and families.

There are at least two possible sources for a capacity to form an autonomous household: employment, or state provision of income for caregiving work. Paid work has been a principal avenue by which women have sought to enhance their independence from husbands and fathers in families - thereby undermining the breadwinner-housewife family form - and claim full status as "independent" citizens in the liberal-democratic polity. Even more significantly than programs within the welfare system, U.S. state efforts to open good employment opportunities to women through anti-discrimination and employment equity policies affect women's access to work and their

⁸ Along with Julia O'Connor and Sheila Shaver (1999), I prefer "capacity to form an autonomous household", or the shorter "autonomy", to "defamilisation", suggested as an analogue for decommodification (McLaughlin and Glendinning 1996; Lister 1997). Some have argued that "capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household" does not attend to women's situation within marriage. On the contrary, by referring to "capacities" for autonomy, one indicates whether people have the resources to choose household forms freely, whatever their current situation (in or out of partnerships of various sorts). "Defamilisation" may suggest a preference for substantive autonomy - no families - and conjure up exactly the sort of illusions about individuals' capacities to operate without interdependencies for which traditional advocates of liberalism have been criticized by feminist political theorists.

possibilities for personal autonomy. (This does leave them vulnerable to the exigencies of depending on labor markets, but this puts them in the same legal position as men, but with the continuing, but "private" vulnerabilities stemming from their responsibilities for caregiving and domestic work.) State benefits for caregivers also give women the capacities to form and maintain households without access to a male wage.

Prior to the elimination of AFDC, one could say that the US system allowed more independence for mothers vis-à-vis marriage and family than for those expected to be workers vis-à-vis the market. US social programs targeted on labor market problems like retirement or unemployment all require recent, steady attachment to the labor market as conditions of eligibility and also involve payment of payroll taxes (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999, chap. 4). Unemployment programs for working-aged people require ongoing demonstration of efforts to find employment, and duration of benefits is quite short - six months (though this has been extended to a year during some past recessions). AFDC until 1988 did not require work from recipients, even though work incentives were in place after 1967; even after 1988, many parents were exempted from requirements, or were in counties where public funding was inadequate to create the supports for work and therefore, work requirements could not be enforced. And AFDC was of much longer duration than unemployment - it could continue until recipients' youngest children reached age 18. AFDC benefits were never generous but they did offer a bottom-line capacity for household independence, which was critical in cases of domestic violence, and with arguably positive effects for many women within gendered power relations. A single mother could maintain a household without access to a male wage and without herself working for pay, although if she lived in a large city she almost certainly had to find ways to supplement meager welfare benefits (Edin and Lein 1996), particularly after 1980 with the erosion of benefits and elimination of provisions allowing women to combine employment and welfare. This is no longer the case under TANF. Although mothers (and other caregivers) may be able to gain temporary state support, there is no entitlement to assistance, and requirements to take paid work are part of the plans of all states. In addition, anyone with children claiming social assistance is required to cooperate in identifying and finding the absent parent, in order to secure child support.

Liberal analysts have typically denied conservative claims that welfare encouraged "illegitimacy" or the formation of households by unmarried mothers, citing the fact that given declining benefit levels and contracting coverage through the late 1980s, AFDC could not be responsible for rising rates of non-marital childbearing and proportions of single-mother households across all social classes and races for this same period. Yet it is hard to imagine

that the availability of welfare benefits did not allow some of the poorest women to have and *keep* children even in the context of a labor market that did not offer them or their potential partners stable jobs with family-supporting wages. Thus, it seems quite reasonable to assume that one of the aims of welfare reform was precisely to eliminate this option *for the poorest women* (Jencks and Edin 1995). (While it may be true that welfare did not influence women's fertility, it surely must have influenced the capacities of poor women to maintain households.) Where liberals and conservatives differed was on whether poor mothers and their children should be supported *if they were employed*. Because of high unemployment in many areas with high concentrations of welfare recipients (e.g., New York City), and the poor pay, instability and lack of health benefits in the majority of the jobs open to most of the welfare population, the only way women on welfare can make the transition to employment is if government supplemented their incomes, enhanced their skills, created job opportunities and helped them gain access to health insurance and child care (Spalter-Roth et al 1995; Institute for Women's Policy Research 1997a). The alternative is the break-up of households. These measures the Republican Party has steadfastly opposed, insisting that family formation be based on purely "private" efforts. The Clinton administration, in contrast, has pursued the strategy of "making work pay" which has applied as well to welfare recipients - within the limits set by budgetary constraints and political calculations, which has meant very limited efforts in the realm of job creation or training, for example. But, as noted above, employment prospects for single mothers who can find private employment have brightened somewhat because of the EITC and raised minimum wages; whether this trend will continue into periods of higher unemployment remains questionable.

The Social Organization of Income and Services

State-society relations, or the institutional relationships among states, markets and families, affect the character of gender relations due to their impact on how care is organized and supported, and how citizens and residents gain income. Analysts have long highlighted the significance of the presence or absence of a public component to care, or public supplements to market-based incomes (e.g., Siim 1990; Ruggie 1984). But the mere absence of public provision of care does not predict which private source - markets, voluntary organizations or families - will provide care, nor whether gender divisions of labor will be egalitarian. Nor is absence of state-provided income sufficient to know whether women (or men) depend on their own employment or partners' wages for income. Thus, it is important to look at all of these institutional spheres and their interrelationships.

With the end of entitlement and constriction of social rights, the "private" sphere has been strengthened, as many have noted. But I would stress that it is the market, even more than families, that has expanded at the expense of the state as the source of income and services, and employment, even more than marriage, that has been strengthened as the basis of citizenship claims and of individuals' well-being.

