about $20, more than the annual per capita spending on health care in many countries.

The lack of cheap tests is one of the main reasons that, away from urban centers, much of the blood used for transfusions is still not being screened. As Monekosso put it, a Westerner who breaks a leg in Africa and needs a blood transfusion faces a difficult choice between going to the local hospital "or dragging yourself to the airport."

Several tests are being scrutinized to see if they meet the stringent requirements that have been laid down by WHO. According to Thomas Quinn of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, results with the latex agglutination slide-test have been "quite pleasing." But the present cost of $2 is, he says, still "too expensive," adding that WHO might play a role in negotiating a lower price with its manufacturers.

Special problems of prevention, according to several speakers at the Naples meeting, arise as a result of traditional social practices in some African countries. In many cases, the disease has arrived in remote rural regions as a result of the tradition that the widow of a dead man—who is, in the case of AIDS, herself highly likely to be a carrier of the virus—is supposed to return to her native village.

The problem of treatment of known AIDS sufferers is equally pressing. Particular difficulties arise, for example, when the sufferers are prostitutes who have come from a neighboring country, and are therefore unlikely to be received sympathetically.

Lurking in the background are the political tensions which, many observers fear, could become exacerbated as the disease strengthens its grip on impoverished countries. In many of these, according to Mann, it already threatens to reverse all improvements in health care—in particular in infant mortality—that have been achieved over the past decade, and to become the leading cause of death in the 20–40 age group.

Three pressing needs stand out in this bleak picture. "There is nothing we need more than basic scientific knowledge which has been checked and rechecked by research workers" said Monekasso of WHO. "What we need is a combination of strong national programs and strong international leadership, stimulation and coordination," says Mann of WHO. Perhaps most difficult is the need, for Western scientists to see Africa's problems through African eyes. The next conference is already planned to take place in Arusha, Tanzania next September, by which time, it is hoped, significant further progress will have been made in this direction as well as in treatment and research. ■

DAVID DICKSON

Is the Time Ripe for Welfare Reform?

New social science research is providing a sounder base for policy change, although new legislation may have to await a new Administration

EVERYBODY thinks the welfare system needs to be reformed. But this year has been the first since the days of the Carter Administration that comprehensive new initiatives have come under serious scrutiny. There are now signs of a bipartisan consensus on the direction change should take; also, a new generation of research on welfare is supplying more reliable information than has previously been available.

Bills introduced in the House and Senate last summer would revise the Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which is the biggest piece of the welfare picture that is targeted to the non-elderly and non-disabled. The House is expected to vote soon on a measure that is being incorporated into this year's budget reconciliation act. The much-touted Senate bill, authored by Daniel Moynihan (D–NY), will probably not see action this session.

The AFDC program affects 11 million people, almost 8 million of them children. The proposed measures incorporate conservative themes about self-sufficiency and parental responsibility into a basically liberal program by requiring job training for mothers of children over the age of 3. In addition, the Moynihan bill would introduce tough new measures for obtaining child support from absent parents.

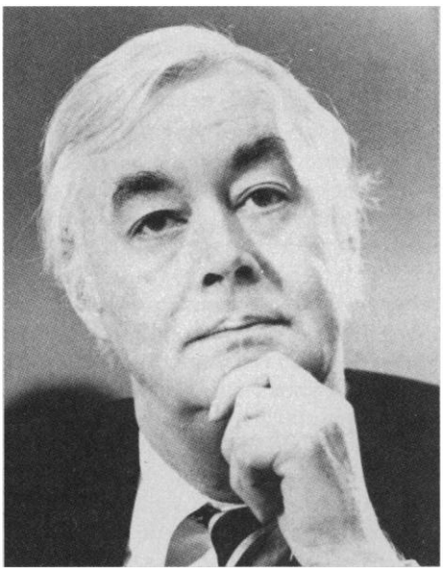
Many people believe that major reforms of the welfare system stand a better chance of being enacted in the foreseeable future than at any time in the past generation (although probably not before the end of the Reagan Administration). Policy-makers from both ends of the political spectrum are increasingly united in the idea that receiving support from the state should entail some sort of responsibilities and obligations on the part of recipients. Liberals and conservatives have both yielded some ground—liberals are coming around to the notion that mothers of young children should be required to work, and conservatives are backing off from their contention that the program is riddled with fraud and abuse and only serves to foster dependency.

