
Articles

Targeting Women for Participation in Work Programs: Lessons from the U.S.¹

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Although welfare programs in North America have historically provided benefits to the “deserving poor” (women, children, the disabled and the elderly), welfare reform during the 1980s targeted single women with children. One rationale for these reforms as articulated by conservative critics of the welfare system is that assistance programs contribute to the break-up of two-parent families and an increase in the birth rates of illegitimate children.² Consequently, social assistance and employment programs in both Canada and the U.S. distinguish between the deserving poor — mainly men with previous attachment to the labour force (receiving unemployment benefits and worker’s compensation) — and the new “undeserving” poor: single women with children (in line for social assistance and mandatory work programs).³

In Canada, the federal government implemented the Canadian Job Strategy (CJS) which targets specific groups for social services and job training in order to help people experiencing social barriers (limited education, little previous job experience) find employment. Training available through CJS has increased access to high-paying industrial or skilled trades jobs for men eligible to participate in the program based on previous attachment to the work force. Women with little previous work experience are trained for low-wage employment in clerical or service-related jobs.⁴ Provincial governments have established jobs programs which also target single mothers on social assistance for job training.⁵ In the United States, most adult welfare recipients are required by federal law to participate in mandatory job training programs. It is argued that mandatory participation represents efforts on the part of government to decrease welfare costs and “punish” unmarried women for the violation of social norms.⁶ In both Canada and the U.S., employment programs for women have provided training for low-wage work.⁷ Much of the debate around welfare reform centres on reducing government expenditures, returning as many adults as possible

to the labour force and increasing the amount of wages from employment earned by recipients.⁸ Issues such as the importance of having the mother present to care for children or the availability of adequate professional child care are not addressed, nor are the psychological limitations of mandatory work or financial hardships associated with participation in mandatory work programs examined.⁹ Program planners, however, have examined the potential benefits and limitations of targeting "hard to serve" recipients (low skilled, uneducated, little previous attachment to the labour force) for participation in work programs in comparison with broad coverage programs in which all able-bodied adults must participate.¹⁰ Also of concern in the U.S. studies is whether voluntary or mandatory programs are best suited to reducing welfare costs and increasing the wages of welfare recipients.

In this paper, the author examines work programs for single mothers on welfare in the United States. The use of welfare programs to reinforce work and marriage norms is discussed. Welfare "reforms" of the 1960s, '70s and '80s which required single mothers to enter the work force are described. The author reports on recent studies of the effectiveness of work programs in the United States, including findings from her own 1989 study of mandatory job programs for welfare recipients in Wayne County (Detroit), Michigan.¹¹ The implications of the U.S. experience in enforcing work requirements for single mothers in Canada are also explored.

Welfare In The U.S. as Social Control: Keeping Women Poor

Welfare programs in capitalist societies are utilized by governments to meet a number of social engineering goals. Social programs are often established to benefit corporate interests by maintaining a source of low-wage labour.¹² Society accepts a certain degree of poverty in order that people will take undesirable jobs. Welfare programs expand during periods of social unrest and contract when corporate employers need a source of low-wage labour. Welfare dependency is reinforced by regulations which limit the ability of the recipient to leave welfare permanently (for example, people lose a portion of cash benefits when they leave welfare for work; in the U.S. recipients also lose medical benefits), thus providing a pool of potential workers. Mandatory work programs are one mechanism used to stigmatize recipients and force them back into the work force when demand for low-wage labour is high. While most workers are members of the primary labour force, some people participate in the secondary labour market, holding temporary, low-wage jobs and alternatively receiving unemployment benefits or welfare when work is not available. A punitive welfare system that stigmatizes recipients and forces them to participate in mandatory work programs results in people accepting employment at subsistence wages under conditions that may be harmful to workers' health and safety.¹³ Work requirements, procedural red

tape and stigmatization of participants (as conservative governments blame the poor for federal deficits) discourage participation in welfare programs and force the poor to accept low-wage employment.¹⁴

One of the primary arguments in support of mandatory work programs for single women on social assistance is that many middle-income and working-class women have entered the labour market. Fewer than 10% of all families in the U.S. are those in which the father works outside the home and the mother cares for the children.¹⁵ Female labour force participation has increased, partly due to the availability of part-time, low-wage work. Often these jobs are temporary or seasonal, thus employees have access to few benefits.¹⁶

Often gender segregation in the labour market adds to income inequities. Women employees are concentrated in sales, clerical and service jobs with low wages and few benefits.¹⁷ Minimum wage employment in the service industry jobs open to women is seldom sufficient to permit sole-support families to exit from the welfare system.¹⁸ By further crowding the sex-segregated labour market, recent efforts to "reform" welfare by increasing work participation among women simply increases competition for jobs and the number of unemployed available for work, forcing wage rates down.¹⁹ Adding to gender segregation in terms of employment opportunities and earning potential are the different assumptions and eligibility requirements that have been utilized by governments in the development of social programs primarily accessible to either women or men. In order to qualify for assistance, low-income women must be homemakers or care givers.²⁰ Programs for men are based on their prior connection to the labour force. Consequently, programs for men are often broad-based entitlement programs in which the applicant must simply provide verification of previous employment (unemployment insurance, worker's compensation). Programs for women require income-testing, verification of residence, living expenses, marital status and the number of children and are thus "inadequate, intrusive, and humiliating".²¹

The Historical Development of Work Programs for Women in the U.S.

