The Interaction of Child Support and TANF: Evidence from Samples of Current and Former Welfare Recipients

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Executive Summary

Child support can represent an important income source for many low-income families, and the receipt of support may be most critical for women as they transition off welfare. In fact, in the post-welfare reform era emphasizing work and self-sufficiency, child support is seen by many policymakers as a key income support.

Administrators at all levels of government are increasingly recognizing the importance of collaboration between various social service agencies, and the agencies administering welfare (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF) and child support are no exception. In the effort to support self-sufficiency, for example, it is important to make sure that women receive all child support to which they may be entitled while receiving benefits but also after leaving welfare, and that they understand the rules of child support and how much they should receive while on and off welfare.

This report examines the interaction of child support and welfare receipt by addressing several questions concerning child support receipt for samples of current and former welfare recipients. We use several data sources, covering different samples, time periods, and geographic areas, to address these questions in an effort to understand current and former recipients' status in the child support system, such as their rates of receipt before and after leaving welfare, and the effects of child support on self-sufficiency. This report is the second and final in a series for this project. The first report provided an extensive literature review addressing each of the key research questions.[1]

Key Research Questions

1. What is the child support status of current and former welfare recipients?
2. What are the patterns of child support receipt around the welfare exit?
3. What are the effects of child support receipt on self-sufficiency?
4. Do families understand the rules of the child support system?
5. What are the effects of pass-through and disregard policies on child support receipt?
6. What are the effects of welfare reform policies on child support receipt?

[1]See Mary Farrell, Asaph Glosser, and Karen Gardiner, *Child Support and TANF Interaction: Literature Review* (Washington, DC: The Lewin Group, 2003).

Data

The report relies on data from five sources, covering both broader and narrower populations and the periods both before and after passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. Although the data sources cover a variety of time periods, it is important to remember that they do not represent the most current state of the child support system. The child support enforcement system has changed dramatically over the past decades and has continued to change in recent years.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 1996-2000

The 1996 SIPP survey follows a nationally representative sample of the noninstitutionalized population for four years, obtaining data on monthly income sources, program participation, benefits, and employment status. Child support modules were administered in waves 5 and 11, or in months 20 and 44.

The Project on Devolution and Urban Change (Urban Change)

Urban Change is a study of the implementation and effects of welfare reform in four urban counties and their major cities — Cleveland, Los Angeles, Miami, and Philadelphia. As part of the evaluation, two surveys were administered to a sample of residents in low-income neighborhoods in 1998/99 and 2001.

Parents' Fair Share (PFS)

PFS was a program designed to help low-income noncustodial parents increase their employment and earnings, increase their child support payments, and become more involved in their children's lives. As part of the evaluation, conducted using a random assignment design, survey data were collected in 1996/1997, or 14 months after program entry, for the custodial parents associated with the fathers in the program.

The Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE)

In 1997, the state of Wisconsin received a waiver to initiate a change in its child support policy — passing through the entire amount paid to parents and disregarding the entire amount when calculating TANF cash benefits. The CSDE was a random assignment evaluation of this policy change, using both administrative records and survey data following a sample of participants who entered the state's welfare program between September 1997 and July 1998. The sample used here includes families in the treatment group.

Welfare Waiver Evaluations (Jobs First, FTP, MFIP, and WRP)

These data include waiver evaluations from four states — Connecticut's Jobs First program, Florida's Family Transition Program (FTP), the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP). Each of these programs started in the mid-1990s and was evaluated using a random assignment design. Each evaluation collected administrative records data on welfare receipt and employment and administered surveys three to four years after random assignment All of the programs included financial incentives, in the form of enhanced earnings disregards relative to the AFDC system, and either a mandate to work or participate in services or a time limit on benefit receipt.

The samples used in this report are restricted to women eligible to receive child support and who had received welfare in the recent past. For examining the child support status of current and former recipients, each data set has both advantages and limitations. Some are more recent than others; some represent very narrow slices of the child support-eligible population; and some rely on survey reports of child support receipt, rather than administrative records data, which are thought to be a more accurate measure of payments. Child support collections are particularly difficult to capture through surveys. Because the government may retain some or all of the collections made on behalf of current and former TANF recipients, families may not know how much child support is being collected on their behalf, only what they receive. Each data source is used according to its relevance for each research question.

In addition, in should be kept in mind that child support outcomes are likely to differ across data sources, given that each source represents a somewhat different segment of the eligible population and a different geographic area. For example, black women and never-married women make up a higher fraction of the PFS and Urban Change samples, compared with the SIPP sample. Black and Hispanic women are less likely to receive support than white women, and never-married women historically have had lower rates of receipt than previously married women. As another example, the CSDE sample may show relatively high rates of receipt, given Wisconsin's strong child support enforcement system and the fact that this sample was subject to the new pass-through policy.

Key Findings

Child Support Receipt Among Current and Former Welfare Recipients

- **In the nationally representative SIPP sample, 22 percent of current and former recipients received child support payments. Receipt rates depend on area-level factors but also on the characteristics of the particular sample, with the lowest rates of receipt for the more disadvantaged Ur-**

ban Change sample and the highest rates for the sample in Wisconsin (CSDE). Child support represents up to one-fourth of family income for women who receive it, although it represents less than 10 percent of family income, on average, for all eligible women.

For our samples of current and former welfare recipients, the percent of women who received child support in the month prior to the survey ranged from a low of 9 percent for Urban Change to 22 percent for the SIPP. (Data from the CPS-CSS show that among all eligible mothers in 2001, 41 percent received some support. Among women with orders, 75 percent received support.) Using yearly data, 48 percent of the CSDE sample received payments in the prior year, a rate higher than that found for the CPS-CSS sample, despite the fact that the CSDE sample is restricted to current and recent welfare recipients. The higher rate may be related to the effects of the CSDE treatment, in which mothers receive all child support paid on their behalf, or to Wisconsin's effectiveness in child support enforcement.

Among those with awards, receipt rates were considerably higher, ranging from 21 percent for Urban Change to 46 percent for the SIPP sample. Among women who receive support, receipts can represent a substantial share of family income, ranging from 12 percent in PFS to 25 percent in the SIPP.

- **Women who leave welfare are more likely to receive child support than those who stay on welfare. Among those who receive child support, leavers on average receive higher amounts than stayers, with the result that child support makes up a higher fraction of family income.**

Table S1 presents data on child support receipt by welfare status at the time of the follow-up surveys. In general, those who left welfare reported higher levels of child support receipt than those who were still receiving benefits.[2] In the SIPP, for example, among women who were still on welfare, 36 percent had orders and 20 percent reported receiving payments. Among those who had left welfare, 49 percent had orders and 28 percent received payments. Among those with orders, women who had left welfare were also more likely to receive payments (50 percent versus 43 percent), although average order amounts were similar. This pattern also holds for the Urban Change sample, but is less pronounced for the PFS sample. Child support also represents a higher fraction of income for women who had left welfare.

The bottom panel presents yearly data for the CSDE sample, based on whether they did or did not receive welfare in 1999. Leavers are more likely than stayers to receive child support (50.5 percent versus 44.7 percent), and they received higher amounts on average. Because these

[2]Higher amounts for leavers does not necessarily imply that less child support is being paid on behalf of welfare stayers but, rather, that they may be reporting the amount they are receiving through the pass-through.

data are from administrative records, these differences in amounts received are real, rather than a result of women on welfare reporting less than what is being paid on their behalf. Among all women, child support represents about 7 percent to 9 percent of family income, although the fraction is higher for women actually receiving payments.

Former welfare recipients may receive more in child support simply through the "mechanical" effect of receiving more of the collections paid on their behalf. Mothers on welfare, in contrast, will receive only the pass-through amount or, if they live in a state that eliminated the pass-through, no child support. In addition to this mechanical effect, leaving welfare may induce certain behavioral changes as well. Mothers may be more proactive in seeking child support once they no longer have welfare as a source of income. In addition, fathers may be more likely to pay or pay more in child support once mothers leave welfare, knowing that the mothers will now receive all of their payments. Further, it is possible that a programmatic decision to prioritize TANF cases or certain TANF cases would impact child support receipt.

- **Child support outcomes have improved over time for the samples as a whole. More women are receiving payments; more women are receiving high payments; and child support has become a more important income source. The largest changes occurred for the CSDE and Urban Change samples, with modest changes for the SIPP sample. These improvements in child support outcomes were due in part to more women having orders and in part to higher payment rates among women with orders.**

Data from the Current Population Survey Child Support Supplement (CPS-CSS) for all eligible women show large increases in receipt rates over the past decade for never-married women and more modest increases for previously married women. For the samples used in this report, there is also a trend toward improved outcomes over time, with the exception of the SIPP sample, which showed receipt rates of about 22 percent in both month 20 and 44 of the panel (see Table S2). In contrast, receipt rates increased for women in the Urban Change and CSDE samples, from 9 percent to 16 percent and 41 percent to 53 percent, respectively. Average amounts received (among women receiving payments) increased over time for all samples including the SIPP, with the result that child support became a greater fraction of family income.

- **In general, child support outcomes improved more over time for welfare recipients than for those who had left welfare by the first follow-up survey. The increase in receipts for welfare recipients represented a real increase in payments made on their behalf and was not simply an increase in the amount of support received due to the fact that some of them left welfare subsequent to the first survey.**

Figure S1 presents trends over time for the SIPP and Urban Change samples by welfare status. With one exception, all groups experienced an increase in award rates, and those with awards had an increase in payments rates. The changes were largest for the Urban Change sample, perhaps because there was more room for improvement. Average receipts (among those receiving payments) also increased for most groups, with relatively larger increases for those still on welfare as of the first survey. Further analysis from the CSDE indicates that this increase in receipts for those on welfare is due in part to an increase in payments made by noncustodial fathers, and not simply to the fact that mothers began to receive more of the payments on their behalf after they left welfare.

- **Payments are somewhat unreliable from month to month. Among women who were receiving child support early in the PFS and SIPP panels, for example, from 35 percent to 39 percent did not receive payments for more than 5 consecutive months.**

For the SIPP sample, women who received payments at some point during the first year received them for an average of 18.5 months out of the 48-month period. Women in PFS who received payments at some point during the panel received payments for an average of 7.8 months out of the 14-month period. Figure S2a presents one measure of reliability — the length of the first spell of payments among women who received payments in the first several months of the panel.3 The figure shows that a significant share stopped receiving payments within 5 months (39 percent for the SIPP sample and 35 percent for the PFS sample). In general, spell lengths are longer for the PFS sample, which partially reflects the fact that the PFS treatment increased child support payments and the reliability of payments.

- **The yearly data from the CSDE show some long-term reliability and an increase in payments over time. Most women who did receive support received similar or higher amounts over time, although a significant number of women did not receive payments in year 1 or year 5.**

Figure S2b presents a measure of reliability over a 5-year period. The figure shows child support status in year 5 by status in year 1. For example, among women who did not receive payments in year 1 (59.2 percent of the sample), over 60 percent also did not receive payments in year 5. The most stable situation is among women who received amounts over $4800 in year 1, given that more than 50 percent of them also received this high amount in year 5. However, this group represents less than 3 percent of the full sample. Looking at the intermediate groups shows that the majority in each group received an equal or higher amount in year 5

[3]For PFS, monthly payment status is based on administrative records data, and a stop in payments is defined as at least two consecutive months of nonpayment. For SIPP, a stop in payment is defined as just one month of nonpayment.

compared with year 1. Among those receiving $1 to $2400 in year 1, for example, more than 70 percent were receiving that amount or more in year 5.

- **Several demographic characteristics of custodial mothers are associated with the likelihood of receiving child support, such as education level, race/ethnicity, and marital status. Some factors, such as education and marital status, increase the likelihood of receiving support partly through their effect on the likelihood that women have orders in place.**

The results from the full report (not shown here) suggest that current welfare receipt is associated with a reduced likelihood of having an order in place and of receiving payments, although women with a longer history of welfare receipt are more likely to receive support than those who are relatively new to the welfare system. Black and Hispanic women are less likely than their white counterparts to have child support orders, are less likely to receive child support, and receive lower amounts. Less educated women are also less likely to receive support, in part because they are also less likely to have awards in place. Marital status also has a strong relationship with child support outcomes — previously married (divorced) women are more likely than married women to receive child support, although some of this effect may operate through their greater likelihood of having orders in place. Finally, the PFS data show that black women are less likely than white women to receive formal child support but are more likely to receive informal support.

Patterns of Child Support Receipt During the Transition from Welfare to Self-Sufficiency

- **The SIPP data show that overall rates of child support receipt remain relatively steady as women transition off welfare, although there is a drop in receipt rates after the welfare exit among women receiving child support in the months prior to exiting welfare. This drop is offset by an increase in receipt rates among women who did not receive child support prior to exiting welfare.**

For the full sample of women who left welfare during the panel, there is a small increase in receipt rates after exit, from 29 percent in the few months surrounding exit to 33 percent in the 5 to 10 months after exit (not shown). This overall rate reflects quite different patterns for women based on their receipt status prior to exit. Figure S3 presents receipt rates for women who did and did not receive child support in the wave before exit.[4] For women receiv-

[4]Results are presented by "wave" of exit (each wave representing a four-month period), rather than month of exit, to avoid problems associated with seam bias.

ing child support before exit, there is a substantial drop in receipt rates during the wave of exit, to 72 percent, and receipt rates decline slightly in the subsequent two waves. The opposite pattern holds for women who did not receive child support in the wave prior to exit — about 10 percent are receiving child support in the wave of exit and 17 percent by two waves after exit. These changes in receipt rates for both groups may simply reflect the instability of payments over time. However, some women may also experience a decrease in child support because of the reason they left welfare, for example if they left because of marriage to or cohabitation with the father or if their children aged out of eligibility for welfare and child support. Part of the increase for women not previously receiving child support may be due to the fact that under PRWORA many states stopped passing child support to TANF recipients. In this case, women would experience an increase in receipt rates once they left welfare, since they would begin receiving payments made on their behalf.

The Effects of Child Support Receipt on Self-Sufficiency

- **Across most samples, child support receipt has little effect on employment status. The effects on welfare status are more mixed and suggest that if any effects do exist, they may be short lived. These results may be due to the fact that the changes we observe in our data in child support amounts are not large enough to generate effects on these measures of self-sufficiency. It might be the case that child support can act as a support for leaving welfare, if the amount received is large enough.**

Table S3 presents the effects of child support receipt on work and welfare status for the SIPP, Urban Change, and CSDE samples. Each number under the columns labeled "coefficient" represents a separate regression model and is the effect of child support receipt on the outcome given in the leftmost column. The first column of coefficients shows the effect of child support when it is entered directly into the regression model. The second column presents the results from an instrumental variables approach. In this case, child support is instrumented, or predicted, using state child support enforcement variables.[5]

For the SIPP sample, the noninstrumented models show that child support receipt increases the likelihood of leaving welfare, reduces the likelihood of returning, and has no significant effect on the likelihood of working. In the instrumented models, child support continues to increase the likelihood of leaving welfare and now has a statistically significant effect on work.

[5]The idea behind the instrumental variables approach is to rid the child support variable of its correlation with self-sufficiency outcomes that are due not to a real causal effect but due to their mutual correlation with other unobserved factors. Since the child support enforcement variables should be correlated with the self-sufficiency outcomes only through their effect on child support receipt, predicted child support receipt should not suffer from this "endogeneity bias."

The Urban Change data show that the receipt of child support in wave 1 increases the likelihood of welfare receipt at wave 2 and has no effect on work. In this case, only the noninstrumented effects are available, since there is not enough variation in state policies to predict child support (recall that the Urban Change sample covers four states). The final panel presents results from the CSDE data. Since the CSDE treatment was found to increase child support payments, child support receipt is instrumented in this case using the variable indicating experimental, or treatment, status. The first set of columns show that child support receipt in year 1 reduces the amount of cash benefits received in year 2. However, the instrumented coefficient is substantially smaller and statistically insignificant.

Experimental Findings

CSDE and PFS were two experiments designed to increase child support payments and receipts, and results from both evaluations show that they achieved this goal. Both evaluations also examined each program's effects on other outcomes, including mothers' welfare receipt and employment. If child support has a true effect on work and welfare outcomes, then the program itself, through its effect on child support, should affect the work and welfare status of women in the evaluation.

In general, both evaluations found few lasting effects on these secondary outcomes (not shown). In CSDE, for example, mothers in the treatment group received fewer welfare benefits than those in the control group, although this effect did not persist beyond the first year. There were few effects on mothers' employment and earnings. Results for PFS were similar, showing little effect on mother's employment rates or welfare receipt rates, even for subgroups that showed relatively larger increases in child support receipt.

Parents' Knowledge of Child Support Rules

- **National data from the SIPP (not shown) suggest that most women are not aware of the amount of child support collected on their behalf and are likely to understate that amount.**

- **The majority of women in PFS who were receiving welfare reported that they received an amount of child support that was equal to or less than the pass-through amount, even while payments being made on their behalf were higher. However, nearly one-third of welfare recipients reported receiving amounts higher than the disregard, suggesting that at least some of them were reporting amounts paid on their behalf.**

The top panel of Table S4 presents data from PFS on reported receipt of child support from the survey, compared with amounts paid according to CSE administrative records data.

The survey and records data are likely to differ for women receiving welfare, since, at the time of the demonstration, most states, and all but one PFS site, only passed through the first $50 in payments made on their behalf.[6] For these women, a difference in amounts does not necessarily indicate a lack of understanding of how much support was being paid on their behalf.

As expected, reported amounts received from the survey generally match records data reporting of what was paid more closely for women not on welfare at the time of the survey. Among women on welfare, 50 percent had a difference between the two sources of $100 or more. Among women on welfare, 69 percent reported receiving the disregard amount or less. Thus, even in sites with a $50 pass-through, one-third of women on welfare reported more than the pass-through amount. It is possible that these women were including informal payments in reported amounts or that there was considerable reporting error. On the other hand, it is also possible that these women were more aware of payments being made on their behalf and reported that amount on the survey.

- **There is a fairly low level of knowledge of distribution rules in Wisconsin, among both fathers and mothers, but particularly among fathers. Fewer than half of the mothers and only about a quarter to a third of fathers responded correctly to questions about the pass-through rules. Status in the welfare system and actual child support experience seem more important predictors of knowledge than demographic characteristics.**

The bottom panel of Table S4 presents data from the CSDE on parents' knowledge of specific child support rules. In particular, two questions were asked of both mothers and fathers about the treatment of payments while the custodial mothers were on or off welfare. The correct answer to the first question, about whether the child's mother would receive all support if she were receiving benefits, depends on the mother's random assignment. The analysis is conducted for the full sample, by treatment group and by AFDC history. Those with a long history of AFDC receipt were more likely to have been exposed to the prior policy regime (the AFDC $50 pass-through and disregard, or partial pass-through) and thus may not have absorbed the new rules of the W-2 full pass-through and disregard (that is, all current support paid in a month).

The answers to the two questions indicate that mothers did not have a very clear understanding of the rules. At most, a little more than half knew the right answer to either question, and almost a third indicated they did not know (not shown). For the treatment group, less than one-quarter understood how their receipt of child support would be affected by the new policy

[6]The exception to this rule is Tennessee, which had a fill-the-gap policy, meaning that the amount passed through and disregarded could be more than $50.

being applied to them. Fathers' knowledge levels are lower than mothers' levels. In general, there are no large differences between the long-term AFDC group and other fathers.

The report also examined the correlates of parents' knowledge of the rules (not shown here). Few demographic characteristics were found to predict correct responses to these questions, among both mothers and fathers. More accurate knowledge seems most consistently related to whether child support has been paid on a mother's behalf since she entered W-2. This suggests that policy knowledge may follow from direct experience — mothers know more when they see how the system treats child support paid on their behalf. Fewer factors help explain fathers' knowledge.

The Effects of Pass-Through and Distribution Policies on Child Support Outcomes

- **More generous pass-through and disregard policies can lead to an increase in the number of fathers making payments, an increase in the number of mothers receiving payments, and an increase in the average payments mothers receive. These policies also have some short-term effects on paternity establishment, through a speeding up of the process.**

Table S5 presents a summary of findings from the experimental CSDE evaluation.[7] The CSDE evaluated the effects of a full pass-through and disregard of child support payments, compared with a policy that passed through $50 or 41 percent of payments, whichever was larger. Thus, the CSDE evaluates the effects of moving from a somewhat generous pass-through policy to a full, or even more generous, pass-through policy. The first row shows that the pass-through policy led to an increase in payments by noncustodial fathers and an increase in the average amount paid, although the latter effect was statistically significant only in the second year.

The pass-through policy also increased the receipt of child support and the average amount received by mothers. Note that the latter effect is to be expected in part due to a "mechanical" effect of simply passing through more support to mothers who are receiving cash welfare, rather than to a "behavioral" effect of fathers paying more. The increase in payments by fathers, however, indicates that the increase in receipts by mothers was not due entirely to this "mechanical" effect. Finally, the pass-through policy increased the rate of paternity establishment, but only in the first year. The effects on paternity establishment are also fairly modest in size, compared with the effect on payment and receipt rates.

[7]See Daniel Meyer and Maria Cancian, *W-2 Child Support Demonstration Evaluation: Phase I: Final Repor* and *W-2 Child Support Demonstration Evaluation: Report on Nonexperimental Analyses* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty, 2001, 2002).

The report also includes information from two nonexperimental studies of the effects of more generous pass-through policies. The findings tend to confirm the findings from the CSDE, indicating that more generous state distribution policies increase rates of collections, receipts, and paternity establishment.

The Effects of Welfare Reforms

- **In two programs with welfare time limits, welfare receipt was reduced and child support receipt increased, while in one program with financial incentives and work mandates, welfare receipt was increased and child support receipt reduced. The impacts on child support receipt tend to be linked with the impacts on welfare receipt. There were no discernable effects on child support from the changes in pass-through policies that were part of two of the demonstrations.**

The report examines the effects of four waiver demonstrations on welfare and child support receipt. The four programs include Connecticut's Jobs First program, Florida's Family Transition Program (FTP), Minnesota's Family Investment Program (MFIP), and Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP). All programs included financial incentives, and almost all included some type of work or participation mandate. Two programs (Jobs First and FTP) included time limits on the receipt of benefits, while two (Jobs First and WRP) included changes to the child support distribution rules that attempted to make the payments more visible and to give both parents a greater stake in how much is paid.

Figure S4a presents impacts (or differences between the treatment and control groups) in rates of welfare receipt and child support receipt, measured at the time of the follow-up surveys, or three to four years after program entry. FTP and Jobs First led to statistically significant reductions in welfare receipt, which is expected, given that they include time limits. MFIP, on the other hand, increased the rate of welfare receipt. This result is also expected, given the program's more generous incentives that allowed families to work and still remain eligible for some benefits. With the exception of WRP, programs that reduced welfare receipt (FTP and Jobs First) led to increases in child support receipt, while those that increased welfare receipt (MFIP) led to reductions in the rate of child support receipt. WRP reduced welfare receipt, although the effect is not statistically significant and had little effect on child support receipt. The fact that child support receipt rates were already relatively high in Vermont (41 percent of the control group received payments) may help explain the lack of impacts in this program.

In general, there were no consistent effects for particular subgroups across programs. Jobs First, for example, had little effect on child support receipt for black women, while FTP led to a relatively large increase in child support. Both programs, in contrast, reduced welfare receipt for this group.

- **Women who left welfare because of a time limit in FTP were more likely to receive child support, possibly a result of more attention paid by caseworkers at the point of welfare exit.**

Figure S4b presents rates of child support receipt for three groups of women who left welfare during the follow-up period — those in the treatment group who left because of reaching their time limit, those in the program group who left before reaching their time limit, and those in the control group. In FTP, women who left because of a time limit were more likely than the other two groups to receive child support. The group with the lowest rate was control group leavers. A similar pattern was shown in the final report for the FTP evaluation, in which time-limit leavers were more likely to receive other transfers, such as food stamps.[8] The authors attributed the difference in part to the exit interviews given to women reaching their time limits, in which eligibility for nonwelfare benefits was assessed. In contrast, receipt rates are very similar for the three groups in Jobs First.

Although exit interviews were also given to women approaching time limits in Jobs First, a key difference between Jobs First and FTP was the way in which the time limit was implemented. Under Jobs First, many recipients who reached their time limit without jobs or with very low earnings were given six-month extensions. Thus, the time-limit leaver group in Jobs First comprised women with higher average earnings than the other two groups, which may have reduced the need to pursue child support.

Conclusion

This study has examined a number of research questions using a variety of data sources. Overall, the findings demonstrate the importance of examining multiple data sources when documenting trends in outcomes and assessing the effects of particular policies. Data using individual states (for example, Wisconsin,) and subsets of the child support population (UC, PFS) often show differences in degree and kind from the overall national trends (SIPP). Nonetheless, the findings do suggest the following broad conclusions.

Child support distribution policy makes a difference.

Families receive more of the child support collected on their behalf when there is a partial or full pass-through and when they leave TANF. Despite the low levels of knowledge about

[8]Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, and Richard Hendra, *The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program* (New York: /MDRC, 2000).

distribution rules, more generous pass-through and distribution policies do increase payment rates by fathers and receipt rates by mothers.

Child support is a significant source of income.

When families receive child support, it is an important contributor to their overall income, and it generally takes on more importance in the family budget after women leave welfare. There is evidence from the waiver evaluations that women rely on child support as another income source when they leave welfare. However, too few families receive child support, and it can be a fairly unreliable source of income, at least on a monthly basis. Receipt rates and award rates are lower in general for current and former recipients than for all eligible women, although the rates have been increasing over time.

Child support can strengthen family self-sufficiency.

In the national sample, child support receipt increased the likelihood of leaving welfare and reduced the likelihood of returning. However, experimental data from Wisconsin suggest that the effects appear to be short lived. Consistent work effects were not identified. The unreliable nature of the payments may be one of the reasons why child support was not found to have consistent effects on women's work and welfare. A caveat to this finding is that the changes in support observed in our data are fairly small. It may be the case that support can encourage women to leave welfare if the amounts are large enough.

Parents do not understand child support distribution rules, nor do they know when the rules have changed.

Another reason for the lack of strong effects of child support on welfare use may be that many parents do not understand how much child support they would receive once they left welfare. Results from the SIPP suggest that, nationwide, mothers who are receiving welfare do not know how their child support collections are distributed. In Wisconsin, a significant fraction of custodial and noncustodial parents did not understand the child support distribution rules. Experience in the child support system is associated with higher knowledge levels, but even these parents have fairly low levels of knowledge. Low knowledge levels were found for those who experienced a change in policy, moving from the partial pass-through under AFDC to the full pass-through under W-2. Since behavioral changes are contingent on understanding distribution policy, educating both parents is an important part of distribution policy changes.

Child support payments may create financial incentive for quicker establishment of paternity.

Results from Wisconsin suggest that more generous pass-through and disregard policies increased the speed of paternity establishment. By speeding up paternity establishment (for example, by creating interest early on among CSE staff and/or clients, focusing on TANF cases, or employing other early intervention strategies), child support outcomes might also be improved.

