

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE DRAFT

**How Different ARE Welfare and Working Families? And Do Those Differences Matter for
Children's Achievement?**

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Welfare reform is upon us and is already producing many welfare to work transitions. There are good reasons to expect that these transitions will be beneficial for many families and children, but also that others will not fare as well. Whether the changes help or hurt depends in large part on families' responses to welfare reform -- the way they manage their time, effort and division of family responsibilities; the impact on their self-esteem, stress levels and other aspects of mental health; how their income changes; their connections to extra-familial support networks; their strategies for seeking and keeping jobs; whether marriages/partnerships or divorces/separations ensue; how fathers absent from the household alter their behavior; how community-level resources and supports change in response to the new welfare regime, and so forth.

The debate preceding the 1996 welfare reform legislation was filled with assertions about how welfare receipt harms family functioning and, depending on the politics of the speaker, how "ending welfare as we know it" either promotes or jeopardizes the well-being of the families and children involved. This debate, like many others, relied more on anecdote than analysis, but in this case for good reason: there is a dearth of systematic research on differences in family process and child well-being in welfare and working poor families.

We investigate in this paper the extent to which families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) differ from other families in mental health and the way they organize their time, manage their households, and spend their money. Our data provide information on several useful comparison groups. Contrasts between welfare and middle-class families speak to stereotypes middle-class adults have of welfare families. Contrasts between welfare and low-SES working family speak more to the possible consequences of welfare reform's welfare-to-work transitions.

Because welfare recipients and low-SES working families differ in difficult-to-measure ways, contrasting these characteristics for a cross-section of recipient and nonrecipient families probably overstates the likely changes that might accompany welfare-to-work transitions induced by welfare reform. But our upper-bound estimates of the effects of welfare reform are much better than nothing, and especially informative if they turn out to be small, since bias from unmeasured characteristics would not be important in those cases.

Our data come from two nationally-representative sources covering different historical periods. The first gathered its information in the early 1970s; the second in the early 1990s. The first of our data sets continued to follow family members, including children, until the mid-1990s. This allows us to investigate whether children growing up in families receiving welfare or having "bad" attitudes or family processes in the early 1970s showed lower achievements 20 years later, when the children had entered early adulthood.

We find large differences between welfare families and middle-class families in mental health, time use and expenditures, even after statistical adjustments for differences in demographic characteristics such as mothers' completed schooling and age. Occasionally, as with measures of parental alcohol consumption and how often the entire family ate meals together and got together

with neighbors, these differences “favored” welfare families. For parent-teacher association involvement, willingness to leave teen alone unsupervised, housework done by children and maternal self-esteem, there were no measurable differences between the two groups.

But in most cases, the differences were substantial and favored middle-class families. Compared with middle-class families, we found in welfare families strikingly higher levels of maternal depression, higher subjective reports of family tension, and greater hours spent watching television, as well as lower involvement in youth activities, lower (middle-class) interviewer ratings of the cleanliness of their dwelling, and lower reported levels of fate control and precautionary behaviors.

Try as it may, welfare reform is unlikely to elevate welfare recipients into the middle class. So rather than asking how welfare-recipient families differ from middle-class families, it is more telling to examine differences between welfare families and low-SES working families, especially single-parent working families.

When compared with welfare recipients, low-SES single working mothers reported closer, more loving and less tense family relations, less housework and, in one of our data sets, less time spent watching television. By and large, however, welfare families differed very little from low-SES single-mother working families. When compared with welfare families, mothers in single-parent working families are just as depressed, hostile and lacking in control of their fate; and they spend no more time reading to their children, helping with their children’s homework, or facilitating youth activities.

Suppose that welfare reform could somehow promote both work and marriage and therefore make welfare families resemble two-parent low-SES families with children. Relative to welfare mothers, working but low-SES mothers in two-parent families reported significantly less depression and hostility, and felt more in control of their fates. Marriage or partnering may indeed improve mental health, although it is also possible that better mental health improves one’s chances of marriage.

There are fewer reasons to expect that parenting behaviors may improve as a result of welfare reform. Relative to low-SES two-parent families, welfare families reported more frequently eating together as a family and getting together with neighbors. On the other hand, levels of parent involvement in youth activities and the time children spent doing chores were higher in low-SES, working-mother two-parent families relative to welfare families, and reported family tensions were less.

More often than not, mothers in low-SES two-parent families were no different from mothers in single-parent welfare families. For example, they spent just as little time reading to their children and helping their children with homework and were no less willing to condone unsupervised time for their adolescent children as mothers receiving welfare. Class, not welfare receipt, underlies many of these parenting differences.

Our look at the long-run effects of some of our family process and mental health measures on the amount of schooling eventually completed by children suggests that social capital

connections parents make outside the family matter the most. Since these differ little across our different groups of low-SES families, there is little reason to expect that welfare-to-work transitions will help children by promoting connections between family members and outside institutions.

More consistently important in our intergenerational models of children's schooling were a number of demographic characteristics, including the mother's own level of schooling, test score and age when her children were born. Strategies focused on improving basic skills and delaying first births may well have a bigger impact on children's success than policies directed at family process.

BACKGROUND

Christopher Jencks (1992) proposes four ways of identifying individuals who comprise the so-called "underclass" of American society. Two of his classification schemes, income level and income sources, deal directly with monetary measures of poverty. The other two, cultural skills and moral norms, speak to issues evoked by discussions and research on the lives of the poor — the extent to which low-income people do not "think, talk and act like those who manage America's major institutions" (p. 144). It is the perceived cultural and moral rather than the financial dimensions of poverty and welfare receipt that have fueled much of the debate over policies directed at the poor.

Recipients of the recently abolished cash income support program -- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) – have received the most attention in this debate. Scholars and politicians alike have suggested that women who receive AFDC demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that differ from those of other women. It is often assumed that welfare receipt itself promotes behavior and attitudes that are at odds with middle-class values, harms the career prospects of mothers and, perhaps most importantly, prevents children from becoming productive adults.

Culture of Poverty. Lewis (1966) was among the first academic researchers to identify and catalogue what he saw as the "culture of poverty" among the poor. In a study of Puerto Rican slums, he identified a "strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence, and inferiority" (p. 23) among the residents and concluded that psychiatric treatment may be the best way of addressing the misery that he observed.

In *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (1967), Rainwater analyzed the passionate debate about potential cultural differences between the poor and the rest of society sparked by Moynihan's report, which was published in the late 1960's and examined trends of family deterioration among African-Americans. In calling attention to increasing out-of-wedlock births, welfare use, and female-headed homes, Moynihan identified the "pathology" of urban black families as a primary cause of these problems (p. 75).

Moynihan linked self-defeating attitudes among blacks to the deprivations imposed on them by whites through “three centuries of sometimes unimaginable mistreatment” (p. 39). Thus, in his view, racial inequalities led to pathological cultural attitudes, which then led to more poverty and family dysfunction. Others, however, interpreted the causality of his argument differently, accusing him of “blaming the victim” by linking poverty to attitudes of the poor (which was, in fact, only half of his argument).

Because of the ire directed at Moynihan after his report, researchers sympathetic to the plight of the poor hesitated to address issues of attitudinal and behavioral differences. Indeed, by the late-1970s, the debate over the culture of poverty was judged to have vanished “without leaving significant intellectual residue” (Aaron, 1978, p. 38). However, it was quickly rekindled during Reagan’s presidency and by Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground* (1984).

More modern ethnographic work on the poor provides rich descriptions of lives that seem strikingly foreign to middle-class readers and imply vast cultural differences between classes. Anderson’s *Streetwise* (1990) describes life in an urban neighborhood called Northton. In the chapter entitled “Sex Codes and Family Life Among Northton’s Youth,” he describes how Northton’s men play on women’s desires for love and marriage in order to gain sexual favors, often leaving them alone and pregnant in the end. Anderson linked these seemingly dysfunctional sexual attitudes to the dire economic situation of the area, calling the lack of sexual and parental responsibility among Northton men, “a mean adaptation to blocked opportunities and profound lack, a grotesque form of coping” (p. 113).