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program had its origins in "mother's pensions" which were available primarily to widows "of good morals" during the early part of the century. Minorities, divorced and single women were excluded from participation and kept in the labour market. When AFDC eligibility was expanded to include all unmarried women with children in the 1960s, regulations which imposed behavioral requirements on participants (such as man-in-the-house rules and mandatory work or job training) were implemented.²²

The institutionalization of federally-mandated work programs for women began in the 1960s primarily as a response to an increase in AFDC enrollment subsequent to the War on Poverty. Between 1961 and 1967, AFDC spending increased from \$994 million to \$2.2 billion. By 1967, single mothers headed 75% of all AFDC households. Minority women (primarily African American and Hispanic) made up almost 50% of the case load.²³

The Work Incentive Program (WIN) implemented in 1967 required every state to operate an employment and training program for AFDC recipients. Initially WIN emphasized education, training and social services. In 1971, conservative lawmakers, alarmed by the growth in welfare spending, shifted the program's focus to immediate job placement (calling for intensive job searches, on-the-job training, public service employment and accumulation of work experience; individuals who refused to participate faced a three-month termination of grants). This program had limited success; participants tended to be job-ready and short-term utilizers of the welfare system. Low-skilled participants often simply returned to welfare after short periods of temporary employment.²⁴

In the early 1980s, under the leadership of Republican President Ronald Reagan, Congress authorized state governments to operate state demonstration projects which allowed for the design of programs based on state resources and labour market conditions (such as grant diversion to employers, target job tax credits, job training programs). Congress also authorized states to run community work experience or "workfare" programs in which recipients would be required to work for a public or private employer (without wages) in return for their welfare checks.²⁵ Participation was to be required of all able-bodied welfare recipients with children over three years of age (contingent upon the availability of day care services). A number of states began to develop demonstration projects for mandatory work, education and employment and training programs in the early 1980s.

Congress approved the Family Support Act (FSA) in 1988, requiring all 50 states to implement work programs for AFDC recipients by 1992. Depending upon the availability of child care, all AFDC recipients with children over three years of age who are not incapacitated or of advanced age or caring for an incapacitated household member are mandated to participate. Recipients under the age of 20 who have not completed high school are required to enroll in education programs. Those who refuse to cooperate can lose a portion of their welfare benefits (exclusive of an amount set aside for the needs of children or a dependent spouse) for a period of up to three months. States are required to provide work programs with the following components: high school and remedial education, job skills training, job readiness activities to help prepare participants for work, and job development and placement. The legislation also requires states to offer at least two

of the following components: job search, on-the-job training, work supplementation (grant diversions to employers) and community work experience (workfare).

Efforts by conservative politicians to contain welfare spending has resulted in a low level of federal appropriations for work programs. Congress allocated \$3.34 billion through the Family Support Act over a five-year period for development of education and job programs for 400,000 people. This figure is relatively insignificant when compared to a \$57 billion reduction in federal welfare programs between 1982 and 1986. Although some additional funds have been allocated for post-employment day care and medical benefits for people who leave welfare for minimum-wage employment, state governments are financially hard pressed to fund such programs adequately.²⁶ Few controls are in place that allow the federal government to monitor the states for program quality and adequacy of support services.

In keeping with the cost-containment focus of the legislation, training and education components may be provided by state and local governments via contracts with non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses and public agencies.²⁷ These contracts are generally performance-oriented: contractors are only reimbursed by government for successful outcomes such as job placement or retention for periods of up to 90 days.²⁸

That concerns about the preservation of two-parent families has had a role in the development of the Family Support Act is evident from the writings of Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynihan, the sponsor of the Act, has written that welfare reform is necessary because the "feminization of poverty" and unemployment among black men have led to social disintegration in the black community.²⁹ Hence both conservatives and liberals in the U.S. Congress seem to have converged around "welfare reform": the idea that welfare recipients should be required to work in return for benefits and be encouraged through education and employment programs and a combination of work incentives (e.g., allowing recipients to retain a larger portion of their benefits and still receive welfare and the providing of support services such as day care, transportation and post-employment medical insurance) and various negative sanctions to leave the welfare system as quickly as possible. Conservative lawmakers tend to favor low-cost, punitive, mandatory programs such as job search and workfare that will reduce welfare expenditures while liberals favor strategies that promote human investment: provision of comprehensive education, job training and support services for voluntary participants.³⁰

It is not clear, however, that the FSA will result in any real reform of the welfare system. State governments have been given wide latitude in the implementation of the Act. The legislation provides no new resources for remedial education, job training, job placements or job creation. States

may adopt low-cost strategies such as workfare and job search rather than education and job training programs.³¹

Research on Work Programs

The political consensus around welfare reform legislation was largely achieved without any research data confirming the effectiveness of work programs.³² Most of the research on program effectiveness was conducted after the legislation was approved in 1988. A number of large-scale studies have examined the program's cost-efficiency and effectiveness in placing people in jobs rather than program implementation (access to services, availability of support services, retention in training programs) or long-term effects (improvements in participant skill level, permanent exit from the welfare system). Cost-efficiency studies have primarily been oriented toward reductions in welfare expenditures (dollars saved as people leave welfare for jobs or lose their benefits due to government sanctions for non-cooperation) and increases in the dollar value of wages earned by welfare recipients.

