

The legacy of Alfred Kahn: Comparative social policy and child well-being

Jane Waldfogel

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Although Al Kahn made many contributions in his long and distinguished career, his greatest contribution was his pioneering work in comparative social policy. His early work focused on delinquency, school truancy, child welfare, and social service delivery. Beginning in the early 1970s, he focused mostly on comparative and international work, undertaken for the most part jointly with his colleague Sheila B. Kamerman. Kahn was convinced that one can only under-

stand one's own country in a larger context—at the very least in the context of developments in other advanced industrialized countries. In particular, he focused on the important role of income transfer policies in reducing child poverty, and documented the poor cross-national ranking of the United States in that regard.¹

In this article, I review some of Kahn's comparative work as well as some of the comparative work that he inspired. The big questions that come up in the cross-national studies that Kahn and Kamerman pioneered are: (1) How does the well-being of children vary across countries, and are these differences related to differences in social policies?; (2) What explains the policy variation?; and (3) Would children in the United States be better off if we adopted policies more like those in other nations?

Alfred J. Kahn Memorial Lecture, 2009

Alfred J. Kahn, who died in 2009 at the age of 90, built a distinguished career in child welfare and social policy during his 57 years at the Columbia University School of Social Work. He was a loyal supporter of the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP), where he served on the IRP National Advisory Committee from the committee's inception in 1967 until 2002.

Over the years, Professor Kahn participated in virtually all of the Institute's conferences that periodically reviewed progress against poverty in the United States. At each conference, he was the beacon of hope in the room, always confident that the poor would have a better future. For instance, at the 1984 conference held in Williamsburg, Virginia, at a time when federal support of poverty studies was waning, Professor Kahn took part in a round-table discussion on the future of poverty research. His remarks were summarized as follows in the Summer 1985 issue of Focus:

*"Kahn cited the 1963 book *Seedtime of Reform* by Clarke Chambers, which described the vigorous activities of voluntary associations and their leaders during the prosperous 1920s, a period that did not encourage public efforts for the poor. Yet the diligent work of the associations laid the groundwork for the reforms that began during the next decade, in response to the crisis of the Great Depression. Despite the inhibiting climate of their own era, these groups persisted in collecting data, formulating plans, inventing and advocating. Their efforts made it possible to move on many fronts when the need became urgent. Teamed with others, they contributed to the emergence of social insurance, child welfare, public housing, and a new approach to the federal role, paving the way for further efforts in later decades. Perhaps, Kahn suggested, the 1980s may prove to be a seedtime."*

Alfred Kahn also contributed an essay to the 1986 issue of Focus that commemorated the Institute's twentieth anniversary. Titled "Poverty Research in International Perspective," his essay reviewed poverty measures and social initiatives in European countries. Kahn concluded:

"Whether the relative line is 50 percent or 40 percent of the median income—or some other proportion—one sees some encouragement to regular reporting of relative as well as country-specific yet comparable absolute poverty in the future. One also notes the likelihood that, stimulated by comparative reports, European and U.S. investigators will look more intensively at their own countries as research covering poverty, income distribution, social benefits, expenditures, and redistribution expands its vocabulary and perspectives. This will be welcomed by those who follow such research for policy purposes or see its relationship to the basic development of their social sciences."

In honor of Alfred Kahn's important role at IRP and in social welfare policy more generally, the Institute invited Jane Waldfogel to give a memorial lecture in his honor in December 2009. This article is based on that presentation.

—Timothy M. Smeeding, IRP Director

Cross-national analysis of child well-being

Kahn looked extensively at how the well-being of children varies across countries, and whether these differences are related to differences in social policies. While it is now standard in social policy to compare child well-being across advanced industrialized countries, Kahn and Kameran were among the first to do so. They were also among the first to document that the United States has a distinctive set of social policies, lagging behind other advanced industrialized countries. An early example of this was their 1975 book in which they discuss European social policies that are “not for the poor alone” but are more universal than is the case for social policy toward children in the United States.² In particular, the United States spends less on social welfare programs, although recent work has noted that this changes significantly if education and health spending are included.³ The fact that the United States lacks key child and family policies and has poorer outcomes for children and families suggests a possible link between the two, although of course many other factors (such as labor markets and demographics) differ between the United States and other nations. Thus, in the years since Kameran and Kahn first documented the differences in policies and child outcomes, researchers have paid considerable attention to exploring whether there is a causal link between the two.

