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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 29
Issue 4 *December*

Article 17

December 2002

Welfare Reform: Failures and Remedies. Alvin L. Schorr

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Recommended Citation

(2002) "*Welfare Reform: Failures and Remedies.* Alvin L. Schorr," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 4 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol29/iss4/17>

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and the Settlements were not the only pioneers of the social work profession. The book's attempt to recognize the contribution of social work colleagues who, over the years, have thought of themselves as radical, is important and timely.

Alvin L. Schorr, *Welfare Reform: Failures and Remedies*. Westport, CT: Praegar Publishers, 2001, \$59.95 hardcover.

Ever since President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in August 1996, the term 'welfare reform' has become well-known among social welfare observers. The notion of government intervention within a market economy sparks controversy whenever the issue is raised, and the current welfare reform debate is no exception. While some would say that the replacement of the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was necessary to end welfare dependency, others argue that TANF is an overly coercive measure that will only exacerbate social problems such as child poverty and homelessness.

Schorr's nine chapter book begins with a brief explanation of the pervasive dissatisfaction that characterized the AFDC era. He shows that this distinction prompted the welfare reform movement and the introduction of TANF. Following an explication of TANF's substantive features, Schorr provides a historical context to the current welfare policy landscape by tracing the development of AFDC. He also enumerates a series of convincing rebuttals to many of the negative stereotypes which fueled public disenchantment toward AFDC recipients.

The middle chapters (four and five) discuss the current TANF program. They reveal that, despite the current decline in welfare caseloads throughout the country, the efficacy of welfare reform is severely compromised due to the many labor market barriers facing impoverished families, particularly single-parent families. These barriers include a lack of health care coverage and insufficient access to affordable and effective child care services.

Chapters six and seven give the reader further insight into the inadequacies surrounding welfare reform efforts by highlighting issues such as declining wages, the absence of affordable housing for low and moderate-income persons, and the growing disparity

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