By ending AFDC, mandating work and time limits, and strengthening child support, politicians were clearly hoping to decrease the government share of families' income in favor of private sources. And spending on welfare is slated to decrease. But other sources of public assistance for families, outside the welfare system, have been expanded, notably the Earned Income Tax Credit. Indeed, forecasts for federal and state spending on low-income families with children - excluding immigrants - show continued increases despite the freeze on AFDC expenditures (Weaver 1998, figure 1; much of the increase, but not all, comes from Medicaid). And this expansion brings public income support to new categories of workers: the EITC represents new commitments to assist fathers and two-parent families, who had been excluded from state assistance under AFDC and associated policies. (The Republicans oppose it for exactly these reasons.) Yet this help comes only to those fathers and mothers who are employed; in giving gender-neutral help to employed parents, US policy here links income support for families to participation in employment for women as well as for men. While in formal terms, this may appear to be the equivalent of a (conditional) social right, it is not politically cast as such, and it seems unlikely that it is so understood.

Caregiving as a full-time activity has lost its (targeted) state subsidy. If parents or others wish to devote their energies full-time to caregiving, they must make private arrangements - financing time off from employment from savings, depending on other family members' wages or employer-provided benefits. Caregiving as an activity to be combined with employment has been given some additional state and federal support, although this is uneven and does not take the form of a social right. Outside the welfare sector, most Americans depend on markets for child care and other care and domestic services, in combination with familial arrangements (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999, chap.3). But the quality of care in the for-profit sector depends largely on price, extending inequalities into the provision of caregiving. Indeed, the availability of low-cost child care of any sort is problematic in many areas, and care for the poorest children - including that of welfare recipients recently required to undertake work assignments - is usually of poor quality. Indeed, one major source of employment for ex-welfare mothers is child care work, although they rarely receive any training for it.

In short, labor market position is increasingly important for life chances as U.S. citizens and residents are less buffered from social inequalities by state policies. Feminist analysis of welfare states in the past has maintained that programs which reward labor market participation advantage men over women, given that men tend to have jobs with higher pay and better conditions than do women. This is still, on average, true. But in the wake of decades of equal-opportunity employment and educational policies, in the context of a restructured labor market featuring fewer manufacturing and more service jobs, there is more variation among both men and women. Labor markets don't advantage men and disadvantage women uniformly. Rather, labor market success depends on educational qualifications and cultural capital, as well as the extent to which workers are burdened with or free from caregiving responsibilities. Many women - including many of us in academia - have rather advantaged positions, while more men than in the past are unable to secure jobs with family-supporting wages. But the problem with work requirements for many welfare recipients is the kind of employment opportunities they have and the kind of care they can afford for their children; others have caregiving responsibilities of the sort that are inherently difficult (or at the least expensive) to reconcile with employment, especially care of very young children or children with disabilities. Of course, these are problems that affect people in the whole lower end of the job market.

The contraction of state support disproportionately affects disadvantaged populations - African Americans, Latinos, some Asian immigrant groups, Native Americans, woman-maintained households and the poor generally because these groups rely on social spending programs for more of their income and services than do better-off segments of the population (see, e.g., Smeeding 1997). More affluent Americans are more likely to depend on employer-provided services and benefits (Esping-Andersen 1990; Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988; Stevens 1988). AFDC has historically been an important source of state support for families in African American and Latino communities, given that U.S. policy features no employment guarantees (Weir 1992; Amenta 1998) and various Great Society efforts to pump money into the inner cities were not institutionalized (Weir 1995; Brown 1997; Skocpol 1988). Thus, the elimination of AFDC cut back on support flowing to these communities of color. Again, it is hard to imagine that this was not an intended result of welfare reform, although politicians may believe that by eliminating social assistance they are forcing people to adopt more "responsible" behaviors "for their own good". This is even more the case given that so many believe mistakenly that AFDC was collected almost exclusively by people of color, and that politicians, some of whom know better, used welfare reform to target particularly long-term users of social assistance, who were predominantly African American and Latino. However, it is significant in analytic terms to point out that there has

been no reinstatement of the formally discriminatory welfare provisions of the past or the openly, albeit de facto rather than *de jure*, discriminatory application of rules like the "employable mother" provision of the 1950s. Rather, the new welfare system is part of the formally "race-neutral" architecture of race relations in the post-legal segregation and discrimination age. Biopolitics - by which I mean support for populations differentiated in "racial" terms, or lack thereof - still goes on, but proceeds through formally race-neutral market mechanisms.

Conservatives, like liberals, are attempting to use the regulatory powers of the state, rather than direct state provision, to achieve their goals - in this case, restoration of a "traditional" gender order centered on the male breadwinner/female (unpaid, full-time) caregiver family, an order in which women had far less autonomy and capacity to make and carry out decisions about their sexuality and reproduction. Liberals have also used such levers, as for example, in legislation outlawing gender and racial discrimination and sexual harassment. Yet it may be that liberals' main targets - employers - are more vulnerable to such interventions than are the targets of conservatives - women, especially poor single mothers. This may strike us as paradoxical, given the huge differences in social power between these groups. But because corporations depend on the resources of federal contracts, they have a lot to lose from not responding to these mandates. But while poor single mothers may indeed be vulnerable to these punitive measures, other women are less so, as they are earning market wages that protect their decisional autonomy in family, marital and reproductive matters (however much we are constrained in terms of making fully satisfactory arrangements for balancing employment and caregiving).

