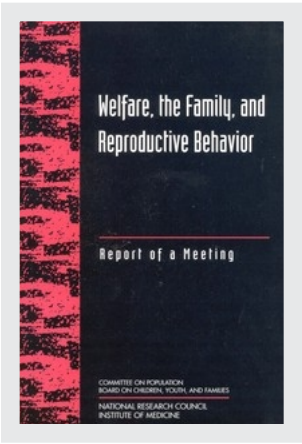

Welfare, the Family, and Reproductive Behavior: Report of a Meeting

DETAILS

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Welfare, the Family, and Reproductive Behavior

Report of a Meeting

John Haaga and Robert A. Moffitt, editors

Committee on Population
Board on Children, Youth, and Families

Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine

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This report summarizes presentations and discussions at the Workshop on Effects of Welfare on Reproductive Behavior and the Family, organized by the Committee on Population and the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, in Washington, DC, May 2-3, 1996. Some of the papers prepared for the workshop will be published in revised form in an edited volume by the National Academy Press. The workshop was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and by the Kellogg Fund of the Governing Board of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine.

Robert Moffitt of the Johns Hopkins University, a member of both the Committee on Population and the Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, led the planning for the workshop and chaired it. John Haaga, director of the Committee on Population, led the staff work and served as rapporteur at the workshop. The committee and the board are very grateful to Michael Laracy and William O'Hare of the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their encouragement and intellectual input, and to Deborah Phillips, director of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families, for her suggestions. Anne Bridgman and Faith Mitchell gave an early draft of this summary a careful reading and made many useful comments. Joel Rosenquist of the Committee on Population staff provided superb assistance throughout, both in organizing the workshop and in handling successive changes to the manuscript. Trang Ta and LaTanya Johnson guided the manuscript through later stages.

Most of all, of course, we are grateful to all the participants in the workshop

whose ideas and comments are summarized here, and we hope that this publication helps ensure that their work contributes to the national debate on the continuing effort toward welfare reform.

Ronald D. Lee, *Chair*
Committee on Population

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Welfare, the Family, and Reproductive Behavior: Report of a Meeting

INTRODUCTION

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed Public Law 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, a sweeping reform of several of the main federal programs providing cash and in-kind assistance to poor people. The welfare program that had always attracted the most public discussion, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), was replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Under AFDC, federal funds had matched state expenditures on programs, with eligibility criteria set by the federal government. TANF is a block grant program, intended to give states much greater latitude in determining eligibility and benefit levels. The section of the 1996 act that set up TANF listed four goals of the new legislation, two of which can be considered primarily "demographic":

- "prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies" and
- "encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families."[1]

[1] The first two goals were "(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage" (P.L. 104-193, Sect. 103 (a)). The President noted in his remarks on signing the bill that the act "requires minor mothers to live at home and stay in school as a condition of assistance" ("Statement on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, v. 32, no. 34, August 26, 1996, pp. 1487-9). This was the President's only mention of "demographic" issues; the rest of his remarks dealt with work, training, and child support enforcement.

Welfare reforms with similar aims had in fact already begun at the state level. The 1981 Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act had allowed states to obtain waivers of federal AFDC rules to allow them to conduct demonstrations of new eligibility, work, and other requirements. By the time the 1996 act was passed, 47 states had applied for one or more waivers, and the federal government had approved nearly 140 state demonstrations of alternative welfare policies.

The reforms aimed most directly at influencing fertility decisions were the "family cap" provisions, under which second and subsequent births to women already receiving assistance result in reduced, or zero, increases in payments. By August 1996, 21 states had received approval for waivers for such family caps. The 1996 act allows, but does not force, states to impose family caps, offering a federal bonus to the five states that most decrease their number of out-of-wedlock births without increasing the abortion rate (P.L. 104-193, Sect. 403(E)(2)).

The welfare reform debate largely focused on AFDC, but demographic behaviors may be affected by eligibility for, and the generosity of, several other programs providing cash and in-kind transfers, including Medicaid, the food stamp program, other nutrition and health programs, housing assistance, and general assistance.

