

Poverty Research Insights

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After PRWORA: Barriers to employment, work, and well-being among current and former welfare recipients

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Overview

How did welfare recipients fare under the new rules laid down by the 1996 welfare reform legislation? What characteristics of welfare recipients affected their ability to move from welfare to work? And how have low-income mothers' transitions off welfare and into employment affected their children's well-being?

This issue of *Poverty Research Insights* explores these questions, summarizing the findings from several large studies.

Despite significant barriers, many former welfare recipients found work, and on average, the single mothers who moved to work have higher incomes than those who remained on welfare without work. However, many welfare leavers remain poor despite working, and a small but increasing number of single mothers are disconnected from both work and welfare.

It may be too soon to assess the impact of welfare reform on children. But the evidence to date suggests that low-income mothers of pre-adolescent children can undertake paid work without negative consequences on their children.

The newsletter ends with descriptions of several opportunities for research and training, including a postdoctoral fellowship and our 2005 Poverty Research Grants program: "Race, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Poverty."

Overview

Shortly after welfare reform was implemented, numerous studies were launched with two goals: (1) to understand better how the personal and family characteristics of welfare recipients affected their ability to move from welfare to work and (2) to follow them over time and determine how they fared under a new set of rules.

In this issue of *Poverty Research Insights*, we highlight the findings from a number of these studies and discuss the policy implications raised in various reports.

During the welfare reform debates of the 1990s, and even after passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, many researchers and policy makers expressed concern about the strong work requirement provisions and the time limits on cash assistance. To receive benefits under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program created by PRWORA, recipients must work or participate in work-related activities, and receipt of those benefits is limited to 60 months during a recipient's lifetime, or less at state option.

Studies of welfare recipients conducted before welfare reform indicated that many lacked prior work experience, had low levels of education, and thus would have a difficult time succeeding in the labor market. However, others argued that the welfare system itself had trapped recipients — most of whom were single mothers — on the rolls for long periods of time through rules that typically deducted a dollar of benefits for every dollar earned from a job.

Given the costs associated with working (e.g., taxes, child care and transportation) and the likelihood that the jobs available to most welfare recipients paid relatively low wages, the incentive to remain on welfare was high for many single mothers.

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Studies of current and former welfare recipients

Passage of welfare reform resulted in a proliferation of studies on welfare recipients. Major research organizations initiated their own studies or were funded by foundations and states to study particular welfare reforms in particular locations. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services commissioned more than 30 studies of so-called “welfare leavers,” i.e., families who had transitioned off of welfare, applicants who were formally or informally diverted from welfare, and current welfare recipients.

A few random assignment studies, most begun prior to welfare reform, also provide information on the impacts of particular welfare policies, such as time limits, work requirements, and work incentives, on the employment and other relevant outcomes.

This article will draw from many of these research projects but will focus particular attention on the results from three studies: two are panel studies of welfare recipients over time and one is a national study. For each study, the primary purpose is to examine the circumstances of welfare recipients in-depth and track well-being by surveying individual welfare clients.

The Women’s Employment Study (WES) is a five-wave panel study of an initial sample of 753 welfare recipients residing in a single urban Michigan county. In-person interviews were conducted in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, and 2003, with response rates of between 86 and 92 percent at each wave. WES is nationally recognized for the depth of information it gathers, including measures on the extent of numerous mental and physical health problems and experiences of domestic violence as well as detailed information on employment experiences.

Where possible, WES uses previously validated measures that allow researchers to make comparisons with national estimates. WES has followed a single cohort over a longer period of time than any of the other post-welfare reform studies. This study is conducted by the Michigan Program on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy, at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan.

A basic assumption underlying PRWORA was that welfare recipients would be capable of finding jobs and transitioning from welfare to employment.

Like WES, Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) is a panel study, involving around 2,000 welfare recipients; the sample was drawn from the entire state’s caseload, as opposed to that of a single county. The study, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, measures clients’ economic progress, employment patterns, material hardship, health status, living situations, and other outcomes over the five- to six-year period after they entered the TANF program.

WFNJ respondents, all of whom participated in New Jersey’s welfare reform program during 1997 and 1998, have been interviewed five times (annually, 1999-2003), with response rates of 80 percent or more in each survey round. The study also follows a later cohort of welfare recipients, who came on the rolls during 2000 and 2001 (and were surveyed in 2002).