While describing the underclass, Wilson (1987) uses the term “social isolation,” rather than “culture of poverty.” He does this deliberately, to highlight the fact that the characteristics of the poor are responses to social and economic situations, not self-sustaining cultural traits. In Wilson’s view, understanding the culture of the poor, which includes their attitudes and behaviors, is vital in understanding poverty itself.

Conservative commentators often draw an explicit connection between the attitudes and behavior of the poor and dependent and their precarious economic position, but attribute the former to the welfare programs themselves. Rector (1993) argues that the real cause of poverty is “a breakdown in the values and conduct that lead to the formation of healthy families and stable personalities, and promote self-sufficiency” among the poor (p. 3). Based on his belief in such “behavioral poverty,” he calls for large-scale reductions in social welfare spending.

Patterns of AFDC use. Numerous studies have shown that spells (i.e., continuous periods of receipt) of AFDC are often quite short, typically lasting less than two years (Blank 1989; Fitzgerald 1991; Harris 1993; O’Neill, Bassi, and Wolf 1987; Pavetti 1993). However, most recipients have more than one spell of AFDC use, with nearly 60 percent of those who leave the program eventually returning to it for additional support (Harris 1996). When multiple spells are added together, the median length of total welfare receipt is roughly four years (Bane and Ellwood 1994; Pavetti 1995).

The characteristics of long-term recipients have been identified in numerous studies, most notably in the work of Bane and Ellwood (1983, 1994), in a special report by Ellwood (1986), and more recently by Pavetti (1995). Pavetti’s estimates are typical in showing the likely problems

of long-term recipients in making successful transitions to the labor force: 63% of long-term (i.e., 60 or more total months of receipt) recipients lacked a high-school degree or GED when they first began to receive welfare; 39% reported no prior work experience; 53% were under age 25; 58% had never been married; and 52% had a child under the age of 13 months. Zill et al. (1991a) show that 56% of long-term AFDC recipients (and 44% of poor, non-recipient mothers and 10% of not poor mothers) score more than one-standard deviation below the mean on a comprehensive achievement test.

Psychological characteristics of AFDC recipients. Despite claims that the attitudes of welfare recipients differ from those of other women, it is unclear whether such differences exist and, even if they do, whether they result from time spent on welfare or existed prior to, and thus perhaps helped cause, the welfare receipt.

Zill et al. (1991a and 1991b) provide a statistical profile using national data on AFDC recipients and other mothers. They find substantially lower self esteem for welfare recipients than non-poor mothers but no significant differences between welfare recipients and other poor mothers.

A number of local studies of welfare recipients find strikingly higher levels of depressive symptoms among welfare mothers (Zill et al. 1991a). However, Zill (1978) finds no significant differences in depression between low-income mothers who were married as opposed to never-married or divorced.

Plotnick, Klawitter, and Edwards (1997) use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to predict young women's initial entry onto welfare using psychological measures and a host of other factors. They find no evidence that prior levels of self-esteem or locus of control affect onset of welfare use. On the other hand, school-related attitudes, family background characteristics and IQ scores did predict subsequent welfare use.

Popkin (1990) studied links between AFDC receipt and recipients' sense of efficacy. Through interviews with a sample of AFDC recipients from Chicago, she found length of time on welfare to be the strongest, negative, predictor of efficacy (consisting of one measure of self-esteem and two measures of fate control). Low efficacy, in turn, affected respondents' beliefs about the difficulty of leaving welfare, with low-efficacy respondents less likely to view work as a viable option.

Ortiz and Bassoff (1987) studied 53 teenage welfare parents from California, examining their views about education, careers, and the future. On their measure of locus of control, the authors found welfare recipients to be less sure of the degree of control they had over their lives than non-recipients. Additionally, a much higher proportion of recipients than non-recipients had no specific career goals and did not expect to graduate from high school.

AFDC and children's attainments. A key question is whether and how children's involvement in welfare programs affects their chances of becoming successful, independent adults. Undergirding much of the rhetoric of the War on Poverty was a simple income model in which children's well-being while children and chances of success as adults were seen as depending on

the level of their families' economic resources as well as the amounts of time parents "invest" in their children during childhood. Since income transfer programs such as AFDC augment the incomes of poor families and make it possible for mothers to spend time with their children rather than in the labor market, one might expect to observe better outcomes with an AFDC transfer system in place than without it.

Fears that welfare programs might harm rather than help children have several sources, the most prominent being that welfare receipt somehow breeds a harmful welfare "culture" in recipient families and neighborhoods. Concerning parents, Murray (1984) argues that the welfare system provides adults with a viable alternative to mainstream work and marriage. Through parental example and direct incentives, welfare may in turn encourage children to drop out of school, have children out of wedlock and otherwise engage in behavior that will reduce their own chances of success as adults.

In her review of the literature on the intergenerational transmission of status, Corcoran (1995) summarized the arguments behind the "welfare-culture" model as follows:

(W)hen parents and neighbors rely heavily on welfare, the stigma associated with being on welfare disappears; parents and neighbors develop self-defeating work attitudes and poor work ethics; and these attitudes are passed on to their children. In addition, parental welfare reciprocity provides children with poor role models for work and marriage. Girls raised in welfare-dependent homes and communities are more likely to drop out of high school, to have illegitimate births, and to go on welfare themselves. Boys raised in welfare-dependent homes and communities are more likely to grow up to father children out of wedlock, to drop out of high school, to hang out, engage in crime, and avoid regular work. Implicit in this welfare culture story is the assumption that welfare receipt changes parents', neighbors' and children's values, attitudes and behaviors. Parents, neighborhood residents and children eventually become "trapped" in poverty and dependency because of their deviant values and dysfunctional behaviors (1995, p. 244).

One mechanism behind the welfare-culture model is that of role models. Life in a welfare-dependent home can provide a vivid example for children of the viability of a single-parent household with few connections to the formal labor market.

Another way in which welfare may harm children is by fostering weak labor-force attachments on the part of mothers. Weak attachment can create a number of problems for parents and children (Guo et al., forthcoming; Parcel and Menaghan, 1994). First, for adolescents, parents unattached to the labor market may not be able to supply needed information and direct contacts that would help the teenager in getting good jobs. A second and related point is that the more general set of "social capital" connections available to children of working parents may be greater for children growing up in families with weak attachment to the labor force (Coleman, 1988).

Third, children in households in which parents do not work may fail to realize the strength of the linkages between schooling and a successful career and thus be less motivated to finish high school or attend college (Guo et al., forthcoming). Fourth, for children of all ages, families in

which adults do not work in the labor market may not provide the structure, stability and predictability that children need (Parcel and Menaghan, 1994). Fifth, children growing up in families with working adults may benefit from the additional household responsibilities they assume (Parcel and Menaghan, 1994).

Empirical tests of beneficial or detrimental effects of welfare receipt on children are difficult. Children from AFDC-dependent homes generally have fewer parental resources available to them, live in worse neighborhoods, go to lower-quality schools, and so forth. A simple omitted-variables approach would view as crucial the need to adjust for the effects of these correlated conditions in assessing the "true" effect of welfare receipt. Failure to do so will likely produce an overestimate of the apparent effect of parental AFDC receipt.

Proponents of a welfare-culture model might well view some of these correlated conditions as themselves products of parental welfare receipt. Suppose, for example, welfare did indeed cause parents to work less, become single parents and, as a result, have lower incomes, live in worse neighborhood, send their children to lower quality schools, etc. In that case, adjustment for the effects of the correlated conditions would cause the "true" effect of welfare to be understated, since those correlated conditions represent the ways in which the detrimental effects of welfare operate. In this view, one should adjust only for differences in conditions that are not themselves the product of welfare-based incentives.

The extent to which income transfers in fact influence the labor-market and demographic behavior of adults is a matter of considerable debate. The most comprehensive and unbiased assessments (e.g., Moffitt, 1992) conclude that disincentive effects are indeed present, particularly for the labor supply of female household heads. Evidence of the effects of welfare incentives on demographic behavior is weaker and inconclusive.

