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## *Introduction*

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Almost everyone talks about the need to invest in the next generation. Yet in the late 1990s federal spending on children represented only 2 percent of GDP, in contrast to the 7 percent of GDP spent on Social Security and Medicare, the 3 percent spent on defense, and the 2.5 percent spent on interest to service the national debt.<sup>1</sup> When state and local spending on education is included, the proportion spent on children increases by 4 percentage points, almost equaling the amount spent on Social Security and Medicare.<sup>2</sup> However, virtually all observers agree that the growth of spending on these big entitlements for the elderly—together with rising expenditures for the war on terrorism and the increased interest payments associated with higher projected budget deficits—are likely to crowd out spending on children’s programs over the next several decades.

The issue is not just how much the nation is investing in the next generation but also whether it is investing the funds well. This book examines promising initiatives—outside the K-12 public

1. Clark and others (2001); Congressional Budget Office (2000).

2. U.S. Census Bureau (2001).

school arena—that research suggests offer effective strategies for improving children’s futures. The authors have chosen to focus on nonschool initiatives not because they believe that education is unimportant, but because their expertise lies in other areas.

The goal of all the initiatives discussed in this volume is to improve children’s life chances. Despite deeply held beliefs in the United States about the importance of opportunity, children born into different kinds of families begin life with very unequal prospects. By the time they are mature enough to make their own decisions, the die is largely cast. Moreover, their prospects are becoming increasingly unequal, both because parental income gaps have widened and because of a related bifurcation in family structure. The result is that a growing group of children is being raised in families in which the mother begins childbearing at an early age—typically outside of marriage—completes very little education, and ends up poor and often dependent on public assistance. Another growing group of children has parents who delay marriage and childbearing until they have completed a high level of education, established themselves in a career, and married. These parents have a limited number of children at an older age and invest both time and money in making sure that their children lead more advantageous lives.<sup>3</sup> This bifurcation in children’s prospects implies increasing social divisions several decades hence that might be prevented if public and private investments were to improve the prospects of those children at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

This volume is the outgrowth of a four-year-long discussion among members of the Brookings Roundtable on Children, a group of scholars convened to address ways of improving children’s life prospects. The authors document what they believe the best research suggests about new policy directions in each of the following domains: income support for families, family formation and parenting, health care, early education and care, and neighborhood environments. Not all of the ideas discussed have been adequately tested using rigorously evaluated demonstrations, but all seem promising based on the available research. For this reason we commend them to policymakers, foundations, and local communities for further consideration. Where insufficient evidence on effectiveness exists, the authors suggest ways of plugging the gaps.

No exercise of this sort would have much credibility if it failed to estimate costs and establish funding priorities. The authors have handled this issue by

3. Data on the size of these groups and on the growing bifurcation can be found in Sawhill and Chadwick (1999); also see Ellwood and Jencks (2002) and Sawhill (1999).

taking a cue from the Blair government in the United Kingdom. As detailed by John Hills in chapter 9, since coming to office in 1997 the Blair government has devoted almost an extra 1 percent of the country's GDP to reducing child poverty. Translated into U.S. terms, this represents almost \$100 billion a year in added spending. Our final budget of \$60 to \$76 billion a year is somewhat less than that and also less than the portion of the 2001 tax cut allocated to the wealthiest 5 percent of American families (\$88 billion a year when fully phased in). Still, it is a startling sum—especially in the context of the currently cramped domestic agenda in the United States. The Children's Roundtable authors have no illusion that the nation will anytime soon devote resources of this magnitude to improving children's futures. They nonetheless feel that it is useful to demonstrate what could be accomplished if the wealthiest Americans were to forgo a tax cut and the nation were to invest a major portion of the forgone funds in the next generation. If action proceeds from ideas, putting these policy options on the agenda for further discussion and debate is the first step toward changing existing budgetary and political constraints. Table 1-1 shows a rough allocation of our budget among the different policy proposals that compose the core of this book.

Needless to say, we did not immediately agree on the best way to improve the lifetime prospects of children or how to divide up these dollars. Still a consensus emerged, and in this first chapter I want to reflect on those areas of agreement after highlighting some of the interesting debates that surfaced in the process of arriving at an agreement.