Finally, the National Survey of American Families (NSAF), conducted by the Urban Institute, gathered data on a nationally representative sample of adults and children through cross-sectional telephone surveys conducted in 1997, 1999, and 2002. The

scope of NSAF is broad, with the study aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the well-being of U.S. families. It contains an over-sample of low-income households and asks questions on topics ranging from employment and earnings, health status, health insurance coverage, and use of health services, to knowledge and use of social services and attitudes about work and welfare.

It is important to note that these studies do not use the same measures in their surveys; thus caution must be exercised when making comparisons across studies. At least some, and perhaps a great deal of the differences between the studies’ findings may also be due to the demographic composition of the welfare caseload across states.

The New Jersey sample is over half African American, more than a quarter Hispanic, and 19 percent White. WES respondents are fairly equally split between African Americans and Whites, with the vast majority living in urban areas. NSAF respondents were 22 percent Hispanic, 42 percent White, Non-Hispanic, and 37 percent Nonwhite, Non-Hispanic, but living in many different states and in a mix of urban and rural settings. NSAF respondents were also receiving welfare when interviewed, whereas some WES and WFNJ participants had left the rolls at the time they were surveyed.

Barriers to employment

A basic assumption underlying PRWORA was that welfare recipients would be capable of finding jobs and transitioning from welfare to employment. Most states adopted a “Work First” strategy that emphasized job search and job readiness skills. Little time was devoted to training recipients or to assessing needs that they might have.

Prior research documented that low levels of human capital, such as a lack of a high school degree, lack of specific job skills, and limited work experience were “barriers” to employment, and welfare recipients

were more likely than other women to face these types of barriers. When recipients are compared to non-recipients with the same schooling and family characteristics, recipients leave jobs at higher rates and earn lower wages than do non-recipients (Hershey and Pavetti, 1997). This suggests that previously unmeasured barriers, including mental health problems, psychiatric disorders, substance abuse or dependence, and physical health or disability also may be important.

The studies listed above attempted to document the prevalence of these barriers among the welfare population. **Table 1 highlights some of the findings.**

All studies find high levels of barriers among their samples of current and former recipients. Between 30 and 45 percent lack a high school diploma or GED. At least 15 percent and perhaps as many as half lack significant work experience prior to welfare reform. The prevalence of physical health problems ranges from 19 percent in WES to 36 percent in the New Jersey study. And mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse problems are all experienced by significant minorities of the samples.

In part, the varied findings between studies are likely due to measurement and definitional differences. For example, WES defines “low work experience” as having worked in less than 20 percent of one’s adult years prior to the start of the panel study. In the New Jersey study, the measure is not having worked at all in the two years prior to TANF entry, and in NSAF, it is not working in the past three years.

Definitions related to mental health provide another example of differences between the three studies. While the WES measure of health problems is more restrictive than those used in the other two studies, for its mental health and substance abuse measures WES uses diagnostic screening criteria for psychiatric disorders based upon the DSM-IV manual, which is used by clinical professionals. NSAF relies on respondent self-report of having experienced mental health problems, while the New Jersey figure reflects the proportion who had actually been in treatment for a mental health problem.¹

The extent to which drug and alcohol problems are significant for welfare recipients

Relative to a national sample of women of the same ages, WES respondents were much less likely to have graduated from high school and much more likely to have experienced transportation problems, to have met diagnostic screening criteria for health and mental health problems, and to report poor child health and severe physical abuse.

is a question that has received a great deal of attention from researchers and policy makers. Some advocates speculate that the majority of recipients suffer from substance abuse problems (for further discussion, see, the National Poverty Center’s Policy Brief #2, *Substance Abuse and Welfare Reform*).

In the first wave of the WES study, only five percent of respondents met the diagnostic screening criteria for alcohol and/or drug dependence, i.e., significant functional impairment resulting from use of the substance. In New Jersey, five percent of respondents said they had sought treatment for a drug or alcohol problem in the past year. At any given survey wave in WES, though, about 20 percent of respondents report that they have used illicit substances — primarily marijuana — in the previous 12 months.

Comparisons with national data yield another perspective on the barriers to employment facing welfare recipients. Relative to a national sample of women of the same ages, WES respondents were much less likely to have graduated from high school and much more likely to have experienced transportation problems, to have met diagnostic screening criteria for health and mental health problems, and to report poor child health and severe physical abuse.