Duncan, Hill and Hoffman (1988) present a revealing bivariate table using data on daughters whose parents' welfare receipt was observed while the daughters were between the ages of 13 and 15 and whose own welfare status was observed when they were between 21 and 23 years of age. They find that the majority of daughters from highly-dependent parental families did not share the fate of their parents. At the same time, however, the fraction of daughters from highly-dependent homes who themselves become highly dependent (20%) is much greater than the fraction of daughters from nonrecipient families who become highly dependent (only 3%). These suggestive associations are reinforced by sibling studies showing how much more likely a given woman is to receive welfare if her sister receives it also (Solon et al., 1988).

An obvious problem in drawing conclusions about the intergenerational consequences of parental welfare receipt from bivariate associations is a lack of adjustment for other aspects of parental background and environment that may also affect a child's chance of subsequent success.

Analysts have employed two strategies for uncovering the causal effect of parental welfare receipt. The first is to use multiple regression to adjust statistically for the effects of the correlated background and environmental conditions. Corcoran (1995) reviews many of the relevant studies; our discussion focuses on a subset of recent studies to convey the nature of the findings.

There is some indication that welfare receipt in the early or perhaps middle childhood years have more sustained and negative effects on outcomes than welfare receipt in later life phases. In the Baltimore Study of Teenage Motherhood, welfare receipt in early childhood was associated with lower high school graduation rates, lower literacy scores, and higher grade failure rates, even after controlling for school readiness scores (Baydar et al, 1993; Brooks-Gunn et al, 1993; Guo et al, in press). At the same time, welfare receipt in middle childhood also contributed to more negative outcomes in the adolescent years. Since readiness tests were given to the children at age 4 to 5, it was possible to chart how early welfare receipt contributed to diminished school readiness, which then set children on a trajectory for later school problems. Other studies report that low readiness is associated with welfare receipt and with later school problems. At the same time, the timing of grade failure was associated with timing of welfare receipt, in that welfare receipt in middle childhood was associated with later grade failure, and welfare receipt in early childhood with earlier grade failure (comparisons between grade failure in the early elementary school years and the later elementary school years). Thus, welfare receipt had effects at both life phases, with somewhat differential effects depending on the outcome of interest.

Most studies of welfare effects relate receipt during early adolescence to schooling and demographic behavior in late adolescence and early adulthood. For example, Gottschalk (1992) uses young women in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) sample to relate parent welfare receipt when the women were adolescents to these women's chances of having a child. After controlling for a long set of characteristics of the young women and their families, he finds substantial effects of parental participation in the AFDC program on childbearing for whites, blacks and Hispanics. Observed AFDC-related birth rates by age 18 were 50% higher for whites and more than 100% higher for blacks and Hispanics than simulated rates that assumed no parental welfare receipt.

Duncan's (1994) analysis of the effects of parental welfare on completed schooling is noteworthy for its extensive controls for both family and neighborhood-level characteristics. He finds negative associations between parental welfare receipt and years of completed schooling for all four race/sex subgroups investigated, although the relevant coefficients are not statistically significant for white males.

Gottschalk (1995) uses data on patterns of mother's welfare receipt after the daughter has left home to adjust for the effects of unobserved differences between families in which welfare is and is not received. After incorporating these adjustments, he finds for blacks but not for whites highly significant effects of parental welfare receipt on the chances that daughters will have AFDC-related births. Furthermore, the strongest effects are for parental receipt immediately prior to the daughter's possible fertility.

Duncan and Yeung (1995) focus on the effects of welfare on the completed schooling of children. As with Gottschalk (1995), they also include in some of their models measures of the future welfare receipt of parents in an attempt to control for unmeasured sources of heterogeneity between parents who do and do not receive income from welfare. They find strong effects of parental welfare receipt, with both white and black children in recipient families completing roughly one year less schooling than children raised in families in which no welfare was received. Interestingly, Duncan and Yeung find different thresholds for the welfare effects across the two

racial groups they studied. For both white males and females, it appears that any welfare receipt on the part of the parents was sufficient to produce the detrimental effect on completed schooling. On the other hand, black children raised in families in which welfare accounted for less than half of total family income completed as much schooling as black children raised in families in which no welfare was received. Detrimental effects of welfare receipt were observed only among black children raised in heavily dependent families.

Virtually all of the existing intergenerational studies are of a “black box” variety, in which parental welfare receipt is related to children’s attainments but without measures of family process that would provide insight into the mechanisms at work. Explicit attention to such mechanisms is an important part of our own look at the intergenerational issues.

DATA

We draw our data from two longitudinal surveys, the National Survey of Families and Households and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Details on both are described in an appendix. Throughout our work, we sought to maximize the comparability of samples and measures between the two data sources.

Our descriptive analyses of family process and mental health differences between welfare and non-welfare families are based on two or three years of data on families with children drawn from very different historical periods – 1971-72 in the case of the PSID, a time of dramatic expansion in and relatively little stigma attached to welfare; and 1990-94 in the case of the NSFH, also a time of dramatic caseload expansion, but coupled with a raging national debate about how to go about, in the words of then-presidential-candidate Bill Clinton, “ending welfare as we know it”.

We formed the following groups in both data sets based on reports of work, welfare, and family structure over the three-year period prior to the NSFH interview¹ and the two-year period prior to the 1972 PSID interview.²

- **WELFARE:** Families persistently headed by a low-SES (i.e., 12 or fewer years of completed schooling) single mother who worked for less than 250 hours per year and reported income from AFDC in all years. It constitutes the reference group in our analyses (i.e., the omitted group in the regressions). There are 99 such cases in the NSFH and 87 in the PSID.
- **LOW-SES WORKING SINGLE MOTHER:** Families persistently headed by a low SES single mother, but (at least over the three-year NSFH period and two-year PSID period) who never received AFDC and worked for 500 hours or more per year. There are 165 such cases in the NSFH and 103 in the PSID.

- **LOW-SES TWO-PARENT WITH A WORKING MOTHER:** Low SES two-parent families with a working (i.e., more than 500 hours per year) mother and no AFDC receipt. There are 410 such cases in the NSFH and 323 in the PSID.
- **HIGH-SES WORKING SINGLE MOTHER:** Families headed by high SES (i.e., more than 12 years of completed schooling) single mothers who worked for 500 hours or more and never received AFDC. There are 154 such cases in the NSFH and 154 in the PSID.
- **HIGH-SES TWO-PARENT WITH NONWORKING MOTHER:** High SES two-parent families that never received AFDC and in which the mother never reported working as many as 500 hours in any year. There are 136 such cases in the NSFH and 251 in the PSID.
- **HIGH-SES TWO-PARENT WITH WORKING MOTHER:** The sixth group includes high-SES two-parent families that never received AFDC and had a mother who reported 500 hours of work in all (three in the NSFH, two in the PSID) years. There are 477 such cases in the NSFH and 251 in the PSID.
- **OTHER:** All other families are grouped in a residual "other" category. There are 1641 such cases in the NSFH and 909 in the PSID.

The residual “other” category is large and extremely heterogeneous. It consists of families that changed their structure, AFDC or work over the two or three-year periods used in the analyses. For example, many low-SES single-parent families alternate between work and welfare from one year to the next or mix the two together in the same year. These families fall into the residual group, as do the high-SES families that underwent a divorce or a change in maternal employment.

Family process and psychological measures. Our two data sets provided a rich set of measures of family process, the networks and social-capital connections families established with others in the community, expenditures as well as psychological characteristics. Details of the construction of these measures are given in an appendix table.

In the case of the NSFH, we constructed measures of:

- **FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE:** the number of days per week the family eats together; hours parents spend watching television with their children; housework hours of mother; housework hours of children; whether teenage children would be left unsupervised; parental help with reading and homework; time spent by mother in youth-related activities; whether the family is reported to be loving and close; and family tensions.
- **FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL:** church attendance; parent-teacher association attendance; visits to social clubs; frequency of getting together with neighbors; and number of friends outside the neighborhood.