The most comprehensive cost-efficiency study was undertaken by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). MDRC conducted studies of work program effectiveness and cost-efficiency in eight states (California, Illinois, Maryland, Arkansas, Maine, New Jersey, Virginia and West Virginia) during the mid-1980s.³³ Welfare recipients were randomly assigned to work programs and compared to control groups of welfare recipients who were not assigned. The MDRC studies confirmed that state governments could reduce welfare expenditures (usually by a few hundred dollars per recipient) by implementing work and job training programs and that program participation could result in a small increase in wages for some recipients. In one state, West Virginia, the program was found to have no effect on either earnings or welfare savings. Researchers attributed this to high unemployment rates and rural isolation. Programs in urban areas with high unemployment rates, however, were found to produce welfare savings: average earnings increased by \$889 per year for single parents while average welfare payments decreased by \$608 per recipient.

The limited resources available to state governments in combination with federal requirements give states three primary options for program design:

1. to provide low-cost services (workfare and job search) to almost everyone;
2. to target more comprehensive, higher-cost services (such as education and vocational training) to a small group of participants;
3. to use a mixed strategy with a combination of programs and target groups.³⁴

A number of earlier studies of job training programs for welfare recipients found that government funded programs delivered on contract by non-profit organizations or private businesses tended to select or "cream" the most job-ready applicants for program participation.³⁵ However, Gueron and Pauly did not confirm that "creaming" rather than targeting services to the most disadvantaged produces the greatest benefit for government. When findings from the nine programs were analyzed, specific program types and target populations showed greater increases in welfare savings and earnings than others. The most job-ready groups of recipients did not produce the greatest impact in either savings or earnings. Earning gains were the greatest among those people in a middle group (in terms of skill level). The least skilled groups of participants produced the most welfare savings, but had smaller earning gains. Hence targeting groups of recipients in terms of pre-enrollment skill levels, education and past work experience depends on whether the program's goal is to increase participant earnings or reduce welfare expenditures.³⁶

In general, selective-voluntary programs (in which participants volunteered or in which specific sub-populations were targeted for participation) produced greater welfare savings and recipient earnings than broad-coverage programs. This could reflect higher participation rates or the targeting of subpopulations that are more likely to have successful job outcomes. The specific program components offered also had an impact on both welfare savings and earnings. Mandatory job search prior to enrollment in other program components led to greater welfare savings and employment, but did not appear to help people find higher paying jobs or benefit sub-populations most in need of job assistance. Higher-cost and more comprehensive services (such as education or job training) resulted in greater earnings for the recipients, but lower welfare savings. Broad-coverage programs that included some higher-cost services produce greater earnings than programs without these components.³⁷

Although the MDRC studies contain the most comprehensive research on work programs in the U.S. during the 1980s, there are several limitations inherent in the research design. Gueron and Pauly did not make direct comparisons between mandatory and voluntary programs nor did they compare programs that offer more versus less service. There are no large-scale studies by other researchers that make such comparisons nor are there studies of large-scale programs which emphasize education and job skill training. Few large-scale studies have examined the impact of support services such as child care, transportation and the continued government provision of medical care and child care reimbursement subsequent to the placement of the recipient in a low-wage job.

These studies fail to assess the non-monetary costs and benefits of participation in mandatory programs. Participants lose self-esteem when forced into low paying, demeaning types of employment. The temporary nature of these jobs and the likelihood that the participant will return to the welfare system may also have negative consequences.³⁸ In addition, program participants may fail to complete job training classes or work assignments due to poor health (of the mother or her children), substance abuse, family problems, the limited availability of adequate child care or lack of access to transportation.³⁹ Some families in need of income assistance may be discouraged from applying to programs viewed as highly bureaucratic, punitive, and largely ineffective in increasing the applicant's access to a paying job.⁴⁰ The consequences of these programs for the economy at large have also not been examined in detail. For example, no detailed studies have been conducted to assess the impact of welfare to work programs on the wage structure of the temporary employment market, the displacement of employed workers or gender segregation in employment opportunities.⁴¹ Piven and Cloward have argued that economic models are inadequate to examine the experiences of people who must comply with government regulations in order to receive social assistance:

to be fully cognizant of the disincentives built into welfare programs, we have to go beyond the model on which the critics rely—a model of economic actors responding to economic incentives. Such a model radically simplifies the options people confront, and radically simplifies the motives of the people who respond to these options.⁴²

For some recipients failure to cooperate with mandatory work and training requirements is a rational decision based on the financial and psychological costs of participation.⁴³