Stratification and the Gender Division of Labor

A final dimension for assessing the effects of the new welfare reform on gender is *stratification*, concerned with both gender differentiation - that is, the reinforcement of the gender division of labour, and inequality - that is, differences in access to valued resources. Policies contribute to gender differentiation and politically salient gender identities on the systemic level (e.g., through creating different programs for labour market and family "failures") and individually (e.g., through processes of making claims on the state, where men have typically made claims as individuals and workers, women often as dependents and family members). The absolute and relative amount of support given to citizens and residents and in what social roles they are supported - mothers, fathers, parents, members of specific nations or "races", workers, citizens, poor people - is both symbolically and materially

significant. Social policy regimes also undermine, reinforce or alter patterns of social inequality in the access to valued resources of different groups based on gendered identities or position in the division of labour, but also on other social differences such as class and race. In turn, these processes affect political interests and alliances constituted in the context of existing policies.

American scholars have tended to see a direct link between differentiation and inequality. Many analysts identify a "two-tier" welfare state with inadequate social assistance programs, AFDC paradigmatically, serving a predominantly female clientele who made claims based on their family status and relatively more generous contributory social insurance targeting a male clientele who made claims based on their status in the labor market (see, e.g., Pearce 1986; Nelson 1984, 1990; Fraser 1989). This description of U.S. social provision implies that a gendered pattern of political support should have emerged around social policies, with women more sympathetic to welfare than are men. To some extent, this has occurred, and is reflected in a gender gap in which women, particularly non-married women, vote Democratic (partly because of their stand as a more pro-social spending party than the Republicans) at rates higher than do men. But there are two significant problems with this characterization. The first has to do with the way policy is said to affect women's interests; the second concerns the ways in which the changes of the 1990s have altered the bases of bifurcation in the U.S., system.

The changes of the 1990s associated with TANF on the one hand and EITC on the other has left the system bifurcated between Social Security and welfare. If anything, TANF represents a worsening of social assistance by undercutting its already limited entitlement, imposing time limits and the rest. At the systemic level, the split between social assistance and social insurance historically reflected an employment/family dualism. There is in addition a strongly gendered character to citizens' claims-making, which partly overlaps with the programmatic split. Women make the majority of family-based claims, men's claims are almost all as workers. But most analysts underestimated the significance of wifely claims made by women in the upper-tier social insurance programs; indeed, women are the majority of all Social Security claimants and there are many more women making claims under Social Security than did under AFDC. Mostly-elderly wives or widows and working-aged needy mothers are not united merely because both make claims on the basis of "marital or family status," rather than as workers. Indeed, marital status as institutionalized in policy divides women. Spousal benefits continue to be important within the system of old-age provision, particularly for cohorts who came of age before the 1960s and 1970s. But among younger cohorts, increasing numbers of women are making claims as workers under Social Security (including under the rubric of dual entitlement; see Meyer 1996; O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999, chap. 4).

Feminist descriptions of the "two-tier" U.S. welfare state underestimated the significance of the *lack* of public support for most women. It is true that almost all adult recipients of AFDC and TANF were and are women. But before they reach retirement age, the majority of women - including over 60% of single mothers, like most men, must rely on employer-provided or privately-financed services and benefits, or do without them. Women, particularly mothers of young children, do sometimes depend at least partially on male partners' income, but labor force participation has become the norm for women as well as men - over half of US women with children less than a year old are employed. (Unpaid parental leave is guaranteed only for workers in firms with more than fifty employees; in contrast, in Scandinavia, most mothers of young children remain formally in the labor force, but are actually at home caring for children because of their generous paid parental leave system.) Thus, there was a significant difference between the political identities of women on welfare - seen as being allowed to be stay-at-home mothers by virtue of receiving government benefits - and the majority of US women, whose political identities are increasingly those of "working (i.e., employed) moms".

Some have argued that single mothers are being singled out for harsh treatment in the new work requirements of TANF and that this reflects not a commitment to employment for all women, but special punishment for women who flout conventional household and sexual mores. Mink (1998, pp.105-07) says that the PRA created a mandate for single parents to be in work activities, while requiring only one parent in two-parent families to be working, thus allowing housewifery in two-parent families receiving assistance. Here, she says, is proof that the law discriminates against single mothers - by virtue of their sexuality and marital status - in denying them the option of full-time caregiving. But Mink's claim appears to be based on a mistaken reading of the law, which in fact mandates full-time work (35 hours per week) for one parent in two-parent families and part-time work (20 hours per week) for the second parent (Institute for Women's Policy Research 1997a). Single parents will have to be in work activities for 30 hours by the year 2000, although states *may* limit required hours per week to 20 if the parent has a child under age six. Although Mink is incorrect about the law permitting full-time caregiving for one parent in two-parent families, it does appear that such families are to be allowed somewhat greater flexibility in making work and caregiving arrangements - echoing the greater flexibility such families have outside the welfare system. And it is true that half-time work by one parent and full-time work by the other better approximates the traditional gender division of labor than does the near-full-time work required of single parents. But given the very small proportion of two-parent families that are even eligible for and receiving welfare assistance (they have never constituted more than 5% of the caseload [Ellwood 1988, 1996]), it makes more sense to see two-parent families as forced to

conform to labor market and economic exigencies* in determining caregiving arrangements. If their income permits, one parent can opt out of the labor market. However, many fewer people are in this category than used to be the case, given the decline in jobs with family-supporting wages; of course, we see these economic exigencies reflected in increasing numbers of dual-earner families and the sharp decline of single-earner ones. Welfare reform imposes these same exigencies on single mothers.