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES OF THE MOTHER:** CESD depression scale; Rosenberg self esteem index; Pearlin mastery scale; and an index of hostility.
- **EXPENDITURE MEASURES:** mother's reported number of drinks of alcohol per day.

In the case of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, we constructed measures of:

- **FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE:** the number of days per week the family eats together; hours of television viewing; mother's housework hours; an interviewer rating of cleanliness of house; and frequency with which the household "head" reads a newspaper.
- **FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL:** church attendance; parent-teacher association attendance; visits to social clubs; number of neighbors known to family; whether relatives live nearby.
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES OF THE HOUSEHOLD "HEAD":**³ personal control; future orientation; trust/hostility; orientation toward challenge vs. affiliation; fear of failure; self-satisfaction; self-directed child; and an index of avoidance of unnecessary risks.
- **EXPENDITURE MEASURES:** alcohol expenditures; how often the head goes to bars; whether the family has medical insurance; cigarette expenditures; food expenditures per person; persons per room (a measure of the spaciousness of housing).

Our method for contrasting family process and psychological measures consists of estimating regression-adjusted differences between the welfare group and each of the other groups. Demographic controls used in all regressions include: head's race and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; and city size. NSFH regressions also control for mother's age. PSID regressions also control for age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate in the county of residence.

Our intergenerational analysis is based on a subset of the PSID sample. We take all children present and aged 14 or less in 1971, whose families were interviewed also in 1972, and track them in the data for as long as possible. If they were observed after age 20 and provided a report on their completed schooling, then they were included in the intergenerational analysis. We used the most recent year of completed schooling data available to create the completed schooling measure. Our models of these children's schooling include as predictors the seven-category structure/work/welfare measure, demographic controls and the family process, social capital, expenditure and psychological characteristics drawn from our analysis of the 1971-72 data.

RESULTS

Family process/time use. We begin with results on differences across groups in family process and time use (Table 1). In all cases, the reference group consists of single mothers who persistently (i.e., two years in the PSID and three years in the NSFH) reported AFDC receipt and virtually no work. The most interesting comparison group is the second, “Low-SES Working Single Mother” group, since welfare recipients who undergo successful welfare-to-work transitions would most resemble (at least demographically) this one.

Entries in the second column show regression-adjusted differences between single-parent welfare and working families in cases where the differences approached statistical significance.⁴ All of the dependent variables in these regressions have been standardized by division by the (whole-sample) standard deviation to facilitate comparisons across dependent variables.

The interpretation of the “-.32” entry in the first row of the first column of Table 1 may help to clarify the meaning of the numbers on the table. It means that, after adjusting for differences in the demographic characteristics listed at the bottom of the table, low-SES single-parent families in the NSFH data who worked and did not receive welfare were significantly (at the .10 level) less likely than single-parent welfare families to have meals together. The difference in frequency of eating together amounted to .32 standard deviations – nearly one day per week.⁵ The corresponding entry in the row immediately below the “-.32” is “-.61”, which indicates a negative, significant and even larger difference in the PSID.⁶

A more complete look at the entries in the second column shows that 7 of 14 are blank, indicating that half of the family process measures did not differ between the two groups of low-SES single mothers. PSID data from the 1970s (but not NSFH data from the 1990s) indicate that welfare-recipient as opposed to working single mothers watch more television. Both surveys agree that welfare-recipient mothers reported significantly more housework hours, although there was no significant difference in the PSID’s interviewer ratings of how clean their apartments or houses were. And data from the NSFH reveal that welfare-recipient as opposed to working single-mother households report significantly lower levels of family love and caring and significantly more family tensions.

The remaining columns of Table 1 reveal many more family process differences between welfare recipients and both high-SES single-parent families and high- and low-SES two-parent families. While a few of these differences (e.g., families eating together and housework) generally favor welfare recipients (exceptional is that non-working mothers in two-parent families report more housework than welfare mothers), most favor intact and/or high-SES families. Most consistent are differences indicating that welfare families: watch more television; spent less time in youth-related activities; report less loving and more tense family relations; and, despite the greater housework, are rated as having dirtier dwellings.

Contrary to stereotypes, there are no significant differences across the groups in the extent to which mothers report that they would leave their teenagers unsupervised at various times during the day. Nor do welfare recipients report reading newspapers any more or less than other families.

Family networks/social capital. The two surveys provide a wealth of data on various kinds of connections that families might make with friends, relatives and institutions such as churches, social clubs and parent-teacher associations. A glance at the second column of Table 2 reveals virtually no differences between welfare and working single mothers in these kinds of connections. The only exception was getting together with neighbors, which occurs more frequently for welfare than working families. Thus it appears unlikely that welfare-to-work transitions would have any effect – either positive or negative - on the extra-familial connections that families might establish.

As with the family process measures, there are more differences in extra-familial connections between welfare families and high-SES and two-parent families. However, the differences are neither as large nor as consistent as those between the two groups of low-SES single-mother families when looking at the family process variables. Compared with the welfare (and, as we have just seen, low-SES single-parent working) families, two-parent families report more frequent church and social club attendance, but less frequent socializing with neighbors.

Psychological measures. The literature contains many studies showing poorer-than-average mental health among welfare recipients. We have argued that a more telling comparison is between welfare recipients and working single-parent households. The second column of Table 3 shows no psychological differences between these two groups in any of the NSFH-based mental health assessments and very few differences in the PSID's psychological measures.

In contrast, and consistent with the literature, there are larger and much more consistent differences between the mental health of low-SES single mothers, both recipients and non-recipients, and all other groups. Specifically, in the NSFH, low-SES single mothers reported significantly higher levels of depression and hostility and lower mastery than all other groups. There were no differences across any of the groups in reported self-esteem.

The mental-health patterns in the PSID are not as consistent, perhaps because the PSID's measures usually consist of only one or two items rather than multi-item indexes. Most striking in the PSID are differences between two-parent and single-parent families, but this may stem in large part from the use of fathers as respondents in two-parent families and mothers as respondents in the single-parent families.

The final entry in the list of PSID measures is a behavior-based index of avoiding of undue risks – fastening seat belts, having car or medical insurance and having at least some reserve savings. Here welfare recipients have significantly lower scores than all other groups.

Expenditure measures. Few stereotypes are as memorable as President Reagan's depiction of Cadillac-driving welfare mothers. Most of the expenditure measures available to us come from the PSID. There are virtually no significant differences in the pattern of expenditures of welfare and working single mothers. The single exception is the higher levels of medical insurance reported by working mothers when these interviews were taken in 1972. Given the increases in Medicaid coverage and the decline of employer-provided health insurance, it is unlikely that these differences persist today.

The higher incomes of the high-SES and two-parent low-SES families enable them to expend more on both good and bad things. Relative to welfare families, high-SES families report drinking and smoking more but also spending more per person on food and enjoying more commodious housing. The results on alcohol consumption are surprising, since other studies (e.g., Zill et al., 1991a, Table 12) found somewhat higher reports of alcohol-related problems among welfare mothers relative to other groups.

Intergenerational consequences of welfare receipt and family process. PSID data provide a look at whether patterns of welfare receipt and family process observed in the early 1970s when PSID children were age 0-14 and living with their parents have any long-run association with school-related achievements of those children in their early adult years.

We began our exploration of this topic by comparing the average completed schooling levels of children raised in our seven groups of families defined by their family structure, welfare and employment status (Table 5). Using the welfare group as the reference and controlling for no other differences in demographic characteristics, we find that children growing up in welfare families completed significantly less schooling than children growing up in all other circumstances, including families with low-SES single working mothers (Table 5, column 1). These unadjusted differences are striking and range between one and two years. Schooling differences between welfare and low-SES working single mothers averaged .97 of a year – a highly significant difference.

Controls for demographic characteristics of these families (i.e., mother's race and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size; age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate in the county of residence) reduced these differences substantially (Table 5, column 2). In the case of welfare and low-SES working single mothers, the difference was cut by two-thirds, from .97 to .34 of a year, with the latter difference no longer statistically significant. Thus, it appears that children's schooling differences are more a function of demography than welfare receipt itself, raising little hope that welfare-to-work transitions will have a large impact on achievements of children. Schooling differences between children raised in welfare and two-parent working families fell from 1.13 to .65 years, but remained significant in the presence of the demographic controls.