Luxembourg Income Study

One of the earliest, and still influential, studies investigating causal links between differences in social policies and

outcomes for children and families used data from the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS). Using simple tabulations of LIS data, Rainwater and Smeeding showed that other countries did much more to reduce child and family poverty than the United States did.⁴ This was important because, although there were differences in pre-tax and transfer poverty between the United States and other countries, these differences did not explain the vast differences in post-tax and transfer poverty. In other words, high rates of child poverty were not inevitable and policy could make a difference.

Later studies from LIS used the same kind of data to show what factors were, and were not, correlated with higher child poverty rates. Again, the bottom line was that child poverty was not inevitable and that policy mattered. Figure 1 shows poverty rates before and after antipoverty efforts in eight wealthy countries. While Canada and the United States begin with similar poverty rates, Canada has a much lower rate following government effort. There are also several countries that have higher initial poverty rates than the United States, but much lower rates after government effort.

Is low pay in the labor market a factor in greater inequality in the United States? Figure 2 shows that there is indeed a strong relationship between the two. The measure of inequality in this figure is the ratio of income of those at the 10th percentile to those at the 50th percentile, expressed as a percentage. If there were no income inequality, this ratio would be 100 percent, so higher ratios indicate lower inequality. The measure of low pay used in this figure is the percentage of full-time workers who have earnings that are less than 65

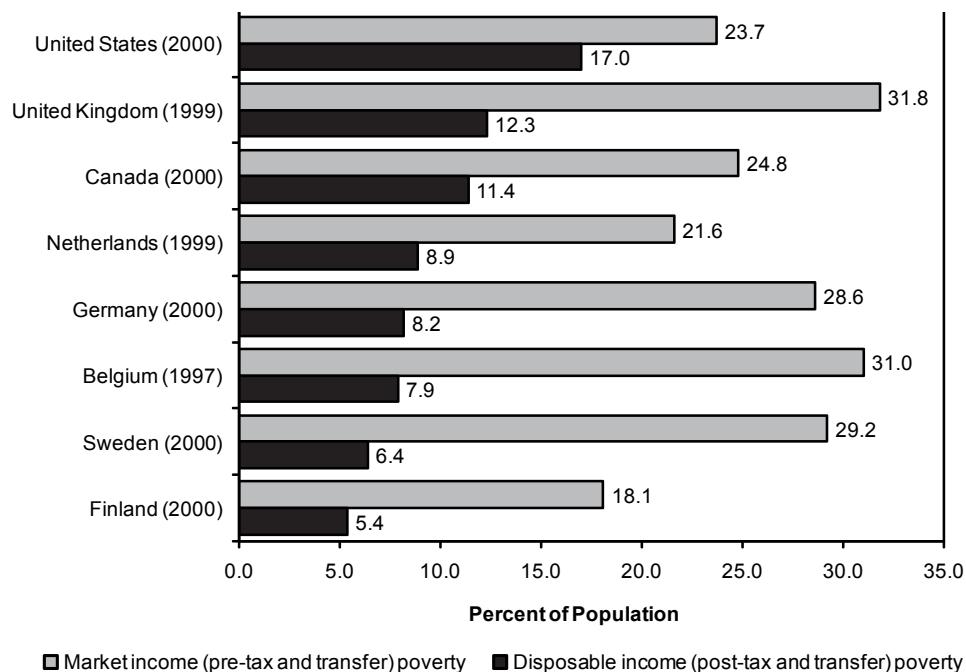


Figure 1. Relative poverty rates and antipoverty effects in eight rich nations at the turn of the century.

Source: T. M. Smeeding, “Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective,” *Social Science Quarterly* 86: 955–983.

Note: Figure shows percentage of persons with market and disposable incomes less than half of adjusted national disposable median income.