Table S1

Child Support Receipt, by Welfare Status

A. Monthly Data

	SIPP - Month 20 1997/98		UC - Wave 1 1998/99		PFS - Month 14 1996/97	
	On Welfare	Off Welfare	On Welfare	Off Welfare	On Welfare	Off Welfare
All						
With agreement or order (%)	36.1	48.6	25.8	33.9	N/A	N/A
Received child support (%)	19.5	27.8	7.5	15.5	N/A	N/A
Among those with orders						
Received child support (%)	43.3	49.5	18.5	29.1	32.9	34.2
Average order amount ($)	282	288	N/A	N/A	201	237
Among those receiving payments ($)						
Average payment ($)	125	270	145	257	114	194
Monthly payment as fraction of family inome (%)	14.3	34.1	11.9	20.8	9.7	16.1

B. Yearly Data, from the CSDE 1999

	On Welfare	Off Welfare
All		
Received child support (%)	44.7	50.5
Income sources (%)		
Child support	6.9	9.4
Mothers' earnings	33.2	78.1
Food stamps	25.9	12.5
W-2	34.0	N/A
Among those receiving child support		
Average amount received (%)		
$1-1200	53.0	44.3
$1201-2400	22.5	23.0
$2401-3600	12.5	13.1
$3601-4800	6.0	8.7
$4800 +	6.0	10.9

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Table S2

Trends Over Time in Child Support Receipt

	SIPP		UC	
	Month 20 1997/98	Month 44 1999/2000	Wave 1 1998/99	Wave 2 2001
All				
With agreement or order in survey month (%)	38.7	43.8	27.0	33.4
Received child support (%)	22.3	21.9	8.9	15.5
Among those with agreements or orders				
Receiving child support (%)	48.8	47.9	20.6	37.8
Average order amount ($)	288	277	N/A	N/A
Among those receiving payments ($)				
Average payment	181	203	177	249
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	20.8	24.6	14.5	22.2

	CSDE				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Receiving child support (%)	40.8	48	53.2	52.4	52.6
Average payments, among those receiving child support (%)					
$1-1200	51.5	47.9	47.9	45.4	43.9
$1201-2400	22.8	22.9	20.5	21.8	21.7
$2401-3600	12.0	12.9	13.9	13.4	14.4
$3601-4800	7.1	7.5	7.1	8.6	8.6
$4800 +	7.1	9.0	10.5	10.9	11.4
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	15.2	17.3	18.0	18.9	19.6

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Table S3

Effects of Child Support Receipt on Self-Sufficiency

	Child Support Not Instrumented			Instrumented[a]		
	Coefficient		P-Value	Coefficient		P-Value
SIPP outcomes						
Left welfare within 6 months, among women on welfare in month 20	0.499	***	0.000	1.523	***	0.000
Returned to welfare with 6 months, among women not on in month 20	-0.288	*	0.064	0.052		0.958
Employed within 6 months, among women not on welfare in month 20	0.126		0.223	1.343	***	0.000
UC outcomes						
Employed at wave 2	-0.076		0.596	N/A		N/A
Receiving welfare at wave 2	0.321	**	0.039	N/A		N/A
CSDE outcomes						
Amount of cash benefits in year 2	-0.047	*	0.060	-0.013		0.956

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Notes: Each coefficient represents a separate model and shows the effects of child support receipt on the outcome listed. For the SIPP and UC models, child support is included as the receipt of any support in month 20 (for the SIPP) and at wave 1 (for UC). For the CSDE model, child support is included as the amount received in year 1. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

[a] Instrumented for the SIPP using state policy variables and for the CSDE using treatment group status.

Table S4

Knowledge and Reporting of Child Support Amounts and Rules

A. PFS	On Welfare	Off Welfare
Among those for whom the survey and records indicated the receipt of child support		
Average amount received, from survey ($)	113	189
Average amount paid, from records data ($)	201	259
Difference between survey and records $100 or more (%)	50.0	34.4
Among those reporting pass-through amount or less (69% of sample)		
Average difference between records and survey ($)	137	
Average amount reported on records ($)	189	
Among those reporting more than pass-through amount (31% of sample)		
Average difference between records and survey ($)	54	
Average amount reported on records ($)	230	

B. CSDE	Mothers	Fathers
Percent responding correctly to the following questions:		
"If you (child's mother) were receiving a check from W-2, would you (child's mother) receive all of the CURRENT child support child's father (you) paid or would the state keep some of it?"		
All	41	27
Experimental	26	18
Control	56	36
Long-term AFDC	42	28
"If you (child's mother) were NOT receiving a check from W-2, would you (child's mother) receive all of the CURRENT child support child's father (you) paid or would the state keep some of it?"		
All	49	26
Experimental	50	27
Control	48	24
Long-term AFDC	47	22

Source: PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration. CSDE: Survey of Wisconson Works Families Wave 2 (1999).

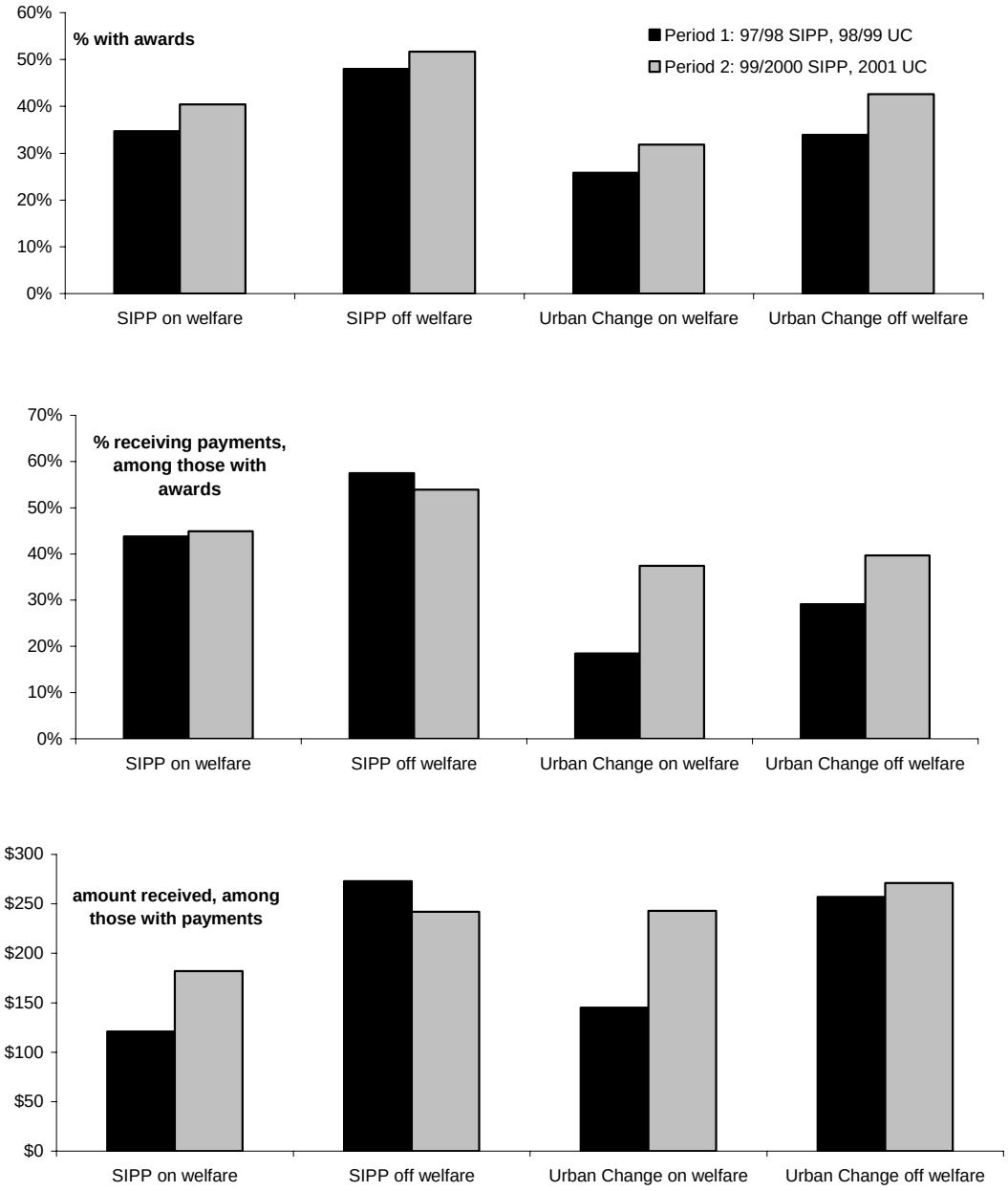
Table S5

The Effects of Pass-Through and Disregard Policies: CSDE

Treatment:	Experimental group received 100% pass-through, control group received the greater of $50 or 41%
Outcomes:	Effects:
Any child support paid	+
Any child support received	+
Amount of child support paid	+ (1999 only)
Amount of child support received	+
Paternity establishment	+ (1998 only)

Source: Reproduced from Meyer and Cancian (2002) Table 2.
Notes: + indicates that the disregard/pass-through was associated with a positive and statistically significant effect on the outcome.

Figure S1: Trends in Child Support Over Time, by Welfare Status in Period 1 SIPP and Urban Change



Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities.

Figure S2a: The Length of First Observed Spell of Child Support Receipt
SIPP and PFS

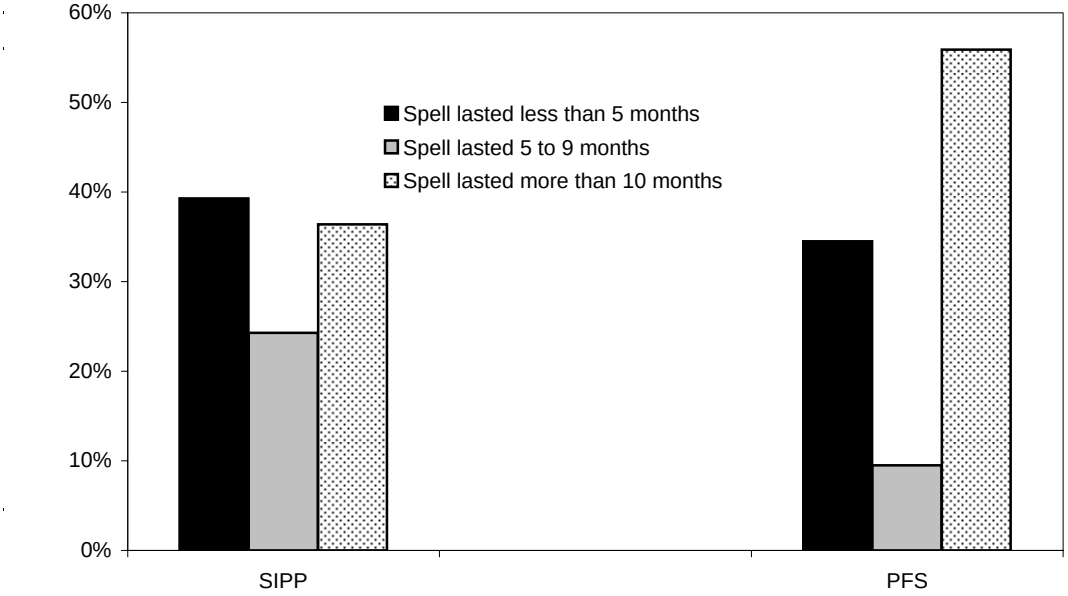
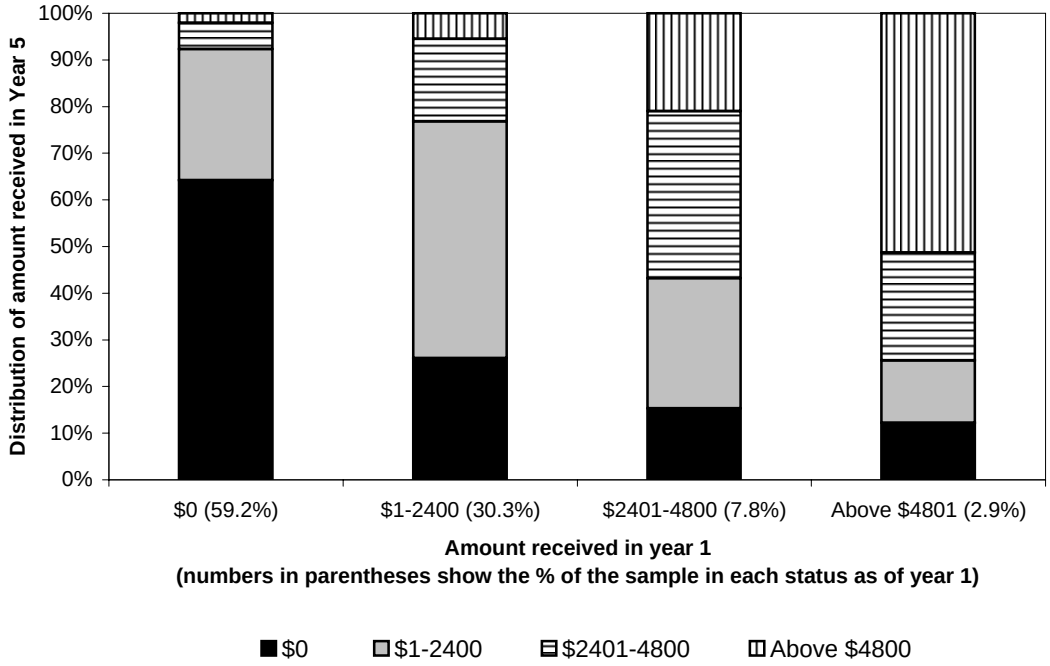
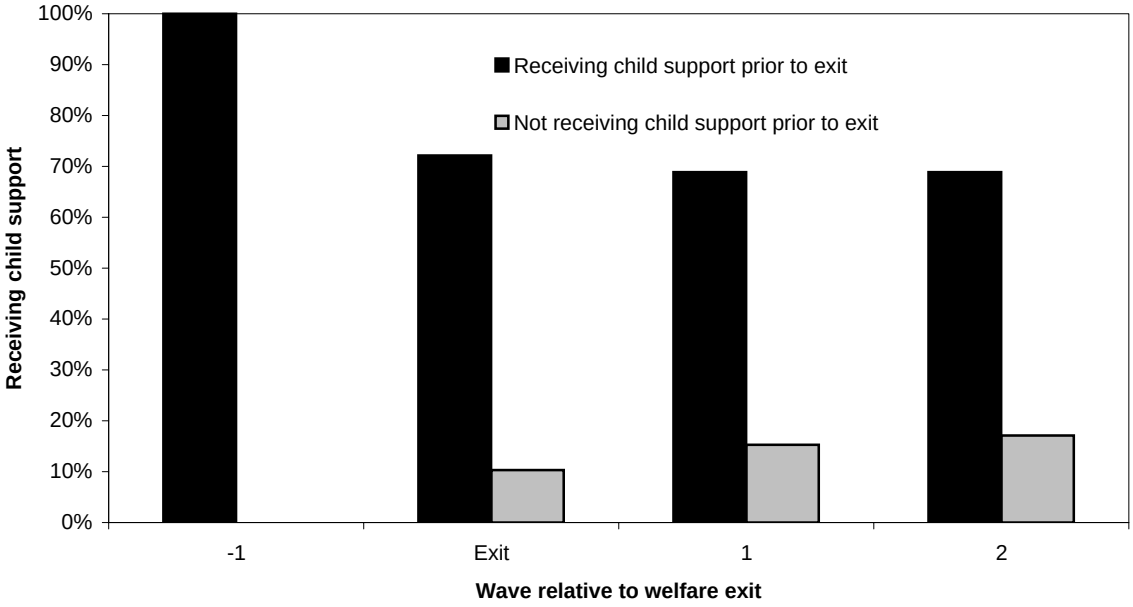


Figure S2b: Transitions in Status Between Year 1 and Year 5
CSDE



Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Figure S3: Child Support Receipt Around the Welfare Exit
SIPP



Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients.

Figure S4a: Effects of Welfare Reforms on Welfare Receipt and Child Support Receipt

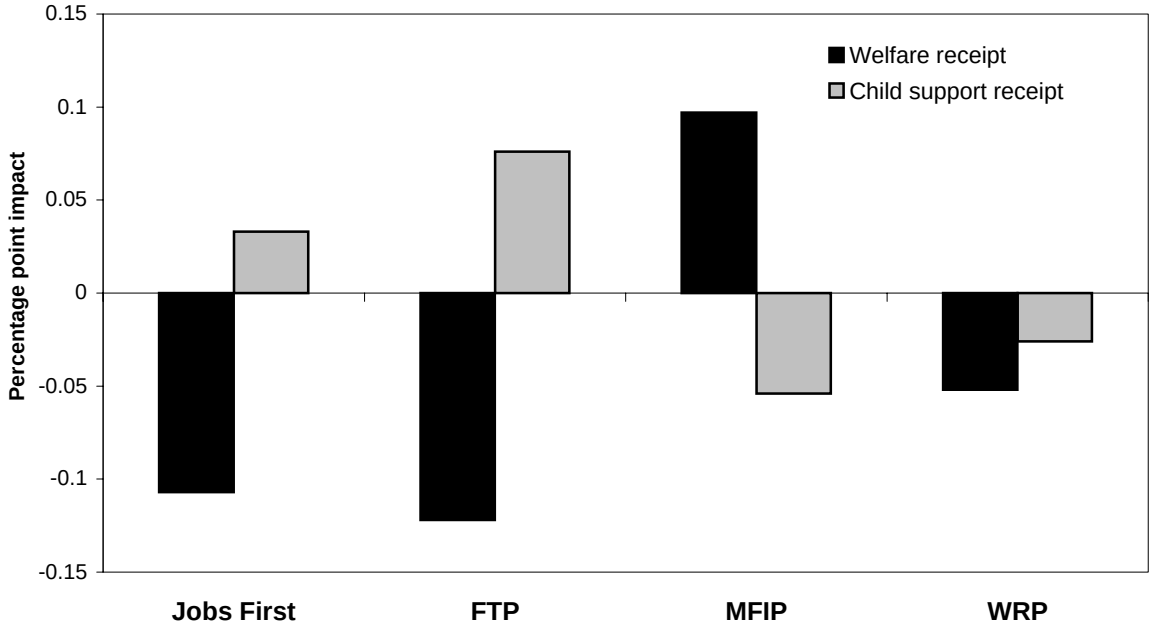
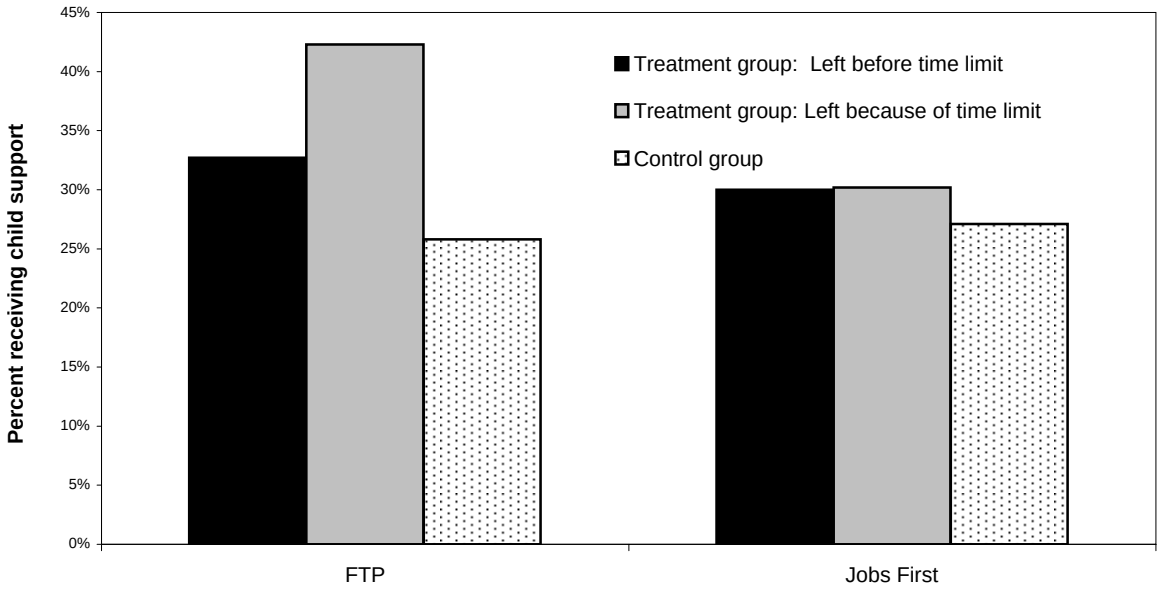


Figure S4b: Child Support Receipt Among Welfare Leavers



Source: Survey and baseline data from four welfare waiver evaluations: Connecticut's Jobs First program, Florida's Family Transition Program (FTP), the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP).

Notes: Child support and welfare receipt are measured at the time of the follow-up surveys. All impacts in the top figure are statistically significant ($p<.10$) with the exception of the impacts for WRP.

I. Introduction

Child support can represent an important income source for many low-income families, and the receipt of support may be most critical for women as they transition off of welfare. In fact, in the post-welfare reform era emphasizing work and self-sufficiency, child support is seen by many policymakers as a key income support.[1]

For this reason, it is important to examine the relationship between welfare and child support as well as the coordination between the two agencies that administer both programs — Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Support Enforcement (CSE). Historically, the CSE program served primarily as a cost recovery mechanism for the welfare program by collecting payments from noncustodial parents to repay the government for their families' public assistance payments.[2] Although welfare reform and other policy changes have shifted the child support enforcement program toward a more family-centered mission, the two programs remain linked because of this earlier focus. Currently, for example, families must assign the right to any child support owed before or during their period of TANF receipt to the state. While the family receives TANF, the state and federal government share these collections. States may "pass through" some or all of these collections to families and/or disregard these collections in determining eligibility for assistance, but they must still reimburse the federal government its share of all collections. After a family leaves TANF, certain categories of past-due child support are retained by the state and federal government when collected.

In the post-welfare reform era, administrators at all levels of government are recognizing the importance of collaboration among various social service agencies, and TANF and CSE are no exception. It is critical to coordinate between the two agencies to assure that families receive child support in each step of the process toward self-sufficiency. For example, it is important to make sure that women receive all child support to which they may be entitled while receiving benefits but also after leaving welfare, and that they understand the rules of child support and how much they should receive while on and off welfare.

There is evidence that states are beginning to address collaboration between welfare and child support (Kakuska and Hercik 2003). However, there is still work to be done. A study by

[1]The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, which put a strong emphasis on work and the time-limited nature of cash assistance. Overall, the child support distribution changes in PRWORA have resulted in more collected child support going to families, although this varies by state.

[2]Although CSE primarily serves families who are not currently receiving TANF, current and former recipients continue to make up a significant share of the caseload. In 2002, for example, current recipients made up 17 percent of the caseload, and former recipients made up 46 percent of the caseload (OCSE 2003).

the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (the "OIG") (2001) suggests that issues in the coordination between the two agencies have resulted in delayed payments for welfare leavers in some states.

This report examines the interaction of child support and welfare receipt by analyzing a variety of questions surrounding child support receipt for samples of current and former welfare recipients. We use several data sources, covering different samples, time periods, and geographic areas, to address several research questions in an effort to understand current and former recipients' status in the child support system, such as their rates of receipt before and after leaving welfare, and the effects of child support on self-sufficiency.

Background

Welfare caseloads have fallen substantially since the mid-1990s, and this trend has affected the size and composition of the CSE caseload. The total CSE caseload has fallen from about 19 million families in 1998 to 16 million in 2002, and, although the majority of CSE cases used to be current welfare recipients, these families now make up less than one-fifth of the caseload (OCSE 1999, 2003). Former recipients currently make up the largest segment of the caseload (46 percent).

Lyon (2002) presents a profile of the CSE-eligible population in 1997, including those in the IV-D caseload and the subset of the IV-D caseload that is receiving TANF. Overall, the IV-D caseload is somewhat less disadvantaged than the TANF caseload. For example, never-married women make up 38 percent of the IV-D caseload, while they make up 54 percent of those receiving TANF. Among the full IV-D caseload, 52 percent of parents are white, 31 percent are black, and 16 percent are Hispanic; among the TANF caseload, the numbers are 36 percent, 35 percent, and 21 percent, respectively. The TANF caseload also has higher poverty rates than the full IV-D caseload (74 percent versus 40 percent) and lower award rates (53 percent versus 63 percent).

The interaction of child support and TANF can be illustrated using the case of a custodial mother receiving welfare. As the first step in the process, the mother must assign the right to any child support owed before or during her period of TANF receipt to the state. She also must cooperate with the CSE agency in establishing a child support order, which includes cooperating in the determination and establishment of paternity, if necessary. Mothers who fail to cooperate are mandated under PRWORA to receive sanctions on their TANF grants of at least 25 percent. Once the order is established, the CSE agency will begin seeking payments from the noncustodial parent.

Federal legislation then determines how collections made on her behalf are distributed between the mother and the state. Prior to PRWORA, states were required to distribute (or pass through) the first $50 in collections to the mother. The remaining collections above $50 were split between the state and federal government. In determining the mother's welfare grant, this amount passed through to her was also disregarded. By disregarding these funds, child support collections could increase the custodial family's income by as much as $50. If the state elected to pass through this amount to the family in a separate check, it also had the effect of notifying the family that the noncustodial parent was making payments. Thus, if the noncustodial father was making payments of $80 per month, the mother would receive $50 and may or may not know that $80 was paid on her behalf.

As a result of PRWORA, states are now allowed to set their own pass-through and disregard policies. About half the states eliminated the pass-through and disregard entirely, retaining all child support collections made on behalf of custodial parents on welfare. Most of the states that retained the pass-through have continued to forward the first $50 to the custodial family. Thus, a custodial mother receiving welfare may continue to receive approximately $50 of collections made on her behalf or may receive none of these collections, depending on her state of residence.

Once the mother leaves welfare, she generally receives most collections made on her behalf, up to the amount of the current monthly obligation. Certain categories of support (such as collections in excess of the monthly obligation) may be kept by the state and applied to arrearages.[3] In particular, assigned past due support that is collected through the Federal Tax Refund Offset is first retained by the government.

This example illustrates one reason why child support may differ for women who are on versus off welfare. Former welfare recipients may receive more in child support simply through the "mechanical" effect of receiving more of the collections paid on their behalf. Mothers on welfare, in contrast, will receive only the pass-through amount or, if they live in a state that eliminated the pass-through, no child support. In addition to this mechanical effect, leaving welfare may induce certain behavioral changes as well. Mothers may be more proactive in seeking child support once they no longer have welfare as a source of income. In addition, fathers may be more likely to pay or pay more in child support once mothers leave welfare, knowing that the mother will now receive all of their payments. Further, it is possible that programmatic decisions to prioritize TANF cases or certain TANF cases would impact child support receipt.

PRWORA led to a number of changes in the child support program that might be expected to affect child support outcomes. In addition to changes in distribution rules, for exam-

[3]See Farrell, Glosser, and Gardiner (2003) for a more detailed discussion of the distribution rules.

ple, PRWORA increased states' paternity establishment standards, mandated that employers report all new hires to the child support enforcement system, and implemented a variety of other reforms to strengthen child support enforcement. Of course, the primary focus of PRWORA was welfare reform, including time limits, employment requirements, financial incentives, and diversion policies. These policies might also affect child support outcomes, to the extent that they affect welfare caseloads.

Several characteristics beyond welfare status have also been found to be associated with child support receipt. More educated mothers, for example, are more likely to receive support than mothers with less education, and, typically, black and Hispanics women are less likely to receive support than white women (Grall 2003). Many of these characteristics of the mothers, however, may be proxying for characteristics of the noncustodial fathers' ability to pay support. Women with more education, for example, typically have ex-partners who also have more education and thus higher income and more ability to pay child support. Black and Hispanic men also have lower earnings and employment rates than their white counterparts, which may explain the lower receipt rates among black and Hispanic mothers.

Fathers' employment and earnings are found to be strongly associated with their payment of child support (Turner and Sorenson 1997). Although the CSE program was originally set up to obtain payments from fathers, with no mechanism for assisting men who could not pay, the child support community has come to realize that this strategy is not sufficient for many low-income men who really cannot afford to pay, due to unemployment, unstable employment, or low wages. The result of this has been a wave of "fatherhood" programs, typically providing parenting and employment and training services to low-income noncustodial fathers. A national example is the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration, while there are a multitude of smaller programs run by local community-based organizations. Many local CSE offices have also begun to recast themselves not as enforcement agencies, but as social service agencies designed to help low-income families.