Our estimates of the intergenerational effects of parental welfare receipt are much cruder than those reported in the recent literature. One problem is we are only using a two-year (1971-72) window for categorizing the work/welfare/family structure status of parental families, when, in fact, a whole-childhood window is much more appropriate. The contribution of our data is in gauging the role of family process variables.

Controls for the set of family process measures available in the PSID "account" for about one-third of the demographically-adjusted differences in the completed schooling of children raised in welfare families and in working single-parent families (Table 5, column 3). In fact, the collection of demographic and family-process measures reduced the schooling difference between welfare families and all other groups to the point of statistical insignificance.

The apparent power of the family process measures to explain completed schooling suggests the utility of a closer look at the elements of family process that appeared most influential. This is done in the first two columns of Table 6, which report coefficients and standard errors on the PSID's family process measures from a regression that includes the welfare/family/work classification and demographic controls.⁷ To facilitate comparisons across measures, all independent variables have been standardized with division by whole-sample standard deviations. In the third and fourth columns of Table 6, we present results from the identical regression run on the subset of families in which the mother had no more than 12 years of schooling.

Interestingly, nearly all of the measures of social capital connections – church, PTA and social club attendance, and number of neighbors known to the family - have statistically significant, positive effects on children's completed schooling in the full sample. For the low-SES subsample, church and social-club attendance were significant positive predictors of children's schooling. Notably, none of the family process measures were significant in the low-SES sample.

Among the psychological characteristics, an orientation toward challenge proved to be the most important predictor of intergenerational success, a result that complements recent findings of the importance of motivation for the long-run labor-market success of adults (Dunifon and Duncan, 1998).

None of the family process and mental health measures were as powerful in explaining children's schooling success as demographic measures – maternal schooling, test scores and age when her children were born. The power of mother's schooling in the low-SES subsample is striking in light of the fact that that group of families is defined by low (12 years or less) of mother's schooling, which limits the extent of variability in maternal schooling in the low-SES subsample.

DISCUSSION

Two questions comprise the title of our paper: How different are welfare and working families? Do those differences matter for children's achievement? We begin with summary answers to those questions and then discuss their implications for studies of welfare reform.

Our two data sets revealed vast differences between welfare families and middle-class families in mental health, organization of time, household management and expenditures, even after statistical adjustments for differences in demographic characteristics such as mother's completed schooling, age and, in one of our data sets, a parent's test score. Occasionally, as with measures of how often the entire family ate meals together or got together with neighbors, parental alcohol and cigarette expenditures, and mother's housework hours, these differences "favored" welfare families. In some cases, most interestingly parent-teacher association involvement, housework done by children and maternal self-esteem, there were no measurable differences between the two groups.

But in most cases, the differences were substantial and favored middle-class families. Compared with middle-class families, we found in welfare families strikingly higher levels of maternal depression; subjective reports of family tension; and hours spent watching television; as well as less time spent facilitating youth activities; lower fate control; and fewer precautionary behaviors.

Welfare reform is unlikely to elevate many welfare recipients into the middle class. So rather than asking how welfare-recipient families differ from middle-class families, it is more telling to examine differences between welfare families and low-SES working families, especially single-parent working families. These differences may still overstate changes that we might expect in welfare families making successful transitions to work, but at least they provide a tighter set of upper-bound estimates of those possible changes.

By and large, welfare families differ very little from low-SES working families. When compared with welfare families, mothers in single-parent working families are just as depressed, hostile and lacking in control of their fate; and they spend no more time reading to their children, helping them with their homework or promoting youth activities. Nor were there indications that either expenditures or the social-capital connections of the two groups differed. In fact, some of the differences favored the welfare mothers, as the frequency of eating meals together, getting together with neighbors and hours of housework. The only significant but certainly noteworthy differences favoring working single mothers were the subjective assessments of how loving and tranquil family relations were and their greater precautionary behavior.

Suppose that welfare reform could somehow promote both work and marriage. Relative to welfare mothers, working but low-SES mothers in two-parent families reported significantly less depression, hostility and family tensions; and felt more in control of their fates. Marriage or partnering may indeed improve mental health - an important benefit if true. An alternative interpretation of this correlation is that women with more positive mental health were more likely to marry or cohabit in the first place.

There are fewer reasons expect that parenting behaviors may change as a result of work and marriage. Relative to low-SES two-parent families, welfare families reported more frequently eating together as a family and getting together with neighbors. On the other hand, levels of parent involvement in youth activities and the time children spent doing chores were higher in low-SES, working-mother two-parent families relative to welfare families. More often than not, working mothers in two-parent families were no different from mothers in single-parent welfare families. For example, they spent just as little time reading to their children and helping their children with homework and were no less willing to condone unsupervised time for their adolescent children as mothers receiving welfare. Class, not welfare, underlies these parenting differences.

Our look at the long-run effects of our family process and mental health measures on the amount of schooling eventually completed by children was limited to the measures available in the PSID. The results suggest that it is not so much family process but rather the social-capital connections parents make outside the family that matter the most for children's achievement. Church and social club attendance were significant positive predictors of children's completed

schooling in low-SES families. These two measures plus PTA attendance and knowing neighbors were important for the full set of families.

Will welfare-reform-induced transitions to work improve the social capital connections of former welfare families and thus foster child development? Wilson's (1987) depiction of the underclass viewed their social isolation, particularly from middle-class and working families, as a key cause of their plight. Our measures of social connections were of a different sort, consisting of socializing with existing neighbors, attending church, PTA meetings and the like. We found few differences in these connections between welfare and low-SES single-parent working families. Thus, there is little reason to expect that welfare-to-work transitions will help children by promoting connections between family members and their neighbors and institutions.

It is important to look beyond the at-best occasional importance of our collection of family process measures in accounting for children's achievement to the consistently important pattern of effects for the more mundane demographic characteristics, including the mother's own level of schooling, test scores and age when her children were born. Improving basic skills and delaying first births have been promoted as strategies for improving the labor-market prospects of mothers. Although not yet confirmed in evaluations of random-assignment experiments (Reichman and McLanahan, 1997), our results suggest that these strategies may have a bigger impact on children's success than policies directed at family processes themselves.

After lamenting the dangers of welfare-mother stereotypes, we might be justifiably accused of generating our own set. Although we have spoken of our groups of welfare and working families as though they were distinct, it is important to end with an appeal to view welfare and working families as fluid and heterogeneous. Roughly half of the families in our two data sets did not fall neatly into our seven groups but instead mixed work and welfare, dropped in and out of the labor force, or underwent important family-structure changes over the brief periods covered in our analyses. It is problematic to speak of a group of "welfare families" when families use welfare in so many different ways.

The heterogeneity extends as well within our groups, particularly our comparison groups of welfare and low-SES working families. For example, while the average level of depression is higher among single-parent than two-parent families, around 40% of welfare-recipients in the NSFH report depression scores that are healthier than average. There are many mentally healthy single parents and many depressed mothers in two-parent situations. Since it is apparent that welfare-to-work transitions are unlikely to produce large favorable changes in the family process and child development, the essential task of welfare reform may be one of more selective supports for subsets of families whose welfare to work transitions will be the most difficult.

Data Appendix

National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) data were collected in two waves: the first between 1987-88 and the second five years later between 1992-94 (Bumpass & Sweet, 1997). The response rate in the first wave was 74% (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988) and between the first and second waves was 77%.

The NSFH conducted interviews with a nationally representative sample of 9,637 non-institutionalized American adults aged 19 and older, plus an oversample of 3,370 individuals from minority groups and non-traditional family structures. Main respondents were randomly chosen from a list of adult household members that was obtained through a screening interview. The main respondent need not have been the individual who responded to the screening interview.