A number of research studies have focused on the degree to which work programs for welfare recipients are implemented as intended and reach those people most in need of services. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities conducted comparison studies of work programs implemented by a number of states in the early to mid-1980s. The researchers found that states such as Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maine and Tennessee, which provided comprehensive education and training packages to recipients and incentives to industry to hire and train program participants and spent a significant portion of their program budgets on support services (such as day care and transportation), operated relatively successful programs. These states also combined training with efforts to increase the ability of welfare recipients to make an adequate living once leaving the welfare system (such as increasing the state minimum wage and requiring that employers provide health coverage to low-wage workers). States such as Michigan, Illinois, and California, on the other hand, have attempted to provide low-cost services to a

wide range of mandatory clients, but have failed to invest money in support services and have consequently placed fewer people in jobs.⁴⁴

A number of additional studies have looked at the implementation of individual jobs programs operated by state governments.⁴⁵ This research suggests that state governments (1) have been reluctant to fund support services at levels adequate to sustain enrollment in training programs, (2) have emphasized low-cost alternatives (such as workfare or job search) rather than comprehensive education and training, and (3) have primarily placed well-educated individuals with good job skills and previous attachments to the work force in jobs rather than the long-term unemployed. The operation of one work program, the Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training program (MOST), is described in detail below.

Welfare to Work Programs in Wayne County: Job Training or Punishment?

Work programs for welfare recipients in Wayne County also prepare women for low-wage employment in the service sector. Single women on AFDC face high costs if they participate, including day care and transportation expenses and loss of welfare benefits if they find a job; participants also face stigmatizing procedural requirements that reduce their self-esteem and thus decrease the likelihood that they will be able to leave welfare for permanent employment at adequate wages. The author examined the effectiveness of job training programs for welfare participants in Detroit (Wayne County), Michigan in 1989.⁴⁶ Program directors in 19 organizations providing job training programs on contract with the Michigan Department of Social Services (MDSS) were interviewed to assess whether the programs provided adequate job training, education, and support services to the welfare population. A focus group interview was also conducted with a small number of welfare rights activists and program participants to assess the experience of women participating in the program.

The Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training Program

Job training programs in Michigan are administered through contracts with for-profit business schools, public education institutions (community colleges or local school districts) and non-profit organizations through the Michigan Opportunity and Skills Training program. Michigan has operated work programs since the early 1980s. The MOST program requires mandatory participation from AFDC recipients with children *over six months of age* (contingent upon the availability of day care). Initiated in 1983 to consolidate existing job programs, the goal of the MOST program is to "enable

MOST participants to become self-supporting by assisting them to prepare for, seek, obtain and retain unsubsidized employment."⁴⁷

MOST has several different components: vocational training, a job "club", job search, education (remedial, high school, college), job development and placement, assessment, a community volunteer program and community work experience. Michigan program regulations clearly specify assignment priorities. Recipients with marketable job skills are to be assigned to job search. Program registrants who lack marketable job skills are to be assigned to vocational training programs. Education programs are to be made available to those participants that do not have the reading and math skills or high school degrees necessary for vocational training. Participation in community work experience (workfare) may be required if other components are not available to the registrant or if work experience is viewed as necessary for future employment.⁴⁸ Vocational training and education services are provided by Michigan's Department of Social Services on contract with private and public organizations. The non-profit organizations, for-profit business schools and the community colleges and school districts that contract to operate these programs are reimbursed for the successful performance of program participants. "Success" is defined as job placement and retention for a period of at least 90 days.⁴⁹

Training for Low-Wage Work

In Wayne County, MDSS contracted with 20 organizations during 1989 to provide a total of 30 programs. Types of programs contracted by MDSS included job-readiness assessment, educational services, employability/motivational training and vocational training. Assessment services included testing and interviewing program participants to determine reading and math skills, job aptitude, career goals and language skills. Employability/motivational training consisted of a three-week course intended to remove emotional barriers to employment and instruction in job hunting skills.

Vocational training was provided in the areas of clerical skills, machinist's training, auto mechanics, food preparation, building maintenance and hotel management. The majority of programs prepared participants for clerical work. Assignment to training programs were sex stratified. Almost 100% of the participants in the clerical programs are women. Few women enrolled in training courses in such male-dominated fields as auto mechanics. Two organizations provided educational services (high school completion and a two-year business college program). During the study period, MDSS did not contract with any organization for remedial education services.

Participants faced intense and sometimes demeaning application procedures prior to admission to education and training programs. Contractors

subjected them to several batteries of skills tests (reading, math, typing, manual dexterity) and several rounds of interviews to assess motivation and personal suitability for enrollment despite the fact that the program is mandatory. Contractors had complete discretion in determining who enrolled in individual training programs.

Job contractors were not able to enroll sufficient numbers of welfare recipients. Thirty percent of the vocational training programs surveyed were operating at less than 50% of their enrollment capacity. Contractors were reimbursed only for "successful" participant outcomes (training and job placement and retention for a period of 90 days) forcing the contractors to accept only those applicants with a high degree of education, previous work experience and motivation.

Financial Costs of Program Participation

Support services during job training were inadequate to sustain participants financially. Day care reimbursements were set well below market rates. Participants paid for day care services provided and then waited for a month or longer for MDSS to reimburse them (MDSS has estimated that fewer than five percent of welfare recipients can afford licensed day care). Participants were required to pay some of the day care costs "out-of-pocket". Transportation was also a problem. MDSS issued bus tickets for participants to get to and from the job training site. However, MDSS did not issue transportation assistance to participants who travelled with their children to and from the day care centre. One focus group participant described her daughter's [also a MOST participant] experience with transportation and day care:

I've seen my daughter leave home at five o'clock in the morning. It's still dark. Dragging two little children to Sleepy Hollow or some nursery in her area. She'd walk back four blocks to the nearest bus line to get two buses to get to work by 8:30. She had to be home at 5:30. Who wouldn't say "I'd rather stay home than [have] the hassle" and not having more money come in. There's no more money in your budget.