State governors and legislators implementing and redesigning TANF are confronting the issues of whether and how income support programs affect the most basic personal decisions about marriage, childbearing, and childrearing. Those evaluating the effects of the changes need to ask: Do the program changes decrease the number of children born outside marriage? Do they encourage abortion? Do they encourage marriage? And how will we know?

On May 2-3, 1996, the Committee on Population and the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council and Institute of Medicine convened a Workshop on Welfare Reform and the Family and Reproductive Behavior. Its purpose was to bring together experts in demographic and family studies, along with researchers and officials familiar with the welfare programs, to assess what we know and what we need to know about effects of welfare on marriage, fertility-related behavior, and the family, especially children. The agenda for the workshop appears in the appendix.

This document provides a summary of presentations and discussions at the meeting. It also reflects the subsequent revisions made by authors of papers presented at the workshop, as well as other recent research. Given the lead time required for states to implement changes, for people to change behavior, and for evaluators and researchers to document what is happening, the empirical work discussed here of necessity documents behavior under the "old regime." But the premise for the workshop and for this publication is that these studies can provide important information about the effects of benefit programs on demographic behavior and about how to evaluate them, which is needed more than ever in this latest phase of welfare reform. The states are still busy designing and redesigning programs, and much of the research addresses the key issue of how behavior

responds to changes in benefit levels, which is one of the main policy instruments the states have. The federal government has already changed some provisions of the 1996 act dealing with benefits to immigrants, and the entire act will come up for reauthorization in 2001. The saga of welfare reform neither began nor ended in 1996.

This summary begins with a discussion of the historical context leading up to the 1996 welfare reform, including society-wide changes in marriage and nonmarital fertility and changes at both national and state levels in the welfare system itself. We next summarize the lessons from available research on how the welfare system has affected marriage, pregnancy, and abortion. Most of this work has focused on women, especially young women, as decision makers; in the next section we discuss the effects of the welfare system on children and on the fathers. The final section brings together some lessons for future research—how evaluations of state-level waivers and of current policy changes can better contribute to the continuing work of welfare reform.

TRENDS IN MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

A retreat from marriage and increases in nonmarital fertility have occurred among all social classes and income levels in the United States—and indeed in most industrial countries—in recent decades. Christine Bachrach pointed out in her presentation that some understanding of these broader national and even international shifts is required in order to assess the role of the welfare system as an influence on the behavior of the poor and near-poor.

There has been a steady increase in the proportion of births to unmarried women (now about one-third of all births in the United States). Age-specific fertility rates for unmarried women declined for most age groups from peaks around 1965 until the mid-1970s, when they began to climb again rapidly (see Figure 1). For unmarried women aged 15-19, fertility rates rose steadily from the 1940s until the early 1990s, when they began to level off. Fertility rates rose between 1982 and 1992 for unmarried women in every education category.

Bachrach emphasized that much of the increase in the rate of births among unmarried women, especially teens, has resulted merely from the reduction in rates of marriage. As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of unmarried women (who are potentially at risk of having a nonmarital birth) has increased since 1960. Bachrach reports that this increase has been the major cause of the increase in nonmarital childbearing for black women and an important cause of the increase for white women as well. Thus a larger part of the story behind increases in nonmarital childbearing is that women today are less likely to marry when having children, not that they are more likely to have children (see also Lichter, 1995, for a review). The decline in marriage rates has to some extent been accompanied by an increase in the proportion of women and men cohabiting (see Table 1).