Wave I consisted of an in-person interview and a self-administered questionnaire with the main respondent. The main respondent's spouse/partner/cohabitor filled out a self-administered questionnaire as well. From these interviews we extracted both demographic and family process variables for our analysis. Demographic data were taken from the main respondent's personal interview and family process information was provided by the two self-administered questionnaires given to the main respondent and their spouse or partner.

Wave II was more extensive than the first and included short telephone interviews with the focal children of the main respondents. These telephone interviews included questions about the focal child's social and behavioral characteristics.

Our NSFH sample consists of 3,055 families with at least one child between the ages of 0 and 18 at the time of their Wave II interview, in the years between 1992 and 1994. Each family is followed for the three-year period leading up to this interview. Only interviews in which the respondent was the mother were included in the sample. Dependent variables were measured at the Wave II interview. Based on family structure, welfare receipt, mother's annual work, and SES over the three-year period, the sample was divided into seven groups. Family structure describes whether a household was headed by a single-mother or by two-parents in all three years. Welfare receipt is defined as receiving public assistance, including welfare AFDC, general assistance, food stamps, and energy assistance but not including Supplemental Security income, for the entire three year period. Mother's annual work is based on the number of months worked in each of the three years. A working mother is defined as having worked 9 or more months per year and a non-working mother is defined as having worked 3 or less months per year. The SES of the family is based on the mother's education. Low SES is defined as high school graduation or lower and high SES as greater than high school graduation.

Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). Our analyses are based on 27 years of data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Hill, 1992). Since 1968 the PSID has followed, interviewed annually, processed, and disseminated information from a representative sample of about five thousand families. Splitoff families are followed when children leave home, when couples divorce, and when more complicated changes break families apart. Apart from immigration, this procedure produces an unbiased population sample each year.

The survey's original design focused on poverty by oversampling lower-income and minority households, but sampling weights have been constructed and are used in this analysis to adjust for both differential sampling fractions and differential nonresponse. Specifically, we use the 1972 family weight for our family analysis and the individual weight associated with the most recent observation of a given adult child in a given analysis to produce our weighted intergenerational results.

The PSID sample drawn for the 1971-72 analysis of family process consists of 2,003 families that had at least a child who was between the age of 0 to 14 in 1971 and remained in the study in the following year - 1972. All the dependent variables were measured in 1972. The sample was divided into seven groups based on combination of characteristics of family's socioeconomic status, the type of family structure, mother's annual work hours, and the welfare receipt status over the two-year period -- 1971 and 1972. The SES status of the family is defined by mother's education, with high school graduation or lower representing the low SES group, and the rest representing the high SES group. Single-mother families are defined as those headed by females in both years, and two-parent families as those with a male head and a female partner in the family in both years. Nonworking mothers are defined as those whose average annual work hours over the two years are 250 hours or less, while working mothers as those who worked 500 hours or more.

Our intergenerational analysis is based on a subset of the PSID sample. We take all children present and aged 14 or less in 1971, whose families were interviewed also in 1972, and track them in the data for as long as possible. If they were observed after age 20 and provided a report on their completed schooling, then they were included in the intergenerational analysis. We used the most recent year of completed schooling data available to create the completed schooling measure. Our models of these children's schooling include as predictors the seven-category structure/work/welfare measure, demographic controls and the family process, social capital, expenditure and psychological characteristics drawn from our analysis of the 1971-72 data.

Table 1: Family Process Differences Between Welfare Recipients, Single-Parent Working Families and Other Groups, National Survey of Families and Households (1990-94) and Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1971-72).

FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE MEASURES			Low SES (Mother's education <=12)			High SES (Mother's education > 12)		
			Welfare	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent With a Working Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent with Nonworking Mother	Two-Parent with Working Mother
Days Per Week Family Eats Together								
	NSFH	Reference		-.33 (.19)*	-.76 (.16)**	-.24 (.20)	-.62 (.18)***	-.71 (.16)***
	PSID	Reference		-.61 (.22)**	-.74 (.18)***	-.51 (.23)**	-.64 (.20)***	-.67 (.19)***
Television Viewing								
	Parent(s) with children (NSFH)	Reference		-.07 (.16)	-.33 (.14)**	-.38 (.16)**	-.50 (.17)***	-.42 (.14)***
	Head of household (PSID)	Reference		-.83 (.21)***	-.78 (.18)***	-1.26 (.23)***	-1.02 (.19)***	-.98 (.19)***
Housework Hours of Mother								
	NSFH	Reference		-.44 (.16)***	-.22 (.14)	-.53 (.17)***	-.19 (.15)	-.51 (.14)***
	PSID	Reference		-.49 (.19)**	.36 (.16)**	-.66 (.20)***	.43 (.17)**	-.24 (.17)
Other NSFH Measures								
	Housework of children	Reference		.01 (.17)	.28 (.14)*	.01 (.18)	-.10 (.16)	-.05 (.14)
	Teens unsupervised	Reference		.15 (.20)	.04 (.17)	.07 (.20)	.11 (.18)	.09 (.17)
	Parent helps with reading & homework	Reference		.14 (.18)	-.08 (.15)	.20 (.18)	.32 (.16)*	.23 (.15)
	Hours of Youth-related activities by mother	Reference		.32 (.21)	.35 (.18)**	.40 (.21)*	.35 (.19)*	.33 (.18)*
	Family loving and close	Reference		.30 (.16)*	.14 (.14)	.57 (.16)***	.54 (.16)***	.34 (.14)**
	Family tensions	Reference		-.67 (.20)***	-.53 (.17)***	-.70 (.20)***	-.80 (.18)***	-.62 (.17)***
Other PSID Measures								
	Interviewer rating of cleanliness of house	Reference		.02 (.22)	.30 (.18)	.41 (.23)*	.49 (.19)**	.43 (.20)**
	Reads newspaper	Reference		-.08 (.21)	.17 (.18)	-.04 (.22)	.05 (.19)	.09 (.19)

Table reads: NSFH data show that low-SES, single parent, working-mother families were .32 of a standard deviation LESS likely to eat together than low-SES AFDC-recipient families. This difference is significant at the .10 level. The corresponding difference in PSID data is -.61 of a standard deviation.

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients that are statistically significant at $p < .10$. *** indicates $p < .05$. **** indicates $p < .01$. All dependent variables have been standardized by division by the whole-sample standard deviation. Coefficients for a heterogeneous group with other work and welfare characteristics have been omitted from the table.

Control variables included in all regressions: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size. NSFH regressions also control for mother's age. PSID regressions also control for age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

Table 2: Family Network/Social Capital Differences Between Welfare Recipients, Single-Parent Working Families and Other Groups, National Survey of Families and Households (1990-94) and Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1971-72).

FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL			Low SES (Mother's education ≤12)			High SES (Mother's education > 12)		
			Welfare	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent With a Working Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent with Nonworking Mother	Two-Parent with Working Mother
Attendance of religious services								
	NSFH	Reference		.31 (.20)	.35 (.17)**	.25 (.20)	.34 (.18)*	.28 (.17)
	PSID	Reference		.32 (.22)	.12 (.18)	-.02 (.23)	.34 (.19)*	-.01 (.19)
PTA attendance								
	NSFH	Reference		.16 (.21)	-.01 (.18)	.03 (.21)	.11 (.19)	-.07 (.17)
	PSID	Reference		-.01 (.22)	.11 (.19)	-.11 (.24)	.27 (.20)	.42 (.20)**
Social clubs								
	NSFH	Reference		.19 (.17)	.21 (.14)	.39 (.18)**	.27 (.16)*	.45 (.14)***
	PSID	Reference		.04 (.22)	.08 (.19)	-.25 (.23)	.17 (.20)	.04 (.20)
Other NSFH Measures								
	Frequency of getting together with neighbors	Reference		-.46 (.17)***	-.52 (.15)***	-.16 (.18)	-.31 (.16)**	-.51 (.15)***
	Number of friends outside of neighborhood	Reference		-.14 (.17)	-.17 (.14)	.07 (.18)	-.08 (.16)	-.15 (.14)
Other PSID Measures								
	Knows neighbors	Reference		-.06 (.21)	.24 (.18)	-.17 (.22)	.35 (.19)*	.23 (.19)
	Relatives nearby	Reference		-.11 (.21)	-.06 (.18)	-.10 (.23)	.01 (.19)	-.07 (.19)

Table reads: NSFH data show that low-SES, two-parent, working-mother families were .35 of a standard deviation MORE likely to attend church than low-SES AFDC-recipient families. This difference is significant at the .05 level.