Key Research Questions

1. **What is the child support status of current and former welfare recipients?** Child support can represent an important source of income for low-income women, particularly those who are transitioning off welfare. What fraction of current and former recipients have child support orders and receive payments? How much do they receive, and how significant is child support as a fraction of family income? How do child support outcomes differ for women who have left welfare versus those who are still receiving benefits? Finally, how have child support outcomes changed over time for this group?

2. **What are the patterns of child support receipt around the welfare exit?** Although there is growing collaboration between the child support and TANF agencies, the recent OIG study documented some delays in payments for women who leave welfare. How many women receive child support in the months immediately after exiting welfare? Are there any delays in receiving child support in these months? Are there changes in the amounts received?

3. **What are the effects of child support receipt on self-sufficiency?** As a potentially important income source, child support may serve as a key support toward self-sufficiency. In the new era of time-limited welfare, it becomes even more important to identify factors that help women leave and stay off welfare. How does child support receipt affect the likelihood of leaving welfare and returning to welfare? Are women who receive child support more likely than those who do not to work after leaving welfare?

4. **Do families understand the rules of the child support system?** Prior to PRWORA, states were required to distribute the first $50 in child support collections each month to custodial parents and to disregard this amount in the calculation of the family's AFDC grant. By disregarding this amount, the receipt of child support could increase a family's income by as much as $50. States also had the option of "passing through" some or all of child support payments to the family as a separate check. Although budget-neutral from the family's perspective, the pass-through had the added effect of indicating to the family that the noncustodial parent was making child support payments. Under TANF, states can set their own pass-through and disregard policies and, to date, most states have chosen to retain all child support collected. The implication of these rules is that women receiving welfare may not receive all of the child support that is being paid on their behalf, which also represents the amount they would receive if they left welfare. If child support is to serve as a support and encouragement for self-sufficiency, it is important that women understand the rules of the system. Do women on welfare know how much child support is being paid on their behalf or only the amount they receive through pass-through policies? Do custodial and noncustodial parents understand the pass-through and distribution rules of the child support system?

5. **What are the effects of pass-through and disregard policies on child support receipt?** It has long been thought that the pass-through and disregard rules discourage the payment of child support, since parents know that not all of the money goes to the family, but instead goes to the state to offset welfare

costs. As mentioned above, most states eliminated the pass-through and disregard entirely after PRWORA, although several states either continued with the pre-PRWORA policy or implemented a more generous one. Do more generous pass-through and disregard policies encourage more noncustodial parents to pay support and increase receipts by custodial parents? Do they encourage more women to seek paternity establishment and child support awards?

6. **What are the effects of welfare reform policies on child support receipt?** Although PRWORA led to important changes in child support policy, its primary effect was to dramatically transform the welfare system. Most parents receiving benefits are now expected to work or participate in services and can only receive federally funded benefits for a limited period. What has been the effect of recent welfare reforms — in particular, time limits, financial incentives, and work mandates — on child support receipt?

This report is the second in a series for this project. The first report (Farrell, Glosser, and Gardiner 2003) provides an extensive literature review addressing each of the key research questions. We summarize key findings from this literature review throughout the report. The report proceeds as follows. The next section discuses each of the data sources used and how the samples differ across sources. The subsequent six sections address each of the research questions. Each section begins with a brief review of relevant literature, presents analyses using one or more of the relevant samples, and ends with a brief summary of findings. The final section concludes with a summary of the findings and their implications.

Although the data sources cover a variety of time periods, it is important to remember that they do not represent the most current state of the child support system. The child support enforcement has changed dramatically over the past decades and has continued to change in recent years. For example, in the past five years collections made by the CSE program have increased by over 40 percent. In addition, 30 percent of TANF recipients had child support collected on their behalf in 2002, up from 14 percent in 1999 (OCSE 2003).

II. Data and Methods

We use data from five sources, covering both broader and narrower populations and the pre- and post-PRWORA periods. Refer to Table II.1 for a summary of each source.

As discussed below, the majority of data sources are surveys administered to certain target populations. It is important to note that child support collection and receipt are particularly difficult to capture through surveys. Because the government may retain some or all of the collections made on behalf of current and former TANF recipients, families may not know how much child support is being collected on their behalf, only what they receive, and therefore have difficulty reporting the full amount of child support paid.

Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 1996-2000

Each round of the SIPP follows a nationally representative sample of the noninstitutionalized population for three to four years, obtaining data on monthly income, program participation, benefits, and employment status. The 1996 SIPP follows individuals for four years and surveys them every four months, referred to as a survey "wave." In addition to collecting basic information on income and benefits, each wave contains several "topical modules" covering areas such as marital and fertility history, assets, and health. Child support modules were administered in waves 5 and 11, or in months 20 and 44. For the SIPP analysis, the main analysis sample includes all women eligible to receive child support at the time the first child support module was administered and who received welfare at some point in the previous year.[4]

The primary advantage of the SIPP is that it is nationally representative; that is, it represents geographic and demographic characteristics of current and former TANF recipients throughout the United States. The fact that it is nationally representative also allows us to capture more variation in CSE policies across states, which, as will be discussed later, can aid in the ability to identify the effects of child support on self-sufficiency. The sample also provides coverage of the full population of current and former recipients who are eligible to receive support. The SIPP also follows the same families over time and covers a key time period, the transition to PRWORA.

A limitation of the SIPP data is that information on child support received is based on self-reports, rather than administrative records. Self-reported benefit receipt is subject to recall error and underreporting. In addition, as mentioned earlier, respondents receiving welfare may

[4]To approximate eligibility, we included all mothers with children less than age 18 in the house and who are not living with the father of their children.

not be aware of the amount paid on their behalf, given pass-through and distribution policies. Relative to the other data sources, a weakness of the SIPP data is that they are nonexperimental. A final issue with the SIPP is "seam bias." That is, changes in child support or TANF status are more likely to be reported between the fourth month of the last wave and the first month of the next wave (at the "seam" between the two waves) rather than within a wave. This pattern is usually attributed to recall error. Therefore, reports of exiting welfare and reports of receipt of child support may not always line up, making interpretation of the analysis difficult.

The Project on Devolution and Urban Change (Urban Change)

Urban Change is a study of the implementation and effects of welfare reform in four urban counties and their major cities — Cleveland, Los Angeles, Miami, and Philadelphia. As part of the evaluation, two surveys were administered to a sample of residents in low-income neighborhoods in 1998/99 and 2001. The surveys follow the same families over time and contain information on welfare status, income, employment status, child support receipt, material hardship, and household structure. The first wave achieved a response rate of approximately 80 percent, and the second wave surveyed somewhat more than 80 percent of those interviewed in wave 1. For this report, we use a sample of women eligible to receive child support who had received welfare at some point during the 12 months prior to the first survey.

Advantages of the Urban Change data are that they are relatively current and focus on a key population of interest — low-income current and former welfare recipients living in large urban counties. On the other hand, this narrow focus may also be seen as a disadvantage, since the sample is limited to a geographically based subset of eligible families. The Urban Change data are also longitudinal and cover a fairly recent period. In addition to capturing a narrow slice of the eligible population, some disadvantages of the data are that information on child support received is obtained from self-reports and that the data are non-experimental. Finally, Urban Change provides little variation in CSE policies, covering only four states.

Parents' Fair Share (PFS)

PFS was a program designed to help low-income noncustodial parents increase their employment and earnings, increase their child support payments, and become more involved in their children's lives. The program took place in seven sites around the country, and eligible participants were those who had a child support order established but were behind on payments, were under- or unemployed, and whose custodial parents received welfare in the recent past. As part of the evaluation, conducted using a random assignment design, survey data were collected approximately 14 months after program entry for over 2,000 custodial parents associated with the fathers in the program. The survey, fielded from early 1996 to early 1997 and with a re-

sponse rate of 90 percent, includes information on the women's employment history, material hardship, family structure, and welfare receipt in the month before the survey. It also contains information on the mothers' child support agreements and self-reports of the amount of child support received. The evaluation also includes data on child support from CSE records.

Advantages of the PFS data are that they include administrative records data on child support payment, likely to be more a more accurate measure than mothers' reports of the amount of formal child support paid on their behalf, and that the program was evaluated using a random assignment design. The program also led to a modest increase in child support payments, which will allow us to take advantage of this exogenous increase to examine the effect of child support receipt on other outcomes for custodial parents. Limitations of these data are that they are less current, covering primarily a pre-PRWORA period; that PFS represents a small, program-based subset of the population of interest in a limited number of states; and that awards had to be in place in order for noncustodial parents to participate in the program. Thus, the sample is a fairly narrow slice of the eligible caseload, being restricted to women with awards who are associated with noncustodial parents who are under- or unemployed.

The Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE)

In 1997, the state of Wisconsin received a waiver to initiate a change in its child support policy — passing through the entire amount paid to parents and disregarding the entire amount when calculating TANF cash benefits. The CSDE was a random assignment evaluation of this policy change commissioned through the waiver. While most parents in the state (the experimental, or treatment, group) received the full amount of child support paid on their behalf, a randomly selected control group only received a portion of what was paid.

As part of the evaluation, a unique data set combining administrative records and survey reports was constructed. The sample includes Wisconsin Works (W-2) participants who entered the program between September of 1997 (when it began) through early July of 1998, who were eligible for child support, who met other sample criteria primarily associated with timely progression in the intake process, and who were female resident parents.[5] The analyses discussed here are drawn from both administrative and survey records. Administrative data analyses include information on over 11,000 mothers in the treatment group. Survey data are drawn from the CSDE Survey of Wisconsin Works Families, a panel study of a stratified random sample of 3,000 mothers and the father of one of their children. The first wave collected data on family experiences during 1998, the first full year that W-2 was in place, and the second focused on 1999 experiences. Interviews were completed with 82 percent of mothers at Time 1

[5]For a detailed discussion of sample criteria, see Meyer and Cancian (2001), especially Volume 3, Chapter 1.

and 82 percent of mothers at Time 2. Response rates for fathers were substantially lower (about 45 percent for the main sample), but the availability of administrative data for virtually all of the fathers provides a strong basis for developing weights to correct for nonresponse (Krecker and Ziliak 2001). The CSDE data provide detailed information on child support outcomes as well as information on earnings of parents and other family members, benefits received, and other income sources. In addition, the survey includes questions about participants' understanding of the child support system.

Advantages of the CSDE data are that they are longitudinal, allowing us to follow the same families over time; they include administrative records data on child support payments; and the evaluation was conducted using a random assignment design. Another advantage is that the administrative data, available through December 2002, are relatively recent. The primary drawback of this sample is that it is fairly narrow in scope — restricted to a sample of TANF recipients in one state, all of whom were eligible to receive at least a $50 pass-through. Because the sample is from one state, the data also provide no variation in child support policies.

Welfare Waiver Evaluations (Jobs First, FTP, MFIP, and WRP)

These data include waiver evaluations from four states — Connecticut's Jobs First program, Florida's Family Transition Program (FTP), the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP). Each of these programs started in the mid-1990s and was evaluated using a random assignment design, in which ongoing recipients of and applicants for welfare were assigned at random either to the new program being tested or to the existing welfare system in the state. All of the programs included financial incentives, in the form of enhanced earnings disregards relative to the AFDC system, and either a mandate to work or participate in services or a time limit. MFIP and WRP included work requirements but not time limits, while Jobs First and FTP included time limits on welfare receipt.

Each evaluation collected administrative records data on welfare receipt and employment and administered a survey to a subset of the full sample three to four years after random assignment, collecting information on family structure, income sources, material hardship, and benefit receipt. For this analysis, we use the survey samples from each evaluation. Each of the surveys achieved response rates of 80 percent or higher.

An advantage of these data are that they test key policies that are now included in most states' TANF programs — time limits, work mandates, and financial incentives. Coupled with the fact that they were evaluated using random assignment designs, they provide an important look into the effects of welfare reform policies on child support status. Of particular interest is the effect of time limits. In addition, two of the programs (Jobs First and WRP) included changes in the child support distribution rules for families on welfare, in order to make the

payments more visible and to give both parents a greater stake in how much is paid (see section VIII for more details). Although it is difficult to isolate the effects of these changes from the effects of other programmatic changes, the results from these two programs may provide information on the effects of child support policies on the status of this population. Limitations of these data are that the sample is narrow in scope, that the survey data are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, and that they rely on survey reports of child support receipt. In addition, the data reflect child support received before many of the child support reforms enacted in the mid-1990s were implemented.

Table II.1 presents a description of each data source. Although the Current Population Survey Child Support Supplement (CPS-CSS) is not one of our samples, it is shown at the top of the table in order to show how each of our samples represents a more narrow slice of that broader sample. The SIPP sample is the only one that is nationally representative. It is a subset of the CPS-CSS because the sample analyzed in this report is restricted to current or recent welfare recipients. Each of the subsequent samples can be thought of as a subset of the SIPP, because of geographical restrictions and sampling restrictions. The PFS data, for example, are restricted to seven cities and to current and former welfare recipients with child support orders who are associated with noncustodial parents who are under- or unemployed. The CSDE data are restricted to current and former welfare recipients in Wisconsin.[6]

Table II.2 presents selected demographic characteristics from each of our samples. We focus on the first four columns, since these data sources (SIPP, CSDE, PFS, and Urban Change) are used most often. The SIPP sample, with its broader sampling scheme, stands out from the others, particularly with respect to race/ethnicity, marital status, and age. For example, 45 percent of the SIPP sample are black, compared with 60 percent of the CSDE sample and 72 percent of the Urban Change sample. Urban Change stands out in this respect, given that its sample members are 94 percent black or Hispanic. The PFS and Urban Change samples also have higher fractions of never-married women, compared with the SIPP. (Data on marital status for the CSDE administrative records sample are not available.) Respondents in the SIPP sample are also older on average than respondents in the other three samples — 19 percent of the SIPP sample are age 45 or over, compared with no more than 6 percent of the other samples. The SIPP sample has somewhat higher levels of education, particularly compared with the CSDE sample, where over half the sample does not have a high school diploma. Finally, the CSDE sample stands out from the others in that a higher fraction of women have young children, or children under age 6.

[6]We use the terms "women" and "mothers" throughout the text, given that our samples are restricted to women eligible to receive support. However, the CSE and TANF programs are not restricted only to women. In addition, data from the most recent CPS-CSS indicate that about 15 percent of parents eligible for child support are custodial fathers.

Because of differences in characteristics and geographic area across samples, we do not necessarily expect child support outcomes and other results to be similar across data sets. Rather, they might be thought of as complementary, with the SIPP providing a nationally representative look and the other data sets providing information on particular subsets of that broader sample. The PFS and Urban Change samples, for example, are more disadvantaged on average than the SIPP sample. Because many of these same characteristics are associated with the likelihood of receiving child support, we expect to see differences in child support outcomes. Black and Hispanic women, for example, are less likely to receive support than white women, and never-married women historically have had lower rates of receipt than previously married women. In addition to differences in child support outcomes due to personal characteristics, receipt rates across samples vary, based on geographic differences. A good example in this case is the CSDE sample. Although this sample contains a higher fraction of black women and women with lower education levels than the SIPP, both of which might suggest that receipt rates should be lower, we may in fact expect to see relatively high rates of child support receipt for this sample, given Wisconsin's strong child support enforcement system and the fact that this sample was subject to the new pass-through policy.

In what follows, we present analyses for all data sets that are relevant to each research question. We also present the results separately, rather that pooling data sets, since the samples are fairly different. Finally, all regressions that model dichotomous outcomes are estimated as probit models.

Table II.1

Sample Definitions and Time Periods

		Sample Selection Rules	Location	Time Period
CPS-CSS	1	All parents eligible to receive child support.	Nationally representative	2001
SIPP	1 2	Parents eligible to receive child support. Had received welfare in the year prior to the child support module.	Nationally representative	Panel began 1996 Child support modules at month 20 (1997/98) and month 44 (1999/2000)
PFS	1 2 3 4	Custodial parents with orders. Not receiving regular payments. Had received welfare prior to start of program. Ex-partner who owed support was eligible for PFS because of under- or un-employment.	Los Angeles, CA Jacksonville, FL Springfield, MA Grand Rapids, MI Trenton, NJ Dayton, OH Memphis, TN	Evaluation began in 1995, 14-month survey fielded in 1996/97
Urban Change	1 2 3	Parents eligible to receive child support. Had received welfare in the year prior to the first survey. Residents of low-income neighborhoods.	Los Angeles, CA Miami, FL Cleveland, OH Philadelphia, PA	Surveys fielded in 1998/99 and 2001
CSDE	1 2 3	Parents eligible to receive child support. Participants in W-2 (Wisconsin's TANF program) Entered W-2 between late 1996/early 1997.	Wisconsin	Administrative records data 1997-2001 Surveys fielded in 1998 and 1999
Waiver Evaluations	1	Ongoing recipients of and new applicants for welfare	Connecticut Florida Minnesota Vermont	Intake: 1996-97, Survey: 1999/2000 Intake: 1994-96, Survey: 1998-2000 Intake: 1994-96, Survey: 1997-99 Intake: 1994-96, Survey: 1997-99

Table II.2

Sample Characteristics, by Study

Characteristic (%)	SIPP	CSDE	PFS	UC	WRP	Jobs First	MFIP	FTP
Race/ethnicity								
White	33.1	25.4	21.5	4.3	N/A	36.3	46.8	42.5
Black	44.6	60.0	65.3	72.1	N/A	41.9	40.5	55.8
Hispanic	19.8	7.4	11.5	21.9	N/A	21.2	2.1	0.8
Other	2.5	4.0	1.7	1.8	N/A	0.5	10.6	1.0
Age								
Under 25	20.5	41.2	33.5	13.1	28.7	28.1	27.7	36.4
25-34	43.0	38.0	45.5	46.1	47.5	43.1	51.7	46.8
35-44	18.0	17.9	17.5	35.5	20.5	24.3	18.3	15.7
Over 45	18.5	2.9	3.5	5.3	3.3	4.5	2.4	1.1
Marital status								
Married/widowed	9.8	na	9.0	3.6	0.8	2.0	1.1	1.1
Divorced/separated	38.9	na	25.0	26.7	54.4	29.3	28.8	20.7
Never married	51.3	na	66.0	69.5	44.7	68.2	69.3	54.4
Education								
Less than high school	36.8	53.4	38.0	40.2	22.6	33.5	31.4	39.1
High school/GED or beyond	63.2	46.6	62.0	59.7	77.3	66.5	68.1	60.9
Number of children								
One child	28.9	32.9	23.3	20.8	40.1	40.3	31.8	38.2
Two children	32.3	29.6	34.0	31.1	32.6	29.8	34.7	29.8
Three or more children	38.7	37.4	42.6	48.1	21.5	17.3	33.5	32.0
Youngest child's age								
Under 6	55.4	76.2	55.6	52.6	63.8	63.6	71.5	76.0
6 or older	44.6	23.8	44.4	47.4	36.2	36.4	28.5	24.0
Sample Size	912	15,997	1,619	1,877	1,136	2,296	1,090	1,420

SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients.
PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998. Welfare Waiver Evaluations, covering new applicants for and recipients of welfare: Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP), Connecticut's Jobs First Program, the Minnesota Family Investment Program, and Florida's Family Transition Program.

III. Child Support Receipt Among Current and Former Welfare Recipients

This section examines the child support status of our samples of current and former welfare recipients. Within each subsection, we document the key findings from previous research. Although there has been extensive research on child support receipt among custodial mothers, this research adds to the literature through its focus on current and recent welfare recipients. It also provides a comparison of outcomes for different populations and different time periods. We also can use the panel nature of several of the data sets to examine the reliability of child support for this population and trends over time in child support receipt.

For comparisons of current and former welfare recipients, it is important to remember that questions on the surveys usually ask women only to report the amount of child support they received (through pass-through policies) rather than the amount that was paid on their behalf by the noncustodial father. For this reason, differences in child support receipts between current and former welfare recipients are likely to overstate differences in actual payments. Finally, although some of these data are relatively recent, they do not represent the current state of child support receipt. For this reason, we bring in data from the most recent Current Population Survey Child Support Supplement (CPS-CSS) when relevant.

Point-in-Time Analysis

According to the most recent CPS data, 55 percent of custodial mothers had orders and were due child support, and 41 percent received some payments in 2001 (Grall 2003). Not surprisingly, receiving support is closely tied to having an order in place. Among women due support, 75 percent received payments. For women not due child support, less than 5 percent reported receiving any support. Average payments received among women due support were $3,200 during the year, or $266 per month. Those less likely to receive support include black and Hispanic women, those with low levels of education, and those who had never been married. Women receiving government benefits for low-income families (TANF, Medicaid, food stamps, housing subsidies, or other welfare) are somewhat less likely to report receiving support, with 33 percent reporting receipt (compared with 41 percent overall), and with those receiving TANF being even less likely (26 percent).

Child support can represent a significant share of income for women who receive it. For example, in 1996, among families who received child support, the average child received $3,795 in support, representing 16 percent of family income (Sorenson and Zibman 2000). Among poor children, the average child received just $1,979, but this amount represented 26 percent of family income. Meyer and Hu (1999) found that, in 1995, about 22 percent of poor

women who received child support were lifted above poverty by child support receipts. However, because less than one-third of poor women received child support, overall, child support lifted about 7 percent of poor women out of poverty.

The award rate for women in the CPS reflects the fact that some women do not pursue awards. In fact, the most commonly cited reason for not having an award (33 percent) was that the respondent did not feel the need to have a legal agreement (see the top panel of Figure III.1, taken from Grall 2003). The next most common reasons given were that "the other parent provided what they could" (26 percent) and that "the other parent could not afford to pay support" (23 percent). However, women who receive TANF benefits do not have a choice in whether a child support award is pursued on their behalf, as they are required to cooperate as a condition of eligibility for receipt of TANF cash assistance. Welfare recipients may be less likely to have awards because they are less likely to have been married and child support is often determined as a part of the divorce or separation process; welfare recipients may no longer know where the noncustodial parent lives and may not have all the identifying information needed to locate the other parent; and some jurisdictions may not move as quickly to establish awards if it is known that the noncustodial parent has no income. The SIPP survey also asks women reasons for not having an award. We examine later the responses for our sample of current and former welfare recipients.

Although child support receipt rates have increased over time for welfare recipients, they have always had lower receipt rates than nonrecipients (Huang, Garfinkel, and Waldfogel 2000). As mentioned above, 26 percent of welfare recipients received child support in recent years. The ASPE-funded leavers studies also examined child support receipt and found rates of receipt for leavers that ranged across states from 11 percent to 46 percent (Acs, Loprest, and Roberts 2001). Current recipients are also less likely to receive support than women who have recently left welfare (Miller 2002). As indicated above, reporting issues in the data make it impossible to determine if that finding reflects changes in amounts paid by the noncustodial parent or the fact that women who have left welfare are eligible to receive all of the current support amounts paid by the other parent.

Table III.1 presents data on child support receipt for the SIPP, Urban Change, and PFS samples.[7] At the point of the 20-month topical module, or in 1997/98, 41 percent of the SIPP sample had child support orders, and 22 percent received support.[8] The fraction of women with orders is about 13 percentage points lower for the Urban Change sample (measured at the wave 1 survey, or in 1998/99), and the fraction receiving payments is substantially lower. Comparable

[7]Data for PFS are presented for the program and control groups combined — the results were similar when only the control group was used.

[8]Information on child support receipt and income is obtained from the SIPP core survey.

numbers for the PFS sample are not shown, since the sample consists of women with orders. All of these rates are lower than that reported for the CPS sample (55 percent had awards), as would be expected, given that our samples are current or recent welfare recipients.

Among custodial parents with orders, the fraction receiving payments ranges from 20.6 percent in Urban Change to a high of 46 percent for the SIPP sample. Average monthly order amounts (in 2002 dollars) were between $217 for PFS and $284 for the SIPP. The lower award amounts for the PFS sample may reflect the fact that the noncustodial fathers associated with these mothers are more disadvantaged or it may reflect differences in how child support guidelines treat poor noncustodial parents in the PFS states as opposed to other states.[9]

The average payment received is similar across the three samples, despite the differences in rates of receipt. For those receiving support, child support represents from 12 percent to 22 percent of total income.[10] The data for PFS show that the bulk of child support was paid formally, although some women did receive informal payments. Formal payments for PFS were payments the mother reported receiving from CSE or as part of her welfare check, whereas informal payments were those that were made directly by the father.[11]

The final panel of Table III.1 examines child support receipt by income quintile within the sample.[12] Although the samples as a whole are low-income, this analysis looks at whether child support is being received by the poorest women. In general, rates of child support receipt are fairly similar across quintiles, particularly for the SIPP and PFS control group samples. For Urban Change, women in the higher quintiles are more likely to receive child support, although the differences between the first and fifth quintiles are not large. For PFS, rates of receipt for the treatment group are much higher for top quintile group, showing where the program had most of its child support impacts.[13]

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[9]PFS resulted in the lower average orders for the experimental group, given that the extra enforcement led to modification of awards that were more in line with fathers' ability to pay. However, this effect does not account for the lower average awards for the PFS sample, since award amounts are also lower for the PFS control group when compared with awards for the SIPP sample.

[10]This average does not equal average payments divided by average income shown in the table, because the average income shown is for the full sample and not those receiving payments.

[11]Comparable monthly data are not available from the SIPP. However, data from the SIPP on formal versus informal payments over the last year show the same pattern as the PFS data.

[12]Income quintiles were calculated based on income less child support receipts. Since average incomes for the samples are fairly similar, the quintile points were roughly similar as well. The ranges were approximately: (1) less than $650, (2) $650 to $950, (3) $950 to $1,200, (4) $1,200 to $1,700, and (5) $1,700 and higher.

[13]Findings from the evaluation of PFS showed that, although PFS increased earnings and employment more for the most disadvantaged subgroups, its effects on child support payments occurred among less disadvantaged men. Given assortative mating assumptions, less disadvantaged men are likely to be associated with the less disadvantaged women in the sample.

The SIPP also asked women the reasons for not having an award (see bottom panel of Figure III.1). As with the CPS sample, a large fraction of women said that they "did not try to get support" and/or that "the other parent could not afford to pay." Recall that the SIPP sample is restricted to current and former welfare recipients, while the CPS sample consists of all eligible custodial parents. Thus, for the SIPP sample, it is not clear that these responses reflect a "choice" to not pursue an award, since these women are or were recently required to cooperate in pursuing an award as a condition of receiving TANF benefits. However, the most commonly cited reason for this sample is that they could not locate the other parent.

Table III.2 presents child support receipt by welfare status. All of the women in the samples had received welfare at some point prior to the survey. This analysis divides them into those who had left welfare by the time of the survey and those who were still receiving benefits. The percentages that had left welfare by the time of survey were 31 percent for the SIPP, 16 percent for Urban Change, and 43 percent for PFS.[14]

In general, those who were not receiving welfare at the time of the survey (referred to as leavers) reported higher levels of child support receipt than those who were receiving welfare at the time of the survey (referred to as stayers). Although the latter group is referred to as stayers, they may have left welfare and returned prior to the survey point. In the SIPP, for example, among women who were still on welfare, 36 percent had orders, and 20 percent reported receiving payments. Among SIPP women who had left welfare, 49 percent had orders, and 28 percent received payments. Among those with orders, women who had left welfare were also more likely to receive payments (50 percent versus 43 percent), although average order amounts were similar, presumably indicating an equal ability to pay among the fathers. Leavers and stayers also had different reasons for not having an award (not shown). For stayers, the most commonly given reason was that they "could not locate the other parent," while for leavers it was that they "did not try to get support." The higher child support receipt rate among welfare leavers does not necessarily indicate that child support receipt caused more women to leave welfare. It may be the case that the women who were more likely to leave welfare were also better able to secure child support or had ex-partners who were more able to pay. Also, they may simply have begun to receive some of the payments made on their behalf after they left welfare. Issues of causality will be examined in a later section.