Welfare reform eliminated claims based on status as a (poor) caregiver. While AFDC gave benefits on the basis of family status and associated expectations about performance of caregiving work, TANF mandates paid employment for all, reflecting a shift in institutionalized assumptions about the gender division of labor as women as well as men are expected to take up paid employment. EITC also is based on employment. And note that while employment and work-related claims are rising among women, men have not increased their claims as caregivers, nor have they taken up caregiving work at anything like the same rate as women have moved into employment. TANF ends entitlement and shrinks benefits for poor mothers, but EITC expands the claims poor employed parents can make for material support. And while TANF incorporates increased regulation of beneficiaries, seen in requirements for employment or work-related activities and in paternity establishment mandates, the EITC involves only the surveillance of the tax system. Thus, there is a shift at the systemic level from employment/family dualism to a regime in which all programs are based on and require participation in labor markets. What differentiates programs on the upper from those on the lower tier then is not whether they address family or market failures, but which segment of the labor market their clients come from. Thus, it seems certain that women's claims will increasingly be as workers, or parent-workers, save for the fairly small proportion (4%) of single parents who are widows, many of whom are covered as survivors under Social Security.

AFDC recipients have been since the 1960s disproportionately members of racial and ethnic minorities and thus welfare reform has been especially salient for these groups. (The media emphasized - to the point of distortion - African American images in discussions of both poverty and welfare, contributing to racializing welfare politics.) But since the PRA was passed, whites have been leaving the system faster than have minorities, with the consequence that the large majority of welfare recipients are now African American and Latino (DeParle 1998). This seems to underline what earlier commentators had assumed about racial patterns of welfare use - that whites had more resources allowing them to leave welfare after relatively short stints. For example Bane (1988) contrasted the situation of white single mothers, who tended to use welfare more intensely, for shorter periods of time, and in

response to short-term crises, with African American single mothers, who tended use welfare over extended periods of time, in response to the problems associated with chronic poverty.

WHY WELFARE REFORM?

Why has the US eliminated certain social rights? Why is employment to be expected of women - mothers - as well as men? Why has the state withdrawn support to caregiving and reproduction, except when it is accompanied by paid labor? To understand the elimination of entitlement for poor mothers and the institution of an expectation that mothers be employed we must situate commonly-discussed explanatory factors - employer strength, particularly in the context of globalization and economic restructuring, women's increased labor force participation, racialized models of motherhood and employment, and racial antipathies - in the context of existing policy and processes of policy feedback. We will then understand the emergence of a "policy crisis" marked by public and elite sentiment that "anything was better than status quo" (Weaver 1998) which opened the possibility for ending entitlement as well as for requiring employment from mothers receiving public assistance. Three features of the policy legacy stand out: the residualism of US social provision, reflecting the weakness of the public safety net for the working-aged population, the institutionalization of a model of motherhood based on full-time caregiving when most women have had to enter employment to sustain households with or without partners, and the racialization of welfare.

Many analysts of the welfare state look to the strength, or power resources, of working-class forces as the central factor in the development of social rights; modifications of this perspective examine the differing class alliances underlying different types of welfare states, but continue to identify a well-organized working class as critical. Most would agree that unions have been relatively weaker than in Europe or the Antipodes, while the lack of a main labor, social-democratic or socialist party has been a notable feature of US political development. And indeed, the US entered the current period of restructuring social provision with a relatively less-developed public system of supports for the working-aged population. But where those who might take a simplistic view of working-class strength and policy demands as the key factors in expanding social rights might expect such a system to engender continuing but unfulfilled political support for the expansion of rights, it is clear this has not been the pattern of US social politics. Rather, limited social assistance has gone along with popular antipathy to welfare. More sophisticated analysts of class coalitions and power resources have also examined the political effects of the relatively-strong private provision that characterizes the US and other

"liberal" welfare states (Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1987; Esping-Andersen 1990). Because US labor organization has been uneven, some sectors of the working class were able to wrest protections from their employers, creating a "private welfare state" for the better-organized segments of workers and their families (Stevens 1988), while leaving those who cannot get private coverage to a residual public system. This has produced weak political support for welfare provision, aside from Social Security, the one US social program which covers almost the whole population. But why, given the overall weakness of social rights, was the categorical social right to assistance for single mothers to be full-time caregivers the one eliminated?

Analysts tend to agree that everywhere the position of employers vis-à-vis workers and organized labor has been strengthened over the last two decades or so by increased capital mobility and the opening of new low-wage labor markets in the developing economies. This has led to the retrenchment and restructuring of social programs everywhere, in order to make income support more closely conform to the "demands" of the new global economy - which is to say, of the employers in that economy (Rhodes 1996; Esping-Andersen 1996). And in the US, employers have not been countered by a particularly strong labor movement, nor a well-developed social-democratic or labor party that might oppose the harshest aspects of economic restructuring. While other countries have targeted the long-term unemployed - mainly men - in efforts to restructure social provision, the US has gone after single mothers. This difference reflects in part the fact that there has been no national system of unemployment assistance - to serve as a safety net when social insurance coverage is exhausted - in the US as in other OECD countries. This is reinforced by differences in the character of the low-skill labor market and unemployment levels - the US has more low-skill jobs, many in occupations dominated by women, and a lower unemployment rate than other advanced industrial democracies. Lack of the "dole" "encourages" participation in that low-wage, low-skill labor market for everyone. AFDC could be said to have been interfering with the low-wage labor market for women. There is certainly quite a lot of truth to these ideas. Again, one can see forces at work to weaken the entire fabric of the safety net and social rights, but once more the forces behind the specific policy development of eliminating AFDC remain underspecified.