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients that are statistically significant at $p < .10$. ** indicates $p < .05$. *** indicates $p < .01$. All dependent variables have been standardized by division by the whole-sample standard deviation. Coefficients for a heterogeneous group with other work and welfare characteristics have been omitted from the table.

Control variables included in all regressions: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size. NSFH regressions also control for mother's age. PSID regressions also control for age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

Table 3: Psychological Differences Between Welfare Recipients, Single-Parent Working Families and Other Groups, National Survey of Families and Households (1990-94) and Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1971-72).

PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES		Low SES (Mother's education <=12)			High SES (Mother's education > 12)		
		Welfare	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent With a Working Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent with Nonworking Mother	Two-Parent with Working Mother
NSFH measures							
	CESD Depression Scale	Reference	-.06 (.16)	-.48 (.13)***	-.47 (.17)***	-.73 (.15)***	-.49 (.13)***
	Rosenberg Self Esteem Index	Reference	-.09 (.16)	-.09 (.14)	-.06 (.17)	-.12 (.15)	-.06 (.14)
	Pearlin Mastery Scale	Reference	.12 (.16)	.33 (.14)**	.76 (.17)***	.73 (.15)***	.62 (.13)***
	Hostility Index	Reference	-.17 (.16)	-.24 (.14)*	-.30 (.17)*	-.45 (.15)***	-.22 (.13)*
PSID Measures							
	Personal control	Reference	-.47 (.21)**	.11 (.18)	-.28 (.22)	.26 (.19)	.22 (.19)
	Future orientation	Reference	.07 (.22)	.15 (.19)	-.10 (.23)	.21 (.20)	-.04 (.20)
	Trust/hostility	Reference	-.11 (.21)	.16 (.18)	.14 (.22)	.07 (.19)	.02 (.19)
	Challenge vs. affiliation	Reference	-.30 (.22)	.34 (.19)*	-.12 (.23)	.40 (.20)**	.45 (.20)**
	Fear of failure	Reference	-.18 (.22)	.65 (.19)***	-.20 (.24)	.58 (.20)***	.54 (.20)***
	Self-satisfaction	Reference	.08 (.22)	.49 (.19)***	.24 (.23)	.56 (.20)***	.44 (.20)**
	Self-directed child	Reference	-.10 (.22)	-.22 (.19)	.17 (.23)	-.18 (.20)	-.06 (.20)
	Undue risk avoidance	Reference	.42 (.19)**	.86 (.17)***	.55 (.21)***	1.10 (.18)***	1.06 (.18)***

Table reads: NSFH data show that mothers in low-SES, two-parent, working-mother families scored .48 of a standard deviation LOWER on the depression scale than mothers in low-SES AFDC-recipient families. This difference is significant at the .01 level.

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients that are statistically significant at $p < .10$. *** indicates $p < .05$. **** indicates $p < .01$. All dependent variables have been standardized by division by the whole-sample standard deviation. Coefficients for a heterogeneous group with other work and welfare characteristics have been omitted from the table.

Control variables included in all regressions: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size. NSFH regressions also control for mother's age. PSID regressions also control for age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

Table 4: Expenditure Differences Between Welfare Recipients, Single-Parent Working Families and Other Groups, National Survey of Families and Households (1990-94) and Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1971-72).

EXPENDITURE MEASURES		Low SES (Mother's education ≤12)			High SES (Mother's education > 12)		
		Welfare	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent With a Working Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent with Nonworking Mother	Two-Parent with Working Mother
Alcohol							
	Drinks per day (NSFH)	Reference	.25 (.16)	.23 (.14)*	.38 (.17)**	.11 (.15)	.29 (.13)**
	Expenditures (PSID)	Reference	.15 (.22)	.55 (.19)***	.31 (.23)	.55 (.20)***	.71 (.20)***
	Family head goes to bars (PSID)	Reference	.26 (.22)	.66 (.18)***	.33 (.23)	.38 (.20)**	.45 (.19)**
Other PSID Measures							
	Medical Insurance of any kind	Reference	1.05 (.20)**	1.47 (.17)***	1.47 (.21)***	1.53 (.18)***	1.58 (.18)***
	Cigarette expenditures	Reference	.21 (.21)	.52 (.18)***	.22 (.23)	.31 (.19)	.52 (.19)***
	Food expenditures per person	Reference	.12 (.18)	.31 (.15)*	.23 (.19)	.61 (.16)***	.56 (.16)***
	Spaciousness (persons per room)	Reference	-.15 (.19)	.45 (.16)***	-.42 (.20)**	.71 (.17)***	.49 (.17)***

Table reads: NSFH data show that mothers in low-SES, two-parent, working-mother families consumed .23 of a standard deviation MORE drinks per day than mothers in low-SES AFDC-recipient families. This difference is significant at the .10 level.

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients that are statistically significant at $p < .10$. ** indicates $p < .05$. *** indicates $p < .01$. All dependent variables have been standardized by division by the whole-sample standard deviation. Coefficients for a heterogeneous group with other work and welfare characteristics have been omitted from the table.

Control variables included in all regressions: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size. NSFH regressions also control for mother's age. PSID regressions also control for age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients on Work/Welfare/Family Structure in 1971-72 from Various Models of Completed Schooling of Children, Without and With Demographic Control and Family Process Variables, Panel Study of Income Dynamics

	Dependent Variable: Years of Schooling Completed By Children		
	Reference	Reference	Reference
Low-SES Welfare			
Low-SES Working Single Mother	.97** (.34)	.34 (.33)	.24 (.32)
Low-SES Two-Parent with a Working Mother	1.13** (.28)	.65* (.28)	.30 (.28)
High-SES Working Single Mother	1.55** (.39)	.66 (.40)	.40 (.39)
High-SES Two-Parent with Nonworking Mother	1.98** (.29)	1.16** (.32)	.43 (.32)
High-SES Two-Parent with Working Mother	1.90** (.29)	1.01** (.32)	.48 (.32)
Other	.93** (.27)	.45 (.27)	.16 (.26)
CONTROL VARIABLES	None	Demographic only	Demographic + Family Process
R-Square	.05	.17	.28

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients and (in parentheses) standard errors. *** indicates $p < .05$. **** indicates $p < .01$.

Demographic control variables are: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size; age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

"Family Process" variables includes all PSID measures listed in Table 1-4.

Table reads: Without adjusting for any other differences, children growing up in low-SES, working single-mother households completed .97 years more schooling than children growing up in low-SES welfare-receiving households.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors from Model of Effects of Demographic and Family Process Measures in 1971-72 on Completed Schooling of Children, Panel Study of Income Dynamics

	All Families		Low-SES Families	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE				
Days Per Week Family Eats Together	.01	.05	-.02	.06
Television Viewing	-.08	.05	.02	.06
Housework Hours of Mother	-.05	.05	-.07	.07
Interviewer rating of cleanliness of house	.16**	.05	.13	.07
Reads newspaper	.01	.00	.01	.01
FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL				
Church attendance	.15**	.05	.27**	.07
PTA attendance	.17**	.05	.07	.06
Social clubs	.20**	.05	.19**	.07
Knows neighbors	.11**	.04	.05	.06
Relatives nearby	.00	.05	.05	.06
PSYCHOLOGICAL				
Personal control	.07	.06	.05	.07
Future orientation	.03	.05	.11	.06
Trust/hostility	.04	.05	.07	.06
Challenge vs. affiliation	.05	.05	.13*	.06
Fear of failure	.05	.04	-.02	.06
Self-satisfaction	-.10*	.05	-.05	.06
Self-directed child	-.00	.05	-.04	.06
Undue risk avoidance	.26**	.07	.11	.08
EXPENDITURES				
Alcohol Expenditures	-.02	.06	-.04	.07
Family head goes to bars	-.02	.06	-.03	.08
Medical Insurance	-.00	.05		
Cigarette expenditures	-.13*	.05	-.19**	.07
Food expenditures per person	.19**	.06	.08	.09
Spaciousness (Persons per room)	.12	.06	.06	.08
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROLS				
Whether Black	.11**	.04	.08	.05
Whether Child is Female	.17**	.05	.18**	.06
Age at birth of child	.34**	.06	.28**	.08
Head's word test score	.14**	.05	.14**	.06
Age of household head	-.24**	.08	-.18*	.09
Mother's education	.03	.06	.31**	.13

Note: Entries in table are regression coefficients and standard errors. ** indicates $p < .05$. *** indicates $p < .01$. All independent variables have been standardized by division by the whole-sample standard deviation.