Participants had to travel to MDSS offices to obtain the bus tickets they did receive. They often missed classes to obtain tickets and also absorbed the out-of-pocket costs of these frequent trips (workers only issue a two-week supply of tickets at a time). In addition, participants allocated money from benefit checks for such job-related extras as lunches, clothing and personal grooming. At least one contractor required participants to wear business suits. Although some MDSS reimbursement was available for clothing or uniforms, this was also a barrier to participation. Participants were not guaranteed the limited transportation and day care assistance,

however. Provision of support services is dependent on the discretion of the participant's welfare worker. Eligibility guidelines for support services were interpreted inconsistently. Consequently, some participants did not receive them.

Although out-of-pocket expenses may seem insignificant when compared to the positive benefits of future employment, AFDC recipients in Michigan had very limited quantities of cash available for such expenditures. The average AFDC household of three during the first six months of 1989 had a total of \$166 per month available for meeting personal needs such as transportation costs, cleaning and household supplies, clothing, food not covered by the Food Stamp program (which provides less than \$1 per meal per household member) and school supplies after paying shelter and utility costs. For many recipients, the costs of participation were too steep to be outweighed by future gains.⁵⁰ Participants also feared the loss of many of their welfare benefits if they accepted employment. While state and federal regulations clearly state that recipients are entitled to retain medical benefits for up to 15 months after employment and retain the first \$30 and a third of their cash income before losing benefits (depending on income), welfare workers applied such rules on a discretionary basis. Some recipients were cut off assistance immediately after job placement. While a third of the contractors interviewed provided information about benefit extensions to program participants, other contractors were not aware of such entitlements. In the words of one of the contractors interviewed, participants in his program were not informed about benefit extensions because: "we don't know what the hell their rights are. We're finding that MOST [caseworkers] don't know what the students' rights are."⁵¹

Many of the MOST contractors interviewed by the author felt frustrated that they were not able to assist participants with their social needs. Contracts prohibit reimbursement for services not directly related to job training. Yet unmet social needs often rendered job training ineffective. One contractor described barriers to program completion this way:

They [participants] constantly or frequently have problems with babysitting, with child illness. The boy friend has drug problems. The boy friend doesn't work. They spend a great deal of time going back and forth to the Department of Social Services. To get food stamps. To get bus tickets. We find that most people they refer to us are able intellectually to do the work, no problem with that, it's the outside influences that prevent them normally from being able to complete it.⁵²

Some of the contractors indicated that they would prefer to deliver a more comprehensive package of services (assessment, remedial education, job training and support services) in order to provide more effective job services emphasizing the long-term needs of welfare recipients (such as skills

that would prepare participants to permanently exit the welfare system and earn adequate wages). The state program was viewed as fragmented, underfunded and inefficient by contractors who often were not fully reimbursed for the costs of these services.

Using Work Programs to Punish Recipients

In addition to unmet social needs, the social stigma associated with work programs and low participant self-esteem also discouraged women from participating in work programs. One focus group respondent described her experience with workfare after being denied admission to a nursing program:

They called me and I was close to 50 [years old]. They were going to put me to work on Belle Isle or either on the expressways, picking up papers, you know cleaning up the expressways. Again I was furious. "Well you have to be in this program. That's all that's available. You have no other qualifications. This is what's left for you to do. Your worker will be in touch with you." Fortunately, I had a very nice worker at that time and I called her and explained the situation. I was really totally upset.⁵³

The work program participants interviewed felt that the mandatory nature of the program was unnecessary. One respondent stated that "people would be willing to work if they could see where their work was going to be beneficial to them, to make them have a better life than just being on assistance." Another respondent said that most welfare recipients "want to work. We set the programs up to punish people, not really to support and help them." Respondents suggested that voluntary programs providing education and training for adequately paying jobs would be far more effective than mandatory work in helping people leave the welfare system.

Conclusions:

Implications for the Design of Work Programs in Canada

Recent research into the effectiveness of job programs suggests that increasing the job skills of women and helping them leave welfare permanently is not the overriding purpose of existing work programs. Instead, work programs prepare women for employment in the service sector that provides women with income that is less than the amount they could receive on welfare. These programs are not sufficient to remedy structural difficulties in the labour market. Service sector employment is often sex-segregated, with women occupying the lowest rungs of the employment ladder.⁵⁴ Work programs for women seem simply to be oriented to creating a pool of low-wage labour rather than supplying industry with a well-trained work force.