A similar pattern for leavers and stayers is found for the Urban Change sample — leavers were more likely to receive support, and they received more in average payments. For PFS

[14]The higher rate for PFS may reflect the fact that sample members had more time to leave welfare prior to the survey. Unlike the SIPP and Urban Change samples, the PFS sample was not restricted to women who had received welfare within the 12 months prior to the survey; rather, the evaluation included women who had received welfare some time in the recent past.

(which was implemented prior to PRWORA), leavers were not much more likely to report receiving child support than stayers (34.2 percent versus 32.9 percent), although they received higher average payments. The PFS finding is consistent with the pre-PRWORA policy of requiring that up to $50 of any current support payment collected on their behalf be passed though to current welfare recipients. Post-PRWORA, many states eliminated the pass-through entirely, meaning that many women on welfare would not receive payments made on their behalf.

As mentioned earlier, the differences in amounts received between leavers and stayers may not accurately represent differences in payments made on their behalf, since questions ask for the amount of child support received, not what was paid. Welfare recipients may only be reporting the amounts received through state distribution and pass-through policies. Informal payments are not likely to be biased by this underreporting, but the data from PFS are inconclusive. Leavers reported receiving a higher amount of informal support than did stayers, but the difference is not statistically significant.

Finally, child support represents a higher fraction of income for women who had left welfare.[15] This is due to the fact that they received higher amounts and not due to the fact that they had lower incomes. In fact, in all three samples, leavers had higher incomes than stayers.

Table III.3 presents child support receipt for the CSDE sample. At the time of program entry, 57 percent of the sample had child support awards in place. First consider outcomes for the full sample, shown in the first column. During 1999, 48 percent received some child support. This number is higher than that for the SIPP but not directly comparable, since it is measured over a year rather than a month. It is also higher than that for the CPS sample (41 percent), even though the CSDE sample is restricted to current and recent welfare recipients. The higher rate may be related to the CSDE treatment, in which mothers receive all child support paid on their behalf, to Wisconsin's effectiveness in child support enforcement, or to higher amounts being shown in administrative data than survey data. Also, only somewhat more than half of the CPS sample is in the child support enforcement program.

For the CSDE sample as a whole, child support represents 8.3 percent of total income. This number is lower than that presented in Table III.1 for the other samples (ranging from 12 percent to 22 percent) because it includes zeroes for women who did not receive any payments. Considering that half (48 percent) of women in the CSDE sample received child support, this implies that child support represents roughly twice that amount (or 17 percent of income) for women who received some payments (or 8.3/0.48). The bottom panel presents the distribution of payment amounts. Among women who received support, about 48 percent received less than

[15]Again, this difference does not necessarily imply that less child support is being paid on behalf of welfare stayers but, rather, that they may be reporting the amount they are receiving through the pass-through. Nonetheless, actual receipts as a fraction of income are lower for stayers.

$1,200 over the year, or less than $100 per month. Although not shown, rates of receipt do not vary much by income quintile.

Columns 2 and 3 divide the sample into leavers and stayers, or those who received no W-2 cash assistance in 1999 and those who did receive cash assistance. Leavers were more likely than stayers to receive child support (50.5 percent versus 44.7 percent), although they did not have substantially higher incomes. (Primarily this is because higher earnings and somewhat higher child support are offset by the loss of W-2 benefits.) Finally, among those who did receive support, leavers received somewhat higher amounts. (Because these data are from administrative records, these are real differences in the amounts paid by nonresident parents, rather than differences in reported receipt by women on and off welfare.) Less than half of leavers (44.3 percent) received $1,200 or less, compared with 53 percent of the stayers, while one-third of the leavers (compared with one-quarter of the stayers) are in the higher child support receipt categories of more than $2,400 in child support (or $200+ per month). Possible causal interpretations of the CSDE finding will be discussed in later sections.

Summary

- Nationwide, 22 percent of current and former recipients from the SIPP sample reported receipt of child support payments. Rates of receipt varied when using data from the other samples representing subsets of this broader SIPP sample. Receipt rates depend on area-level factors but also on the characteristics of the particular sample, with the lowest rates of receipt being seen for the more disadvantaged Urban Change sample and the highest rates for the statewide sample in Wisconsin (CSDE). Child support represents up to one-fifth of family income for women who receive it, although it represents less than 10 percent of family income on average for all eligible women. Some women do report the receipt of informal payments from the noncustodial parents, but this type of support represents a very small fraction of total receipts.

- Women who leave welfare are more likely to report receiving child support than those who stay on welfare, with a difference typically of between 6 and 8 percentage points in rates of receipt. Among those who receive child support, leavers on average receive higher amounts than stayers, with the result that child support makes up a higher fraction of family income. These results generally held across all data sources examined.

- Finally, welfare leavers do not have lower incomes than stayers. The loss of income from welfare benefits is replaced largely by earnings and to a lesser extent by child support receipts.

Trends Over Time

The proportion of custodial mothers who receive child support has stayed fairly constant over the past decade.[16] Since 1994, about three-quarters of custodial families who are owed child support have received payments, while those receiving the full amount due have increased from 37 percent to 45 percent (Grall 2003). While rates for ever-married women have increased slightly, rates for never-married women have increased substantially (Sorenson and Halpern 1999). Between 1987 and 1997, for example, the receipt rate for never-married women nearly doubled, from 10 percent to 18 percent. In contrast, the receipt rate for ever-married women increased from about 40 percent to 42 percent over this period. The lack of change for women as a whole is due to the fact that the custodial parent population has become increasingly made up of never-married women, who have relatively lower receipt rates. Looking at all custodial mothers as a whole also masks a big improvement for welfare recipients. Receipt rates increased for this group from 9 percent in 1980 to 26 percent in 1996 (Huang, Garfinkel, and Waldfogel 2000).

Child support enforcement has been strengthened continuously over the past two decades and has contributed to the increase in receipt rates. For example, state laws and policies have been implemented to increase paternity establishment, such as mandated genetic testing in the Family Support Act of 1988, and the later adoption of voluntary paternity acknowledgment programs. Nationally, the number of children for whom paternity was established has increased dramatically, from less than 300,000 in fiscal year 1987 (U.S. House of Representatives 2000) to over 1 million in fiscal year 2002 (OCSE 2003). The rate of paternity establishment for children in the IV-D program was 84 percent in fiscal year 2002 (OCSE 2003).[17] Several researchers have found that specific enforcement policies of the past two decades have contributed to the observed increase in receipt rates (Sorensen and Halpern 1999; Cassetty, Cancian, and Meyer 2002).

This section examines trends over time for the full samples as well as for sub-samples of welfare leavers and stayers. The SIPP and Urban Change data allow us to examine shorter-term trends over time (about two years), and the CSDE data provide evidence on longer-term trends (five years). Table III.4 presents data for the SIPP and Urban Change samples. For the SIPP, we examine rates of receipt at the 20-month and 44-month points, or the months in which the child support topical modules were administered. These two points correspond roughly to the periods 1997/98 and 1999/2000. For Urban Change, we examine rates of child support receipt in the months prior to each survey wave, or in 1998/99 and 2001.

[16]However, in the CSE caseload, there has been a large increase in the past several years. In fiscal year 2002 collections were made in 70 percent of cases with orders established, compared with 40 percent in fiscal year 1998 (OCSE 1999, 2003).

[17]The calculation of this rate is based on states with reliable data on paternity establishment.

Although the award rate increased slightly, from 38 percent to 44 percent, the national receipt rates reflected in the SIPP sample did not change over time, remaining at 22 percent. Child support receipt rates improved for the Urban Change sample, increasing from 8.9 percent to 15.5 percent, but still remained below the national average. Most of the Urban Change increase appears to be due to an increase in rates of receipt among women with orders (20.6 percent to 37.8 percent), with a smaller part due to an increase in the fraction with orders. For both samples, child support increased as a fraction of family income, from 21 percent to 25 percent for the SIPP sample and from about 15 percent to 22 percent for the Urban Change sample. Finally, rates of receipt by income quintile show that, for the SIPP sample, receipt rates improved the most for the highest quintile. For the Urban Change sample, child support outcomes improved most for the lowest-income women; however, there were not significant differences in the magnitude of the increases across the quintiles.

Table III.5 divides the SIPP and Urban Change samples into women who had left welfare by the first wave and those who had not. By fixing the sample by status at wave 1, the two columns showing waves 1 and 2 compare the same samples over time, eliminating differences that would be due to changes in the composition of each subgroup.[18] However, differences in reports of receipt may still exist because of pass-through and distribution policies. For example, some women on welfare in wave 1 may leave welfare by wave 2 and begin to receive child support payments that were being made on their behalf. For this reason, an increase in rates of child support receipt for those on welfare in wave 1 may reflect this change and not an increase in payments being made by fathers.

For the SIPP sample, rates of receipt increased very modestly only for women still on welfare at wave 1. Additionally, for those on welfare at time 1, child support payments increased over time and had become a larger fraction of family income by wave 2, a finding consistent with decreased welfare receipt from wave 1 to wave 2. In the Urban Change sample, child support outcomes improved for those on and off welfare at wave 1, perhaps because there was more room for improvement for both groups. Compared with those who were off welfare at wave 1, the amount of support received and the importance of child support as a source of income increased more for those on welfare at wave 1. As mentioned earlier, part of the increase in receipts for the groups on welfare may reflect that some of them moved off welfare and began to receive the full amount of child support paid on their behalf. However, separate analyses for the Urban Change sample (not shown) indicate that the increase in receipts is due at least in part to an increase in payments made on their behalf.[19] Whatever the mechanism, recipients are

[18]The SIPP numbers for wave 1 are slightly different from those shown in Table III.1, since this analysis is restricted to women who were surveyed and eligible for child support in both waves.

[19]When the analysis was restricted to women receiving welfare in both periods (or continuous stayers), we also observed an increase in receipt amounts over time.

receiving more in child support over time. There are increases in the proportion with orders and the proportion receiving support when an order is present for both Urban Change samples. This also may represent improvements in the effectiveness of the child support program in the Urban Change sites.

Table III.6 presents trends over a longer time period using the CSDE sample. Receipt rates increased substantially over the period, from 40.8 percent to 52.6 percent. The biggest increases occurred between 1998 and 2000. This increase may reflect the early impact of the pass-through policies in Wisconsin and/or the result of increased enforcement actions due to PRWORA changes. Average payment amounts also increased over time. The fraction receiving less than $1,200 per year fell from 51.5 percent to 43.9 percent. Those receiving more than $4,800 increased from 7.1 percent to 11.4 percent.

The second panel shows that child support has increased as a fraction of family income, from 6.2 percent to 10.3 percent, and data from the other rows in this panel show where this increase came from — from a decrease in the fraction for whom child support is 0 percent of family income (from 59.0 percent to 42.8 percent), and from a large increase in the percent for whom child support is more than 20 percent of family income (from 11.2 percent to 25.7 percent). This pattern, in which more women are receiving some payments and more women are receiving higher payments, is corroborated by the fact that when we calculate support as a fraction of income for women who received payments (by dividing the rate for the full sample by the fraction of the sample that received payments), we also find an increase in child support as a fraction of income, from 15 percent to 20 percent. Finally, the last set of rows shows that the gains in child support were distributed fairly evenly throughout the income distribution of current and former TANF recipients; all groups of low-income custodial parents experienced an increase in rates of receipt over time, with the exception of the bottom quintile.

Table III.7 presents changes over time for the CSDE sample of women divided by those who did versus did not receive any cash benefits in 1999. This table shows a smaller increase in receipt over time than in Table III.6, because the data start in 1999 rather than in 1998. In general, child support outcomes improved for both groups but more for the sample of women who were receiving benefits in 1999. Most of this improvement occurred between 1999 and 2000. For both groups, there was a slight increase in the percentage receiving high amounts of child support (more than $4,800 per year). In this case, the increase in child support receipt over time for the group receiving cash benefits in 1999 does not reflect the fact that they began to receive more of the payments on their behalf after they left welfare, since in Wisconsin this group received the full amount paid on their behalf while they were on welfare. In other words, this increase reflects an actual increase in payments made by the noncustodial fathers. This finding is consistent with the results from the Urban Change analysis, when the sample is restricted to continuous stayers (see footnote 19), although the changes are larger for the CSDE sample.

Summary

- While the SIPP does not show changes in the national rate of child support receipt, child support outcomes have improved within certain groups — more women have awards, are receiving payment, and are receiving high payments, and child support has become a more important income source. The largest changes in receipt were for the CSDE sample, owing in part to the pass-through policies in Wisconsin. The Urban Change sample also saw a fairly large increase in receipt rates, perhaps because there was more room for improvement for this group. Changes for the SIPP sample were fairly modest. These improvements in child support outcomes were due in part to more women having orders and in part to higher payment rates among women with orders.

- In general, child support outcomes improved more over time for welfare recipients than for those who had left welfare in the early waves. This pattern held for all three of the samples, but it was less pronounced for the Urban Change sample. Based on the CSDE sample and a subsample of recipients in the UC study ("continuous stayers"), the increase in outcomes for welfare recipients represents a real increase in payments made on their behalf and is not simply an increase in the amount of support received due to the movement off welfare by some respondents. This finding is consistent with a child support enforcement system that is more aggressively pursuing support among welfare recipients.

Reliability of Payments

An important part of child support status is the regularity with which women receive payments. Child support is more likely to serve as a path to self-sufficiency if viewed by women as a stable and secure source of income. Although we know from the CPS, for example, that 75 percent of women who were due support received some payments in 2001, we do not know whether those payments occurred every month or sporadically throughout the year.

Table III.8 presents information on the monthly reliability of child support payments using data from the SIPP and PFS. In the case of PFS, monthly payment status is based on administrative records data. In order to account for the possibility that records data may overstate instability, if, for example, payments in one month are posted on the 31st of the month instead of the 1st, we only consider a woman to have stopped receiving payments if she did not receive child support for at least two consecutive months. The SIPP analysis is restricted to women who

received some payments at some point during the first year of the panel, and the PFS analysis is restricted to women who received payments during the 14-month period preceding the survey.

The first row presents the number of months payments were received. Although not a measure of reliability per se, since the months need not be consecutive, it indicates the fraction of time women receive payments. For the SIPP sample, women who received payments at some point during the first year received them for an average of 18.5 months out of the 48-month period. Women in PFS who received payments at some point during the panel received payments for an average of 7.8 months out of the 14-month period. Child support status changed (went from positive to zero payments or from zero to positive payments) an average of 3.5 times over the panel for the SIPP sample. Note that this figure includes changes in status that represent the initiation of payments, or from no payments to a positive amount. Payments changed by 40 percent or more 5.1 times.[20] Since the latter measure includes changes from zero to a positive amount as well as changes from one positive amount to another, the difference between it and the former measure (1.6) indicates the extent of variability in payment amounts over and above changes in payment status. These same measures for the PFS sample are smaller, as expected, given the shorter length of the panel.

For those who were receiving child support in the first few months of the panel, a significant share stopped receiving payments within five months (39.3 percent for the SIPP sample and 34.5 percent for the PFS sample). In general, spell lengths are longer for the PFS sample, which partially reflects the fact that the PFS treatment increased child support payments and the reliability of payments. However, spell lengths are still somewhat longer for the PFS sample when the analysis is restricted to the control group. As mentioned in the evaluation report, the process of bringing men in for hearings to determine their random assignment status also increased payments rates, which might help to explain the greater reliability of payments for the control group.

One area of concern in reporting reliability from the SIPP is "seam bias," which is the uneven distribution of changes between the last month of one interview and the first month of the next interview because of recall error. It is unclear whether this overstates or understates reliability (respondents might smooth out variation within a wave, although we observe large changes in outcomes between waves). Nonetheless, this issue is important to keep in mind when interpreting the SIPP results.

[20] An analysis of the percentage change in monthly payments for the PFS data revealed that the majority of the sample showed zero change, with slight concentrations of observations at 20 percent, 25 percent, 33 percent, 50 percent, and 100 percent. About 80 percent of the sample in any given month experienced a change in payments from one month to the next of less than 50 percent. Thus, to capture instability, while at the same time preserving some variability in the data, we characterize payments as unstable if they changed by 40 percent or more.

The SIPP survey also includes a question about the regularity of child support payments, for women who received at least one payment in the 12 months prior to the topical module. When asked "how regularly these payments were received," women's responses were the following: 50 percent reported "all of the time"; 19 percent reported "most of the time"; 22 percent reported "some of the time"; and 8 percent reported "none of the time."

Table III.9 presents reliability of payments by year, using the CSDE sample, including women without child support awards. The top panel presents the number of years over the panel in which women received no support, low support, or high support. Low support is defined as $1 to $2,400 during the year, and high support is more than $2,400 during the year. The numbers suggests that that a fair amount of women were stable in the status of either receiving no payments for all five years (30.1 percent) or some payments for all five years (26.7 percent). In other words, 40 percent of those who received payments received them in all five years. The last column shows that few women received high payments consistently.

While not measuring year-to-year changes, the lower panel of Table III.9 confirms that over time there was a significant change in the amount of child support paid annually and that these changes went in both directions, with some noncustodial parents paying more and some paying less. "No payments" was the more stable status; 38 percent of custodial parents had no payment in either year 1 or 5, a slightly higher rate than those with no payment in any year (the upper panel). However, more than twice as many custodial parents received *more* in year 5 than in year 1 (33.9 percent), compared with those who received less (15.5 percent).

Summary

- There appears to be a fair amount of instability in payments from month to month. Among those who were receiving child support early in the panels, for example, from 35 percent to 39 percent did not receive payments for more than five consecutive months. The unreliability of monthly payments may reduce the ability of child support to sustain self-sufficiency. Given the prevalence of wage withholding as a method of securing payments, and the inability to voluntarily discontinue wage withholding, this instability may reflect frequent job changes by the noncustodial parent, a pattern often associated with the low-wage labor market, and/or employment by the noncustodial parent that is not amenable to wage withholding, such as day labor, self-employment, or short-term contracts.

- The yearly data from the CSDE show an increase in payments over time, although a significant number of women did not receive payments in year 1 or year 5. Among women with payments, those who received the highest pay-

ments had the most reliability. Among women who received some payments, most experienced increases in payments or received similar amounts over time.

Multivariate Analyses of Child Support Receipt

In addition to being influenced by policy, child support outcomes are related to the demographic characteristics of custodial and noncustodial parents. Award rates, for example, are lower for black and Hispanic women, compared with white women; are lower for less educated women; and are lower for never-married women (Grall 2003). Receipt rates also vary in a similar way by these characteristics. This section examines the correlates of child support award and receipt rates.

Table III.10 presents estimates from the SIPP sample. The results for having an award and receiving support are similar to those found in other research. Black and Hispanic women, for example, are less likely to have awards and receive support than white women; more educated women are more likely to receive support; and divorced and separated women are more likely to receive support than never-married and (re-) married women (an omitted category).

Comparing the three models shows that some of the factors that help explain "receiving support" seem to work largely through their effect on the probability of having an award. For example, women with more than a high school education were more likely to have awards and receive payments than those who did not complete high school (models 1 and 2). But the effect of this variable on the likelihood of child support receipt goes to zero once we restrict the sample to women with awards. In other words, more educated women are more likely to receive child support largely because they are more likely to have orders in place. For other variables, however, the lack of statistical significance appears related to the smaller sample size for the third model. Once we restrict the sample to women with awards, for example, the coefficients on black and Hispanic status are largely unchanged, but the coefficient on Hispanic status is now statistically insignificant because of an increase in the standard error.

Table III.11 presents models for the PFS sample. Since the PFS sample consists of mothers already with awards, the appropriate comparison with the SIPP analysis is the first column of Table III.11 with the third column of Table III.10. The models for PFS also are separated into those predicting formal versus informal cash support (these data were unavailable in the SIPP). In general, few variables predict the likelihood of receiving support. Factors such as education, marital status, and race/ethnicity have no significant effects on the likelihood of receiving payments. This pattern may be due to the fact that this sample consists entirely of women with awards in place, although we cannot rule out the possibility that it is due to the particular sampling strategy used for the PFS demonstration. One interesting finding for this sample is that black women are less likely to receive formal support than white women but are more likely to receive informal

support. This may relate to employment patterns in which black noncustodial parents have less stable employment so they "pay when they can" but white noncustodial parents have jobs in which wage attachments can be more easily executed. The most important predictors of receipt seem to be the site variables (the omitted category is Tennessee), indicating the potential importance of state policies and practices relating to enforcement. Women in Massachusetts, for example, are more likely than those in Tennessee to receive support. This may be related to unobservable factors about the state that are correlated with child support outcomes but may also be due to differences in the strength of its child support enforcement system.

The Urban Change results are presented in Table III.12. In general, once women get an award, there is not much difference in receipt rates based on demographic characteristics or location. In some cases, however, this is the result of a smaller sample size. The effects of mothers' age and number of children, for example, go to zero for the sample with awards. On the other hand, education level becomes statistically insignificant in model 3 owing largely to the increased standard error. The pattern of effects in some cases runs counter to that found for the SIPP. For example, race/ethnicity has no effect on the likelihood of having an award, but being Hispanic does affect the likelihood of receiving payments. The Urban Change results also differ with respect to the signs of some coefficients. In Urban Change, for example, black and Hispanic women were more likely to receive support than white women, while the SIPP results show the opposite pattern, and one that is typically found in prior research. This finding may be a result of sampling strategy for Urban Change, in which the sample was drawn from low-income neighborhoods with a high fraction of black or Hispanic residents.

Table III.13 presents models for the CSDE sample. The models for this sample examine what factors predict the likelihood of receiving any support (without taking award status into account), following model 2 for the SIPP and Urban Change samples, but also what factors predict the likelihood of receiving a high level of support, or more than $2,400 a year. In addition to the standard demographic characteristics of the mother, we also include information on the father's contact with focal child.

The results suggest that mothers are more likely to receive any child support when noncustodial fathers have some contact with their children and when there are a greater number of children living with the custodial mothers. These factors were also positively associated with the receipt of high amounts of child support, although the associations were slightly weakened. Other studies have also shown this relationship between contact and payment. Nord and Zill (1996), however, find using the SIPP that the effect of contact diminishes when the effect of prior payment also is taken into account.

The results from the CSDE are somewhat more similar to the SIPP than to the other samples. For example, black and Hispanic women were less likely to receive both any and high

child support, and more educated mothers were also more likely to receive some support, although high amounts of support. The similarity of findings with those from the SIPP sample may reflect the broader sampling strategy of CSDE, relative to PFS and Urban Change.

Finally, we find a marginally significant relationship between the mothers' cash welfare history and the receipt of any child support, but not with the receipt of high levels of support. Those with longer welfare histories are more likely to receive support, perhaps because the child support office has been working with them for a longer period or because they may be more likely to have awards. The effect of welfare receipt differs from the effects found for the Urban Change sample, in which welfare receipt in the prior month reduced the likelihood of child support receipt. However, welfare receipt for this sample was measured in the month prior to the survey. In contrast, the welfare receipt for the CSDE analysis is defined as welfare receipt at some point during the 24 months prior to entering Wisconsin's TANF program. For this reason, it distinguishes between ongoing versus new recipients.

Table III.14 presents models of child support stability using the SIPP and PFS samples. For these models, the samples are restricted to those who received child support at some point during the first 12 months (SIPP) or first 3 months (PFS). The first column presents results from a model predicting whether the first spell of child support receipt lasted 6 or more months (including spells that were already in progress in month 1). In the SIPP, the only factors predicting spell length are Hispanic status and education level. The second column presents results from a model predicting the number of times monthly payment changed by more than 40 percent. In the SIPP sample, black and Hispanic women were less likely to experience big changes in child support receipt, perhaps because they received lower amounts or because they were more likely to have an order only if the noncustodial parent had employment that allowed for wage attachment. For PFS, only the mother's age (older women are less likely to experience big changes in amounts) and marital status affected reliability, although several of the site variables are statistically significant. Again, the PFS findings imply that the state's enforcement actions, not custodial parent characteristics, affect payment reliability

Summary

- Using the broader-based sample of the SIPP and the Wisconsin-based CSDE, black and Hispanic women were found to be less likely than their white counterparts to have child support orders, to be less likely to receive child support, and to receive lower amounts. Across all samples, less educated women were also less likely to receive support, and part of this effect operates through the fact that they were also less likely to have awards in place. Education may be strongly tied to the receipt of support, because better-educated women are more able to navigate the system or because their edu-

cation level is a proxy for the noncustodial parents' ability to pay. Marital status also has a strong relationship with child support outcomes — previously married (divorced) women are more likely than married women to receive child support, although this effect may operate through their greater likelihood of having orders in place. Never-married women also appear less likely than previously married women to have orders in place and to receive support, although this relationship was not found in every analysis. Current welfare receipt is associated with a reduced likelihood of receiving payments in one sample, although women with a longer history of welfare receipt are more likely to receive support than those who are relatively new to the welfare system. Finally, the PFS data show that black women are less likely than white women to receive formal child support but more likely to receive informal support.

Table III.1

Child Support Receipt, Full Samples

	SIPP Month 20 1997/98	UC Wave 1 1998/99	PFS Month 14 1996/97	
All				
With order or agreement in survey month (%)	40.9	27.0	N/A	
Received child support (%)	22.1	8.8	N/A	
Monthly income	1,374	1,165	1,400	
Among those with agreements or orders				
Receiving child support (%)	45.6	20.6	33.5	
Average order amount ($)	284	N/A	217	
Among those receiving payments ($)				
Average payment	181	177	148	
Formal payments	N/A	N/A	123	
Informal payments	N/A	N/A	25	
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	21.9	14.5	12.4	
	SIPP Month 20 1997/98	UC Wave 1 1998/99	PFS Program 1996/97	PFS Control 1996/97
Receipt of child support by income quintile (%)				
0-20%	24.6	7.8	29.5	32.6
21-40%	20.4	6.7	35.5	38.0
41-60%	27.8	9.0	34.9	28.6
61-80%	23.0	11.0	33.1	30.9
81-100%	18.7	10.2	43.1	29.1
Sample size	915	1,876	1,315	

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities.

Notes: Information on child support order status in the SIPP comes from the topical module; child support receipt comes from the core survey.

Table III.2

Child Support Receipt, by Welfare Status

	SIPP - Month 20 1997/98		UC -Wave 1 1998/99		PFS -Month 14 1996/97	
	On Welfare	Off Welfare	On Welfare	Off Welfare	On Welfare	Off Welfare
All						
With agreement or order in survey month (%)	36.1	48.6	25.8	33.9	N/A	N/A
Received child support (%)	19.5	27.8	7.5	15.5	N/A	N/A
Monthly income	1,229	1,694	1,133	1,341	1,263	1,589
Among those with agreements or orders						
Receiving child support (%)	43.3	49.5	18.5	29.1	32.9	34.2
Average order amount ($)	282	288	N/A	N/A	201	237
Among those receiving payments ($)						
Average payment	125	270	145	257	114	194
Formal payments	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	92	166
Informal payments	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	23	28
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	14.3	34.1	11.9	20.8	9.7	16.1
Sample size	636	279	1,565	310	928	688

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.

Notes: Information on child support order status in the SIPP comes from the topical module; child support receipt comes from the core survey.

