

A revised version of this paper was published in Greg J. Duncan and Lindsay Chase-Lansdale (eds.) For Better and For Worse: Welfare Reform and the Well-Being of Children and Families New York: Russell Sage, 2001, pp. 103-131.

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

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Welfare reform is upon us and many are already making the transition from welfare to work. There are good reasons to expect that these transitions will benefit many families and children; others, however, may 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, divorces, or separations ensue; how fathers absent from the household alter their behavior; and how community-level resources and supports change in response to the new welfare regime.

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 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 middle-class adults' stereotypes of welfare families. Contrasts between welfare and low-socioeconomic status (SES) working families 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 likely overstates the changes that might accompany welfare-to-work transitions induced by welfare reform. Nevertheless, 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 because 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 during 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' education and age. Occasionally, these differences "favored" welfare families, as with measures of parental alcohol consumption and how often the entire family ate meals together and got together with neighbors. Other times, there were no measurable differences between the two groups, such as in parent-teacher involvement, willingness to leave teens alone unsupervised, housework done by children, and maternal self-esteem.

In most cases, however, the differences were substantial and favored middle-class families. Middle-class families had strikingly lower levels of maternal depression, lower subjective reports of family tension, and fewer hours spent watching television, as well as greater involvement in youth activities, higher (middle-class) interviewer ratings of the cleanliness of dwellings, and higher reported levels of fate control and precautionary behaviors.

Try as it may, welfare reform is unlikely to elevate welfare recipients into the middle class. 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 for 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. 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 eating together as a family and getting together with neighbors more frequently. 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 were mothers receiving welfare. Class, not welfare receipt, underlies many of these parenting differences.

Looking at the long-run effects of some of our family process and mental health measures on the amount of schooling completed by children suggests that the social capital connections parents make outside the family matter the most. Because 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 education, test scores, and age when her children were born. Strategies that focus on improving basic skills and delaying first births may well have a larger effect on children's success than policies directed at family process.

Background

Christopher Jencks (1992) proposes four ways of identifying the individuals who compose 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, AFDC, have received the most attention in this debate. Scholars and politicians alike have suggested that the 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 important, prevents children from becoming productive adults.

Culture of Poverty

Lewis (1966) was among the first 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 1960s and which examined trends of family deterioration among African Americans. In calling attention to increasing out-of-wedlock births, welfare use, and single-mother 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 consequently 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 behaviors 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 fewer than two years (Blank, 1989; Fitzgerald, 1991; Harris, 1993; O’Neill, Bassi, & 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 for additional support (Harris, 1996). When multiple spells are added together, the median length of total welfare receipt is roughly four years (Bane & 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 percent of long-term recipients (i.e., 60 or more total months of receipt) lacked a high-school degree or

GED when they first began to receive welfare; 39 percent reported no prior work experience; 53 percent were under age 25; 58 percent had never been married; and 52 percent had a child under the age of 13 months. Zill and colleagues (1991a) show that 56 percent of long-term AFDC recipients (and 44 percent of poor, nonrecipient mothers, and 10 percent of nonpoor 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 (1991a & 1991b) provides a statistical profile using national data on AFDC recipients and other mothers. They find substantially lower self-esteem for welfare recipients than nonpoor mothers, but report 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 mothers.

Plotnick, Klawitter, and Edwards (1997) use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to predict young women's initial entry to 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 nonrecipients. In addition, a much higher proportion of recipients than nonrecipients 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 and chances of success as adults depended on the level of their families' economic resources as well as the amounts of time parents "invest" in their children during childhood. Because 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 their own 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, Brooks-Gunn, & Harris, forthcoming; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994). First, for adolescents, parents unattached to the labor market may not be able to supply needed information and direct contacts to help the teenager in securing 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 than 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 links between schooling and a successful career and, thus, may be less motivated to finish high school or attend college (Guo, Brooks-Gunn, & Harris, 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 & Menaghan, 1994). Finally, children growing up in families with working adults may benefit from the additional household responsibilities that they assume (Parcel & 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 order to assess 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, that welfare did indeed cause parents to work less, become single parents, and, as a result, have lower incomes, live in worse neighborhood, and send their children to lower-quality schools. In that case, adjusting for the effects of the correlated conditions would cause the "true" effect of welfare to be understated because 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 actually influence the labor-market and demographic behaviors 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 has 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, Brooks-Gunn, & Furstenburg, 1993; Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenburg, 1993; Guo, Brooks-Gunn, & Harris, forthcoming). At the same time, welfare receipt in middle childhood also contributed to more negative outcomes in the adolescent years. Because readiness tests were given to the children at ages 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 was associated 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 different 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 percent higher for whites and more than 100 percent 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 reared 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 reared in families in which welfare accounted for less than one-half of total family income completed as much schooling as black children reared in families in which no welfare was received. Detrimental effects of welfare receipt were observed only among black children reared 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 (NSFH) and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID).¹ 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 nonwelfare 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 welfare when relatively little stigma was attached to welfare receipt; 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 interview² and the two-year period prior to the 1972 PSID interview.³