One of the debates was about whether to target younger or older children for investment. Almost all of us wanted to focus on younger children, especially those in the preschool years. Research has shown that, as a general proposition, investments in young children produce bigger payoffs than later interventions.<sup>4</sup> One exception is found in chapter 4, which focuses on adolescents. It does so in part because of emerging evidence that some interventions with this age group can reduce crime, drug abuse, and dropping out of school. In addition, such interventions can reduce early childbearing outside of marriage and all of the problems that it creates for the children born to very young single parents. In short, starting early means starting before, not after, a child is born and targeting those who have not yet had children.

Another debate concerned whether to provide universal services to all children (or their families) or to direct limited funds to a smaller and more disadvantaged group. Most members of the group wanted to limit additional assistance to the most needy, but many cautioned that it was important to

4. Currie (2000); Heckman (2000).

Table 1-1. *Estimated Cost of Improving Children's Futures*

Billions of dollars

<i>Program description</i>	<i>Gross cost</i>	<i>Savings</i>	<i>Net cost</i>
Child allowance <sup>a</sup>	39.4		10.6
Elimination of child credit for under 6		16.8	
Increased federal income tax revenues		4.6	
Decreased food stamp outlays due to increased income		3.4	
Reduction of child care tax credit		1.7	
Decreased TANF outlays due to increased income		2.3	
Total savings		28.8	
Increased earnings supplements <sup>b</sup>	20		20
Parental leave <sup>c</sup>	0.3		0.3
After-school programs <sup>d</sup>	2.5		2.5
Marriage promotion demonstration <sup>e</sup>	0.15–0.25		0.15–0.25
National Whole Family Campaign <sup>f</sup>	0.4		0.4
Improved health services			
Universal prenatal/perinatal screening <sup>g</sup>	1.7		1.7
Insurance for all uninsured under 18	10		10
Intensive interventions for severe behavioral and emotional problems <sup>g</sup>	5		5
Early childhood education <sup>h</sup>	10		10
Universal preschool for 4-year-olds <sup>i</sup>	20.8		0–15.4 <sup>j</sup>
Reallocation of current child care subsidies for 4-year-olds		5.4 <sup>k</sup>	
Improved neighborhoods for poor children <sup>l</sup>	0		0
Total cost			60.65–76.15

a. For families with children under five and income under \$60,000 (Duncan and Magnuson).

b. Increase the minimum wage; accelerate the CTC phase-in; supplement the EITC for full-time workers and cover any additional child care costs (Haveman).

extend assistance to the bottom third, or even half, of all families in order to avoid stigmatizing recipients or creating undue disincentives to work and to marry. In chapter 7, for example, Barbara Wolfe and Scott Scrivner admit that disadvantaged children are more likely to benefit from preschool education than their more advantaged peers, but the authors still argue for a universal program on the grounds that it will lead to less income stratification and more public support. And in chapter 2, Greg Duncan and Katherine Magnuson propose a child allowance extending well into the middle class but with a significant claw-back through the income tax system.

A third debate centered around the importance of family environments and the ability of public policies to affect when people have children, how many children they have, whether they marry, and the quality of parents' relationships with each other and with their children. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 deal with this set of issues. Almost everyone agrees that children are better off if they have two relatively mature, married parents who have completed their own education and are prepared to take on the responsibility of parenting. But how such an objective might be achieved is far less clear. Chapter 4 argues for reducing teenage pregnancy through new investments in after-school programs; chapter 5 for an experiment to strengthen the relationship between unwed parents; and chapter 6 for a campaign to educate parents and potential parents on how their decisions regarding marriage and childbearing affect their children's chances of success.

Still another unresolved issue is the importance of money in a child's life. A lack of material resources is easier to replace through government action than a weak family. For this and other reasons, many policy options

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c. Exemptions from all welfare-related work requirements until child is six months old and from full-time work requirements when child is between six months and one year of age; six months of parental leave (Duncan and Magnuson).

d. Funds target low-income neighborhoods or school districts (Kane and Sawhill).

e. Promote healthy marriages, fathers' involvement, and child well-being among new unmarried parents (Garfinkel and McLanahan).

f. Improve children's intelligence and academic achievement by reducing family risk factors (Armor).

g. Duncan and Magnuson.

h. Intensive center-based programs for high-risk children up to three years old (Duncan and Magnuson).

i. Wolfe and Scrivner.

j. The higher figure assumes public funding; the lower figure assumes funding by parents.