Many have made the straightforward point that - in terms of coalitions or power resources - poor single mothers on AFDC were a very weak group (e.g., Weir, Orloff and Skocpol 1988). While Medicaid involved the interests of medical providers or Food Stamps the concerns of agricultural interests, AFDC drew on no middle-class or well-organized interests. This was particularly the case after the mobilizations of poor people, especially women welfare

recipients, died down after the early 1970s (Piven and Cloward 1977). Thus, to the extent that retrenchment occurred in the 1980s, it fell disproportionately on AFDC and allied programs, rather than on those programs which served larger constituencies. President Reagan and like-minded governors found it politically useful to keep welfare alive, while subjecting it to numerous new and widely publicized sanctions and attacks. This also had the merit of being cheaper than what most analysts considered to be "real" reform, that is, getting recipients into the labor force, with concomitant supports like child care and health insurance. Few expected that AFDC could be eliminated without any kind of government back-up. And poor single mothers on welfare have been a weak constituency for a long time (with the exception of the 1960s period of mobilization), so one still needs to ask why in 1996 AFDC was vulnerable not just to cutbacks and the addition of deterrent provisions, but to elimination. The timing is especially interesting given that elimination of AFDC was not considered politically possible under President Reagan (who was certainly hostile to welfare), when Republicans had excellent opportunities to change the system. Of course, Democratic control of the House was a bulwark against the most radical retrenchment under Reagan; a Democratic President in 1995-96 was not a bulwark against the attempts of a Republican Congress to eliminate AFDC. Thus, it is not simply a matter of divided government, but a question of what deprived AFDC of political protection even among Democrats in 1996.

Pierson (1994) has argued that even with the decline of groups like trade unions whose power resources were central to initiating and expanding welfare programs, cutting back welfare provision is difficult because the welfare state spawns its own defending constituencies. And even in the case of a marginal constituency like poor single mothers, there were constraints on political elites that would prevent the complete elimination of the program. Pierson relied on the Family Support Act of 1988 to make his case - the FSA did not break out of the AFDC framework, but added provisions that looked more radical than they were in reality. In his more recent pieces, Pierson (1998; Myles and Pierson 1997) contrasts the demise of AFDC with the expansion of the EITC; yet he does not pinpoint why elimination of AFDC became possible in 1996 beyond noting that Clinton was willing to sacrifice AFDC but stood firm on EITC when the Republicans (in 1995-96) wanted to cut back on both. True enough - but why could Clinton sacrifice AFDC?

There are at least two problems with Pierson's approach. First, he seems to overemphasize constraints on retrenchment and underemphasize the potentials for radically restructuring reforms such as the elimination of welfare (see also Clayton and Pontusson 1998; Bonoli and Palier 1998). He notes that Reagan was able to affect future social policy developments by defunding the welfare state (indirectly, through tax cuts and defense spending). But while

welfare reform was shaped by fiscal austerity, it was certainly not necessary for budget reduction. Rather welfare reform was driven by social politics. Reagan, as a popular politician, helped to create and expand the demand for welfare reform. The political fact of the Reagan Democrats helped to propel the Democratic Leadership Council and then candidate Bill Clinton to their inoculation strategy on crime and welfare. Clinton entered office willing to consider radical change in AFDC, and committed to a "make work pay" approach that would more easily accommodate EITC expansion than the defense of the existing welfare system. On the intellectual front, the conservative analysts who helped to shape the Republican policy agenda reframed the debate about welfare. Meanwhile, precisely because the FSA incorporated what expert opinion argued was needed to reduce "dependency," and associated social problems, but didn't do so, it helped to create the ground for more radical reforms to be considered. Thus, experts were struck by the rise in welfare receipt after FSA; popular opinion was influenced by the picture of an essentially unreformed welfare system - and continuing problems of crime, poverty and "illegitimacy," particularly in the inner cities, and came to the conclusion that existing policy wasn't working. All of this contributed to the emergence of a "policy crisis" - the perceived failure of existing policy, and the opening of possibilities to include heretofore excluded policy options (Orloff 1993a, chap.1-2). Clinton, left to his own agenda, would not have eliminated AFDC, but was committed to time limits and work requirements - policy options that had been unthinkable within Democratic circles a decade earlier. Republicans' power in Congress after 1994 forced the issue of eliminating AFDC; yet Clinton in the end accepted this. Why was this change, which eliminated the social right to full-time caregiving and furthered the commodification of mothers' labor, acceptable? Here is the second problem: Pierson (1994), like others, fails to take into account the gendered dynamics that made AFDC politically indefensible, even among many of those committed to women's equality.⁹

⁹ Here, the comparison to Britain is instructive, although Pierson's own comparison does not draw out the gender issues. Both the UK Income Support system, which supports poor lone mothers among other groups, and US AFDC were subjected to similar tinkering in the 1980s, but the programs' fates have diverged more considerably under Clinton and Blair. Clinton's initial election promise to put welfare mothers to work was very popular, and even the elimination of AFDC in 1996 did not bring out widespread popular or political outrage. In contrast, Blair's less radical proposals to cut lone mothers' benefits and to expand work incentives were greeted with resistance - in the former case, sufficient to force the administration to back down. Mothers' full-time caregiving, at least until children are in school, remains legitimate and politically defensible in Britain, in a context where mothers generally are more likely to stay at home full-time or work part-time than in the US (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999, chap.3-4). In the US, the clamor for reform remained high through the 1980s and 1990s despite the fact that US single mothers exhibit relatively high rates of labor force participation and low rates of welfare receipt (only about two-fifths

Patterns of gender relations bear on the policies affecting women's capacities to form and maintain households, and demands for women's labor. The policy legacy of support to mothering is one factor. One can ask what "protects" women from commodification of their labor, in a capitalist system that in theory commodifies everyone? Historically, when unconstrained, employers have been interested in creating loose labor markets, and have been willing to use women's labor, partly because it was useful in keeping wage levels low and undermining working-class organization. They might be countered by strong (male-dominated) trade unions or by political elites who for reasons of nationalist projects and geopolitical maneuvering might want to support reproduction (Jenson 1986; Pedersen 1993). Both sorts of forces were implicated in measures to keep women out of the labor market, or in subordinate places within it, and to directly support reproduction through social provision. In much of Continental Europe, Britain and Australia, such forces helped to bolster social provision, creating a safety net in which motherhood was supported through near-universal programs.