Table III.3

Child Support Receipt in 1999, CSDE

	Full Sample	On Welfare	Off Welfare
All			
Received child support (%)	48	44.7	50.5
Total income ($)	11,098	10,684	11,418
Income sources (%)			
Child support	8.3	6.9	9.4
Mothers' earnings	59.3	33.2	78.1
Food stamps	18.1	25.9	12.5
W-2	14.3	34.0	N/A
Among those receiving child support			
Average amount received (%)			
$1-1200	47.8	53	44.3
$1201-2400	22.9	22.5	23
$2401-3600	12.9	12.5	13.1
$3601-4800	7.5	6	8.7
$4800 +	8.9	6	10.9
Sample size	11,973	5,241	6,732

Source: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Table III.4

Trends Over Time in Child Support Receipt

	SIPP		UC	
	Month 20 1997/98	Month 44 1999/2000	Wave 1 1998/99	Wave 2 2001
All				
With agreement or order in survey month (%)	38.7	43.8	27.0	33.4
Received child support (%)	22.3	21.9	8.9	15.5
Among those with agreements or orders				
Receiving child support (%)	48.8	47.9	20.6	37.8
Average order amount ($)	288	277	N/A	N/A
Among those receiving payments ($)				
Average payment	181	203	177	249
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	20.8	24.6	14.5	22.2
Receipt of child support by income quintile (%) (rates of welfare receipt in parentheses)				
0-20%	22.9 (73.7)	22.2 (47.0)	7.8 (80.3)	15.4 (27.7)
21-40%	21.1 (83.7)	21.5 (46.3)	6.7 (91.6)	13.1 (49.0)
41-60%	23.7 (68.1)	19.7 (38.5)	9.0 (87.2)	13.4 (43.1)
61-80%	23.7 (58.8)	25.0 (26.8)	11.0 (80.3)	17.3 (37.7)
81-100%	19.7 (56.8)	27.3 (23.2)	10.2 (79.4)	16.2 (28.4)
Sample size	666	666	1,876	1,876

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities.

Notes: Information on child support order status in the SIPP comes from the topical module; child support receipt comes from the core survey.

Table III.5

Trends Over Time, by Welfare Status in First Survey Wave

	SIPP		UC	
	Month 20 1997/98	Month 44 1999/2000	Wave 1 1998/99	Wave 2 2001
On Welfare in Month 20 or Wave 1				
All				
With order or agreement in survey month (%)	34.7	40.4	25.8	31.8
Received child support (%)	19.1	19.7	7.5	14.6
Among those with agreements or orders				
Receiving child support (%)	43.8	44.9	18.5	37.4
Average order amount ($)	278	262	N/A	N/A
Among those receiving payments ($)				
Average payment	121	182	145	243
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	14.3	22.1	11.9	22.5
Sample size	466	466	1,565	1,566
Off Welfare in Month 20 in Wave 1				
All				
With order or agreement in survey month (%)	48.0	51.7	33.9	42.6
Received child support (%)	29.8	27.4	15.5	20.1
Among those with agreements or orders				
Receiving child support (%)	57.5	53.9	29.1	39.7
Average order amount ($)	306	305	N/A	N/A
Among those receiving payments ($)				
Average payment	273	242	257	271
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	30.6	29.2	20.8	21.4
Sample size	200	200	310	310

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities.
Notes: Information on child support order status in the SIPP comes from the topical module; child support receipt comes from the core survey.

Table III.6

Trends Over Time in Child Support Receipt: CSDE

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Receiving child support (%)	40.8	48	53.2	52.4	52.6
Average payments, among those receiving child support (%)					
$1-1200	51.5	47.9	47.9	45.4	43.9
$1201-2400	22.8	22.9	20.5	21.8	21.7
$2401-3600	12.0	12.9	13.9	13.4	14.4
$3601-4800	7.1	7.5	7.1	8.6	8.6
$4800 +	7.1	9.0	10.5	10.9	11.4
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	15.2	17.3	18.0	18.9	19.6
Child support as a fraction of income (%)					
0%	59.0	50.2	43.8	43.7	42.8
1-10%	20.7	22.3	24.3	23.4	19.9
11-20%	9.1	10.7	11.6	10.9	11.5
Over 20%	11.2	16.8	20.3	22.0	25.7
Monthly payment as percentage of family income (%)	6.2	8.3	9.6	9.9	10.3
Receipt of child support by income quintile (%)					
0-20%	38.5	41.7	43.1	40.7	39.7
21-40%	40.0	48.6	54.0	52.6	53.1
41-60%	39.1	48.1	55.8	55.5	55.9
61-80%	42.6	49.7	56.2	56.5	58.3
81-100%	43.9	51.8	57.1	57.0	56.1
Sample size = 11,973					

Source: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998. Calculations for the botton two panels are based on observations with nonmissing income information. The percent of the full sample missing income information varies from 1% to 8% across years.

Table III.7

Trends Over Time, by Welfare Status: CSDE

	1999	2000	2001	2002
Leavers in 1999				
Receiving child support (%)	50.5	54.0	52.6	52.4
Among those receiving child support (%)				
$1-1200	44.4	43.5	41.6	41.0
$1201-2400	23.0	20.9	21.9	21.6
$2401-3600	13.1	14.6	13.7	14.9
$3601-4800	8.7	8.1	9.3	9.0
$4800 +	10.9	13.0	13.5	13.5
Sample size = 6,732				
Recipients in 1999				
Receiving child support (%)	44.7	52.2	52.3	52.8
Among those receiving child support (%)				
$1-1200	53.2	53.8	50.3	47.7
$1201-2400	22.6	20.1	21.6	22.0
$2401-3600	12.5	12.8	12.8	13.8
$3601-4800	6.0	6.1	7.6	8.0
$4800 +	6.0	7.1	7.6	8.5
Sample size = 5,241				

Source: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Table III.8

Reliability of Monthly Payments

	SIPP 48-Month Panel	PFS 14-Month Panel
Among those who ever received child support payments		
Number of months received child support payments	18.5	7.8
Number of times child support payment status changed	3.5	1.3
Number of times child support payment changed by 40% or more	5.1	3.8
Number of months of first child support spell	10.7	6.4
If spell started in months 1, 2, or 3		
Spell lasted less than 5 months	39.3	34.5
Spell lasted 5 to 9 months	24.3	9.5
Spell lasted more than 10 months	36.4	56.0
Sample size	568	440

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.
Notes: Analysis restricted to women who received at least one payment within the first year of the panel (SIPP) or during the 14 months before the survey (PFS).

Table III.9

Reliability of Child Support Payments 1998-2002: CSDE

	No Child Support	Low Child Support	High Child Support
Number of years in 1998-2002 in which family had zero, low, or high child support payments			
Zero years	26.7	37.0	71.4
One year	12.5	16.0	8.8
Two years	11.4	14.4	5.8
Three years	10.1	13.2	4.9
Four years	9.2	10.8	4.1
Five years	30.1	8.5	5.1

	Child Support Received in Year 5						
Child support payments in year 1 and year 5	$0	$1-1200	$1201-2400	$2401-3600	$3601-4800	Above $4800	Row sum
Child support received in year 1							
$0	38.0	12.2	4.5	2.3	1.1	1.2	59.2
$1-1200	6.4	7.5	3.4	1.9	1.0	0.8	21.0
$1201-2400	1.5	2.2	2.2	1.5	0.9	0.9	9.3
$2401-3600	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.9	4.9
$3601-4800	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.8	2.9
Above $4801	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	1.5	2.9

Sample size = 11,973

Source: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W-2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.
Notes: The numbers across all cells in panel 2 of the table sum to 100%. Low support is defined as $1 to $2400 during the year, and high support is defined as more than $2400 during the year.

Table III.10

Multivariate Analysis of Child Support Receipt, SIPP

	Having Award or Agreement			Received Child Support			Received Child Support Among Those with Awards		
	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error
Any child under the age of 5	0.221 *	0.059	0.117	0.162	0.190	0.124	0.024	0.905	0.200
Mother's age									
25-29	0.116	0.428	0.147	0.236	0.150	0.164	0.058	0.803	0.234
30-34	0.004	0.981	0.164	0.103	0.578	0.185	0.237	0.380	0.270
35-39	0.045	0.798	0.176	0.279	0.144	0.191	0.429	0.144	0.294
Over 40	-0.101	0.585	0.185	0.182	0.373	0.204	0.557 *	0.082	0.320
Race/ethnicity									
Black	-0.354 ***	0.001	0.110	-0.248 **	0.039	0.120	-0.240	0.180	0.179
Hispanic	-0.485 ***	0.000	0.138	-0.400 ***	0.008	0.150	-0.358	0.124	0.233
Other	-0.808 ***	0.003	0.276	-0.884 **	0.019	0.377	-0.680	0.319	0.682
Education									
High school diploma or GED	0.231 **	0.026	0.104	-0.028	0.801	0.112	-0.178	0.318	0.178
Beyond high school	0.325 *	0.051	0.166	0.293 *	0.085	0.170	0.003	0.990	0.254
Marital status									
Separated	0.051	0.798	0.197	0.274	0.198	0.213	0.282	0.416	0.347
Divorced	0.433 **	0.025	0.193	0.233	0.275	0.213	0.004	0.989	0.329
Never married	-0.004	0.984	0.183	0.101	0.615	0.201	0.395	0.228	0.328
Welfare receipt									
Received welfare payment last month	-0.149	0.138	0.100	-0.155	0.149	0.107	-0.105	0.513	0.160
Intercept	-0.412 *	0.091	0.244	-0.898 ***	0.001	0.270	-0.245	0.565	0.425
Sample size	890			890			318		
Log likelihood	-544.3			-453.9			-213.2		

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients.
Notes: Information on child support order status in the SIPP comes from the topical module; child support receipt comes from the core survey. All models are estimated as probits. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table III.11

Multivariate Analysis of Child Support Receipt, PFS

	Any Child Support			Formal			Informal		
	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error
Mother's age	-0.007	0.181	0.005	-0.004	0.499	0.005	-0.024 **	0.013	0.010
Race/ethnicity									
Black	-0.094	0.354	0.102	-0.177 *	0.063	0.095	0.568 ***	0.002	0.186
Hispanic	0.131	0.380	0.149	0.071	0.612	0.140	0.291	0.235	0.245
Education									
High school diploma or GED	0.126	0.164	0.091	0.185 **	0.032	0.086	-0.001	0.993	0.139
Beyond high school	0.117	0.220	0.096	0.118	0.198	0.092	0.123	0.400	0.145
Marital status									
Separated	-0.035	0.841	0.172	0.060	0.718	0.166	0.245	0.433	0.312
Divorced	0.003	0.987	0.155	0.074	0.618	0.149	0.025	0.936	0.312
Never married	-0.099	0.486	0.142	-0.034	0.803	0.137	0.213	0.437	0.273
Welfare receipt									
Received welfare payment last month	0.017	0.899	0.136	-0.021	0.875	0.132	0.078	0.704	0.205
Amount of welfare payment received	0.000	0.351	0.000	0.000	0.494	0.000	0.000	0.534	0.001
Employment status									
Employed at time of survey	0.041	0.623	0.083	0.072	0.367	0.080	-0.138	0.279	0.128
Number of children									
Two	-0.190 *	0.062	0.101	-0.120	0.212	0.096	0.067	0.655	0.150
Three or more	-0.033	0.749	0.103	0.056	0.566	0.098	-0.113	0.484	0.162
Site									
California	0.394 *	0.050	0.202	0.514 **	0.010	0.200	0.050	0.879	0.328
Florida	0.283 **	0.029	0.130	0.427 ***	0.001	0.128	0.041	0.831	0.192
Massachusetts	0.906 ***	0.000	0.180	0.958 ***	0.000	0.168	0.504 *	0.056	0.263
Michigan	0.198	0.115	0.126	0.333 ***	0.008	0.125	0.015	0.937	0.188
New Jersey	0.568 ***	0.000	0.148	0.698 ***	0.000	0.144	-0.030	0.891	0.221
Ohio	0.291 **	0.035	0.138	0.327 **	0.017	0.137	0.155	0.445	0.203
Intercept	-0.425	0.105	0.262	-0.901 ***	0.000	0.254	-1.402 ***	0.002	0.451
Sample size	1,315			1,510			1,334		
Log likelihood	-803.8			-865.2			-304.7		

Source: PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration

Notes: All models are estimated as probits. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table III.12

Multivariate Analysis of Child Support Receipt, Urban Change

	Having Award or Agreement				Received Child Support				Received Child Support Among Those with Awards			
	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
Mother's age	-0.011	*	0.087	0.006	-0.014	*	0.053	0.007	-0.005		0.627	0.011
Race/ethnicity												
Black	-0.074		0.673	0.175	0.338		0.114	0.214	0.275		0.299	0.265
Hispanic	-0.190		0.329	0.195	0.432	*	0.065	0.234	0.440		0.156	0.310
Education												
High school diploma or GED	0.134	*	0.098	0.081	0.182	*	0.050	0.093	0.176		0.204	0.138
Marital status												
Separated	-0.092		0.595	0.174	-0.104		0.608	0.202	-0.086		0.787	0.318
Divorced	0.521	***	0.002	0.171	0.498	***	0.009	0.190	0.504	*	0.074	0.282
Never married	-0.057		0.689	0.142	-0.002		0.993	0.163	0.170		0.502	0.254
Welfare receipt												
Received welfare payment last month	-0.140		0.266	0.126	-0.473	***	0.002	0.151	-0.385	*	0.087	0.225
Amount of welfare payment received	0.000		0.767	0.000	0.000		0.273	0.000	0.000		0.998	0.001
Employment status												
Employed at time of survey	-0.066		0.448	0.087	-0.111		0.261	0.098	-0.032		0.823	0.144
Number of children												
Two	0.264	**	0.037	0.127	0.298	**	0.046	0.150	0.091		0.693	0.230
Three or more	0.258	**	0.032	0.120	0.294	**	0.039	0.142	0.078		0.723	0.219
Site												
California	-0.074		0.526	0.116	-0.281	**	0.038	0.135	-0.158		0.462	0.215
Florida	-0.180		0.126	0.118	-0.243	*	0.067	0.132	-0.284		0.192	0.217
Ohio	0.453	***	0.000	0.108	0.070		0.560	0.120	-0.161		0.363	0.176
Intercept	-0.292		0.386	0.337	-0.969		0.013	0.390	-0.527		0.351	0.565
Sample size	1,217				1,217				407			
Log likelihood	-723.9				-539.8				-260.1			

Source: UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities.

Notes: All models are estimated as probits. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table III.13

Multivariate Analysis of Child Support Receipt, CSDE 1999

	CSDE (Any Child Support)				CSDE (High Child Support)			
	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
Any child under age 5	0.060		0.622	0.122	0.209		0.168	0.152
Mother's age								
25-29	0.303	**	0.014	0.123	0.384	**	0.017	0.160
30-34	0.302	**	0.039	0.146	0.362	*	0.054	0.188
35-39	0.227		0.153	0.159	0.547	***	0.006	0.199
Over 40	-0.098		0.608	0.191	0.148		0.552	0.249
Race/ethnicity								
Black	-0.500	***	0.000	0.105	-0.903	***	0.000	0.128
Hispanic	-0.818	***	0.000	0.198	-0.782	***	0.002	0.249
Other	-0.654	***	0.006	0.236	-0.822	**	0.013	0.329
Education								
High school diploma or GED	0.251	***	0.007	0.093	-0.092		0.457	0.124
Beyond high school	0.302	***	0.010	0.117	0.185		0.204	0.146
Marital status								
Cohabitating	0.076		0.657	0.172	0.089		0.678	0.214
Separated	0.554	*	0.081	0.318	0.006		0.988	0.390
Divorced	0.666	***	0.000	0.186	0.627	***	0.002	0.204
Never married	0.090		0.553	0.152	0.117		0.544	0.192
Welfare receipt								
Received welfare in 24 months prior to entry	0.233	*	0.055	0.121	0.242		0.123	0.157
Number of children								
Two	0.341	***	0.002	0.109	0.244	*	0.091	0.144
Three or more	0.258	**	0.027	0.117	0.326	**	0.035	0.154
Father related to focal child by marriage	-0.139		0.361	0.152	0.291	*	0.085	0.169

(continued)

Table III.13 (continued)

	CSDE (Any Child Support)				CSDE (High Child Support)			
	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
Fathers contact with focal child during 1999	0.285	***	0.002	0.091	0.229	*	0.058	0.121
Age of focal child as of 9/1/99								
2-5	-0.166		0.323	0.168	-0.299		0.168	0.217
6-12	-0.203		0.287	0.19	-0.224		0.346	0.238
13 or older	-0.166		0.471	0.230	-0.137		0.630	0.285
Intercept	-0.496	**	0.049	0.252	-1.467	***	0.000	0.325
Sample size	1,001				1,001			
Log likelihood	-638.6				-354.1			

Source: Survey of Wisconsin Works Families 1999.

Notes: High child support is defined as an amount of $4800 or higher. All models are estimated as probits. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table III.14

Multivariate Analysis of the Stability of Child Support Receipt

	First Spell Lasted 6 + Months				Number of Times Payment Changed by 40% +			
	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
SIPP								
Any child under age of 5	0.083		0.575	0.148	1.126		0.002	0.369
Mother's age								
25-29	0.142		0.412	0.173	0.164		0.744	0.504
30-34	0.076		0.689	0.191	-0.205		0.675	0.489
35-39	-0.157		0.472	0.218	0.150		0.793	0.569
Over 40	0.093		0.695	0.237	-0.041		0.946	0.600
Race/ethnicity								
Black	-0.017		0.908	0.147	-1.441	***	0.000	0.409
Hispanic	-0.445	**	0.015	0.183	-2.144	***	0.000	0.475
Other	-0.450		0.244	0.386	-2.667	***	0.000	0.729
Education								
High school diploma or GED	0.228	*	0.100	0.139	0.020		0.958	0.381
Beyond high school	0.239		0.280	0.221	0.709		0.327	0.723
Marital status								
Separated	-0.057		0.810	0.236	0.201		0.760	0.656
Divorced	0.248		0.269	0.225	1.036		0.120	0.666
Never married	-0.077		0.712	0.208	0.404		0.481	0.573
Welfare receipt								
Received welfare payment in month 1	-0.147		0.346	0.156	-0.358		0.412	0.436
Intercept	-0.612	**	0.029	0.281	2.863	***	0.000	0.762
Sample size	549				549			

(continued)

Table III.14 (continued)

	First Spell Lasted 6 + Months			Number of Times Payment Changed by 40% +		
	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error
PFS						
Mother's age	0.009	0.208	0.008	-0.032 ***	0.007	0.012
Race/ethnicity						
Black	0.015	0.911	0.130	-0.014	0.945	0.199
Hispanic	-0.013	0.944	0.180	-0.354	0.199	0.275
Education						
High school diploma or GED	0.050	0.685	0.124	0.199	0.294	0.190
Beyond high school	0.113	0.377	0.128	0.055	0.778	0.196
Marital status						
Separated	0.081	0.710	0.218	0.627 *	0.061	0.334
Divorced	-0.101	0.619	0.203	0.039	0.901	0.313
Never married	-0.065	0.722	0.181	-0.087	0.754	0.279
Welfare receipt						
Received welfare payment last month	-0.131	0.470	0.181	-0.094	0.735	0.279
Amount of welfare payment received	0.000	0.462	0.000	0.000	0.475	0.001
Employment status						
Employed at time of survey	-0.053	0.642	0.115	0.071	0.687	0.176
Number of children						
Two	-0.126	0.347	0.133	-0.117	0.564	0.204
Three or more	0.028	0.837	0.137	-0.014	0.949	0.210
Site						
California	0.456	0.127	0.299	0.155	0.735	0.458
Florida	0.216	0.280	0.200	0.687 **	0.025	0.305
Massachusetts	0.452	0.068	0.248	-0.018	0.962	0.377
Michigan	0.054	0.797	0.210	0.501	0.115	0.318
New Jersey	0.417 *	0.055	0.217	0.918 ***	0.006	0.331
Ohio	0.264	0.280	0.244	0.400	0.284	0.374
Intercept	-0.616	0.100	0.375	4.631 ***	0.000	0.574
Sample size	678			678		
Log likelihood	-452.9			0.1		

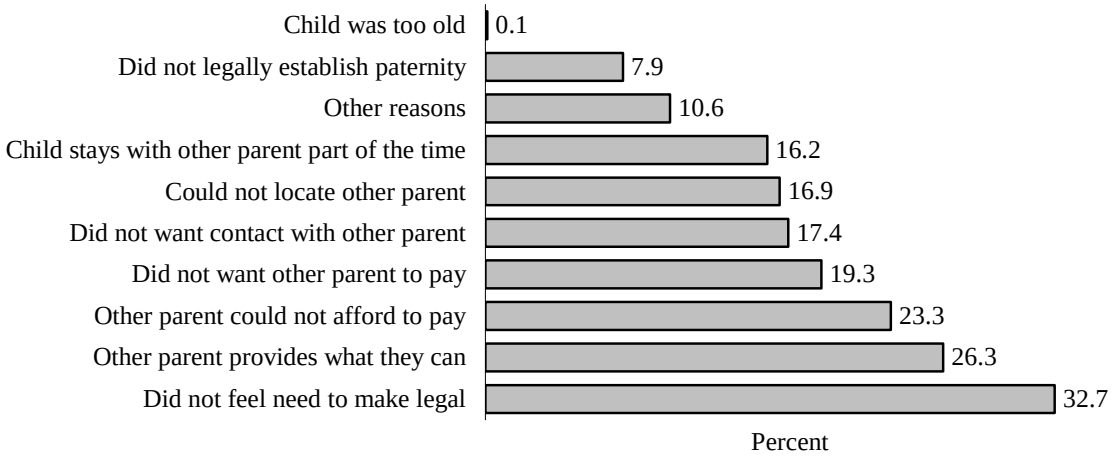
Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.

Notes: Analyses restricted to women who received at least one payment within the first year of the panel (SIPP) or the first 3 months of the PFS follow-up period.

Figure III.1

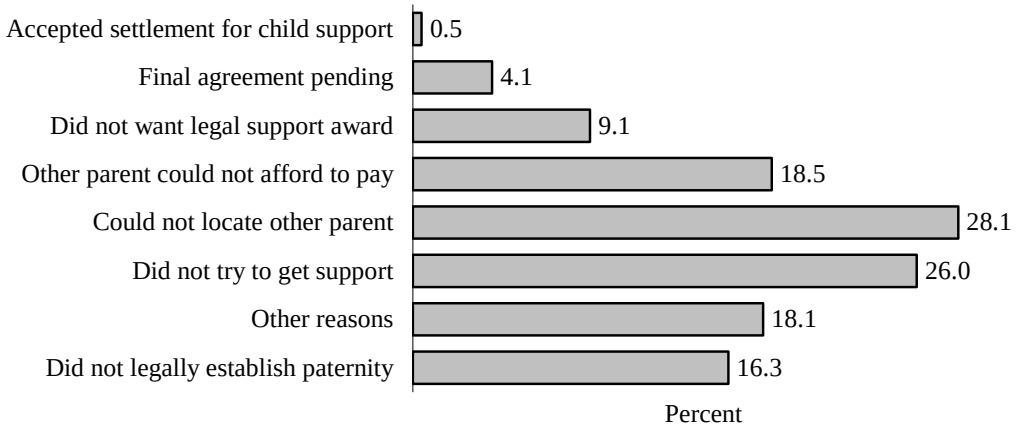
Reasons for Not Having a Child Support Order

Reasons No Legal Agreement Established for Custodial Parents: 2002 Current Population Survey



Source: Grall 2003. Base includes 5.9 million custodial parents without agreements or with informal agreements. Excludes those with pending agreements.
Notes: Total of percentages exceeds 100 because respondents could list more than one reason.

Reason for No Agreement: 1996 SIPP Panel



Source: 523 custodial mothers who were current and ex-welfare recipients without agreements in month 20 of SIPP 1996 panel.
Notes: Total of percentages exceeds 100 because respondents could list more than one reason.

IV. Patterns of Child Support Receipt During the Transition from Welfare to Self-Sufficiency

This section uses data from the SIPP sample to examine the receipt of child support around the time women exit welfare. We know from the analyses presented in this report and previous research that women who have left welfare do receive child support and that, in fact, they have higher receipt rates than women who stay on welfare. But what about immediately after the welfare exit, when the need for other sources of income may be greatest?

Analysis from Wisconsin from the pre-TANF period shows that child support payment patterns were not significantly related to a mother's welfare transitions (Meyer and Cancian 2002, a study reviewed in section V below). In contrast, the recent OIG study (2001) suggests that there are some problems in the coordination between the two agencies that resulted in delayed payments for welfare leavers in some states. For example, between 7 percent and 30 percent of TANF leavers in the case study states experienced delays in receiving child support payments or received underpayments. The report also cited frequent underpayment, particularly in cases where there was a recent change in TANF status.

This analysis speaks to the issue of coordination between the TANF and CSE agencies and whether there are noticeable delays in the receipt of payments after exit. Although it does not provide direct evidence on whether women receive the pass-through rather than the full amount of the current support payment in the few months immediately after they leave welfare, examining changes in child support status pre- and post-exit may provide clues about the nature and extent of any problem that may exist.

Figure IV.1 presents results for the full sample of leavers and for the subset with child support orders. Results are shown not by month of exit but by survey wave of exit, to avoid problems associated with seam bias. Recall that a survey wave is four months, meaning that wave 1 after exit can be up to months 4 through 7 after exit if the woman left welfare in month 1 of the previous wave. For both groups, receipt rates change very little before and after the welfare exit. The changes upwards are very small, and there is no evidence that receipt rates drop in the period after the welfare exit.

Panel A of Figure IV.2 presents results for women who were receiving support in the wave prior to exiting welfare. For this group, there is a drop in receipt rates during the wave of exit, to 72 percent. Rates decline slightly in the subsequent two waves; by the second wave after welfare exit, 69 percent received support. Thus, the small drop in receipt rates we observe for all women reflects a decline for women who were actually receiving payments prior to exiting. However, among women who were not receiving child support in the wave prior to exit, about

10 percent were receiving child support in the wave of exit, and 17 percent were receiving it by two waves after exit (Panel B of Figure IV.2). Part of the changes in receipt rates for both groups is likely a reflection of the instability of payments over time. In other words, given the observed variability in payments, we would expect payment rates to fall somewhat for the group in which 100 percent were receiving payments in the prior wave. Some women may also experience a decrease in child support because of the reason they left welfare, for example, if they left because of marriage to or cohabitation with the father or if their children aged out of eligibility for welfare and child support.

Panel C of Figure IV.2 presents results on amounts received for women who received payments in all four waves. Average receipts increased in the wave of exit and in the wave after exit. Although we cannot determine whether these women were receiving all of the child support paid on their behalf, the data show that they were receiving more on average after they exited welfare. Recall that this pattern does not necessarily mean that more payments were being made after they exited, since the women were reporting only the amount they received directly. The pass-through amount they received while they were on welfare is likely to be less than the amount of current child support collected on their behalf. By the time of the child support data collection under the 1996 SIPP panel, some states had already discontinued any pass-through and disregard of child support collections for TANF recipients (Sorensen and Halpern 1999). However, this analysis cannot fully address the timeliness of payment issues raised in the recent report by the OIG since the SIPP is too rough (with seam bias) to capture the period immediately following the welfare exit.