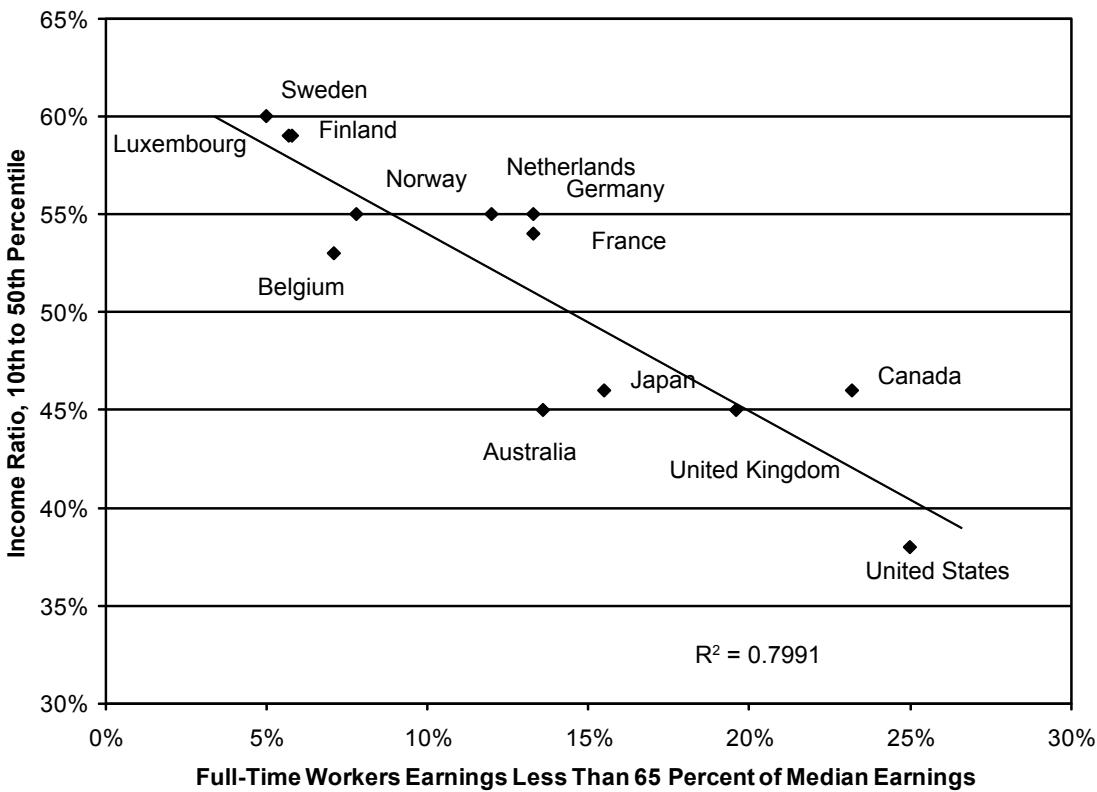


Figure 2. Relationship of low pay and and income inequality in 13 industrialized countries in the 1990s.

Source: T. M. Smeeding, "Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective," Social Science Quarterly 86 (2005): 955–983.

percent of median earnings. The figure shows that countries with low inequality, such as Sweden and Finland, tend to have a low percentage of workers with low pay, and those with high inequality, such as the United States, tend to have a high percentage of workers with low pay.

There is now a large set of studies examining child poverty and other child outcomes across countries.⁵ A similar approach is being applied to inequality and social mobility in the new Cross-National Research on the Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage (CRITA) project. Teams of researchers are analyzing the extent to which children's outcomes are predicted by their parents' position, and how this varies across countries.

Studies across countries and over time

Descriptive studies that compare outcomes and policies across countries at one point in time can suggest links between policies and child outcomes, but cannot establish causality, since countries that differ in social policies may differ in many other respects as well. A useful research design to address this challenge is to study how *changes* in outcomes relate to *changes* in policies, across countries and over time.