Nonmarital fertility rates have been strongly affected by the disappearance

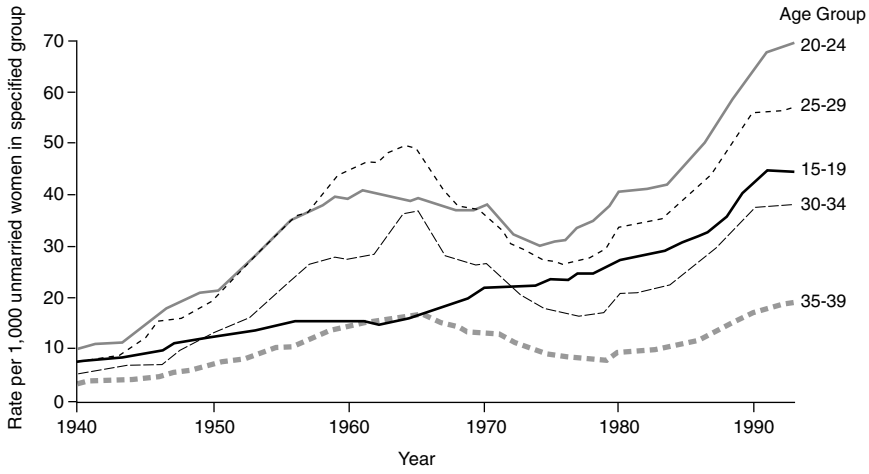

FIGURE 1 Birth rates for unmarried women by age, United States, 1940-1993. Source: National Center for Health Statistics (1995).

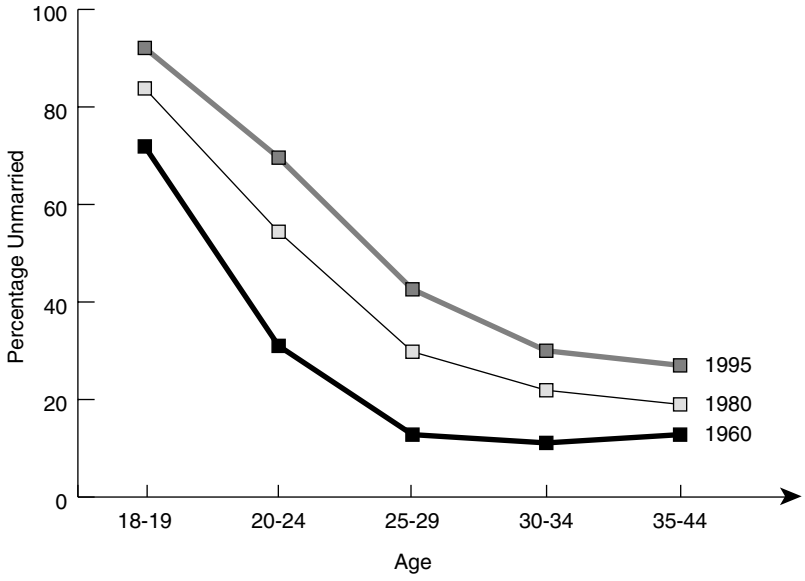

FIGURE 2 Percentage of unmarried women, by age, selected years. Source: National Center for Health Statistics (1995:Table III.1) and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996:Table 59).

TABLE 1 Percentage of Women and Men Currently Cohabiting, by Age, 1987-1988 and 1992-1994

	1987-1988	1992-1994
Women		
20-24	10	n.a.
25-29	7	12
30-34	4	7
35-39	2	7
40-44	4	5
Men		
20-24	6	n.a.
25-29	7	12
30-34	6	7
35-39	5	7
40-44	4	5

n.a. = not available

Source: Larry Bumpass, unpublished analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households.

of the "shotgun wedding." Although the decline in marriage rates has been an important contributor to the increase in nonmarital birth rates, an increase in childbearing among the unmarried is also a factor. Sexual activity rates and sexual experience in the population have increased, according to Bachrach. Although use of contraception has increased, it has not been sufficient to outweigh increases in sexual activity, leading to an increase in pregnancies. In addition, rather surprisingly, trends in abortion have recently accelerated the increase in nonmarital fertility: the proportion of pregnancies of unmarried women that are terminated by abortion has declined somewhat, from a peak in the late 1970s, when about two-thirds of such pregnancies ended in abortion, until the early 1990s, when just over half of pregnancies ended in abortion.