- **Welfare:** Families persistently headed by a low-SES (i.e., 12 or fewer years of completed schooling), single mother who worked 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 1,641 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 provide a rich set of measures of family process, the networks and social-capital connections that families established with others in the community, expenditures, as well as psychological characteristics.⁴

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

- **Family process and time use**—The number of days per week that the family eats together; hours parents spend watching television with their children; hours of housework by mother; hours of housework by children; whether teenage children are 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 and social capital**—Church attendance; parent-teacher association (PTA) 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 and 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 and social capital**—Church attendance; parent-teacher association (PTA) attendance; visits to social clubs; number of neighbors known to family; whether relatives live nearby.
- **Psychological measures of the household “head”⁵**—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 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 ages 14 or younger in 1971, whose families were also interviewed 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, 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 and 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, the "Low-SES, Working, Single Mother" group, because 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. 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 "-0.76" entry in the first row of the third 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, married-couple-parent families in the NSFH data who worked and did not receive welfare were significantly (at the 0.05 level) less likely than single-parent welfare families to have meals together. The difference in frequency of eating together amounted to 0.67 standard deviations—more than two days per week.⁶ The corresponding entry in the row immediately below the -0.76 is -.74, which indicates a negative and significant difference in the PSID.

A more look at the entries in the second column of Table 1 shows that 9 of 14 family process measures did not differ significantly 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 mothers, 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. Data from the NSFH reveal that welfare-recipient single-mother households, as opposed to working single-mother households, report 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. Although a few of these differences (e.g., families eating together and housework) generally favor welfare recipients (exceptional is that nonworking mothers in two-parent families report more housework than welfare mothers), most favor intact and high-SES families. Most consistent are differences indicating that welfare families 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. Similarly, welfare recipients do not report reading newspapers any more or less than other families.

Family Networks and 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 making 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 extrafamilial connections that families might establish.

As with the family process measures, there are more differences in extrafamilial 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 nonrecipients, and all other groups. In the NSFH, specifically, 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 largely 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 spend more per person on food and enjoy more commodious housing. The results on alcohol consumption are surprising because 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 ages 0-14 and living with their parents) have any long-run association with the 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 reared in our seven groups of families defined by their family structure, welfare, and employment status (Table 4). 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 4, 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 0.97 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 4, column 2). In the case of welfare and low-SES, working, single mothers, the difference was cut by two-thirds, from 0.97 to 0.34 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 reared in welfare and two-parent working families fell from 1.13 to 0.65 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 nearly one-third of the demographically adjusted differences in the completed schooling of children raised in welfare families and in working single-parent families (Table 4, 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 5, 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 5, 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, parent-teacher association, 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.

None of the family process and mental health measures was 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-income subsample is striking in light of the fact that that group of families is defined by a low level (12 years or less)

of mother's schooling, which limits the extent of variability in maternal schooling in the low-income subsample.

Discussion

Two questions compose 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 education, age, and, in one of our data sets, a parent's test scores. 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.

In most cases, however, the differences were substantial and favored middle-class families. Compared with middle-class families, in welfare families we found 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.

As we stated in the introduction, welfare reform is unlikely to elevate many welfare recipients into the middle class. Therefore, rather than asking how welfare-recipient families differ from middle-class families, it is more telling to examine differences between welfare families and low-income 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-income 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-income 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 to expect that parenting behaviors may change as a result of work and marriage. Relative to low-income, two-parent families, welfare families reported eating together as a family and getting together with neighbors more frequently. On the other hand, levels of parent involvement in youth activities and the time children spent doing chores were higher in low-income, 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-income 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-income, 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 & McLanahan, 1997), our results suggest that these strategies may have a greater effect 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 one-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 also extends within our groups, particularly our comparison groups of welfare and low-income working families. For example, while the average level of depression is higher among single-parent than two-parent families, around 40 percent 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. Because 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.

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Endnotes

We are grateful to the Family and Child Well-being Research Network of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development for supporting this research.

¹ Details on both can be found at Joint Center for Poverty Research website [www.jcpr.org/...](http://www.jcpr.org/)

² The NSFH interviews were conducted between June 1992 and July 1994.