Table 1: Prevalence of potential barriers to employment among welfare recipients

	WES, 1997	Work First New Jersey, 1999	NSAF, 1999
Low Education	31%	45%	41%
Low Work Experience	15%	51%	43%
Physical Health Problem	19%	36%	25%
Mental Health Problem	35%	11%	35%
Domestic Violence	15%	7%	n/a
Substance Abuse Problem	5%	5%	n/a

Sources: Danziger et al, 2000; Zedlewski, 1999; Rangarajan and Wood, 1999.

For example, just under a third lacked a high school diploma or GED, compared to about 13 percent of women nationally; more than a quarter met the diagnostic screening criteria for major depression, again compared to about 13 percent of women in a national sample; and 15 percent experienced domestic violence, as opposed to roughly three percent of all women (Danziger et al, 2000).

The three studies described above all focus primarily on welfare recipients living in urban areas. A study of welfare recipients in Nebraska finds similar or even higher levels of barriers among rural versus urban dwellers. Rural clients were somewhat more likely to report having substance abuse problems (22 percent versus 14 percent for urban clients). They were also more likely to have experienced domestic violence in their lifetimes (50 percent as opposed to 40 percent for urban clients). Although not significantly different, 37 percent of rural clients had a major depressive disorder, compared to 30 percent of clients living in urban areas (Meckstroth, Ponza, and Derr, 2002).

Employment, welfare receipt, and economic well-being after welfare reform

Although the prevalence of employment barriers is quite high, many welfare recipients have moved off of the rolls and into employment. Soon after welfare reform was implemented, many recipients had found jobs. In August, 1998, two years after PRWORA's passage, just under 70 percent of WES respondents were employed. A smaller proportion, 43 percent, were employed in New Jersey at the time of the first survey in 1999. In the NSAF, among those who left welfare between 1997 and 1999 and had not returned to the rolls, 64 percent were working (Loprest, 2002).

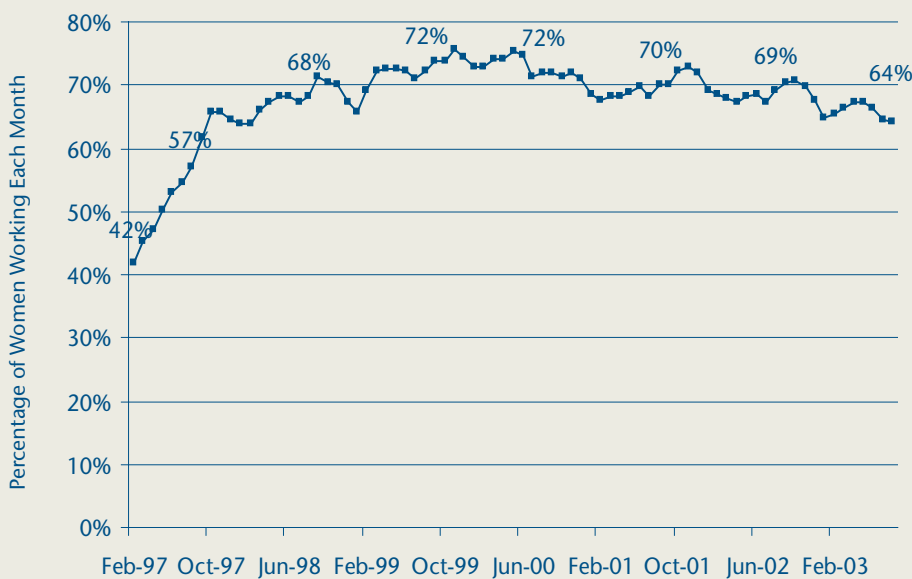
By 2002, more than half, 54 percent, of WFNJ respondents were employed (Wood, Rangarajan, and Deke, 2004.) Among WES respondents in 2002, monthly employment rates averaged about 68.5 percent, about the same as 2001 and a slight decline from 2000 (calculations from Danziger and Johnson, 2004).² Figure 1 shows employment rates for the WES sample over the entire seven-year study period.

Not all employment is stable, however. In the New Jersey study, three out of every four employed clients experienced a job loss at some point, with "quits" being the most common reason for losing a job (Wood, Rangarajan, and Deke, 2003). Voluntary quits accounted for about one-fifth of all job exits in WES, although that figure dropped to one-tenth of exits during the recession (Danziger and Johnson, 2004). A number of different ASPE-funded, state-level studies of welfare leavers find that on average, about 60 percent of leavers are employed at any given time (Acs and Loprest, 2004). Some are between jobs, and some return to welfare.