k. That is, 85 percent of the \$6.4 billion currently being spent on four-year-olds through Head Start, CCDF, TANF, and tax credits (assuming an 85 percent participation rate among this age group). These offset funds could be used to improve the quality of care, rather than to reduce net costs.

l. Provide housing vouchers to public housing residents; rebuild public housing stock (Ludwig).

designed to improve low-income children's futures involve increasing their family's income or access to needed resources. But the extent to which income matters, especially above some relatively low threshold amount, is not clear. Some scholars contend that existing safety-net programs have eliminated the most serious forms of material deprivation and that the remaining effect of income on children's development observed in much of the literature results from the fact that income is correlated with such hard-to-measure parental characteristics as poor mental health or low IQ. These factors rather than a lack of income per se cause some parents simultaneously to be less successful in the labor market and to adversely affect their children's well-being.<sup>5</sup> If that is the case, then providing more income to these families through a child allowance, for example, is not likely to have much effect on their children's life chances. Other scholars believe that income plays a more causal role. They argue that it can affect the amount of stress experienced by parents as well as their ability to expose their children to various opportunities, such as good neighborhoods and good schools. These issues are addressed in chapters 2, 3, and 9, wherein the authors cite a variety of solid research done in both the United States and the United Kingdom that tends to support the "income matters" side of this debate. Nonetheless, the case is far from airtight.

A final concern centered around whether any single programmatic intervention can succeed given the multiple needs of many children, especially the most disadvantaged, and the importance of making sure that programs are implemented well and staffed by competent people with a commitment to their mission and a willingness to learn from experience. Kristin Moore has written on the inability of single-purpose programs to address the multiple disadvantages found in a small number of very disadvantaged families, and Lisbeth Schorr has argued for greater attention to implementation issues, to the context in which programs operate, and to how interventions may combine and interact, the whole producing greater effects than the sum of its parts. Although their thinking is not represented in this volume, given their active participation in our discussions, it is worth noting here.<sup>6</sup>

With this as background, we considered the need for more resources for those with limited incomes and for stronger families, better health care, and more early education and child care as well as safer and less toxic neighborhoods. Clear support existed for a set of policies that would provide low-income families with the resources they need to raise children. Our preference was for linking such assistance to a willingness to work. The biggest debate here

5. Mayer (1997).

6. Moore, Vandivere, and Redd (2003); Schorr (2003).

was over how much single parents should be expected to work, with some believing that they should be provided an allowance that would enable them to stay home at least while their children were very young and others arguing for conditioning new assistance not just on work but on full-time work.

In chapter 3, Robert Haveman reports research showing that school-aged children in low-income families whose earned income is supplemented with government assistance have fared better in terms of academic achievement, behavior, and health. Other research, cited in chapter 2, suggests that infants whose mothers work extensively during the first year of life do not do as well as those whose mothers work fewer hours or not at all. In the end, we argue for work requirements for those receiving welfare with an exemption for the mothers of infants, and we recommend six months of paid parental leave for everyone, contingent on parents having established a work history. Families with incomes of less than \$60,000 a year would receive a modest child allowance that is not contingent on work, and low-income working families would receive additional supplements.

Supplementing the income of those raising children may be desirable, but all of the resources in the world will not save a child whose parents do not provide the nurturing, guidance, and discipline that researchers find children need. In chapter 6, David Armor suggests that poor home environments affect not only a child's subsequent behavior but also his or her IQ or cognitive skills. He favors greater efforts to educate parents and parents-to-be about the effects of their own behaviors on their children's intellectual functioning. Too many children are being born to young unwed parents, and we favor preventing such early births whenever possible (see chapter 4) and experimenting with efforts to make the parents' relationship more successful and durable when it is not possible (see chapter 5). We have learned quite a bit about how to prevent early, unwanted pregnancies in recent years but less about how to produce durable relationships between men and women who already have had a child outside of marriage—or about how to produce good parenting among those who have never experienced it themselves.

Health care was another high priority. The roundtable authors applauded recent expansions of health insurance through Medicaid and the State Child Health Insurance Program and the nutrition assistance provided through the Women, Infants, and Children program. These improvements need to be supplemented by adequate screening and a basic package of preventive health care for all children and pregnant women, including greater emphasis on the need to identify and treat behavioral and emotional problems early in life. Extending health insurance to all uninsured children under the age of eighteen would complete this agenda.