³ 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.

⁴ Details of the construction of these measures are found in the working paper [title] found at the JCPR website <www.jcpr.org/...>.

⁵ 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.

⁶ As shown in Table 5, the standard deviation on the NSFH’s eating together measure is 2.91 times per week. Thus, -.76 of a standard deviation is -2.18 times per week.

⁷ These coefficients are taken from the same regression that produced the coefficients shown in Table 4, column 3.

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

Table reads: NSFH data show that low-SES, two-parent, working-mother families were .76 of a standard deviation LESS likely to eat together than low-SES AFDC-recipient families. This difference is significant at the .05 level. The corresponding difference in PSID data is -.74 of a standard deviation.

Note: *** 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 Wrkng Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent Nonwrk Mother	Two-Parent Wrkng Mother
Attendance of religious services						
NSFH	Ref	.31 (.20)	.35 (.17)**	.25 (.20)	.34 (.18)	.28 (.17)
PSID	Ref	.32 (.22)	.12 (.18)	-.02 (.23)	.34 (.19)	-.01 (.19)
PTA attendance						
NSFH	Ref	.16 (.21)	-.01 (.18)	.03 (.21)	.11 (.19)	-.07 (.17)
PSID	Ref	-.01 (.22)	.11 (.19)	-.11 (.24)	.27 (.20)	.42 (.20)**
Social clubs						
NSFH	Ref	.19 (.17)	.21 (.14)	.39 (.18)**	.27 (.16)	.45 (.14)***
PSID	Ref	.04 (.22)	.08 (.19)	-.25 (.23)	.17 (.20)	.04 (.20)
Other NSFH Measures						
Socializing w/ neighbors	Ref	-.46 (.17)***	-.52 (.15)***	-.16 (.18)	-.31 (.16)**	-.51 (.15)***
# of friends outside nghbrhd	Ref	-.14 (.17)	-.17 (.14)	.07 (.18)	-.08 (.16)	-.15 (.14)
Other PSID Measures						
Knows neighbors	Ref	-.06 (.21)	.24 (.18)	-.17 (.22)	.35 (.19)*	.23 (.19)
Relatives nearby	Ref	-.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: "*" indicates p<.05, and "***" 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. SES = socioeconomic status. 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 w/ Working Mother	Working Single Mother	Two-Parent Nonwrkng Mother	Two-Parent w/ 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:*** 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. SES= socioeconomic status.

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: 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. Note: “***” indicates $p < .05$., and “****” 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 5: 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	SE	Coefficient	SE
FAMILY PROCESS/TIME USE				
Days Per Week Family Eats Together	0.01	0.05	-0.02	0.06
Television Viewing	-0.08	0.05	0.02	0.06
Housework Hours of Mother	-0.05	0.05	-0.07	0.07
Interviewer rating of cleanliness of house	.16**	0.05	0.13	0.07
Reads newspaper	0.01	0	0.01	0.01
FAMILY NETWORK/SOCIAL CAPITAL				
Church attendance	.15**	0.05	.27**	0.07
PTA attendance	.17**	0.05	0.07	0.06
Social clubs	.20**	0.05	.19**	0.07
Knows neighbors	.11**	0.04	0.05	0.06
Relatives nearby	0	0.05	0.05	0.06
PSYCHOLOGICAL				
Personal control	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.07
Future orientation	0.03	0.05	0.11	0.06
Trust/hostility	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.06
Challenge vs. affiliation	0.05	0.05	0.13	0.06
Fear of failure	0.05	0.04	-0.02	0.06
Self-satisfaction	-0.1	0.05	-0.05	0.06
Self-directed child	0	0.05	-0.04	0.06
Undue risk avoidance	.26**	0.07	0.11	0.08
EXPENDITURES				
Alcohol Expenditures	-0.02	0.06	-0.04	0.07
Family head goes to bars	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	0.08
Medical Insurance	0	0.05		
Cigarette expenditures	-0.13	0.05	-.19**	0.07
Food expenditures per person	.19**	0.06	0.08	0.09
Spaciousness (Persons per room)	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.08
Statistically significant demographic controls				
Whether Black	.11**	0.04	0.08	0.05
Whether Child is Female	.17**	0.05	.18**	0.06
Age at birth of child	.34**	0.06	.28**	0.08
Head's word test score	.14**	0.05	.14**	0.06
Age of household head	-.24**	0.08	-.18	0.09
Mother's education	0.03	0.06	.31**	0.13

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. SES = socioeconomic status

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.