However, as employment increased, welfare receipt decreased, even among former recipients who lose employment. All women in the WES sample received TANF in February, 1997, the month the sample was drawn. Four years later, only 23 percent were still on the rolls. Likewise, in New Jersey, 21 percent of the original sample, all of whom were Work First New Jersey participants between July 1997 and December, 1998, received welfare at the time of the fourth survey in 2002.

Employment has not necessarily translated into large improvements in economic well-being for all of those who have left welfare. ASPE commissioned a synthesis of its state leaver studies and found that about a quarter or more leavers experience food hardships at some point after leaving TANF, including problems having enough money for food or having food last for the month. Similar percentages experience trouble paying rent or utilities (Acs and Loprest, 2004). What is not clear, though, is whether hardships increased due to leaving welfare; some studies show that hardships decrease or remain the same after exit (Acs and Loprest, 2004).

Figure 1: Monthly Employment Rates, Current and Former Welfare Recipients
Mean Months Worked = 68% of 79 Months



Sources: Danziger and Johnson, 2004.

For some women, leaving welfare for work translates into the loss of health insurance. Even though PRWORA de-linked automatic eligibility for Medicaid and welfare receipt, most TANF recipients were covered by the program. Subsequent expansions of Medicaid and the enactment of the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) allowed many more low-income children to be covered by public health insurance, but adults leaving welfare for work were usually not covered by this program. Among WES respondents, about a fifth did not have health insurance for themselves in 2001. Likewise, among WFNJ clients, about one in four lacked insurance three to four years after TANF entry, although children were more likely to be covered. (Wood, Rangarajan, and Deke, 2003). Similar results are found among welfare leavers in the 1997 NSAF sample (Garrett and Holahan, 2002.)

Related to the issue of health insurance loss is the debate over whether or not it “pays” to leave welfare for work. While in many states welfare benefits are not overly generous (in 2000 the median monthly TANF benefit for a family of three with no other income was approximately \$390), going to work might mean the loss of some or all of those benefits, including loss of Food Stamps and Medicaid.

Additionally, recipients might incur work-related expenses such as child care and transportation. Danziger et. al (2002), using WES data, found that those who left welfare for work had much higher monthly net household incomes than those not working and on welfare (\$17,265 vs \$8,244). However, analysis of data from the Three-City Study, which follows low-income families (including welfare recipients) in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio, does not find similar returns to leaving welfare for work (Moffitt and Winder, 2003).³

While welfare rolls have dropped to historically low levels, some recipients still remain on assistance, putting them at risk

for reaching TANF’s 60 month time limit. WES respondents who have accumulated the greatest number of months (at least 40 months during a 60 month period) on TANF are more likely to have human capital problems as well as persistent personal and family challenges, such as children with health problems, domestic violence, and drug use (Seefeldt and Orzol, 2004).

... (A) synthesis of ... state (welfare) leaver studies ... found that about a quarter or more leavers experience food hardships at some point after leaving TANF, including problems having enough money for food or having food last for the month.

What has happened since the recession?

Despite the record-high levels of employment among welfare recipients and single mothers more generally, there are indications that the economic downturn of the early 2000s is affecting welfare recipients and welfare leavers. According to data from the National Survey of America’s Families, the proportion of recent welfare leavers who were working and off of TANF was lower in 2002 than it was in 1999— 42.2 percent compared to 49.9 percent (Loprest, 2003a).

Monthly employment rates of WES recipients, all of whom were receiving welfare in early 1997, have also slowed. While, as noted above, more than three-quarters of the sample were working in November, 1999, the height of the economic boom, employment rates subsequently declined. In August

2003, roughly 64 percent of the sample were employed (Danziger and Johnson, 2004).

Neither data from NSAF nor from WES indicate that there have been major changes in job quality for welfare leavers. Median hourly wages for welfare leavers in 2002 were not significantly different from those who left welfare in 1999 (Loprest, 2003a). Also unchanged is the proportion of WES respondents (28 percent) who are in jobs providing an annual income that exceeds the federal poverty line and allows them to maintain health insurance. However, six and a half years after welfare reform was implemented, about half of working respondents were not in those types of jobs: despite having accumulated work experience (on average 54 months), almost two-fifths were not employed at all (Danziger and Johnson, 2004).

