

nize that the focus of the 1980s on increased economic growth and productivity has, through neglect, exacerbated these social ills. It has left us with particular populations at risk and fundamental and growing inequalities of opportunity.

The fact that a simple expansion of our current strategy carries with it serious efficiency costs indicates the need for a new way of conducting the nation's business. A new program to achieve equality with efficiency is within reach and can serve as the basis for the inevitable swing in emphasis of political concern. The single lesson of this journey, I believe, is that two central objectives of our society—less poverty and inequality, more efficiency—are reconcilable. By focusing on opportunities rather than outcomes, and by attending to both incentives and accountability, government policy can support the operation of a more productive and less unequal society and economy. But regardless of the nation's interest in proceeding down this path, it is important that we confront the facts of our successes and our failures and assess the options that we have open to us. ■

## The status of children in Wisconsin

The state of Wisconsin has just released *The Status of Children in Wisconsin: Recent Trends in Family Resources and Child Well-Being*, authored by two IRP researchers, Sandra K. Danziger and Michael R. Sosin, as well as John F. Longres, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The document reports on some general trends in the status of children, youth, and their families in Wisconsin. It examines economic and demographic characteristics, household composition and family life, and the well-being of children. Its express purpose is to assess needs of children and families as can be inferred from population data rather than from patterns of use of services and programs.

Danziger, Longres, and Sosin find that the children of Wisconsin seem to be facing potentially troubling trends. These involve increasing family turbulence, increasing demands for early independence, increasing hours of work, and multiple social pressures. Although the typical child still demonstrates a high level of educational achievement and relatively good health, the growth in such problems as teenage pregnancy, gonorrhea, and violent crime attests to the fact that a proportion of the population is not faring as well as the rest. And stability of performance on some measures for the average child represents a departure from the consistent and continuous improvements of the past.

The study shows enormous differentials among children. There is evidence of growing economic inequality and of uneven access to the resources that may promote adequate socialization and maturation. Those who are in single-parent families, who are poor, or who are members of minority groups appear to be particularly vulnerable. Therefore, while the majority of children so far seem to be facing the pressures of change with equanimity, children who have fewer personal, family, and community resources appear to show disquieting rates of deterioration in well-being.

*The Status of Children in Wisconsin* may be obtained free of charge from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Community Services, Communications Unit, P.O. Box 7850, Madison, WI 53707.

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<sup>1</sup>The data on the income share of the bottom quintile are from *Starting Even*, Table 5.2, and are calculated from data in the U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, no. 68 and subsequent poverty reports. The statistics taken from the book are, unless otherwise noted, derived from special tabulations of census data (decennial censuses and the Current Population Survey) carried out by the author.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Table 5.3, adapted from Christine Ross, Sheldon Danziger, and Eugene Smolensky, "The Level and Trend of Poverty in the United States, 1939-1979," *Demography*, 24 (November 1987), 587-600 (also available as IRP Reprint no. 571); and Sheldon Danziger, Robert Haveman, and Robert Plotnick, "Antipoverty Policy: Effects on the Poor and the Nonpoor," in Danziger and Daniel H. Weinberg, eds., *Fighting Poverty: What Works and What Doesn't* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup>See "The Relative Economic Status of the Aged," *Focus* 6:2 (Spring 1983).

<sup>4</sup>*Starting Even*, Appendix Tables 1 and 2. The Appendix was written by Ross Finnie.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Appendix Table 8.

<sup>6</sup>The data on trends among youth are taken from *Starting Even*, Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup>The data on trends among mother-only families are also from *Starting Even*, Chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, *Background Material and Data on Programs within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988), p. 630.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 713.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 717.

<sup>11</sup>*Starting Even*, Chapter 3. Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal welfare program to aid the elderly poor, provides some income support, but only about 60 percent of the eligible elderly participate, and in many cases the benefits do not boost them over the poverty line.