The authors believe that good-quality child care and early education are essential to children's healthy growth and development. We favored not only establishing a universal pre-K program but also expanding Head Start or a similar early education program to cover all poor children at younger ages. We discussed opening the program to those somewhat above the poverty line along with extending the hours (or providing wraparound child care) for mothers who work. For nonpoor mothers, we saw a need for adequate and stable child care provided in part by the government and in part by parents' contributions linked to their ability to pay. Chapter 7 details the many sources of current funding for such care. The child allowance proposed in chapter 2 would give parents more choice; they could use the funds either to pay for care or to support a mother's decision to stay at home.

Last, with respect to neighborhoods, we were impressed with research showing that children whose families move to low-poverty neighborhoods fare better in terms of academic achievement, health, and involvement in crime. We suspect that the more positive peer and adult influences in higher-income neighborhoods as well as better schools, more community-based activities, and better policing or adult supervision have something to do with the results. This suggests the need to invest in these basic neighborhood institutions and to avoid concentrating low-income families in public housing projects where peer influences are more negative. Better to provide such families with portable housing subsidies (so-called section 8 vouchers), which have the additional advantage of costing less than public housing.

This policy menu is very broad and ambitious. Each chapter in this volume provides more details on what is known about each topic, how various authors would address the specific policy challenge in their area of expertise, what it might cost, and how more could be learned about the issues involved. A brief summary of each of the chapters follows.

In chapter 2, Greg Duncan and Katherine Magnuson argue that early childhood is a crucial period in a child's development and that the benefits associated with additional federal spending on young children easily exceed the costs of well-designed and well-targeted investments. They propose a package of policies for children in low-income families that contains the following components: universal prenatal and perinatal screening services plus health insurance coverage; intensive center-based early-education programs for high-risk children, beginning at age three; exemption from all welfare-related work requirements for mothers of children under six months of age and exemption from full-time (more than thirty hours a week) work requirements for mothers of children between six months and one year. Mothers with children

older than twelve months would not be affected. In addition, one working parent in each family would be entitled to six months of parental leave. To these components they add a taxable child allowance for families with children under the age of five and a family income below \$60,000. The allowance would be equal to \$300 a month during the child's first year, \$200 a month between ages one and five, and zero after that. Families with more than one child under age five would receive a maximum of two child allowances.

An extensive body of early childhood research supports the argument that each of the components of Duncan and Magnuson's proposal helps to ensure healthy child development. The medical care component of their proposal is supported by research identifying the negative consequences of compromising the quality of prenatal and perinatal care. The early education component is based on results from several evaluations of high-quality, center-based programs that have demonstrated improvements in a variety of outcomes among economically disadvantaged children enrolled in such programs. The work exemption and the child allowance components are based on research indicating that early maternal employment and low family income may be detrimental to young children. The cost of this proposal is high, making any uncertainty about its effectiveness especially critical. But unlike some advocates of such measures, the authors have done an especially careful job of providing a detailed assessment of the research literature along with the estimated costs of the proposed initiatives.

In chapter 3, Robert Haveman addresses the need to increase the earnings of families raising children, many of whom have left welfare but are earning very low wages. He proposes some combination of a modest increase in the minimum wage, accelerating the child tax credit phase-in from the year 2010 to 2006, simplifying and expanding various tax credits affecting families with children, and supplementing the earned income tax credit for low-wage workers. These proposals are based on findings from demonstration programs conducted in Canada, Minnesota, and Milwaukee that have required or encouraged full-time work but also have supplemented the earnings of the families involved. Rigorous research shows that the programs have had beneficial effects for the school-age children in these families, improving their academic achievements in particular.

In chapter 4, Andrea Kane and I address the issue of early unintended childbearing and its adverse consequences for children. We argue for an expanded investment in after-school programs that are less politically contentious than some of the alternative approaches to preventing teen pregnancy (for example, sex education, abstinence education, family planning) but potentially are as effective, especially for higher-risk youth. A major issue,

however, is their cost. The research literature suggests that the most effective programs can cost as much as \$4,000 a year per participating teen, although some successful but less intensive efforts, such as the Teen Outreach Program, have cost considerably less. We propose a \$2.5 billion investment in programs that replicate effective models. These models typically include a mix of academics, community service, and group activities; they are relatively long-lasting (at least a year), and they engage teens for a substantial number of hours, employ high-quality staff, and successfully recruit and retain high-risk youth. Funds would target low-income neighborhoods or school districts where young people have fewer opportunities to engage in constructive activities and where the risks of teen pregnancy are greatest. The benefits of this investment are likely to go beyond reducing teen pregnancy to include less crime, more academic achievement, and less drug use. Even when they are assessed in terms of their ability to accomplish only the single objective of ensuring that more teens delay childbearing, they can be a cost-effective investment for taxpayers.