Also of concern is the still small but growing proportion of welfare leavers who appear to be “disconnected” from work and welfare. In New Jersey, about one in four survey respondents who were on TANF in 1997 and 1998 were, in any given month subsequent to that, neither working nor receiving welfare (Wood and Rangarajan, 2003). Among this group, just under a quarter were living with a working spouse or partner, about another quarter were receiving benefits from either the Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) or Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs, and others were in between jobs; about two-fifths of this group lack other sources of support.

Analyses of the NSAF find that about one in seven recent welfare leavers are not working, not living with a working spouse or partner, and not receiving welfare or disability (Loprest, 2003b). Compared to working welfare leavers, these families were more likely to cut back on food intake (48 versus 30 percent) or to have had food run out during the year (63 versus 43 percent).

Additionally, the proportion of leavers disconnected from work and welfare increased from 9.8 percent in 1999 to 13.8 percent in 2001, but was slightly lower in 2002 because fewer families left welfare after 1999.

Results from the Women's Employment Study show a similar increase in the percentage of women who are both not working and not receiving welfare benefits in a given month – from 4.4 percent in 1997 to 15.3 percent in 2001. WES respondents who have been disconnected for more than a quarter of the months between 1997 and 2001 have a significantly greater number of barriers to employment – including human capital, health, and mental health problems – and are more disadvantaged on a variety of economic measures. (Turner, Danziger, and Seefeldt, 2004).

Policy Implications

Greater numbers of single mothers, including welfare recipients, entered the labor force after welfare reform. And on average, those who moved from welfare to work have higher incomes than those who remain on welfare.

However, as Danziger and Wang (2004) note, many welfare leavers still remain poor despite working. The researchers propose consideration of policies that would raise the net income of workers, such as increased child care subsidies, expanded access to health insurance, raises in the minimum wage, or implementation of state-level earned income tax credits.

Wood and Rangarajan (2003) suggest that employment retention and advancement services or linkages to community agencies might be helpful for the least stable families leaving welfare, for example, those who were sanctioned or employed leavers with low levels of education. For those still on welfare or entering the rolls, assessment, referrals, and the use of a wide array of

services has been suggested as a way to help address employment barriers (Danziger and Seefeldt, 2002).

Helping disconnected families, Loprest (2003b) notes, may be particularly challenging. Welfare offices may not follow up with these families, because they have left the rolls; and some families may not wish to return or may have personal and other family challenges (e.g., physical and mental health problems) that impede their ability to navigate the system. Loprest suggests that despite the challenges, attempts should be made to reconnect these families with TANF benefits and also work to assess and address any employment barriers. ■

Endnotes

¹In the later cohort of WFNJ clients studied (those who were on TANF between 2000 and 2001), a higher proportion, 16 percent, reported a diagnosed mental health problem (Wood, Rangarajan, and Deke, 2004.)

²The higher employment rates in WES compared to WFNJ may be due to earlier welfare exits since the WES sample were on welfare in early 1997, whereas only some WFNJ sample members were on welfare in 1997.

³For more detail on this debate, see the forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Volume 24, Number 2, 2005.

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Welfare Reform and Children's Well-Being

Prepared from: "The Consequences of Welfare Reform for Child Well-Being: What Have We Learned So Far and What are the Policy Implications?" by Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University. This paper was presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Thematic Session: "The End of Welfare as We Knew It: What Now?", August 14, 2004. Read the full paper at: http://www.jhu.edu/~welfare/Cherlin_ASA2004.pdf.

How have low-income mothers' transitions off welfare and into employment affected their children's well-being?

This is a central question for researchers and policy makers. When welfare recipients go to work, their children might experience improved well-being if their household income increases and if their mother's self-esteem increases. On the other hand, children might experience negative effects if employment leads to increased maternal stress or if children spend longer periods of time in unsupervised settings.

In this piece, we present a summary of a recent paper, "The Consequences of Welfare Reform for Child Well-Being: What Have We Learned So Far and What are the Policy Implications?" by Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University. Cherlin reviews findings from several studies to learn how children have fared post-welfare reform.

The studies

Two types of large-scale studies of this topic have been carried out over the past several years. The first type consists of evaluations based on random-assignment studies in particular communities, in which one group of families receives assistance under pre-welfare-reform rules and a second, experimental group is subject to new policies, including work requirements, time limits, and earnings supplements for the employed.