Many of the trends in job training in the U.S. resemble recent trends in Canada. During the 1980s, federal training programs shifted from training for high skill trades provided by community colleges to targeting specific subpopulations for assistance. Under programs funded through the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS), the federal government has also made greater use of purchase-of-service contracting, placing much of the responsibility for training on the private sector.⁵⁵ Eligibility for participation in the various job programs funded through CJS has been based on previous attachment to the work force and job skills. Training for high-paying industrial jobs thus primarily benefited men. A number of programs target women entering the work force for the first time (homemakers). As Daenzer reports, two-thirds of the women trained during the first year of the CJS, received training for low-wage positions in clerical and sales jobs. The marginally employed (new immigrants and part-time workers) were excluded from participation. In Ontario, 73% of women trained through CJS in programs that offered nontechnical employment experiences, found jobs that paid only 50% of the wages offered in technical, male dominated jobs.⁵⁶

In 1985, Canada's provincial governments entered into a multilateral agreement with the federal government to increase job training opportunities and remove employment barriers for social assistance recipients. Although one of the conditions attached to CAP funding for employment programs was that recipients should not be forced to accept mandatory work or enrollment in work programs in exchange for welfare benefits, a number of provinces expanded efforts to "counsel" recipients to accept such training or employment and increased the number of recipients considered employable.⁵⁷ Job training available to recipients through CJS and other provincial programs seldom prepares women for well-paying, permanent employment or raises their skill levels. As is the case with work programs in the U.S., provincial governments do not provide sufficient child care spaces to support program enrollment; low deductions for work expenses and potential losses of some types of benefits available to women on welfare, such as transportation and medical expenses not covered by medicare, reduce the incentive to work.⁵⁸

One of the provinces that has not yet moved forward with coercive work programs is Ontario. The province's Advisory Commission on Social Assistance recommended a package of employment incentives to encourage recipients to leave the system for adequately paid jobs. The recommendations included improvements in support services such as child care, increased deductions for work expenses and reductions in the tax back rate for earned income. The working poor were to be allowed to "top-up" wages with social assistance benefits to encourage them to stay in the work force.⁵⁹ The intent of these changes was to allow recipients to accept low-wage or temporary

jobs that could be subsidized with a portion of their welfare benefits. Such work would allow recipients to obtain job training and experience in order to move on to permanent employment. Although some of these recommendations were implemented in 1989, the province of Ontario has modified regulations to exclude all but recipients earning very low wages from participation. Under pressure from the media and corporate interests, the NDP Premier of Ontario has even suggested that the province explore the feasibility of work programs to reduce welfare dependency.⁶⁰ The most important limitation of work programs—that adequate jobs are not available to move people from welfare to work—has not entered into the public debate on welfare reform. Consequently, the prospect that welfare-to-work programs that assist recipients to develop the skills needed to find permanent well-paid employment will be developed in Canada are slim. Nor is it likely that either federal or provincial governments will develop comprehensive programs to create an adequate supply of jobs.

In the development of job programs, federal and provincial governments should keep in mind the following lessons from the U.S.:

- Lesson #1: Job training programs (especially those delivered on contract by private organizations) often emphasize immediate job placement rather than skill development and permanent employment in well-paid jobs.
- Lesson #2: Gender segregated training programs are likely to prepare women for low-wage work in clerical, sales or service jobs.
- Lesson #3: Providing job services to highly skilled, well-educated people with previous connections to the work force does not produce welfare savings for government. Instead, targeting work programs to the least advantaged is most beneficial in reducing government expenditures and increasing the earnings of program participants.
- Lesson #4: The provision of day care and other support services (transportation and clothing allowances) is essential to the effectiveness of work programs.
- Lesson #5: Recipient costs (transportation, day care and welfare benefit termination) may outweigh the benefits of participation for some individuals who accept low-wage or part-time work.
- Lesson #6: Mandatory work programs are often stigmatizing and demeaning for participants and do not increase the participants willingness to be placed in jobs.

- Lesson #7: The social and psychological costs as well as out-of-pocket expenditures for transportation, day care, clothing and other essentials needed by recipients to successfully participate in job programs should be incorporated into any future evaluations of welfare-to-work programs.
- Lesson #8: Punitive work programs may unfairly target members of disadvantaged groups (the long-term unemployed, the illiterate, mothers with young children, new immigrants or minorities) who have trouble competing in the labour market and may not have the skills required to enroll in vocational training programs (or access to training programs that would prepare them for high-wage employment).
- Lesson #9: The welfare recipients who are most in need of employment and education to enhance their long-term employability seldom receive such services because of program emphasis on "successful" outcomes (immediate job placement) and government concerns about reducing expenditures.
- Lesson #10: A growing economy rather than mandatory work may be the key ingredient that allows social assistance recipients to move from welfare to work.

NOTES

1. The research for this paper was conducted while the author held a post-doctoral fellowship at the College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. A previous version of the paper was presented at the 5th Conference on Social Welfare Policy (Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec, August 1991). I would also like to thank the three CRSP reviewers, especially Bob Mullaly, for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.
2. For example, Charles Murray, *Losing Ground* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). See also Lawrence Mead, *Beyond Entitlement* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); and George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
3. See Patricia M. Evans, "Targeting Single Mothers for Employment: Comparisons from the United States, Britain, and Canada," *Social Service Review*, 66, 3 (September 1992): 378-399; Joel Handler and Yeheskel Hasenfeld, *The Moral Construction of Poverty* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991); and Mimi Abramowitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women* (Boston: South End, 1988).
4. Patricia M. Daenzer, "Policy and Program Responses of the 1980s: The National Training Program and the Canadian Jobs Strategy," in Graham Riches and Gordon Ternowetsky, eds., *Unemployment and Welfare* (Toronto: Garamond, 1990), pp. 65-89.