At the same time, new social science research on AFDC, produced within the past 5 years, is contributing some of the groundwork to the proposals. Although such research generally does not carry much weight unless it is compatible with prevailing political trends, in this case it has provided new information to limit the parameters of debate and bolster certain elements.

For example, recent studies have supplied the first reliable data on certain aspects of the AFDC population—particularly factors associated with long-term dependency and routes of "escape" from welfare. New research is also demonstrating that required work and training programs have a modest but significant effect on employment and income.

Although abundant recent publicity on welfare gives the impression that the welfare population, and particularly its proportion of young, unmarried mothers, is growing by leaps and bounds, the situation has, in fact, remained relatively stagnant since the mid-1970s. The number of people on AFDC has stayed static, primarily because benefits have shrunk in real terms by about one-third. Among blacks the proportion of women who bear children out of wedlock has grown, but the actual birthrate among blacks, as well as whites, both married and unmarried, has fallen.

One milestone of the new interest in welfare reform is a book, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980*, written by conservative theorist Charles Murray of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, who makes the case that social welfare programs of the past two decades have had no effect on poverty but have actually increased dependency by rewarding it. Although the text has been thoroughly lambasted by liberals, it has supplied a coherent and highly influential conservative critique in an area that, according to Robert Reischauer of Brookings Institution, "was pretty much the



Senator Daniel Moynihan. *Unpopular ideas of the '60s have become common knowledge of the '80s.*

exclusive sandbox for liberals to play in."

What really spurred the current debate, says Reischauer, was the President's 1986 State of the Union address in which he called for welfare reform. Although he subsequently dropped the subject, this call inspired numerous government and private groups to come up with their own formulations.

The new bills pick up the withered concept of "workfare"—working for benefits—which has been starved for lack of funds. It would be expanded in the form of requirements that all able-bodied mothers of young children participate in state job training and placement programs. Although traditional jobs programs, such as the Work Incentives program (WIN), exempt mothers of children under the age of 6, these bills lower the age to 3. This would have the effect of getting women involved earlier in their "welfare careers."

The most publicized bill has been Moynihan's S 1511, which has 56 cosponsors. After having been excoriated in 1965 for calling attention to the deterioration of black families, Moynihan now finds his ideas to be part of the common wisdom as the situation has continued to worsen.

The Senate bill would require states to set up programs aimed at getting mothers into at least part-time jobs. In addition to the work requirement, other major features of his bill would extend AFDC coverage to two-parent families (this is already the case in half the states), and would require that child support payments be deducted from paychecks of absent fathers.

The bill passed by the House Ways and Means Committee, HR 1720, is somewhat more rigorous in that it would require a larger proportion of the AFDC population to be enrolled in the mandatory work programs. It also makes more effort to target services to recipients most likely to be on the rolls for a long time.

A third bill, promoted by House Republicans and endorsed by the Administration, would require mothers of children as young as 6 months to be enrolled in jobs programs.

According to Richard Nathan of Princeton University, chairman of the Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC), the welfare reform proposals, while modest, embody a rare instance where major policy issues are being influenced by the latest research. They "take into account systems, attitudes, whole people, and not just economic man" in contrast to the much-touted negative income tax experiments of the 1970s, which, as it turned out, served only to increase unemployment and family breakups.

The latest information on welfare mothers comes from two principal sources. One is David Ellwood at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and his colleague Mary Jo Bane of the New York State Department of Social Services. Ellwood and Bane have produced what is regarded as the most reliable data so far on patterns of welfare dependency by using the University of Michigan's Panel Study on Income Dynamics, which has been collecting income data on 7000 families since 1968.