Because random assignment is used, one can compare the well-being of children in the experimental and control groups and conclude that differences are the result of some part of the experimental treatment. However, as Cherlin notes, random-assignment studies are limited in their ability to highlight the processes that cause these results. MDRC, which conducted many of these studies, conducted a meta-analysis of their data, assembled under the name "The Next Generation Studies."

The second type of large-scale study is the longitudinal, observational study. In these studies, a population-based random sample of families is selected and then interviewed at regular intervals. The Women's Employment Study (WES) interviewed a sample of 753 single mothers who were welfare recipients in an urban Michigan county in 1997. Information was collected at each survey wave on a particular "focal child" for the three-fourths of the mothers who had a child age 2 to 10 (see the accompanying article "After PRWORA: Barriers to Employment, Work, and Well-Being Among Current and Former Welfare Recipients" for more information about WES). The Three-City Study, for which Cherlin is a co-investigator, follows a sample of families from low-income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio, with a particular focus on children ages 0 to 4 and 10 to 14 years old living in households with incomes less than twice the poverty line. This study includes extensive measures of child well-being, including direct measures obtained from the children. Children and their families were interviewed in 1999 and 2001.¹

The findings

Even though the various studies use different designs and collect different measures of child well-being, it is possible to compare

some findings. **Table 1** highlights some of these.

The two observational studies, WES and the Three Cities Study, report consistent findings: transitions off of welfare or into employment have no significant negative effects on child well-being; children are not worse off than when they started. There are also some suggestions of positive effects: WES finds that moving from reliance on welfare to a reliance on a combination of welfare and earnings from paid work appears to reduce behavioral problems among pre-adolescent children.

The Three-City Study found modest evidence of some improvement in adolescents' mental health when their mothers transitioned into employment. WES has limited information on adolescents, but in a cross-sectional analysis of data collected in 1999, Dunifon and Kalil (2003) report that teenagers whose mothers left welfare or who were combining welfare and work were less likely to have been suspended or expelled from school than those whose mothers were nonworking welfare recipients.

The findings from the MDRC Next Generation random assignment studies are consistent with the findings of the observational studies for younger children but not for

(T)he evidence to date is that low-income mothers can undertake paid work without negative consequences – and perhaps with some positive consequences – for pre-adolescent children, with the picture for adolescents more mixed.

Age at base-line	Three-City Study	Women's Employment Study	MDRC Next Generation Study
Infants	Not studied	Not studied	Few effects found
Pre-schoolers	No effects of mother's employment or welfare transitions	Positive effects of combined welfare and work on behavior problems	Positive effects of earning supplements on test scores
Elementary school	Not studied	Not studied	Not studied
Adolescents	No effects on most outcomes; perhaps some mental health improvement	Cross-sectional results show less suspension and expulsion from school.	Negative effects found on school performance and grade repetition

adolescents. MDRC, too, finds no significant negative effects for pre-school and elementary school children. These studies also find evidence for positive effects of programs that provide earnings supplements to mothers who were employed: children's school achievement increased, and in some studies their behavior problems lessened.

However unlike the observational studies, the random assignment studies do find some evidence of negative effects of work requirements on the schooling outcomes of adolescents. According to parents' reports, adolescents in the experimental group were not performing as well in school and were more likely to repeat a grade. In addition, those with younger siblings were more likely to be suspended or expelled or to drop out of school – findings which, the authors speculate, may reflect a greater burden of caring for younger siblings while mothers are at work.

Implications

Cherlin cautions that these findings may not represent the final story of the effects of welfare reform on children, for several reasons:

1. Findings from these studies represent data collected prior to the weakening of the economy in the second quarter of 2001. In a

weaker economy, mothers may have more difficulty finding and keeping paid employment. And the jobs they find could place more strain on families if they are low-paying or involve evening, night, or weekend work.

2. Relatively few welfare families had reached their time limits until very recently. As of December 2001, only about 54,000 families nationwide had reached the federal five-year time-limit nationwide, and only about 8,000 had had their cases closed due to time limits and were receiving no other assistance (Bloom et al, 2002).

Thus, until very recently, many welfare exits were in some sense voluntary: facing pressure to work and under the shadow of a time-limit, parents found jobs or left for other reasons before they had to. Cherlin notes that little is known about how families will fare who are forced to leave the rolls because they have reached a time limit.