In chapter 5, Irwin Garfinkel and Sara McLanahan propose a demonstration that would evaluate new policies aimed at strengthening the relationship between unwed parents. Although the authors recognize the importance and desirability of marriage for children's well-being and have made marriage-friendly policies an important part of their proposal, they also recognize that a substantial proportion of unwed parents choose to live apart. Therefore their proposal aims to promote more father involvement (including more child support) and better outcomes for children regardless of whether parents decide to marry. The demonstration consists of three components: providing better assessment and referral services to ensure that new parents are aware of the government-sponsored services for which they are eligible; reducing marriage penalties in existing programs; and providing education and mentoring programs to strengthen the communication skills and relationship of unwed parents.

The proposals offered in this chapter are based, in part, on findings from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being study, which shows that most new, unmarried parents are romantically involved and expect to marry each other at the time of their first child's birth. However, few do marry, and we know very little about what, if anything, can be done to improve their relationships and increase their chances of marrying. The demonstration is designed to provide important guidance to policymakers by sorting out the relative effectiveness of different intervention strategies.

In chapter 6, David Armor also focuses on family structure and related aspects of children's early environments. His research has shown that chil-

dren's IQs are most malleable when children are very young and that such measurable factors as family size, marital status of parents, and parents' age, education, and parenting skills affect a child's IQ. Early IQ, in turn, affects later IQ as well as educational attainment and income. Intervening once children have begun school is not as effective, in his view, as intervening very early; even preschool may be too late if we want to affect IQ rather than social skills and behavior. For these reasons—and because the most important influence in a young child's life is his or her parents—he proposes “a whole family policy,” an effort to better educate parents and potential parents, starting in junior high school, about the best family environments for children. He suggests that if young people know how much their own decisions about schooling, childbearing, marriage, and parenting affect their children, they might be more motivated to finish school, marry before having a baby, limit the size of their families, and learn how to provide adequate instruction and emotional support to their children. His hope is to use education programs and media campaigns to change attitudes about the consequences of such decisions for children, much as the Surgeon General's report changed attitudes about the consequences of smoking.

In chapter 7, Barbara Wolfe and Scott Scrivner argue for a major new investment in preschool. Although they believe that the gains from such an investment would be especially large for children from more disadvantaged families, they support a universal program on the grounds that it would produce less social stratification and a greater willingness on the part of the public to pay for it. The authors propose a full day of preschool, with a part-day, education-intensive component taught by early education specialists and a child care component provided by aides supervised by teachers for the remainder of the day. In addition to describing program design and implementation, Wolfe and Scrivner's chapter outlines a plan for financing universal preschool through a combination of federal and state funding and parent contributions.

To support their proposal, the authors cite a large body of research showing that high-quality, highly structured preschool programs can improve children's school readiness and academic achievement, reduce grade retention and use of special education, and reduce rates of crime and teen pregnancy at later ages. They cite the Chicago Child-Parent Program (CPC), an intervention operating in Chicago public schools in low-income areas, as the largest and potentially most convincing study. A recent CPC program evaluation found that participation in preschool at ages three and four is associated with higher school-completion rates by age twenty, lower arrest rates by age eighteen, and lower rates of special education and grade retention.

This evaluation provides a cost-benefit analysis as well, projecting a return to society of \$47,759 per participant by age twenty-one, a benefit that compares favorably to the much lower cost of the program, at \$7,000 per participant.

To estimate the additional resources that might be needed to fund universal preschool, the authors first calculate how much currently is spent on early childhood education in the United States, including both public and private sources. Their proposed financing mechanism uses existing public funding sources (including the Child Care Development Fund, Head Start, and state child care funds), but it also relies on parents to subsidize a large portion of the costs. Parents would contribute between \$125 and \$800 a year over ten years, based on their ability to pay, which would be determined by the income taxes they have paid; parents with lower income would pay less than higher-income parents.