With support from the Department of Health and Human Services, Ellwood and Bane have identified two populations of welfare recipients—the short-termers, who are likely to get off welfare within 2 years, and the long-termers. They have dispelled the notion that long-term dependency is the norm, but have reaffirmed that these are the most difficult cases. Long-term cases are disproportionately black, high school dropouts, and unmarried mothers.

Ellwood says previous studies have understated the extent of long-term welfare dependency by neglecting multiple spells by the same individuals. He and Bane have found that while the majority of AFDC recipients stay on the rolls for less than 4 years, 60% of the population at any point are in welfare spells lasting at least 6 years. However, when recidivism is taken into account, it turns out that 60% of the caseload is on welfare for 10 years or more. This information "suggests that long-term welfare use is even more common and captures an even larger share of resources than previously suggested," writes Ellwood.

At present, increases or decreases in earnings are not the major determinants of welfare dependency. About 75% of all welfare spells occur because of family changes (divorce or the birth of a child), and only 12% occur because a woman's earnings fall. Earnings increases account for only 21% of "escapes" from welfare, and in two-thirds of these cases, exits are effected within the first 3 years. Marriage offers the most common exit route, and the lower marriage rate for blacks is one of the chief reasons that they stay on welfare longer than whites.

One finding relevant to the current debate is that neither a woman's age nor the age of the youngest child is a predictor of whether a woman will earn her way off welfare, although number of children is relevant. Indeed, two-thirds of the "earnings exits" were by mothers with preschool children. "Clearly having a preschool child is not the absolute deterrent to working and indeed to working your way off welfare that many people think," the authors write. Those most likely to earn their way out are those with higher educational levels and prior work history.

The fact that more than half the women who exit via earnings do so in the first 2 years also has implications for policy, adding support to the idea of intervening early in a woman's welfare career. WIN, the mandatory jobs program passed in 1967, has long been ineffectual because of lack of money, but it also bypasses most of the welfare population because mothers who have children under the age of 6 are exempted.

Support for more extensive mandatory jobs programs comes from the other major area of research, which has been conducted by the MDRC in New York City. In 1982 MDRC launched separate studies of mandatory job training and job search programs in eight states. According to David Long of MDRC, that organization is the first to use randomly selected control populations—that is, people are designated as part of the experimental or control groups at the time they apply for welfare; 35,000 people were included in the studies.

So far, five of the programs have been evaluated. The results have been modest indeed. In Maryland, for example, with a research population of about 3000, 51% of the "experimentals" were employed at some time during a 12-month period, in contrast with 44% of the controls. Average earnings were $3800—23% more than those of the controls, resulting in about 11% savings in welfare payments.

Researchers found that among those who were regarded as the most employable, the differences between the experimental and control groups were small. The largest gains were for those deemed the least employable. This has added support to the belief that jobs programs should be targeted to the

most difficult to employ segment of the welfare population.

Although the savings were modest, the MDRC studies indicate that the programs were productive for both employers and employees. The jobs, mostly clerical, maintenance, and human service work, did not enhance participants' basic skills, but neither were they "make work" according to Judith Gueron of MDRC. Furthermore, the experimentals were polled on what they thought of the program, and most thought it was a good idea.

Nailing absent fathers for child support is probably the area where the firmest consensus exists. Some 58% of divorced or single parents have court awards for child support; about 40% get some money, and half of these receive less than the full amount. The Moynihan bill contains stern new remedies that would require ascertainment of paternity at birth and entail deducting payments from fathers' paychecks. Research has not determined the efficacy of this provision. However, results are eagerly awaited from an experiment in Wisconsin that entails automatic withholding of specified percentages of the father's wages, based on the number of children. The state makes up the difference in cases where the deduction is deemed insufficient.

The perennial nagging question about welfare has been: does it foster dependency and affect behavior in other ways, such as child-bearing decisions? This is the "single major issue on which consensus doesn't exist," says Robert Greenstein of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C. Murray has answered the question with an unqualified affirmative. But researchers tend to believe otherwise, if only because the decline in real benefit levels has kept the population from growing.