For example, two studies have taken advantage of variation in parental leave policies across countries and over time to examine how child outcomes change as parental leave policies change. Using data from sixteen Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries from 1969 to 1994, Ruhm showed that when a country extended the period of entitlement to paid maternity leave, infant mortality rates fell.⁶ Updating Ruhm's analysis to 2000 and adding the United States and Japan, Tanaka confirmed that paid leave reduced infant mortality and improved other health outcomes.⁷ This evidence was cited when the United Kingdom decided to extend its paid parental leave program.

Fuhua Zhai and I applied a similar method to analyze the effect of preschool policies on children's school achievement. Using education data from seven countries, we found that in countries that increased their support for preschool, children's math and science achievement rose, with the greatest gains for the most disadvantaged children.⁸ This study supported the argument that more public provision of preschool could raise overall achievement and help narrow gaps in achievement.

Within-country evidence

Evidence of the effects of policy change within other countries can also be very persuasive. A case study from one country can be used to assess the likely effects of changing a policy in another country, although care must be taken to compare like to like. Often such studies take advantage of "natural experiments" whereby some groups within a country are exposed to a policy change while others are not.

Studies of parental leave extensions in other countries have provided evidence as to how such policies affect a host of adult and child outcomes. Taken together, this research has shown that the effects of policies vary depending on how long the leave lasts.⁹ Strengthening leave provisions generally improves women's labor market outcomes, but not when the leave is extremely long. And, for child outcomes, benefits are greatest when extensions permit more leave-taking early in the first year of life.

Universal preschool or prekindergarten in the year or two prior to school entry is now offered in nearly every industrialized country except the United States. Several countries in Latin America have recently moved to expand preschool or prekindergarten provision. Taking advantage of these natural experiments, studies in Argentina and Uruguay have shown that children who were offered preschool or prekindergarten went on to have higher school achievement than children who did not have access to such programs.¹⁰

What explains policy variation across countries?

The second major question explored by Kamerman and Kahn was what explains policy variation across countries.¹¹ For Kamerman and Kahn, sources of this variation include historical and institutional contexts as well as contemporary public attitudes. Building on this work, Miles Corak and colleagues have used public attitude data to examine the reasons for the differences in social policies across Canada and the United States. They find that while both Americans and Canadians place a high value on social mobility and opportunity, Canadians are more likely to view government as playing a helpful role in promoting social mobility and opportunity, while Americans are more likely to see government intervention as unhelpful interference. Such differences in attitudes could help explain why Canadians support a more active social policy regime.

In my recent work, I contrast the British and U.S. approaches to welfare reform.¹² In Britain, until very recently, welfare-to-work programs were voluntary for lone mothers. Even now, only those with children over age 10 are required to participate, and the goal is to have those mothers work 16 hours per week. These policies reflect much more traditional attitudes about women's roles, what is best for children, and mothers' employment.

Would children in the United States be better off if we adopted policies more like other nations?

The overall thrust of much of Kamerman and Kahn's work was to argue that we could—and should—advance child and family well-being in the United States by enacting social

policies more like those found in other nations. In *Starting Right*, for example, they argued that the United States could improve child outcomes by adopting a more supportive set of early childhood policies.¹³

Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers document the extensive differences in work-family policies between the United States and peer nations and argue that children and families would be better off if we adopted policies more like those in other countries.¹⁴ In my book *What Children Need*, I draw on comparative evidence to make the case that children and youth in the United States would be better off if we enacted parental leave, preschool, school year, and parent support policies more like those in peer nations.¹⁵

Evidence from Britain's war on poverty

Most recently, I draw on evidence from Britain's war on poverty to argue that the remarkable progress that Britain has made in reducing child poverty contains policy lessons for the United States.¹⁶ When Tony Blair and the Labour party came into office in May 1997—after 18 years of Conservative government—there was mounting concern about child poverty and inequality. In March 1999, Blair made an ambitious pledge to end child poverty in a generation. Gordon Brown put real resources into the campaign and set specific targets to cut the poverty rate in half within 10 years, and to end child poverty within 20 years.

The motto of the British antipoverty strategy is “work for those who can, security for those who cannot.” The strategy has three parts: (1) promoting work and making work pay; (2) raising incomes for families with children; and (3) investing in children. While the first part of this strategy has been a major component of welfare reform in the United States, the other two have not.