3. Findings reported so far could reflect short-term effects that might change in the long-term. Some mothers who have had initial successes in finding jobs may not be able to make a secure transition to employment. Some children who were initially doing well may experience difficulties.

On the other hand, the functioning of mothers and children may continue to improve following their exits from welfare. Mothers may move up the job ladder and improve their financial well-being and family functioning, leading children to experience fewer emotional and behavioral problems and greater success in school. Moreover, in the longer-term, the signals of welfare reform could affect marriage and childbearing rates as well as school completion and work among low-income youth and young adults.

However, Cherlin suggests that even though the “story isn’t finished,” the evidence to date is that low-income mothers can undertake paid work without negative consequences – and perhaps with some positive consequences – for pre-adolescent children, with the picture for adolescents more mixed. ■

Endnote

¹A third study, the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, which follows 3,000 unmarried and 1,000 married lower-income couples, also has a child well-being component, but the study has not yet published papers detailing these findings.

Call for papers: April 2005 conference on social policies in the U.S. and the European Union

We invite paper submissions from scholars in the U.S. and Europe for a conference to be held in Ann Arbor, Michigan April 7-8, 2005, “Changing Social Policies for Low-Income Families and Less Skilled Workers in the EU and the U.S.”

Papers should evaluate key policy changes in social programs affecting work structure and work incentives within EU countries or the U.S. While we expect most papers will analyze a particular intervention in a particular country, we welcome papers that compare multiple changes within a country or that compare similar changes across countries.

Papers should focus on programs aimed at working-age populations, with particular attention to lower-skilled and less advantaged workers or low-income families. Among topics of particular interest are employment and training programs for younger or less-skilled workers, programs designed to increase female labor supply, or social assistance and tax changes designed to increase job opportunities or labor force participation.

The conference will feature a keynote address by Sir Tony Atkinson (Nuffield College, Oxford) on Thursday, April 7. A roundtable discussion on April 8 will focus on the political and economic forces that are

driving these changes and how they differ across countries.

This conference is jointly sponsored by the National Poverty Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan and the European Union Center, University of Michigan.

Application deadline: December 6, 2004.

Application details: www.npc.umich.edu/news/events/npceconf ■

For additional reading on welfare reform and children’s well-being:

Cherlin, Andrew. 2004. “The Consequences of Welfare Reform for Child Well-Being: What Have We Learned So Far and What are the Policy Implications?” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Available at www.jhu.edu/~welfare

Dunifon, Rachel, Ariel Kalil, and Sandra K. Danziger. 2003. “Does Maternal Employment Mandated by Welfare Reform Affect Parenting Behavior?” *Children and Youth Services Review* 25: 55-82.

Chase-Lansdale, P. Lindsay, Robert A. Moffitt, Brenda J. Lohman, Andrew J. Cherlin, Rebekah Levine Coley, Laura D. Pittman, Jennifer E. Roff, and Elizabeth Votruba-Drzal. 2003. “Mothers’ Transitions from Welfare to Work and the Well-Being of Preschoolers and Adolescents.” *Science* 299: 1548-52.

Gennetian, L.; G. Duncan; V. Knox; W. Vargas; E. Clark-Kauffman; and A. London. 2002. “How Welfare and Work Policies for Parents Affect Adolescents: A Synthesis of Research.” New York: MDRC. Available at www.mdrc.org

Morris, P; A. Huston; G. Duncan; D. Crosby; and J. Bos. 2001. “How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Children: A Synthesis of Research.” New York: MDRC. Available at www.mdrc.org

Call for applications: urban poverty workshop, June 2005

The NPC invites applications for participants in a five-day workshop on urban poverty, to take place in Ann Arbor from June 20 - 24, 2005. This workshop is designed as an intense introductory mini-graduate course, providing the background to persons who want to offer undergraduate courses or engage in poverty-related research but who did not receive substantive training about poverty research in their graduate work.

The instructors for the workshop will be University of Michigan faculty: Mary Corcoran, Professor of Public Policy and Political Science and Kerwin Charles, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Economics. In addition, the workshop will include presentations by other nationally recognized poverty researchers.

The number of selected participants will be limited to about fifteen. Successful applicants will be reimbursed for reasonable travel, lodging, and meal expenses.

The **deadline for applications** is March 15, 2005. Details: www.npc.umich.edu/news/events/summer05. ■

RFP: poverty research grants

The NPC's 2005 Poverty Research Grants program will fund research designed to broaden our understanding of the relationships between race, ethnicity, immigration, and poverty.