(I should point out that similar, though not exactly the same, social forces are associated with the development of social rights generally. However, one thing that differentiates among countries with relatively strong social rights is the extent to which women are supported as worker-caregivers or as full-time caregivers; this appears to reflect the position of women within the labor force as well as within trade unions and social-democratic political organizations. Thus, the strongly social-democratic Scandinavian countries have been more supportive of women's employment than the Northern European countries, with the exception of France, where there was a historical legacy of support to employed mothers [Jenson 1986; Leira 1992; Ruggie 1984]).

Neither of these forces was as strong in early twentieth-century America. (This is not to say American elites were not involved in nationalism or geopolitical adventuring - but these projects were not articulated with state support to national reproduction, given population heterogeneity and the strength of employers vis-a-vis state elites.) In spite of this, partly because women's political mobilization was unusually well-developed (Skocpol 1992; Gordon 1994; Sklar 1993), maternalist policies did develop in the early twentieth-century US, including the mothers' pensions that were the forerunners

of single mothers received AFDC - a much lower proportion than in Britain, where the proportion was about twice as high, and many US mothers cycled between paid work and welfare, in effect using AFDC as an unemployment benefit [Spalter-Roth et al 1995]). Yet in the US, a program assisting poor full-time caregivers could not call upon such popular and elite support. Why? I would contend that a significant part of the answer lies in the specific character of US gender relations, especially patterns of women's labor force participation and associated government policies.

of Survivors' Insurance and AFDC. Yet for a host of reasons, the universalist aspirations of reformers were not realized, and these pensions were fairly limited, reaching only the "worthiest" of widows in counties where officials were willing to finance them (Skocpol 1992; Orloff 1991). The state-level programs were incorporated into the Social Security Act as Aid to Dependent Children in 1935, given federal backing, and expanded to cover more single mothers. Yet they still functioned as a back-up to the family wage, not as a general system of support to mothering and reproduction more generally, as, for example, children's allowances were in many countries (see, e.g., Lake 1992). When the widows of covered wage earners were brought under the umbrella of Survivors' Insurance in 1939, ADC was left to cover a clientele of deserted, divorced and never-married mothers, seen by many as less "deserving" than the widows had been. But again, we face the fact that AFDC has served this weak constituency for quite some time, yet it is only recently that forces for eliminating the public subsidy to poor single women's full-time mothering could gain the upper hand.

Clearly, the gender division of labor today is quite different than when AFDC was established in 1935, with far fewer women staying home full-time to care for children and large increases in women's, especially mothers', labor force participation. This must be a significant part of the explanation for why work requirements for single mothers came to be seen as reasonable by policymakers, academics and the public. Sole parent benefits - both AFDC and Survivors' Insurance - were established with the aim of allowing white single mothers to pursue the distinctive, non-commodified life pattern deemed appropriate for other white mothers in order to care for their children. Public provision construed single mothers as unemployable, as full-time caregivers rather than as potential workers, even after court decisions and political challenges of the 1960s and 1970s broke down exclusionary provisions and the clientele of AFDC expanded to include women of color. Yet women's labor force participation, particularly among married mothers of children under age six, was accelerating at this time (Reskin and Padavic 1994). And indeed, one can see reflections of changing attitudes about mothers' employment in changes to AFDC from the 1960s through the 1980s.

Formal work requirements (though quite mild by today's standards) were introduced into AFDC in 1967. (It is interesting to note that proposed new supports for breadwinner families, such as the negative income tax, were rejected at the same time, as was the expansion of day care services [Quadagno 1994]; one might view these as U.S. analogues to the Christian-democratic and social-democratic policy approaches respectively.) In the 1970s, work requirements actually allowed women to combine employment earnings and welfare benefits, while retaining health coverage under Medicaid. While this

was probably the outcome most favorable for beneficiaries, this line of policy development continued to leave the employed poor and most two-parent families outside the umbrella of social protection, which in turn left AFDC politically vulnerable (Weir, Orloff and Skocpol 1988). Then new restrictions against combining paid work and welfare, causing over a tenth of the caseload to lose eligibility, were brought in during the early Reagan administration (Blank 1997, p.137). But these changes left in place a formal model of motherhood based on full-time caregiving, which over the course of the decade was increasingly out of sync with the behavior of most mothers (Reskin and Padavic 1994, pp.143-145).

The Family Support Act of 1988 at first glance might appear to have changed this formally institutionalized model. Many argue that there was a "new consensus" involving welfare recipients' employment by the mid-1980s, instituted in the Family Support Act, which mandated work or training for mothers as well as fathers, with some exemptions (Naples 1997). Single parents were required to be at work or in training after their youngest child reached three years of age, and states had the option of requiring work or training for parents of children as young as one year (U.S. Social Security Administration 1993, pp.83-97). Still, welfare remained an entitlement under the FSA. But one might well argue that the FSA helped to bring on the elimination of AFDC - because of its lack of effectiveness in promoting employment among most welfare recipients.

The Family Support Act was "welfare reform" within the parameters of AFDC - the clientele remained very limited, and work requirements had a fairly small impact overall. The provisions of the Family Support Act were introduced so slowly, and so many recipients could claim exemptions from requirements to be employed, that few in the public saw welfare as fundamentally changed. The slow implementation largely reflected fiscal constraints - the fruit of Republicans' and conservative Democrats' campaigns against taxation and public social spending, and of course, the massive budget deficit bequeathed by the Reagan administration. To have demanded employment and training from everyone under the terms of the FSA would have been much more expensive than simply continuing with AFDC as it was. Many states did not even claim their full share of federal cost-sharing funds, as this would have necessitated their own spending to increase. And even after the Family Support Act, AFDC regulations made it difficult to combine on-the-record work and welfare (although most women on welfare have depended on some outside income, from family, boyfriends or unreported work [Edin and Lein 1996]).