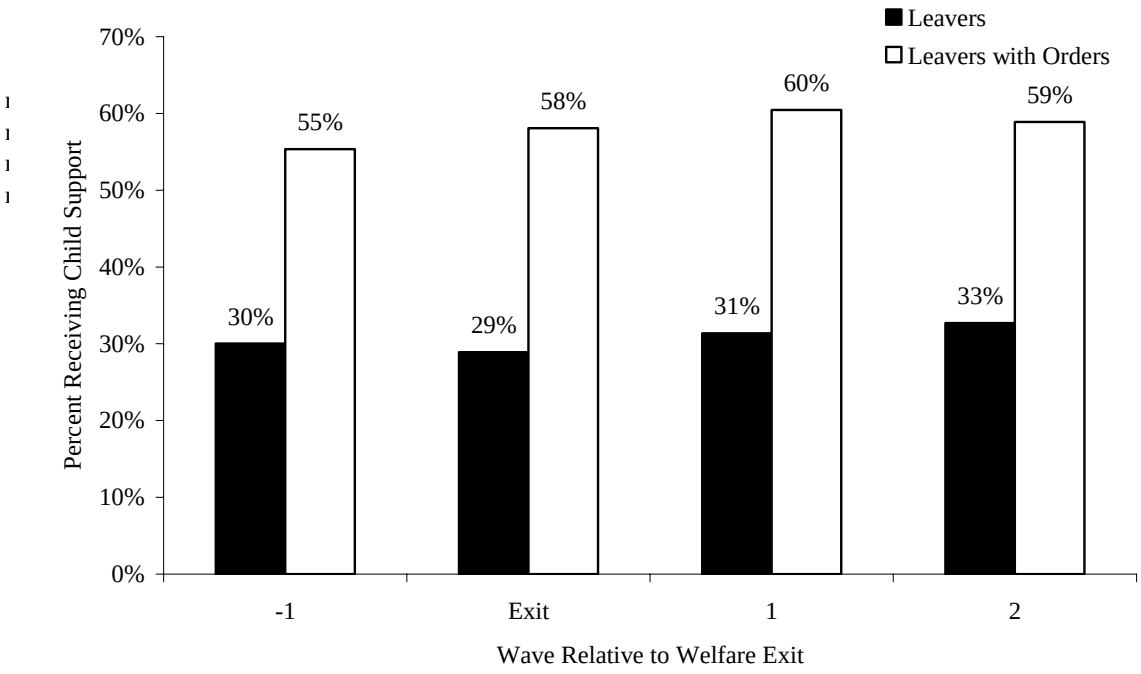
Summary

- The SIPP data show that overall rates of child support receipt remain relatively steady as women transition off welfare, although there is a drop in receipt rates among women receiving child support in the months prior to exiting welfare; about 69 percent received child support eight to 11 months later, a reduction of 31 percent. In contrast, about 17 percent of women who were not receiving support in the months immediately prior to exit began receiving support after exit. Part of this increase may be a result of the fact that under PRWORA many states discontinued to pass through child support to TANF recipients. This would lead to an increase in receipt rates once women left TANF.

- Average amounts received increase after exit from welfare for women who continue to receive payments. This finding suggests that they are beginning to receive more of the payments made on their behalf.

Figure IV.1

Child Support Receipt Around the Welfare Exit (SIPP)

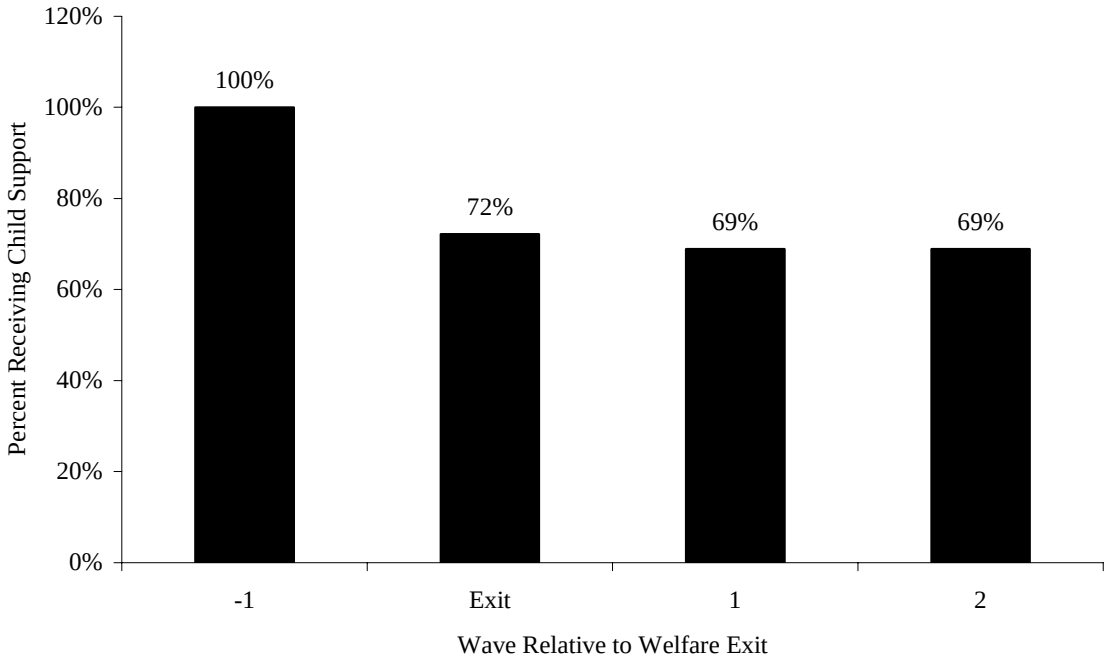


Source: SIPP 1996 panel.
Note: Sample size is 609.

Figure IV.2

Child Support Receipt Around the Welfare Exit (SIPP)

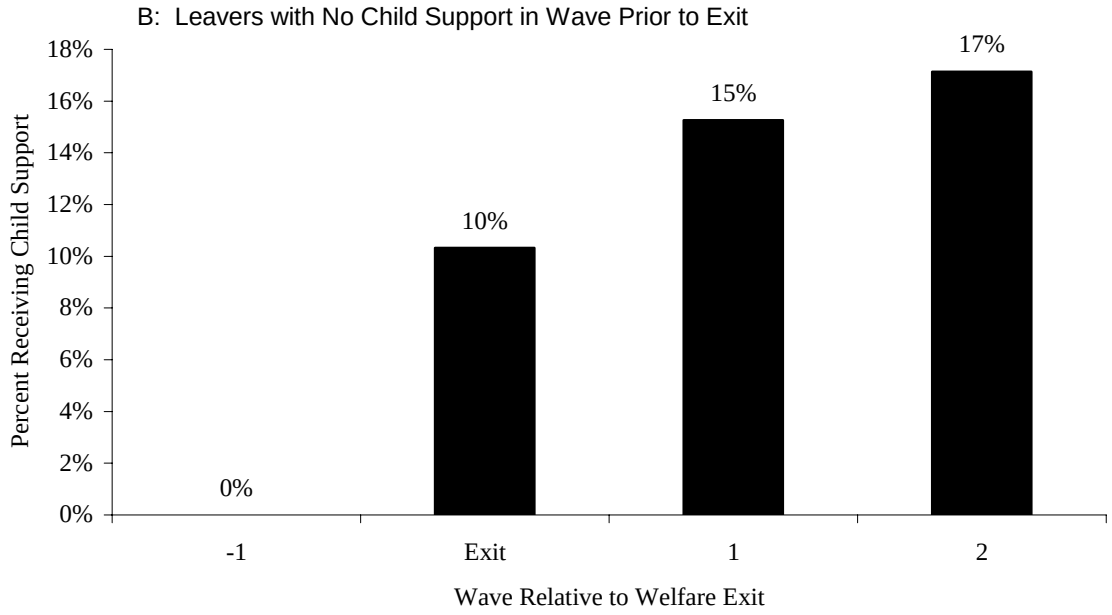
A: Leavers with Child Support in Wave Prior to Exit



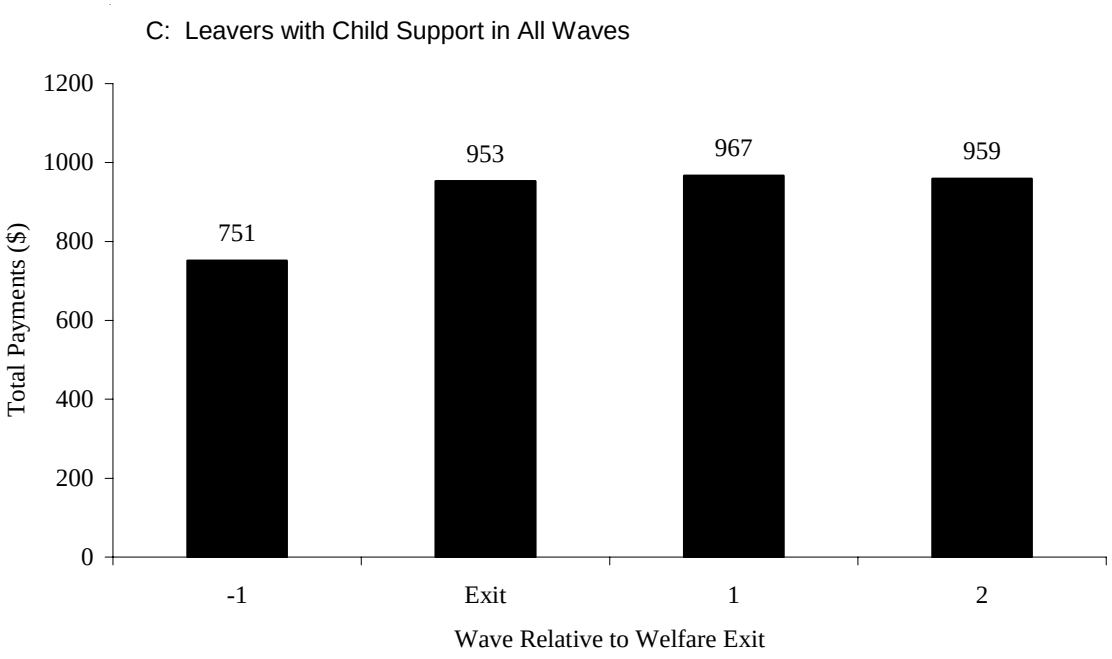
Source: SIPP 1996 panel
Sample size 183.

(continued)

Figure IV.2 (continued)



Source: SIPP 1996 panel.
Note: Sample size 426.



Source: SIPP 1996 panel.
Note: Sample size 101.

V. Effects of Child Support Receipt on Self-Sufficiency

Child support can represent a significant share of income for women who receive it and can help women move to self-sufficiency by increasing the likelihood of leaving and staying off welfare. Theoretically speaking, the receipt of child support income should increase the likelihood that a woman leaves welfare and reduce the likelihood that she returns once she has left. In terms of its effects on employment, the prediction is not so clear. By providing another income source, child support might encourage women to leave welfare and thus increase work. However, as a source of nonlabor income, the standard economic model would predict a reduction in her work effort.

The existing research on this issue is primarily based on statistical analyses using survey data rather than experimental research designs. Huang, Garfinkel, and Waldfogel (2000) used data from the NLSY and found that child support receipt increased the likelihood of leaving welfare and reduced the likelihood of returning to welfare. Meyer (1993) found similar results using data from Wisconsin, but the changes in child support that were needed to affect welfare decisions were fairly large. Small amounts of child support actually reduced the likelihood of welfare exit. Finally, Hu (1999) also found that child support receipt reduced welfare use and had little effect on work effort.

A key limitation of the existing research is that, in the absence of an experiment, there is always the possibility that any observed relationship, such as between child support receipt and welfare use, is due to unobserved factors that influence both outcomes. This section presents a range of estimates and methods, using both statistical (or non-experimental) and experimental data.

Table V.1 presents the effects of child support receipt on work and welfare status for the SIPP, Urban Change, and CSDE samples. Each number under the columns labeled "coefficient" represents a separate regression model and is the effect of child support receipt on the outcome given in the leftmost column. The first column of coefficients shows the effect of child support when it is entered directly into the regression model. The second column presents the results from an instrumental variables approach. In this case, child support is "instrumented," or predicted, using state child support enforcement variables. This predicted value for child support is then entered into the model instead of the actual value. The idea behind the instrumental variables approach is to rid the child support variable of its correlation with self-sufficiency outcomes that are due not to a real causal effect but to their mutual correlation with other unobserved factors. Since the child support enforcement variables should be correlated with the self-

sufficiency outcomes only through their effect on child support receipt, predicted child support receipt should not suffer from this "endogeneity bias."

The first several rows present evidence from the SIPP sample, showing the effects of child support on the likelihood of leaving welfare, returning to welfare, and working. For those on welfare in month 20, for example, receiving child support in month 20 increases the likelihood of leaving welfare within six months. For women not receiving welfare in month 20, receiving child support in that month decreases the likelihood of returning to welfare within the next six months. Finally, among women were not receiving welfare in month 20, the receipt of child support has no effect on their likelihood of working at some point during the subsequent six months.

The right set of columns present child support receipt that is instrumented using state variables. State variables that have been associated with strong child support enforcement and are currently being used to measure state performance in the IV-D program (percentage of IV-D cases with collections on arrears, the percentage of IV-D cases with orders, IV-D expenditures per case, and the percentage of cases with paternity establishment) are believed to affect child support receipt but to have no effect on welfare exit, reentry, or employment, other than through their effects on child support receipt. Once child support is instrumented, or predicted, using these variables, its effect on leaving welfare remains statistically significant, and it now has a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of working after leaving welfare.[21]

The next panel presents results from Urban Change. For the full sample, including women without awards, we examine the effects of women's child support status in wave 1 (1998/1999) on their work and welfare status at wave 2 (2001). In this case, only the non-instrumented effects are available, since there is not enough variation in state policies to predict child support (recall that the Urban Change sample covers four states). The receipt of child support in the first survey wave has no effect on the likelihood of being employed in wave 2 and, in contrast to the SIPP results, is associated with an increase in the likelihood of receiving welfare at wave 2.

The final panel presents results from the CSDE data. Since the CSDE treatment was found to increase child support payments, child support receipt is instrumented in this case using the variable indicating experimental, or treatment, status. Because experimental status was determined at random, it should have no effect on self-sufficiency outcomes other than through its effect on child support receipt. The left rows show that child support receipt in year 1 reduces

[21]This analysis also controlled for certain state demographics that are associated with performance on these measures. These include: percent of the IV-D caseload on TANF; percent of males aged 20 to 64 not employed; percent of population living in urban areas; personal income per capita; proportion of TANF cases with case heads who are under age 30; and percent of the state's population living in the same home one year before the Census survey. For more information, see Tapogna et al. (2003).

the amount of cash benefits received in year 2. However, the instrumented coefficient is substantially smaller and statistically insignificant.

Additional Results from the CSDE and PFS Experimental Evaluations

Both the CSDE and PFS were random assignment evaluations of programs that had the goal of increasing the payment and receipt of child support. Results shown in the evaluation reports show that both programs met this goal. Experimental results from the CSDE show effects of the pass-through policy (Meyer and Cancian 2001). The pass-through led to a significant increase in child support receipt for mothers in the treatment group and also to an increase in the proportion of fathers making payments (details will be presented in the section VII). PFS also led to an increase in payments by fathers (for the full sample) and an increase in mothers' reported receipt of child support (for some subgroups).

As part of these evaluations, researchers also examined effects on secondary outcomes, including mothers' welfare receipt and employment. If child support has a true effect on work and welfare outcomes, then each program, through its effect on child support, should affect women's work and welfare status. In addition, if the program has larger effects on child support for particular subgroups, we might expect to see larger effects on work and welfare for these same subgroups.

In general, the evaluations found few effects on these secondary outcomes, although there were effects in particular areas. In CSDE, mothers in the treatment group received fewer welfare benefits than those in the control group, although this effect did not persist beyond the first year (1998). There were few effects on mothers' employment and earnings. The fact that the experimental effect on welfare receipt did not persist is consistent with the insignificant coefficient for instrumented child support receipt in Table V.1.

Table V.2 presents results from PFS, many of which were presented in the evaluation reports. The first set of columns presents the program's effects on child support, work, and welfare status for the full sample. The program led to an increase in child support payments, as reported on CSE records; a small and statistically insignificant increase in survey reported receipt of child support; and no effects on custodial parents' employment or welfare receipt.

The next columns look at impacts for two subgroups. The idea behind looking at subgroups is to examine whether larger increases in child support are associated with bigger changes in work and welfare. PFS led to an increase in child support receipt (5.9 percentage points) for families who had high rates of father visitation at baseline (or prior to entering the program) and a negative but insignificant effect for families with low visitation. However, the

program's effects on employment and welfare receipt are similar and remain insignificant for both groups, suggesting that child support per se had little effect on these two outcomes.

Summary

- Across most specifications, child support receipt has little effect on custodial parents' employment status. This result may be due to the fact that the changes we observe in our data in child support amounts are not large enough to generate effects on this measure of self-sufficiency. On the other hand, the lack of strong results is consistent with economic theory, in which child support income may either increase or decrease work effort.

- The effects on welfare status are more mixed. Both the SIPP results and the CSDE experimental results suggest that child support receipt reduced welfare receipt (although the effects in the CSDE faded after one year), while the PFS results suggest no effect. The results from the two experiments suggest that if any effects do occur, they are short lived. However, a drawback of the experiments is that, in addition to being limited to a subset of the target population, they measure the effects of changes in child support that were observed in the data. In CSDE, and even more so in PFS, the increases in child support received by mothers in the treatment groups were fairly small. It might be the case that child support can act as a support for leaving welfare, if the amount received is large enough. Another reason for the small effects on work and welfare may be that child support is still a fairly unstable source of income for many women. Nonetheless, although we do not observe strong and consistent effects of child support on work and welfare, it continues to represent an important source of income for many low-income women.

Table V.1

Effects of Child Support Receipt on Self-Sufficiency

		Child Support Not Instrumented				Instrumented[a]			
Measures of self-sufficiency	Sample size	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
SIPP outcomes									
Likelihood of leaving welfare within 6 months among women on welfare in month 20	617	0.499	***	0.000	0.138	1.523	***	0.000	0.607
Likelihood of returning to welfare within 6 months among women not on welfare in month 20	919	-0.288	*	0.064	0.155	0.052		0.958	0.993
Likelihood of working within 6 months among women not on welfare in month 20	919	0.126		0.223	0.104	1.343	***	0.000	0.332
UC outcomes									
Employed at wave 2	1,873	-0.076		0.596	0.143	N/A			N/A
Receiving welfare at wave 2	1,873	0.321	**	0.039	0.155	N/A			N/A
CSDE outcomes									
Amount of cash benefits in year 2	11,647	-0.047	*	0.060	0.025	-0.013		0.956	0.240

Source: SIPP: Survey of Income and Program Participation 1996 panel, covering a nationally representative sample of current and ex-welfare recipients. UC: Urban Change, covering current and former welfare recipients in four large cities. CSDE: Child Support Demonstration Evaluation in Wisconsin, covering W2 participants who entered the program in 1997/1998.

Notes: Each coefficient represents a separate model and shows the effects of child support receipt on the outcome listed. For the SIPP and UC models, child support is included as the receipt of any support in month 20 (for the SIPP) and at wave 1 (for UC). For the CSDE model, child support is included as the amount received in year 1. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

[a]Instrumented for the SIPP using state policy variables and for CSDE using the treatment group status.

Table V.2

PFS Impacts on Employment and Welfare Receipt

	Full Sample				Low NCP Visits at Baseline				High NCP Visits at Baseline			
	Program	Control	Impact	P-Value	Program	Control	Impact	P-Value	Program	Control	Impact	P-Value
Employed (%)	43.7	44.5	-0.7	0.760	45.0	45.9	-0.9	0.833	43.3	43.4	-0.1	0.963
Earnings ($)	551	569	-18	0.632	580	528	52	0.424	538	586	-48	0.289
On welfare (%)	58.9	56.0	3.0	0.215	59.2	56.8	2.4	0.559	58.6	55.7	2.9	0.327
Survey records												
Received child support (%)	34.9	32.0	2.9	0.247	31.0	33.7	-2.8	0.543	37.1	31.1	5.9 *	0.055
Amount of formal child support ($)	45	39	5	0.338	38	42	-4	0.690	48	38	10	0.145
Child support records												
Received child support (%)	36.2	27.9	8.2 ***	0.000	36.0	26.8	9.2 **	0.016	36.1	28.5	7.5 ***	0.005
Amount of formal child support ($)	90.1	68.9	21.2 **	0.033	81.2	77.6	3.5	0.849	93.8	64.3	29.5 **	0.011
Sample size	1,618				544				1,074			

Source: PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.
Notes: Low visits indicates that the father visited the child less than monthly at baseline, while high visits indicates that the father visited the child at least monthly.
Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

VI. Parents' Knowledge of Child Support Rules

It has long been a concern among researchers that women receiving welfare are not fully aware of how much child support is being paid on their behalf. This issue is important from a research standpoint — relevant for describing and analyzing statistics on child support receipt — and also from a policy standpoint, in that knowledge of child support rules may give women a greater stake in pursuing regular child support payments and knowledge of child support receipt may encourage women to leave welfare. However, if women do not understand the amount of child support being paid on their behalf, then it is not realistic to expect strong effects of child support on other behaviors. Thus it is important to assess women's knowledge of payments as well as their knowledge of broader child support rules.

Federal regulations require that states issue all current- and former-recipient custodial parents monthly notices that inform them of the amount of support collected on their behalf, including current support, arrearages, and the amount paid to the family. Nonetheless, the OIG (2001) case study of state practices found that many parents struggled to understand the monthly accounting forms they received. As part of another study, Meyer and Hu (1999) explored the extent to which welfare recipients in the CPS report the amount of child support received or the amount paid on their behalf. Over half of full-year welfare recipients who reported receiving child support reported that they had received amounts over $50/month. Possible explanations include that these women were living in one of the few states that had pass-through amounts larger than $50/month, that they were reporting informal (as well as formal) support, that they were aware of and reported the amount of collections made on their behalf, and that their self-reports have substantial errors.

Other studies have examined knowledge of the child support rules. One key study of participant knowledge is the evaluation of a full child support pass-through in Minnesota (Venohr et al. 2002). In January 2001, policy changed in Minnesota so that TANF participants would receive the full amount of child support paid on their behalf. In contrast to Wisconsin's policy, there was no disregard, that is, participants' TANF checks were adjusted dollar-for-dollar so that they ended up with the same total income whether child support was paid or not. In a survey of parents and in focus groups, there was little apparent knowledge of the pass-through policy; 70 percent of custodial parents knew little or nothing about the new policy, and even fewer noncustodial parents knew about it. The lack of understanding of child support rules is perhaps not surprising, given findings from other research that a substantial portion of welfare recipients do not understand the specific welfare rules they face (see Anderson 2002; Bloom et al. 2002; Coley, Kuta, and Chase-Landale 2000; Gibson 2002; and Smith, Wise, and Wampler 2002). This study did not specifically look at characteristics associated with higher levels of un-

derstanding, but it did find that people receiving child support were more likely to be aware of the pass-through policy.

Other than the Minnesota study, there is little prior research on the level of participants' understanding of child support policy. Qualitative studies provide evidence that some parents have a basic understanding that they cannot keep all child support paid on their behalf. For example, Edin (1995) reports that some welfare mothers knew that all support in excess of $50/month was kept by the government (the pass-through/disregard policy in place under AFDC during this period). Some mothers report not cooperating with the formal child support system because the father of their children pays more than $50/month informally. Similarly, Waller and Plotnick (2001) report that some fathers understand that not all their formal child support payments benefit their children.

This section uses data from the PFS and CSDE samples to examine knowledge of child support payments and rules. The PFS analysis addresses this question by comparing records- and survey-reported child support receipts, while the CSDE analysis examines understanding of several key distribution rules in effect in Wisconsin. The CSDE data also allow us to examine knowledge among both custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers.

Table VI.1 presents data from the PFS sample. The PFS data provide a comparison of how much child support women reported receiving (from the survey) with how much child support was paid on their behalf (from the CSE administrative records data). We expect these two sources to differ for women receiving welfare, since, at the time of the demonstration, most states, and all but one PFS site, only passed through the first $50 in payments made on their behalf.[22] Thus, for these women, a difference in amounts does not necessarily indicate lack of understanding of how much support was being paid on their behalf. Nonetheless, it is still interesting to examine what women reported receiving and how it may or may not align with actual payments.

The sample is divided by welfare status at the time of the survey. The data show a fair amount of correspondence in whether women knew they were receiving at least some child support. About 85 percent of women's responses agreed with the records (in either indicating no child support or some child support). Among those who received positive amounts according to both sources, average amounts are higher for women who were not receiving welfare. In addition, their survey responses tend to match records amounts more closely, as expected. We can divide the

[22] All states were required to disregard the first $50 of payments, but the amount they chose to pass through (or make visible to the custodial parent) could vary. Although data on pre-PRWORA pass-through policies are limited, we assume that the policy in each of the PFS sites was to disregard and pass through the first $50. The exception to this rule is Tennessee, which had a fill-the-gap policy, meaning that the amount passed through and disregarded could be more than $50. The data bear out this assumption. Among women on welfare in every site except Tennessee, there is a concentration of reported amounts at $50.

welfare sample further into those who reported the pass-through amount or less and those who reported more than this amount on the survey. Among those who reported the pass-through amount or less (69 percent of the sample), the average difference between the records and survey is $137. For those who reported more than the disregard amount (31 percent), the average difference between the survey and records is $54. Thus, the difference is larger for the disregard group, despite the fact that the records data report roughly similar amounts paid on their behalf.[23]

The PFS analysis is consistent with the findings from Meyer and Hu (1999) but indicates a slightly higher correspondence between amounts reported and amounts paid. In the PFS sample, only 31 percent of welfare recipients reported more than the pass-through amount, whereas over 50 percent did so in the Meyer and Hu analysis. However, Meyer and Hu were unable to identify whether the discrepancy was due in part to the fact that some women lived in states with more than a $50 pass-through. Our analysis (because it is focused on states with a $50 pass-through) suggests that this is only part of the story — even in these states with the $50 pass-through, a significant fraction of women reported receiving more than the pass-through amount. As Meyer and Hu note, it is possible that women are including informal payments in reported amounts or that there was considerable reporting error. On the other hand, it is possible that these women were more aware of payments being made on their behalf and reported that amount on the survey. Some support for this hypothesis can be found in the fact that the discrepancy between records and survey amounts is smaller for the group reporting more than the disregard amount, suggesting that reporting error is not driving the results.

Table VI.2 presents the results of a model explaining the difference between records and survey. Not many demographic characteristics help explain this difference, with the exception of marital status. The coefficient on current welfare status is positive and marginally significant, which is consistent with the idea that welfare recipients are less likely to report amounts that are actually paid on their behalf.

Data that address this question are also available from the SIPP. In addition to asking women the amount of child support they received, the survey asks women receiving welfare whether the government made child support collections on their behalf. Recall from Table III.2 that about 20 percent of women on welfare in month 20 of the panel reported receiving child support. A little more than half of this group (11 percent) reported that the government was not making collections on their behalf, indicating that they did not fully understand the survey question or that they were unaware of these collections. Within this group, 40 percent reported receiving an amount of $50.

[23]The results were similar when the analysis did not include the sample from Tennessee, which had a variable pass-through amount.

The remaining half of the group receiving payments (9 percent) did say that the government was making collections on their behalf. The SIPP also asked them how much was collected. About half of these women reported an amount that was equal to the amount they reported receiving through the pass-through. In other words, many of these women reported receiving $50 through the pass-through but also reported that this was the full amount collected by the government. This result should be interpreted with some caution, however, since the analysis is based on 57 cases. The SIPP results suggest that many women do not know how much is collected on their behalf — many are unaware of any collections being made, and others are not aware of the full amount.

Tables VI.3 and VI.4 present results from the CSDE on parents' knowledge of specific child support rules. The analysis is conducted for the full sample, by treatment group, and by AFDC history. Those with a long history of AFDC receipt were more likely to have been exposed to the prior policy regime (the AFDC $50 pass-through and disregard, or partial pass-through) and thus may not have absorbed the new rules of the W-2 full pass-through and disregard (that is, all current support paid in a month). Mothers are considered "long-term AFDC" if they had received welfare for more than 18 of the 24 months prior to the TANF program entry. We define fathers as "long-term AFDC" if the mother of their focal child was a long-term recipient.

The Survey of Wisconsin Works Families includes a series of questions about child support pass-through/distribution policy. From both waves of the mothers' survey, we use responses to two hypothetical questions. The first is:

> I have two questions about things that might affect the amount of child support mothers receive. If you were in a W-2 assignment where you received a check from W-2, would you receive all of the CURRENT child support <focal child/the children>'s father paid or would the state keep some of it?