5. Stella Lord, "The Social Assistance Recipients Program and the Institution-ization of Employability: Implications for Single Mothers in Nova Scotia," paper presented at the 5th Conference on Social Welfare Policy (Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec, August 1991); Eric Shragge, "Welfare Reform, Quebec Style," in Riches and Ternowetsky, eds., *Unemployment*, pp. 125-139; Graham Riches, "Welfare Reform and Social Work Practice," also in *Unemployment*, pp. 107-123.
6. Mimi Abramowitz, *Regulating*.
7. Patricia Daenzer, "Policy and Program Responses."
8. See Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*; Judith Gueron and Edward Pauly, *From Welfare to Work* (New York: Sage Foundation, 1991).
9. Recipients must often pay a portion of the day care and transportation costs associated with participation in such programs.
10. Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*; Gueron and Pauly, *Welfare*.
11. Donna Hardina, *Solution or Illusion?: Purchasing Job Services for Welfare Recipients in Wayne County* (Detroit, MI: Center for Urban Studies, 1990).
12. Eric Shragge, "Welfare Reform, Quebec Style"; Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "The Contemporary Relief Debate," in Fred Block, Richard A. Cloward, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Frances Fox Piven, eds., *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 45-108.
13. Graham Riches, "Unemployment and the State," in *Unemployment*, pp. 289-301; Piven and Cloward, "The Contemporary Relief Debate."
14. Michael Lipsky, *Street-level Bureaucracy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980); Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).
15. A. Moon, A. Nichols-Casebolt, J. McClure, R. Pruger, D. Stoez and R. Baum, "Should Welfare Clients Be Really Required to Work?" in Edith Gambrill and Robert Pruger, eds., *Controversial Issues in Social Work* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992), pp. 356-385.
16. Riches, "Unemployment and the State." Longitudinal studies of welfare participation rates in the U.S. have found that many women remain on welfare for short periods (going on and off the system), while less than 20% of women receiving AFDC remain on welfare for more than eight years. See Greg Duncan and Saul B. Hoffman, "The Use and Effects of Welfare," *Social Service Review*, 61, 2 (June 1988): 420-432.
17. Brigitte Kitchen, "Employment Strategies for Women and the Sexual Division of Labour," in *Unemployment and Welfare*, pp. 141-160.
18. Paula Roberts and Rhoda Schulzinger, *Toward Reform of the Welfare System: Is Consensus Emerging?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, 1987).
19. Abramowitz, *Regulating*, p. 360.
20. Susan A. McDaniel, "Single Parenthood: Policy Apartheid in Canada," in Joe Hudson and Burt Galaway, eds., *Single Parent Families: Perspectives*

- on *Research and Policy* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1993), pp. 203-220; Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*.
21. Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*, p. 6. Men who exhaust unemployment benefits or have had difficulty finding sufficient employment to qualify for benefits under other job-related programs may apply for welfare benefits through General Assistance programs (in a handful of states where such assistance is available to able-bodied adults) or the AFDC-Unemployed Parent program (available to two-parent families in which an adult member has had previous attachment to the work force.) The eligibility procedures and work-requirements in such programs are often more stringent than those imposed on single mothers who apply for AFDC. Workfare and other job requirements in the U.S. have historically targeted unemployed men who are perceived to be "able-bodied".
 22. Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*; Abramovitz, *Regulating*. State governments provide welfare benefits to single parents with children, a limited number of two-parent families in which one parent has been separated from the work force and disabled adults. Benefits are not readily available to able-bodied adults without children. Hence most attempts to cut welfare costs in the U.S. (either federally mandated programs or state initiatives) through mandatory enrollment in work or job training programs have targeted single mothers.
 23. Abramovitz, *Regulating*.
 24. Nancy S. Dickson, "Which Welfare Strategies Work?" *Social Work*, 31 (July-August 1986): 266-272.
 25. Paula Roberts and Rhonda Schulzinger, *Welfare Reform in the States: Fact or Fiction* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, 1988).
 26. David Stoesz and Howard J. Karger, "Welfare Reform: From Illusion to Reality," *Social Work*, 35 (March 1990): 141-147.
 27. Several studies have examined the purchase-of-service contracting for job services and have cast doubt on their effectiveness in putting the long-term unemployed in permanent jobs. Pressure on the contractors to limit costs results in their selecting only the most job-ready for program enrollment. People with little education or previous work experience are generally excluded from such programs at the contractor's discretion. See Donna Hardina, "Purchase of Service Contracting and the Oppression of the Poor," paper presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education (Chicago, March, 1989); Kathleen Hemmens, *The Promises and Pitfalls of Welfare-to-Work Transition* (Chicago: Taylor Institute, 1988); Sar Levitan and Frank Gallo, *A Second Chance: Training for Jobs* (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1988); Ruth H. DeHoog, *Contracting Out for Human Services* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).
 28. Hardina, *Solution*.
 29. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Family and Nation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986). Moynihan also argues that the entry of middle-income women into the labour force makes it necessary that single women who receive welfare should be required to work. However studies have found that while 62% of married mothers participate in the paid labour force, less than one