The particular patterns of American women's labor force participation, the policy context within which these occur, and the disjunction between

formal models of motherhood in AFDC and labor force participation patterns among women not on welfare made AFDC more problematic politically than sole-parent provision in other countries. While part-time work is more widespread in other countries, American women are likely to work full-time - about 3/4 of all employed women are working full-time - and full-year (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999, table 3.3). Part-time work challenges the traditional gender division of labor less than does full-time work. And it was the traditional gender division of labor that was institutionalized in AFDC.

Perhaps most critically for AFDC's lack of political support was that American women work with less *public* support, such as child allowances, child care or paid leaves, than do their counterparts in other parts of the West where women's employment is institutionalized in the policy regime (e.g., Scandinavia). Those segments of the populace that do not receive any government welfare (whatever other government largesse they may enjoy) that is, a large majority of the non-elderly - must depend on their capacities in the labor market (or marriage to someone who is employed) to gain access to valued resources, including health benefits. There is widespread sentiment that mothers as well as fathers "must" work for most families to maintain households, or, among the more affluent sectors of the population, to maintain a middle-class standard of living, including education for children and the like. Staying at home full-time to care for children has come to be understood as something to be earned through one's efforts in the labor market - as a reward from an employer who gives paid leave - a benefit usually reserved for the best-off women, or supported through savings, help from parents or at the price of a normal consumption pattern (e.g., when Christian conservatives argue for upholding "family values", including housewifery, as requiring resistance to middle-class consumerism). For example, in the course of debates about family caps, proponents argued that wage-earners get no supplement when they have another child, so why should welfare recipients? It was difficult for critics to mount an effective response to this logic of the market. One suspects that their task would have been easier had family allowances or other explicit forms of government support of all citizens' reproduction ever been instituted in U.S. (However, such supports usually reflect some commitments to "imagined communities" of an ethnically homogenous nation, among other things - a condition never in place in racially- and ethnically-heterogenous America.) Welfare reform aimed to extend the compulsion of the market to welfare recipients.¹⁰

¹⁰ Mink (1998) focuses on how welfare reform affects the citizenship rights of women depending on public assistance, acutely describing the ways in which their choices are constrained by new regulations about paternity establishment, child support, and employment - constraints that affect them only because they are depending on welfare. She argues that

Feminists' interventions tend to support the premise that employment is to be expected from all. A "maternalist" option B support to full-time caregiving B has been the preference of only a minority of activists and academics, even as most feminists, coming from left-liberal position, opposed most of the provisions of the 1996 welfare reform bill, especially the end of entitlement and lifetime limits, and the targeting of "illegitimacy". But the main focus of activists' attention around the 1996 legislation was the "Domestic Violence Option", which permits states to exempt women fleeing battering from work requirements; it seems that here the premise is that absent such circumstances, and given proper supports such as day care, women's paid work is reasonable (see Institute for Women's Policy Research 1997b for information on welfare reform and domestic violence, including the D.V.O.).

But there is perhaps a larger question to ask about the response of women and women's equality organizations to welfare reform. Why, for example, did the proposed elimination of AFDC not call forth popular protests similar to those which followed the 1989 Supreme Court Webster decision, when hundreds of thousands of women turned out to defend abortion rights? The Women's Committee of One Hundred, one of the few pro-welfare feminist lobbying groups to appear when welfare was being debated, tried to mobilize under the slogan "a war against poor women is a war against all women." They succeeded in drawing out only hundreds in their several demonstrations. In the case of defending abortion rights, women across the social spectrum saw this as an issue that engaged their interests; in the case of welfare reform, this did not happen.¹¹

welfare, by providing an exit option, is a condition for all women's equality. But this misses the politics that have grown around the isolated character of the welfare constituency. More women identify as workers/taxpayers than as potential welfare recipients. Some, no doubt, are middle-class by virtue of their partners' income and status; others react to welfare based on their own status as employed women. And while women exhibit more generous attitudes than do men vis-a-vis social spending, they have not defended "welfare as we knew it". Rather, there is sentiment for helping those who try to work, but can't, supplying affordable child care and health care, and the like. I would argue that this is precisely because AFDC rules seemed to make possible staying at home to care for children at public expense for poor women - exactly what isn't guaranteed to any other mother or parent.

¹¹ Here, one might make the parallel to Sweden's recent experience of the lack of an explicit defense of spousal pension benefits when these were cut back. Apparently, many women felt they might need such benefits, as a higher-than-normal number of marriages were registered before the deadline (after which the provision granting them would no longer apply). Yet no public protest emerged around the issue. Barbara Hobson (1998) explains this with reference to the strong assumptions about women's employment in the Swedish policy regime, which undercut claims based on spousal status.

Situating welfare reform in the context of wider policy developments - such as the regulation of labor markets and policy on reproduction - makes clear that it reflects broader gender patterns characterizing the US policy regime and gender politics. Gender equality forces have defined employment and educational opportunity as central to women's emancipation. Employment-equity legislation has, in combination with strong employer demand for women workers, helped to create much-enhanced possibilities for women's economic independence, despite the continuation of a pay gap and occupational sex segregation. Reproductive rights are also understood as central to the equality project, at least partly because control of one's reproductive capacities is necessary to competing more equally in the labor market. In contrast, social protection has been much less significant in post-WW II US gender policy.