The correct answer to this question depends on the mothers' random assignment. Those in the treatment group should say "all," and those in the control group should say "some." Responses to this question across both survey waves are shown in the top panel of Table VI.3. There is a substantial difference in knowledge between the treatment and control group, with the control group being more likely to answer correctly. Note that the correct answer for the control group is consistent with the correct answer under pre-TANF policy. Nonetheless, whether or not their understanding reflects information received about the new policy, those in the control group were substantially more likely to correctly understand how child support would be handled in their case. Finally, long-term AFDC recipients had similar levels of knowledge as the sample as a whole. There is little difference in the percentage correct between the two waves.

The second question follows immediately:

> If you were NOT receiving a check from W-2, would you receive all of the CURRENT child support <focal child/the children>'s father paid or would the state keep some of it?

The correct answer to this question does not depend on random assignment. Those in both groups should say "all." These results are shown in the bottom panel of the table. The percentage with the correct answer to this question is a little higher than the previous question. Again there is little difference in knowledge between the two waves. On this question there is almost no difference between the treatment and control group, perhaps because both groups face the same policy regime. Again, long-term AFDC recipients have similar levels of knowledge.

The answers to the two questions indicate that recipients did not have a very clear understanding of the rules. For all the questions, almost a third of recipients indicated they did not know the rules. At most, a little more than half knew the right answer to either question. Those who were most likely to respond correctly responded with knowledge of policies that had been in effect for a long time. For the treatment group, less than one-quarter understood how their receipt of child support would be affected by the new policy being applied to them.

Table VI.4 presents information on fathers' knowledge. The fathers' survey instrument includes a similar series of questions about child support pass-through/distribution policy, as listed on the table. The correct answer to the first question, about whether the child's mother would receive all support if she were receiving benefits, depends on the mothers' random assignment. Those in the treatment group should say "all," and those in the control group should say "some." Note that fathers' knowledge levels are lower than mothers' and that there are very high percentages responding "don't know." The control group was somewhat more likely to answer correctly. About one-quarter of the fathers responded correctly, and there is not much difference between the waves in the percentage correct for fathers. Those partnered with long-term AFDC recipients had similar levels of knowledge as to the whole sample.

A subsequent question asks about the treatment of child support if the child's mother is not receiving benefits. The correct answer to this question does not depend on random assignment. Those in both groups should say "all." Only slightly more than one-quarter of the fathers knew the correct answer to the question. As for the previous question, fathers' knowledge levels are lower than mothers', and there is no evidence of increased knowledge between the waves. There is also no large difference between the treatment and control groups, or between the long-term AFDC group and other fathers.

Tables VI.5 and VI.6 present models explaining correct responses to these two questions for mothers and fathers. Because there is little prior work on the factors related to knowledge, the analysis is exploratory, including demographic variables, a measure of the knowledge of county staff, and whether child support was paid/received recently. In addition, we include a

set of variables that measure whether the mother had a child support order when she entered TANF, her AFDC history, and her treatment group status. When we consider fathers' knowledge, we also include a measure of the knowledge level of the mother of his children.

We provide information only on wave 2, for which we have a consistent set of questions for mothers and fathers. Table VI.5 focuses on mothers. The first columns show the results of a probit analysis on whether mothers responded correctly to the first question (regarding whether those in a cash-paying W-2 tier would receive all or some of the support paid on their behalf). The results show that those who entered in noncash-paying tiers (case management only) were less likely to answer correctly than those who entered in a cash-paying/lower tier. Those with child support paid on their behalf had higher knowledge, although the results suggest that those who had received payments over a longer period of time had a better understanding of the rules. Consistent with expectations, the lowest knowledge levels are among women in the treatment group who had an order and had previously received AFDC; these women had experienced the prior regime and now faced different rules. Also as expected, women in the control group with an order and with a history of AFDC receipt were somewhat more likely to get this question correct (p=.13); these women had experienced the prior regime and now faced the same rules. Staff knowledge at the county level is unrelated to mothers' knowledge.

The next columns show results for the second question, whether the respondent would receive all current support if she were not in a cash-paying tier. Again, those with post-W-2 child support had higher levels of knowledge. For this question, those without AFDC history or without an order generally had a more accurate understanding of current policy rules, except for control group members without AFDC history and without an order (the omitted group). Those with more than a high school diploma had more accurate knowledge. Again, staff knowledge at the county level is unrelated to mothers' knowledge.

Table VI.6 shows results for fathers. Fewer factors help predict fathers' knowledge (in part due to small sample sizes). As expected, those who had orders when they entered W-2, whose ex-partners had AFDC history and were in the control group, were more likely to know what would happen during a period of cash receipt. Those who had paid child support knew more about what would happen with their ex-partners during a period of benefit receipt. Staff knowledge and their ex-partner's knowledge are not consistently related to fathers' knowledge.

The results suggest the difficulty of identifying the factors associated with more accurate knowledge, as it is measured here. More accurate knowledge seems most consistently related to whether child support has been paid on a mother's behalf since she entered W-2. This suggests that policy knowledge may follow from direct experience — mothers know more when they see how the system treats child support paid on their behalf. Fewer factors help explain fathers' knowledge.

Summary

- Data from PFS show that the majority of women receiving welfare report that they receive an amount that is equal to or less than the pass-through amount, even while payments being made on their behalf are higher. The analysis does not indicate whether they are aware of the larger amount collected on their behalf. Data from the SIPP suggest that most women are not aware of this amount — many are unaware of any collections being made on their behalf, and others are most likely underestimating the amount collected.

- There is a fairly low level of knowledge of distribution rules in Wisconsin, among both fathers and mothers. Fewer than half of the mothers and only about a quarter to a third of the fathers responded correctly to questions about the pass-through rules. Status in the welfare system and actual child support experience seem more important predictors of knowledge than demographic characteristics. This suggests that states may have to put considerable effort into information dissemination if they intend recipients to understand the policy and if the policy change is to have any behavioral effect.

Table VI.1

Survey Versus Records Reports of Child Support Receipt, PFS

	On Welfare at Survey	Off Welfare at Survey
Correspondence between sources (%)		
Survey yes, records no	7.0	6.7
Survey no, records yes	8.7	10.0
Survey no, records no	63.1	59.2
Survey yes, records yes	21.3	24.0
Among yes, yes group:		
Average child support payment amount on survey ($)	113	189
Average child support payment amount on record ($)	201	259
Size of difference (%)		
Difference < $50	34.4	45.0
Difference $50 - $100	15.6	20.5
Difference $100 +	50.0	34.4
Among those reporting pass-through amount or less		
Average difference between records and survey ($)	137	
Average amount reported on records ($)	189	
Among those reporting more than pass-through amount		
Average difference between records and survey ($)	54	
Average amount reported on records ($)	230	
Sample size	875	628

Source: PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.

Table VI.2

Multivariate Analysis of the Difference Between Survey and Records Reports of Child Support: PFS Dependent Variable: Whether the Difference Is Greater Than $50

	Coefficient		P-Value	Standard Error
Mother's age	0.010		0.391	0.012
Race/ethnicity				
Black	0.053		0.784	0.192
Hispanic	0.433		0.109	0.271
Education				
High school diploma or GED	-0.108		0.566	0.188
Beyond high school	0.249		0.204	0.197
Marital status				
Separated	0.780	**	0.024	0.345
Divorced	0.787	**	0.012	0.312
Never married	0.644	**	0.028	0.294
Welfare receipt				
Received welfare payment last month	0.425		0.121	0.274
Amount of welfare payment received	-0.001		0.466	0.001
Employment status				
Employed at time of survey	0.019		0.906	0.162
Number of children				
Two	-0.104		0.600	0.198
Three or more	0.203		0.325	0.206
Site				
California	0.594		0.207	0.470
Florida	0.362		0.264	0.324
Massachusetts	0.503		0.191	0.385
Michigan	0.676	**	0.039	0.327
New Jersey	0.853	**	0.013	0.344
Ohio	1.205	***	0.001	0.358
Intercept	-1.606	***	0.007	0.591
Sample size	337			
Log likelihood	-206.1			

Source: PFS: Parents' Fair Share, covering custodial parents in seven urban areas, with child support orders and associated with the men in the demonstration.

Notes: Model estimated as a probit. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VI.3

Mother's Understanding of Child Support Rules, CSDE

	Wave 1 (%)			Wave 2 (%)		
	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know
"If you were receiving a check from W-2, would you receive all of the CURRENT child support child's father paid or would the state keep some of it?"						
All	39	28	33	41	28	31
Experimental	23	42	34	26	41	33
Control	55	13	32	56	15	29
Long-term AFDC	40	29	31	42	29	29
"If you were NOT receiving a check from W-2, would you receive all of the CURRENT child support child's father paid or would the state keep some of it?"						
All	49	23	28	49	25	26
Experimental	49	23	28	50	23	27
Control	50	22	28	48	28	24
Long-term AFDC	46	25	29	47	27	26
Sample size	2,074			2,105		

Source: Survey of Wisconson Works Families 1998 and 1999.

Table VI.4

Father's Understanding of Child Support Rules, CSDE

	Wave 1 (%)			Wave 2 (%)		
	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know	Correct	Incorrect	Don't Know
"If the child/children's mother was receiving a check from W-2, would she receive all of the CURRENT child support you paid or would the state keep some or all of it?"						
All	25	25	50	27	26	47
Experimental	22	32	46	18	32	50
Control	28	19	53	36	20	44
Long-term AFDC	23	24	53	28	25	47
"If the child/children's mother was NOT receiving a check from W-2, would she receive all of the CURRENT child support you paid or would the state keep some or all of it?"						
All	28	33	39	26	29	45
Experimental	32	28	40	27	28	45
Control	25	36	39	24	30	46
Long-term AFDC	24	34	42	22	31	47
Sample size	492			552		

Source: Survey of Wisconsin Works Families 1998 and 1999.

Table VI.5

Multivariate Analyses for Mother's Knowledge: CSDE Survey Wave 2

	If in W-2 Cash Tier, Receive CS?			If Not in W-2 Cash Tier, Receive CS?		
	Coefficient	P-Value	Std. Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Std. Error
Initial W2 tier (compared with lower tier)						
Caretaker of newborn	-0.112	0.339	0.117	-0.054	0.630	0.112
Case management only	-0.162 **	0.015	0.067	-0.031	0.628	0.064
County (compared with Milwaukee)						
Other urban	-0.020	0.886	0.138	0.107	0.421	0.133
Rural	0.003	0.987	0.161	0.213	0.175	0.157
Child support history since W-2 entry						
Support paid post-entry, but not in last 6 months	0.376 ***	0.000	0.104	0.264 ***	0.008	0.100
Support paid post-entry, only in last 6 months	0.151	0.263	0.135	0.044	0.734	0.130
Support paid post-entry, both periods	0.439 ***	0.000	0.076	0.329 ***	0.000	0.072
Order, AFDC experimental group status						
(compared with no order, no AFDC, control group)						
Order - AFDC - experimental group	-0.760 ***	0.000	0.155	0.151	0.323	0.153
Order - AFDC - control group	0.232	0.127	0.152	0.155	0.310	0.152
Order - no AFDC - experimental group	-0.396	0.151	0.276	0.543 **	0.046	0.273
Order - no AFDC - control group	-0.081	0.766	0.271	0.429	0.117	0.274
No order - AFDC - experimental group	-0.477 **	0.002	0.157	0.436 ***	0.005	0.156
No order - AFDC - control group	0.295 *	0.057	0.155	0.402 **	0.010	0.156
No order - no AFDC - experimental group	-0.441 **	0.016	0.183	0.319 *	0.074	0.179
In county with high staff knowledge	-0.026	0.851	0.137	-0.038	0.779	0.134
Mom's education (compared with less than HS)						
High Sshool	-0.006	0.928	0.063	0.030	0.623	0.060
More than high school	0.163	0.110	0.102	0.173 *	0.081	0.099
Mom's age (compared with less than 25)						
25-34	-0.066	0.356	0.071	-0.072	0.291	0.068
35+	-0.059	0.468	0.082	-0.214 ***	0.006	0.079
Mom's race (compared with white)						
African-American	0.170 **	0.037	0.081	0.031	0.691	0.078
All others	0.078	0.479	0.110	-0.150	0.152	0.105
Intercept	-0.322 **	0.049	0.163	-0.418 **	0.010	0.162
Sample size	2,078			2,078		
Log likelihood	-1,268			-1,411		

Source: Survey of Wisconsin Works Families 1999.

Notes: Models also include variables representing quarter of entry. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VI.6

Multivariate Analyses for Father's Knowledge: CSDE Survey Wave 2

	If in W-2 Cash Tier, Receive CS?			If Not in W-2 Cash Tier, Receive CS?		
	Coefficient	P-Value	Std. Error	Coefficient	P-Value	Std. Error
Initial W-2 Tier (compared to lower tier)						
Caretaker of newborn	-0.098	0.713	0.268	-0.150	0.563	0.258
Case management only	-0.027	0.850	0.145	-0.034	0.815	0.145
County (compared with Milwaukee)						
Other urban	0.309	0.280	0.286	0.593 **	0.028	0.269
Rural	0.793 ***	0.006	0.289	0.327	0.244	0.281
Child support history since W-2 Entry						
Support paid post-entry, but not in last 6 months	0.858 ***	0.000	0.212	0.296	0.159	0.210
Support paid post-entry, only in last 6 months	0.300	0.395	0.353	0.298	0.391	0.347
Support paid post-entry, both periods	0.560 **	0.004	0.192	0.186	0.308	0.182
Order, AFDC experimental group status (compared with no order, no AFDC, control group)						
Order - AFDC - experimental group	0.052	0.916	0.494	-0.421	0.326	0.428
Order - AFDC - control group	0.898 *	0.068	0.491	-0.438	0.306	0.428
Order - no AFDC - experimental group	0.478	0.447	0.629	-0.371	0.521	0.578
Order - no AFDC - control group	0.010	0.990	0.813	-0.302	0.672	0.713
No order - AFDC - experimental group	0.349	0.518	0.540	-0.641	0.184	0.482
No order - AFDC - control group	0.346	0.512	0.529	-0.134	0.773	0.462
No order - no AFDC - experimental group	0.792	0.152	0.554	-0.046	0.926	0.497
In county with high staff knowledge	-0.168	0.528	0.266	-0.322	0.202	0.253
Knowledge level of mother						
High	0.020	0.931	0.232	-0.141	0.544	0.232
Moderate	-0.105	0.476	0.148	-0.345 **	0.016	0.143
Dad's education (compared with less than HS)						
High school	0.034	0.802	0.137	0.091	0.501	0.136
More than high school	-0.001	0.996	0.226	0.359	0.101	0.219
Dad's age (compared with less than 25)						
25-34	-0.059	0.798	0.229	-0.053	0.812	0.221
35+	0.051	0.823	0.229	-0.149	0.506	0.224
Dad's race (compared with white)						
African-American	0.275	0.165	0.198	-0.558 ***	0.002	0.181
All others	-0.041	0.870	0.253	-0.572 **	0.017	0.239
Intercept	-1.788 ***	0.001	0.550	0.153	0.753	0.486
Sample size	518			518		
Log likelihood	-264.3			-266.8		

Source: Survey of Wisconsin Works Families 1999.

Notes: Models also include variables representing quarter of entry. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

VII. The Effects of Pass-Through and Distribution Policies on Child Support Outcomes

Prior to PRWORA, states were required to distribute the first $50 in child support collections each month to custodial parents, and the amount distributed was disregarded in the calculation of the family's AFDC grant. Under TANF, states can set their own pass-through and disregard policies and are required only to withhold the federal share of child support collected. To date, half the states (25) have chosen to retain all child support collected, passing through nothing to the families.[24] Of the remaining states that continued with the pass-through, 14 have stayed with the $50 pass-through and disregard, and the others have implemented some other amount, including a full pass-through.

Qualitative data obtained from mothers and fathers suggest that distribution and pass-through rules affect the payment of child support. For example, many fathers in the PFS demonstration were well aware of, and resented, the fact that much of any child support they paid would go to the state and not the custodial family (Miller and Knox 2001). However, much of the prior research on the effects of these policies has been nonexperimental. Sorensen and Halpern (1999), for example, used state variation in pass-through policies post-PRWORA and found that more generous pass-through policies led to an increase in child support receipt, particularly for never-married women.

This section presents findings from the CSDE demonstration on the effects of the more generous pass-through and distribution policies tested in Wisconsin. We present both experimental and nonexperimental findings from the two recent CSDE reports (Meyer and Cancian 2001, 2002). The SIPP sample was also used for this analysis. However, these analyses are not reported because (1) we found few significant effects of state pass-through policies on child support outcomes, owing in part to the small samples sizes for individual states, and (2) the analysis is nonexperimental and thus suffers from the potential biases of prior nonexperimental work.

The experimental component of the CSDE is designed to assess the effects of a full pass-through/disregard. As we have described above, one feature of Wisconsin's welfare reform program, Wisconsin Works (W-2), is that for most mothers participating in it, any child support paid on behalf of their children is passed through to them and is disregarded in the calculation of their W-2 cash payments (that is, payments are not reduced by the amount of child support received). W-2 child support policy was implemented as a random assignment experiment. Most W-2 participants received a full pass-through of child support, but a ran-

[24]This number does not include two or three states that have eliminated the pass-through but increase custodial parents' TANF grants by up to $50 when child support is collected on their behalf.

domly selected control group received a reduced amount (for this reason, the CSDE data are limited in their ability to assess the impact of having a pass-through or not, since the data compare two different levels of pass-through). Because assignment to the treatment (full pass-through) and control (partial pass-through) groups was random, any differences in outcomes between the two groups can be attributed to the difference in the treatment of child support. The CSDE was designed to evaluate a variety of impacts of this new approach to child support, beginning with the direct effects of the new policy on child support paid and received. The study also includes measures of a wide range of potential secondary effects — on mothers' and fathers' employment and earnings, on parents' interactions, and on the well being of their children. These effects were evaluated using state administrative records and a survey of W-2 families, primarily covering outcomes in 1998 and 1999.

A detailed report on the results of the experimental analysis and companion nonexperimental analyses can be found elsewhere (for the experimental results, see Meyer and Cancian 2001; for a comparative report on the nonexperimental analysis, see Meyer and Cancian 2002). We summarize highlights of these results here. Tables VII.1 to VII.3 reproduce key results reported in the CSDE experimental evaluation (Meyer and Cancian 2001). All comparisons between the treatment and control groups used multivariate analyses for differences in the characteristics of sample members at W-2 entry.

Effects on Child Support Payments

A key outcome of interest is child support payments. We expect that fathers of children in the treatment group who want to support their children will pay more formal child support than fathers in the control group. This could occur because fathers will be more likely to pay formal child support or because fathers who pay will be more likely to pay higher amounts if they know the child support will benefit their children and not just reimburse the state for its welfare payments. Table VII.1 presents results for payments. It is based on an analysis of effects on the 14,343 men who were legal fathers (those for whom paternity had been established or who had marital children) when their children entered W-2. The analysis used administrative data on child support payments from the Kids Information Data System (KIDS) and examined two measures of fathers' formal child support payments: whether a father paid any support and the overall average amount of support paid.

The first panel of Table VII.1 shows that 52.0 percent of the fathers of children in the treatment group paid something in 1998; this percentage rose to 56.3 percent in 1999. Consistent with our hypothesis, fathers of children in the treatment group were more likely to make payments in both 1998 and 1999 than fathers of children in the control group. In 1998, the effects are fairly small and statistically significant only at the .08 level while, in 1999, the effects are larger and statistically significant ($p < .01$). In 1999, 53.2 percent of fathers of children in the

control group made payments, compared with 56.3 percent of fathers of children in the treatment group, a difference of 3.1 percentage points, or 6.0 percent. The larger effects in 1999 may reflect the possibility that it takes time for fathers to understand the new policy, and, once fathers understand, it may take time for them to change their payment behavior.

The next rows examine whether this effect is limited to certain key subgroups. In both years, the reform induced a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of payment among those who had a child support order when their partners entered W-2. One explanation is that those who had an order when their partners entered W-2 could begin paying formal support fairly quickly; those without an order would generally not begin paying until an order was in place. The largest impacts occurred among those whose partners did not have recent AFDC experience. Among these fathers, 48.2 percent of those in the control group paid something in 1998, compared with 58.4 percent of those in the treatment group. Although fathers in the treatment group again appear to be more likely to pay in 1999, the effects are not statistically significant, partly because of the relatively small sample size. Among those whose partners entered the lower tiers and who had no recent AFDC history (not shown), the effects were larger. The reform significantly affected both nonmarital and divorced fathers in 1999.

Considering all fathers — that is, those who paid and those who did not — the average amount paid in 1998 by fathers in the treatment group was $798; this increased to $946 in 1999, as shown in the second panel of Table VII.1. Overall, fathers of children in the treatment group paid higher amounts than fathers in the control group in 1999. The difference is $28 in 1998 and is not statistically significant. In 1999 the difference increases to $54, a difference of 6.2 percent, which is statistically significant at a level of .055. The impact is larger among those whose partners entered the lower tiers and is large among those without recent AFDC history. Because treatment or control status results in a different amount of child support received only when resident parents are in lower tiers, the concentration of the effect among fathers whose partners entered in lower tiers is not surprising. The large impact found among those whose partners had no recent AFDC history, however, could be quite important. If behavioral effects are much larger among fathers who have not been exposed to the previous policy, the long-run impact of this reform may be larger than seen here because, over time, an increasing proportion of the caseload would not have been exposed to the previous policy. The difference in amount paid was particularly large among those whose partners entered the lower tiers and had no recent AFDC history (not shown). Among this group, the impact was $440 in 1998 and $411 in 1999, differences of 56 percent and 35 percent, respectively. There were also significant effects in both years among fathers who had not yet accumulated a large debt to the state, also suggesting potentially larger long-run effects of this reform (not shown). Our findings concerning overall payments are somewhat similar to our findings on the likelihood of paying: the reform had a larger effect among fathers already in the child support system. There was a significant impact

on divorced fathers in both years. These finding are consistent with the possibility that the effect is likely to show up sooner if a child support award is already in place.

Summary

- We find a higher likelihood of paying and higher child support payments among fathers in the treatment (full pass-through) group in 1999. The effects are small in the overall sample but larger in some subgroups, particularly fathers of those children without a recent history of welfare receipt.

Effects on Child Support Received

Our next set of analyses focuses on differences in the amount of support received by mothers in the treatment and control groups. By definition, a full pass-through should result in higher child support receipts for the treatment group, since those in the control group have a portion of the payments retained by the government when they are in the lower tiers of W-2. Thus, as a mechanical effect of the experiment, as long as mothers spend some time in the lower tiers and as long as the child support paid on a mother's behalf is at least $50/month, mothers in the treatment group should receive more child support than mothers in the control group. This effect should be largest among mothers for whom the most is paid, since in this group the differences between the treatment and control groups will be magnified. A finding that the treatment group received higher amounts of child support could therefore merely indicate that the experiment was administered properly, rather than revealing a behavioral effect.

The experimental impact is not, however, necessarily limited to this mechanical impact. On the one hand, to the extent that fathers in the treatment group are more likely to pay, and to pay more when they do pay, the effect on receipts would be even greater. On the other hand, during periods in which mothers are in higher tiers of W-2 or off W-2 altogether, the treatment and control groups are treated identically. Thus as time passes and more mothers leave the lower tiers of W-2, any treatment-control difference in receipts may shrink. For the analyses of child support receipts, we examine the 15,977 mothers who entered W-2 during the demonstration and who were potentially eligible for child support.

The first panel of Table VII.2 reproduces results from the CSDE and shows that 38 percent of treatment-group mothers received support in 1998 and that this percentage increased to 47.8 percent in 1999. These figures are substantially higher than the national figures, in which child support was collected for 29 percent of current assistance cases in 2002 (OCSE 2003); they reflect Wisconsin's continued effectiveness in collecting support among difficult cases. The table shows that mothers in the treatment group were significantly more likely to receive child support than mothers in the control group. This difference in the likeli-

hood of receiving support is fairly small (3.1 percentage points in 1998 and 2.7 percentage points in 1999), but it is statistically significant and is related to differences in behavior, not only to the mechanical effect of the reform. The next rows show a large impact in 1998 among mothers with no recent AFDC history. There are statistically significant effects in several of the subgroups, including those with a child support order at entry and those who had a history of higher child support amounts (1999 only). There are particularly large effects in 1999 among those with marital children.

The second panel of Table VII.2 shows the mean amount of child support among all mothers. Mothers in the treatment group received an average of $641 in 1998, increasing to $848 in 1999. These figures are roughly comparable to the national average of collections among current assistance recipients of $599 (OCSE 2003).[25] In most states, however, most of the amounts collected for welfare recipients are not passed through to the family.

The table shows that mothers in the treatment group received more in support in 1998 and 1999. The effect, though fairly small, is statistically significant: $142 in 1998 and $123 in 1999. Although small in dollar terms, it is equivalent to an increase of 28 percent (1998) and 17 percent (1999) in the average support received by mothers in the control group. This impact reflects at least in part the mechanical effect of the pass-through policy, so it is not surprising that the effect can be seen in every subgroup in both years. That is, there are significant impacts among those who entered a lower tier, those who had no recent AFDC history, those with orders at entry, and those with a history of higher child support. Particularly large effects are found among those with only marital children — differences of $540 in 1998 and $419 in 1999, or 66 percent and 33 percent. There are also large effects for those without recent AFDC history who entered a lower tier — differences of $333 in 1998 and $300 in 1999, or 90 percent and 43 percent (not shown).

Summary

- In Wisconsin, mothers in the treatment (full pass-through) group were more likely to receive child support and, largely as a mechanical effect of the change in pass-through policy, received more child support than mothers in the control (partial pass-through) group.

[25]The average child support collection for current recipients who had a collection in fiscal year 2002 was $2,086 (OCSE FY 2002 Annual Statistical Report).

Effects on Paternity Establishment

One possible outcome of the treatment was that those who participated in the experiment would be more active in pursuing the establishment of paternity for their children than those who were in the control group. If mothers knew they would get all of the current child support paid on their behalf, it was thought that they might be more interested in establishing paternity quickly. Note, however that both treatment and control group mothers were required to name the father as a condition of receipt of W-2 benefits. Within the context of court-determined paternity, there is little reason to believe that the process would happen faster for the treatment than for the control group. If the mother wanted to speed up the process, paternity could be established through a voluntary acknowledgement process. However, this requires the cooperation of both parents, so it may be that the noncustodial parents' knowledge of the treatment is more important than the mothers' knowledge.

In the first panel of Table VII.3, we again reproduce results from the CSDE, which examine 15,568 nonmarital children who lacked paternity establishment when they entered W-2. (About half of nonmarital children entering W-2 had had paternity established; the other half, who had not, are examined here.) As the first panel of Table VII.3 shows, slightly less than 15 percent of those without paternity at entry had paternity established by the end of 1998, and roughly 25 percent had done so by the end of 1999. The differences in new paternity establishment between the treatment and control groups were in the expected direction in 1998 but are not strongly significant in either year. It is noteworthy that in 1998 there was a significant difference in paternity establishment among the children of mothers entering W-2 with no recent AFDC experience (19.7 percent of the treatment group versus 14.5 percent of the control group). This is one group for which one would expect a treatment effect to occur. Those who entered W-2 after participating in AFDC had already been encouraged to pursue paternity establishment as part of their involvement in AFDC and were likely to have been exposed to the child support system under the old rules. Resident mothers with no AFDC experience in the previous 24 months were more likely to be exposed for the first time to organized governmental efforts to encourage and facilitate the establishment of paternity. However, the effect for mothers with no recent AFDC experience declines by the end of 1999 and is no longer statistically significant, suggesting that although participation in the experiment accelerated paternity establishment among this subgroup, eventually the control group may catch up with the treatment group.

Table VII.3 also shows treatment effects in 1998 for those with an order at entry and those with a history of higher child support. For the latter group, the difference between treatment and control groups remained significant at the end of 1999. This suggests that those mothers on whose behalf higher levels of support had been paid in the past may have expected greater gains from establishing paternity for another child, and thus may have been more sensitive to the treatment.