Proposals must investigate the mechanisms that create racial and ethnic disparities in poverty-related outcomes. The highest priority will be given to proposals that investigate mechanisms across racial, ethnic and/or immigrant groups, rather than proposals that focus only on race, migration, or ethnicity.

The NPC is particularly interested in funding analyses of novel qualitative and quantitative data sources, and novel uses of

existing datasets. Researchers who earned their doctoral degrees within the previous six years are especially encouraged to apply.

We anticipate funding up to 5 proposals, up to a maximum of \$20,000 per award. Drafts of funded research will be presented at a conference in Ann Arbor in late January 2006. Grantees will also be invited to attend a larger NPC-produced conference, "The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist," September 15-17, 2005 in Ann Arbor.

Application deadline: February 15, 2005.

Details:
http://www.npc.umich.edu/opportunities/research_grants/smallgrants05/ ■

Postdoctoral fellowships

The NPC is accepting applications for 2005 Postdoctoral Fellowships with the University of Michigan's Research and Training Program on Poverty and Public Policy. Funded by the Ford Foundation, this program provides the opportunity for one or two years of research and extensive training to outstanding American scholars who are members of groups that are underrepresented in the social sciences (e.g. members of racial and ethnic minority groups, individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, etc.)

Preference will be given to scholars who are engaged in poverty research and who received the Ph.D. after 2000.

Application Deadline: January 13, 2005
Award Notification: March 31, 2005

Details are available online:
www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/fellowship.htm ■

Welfare reform and Supplemental Security Income: new NPC Policy Brief

A recent National Poverty Center Policy Brief summarizes research related to welfare reform's effects on the Supplemental Security Income program. The Brief was written by Lucie Schmidt, Assistant Professor of Economics at Williams College.

The findings included:

- PRWORA tightened SSI eligibility standards for disabled children, excluded individuals diagnosed as disabled due to drug or alcohol addiction (DA&A), and made noncitizens ineligible.
- By 2001, the childhood SSI caseload was estimated to be 250,000 cases (22%) lower than it would have been in the absence of welfare reform.
- Use of SSI by legal noncitizens fell by 32% from 1994-1999, even though SSI eligibility was restored for most via a grandfather clause instituted in 1997.
- By April 1999, only 36% of former DA&A recipients had requalified for SSI under other medical conditions.
- Eight years after passage of PRWORA, we still know little about the well-being of former SSI recipients affected by changes in eligibility standards.

Read the entire Policy Brief online at www.npc.umich.edu.

CDS-II EARLY RESULTS WORKSHOP CALL FOR PAPERS

June 24-25, 2005

The Institute for Social Research at Michigan is hosting a 2-day workshop to highlight new empirical research focusing on the recently released Child Development Supplement, Wave II Data (CDS-II). The CDS is a two-wave, nationally representative study of children of PSID families conducted in 1997 and again in 2002/03. See the CDSS web site for details: <http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu>

We invite scholars to submit short abstracts (500 words) describing research based on analyses utilizing the CDS-II data for inclusion in the workshop poster sessions.



The workshop will be composed of poster sessions and symposiums. There will be four symposiums centered around the following topics:

- Child and Adolescent Health
- Competence and Achievement
- Time Use
- Psycho-social wellbeing/Languishing & flourishing

Each symposium session will be comprised of a lead scholar who will discuss current issues in the field, and three empirical papers. We anticipate 3-4 poster sessions with 5-10 papers per session.

Assistance with travel costs is available for some participants on the basis of merit and need. Meals will be provided to all participants. The workshop will be held in Ann Arbor.

Deadline for Submission of Abstracts: December 15, 2004 by 5:00pm

Submit abstracts electronically (in Word or PDF form) to Elizabeth Vandewater (Conference Organizer) at evandewater@mail.utexas.edu. Also please indicate whether you would like to be considered for travel assistance.



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The National Poverty Center

About the NPC

The National Poverty Center is charged with promoting high-quality research on the causes and consequences of poverty, evaluating and analyzing policies to alleviate poverty, and training the next generation of poverty researchers.

Rebecca M. Blank and Sheldon H. Danziger, Co-Directors

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Poverty Research Insights

A newsletter featuring recent research findings on poverty and policy from the National Poverty Center

Laura K. Lee, Editor

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