British measures to make work pay include a national minimum wage, a working families tax credit, and reduced payroll taxes for low-income workers. Promoting work in the United Kingdom also includes welfare-to-work programs. However, unlike in the United States, until recently lone parents were not required to work in order to receive government benefits. Nevertheless, employment among lone parents in Britain increased by 12 percent under the voluntary welfare-to-work programs, the same increase that was achieved in the United States under more stringent work rules.¹⁷

The measures to raise incomes in families with children (whether or not the parents are working) include significant real increases in the universal child benefit as well as in welfare grants for children under age 10. Welfare grants had previously been higher for families with older children, so this increase for younger children equalized benefits for children of all ages. There is also a new child tax credit for low- and moderate-income families and new child trust funds.

Investments in children include both parental supports and other measures for preschool-age children, and extensive education reforms for school-age children. Paid maternity leave was extended to 9 months (with an aspiration to extend it to 12 months in the future) and 2 weeks of paid paternity leave were added. Maternity grants for low-income families were raised. Parents of children under age 6 also gained the right to request part-time or flexible hours, a right that is now being extended to all families with children. The first year this option was offered, one million parents made such a request, and the great majority of requests were granted.¹⁸ Universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds was added. Preschool was also expanded for disadvantaged 2-year-olds, and an ambitious early intervention program, Sure Start, combining home visiting and child care, was added for newborns through 3-year-olds in the poorest areas. For school-age children, there were reductions in primary school class sizes. All teachers in primary schools were required to spend at least one literacy hour and one numeracy hour each day. Education spending was increased from 4.5 percent of GDP to 5.6 percent. Through the extended schools program, schools are encouraged to provide services before and after school, and during school holidays. Educational maintenance allowances provide incentives for low-income children to stay in school, and the minimum age to legally leave school was raised from 16 to 17, eventually to be raised to 18.

Together, these antipoverty initiatives amounted to a sizable increase in spending on children. By 2002–2003, the government was spending an additional £9 billion per year, nearly 1 percent of GDP.¹⁹ By April of this year, families with children were £2,000 per year (around \$3,000) better off, while families in bottom quintile were £4,500 year (around \$6,750) better off.

Results from Britain

When Blair declared war on poverty in 1999, 3.4 million children (1 in 4) were in poverty (whether defined in relative or absolute terms) and 2.6 million (1 in 5) were materially deprived. By 2007/2008:

- Absolute poverty had fallen by 1.7 million—a 50% reduction;
- Relative poverty had fallen by 500,000—a 15% reduction; and
- Material deprivation had fallen by 400,000—a 15% reduction.²⁰

In addition to these headline results, families with young children increased spending on items for children, and also decreased spending on alcohol and tobacco.²¹ Adolescents in lone-parent families had improved mental health, school