The more coercive work requirements in the US and the elimination of a social right to assistance are also related to the racialization of welfare politics and the racial characteristics of the clientele of sole parent programs historically created by the structures of social provision and immigration and settlement patterns. The beneficiaries of sole parent programs in other Western countries are overwhelmingly white. In the United States, single mothers on AFDC were disproportionately minority and indeed, a majority of claimants were African-American and Latino; white women were significant proportion of AFDC recipients, but, not being concentrated in the ghettos of major metropolises, had less public visibility, and were indeed less likely than minority mothers to be on the program for long periods (US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Assistance 1991, p.6; Bane 1988).¹² And the emerging model of motherhood - as encompassing paid work which we see expressed in US policies may relate to the fact that US women of color have been held to requirements about combining motherhood and paid work that have differed historically from those applying to whites (Bell 1968; Collins 1990; Glenn 1992). As the clientele of AFDC was perceived as less

¹² In the US, analysts distinguished between two or three types of clients - long-term clients (often identified as members of an "underclass") and clients using the program only for short-term needs until they remarried or re-entered the workforce; others identified "cyclers" (Spalter-Roth et al 1995) who could not get off welfare permanently due to the character of jobs in the low-wage labour market, absence of services and lack of universal medical coverage. The US media paid disproportionate attention to the long-term "dependency" of primarily African-American and Latina women. Also, more teens and never-married women were on welfare than in the social assistance programs of other OECD countries. These indicators point to a greater problem of social exclusion in the US, tied to the history of race and racial labor markets, as well as to higher levels of economic inequality. Analogous problems exist in the other settler nations among the advanced industrial countries, New Zealand, Australia and Canada - indigenous populations in these countries are terribly deprived and marginalized, but they form a very small proportion of the population and, moreover, are geographically concentrated away from the biggest urban centers.

white, the standards applicable to women of color are being made requirements of all welfare programs, a trend reinforced by the increasing proportions of women of all races and ethnic groups entering the labor force. Again, the change in institutionalized expectations for paid work are explicable by these long-standing differences in views about white women versus women of color, but the end of entitlement, and the preceding ratcheting up of onerous requirements in AFDC, are more severe than institutionalizing expectations about employment. Here, I believe we do need to invoke biopolitics, and the unwillingness of some white elites and white voters to give material support to the reproduction of people of color.¹³ This represented a set of sentiments available for mobilization by politicians, and certainly contributed to the campaign against welfare and "welfare queens" waged by the Republicans over the 1980s, and formed the context for the Democrats move to the right on "wedge issues".

The welfare rolls began to rise again soon after passage of the FSA, reversing years of declining coverage, and the social ills which concerned policymakers - nonmarital childbearing and lack of employment - continued unabated. And while most liberal analysts continued to propose what was essentially tinkering with AFDC, certain conservatives, Charles Murray and his intellectual compatriots most significantly, argued that elimination of social provision was more humane than the continuation of AFDC under any circumstances. While, among elites, conservative thinking about welfare was gaining sway, there was not a public consensus on needed changes - but public opinion polls after the 1994 election "showed that the public preferred *any* possible package of reforms over the status quo" (Weaver 1998, p.375). Liberals like Clinton and Ellwood inadvertently may have reinforced the conservatives' claim that AFDC was worse than any alternative by promising to "end welfare as we know it". Thus, there was a continuing demand for reform, and mounting receptivity among the electorate for radical solutions to the "welfare mess".

Indeed, one might argue that the elimination of AFDC became inevitable once Clinton made his famous promise. Like Cold Warrior Richard Nixon opening the door to Communist China, Clinton's embrace of a stance that had formerly been anathema in his party changed political dynamics irrevocably. Although Democrats sought to retain control of the welfare issue, the call to end welfare was seized on mainly by Republicans, who moved the debate far to the right - to outright elimination of a right to assistance. After the Republicans

¹³ Given the surfeit of low-wage workers available in the US and worldwide, one might argue that support to their reproduction will be seen as superfluous at best by economic elites and the politicians who depend on them for campaign finance.

captured the House of Representatives in 1994, President Clinton was forced by his political concerns into signing a Republican welfare bill that was much more restrictive and less generous than his own, unsuccessful, plan.

With the end of AFDC, poor mothers and other caregivers of children no longer have a social right to assistance. Given the emphasis placed on women's workplace access and equality by feminist groups, one might well ask whether it had been in the interests of poor women to be enabled to stay at home by welfare payments. Earlier feminist critics of the welfare state indeed focused on the negative aspects of reinforcing women's domesticity in this way. Certainly, there are drawbacks for women accompanying withdrawal from the labor force to care for their children full time, even for a few years (accommodating caring by working part time also "costs," though not as much; see, e.g., Joshi 1992). However, it is hard to champion paid work as reflecting the gender interests of women if it is in substandard work settings and brings no access to employment-related benefits or in the absence of sufficient support services, particularly without a second adult helping out, and, in the U.S. especially, in dangerous neighborhoods. Yet I do not believe there is any likelihood that we will return to a policy which supports full-time caregiving for anyone, beyond a short period after the birth of a child. Moreover, AFDC was deeply flawed, not least because of its restricted coverage. While AFDC at least provided medical coverage and a subsistence to non-employed single-parent families, the employed poor and working classes were left with no public support whatsoever. I would argue that the best option today is to be found in supporting better treatment for single mothers by accepting that they will be workers, and campaigning for better supports for all workers, especially those with children (for a similar argument, see, e.g., Bergmann and Hartmann 1995; Greenberg and Skocpol 1997).

Ann Shola Orloff
Department of Sociology
Northwestern University
1810 Chicago Avenue
Evanston IL 60208-1330 USA
phone: 1-847-491-5415
fax: 1-847-491-9907
email: orloff@ssc.wisc.edu

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