- third work full-time year round. See Paula Roberts and Rhoda Schulzinger, *Toward Reform of the Welfare System*.
30. Catherine S. Chilman, "Welfare Reform or Revision? The Family Support Act of 1988," *Social Service Review*, 66, 3 (September 1992): 347-398; Moon et al., "Should Welfare Clients Be Really Required to Work?"; Irene Lurie and Mary Bryna Sanger, "The Family Support Act: Defining the Social Contract in New York," *Social Service Review*, 65, (March 1991): 43-67. In order to obtain liberal support for mandatory work and employment programs, the legislative sponsors of the Family Support Act included provisions in the legislation to mandate all 50 states to provide AFDC benefits for two-parent families (only 28 provided such coverage previously). The legislation also contains provisions for child support enforcement.
 31. Chilman, "Welfare Reform or Revision?"; Gueron and Pauly, *Welfare*.
 32. The perceived success of the "ET" (Employment and Training) program in Massachusetts was largely influential in the development of the federal legislation. Subsequent research suggests that the ET program was successful due to rapid economic growth in that state during the mid-1980s and factors such as the availability of health care benefits for program participants (subsequent to their leaving the welfare system), high school and college education components in ET and placement of some participants in administrative and professional jobs. See Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*; Roberts and Schulzinger, *Welfare Reform in the States*.
 33. Gueron and Pauly, *Welfare*.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. Hardina, "Purchase of Service Contracting"; Hemmens, *Promises and Pitfalls*; Levitan and Gallo, *Second Chance*; DeHoog, *Contracting Out*.
 36. Gueron and Edward, *Welfare*.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*; Riches, "Unemployment and the State."
 39. As many as 50% of the participants in the MDRC studies dropped out of work and training programs due to family, health and child care related problems, Chilman, "Welfare Reform or Revision?" See also Denise Polit and J.J. O'Hara, "Support Services," in Phoebe H. Cottingham and David Ellwood, eds., *Welfare Policy for the 1990's* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 165-198, for a discussion of the impact of support services on program participation rates.
 40. Piven and Cloward, "The Contemporary Relief Debate."
 41. Handler and Hasenfeld, *Moral*.
 42. Piven and Cloward, "The Contemporary Relief Debate," p. 85.
 43. Hardina, *Solution*.
 44. Roberts and Schulzinger, *Welfare Reform in the States*.
 45. Hardina, "Purchase of Service Contracting"; Hemmens, *Promises and Pitfalls*; Fred Sebesta and Martin Sklar, *Hope or Hassle: A Study of New York City's Welfare-to-Work Initiatives for AFDC Recipients* (Rochester,

- NY: State Youthwide Advocacy, 1987); American Friends Service Committee, *ET: A Model for the Nation?* (Philadelphia, 1987).
46. Hardina, *Solution*. Able-bodied General Assistance recipients were also required to participate in mandatory work programs. General Assistance provided benefits to single adults and some disabled and elderly recipients. In 1991, the state of Michigan cut off General Assistance benefits for able-bodied adults, effectively limiting access to state work programs for this group of recipients.
 47. Michigan Department of Social Services, MOST Program Overview (Lansing, MI, 1989), p. 1.
 48. MDSS, 1989.
 49. Hardina, *Solution*.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid, p. 34.
 52. Ibid, p. 32.
 53. Welfare advocates interviewed for the MOST study reported that some Michigan counties placed participants in community work experience programs that required forced work digging graves or cleaning hotel bathrooms. (A follow-up interview with a Department of Social Service official confirmed that this practice is not uncommon.)
 54. Roberts and Schulzinger, *Toward Reform*; Abramovitz, *Regulating*.
 55. Daenzer, 1990.
 56. Daenzer, "Policy and Program Responses of the 1980s."
 57. Marilyn Callahan, Andrew Armitage, Michael J. Prince and Brian Wharf, "Workfare in British Columbia: Social Development Alternatives," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 26, (November 1990): 15-25; Lord, "The Social Assistance Recipients Program."
 58. See Marilyn Callahan, et al., "Workfare in British Columbia"; Morris Saldov and J. Victor Thompson, "Make-Work Projects in Newfoundland," *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, 24, (1989): 35-41; Eric Shragge, "Welfare Reform, Quebec Style"; and Riches, "Welfare Reform and Social Work Practice." Quebec (which was not a party to the multilateral agreement) implemented regulations to reduce the welfare checks of recipients who refuse to cooperate with work requirements. See "Quebec promises welfare crack down," *The Globe and Mail* (June 10, 1993).
 59. Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation, *Back on Track* (Toronto: Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1991).
 60. Mackie, Richard, "Rae Softens Comments on Welfare Recipients," *The Globe and Mail* (February 11, 1993). The print media in Ontario during 1992 and 1993 depicted the "top-up" provisions in the welfare reform plan as allowing working people with incomes significantly above the poverty line to qualify for assistance. See for example, Gord Henderson, "Pigging out at the public trough," *Windsor Star* (May, 29, 1993). Subsequently, income eligibility guidelines were tightened and other provisions were modified.