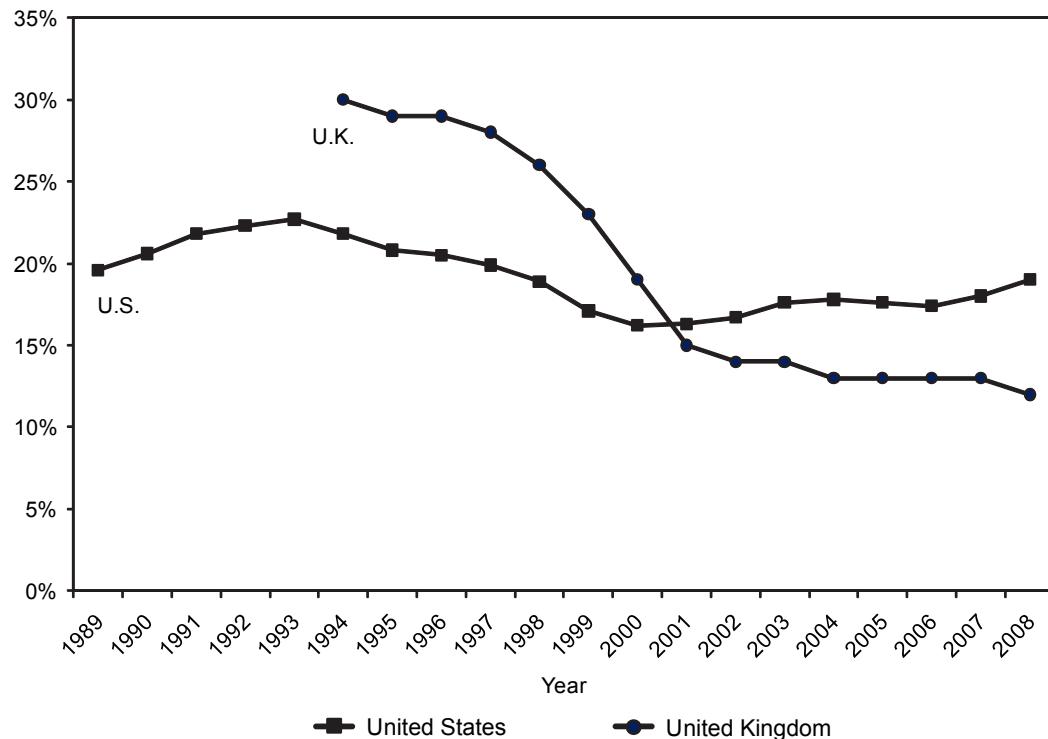


Figure 3. Absolute poverty in the United States and United Kingdom, 1989–2007.

Source: T. M. Smeeding and J. Waldfogel, “Fighting Poverty: Attentive Policy Can Make a Huge Difference,” Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 29, No. 2 (2010): 401–407.

Notes:

United States: Percentage of all persons under age 18 below the official US Poverty Line, 1989–2008 (about 35 percent of median in 2000).

United Kingdom: Percentage of U.K. children below the absolute poverty threshold, 1994–2008 (about 60 percent of median in 1998–99).

attendance, and school intentions.²² Sure Start, the early intervention program for children, led to improvements in 7 of 14 outcomes assessed (2 parenting, 2 child health, and 3 child behavior outcomes).²³ Finally, addition of literacy and numeracy hours resulted in improved children's reading and math scores.²⁴

Lessons for the United States

Comparing the British record to the U.S. record after our welfare reforms as shown in Figure 3, Britain achieved a steeper and more lasting reduction in child poverty. After two decades of rising inequality, Labour came into office committed to reducing child poverty, and with public support for that goal. The most important lesson for the United States is that it is possible to make a sizable reduction in child poverty, and that it is not necessary to identify all the details of the policy in advance. There are also lessons regarding the reform strategy (Britain promoted work and made work pay, but also raised benefits for non-working families and investments in children), the reform process, and the politics.

In conclusion: The enduring legacy of Al Kahn

As recently as a few decades ago, American exceptionalism in social policy was accompanied by American parochialism—we did not see what we could or should learn from foreign countries. Today, social policy, like so many other aspects of our lives, is becoming more global. It is telling that, while our welfare reforms of only a decade ago drew on examples from Wisconsin and California (but not Sweden or New Zealand), a major element of today's health care debate is whether we should emulate countries such as France, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, or Canada.²⁵

Al Kahn, and Sheila Kamerman, played a major role in convincing Americans that they could—and should—learn from policies of other advanced industrialized nations. Initially, the focus was on Western countries but this was later extended to Eastern Europe and Asia.²⁶ More recently, newly industrializing and developing countries have been included in this work. This shift is evident in the last piece Al Kahn wrote, the introduction to a volume on social indicators.²⁷

The other change Kahn stressed in his final piece was the pronounced shift that had occurred in social policy, away from a narrow focus on child-saving to a broader focus on child well-being. This was a shift he welcomed, writing: "The emphasis will no longer be on the problems, rather the limitless potential, of each wondrously individual child." This terrific sense of optimism and deep concern for children inspired all of Kahn's work, and I hope it will go on to inspire the next generation of comparative social policy scholars. ■

¹S. B. Kamerman, "Alfred J. Kahn, a Giant in Comparative International Social Welfare Dies," *Children and Youth Services Review* 31 (2009): 1215–1216.

²See, for example, A. J. Kahn and S. B. Kamerman, *Not for the Poor Alone* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975).

