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Evaluating Welfare Reform in an Era of Transition. Robert A. Moffitt and Michele Ver Ploeg (Eds.).

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between the rich and poor. The final two chapters outline a series of recommendations intended to offset the disempowering implications of TANF. These recommendations include tax and labor market reforms designed to decrease poverty and promote gainful employment.

The book ends with a vivid account of a romantic fable which urges the reader to seriously consider the implications of the current path taken by American public policymakers. Schorr's ability to capture and elaborate the most critical aspects of welfare policy (both past and present) makes this book a valuable read for any observer of American social policy. The book's recommendations are insightful and feasible, thus leaving readers, regardless of their position on welfare reform, with a much more comprehensive knowledge of the issue. However, since these recommendations are outside the purview of most social workers and other human service professionals, it would have been helpful if the book had contained suggestions that progressively-minded caseworkers and administrators could use. Nevertheless, the book's penetrating analysis, brevity, and sheer readability ensure its relevance for a variety of audiences.

Robert A. Moffitt and Michele Ver Ploeg (Eds.), *Evaluating Welfare Reform in an Era of Transition*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001. \$42.95 hardcover.

All too often, policy makers and administrators decide the course of policy in advance or absence of supporting empirical evidence. The political will of the people, or the political power of corporate America, seems to weigh more heavily than the truth when deciding the future of social policy. Such was the case when the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), more informally known as 'welfare reform', was enacted in 1996. Responding to electoral campaigns and popular opinion, President Clinton delivered on his promise to "end welfare as we know it." Under welfare reform, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (or TANF program) replaced sixty years of entitlement welfare with a 'work-first' model of welfare.

In the five years since welfare reform began, a wealth of empirical knowledge has been gained from a plethora of studies on subjects ranging from the ability of welfare clients to work, to the

effects of time-limits on child well-being, to the lives people lead when they no longer receive welfare. Although the experience of the past is not hopeful, the information mined from these empirical studies needs to be intelligently used by social policy makers and elected officials as they decide on the re-authorization of the TANF program. The issue of what should be included in the re-authorization of TANF has been extensively debated in Washington, DC. This book provides a good deal of relevant information which can inform discussions currently taking place on the future of welfare. The book describes the historical roots of the 1996 welfare reform legislation, discusses its programmatic components, and examines the research completed to date on many different welfare reform issues. Gaps in the knowledge-base are identified, and the book provides a detailed analysis of what still needs to be studied. It also considers the reasons this research is needed.

Moffitt and Ver Ploeg have produced an important book. *Evaluating Welfare Reform in an Era of Transition* is a rich trove of information presented in a sensible, logical way that encapsulates many research topics undertaken to date on these issues. The book, with its thorough analysis of the PRWORA legislation, is a useful tool for academics teaching social policy. Students, too, will find the book useful in understanding how this legislation took shape from a contemporary-historical perspective and what the legislation means for the stakeholders of social policy at the federal, state, and local level and for the nation's citizenry, social service organizations, and the clients of welfare agencies. Policy makers and welfare administrators should also find the text informative. It brings together in one place, a discussion of the major empirical studies of welfare reform's issues and the implications of those studies for social policy. Finally, researchers themselves will benefit from reading this text, gaining insight into the direction that future research needs to take to address many important questions regarding welfare. It provides helpful advice on how empirical research can legitimately offer evidence for the efficacy of welfare interventions and should be widely consulted.