Work/welfare/family structure classification is also included in the regression. Demographic control variables included are: head's race, and years of completed schooling; number of children; whether children under age 5 are present in the household; region; city size; age of mother at the birth of the child; disability status and sentence-completion test score of the household head; and the unemployment rate of the county of residence.

Appendix: Question Wording, Means and Standard Deviations for Family Process Measures

MEASURE	WORDING	MEAN	S.D.
<i>National Survey of Families and Households</i>			
FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE			
Days Per Week Family Eats Together	Days over past week that the whole family ate dinner together (0-7)	4.55	2.91
Television Viewing: Parent(s) with children	How often spend time with children watching TV or Videos (rarely 0 always 5)	3.89	1.17
Housework Hours of Mother	Summary variable for mother's work in and around home on five tasks, in hours per week. (preparing meals, washing dishes, clean house, outdoor tasks, washing and ironing)	32.00	22.18
Housework of Children	Summary variable for child under 18's work in home in hours per week (5 tasks)	7.30	9.72
Teens Unsupervised	Summary variable of whether mom would leave teen (age 10-17) home alone if she: were away in the morning, after school, and at night. Each is a 0,1 variable	2.21	.92
Parent helps with reading & homework	How much time do you spend with your child helping with reading or homework, 0 rarely to 5 almost every day).	3.69	1.49
Family loving and close	Summary of "family has love and concern for each other" and "family feels distant and apart" [reverse coded]. Likert scale (0-8).	6.41	1.40
Family tensions	Things are tense in the family. 5 point Likert scale (0-4).	1.34	1.03
FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL			
Church attendance	How many times per month do you attend religious services? (0-31)	3.76	4.01
PTA attendance	How many times per week in the past 2 months did you spend doing PTA-related activities?	1.76	4.10
Social clubs	How many times per month do you get together with clubs?	.91	1.92
Hours of Youth-related activities by mother	Summary of activity with child (PTA, religious groups, community youth groups, sports). Coded as hours per week in the last 2 months.	5.20	10.25
Frequency of getting together with neighbors	Times per month gets together with neighbors.	1.60	2.33
Number of Friends Outside of Neighborhood	How many times per month do you get together with friends outside of the neighborhood?	1.52	1.98
PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES			
CESD Depression Scale	12-item scale, each 0-7.	16.28	16.76
Rosenberg Self Esteem Index	3-item scale, each 0-4.	6.69	1.37
Pearlin Mastery Scale	4-item scale, each 0-4.	10.20	2.98
Hostility Index	3-item Aquilino & Marks scale, each 0-7.	3.83	4.57
EXPENDITURE MEASURES			
Drinks per day	Number of drinks per day.	.93	1.51
<i>Panel Study of Income Dynamics</i>			
FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE			
Days Per Week Family Eats Together	Days over past week that the whole family ate dinner together (0-7).	5.70	1.46
Television Viewing	Average hours of TV watched per day.	2.03	1.05
Housework Hours of Mother	Average annual housework hours (in thousands).	1.85	.72
Interviewer rating of cleanliness of house	How clean is the interior of the dwelling unit (-1 to 1).	.16	.62
Reads newspaper	Average number of times per month reads newspaper.	23.92	8.80
FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL			
Church attendance	Average number of times per week head goes to church (0-1).	.47	.39
PTA attendance	Average PTA attendance of head (-1 to 1).	.02	.53
Social clubs	Average times per week head attends a club.	.26	.36
Knows neighbors	Number of neighbors known (0-8).	6.72	1.97
Relatives nearby	Whether relatives live nearby (0,1).	.45	.50
PSYCHOLOGICAL			
Personal control	Average of "do your plans usually work out", "do you think life will work out OK", and "do you usually finish what you start".	.65	.29
Future orientation	Average of "Are you the kind of person who plans his life ahead of time, or do you live more day to day?" "Would you rather spend your money and enjoy life today, or save more for the future?" and "Do you think a lot about things that might happen in the future, or do you usually just take things as they come?"	.45	.26
Trust/hostility	Average of "Do you get angry easily, or does it take a lot to get you angry?", "Do you think that the life of the average person is improving or getting worse?", "How much does it matter what other people think about you?" and "Do you trust most people, some, or very few?" (0,1).	.49	.20
Challenge vs. affiliation	Average of "Would you like to have more friends, or would you like to do better at what you try?" and "Would you prefer a job where you had to think for yourself, or one where you work with a nice group of people?"(0,1).	.43	.29
Fear of failure	Average of "When taking tests would you say that you get very upset, somewhat upset, or not upset at all?", "When working on tests, does your heart beat very fast, faster than normal, or about normal?", "During tests, would you worry a lot about what it would mean to fail, worry some, or not worry at all?", and "When taking a test, do you perspire a great deal, more than usual, or not at all?" (-1 to 1).	-.22	.52
Self-satisfaction	"Are you more often satisfied or dissatisfied with yourself?" (0,1)	.80	.28
Self-directed child	Average of "Which would you like your child to do most, be popular with his classmates or	.32	.29

	be a leader?" "Would you rather have your child be a leader or do the work his teacher expects?"		
Undue risk avoidance	Sum of whether wears seatbelts, whether has medical insurance, car insurance, and whether has 2 months' salary saved. (0-4)	2.58	.82
EXPENDITURES			
Alcohol Expenditures	Average annual alcohol expenditures (in hundreds).	3.49	5.22
Family head goes to bars	Average number of times per week goes to a bar.	.43	.72
Medical Insurance	Whether family had medical insurance (0,1).	.86	.26
Cigarette expenditures	Average annual expenditures in hundreds of dollars.	4.96	6.12
Food/Needs ratio	Total food expenditure divided by food needs.	1.67	.52
Spaciousness (Persons per room)	Number of rooms minus number of rooms required for household.	1.82	1.35

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Endnotes

¹ The NSFH interviews were conducted between June 1992 and July 1994.

² We tried to impose in both data sets a three-year period over which family structure, welfare receipt and work were relatively stable. This produced acceptable sample sizes for key single-parent groups in the NSFH but not in the PSID. Thus we opted for a three-year period in the NSFH and a two-year period in the PSID.

³ Following established survey procedure in the late 1960s, the PSID defined the husband to be “head” of two-parent households and conducted interviews with him. In the case of single-mother households, the mother herself is the “head”. Thus social-psychological measures in the PSID are taken from the head. In the case of the NSFH, these measures were always taken from the mother.

⁴ Specifically, a coefficient is presented if it was significant at the 10% level or less. Coefficients significant at the 1% level are denoted with two asterisks; coefficient significant at the 5% level are denoted with a single asterisk.

⁵ As shown in Table 6, the standard deviation on the NSFH’s eating together measure is 2.91 times per week. Thus, $-.32$ of a standard deviation is $-.93$ times per week.

⁶ There is less variability (the standard deviation is 1.46) in the eating together measures in the PSID than in the NSFH. Since $.61 \times 1.46 = .89$, the raw-score difference in eating together between the welfare and working single-mother families across the two data sets is quite small.

⁷ These coefficients are taken from the same regression that produced the coefficients shown in Table 5, column 3.