³J. Isaacs, "A Comparative Perspective on Public Spending on Children," paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Conference, Washington, DC, November 6, 2009.

⁴L. Rainwater and T. M. Smeeding, "Doing Poorly: The Real Income of American Children in a Comparative Perspective," Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper No. 127, 1995; followed by L. Rainwater and T. Smeeding, *Poor Kids in a Rich Country* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

⁵See, for example, J. Gornick and M. Jantti, "Child Poverty in Upper-Income Countries: Lessons from the Luxembourg Income Study," Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper No. 509, 2009; B. Bradbury, S. Jenkins, and J. Micklewright, eds., *The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialized Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries," *Innocenti Report Card Number 7*, Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2007.

⁶C. Ruhm, "Parental Leave and Child Health," *Journal of Health Economics* 19, No. 6 (2000): 931–960.

⁷S. Tanaka, "Parental Leave and Child Health across OECD Countries," *Economic Journal* 115, No. 501 (2005): F7–F28.

⁸J. Waldfogel and F. Zhai, "Effects of Public Preschool Expenditures on the Test Scores of 4th Graders: Evidence from TIMSS," *Educational Research and Evaluation* 14, No. 1 (2008): 9–28.

⁹See review in J. Waldfogel, *What Children Need* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁰See S. Berlinski, S. Galliani, and M. Manacorda, "Giving Children a Better Start: Preschool Attendance and School-Age Profiles," *Journal of Public Economics* 92, No. 5–6 (2008): 1416–1440; and S. Berlinski, S. Galliani, and P. Gertler, "The Effect of Preprimary Education on Primary School Performance," *Journal of Public Economics* 93, No. 1–2: 219–234.

¹¹See, most recently, S. B. Kamerman and P. Moss, eds., *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2009).

¹²J. Waldfogel, *Britain's War on Poverty* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2010).

¹³S. B. Kamerman and A. J. Kahn, *Starting Right: How America Neglects Its Youngest Children and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁴J. Gornick and M. Meyers, *Families that Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2003).

¹⁵J. Waldfogel, *What Children Need* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁶J. Waldfogel, *Britain's War on Poverty*.

¹⁷Waldfogel, *Britain's War on Poverty*.

¹⁸Waldfogel, *Britain's War on Poverty*.

¹⁹J. Hills, "The Blair Government and Child Poverty: An Extra One Percent for the Kids of the United Kingdom," in *One Percent for the Kids: New Policies, Brighter Futures for America's Children*, ed. I. Sawhill (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003).

²⁰Absolute poverty is income <60 percent of median income in 1998–1999, updated only for inflation. Relative poverty is income <60 percent of contemporary median income. Material deprivation combines an index of lacking basic necessities and having low income.

²¹P. Gregg, J. Waldfogel, and E. Washbrook, “Family Expenditures Post-Welfare Reform in the UK: Are Low-Income Families with Children Starting to Catch Up?” *Labour Economics* 13, No. 6 (2006): 721–746.

²²P. Gregg, S. Harkness, and S. Smith, “Welfare Reform and Lone Parents in the UK,” *Economic Journal* 119, No. 535 (February 2009): F38–F65.

²³National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS), *The Impact of Sure Start on Three-Year-Olds and Their Families*, Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck, University of London, 2008.

²⁴See S. Machin and S. McNally, “The Literacy Hour,” *Journal of Public Economics* 92, No. 5–6 (2008): 1441–1462; and S. Machin and S. McNally,

“The Three Rs: The Scope for Literacy and Numeracy Policies to Raise Achievement,” unpublished Paper, Center for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics, 2008.

²⁵T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

²⁶See, for example, G. A. Cornia and S. Danziger, eds., *Child Poverty and Deprivation in the Industrialized Countries, 1945–1995* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

²⁷A. J. Kahn, “From ‘Child-Saving’ to ‘Child Development?’” in *From Child Welfare to Child Well-Being: An International Perspective on Knowledge in the Service of Policy-Making*, eds. S. B. Kamerman, S. Phipps, and A. Ben-Arieh (New York: Springer, 2009).