Summary

- The results provide some support for a treatment effect on the rate of paternity establishment. Over time, paternity establishment rates leveled out between the treatment and control groups, suggesting that the treatment increased the speed of paternity establishment.

Quantitative Nonexperimental Analyses

The CSDE also included several quantitative nonexperimental studies. The results of two of these studies are summarized in Table VII.4 and are briefly discussed here.

Study 1: Child Support Disregard Policies and Program Outcomes: An Analysis of State-Level Data from the OCSE

This study uses OCSE state data from the past 15 years to assess the effect of child support disregard policies on state-level outcomes for the IV-D population. Specifically, we examine the effect of the generosity (or size) of the disregard, independent of the pass-through amount, on paternity establishment; whether child support is collected; and the amount of child support collected. Disregard policies have changed over time, from mandatory to voluntary, and from 40 percent of the first $50, to up to $50 (1984), to state discretion (1996), and from state and federal government splitting the cost to state-cost only. TANF resulted in considerable policy variation from state to state, but even before TANF some states had fill-the-gap policies, and some obtained waivers to experiment with policy changes. Because different policies were in place in different states and different periods, it is possible to compare outcomes associated with alternative policy regimes.

The study uses three primary measures of state IV-D program outcomes: the ratio of the number of AFDC/TANF paternities established to the number of AFDC/TANF cases in the IV-D caseload; the ratio of AFDC/TANF cases with collections to the number of IV-D AFDC/TANF cases; and the average amount of child support collected among AFDC/TANF cases that had collections. The primary hypothesis is that, all other things being equal, a more generous disregard will have a positive effect on each of these indicators of IV-D program performance

Results

As summarized in the second column of Table VII.4, the analyses of OCSE data show that a larger disregard is associated with a statistically significant increase in the rate of paternity establishment and the proportion of cases with collections. The estimated effects are small but important, given the large number of welfare cases in IV-D caseloads nationwide. The size of

the disregard does not have a statistically significant effect on the average collection per case among cases with collections.

Study 2: Child Support Disregard Policies and Program Outcomes: An Analysis of Microdata from the CPS

This study used individual-level data from the March Current Population Surveys (CPS), 1985-2000, to assess the effects of child support disregards on reports of child support receipt. In contrast to the previous study, which relied on state data, the CPS data provide the opportunity to include individual demographic characteristics. While CPS data do include women's reports on how much child support they received, this may not actually reflect what was paid by the noncustodial parent because of the various state disregard and pass-through policies that are in place. In addition, CPS data do not allow us to explicitly limit our analysis to the AFDC/TANF population of a state's IV-D system, though we are able to restrict the analysis to women 18 to 45, with children of their own, who headed households and who reported receiving AFDC at some point during the year prior to the interview. The outcome measure used in this analysis was whether the mother received any child support in the prior year.

Results

As shown in the third column of Table VII.4, the analysis showed a positive and statistically significant ($p < .10$) relationship between the size of the total disregard available through state welfare program policy and whether child support was received. The findings with regard to disregard policy tend to confirm those found in the analysis of OCSE state administrative data, as well as a previous analysis using March CPS data (Sorensen and Halpern 1999).

The experimental evaluation and the two nonexperimental studies all provide different information on potential effects of a full pass-through/disregard. Taken as a whole, the results summarized here support the conclusion that increasing the pass-through/disregard will increase the payment and the receipt of child support. The confirmation of the results from the CSDE experiment in nonexperimental studies relying on national data is encouraging. While the CSDE experimental results also suggest increases in amounts of child support paid, the study using OCSE data finds no effect. Finally, the CSDE experiment suggests that paternity establishment proceeds more quickly for children eligible for a full pass-through, although the effect disappears after the first year. The OCSE data analysis also suggests a positive relationship between pass-through levels and paternity establishment.

Summary

- The findings as a whole suggest that the more generous pass-through and disregard policy may lead to an increase in the number of fathers making pay-

ments, an increase in the number of mothers receiving payments, and an increase in the average payments mothers receive. These policies may also have some effects on paternity establishment, although these effects seem to be a speeding up of the process of establishing paternity. The precise way in which this might happen is not identified. In general, effects are fairly modest in size, although they are larger for particular subgroups. The modest effects may not be surprising, given the findings from the previous section that many parents did not fully understand the pass-through rules.

Table VII.1

Results from the CSDE: Effects on Child Support Paid

	1998						1999					
	Sample Size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value	Sample size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value
Percentage of nonresident fathers paying child support (%)												
All nonresident fathers	14,343	52.0	50.0	2.0	*	0.083	14,343	56.3	53.2	3.1	***	0.005
Mother entered in lower tier	8,767	48.4	46.8	1.7		0.249	8,767	53.4	50.7	2.7	*	0.057
Mother has no recent AFDC history	850	58.4	48.2	10.3	**	0.022	850	61.3	56.2	5.1		0.229
Couple has order at entry	10,569	63.2	60.0	3.2	**	0.012	10,569	66.4	62.6	3.8	***	0.001
Higher child support history	2,694	94.3	92.4	1.9		0.111	2,694	91.0	86.2	4.9	***	0.002
Couple is divorced	2,359	55.3	52.2	3.1		0.293	2,359	58.8	53.3	5.5	**	0.044
Couple was not married	11,941	51.5	49.8	1.8		0.155	11,941	55.8	53.3	2.5	**	0.034
Average annual amount of child support paid among all nonresident fathers ($)												
All nonresident fathers	14,343	798	770	28		0.228	14,343	946	891	54	*	0.055
Mother entered in lower tier	8,767	750	709	41		0.164	8,767	896	822	74	**	0.038
Mother has no recent AFDC history	850	1,273	969	305	**	0.011	850	1,580	1,348	232		0.133
Couple has order at entry	10,569	971	937	34		0.238	10,569	1,109	1,032	77	**	0.024
Higher child support history	2,694	2,323	2,203	120		0.146	2,694	2,381	2,173	208	**	0.030
Couple is divorced	2,359	1,251	1,004	247	***	0.001	2,359	1,487	1,298	190	*	0.054
Couple was not married	11,941	707	726	-19		0.409	11,941	835	813	22		0.422

Source: Reproduced from Meyer and Cancian (2001), Table IV.1.

Notes: All impacts are regression adjusted, controlling for a range of characteristics, such as the mother's age, education, race, and the father's earning history. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VII.2

Results from the CSDE: Effects on Child Support Received

	1998						1999					
	Sample Size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value	Sample Size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value
Percentage of resident mothers receiving child support (%)												
All resident mothers	15,977	38.0	35.0	3.1	***	0.006	15,977	47.8	45.1	2.7	**	0.014
Entered in lower tier	9,634	33.4	31.2	2.2		0.117	9,634	43.9	41.2	2.7	*	0.057
No recent AFDC history	2,005	27.6	19.9	7.7	***	0.002	2,005	40.2	36.0	4.3		0.123
Has order at entry	8,924	66.5	63.9	2.6	*	0.056	8,924	71.8	68.0	3.8	***	0.003
Higher child support history	2,744	92.0	90.5	1.4		0.305	2,744	90.5	87.0	3.5	**	0.023
Has only marital children	1,183	55.6	48.9	6.6		0.128	1,183	61.9	50.3	11.6	***	0.004
Has only nonmarital children	13,518	34.3	31.5	2.8	**	0.016	13,518	44.8	42.7	2.1	*	0.082
Average annual amount of child support received among all resident mothers ($)												
All resident mothers	15,977	641	499	142	***	0.000	15,977	848	725	123	***	0.000
Entered in lower tier	9,634	588	390	197	***	0.000	9,634	759	604	155	***	0.000
No recent AFDC history	2,005	642	448	194	***	0.000	2,005	992	841	151	**	0.049
Has order at entry	8,924	1,004	799	205	***	0.000	8,924	1,222	1,054	168	***	0.000
Higher child support history	2,744	2,220	1,738	482	***	0.000	2,744	2,402	2,102	300	***	0.002
Has only marital children	1,183	1,361	822	540	***	0.000	1,183	1,684	1,265	419	***	0.003
Has only nonmarital children	13,518	510	415	95	***	0.000	13,518	702	593	108	***	0.000

Source: Reproduced from Meyer and Cancian (2001), Table IV.2.

Notes: All impacts are regression adjusted, controlling for a range of characteristics, such as the mother's age, education, race, and the father's earning history. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VII.3

Results from the CSDE: Effects on Paternity Establishment

	1998						1999					
	Sample Size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value	Sample Size	Program Group	Control Group	Impact		P-Value
Paternity established among nonmarital children without a legal father at W-2 entry (%)												
All nonmarital children	15,568	14.2	12.9	1.3	*	0.056	15,568	24.7	24.9	-0.2		0.840
Mother entered in lower tier	9,649	11.8	10.9	1.0		0.227	9,649	21.3	20.9	0.5		0.650
No recent AFDC history	1,794	19.7	14.5	5.1	**	0.013	1,794	32.9	29.3	3.7		0.165
Mother has order at entry	6,135	16.5	13.6	2.8	**	0.015	6,135	29.1	27.0	2.1		0.151
Higher child support history	1,605	16.2	11.1	5.1	**	0.027	1,605	29.4	22.5	6.9	**	0.021

Source: Reproduced from Meyer and Cancian (2001), Table IV.3.

Notes: All impacts are regression adjusted, controlling for a range of characteristics, such as the mother's age, education, race, and the father's earning history. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VII.4

Summary of Impacts of Pass-Through and Disregard Policies on Child Support Outcomes

	CSDE	OCSE	CPS
Nature of variation or counterfactual:	Experimental group received 100% pass-through, control group received the greater of $50 or 41%	Across states and time	Across states and time
Outcomes:			
Any child support paid	+	+	
Any child support received	+		+
Amount of child support paid	+ (1999 only)	No effect	
Amount of child support received	+		
Paternity establishment	+ (1998 only)	+	

Source: Reproduced from Meyer and Cancian (2002). Table 2.

Notes: + indicates that the disregard or pass-through was associated with a positive and statistically significant effect on the outcome. The study labeled "OCSE" uses state-level data from OCSE reports, and the study labeled "CPS" uses individual-level data from the Current Population Surveys.

VIII. The Effects of Welfare Reforms

When assessing the relationship between child support and self-sufficiency, an important question is whether this relationship has been affected by changes in welfare policies. This section addresses the effects of state welfare reform demonstrations on child support outcomes by using data from several welfare-to-work evaluations. The programs evaluated include many of the same components that states have implemented as part of their new TANF programs — time limits, financial incentives, and work mandates (two of the programs also changed the child support distribution rules). The programs were evaluated using random assignment designs, meaning that any effects on welfare and child support outcomes are directly attributable to the program.

The potential effects of each of these policies on child support could be positive or negative. Financial incentives, for example, could increase women's employment and income, reducing their need to pursue child support. On the other hand, time limits could lead to an increase in child support receipt, if women leaving welfare are more motivated to look for additional income supports, or if they receive more attention from caseworkers when they reach the time limit.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program

Jobs First evaluated the effects of a 21-month time limit on welfare receipt in the offices of Manchester and New Haven (although the program was run statewide). The program also included very generous financial incentives to encourage work — all of the recipient's earnings were disregarded when calculating her grant level and food stamp benefits until her earnings reached the poverty line. See Bloom et al. (2002) for more information about the program.

Florida's Family Transition Program (FTP)

FTP tested the effects of 24- and 36-month time limits on welfare receipt for a sample of single-parent families in Escambia County, Florida. The program, which started in 1994, offered financial incentives as well as enhanced services designed to help recipients find jobs. See Bloom et al. (2000) for the final report on the program's effects.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)

MFIP tested the effects of a strategy that combined financial incentives to work, in the form of enhanced earnings disregards relative to the AFDC system, and mandated participation in work-focused activities for long-term welfare recipients. The evaluation included a three-group research design, in which one group received only MFIP's enhanced incentives and not

the participation mandates, in order to test the effects of the incentives by themselves. See Knox, Miller, and Gennetian (2000) for a summary of the program's effects.

Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP)

WRP tested the effects of a 30-month work trigger that required most single parents to work in wage-paying jobs once they had received welfare for 30 cumulative months. The program also included financial incentives in the form of an enhanced disregard that was somewhat more generous than under Vermont's old AFDC program. WRP also included a three-group research design, in which some individuals received only the enhanced incentives without the work trigger. See Bloom et al. (2002) for the program's effects.

Table VIII.1 characterizes the programs according to whether they included financial incentives, work or participation mandates, and time limits. All programs included financial incentives, and almost all included some type of work or participation mandate. The table also includes a column indicating changes to the child support distribution rules. As part of their efforts to promote work and self-sufficiency, the Vermont and Connecticut programs changed the child support disbursement procedures for families on welfare in order to make the payments more visible and to give both parents a greater stake in how much is paid. For the program group in WRP, all child support paid on behalf of the family was passed through to the custodial parent, and any payments in excess of $50 were counted as income in determining the welfare grant. Thus, although the change is budget neutral from the perspective of the family and the state, the custodial parent is aware of exactly how much child support was paid. The Jobs First program went one step further, passing through all child support to the family and increasing the disregard from $50 to $100. In contrast, under MFIP and FTP, there were no differences between the treatment and control groups in the distribution of child support. In these programs, both groups experienced the $50 pass-through and disregard policy that was in place in the both states prior to welfare reform. The FTP treatment also intended to provide enhanced child support enforcement services, such as dedicated CSE-FTP staff and co-location of workers. In practice, however, such enhanced services were not provided consistently throughout the follow-up period.

If recipients are more aware that they are receiving regular and sufficient child support payments, they may be more willing to leave welfare for work. The CSDE experimental results discussed earlier, which found few lasting effects of the pass-through on work and welfare, suggest that these policies may have little effect. However, when examining policies in a single state, it is important to examine their effects in the context of other state programs. Of course, when assessing the effects of WRP and Jobs First on child support receipt and welfare receipt, we cannot isolate the effects of changes in the distribution policies from the effect of the other program components, such as time limits or work mandates.

The final evaluations included information on the effects of each program on child support receipts. Both FTP and Jobs First led to modest increases in the amount of child support received for the treatment group, while MFIP led to a modest reduction in the amount received. Results from WRP showed a negative impact on child support but only for one subgroup, recipients. In what follows, we present these results for the full evaluation samples and also for a range of subgroups.

Table VIII.2 presents impacts on welfare and child support receipt of each of the four programs. Outcomes are measured as of the follow-up surveys for each evaluation and are based on self-reports.[26] The first panel presents results from Jobs First. The program led to a substantial reduction in the rate of welfare receipt by the time of the survey and a modest increase in child support receipt. The effects on child support vary more across subgroups than the effect on welfare receipt, with larger effects for the less educated group and larger effects for women with two children.

The second panel presents the effects of FTP. FTP substantially reduced welfare receipt, with somewhat larger effects for black women and for less educated women. It also increased child support receipt. The effects on child support receipt do not always mirror the welfare effects. For example, those without a high school diploma had large effects on welfare effects but no significant effects on child support.

Panel three presents results for MFIP. Results are presented for long-term recipients only, since they faced the full program (work mandates plus incentives) when they entered the program. MFIP increased the fraction of families receiving welfare, which is somewhat expected given its more generous incentives, and reduced child support receipt. Although not shown, the full MFIP program also increased employment and earnings. This effect, combined with more generous welfare benefits, led to an increase in income for the treatment group, which may explain the reduction in child support receipt, that is, if women felt less urgency in their need to pursue other income sources, such as child support. The effects on child support receipt do not vary much across subgroups, although they are significant for black women and women with two children. The impacts on welfare receipt were also larger for these groups. Finally, the incentives-only program had no significant effects on child support receipt, which may be due partly to smaller sample sizes.

WRP had few effects on welfare and child support receipt, with the exception of a very large increase in child support receipt for women with three or more children. Comparing rates of child support receipt for the control groups shows that women in Vermont were more likely

[26]The follow-up surveys occurred at the following points after random assignment: Jobs First at three years, FTP at four years, MFIP at three years, and WRP at three and one-half years.

to receive child support than women in Minnesota and Connecticut. The fact that receipt rates were already relatively high in Vermont may help explain the lack of impacts.

The findings in Table VIII.2 suggest that the impacts of the programs on child support might be related to their impacts on welfare receipt. If the program encourages women to leave welfare, for example, it might also encourage them to pursue child support as another income source. Conversely, if the program encourages women to stay on welfare (relative to the control group), it might reduce child support receipt if women do not feel the need for other income sources. Looking at the full samples, two programs (Jobs First and FTP) reduced welfare receipt and increased child support receipt, one program (MFIP) increased welfare receipt; and one program (WRP) had little effect on either welfare receipt of child support receipt. To further examine whether the child support impacts are the result of the welfare impacts, we conducted a separate analysis estimating impacts on "joint" outcomes of both child support and welfare receipt. For example, impacts for MFIP show that the biggest movement across categories was a movement from the "some child support but no welfare" status to "no child support but some welfare." Impacts on the other two categories ("some child support and some welfare" and "no child support and no welfare") were quite small. In other words, the same women who stayed on welfare because of MFIP appear to be the same women who did not receive child support because of MFIP. In this way, the impacts on child support appear to be related to the impacts on welfare receipt, although we cannot say with certainty that one impact caused the other. Some support for the idea that the welfare impact caused the child support impact is that MFIP had no treatment component that was designed specifically to affect child support. This pattern of strong association between the two impacts also held for FTP, and less so for Jobs First and WRP. These results are consistent with the findings from the multivariate, although nonexperimental, results presented in section III.D, showing that current welfare recipients are less likely to receive child support.

Table VIII.3 looks more at the two time limit programs. Rates of child support receipt at the survey are presented for three groups of women who had left welfare prior to the survey — those in the control group, those in the treatment group who left before their time limit expired, and those who left because of the time limit. In FTP, women who left because of a time limit were more likely than the other two groups to receive child support. The group with the lowest rate was the control group leavers. A similar pattern was reported in Bloom et al. (2000), in which time-limit leavers were more likely to receive other transfers, such as food stamps and child support. The authors attributed the difference in part to the exit interviews given to women reaching their time limits, in which eligibility for nonwelfare benefits was assessed. Although formal involvement of the child support program was not part of the exit interview, caseworkers most likely talked to recipients about child support.

Exit interviews were also given to women approaching time limits in Jobs First. However, for Jobs First there are no differences in child support receipt between the three groups. A similar result was found for the receipt of food stamps (Miller et al. 2002), in which the time limit leaver group in Jobs First was not more likely to receive food stamps than the other two groups of leavers. A key difference between Jobs First and FTP was the way in which the time limit was implemented. Under Jobs First, many recipients who reached their time limit without jobs or with very low earnings were given six-month extensions. Thus, the time-limit leaver group in Jobs First comprises women with higher average earnings than the other two groups, which may reduce the need for pursuing child support. In contrast, extensions were fairly rare in FTP, meaning that time-limit leavers did not have relatively high earnings. For this reason, although exit interviews were given in both FTP and Jobs First, there may be been more focus by staff and the recipients themselves in FTP on securing child support in addition to other income sources.

Summary

- The two time-limit programs reduced the number of families receiving welfare and increased the number receiving child support, while the two programs with financial incentives and work mandates either increased or had little effect on welfare receipt and reduced or had little effect on child support receipt. For the samples as a whole, the impacts on child support receipt are linked with the impacts on welfare receipt, although less so for Jobs First and WRP.

- Although the results are only suggestive, there were no obvious effects on child support of changes in the pass-through policies as part of the demonstrations in Connecticut and Vermont. Jobs First increased the rate of child support receipt, but this increase could have been due to the fact that fewer families in the treatment group were receiving welfare, so that they were receiving more of the child support that was already being paid on their behalf. WRP had little effect on child support receipt, although its pass-through policy was budget neutral and not as generous to families as that in Jobs First.

- Women who left welfare because of a time limit in FTP were more likely to receive child support, possibly a result of more attention paid by caseworkers at the point of welfare exit.

Table VIII.1

Key Features of Welfare Waiver Evaluations

Program	Financial Incentives	Work or Participation Mandates	Time Limit	Changes in Child Support Distribution Rules
Jobs First	√	√	√	√
FTP	√	√	√	
MFIP				
Full MFIP	√	√		
MFIP Incentives Only	√			
WRP				
Full WRP	√	√		√
WRP Incentives Only	√			√

Table VIII.2

Impacts on Child Support and Welfare Receipt - State Waiver Evaluations

	Receiving Welfare at Survey (%)				Receiving Child Support at Survey (%)			
	Control	Impact		P-value	Control	Impact		P-value
Jobs First								
Full sample	41.0	-10.7	***	0.000	25.5	3.3	*	0.077
Race/ethnicity								
Black	44.3	-9.1	***	0.004	24.6	0.9		0.758
Hispanic	45.3	-6.7		0.141	17.6	6.0		0.109
White	34.4	-14.5	***	0.000	30.9	5.3		0.107
Education								
High school diploma or GED	36.1	-10.8	***	0.000	28.5	1.4		0.553
No high school diploma or GED	48.6	-10.3	***	0.002	20.9	6.8	**	0.018
Number of children								
One	35.0	-9.9	***	0.001	23.5	0.4		0.896
Two	40.2	-9.5	***	0.008	26.4	8.7	**	0.014
Three or more	45.1	-11.0	**	0.025	27.8	3.3		0.466
Child support status at baseline								
Receiving payments	42.8	-19.5	***	0.000	62.4	7.3		0.176
Not receiving payments	47.0	-12.8	***	0.000	17.9	2.4		0.245
Sample size	2,288				2,289			

(continued)

Table VIII.2 (continued)

	Receiving Welfare at Survey (%)				Receiving Child Support at Survey (%)			
	Control	Impact		P-Value	Control	Impact		P-Value
FTP								
Full sample	21.9	-12.2	***	0.000	25.9	7.6	***	0.002
Race/ethnicity								
Black	26.9	-16.4	***	0.000	24.7	11.4	***	0.001
Hispanic	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A		
White	15.8	-7.8	***	0.003	27.8	2.4		0.518
Education								
High school diploma or GED	18.5	-8.9	***	0.000	28.1	8.9	***	0.008
No high school diploma or GED	26.3	-16.5	***	0.000	23.5	5.4		0.128
Number of children								
One	18.4	-11.2	***	0.000	25.0	5.1		0.194
Two	26.1	-17.1	***	0.000	26.1	7.0		0.124
Three or more	22.7	-9.8	***	0.007	26.9	9.9	**	0.026
Sample size	1,405				1,405			

(continued)

Table VIII.2 (continued)

	Receiving Welfare at Survey (%)					Receiving Child Support at Survey (%)				
		Impact		Impact			Impact		Impact	
	Control	(Full Program)	P-Value	(Incentives Only)	P-Value	Control	(Full Program)	P-Value	(Incentives Only)	P-Value
MFIP (long-term recipients)										
Full sample	46.5	9.7	*** 0.009	7.5	** 0.047	19.1	-5.4	** 0.049	-2.3	0.409
Race/ethnicity										
Black	51.1	8.3	0.156	12.5	** 0.031	11.0	-6.2	* 0.052	-3.1	0.335
White	42.0	8.7	0.121	2.7	0.631	28.5	-4.2	0.401	-3.2	0.521
Education										
High school diploma or GED	39.2	12.8	*** 0.005	10.6	** 0.020	22.0	-4.5	0.203	-4.1	0.241
No high school diploma or GED	64.2	0.9	0.894	-1.4	0.832	12.4	-6.4	0.126	2.0	0.649
Number of children										
One	43.0	2.6	0.697	9.8	0.159	19.4	-0.8	0.876	-0.6	0.912
Two	46.8	11.6	* 0.072	4.9	0.442	19.9	-7.4	* 0.097	-6.0	0.179
Three or more	49.6	13.8	** 0.029	8.3	0.192	17.9	-7.2	0.126	0.1	0.990
Sample size	1,039						1,044			
WRP										
Full sample	41.9	-5.2	0.138	-2.4	0.492	41.0	-2.6	0.461	0.9	0.807
Education										
High school diploma or GED	38.3	-4.2	0.338	1.0	0.812	42.6	-2.1	0.641	-1.4	0.760
No high school diploma or GED	48.7	-7.7		-9.4		38.2	-3.2		5.0	
Number of children										
One	40.6	-15.2	*** 0.006	-6.2	0.236	41.6	-4.0	0.485	-2.2	0.685
Two	38.1	6.2	0.318	2.1	0.740	48.3	-11.4	* 0.067	-6.5	0.304
Three or more	52.7	-8.7	0.279	-1.8	0.824	30.6	12.9	0.100	18.7	** 0.022
Sample size	1,125						1,126			

Source: Survey and baseline data from the Jobs First, FTP, MFIP, and WRP evaluations.

Notes: All impacts are regression adjusted using a range of characteristics measured at baseline. Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1%; ** = 5%; and * = 10%.

Table VIII.3

Child Support Receipt Among Welfare Leavers: FTP and Jobs First

	Receiving Child Support at Survey (%)
FTP	
Experimental non-time-limit leavers	32.7
Experimental time-limit leavers	42.4
Control leavers	25.8
Sample size = 1,043	
Jobs First	
Experimental non-time-limit leavers	30.1
Experimental time-limit leavers	30.2
Control leavers	27.1
Sample size = 1,337	

Source: Survey data from the FTP and Jobs First evaluations.

IX. Conclusion

This study has examined a number of research questions using a variety of data sources. Overall, the findings demonstrate the importance of examining multiple data sources when documenting trends in outcomes and assessing the effects of particular policies. Data using individual states (for example, Wisconsin) and subsets of the child support eligible population (Urban Change, PFS) often show differences in degree and kind from the overall national trends (SIPP). Nonetheless, the findings do suggest some broad conclusions.

Child support distribution policy makes a difference.

Families receive more of the child support collected on their behalf when there is a partial or full pass-through and when they leave TANF. Despite the low levels of knowledge about distribution rules, more generous pass-through and distribution policies do increase payments rates by fathers and receipt rates by mothers.

Child support is a significant source of income.

When families receive child support, it is an important contributor to families' overall income and generally takes on more importance in the family budget after women leave welfare. There is evidence from the waiver evaluations that women rely on child support as another income source when they leave welfare. However, too few families receive child support, and it can be a fairly unreliable source of income, at least on a monthly basis. Receipt rates and award rates are lower in general for current and former recipients than for all eligible women, although they have been increasing over time.

Child support can strengthen family self-sufficiency.

In the national sample, child support receipt increased the likelihood of leaving welfare and reduced the likelihood of returning. However, experimental data from Wisconsin suggest that the effects appear to be short lived. Consistent work effects were not identified. The unreliable nature of the payments may be one of the reasons why child support was not found to have consistent effects on women's work and welfare. A caveat to this finding is that the changes in support observed in our data were fairly small. It may be the case that support can encourage women to leave welfare if the amounts are large enough.

Parents do not understand child support distribution rules, nor do they know when the rules have changed.

Another reason for the lack of strong effects of child support on welfare use may be that many parents do not understand how much child support they would receive once they left welfare. Results from the SIPP suggest that, nationwide, mothers who are receiving welfare do not know how their child support collections are distributed. In Wisconsin, a significant fraction of custodial and noncustodial parents did not understand the child support distribution rules. Experience in the child support system is associated with higher knowledge levels, but even these parents have fairly low levels of knowledge. Low knowledge levels were found for those who experienced a change in policy, moving from the partial pass-through under AFDC to the full pass-through under W-2. Since behavioral changes are contingent on understanding distribution policy, educating both parents is an important part of distribution policy changes.

Child support payments may create financial incentive for quicker establishment of paternity.

Results from Wisconsin suggest that more generous pass-through and disregard policy increased the speed of paternity establishment. By speeding up paternity establishment (for example, by creating interest early on among CSE staff and/or clients, focusing on TANF cases, or employing other early intervention strategies), child support outcomes might also be improved.

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