

# Preface

This book examines changes in social welfare provisioning for low-income families in the U.S.A. between 1981, the advent of the Ronald Reagan administration, and 2010, the second year of the Barak Obama administration. It is divided into two parts. Chapters 1–6 make up Part I which focuses on changes from the Federal-state open entitlement Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program to the time-limited state run Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program which Congress authorized with passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. Part I also highlights the development of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, enacted in 1975 against the backdrop of failed efforts to nationalize AFDC aimed at providing a basic income to all poor families, but which blossomed with continued bipartisan support throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In addition to these developments, Part I presents results of research showing the prevalence and patterns of EITC, TANF, and other social program use in two National Longitudinal Survey cohorts (NLSY79 and NLSY97) of EITC-eligible persons and their families. Particular attention is given to predictors of EITC take-up rates in both cohorts. The role of awareness in the EITC take-up rate is examined in the NLSY97 cohort. The main thrust of Part I is to chart developments in job training and education programs linking welfare to work, thereby mainstreaming the able-bodied welfare population into the economy with varying degrees of success.

Chapters 7–10 make up Part II which explores employment and training initiatives in light of heightened income uncertainty associated with an increasingly internationally competitive and financially interdependent or global economy. The main thrust of Part II is to chart the transition from education and job training programs as anti-poverty strategies to workforce development initiatives, thereby mainstreaming working poor persons and their families with middle-income blue and white collar workers. Part II presents results of two outcome studies of job training and education programs, one relying on the NLSY79 to shed light on programs enacted prior to 1990 and the other relying on the NLSY97 to shed light on programs enacted during and after the 1990s. Part II concludes with a discussion of social policy initiatives benefiting low-income working families and related challenges the Obama administration

faces as the U.S.A. emerges from the 2007–2009 recession. Particular attention is given to Obama administration’s initiatives, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, the American Graduation Initiative (AGI), and to alternative social policy prescriptions, such as increasing the minimum wage, implementing living ordinances, and wage subsidies to employers. Part II concludes with a discussion of reconsidering previously rejected policies that would benefit low-income working families, such as family allowances and a guaranteed income.

The book would not have been possible without the encouragement of the series editor Jing Xiao to make this a more substantive contribution to the literature than I had originally proposed. I am deeply indebted to reviewers Alice Butterfield, Luisa Deprez, and Charles Guzzetta each of whom took time from their busy lives to read and comment on several chapters. Their insights were on the mark and suggestions most helpful in revisions to earlier drafts. I also wish to thank Dean Sheldon Gelman who provided the “intellectual space,” so to speak, that afforded me sufficient time given my academic and administrative responsibilities. Vicki Fitzsimmons helped with initial copy-editing and indexing, for which I am most grateful. Thanks also go to Jennifer Hadley, Brian Halm, and Rekha Udaiyar who helped me navigate the final editing and formatting processes at Springer. Finally, I am most indebted to my wife Mary whose unwavering support I had from the get-go and to whom this book is dedicated.

New York, NY

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<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-7673-4>

U.S. Social Welfare Reform  
Policy Transitions from 1981 to the Present  
Caputo, R.K.  
2011, XVI, 308 p., Hardcover  
ISBN: 978-1-4419-7673-4