Britain’s War on Poverty

Jane Waldfogel

In 1999, one in four British children lived in poverty—the third highest child poverty rate among industrialized countries. Five years later, the child poverty rate in Britain had fallen by more than half in absolute terms. How did the British government accomplish this and what can the United States learn from the British experience? Comparing Britain’s antipoverty initiative to U.S. welfare reform, this book shows how the policies of both countries have affected child poverty, living standards, and well-being in low-income families and suggests next steps for future reforms.

- Chapter 1 One in Four Children
- Chapter 2 Promoting Work and Making Work Pay
- Chapter 3 Increasing Financial Support for Families with Children
- Chapter 4 Investing in Children in the Early Years
- Chapter 5 Investing in School-Age Children
- Chapter 6 Ten Years Later
- Chapter 7 The Next Steps for Britain
- Chapter 8 Lessons for the United States and Other Countries

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Four Subgrants

Four food assistance research proposals were recently awarded funding by the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in conjunction with the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The grants begin July 1, 2010, and run through December 31, 2011, and are the first in what will be four rounds of 18-month awards for food assistance research since ERS named IRP as the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) Center for National Food and Nutrition Assistance Research in January 2010, following a national competition. The 2010 investigators and proposal abstracts follow below.

Food Security, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Food Access

Alessandro Bonanno, Pennsylvania State University

The analysis of the factors that enable food stamp or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation to reduce food insecurity has been so far neglected. Food insecure households joining SNAP will be better off if they have access to a source of food (preferably low priced). As food access is exogenous for low-income individuals (they have limited resources, and therefore limited mobility), the characteristics of the food environment surrounding them becomes a key factor in the effectiveness of the policy. The objective of this study is to analyze the role of food access in SNAP's ability to mitigate food insecurity. In particular, the study will consider both the access to traditional food retailers (grocery stores and specialty food stores) and to a low-priced nontraditional alternative, Wal-Mart Supercenters.

Bridging the Gap: Do Farmers' Markets Help Alleviate Impacts of Food Deserts?

Vicki A. McCracken, Washington State University

Existing research in the area of food deserts and community food security lacks significant empirical, spatially relevant support for developing a sound understanding on the variation of effectiveness of federal food assistance programs in relation to local food systems. This proposed research will begin to fill this void by first establishing the traditionally conceived food desert estimation for Washington state using grocery store location and census demographic data, followed by an expansion using farmers' markets and a behaviorally appropriate measure of travel characteristics to such markets. Following these estimations, we will move beyond the typical food desert analysis by operationalizing them via an assessment of the variation in redemption rates and utilization of federal food assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, FMNP). SNAP data will be obtained from the 20 pilot markets located in Washington, while complete WIC and Senior FMNP data has been obtained for 2009 from all approved farmers' markets.

Explaining the Increase in SNAP Caseloads during the Recovery of 2003–2007

Robert J. LaLonde and Janna E. Johnson, University of Chicago

The recent recession has seen an increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) caseloads of over 30 percent. However, the period following the 2001 recession also saw an increase in SNAP caseloads, the first time in program history that caseloads rose during a period of economic recovery. This project will attempt to explain this phenomenon by decomposing caseload changes into their basic mechanical components: changes in the number of eligibles, participation rates among the eligibles, and spell length. We will then determine the underlying causes of these mechanical movements to more precisely specify the relationship between macroeconomic conditions, policy changes, and SNAP caseloads than has previously been done.

Estimating the Impact of Food Stamps on the Poverty Rate Using a National Academy of Sciences-Style Poverty Measure for New York City

Mark Levitan and Daniel Scheer, New York City Center for Economic Opportunity

The New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) developed an alternative poverty measure for New York City based on the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) recommendations. The creation of an alternative method for measuring poverty, particularly one that accounts for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, is well-timed; over the course of the current recession, SNAP has become an increasingly significant element of the social safety net. As a result, researchers and policymakers have become acutely interested in understanding the degree to which increased SNAP participation has ameliorated the impact of the recent economic downturn on families vulnerable to poverty. An NAS-style poverty measure is well-suited to this task.

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