To bolster their case, the authors cite investments in similar and even more extensive programs for preschool children in other developed nations, such as Belgium, France, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. Discussing the political feasibility of enacting policies to support universal preschool, the authors note that both presidential candidates in the 2000 election emphasized increasing the federal commitment to improving early childhood education (Gore with a \$50 billion proposed commitment to universal preschool and Bush with a commitment to expand Head Start and improve its quality). Wolfe and Scrivner suggest that although public opinion and political momentum may not yet support complete public financing of preschool, enacting their proposal (which includes substantial parent contributions) could eventually build support for public financing of preschool as an essential component of elementary education.

In chapter 8, Jens Ludwig focuses on upgrading the quality of neighborhoods for poor children. Neighborhoods may matter for children's life chances because interactions with other residents can change children's attitudes and behaviors and because the availability of strong local institutions such as schools or community-based organizations can make a difference in their lives. One way to improve children's environments is to offer housing vouchers to current public housing residents so that they can move to better neighborhoods. Other options include building new public housing units in mixed-income communities or requiring developers to include affordable rental units in their new projects. These dispersal strategies should be distinguished from direct efforts to improve low-income neighborhoods. As Ludwig notes, efforts to improve depressed areas through empowerment zones or community development programs have not been particularly successful. They also are more expensive than mobility strategies that repro-

gram existing housing subsidies, rely heavily on private housing markets to accomplish their objectives, and tap into people's natural desire to live in better neighborhoods.

Ludwig argues that dispersal strategies merit serious consideration. He bases his assessment on recent findings from a housing voucher experiment called Moving to Opportunity that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has operated in five major U.S. cities since 1994. The program offers low-income families with children currently living in public or project housing the opportunity to relocate to a better neighborhood. The adults who moved reported improvements in mental health as well as in parenting behavior, although no consistent changes were noted in employment or earnings. Their children experienced improvements in mental and physical health and a decline in antisocial behavior, including violent crime. In addition, the children who moved did better in school as measured by test scores in reading and math. These encouraging findings are somewhat preliminary and do not address the possible negative effects that moving large numbers of disadvantaged families to new neighborhoods might have on their new communities, an issue that is likely to create political opposition to any large-scale effort of this sort. Nonetheless, if carefully designed to deal with such problems, housing voucher programs combined with some counseling appear to have the potential to substantially improve children's prospects.

The last chapter, by John Hills, stands apart from the other chapters in the sense that it does not directly prescribe a particular set of U.S. policy reforms. Instead, this chapter discusses the Blair government's commitment to eliminating child poverty over twenty years in the United Kingdom, the means adopted to achieve that objective, the effects to date, and the possible implications of this British experiment for U.S. antipoverty policy. The Labour party's agenda has included tax and benefit reforms, a work-based approach to alleviating unemployment, improved public services in low-income neighborhoods and for vulnerable groups, and child care and early education programs. Increased emphasis is being placed on making sure that "work pays" but not by denying increased benefits to those, such as single mothers, who remain out of work. More emphasis has been placed on the carrots of assistance (for example, work supports) than on sticks (sanctions or work requirements). Heavy reliance has been placed on using the tax system to raise incomes at the bottom. But in contrast to the earned income tax credit's annual lump-sum payments, the United Kingdom's child tax credit system, introduced in April 2003, will disburse payments regularly throughout the year, usually to the mother. Previous research suggests that this form of disbursement results in spending patterns that are more favorable to children.

Thus far the reforms appear to have boosted incomes in a way that has enabled the government to claim that its interim objective of a one-quarter reduction in child poverty by 2004 is within reach. Although facing some of the same political constraints as the United States, the United Kingdom has, in the end, relied heavily on directly boosting the incomes of poor families rather than on such indirect approaches as encouraging work and marriage. Whether such a direct approach would be politically feasible in the United States remains questionable, but the apparent success of the effort in both substantive and political terms should be of interest to those U.S. policy-makers with similar ambitions.

Given its more conservative public philosophy and lack of parliamentary government, the United States is less likely than Britain to make the kind of investments in children suggested in this book. And even if it were to do so, there is no guarantee that all of them would work to improve children's futures. But there is no reason to believe that current policies are optimal. Indeed, there is a very good chance that the ideas put forward in this volume would simultaneously reduce child poverty and a variety of other costly social problems, from welfare dependency to crime; save money over the longer run; increase social mobility; and bring the United States closer to being the "land of opportunity" celebrated in our history and culture.

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