Ellwood and Bane have attempted to cast light on how welfare affects family decisions by comparing statistics in states with varying benefit levels, which range from $120 a month in Mississippi to $676 in New York. They have concluded that welfare does not affect the most significant decision—whether or not to have a child—since the birthrate is higher in low-benefit states. Benefit levels do, however, have some effect on the divorce and separation rate and play a strong role in decisions by single mothers to move out from parental homes and set up their own households.

Also hotly debated is whether welfare has become an "intergenerational" phenomenon. Researchers at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Poverty have undertaken to find out whether welfare dependency in one generation begets it in the next. Michigan's Greg Duncan says that although welfare has come to be perceived as an intergenerational phenomenon, the situation is not as bad as some think. The center did a longitudinal study of 1085 girls, at ages 13 and 15, and compared their welfare status at that time with the 3-year period when they were aged 21 and 23. Of those whose families were "heavily" dependent (on welfare all 3 years), they found that 20% also became heavily dependent. An additional 16% of the women from the heavily dependent families were "moderately dependent" in their 20s—that is, on welfare for 1 or 2 of the 3 years. In contrast, 3% of those from nondependent families became heavily dependent in their 20s.

Peter L. Gould, FPG

Poor family in Harlem. *More than 85% of black children will live in single-parent families at some point before they reach 18.*

Social science research has always borne an uncertain relation to the policies it is intended to enlighten. Since studies take a long time to bear fruit, the timing of pertinent findings often misses the politically ripe moment. In fact, according to economists David H. Greenberg of the University of Maryland and Philip K. Robins of the University of Miami, social science findings often have an inhibitory effect on policy decisions because the facts make things much more complicated—it is easier to make bold moves on the basis of principles alone.

The current welfare proposals, modest as they are, mark a fusion of current mores and political trends with some of the latest research. Perhaps the primary development behind the proposed bills has been the changing work habits of American mothers. It is no longer regarded as punitive to require mothers of young children to work, although most of those that do so now work only part time. Furthermore, raising the question of "values" no longer marks the questioner as a right-winger. "It's now fashionable to talk about values," says Reischauer. This includes the values of the work ethic, a reciprocal obligation to the state, parental responsibility, and marital stability.

What research has done is weaken some of the more radical stereotypes—both the conservative notion that welfare perpetuates poverty and the liberal idea that welfare is just a temporary expedient for wage earners down on their luck.

An abundance of questions remains to be explored: day care—both how to provide it and its effects on small children; how the availability of Medicaid for AFDC families may inhibit getting jobs where they will lose benefits; factors affecting fertility and teenaged motherhood; and questions about how to target services and to whom.

There is also very little information on levels of literacy and basic competency among welfare mothers, beyond the fact that a substantial proportion are high school dropouts. The picture may be very bleak indeed. According to data from California's expensive new welfare job program, called GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence), up to 70% of new applicants in some areas need remedial instruction in English and basic literacy before they can even benefit from job training.

The relationship of female-headed families to poverty among males is a subject that is not addressed in current proposals. Sociologist William Julius Wilson of the University of Chicago believes that the falloff in marriage among black women is related to the shortage of eligible black males, and says that since the mid-1970s, the ratio of employed black males to females in the 21 to 24 age range has fallen from 70 to 50%. Even this connection is debated, however. June O'Neill of the U.S. Commission for Civil Rights has contended that the rise in black illegitimate births began while black male employment was high, and speculates the phenomenon may be linked to "the rise of the welfare state" and "the rise in the earnings of black women relative to black men."

Areas of bipartisan agreement, then, are still narrow. But nowadays no one thinks the answers are obvious, and no one is claiming that current proposals would provide a panacea. They are too modest, for one thing—it is estimated, for example, that the Moynihan measure would increase employment by only 75,000 in the first year. But incremental change is now generally seen as the only realistic course. Richard Nathan, who has been involved in welfare policy since the days of the Great Society, says welfare reform—"the Mount Everest of domestic public policy"—is an area in which "the '70s were wasted." Now, he says, "we are on the right track." ■

CONSTANCE HOLDEN