> "The rate of nonmarital births would have increased only marginally between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s if unmarried pregnant women who carried to term had continued to marry between conception and birth at the same rate as they had in 1963."
>
> —Christine Bachrach, citing Morgan et al. (1995)

TRENDS IN THE WELFARE SYSTEM

Spending on income support increased in real terms during the 1990s, but the increase has been very uneven across programs. Rebecca Blank reviewed trends in participation rates and expenditures for a full range of public assistance programs, including both cash and in-kind assistance and tax credits. Real expenditures for AFDC have been level, never attaining in recent years the peak of the mid-1970s. The number of participants in AFDC grew in the first half of the 1990s, as both nonmarital fertility rates and the proportion of unwed mothers participating in AFDC rose, so the benefits per participant fell steadily in real terms to an all-time low of less than $150 dollars per month (in 1995 dollars). However, most of the growth in overall spending on public assistance came, not from AFDC expenditures, but from increases in both the number of participants and per capita spending for Medicaid, food stamps, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

At the state level, the contrast among programs is even more striking. All states spent more in 1995 for public assistance than they did in 1985, but in almost all cases non-Medicaid spending declined. The overall increase was entirely due to Medicaid, which accounts for 11 percent of the average state budget; non-Medicaid public assistance accounts for about 3 percent. Most of the Medicaid increase was due to rising medical and long-term care costs for the elderly and the disabled.

Blank argued that, since the 1980s, there has been an ever-increasing emphasis on behavioral requirements for program eligibility, with particular emphasis on work and training. One of the fastest-growing income support programs is the Earned Income Tax Credit, targeted to the working poor, which exemplifies a trend toward linking assistance to desirable behavior. There has also been a return to local and state responsibilities for designing programs, culminating in the 1996 act.

> "Overall, we are moving further away from a system that provides direct cash assistance payments to low-income families, toward a system that increasingly conditions its assistance much more closely on particular groups that meet behavioral as well as income requirements."
>
> — Rebecca Blank

Given these trends in public assistance, why is there so much focus on the AFDC program and so little on the "budget busters," Medicaid and SSI? William Dickens suggested several answers: one is the continued increase in labor force participation rates among mothers of young children. The majority of mothers of young children now work outside the home, and public support for cash assis-

tance to allow unmarried mothers to remain outside the (official) workforce has greatly eroded. Another possible answer is the increasing earnings disparity among full-time workers in the United States and attendant anxiety about the economic future. A third possibility, Dickens suggested, is that the narrow focus on AFDC eligibility has resulted from a lack of politically practicable alternatives: AFDC is much more amenable to policy change than are medical expenditures.

EFFECTS OF WELFARE ON MARRIAGE, FERTILITY, AND ABORTION

Most research on welfare has dealt with effects on work-related behavior, not on fertility-related behavior. But the effects of the welfare system on marriage and fertility have generated a considerable body of scholarly analysis as well. A review of this research provides clues to what to expect from the current round of welfare reform and a new generation of studies evaluating those reforms.

Table 2 summarizes results of 68 studies of effects of welfare on marriage and fertility, by type of study and by the race of the population studied. Across all methods, a majority of the studies find a significant effect of welfare (positive on fertility, negative on marriage). Although many studies also find insignificant effects and many others find a mixed pattern of results (some significant, some insignificant), an equal weighting of studies strongly suggests the existence of some welfare effects on demographic outcomes. When methods are used that many researchers find more credible ("cross-state changes"), the picture is muddied slightly: effects are greater for black women but smaller for white women. Nevertheless, the central tendency of the literature is clear enough. This pattern of results has been recognized among researchers, among whom there is now a rough consensus that welfare does have some effects on these demographic outcomes.

Robert Moffitt noted that the magnitudes of these effects are still quite uncertain. Not only are there still quite a few studies showing no significant effect of the welfare system (see Table 2), but also many of these studies use stronger methodologies and are sounder than the others (as in the results for whites). In addition, of the studies that find significant effects, some find the size of the effect to be very modest in magnitude compared with other influences on fertility and marriage, although some find sizable effects as well.

Nearly all the studies reviewed by Moffitt analyzed effects of changes, or cross-state differences, in the levels of AFDC benefits. However, new changes in state programs also deal with many other aspects of the system: removing limits on outside earnings, requiring work or training, limiting duration of benefits, eliminating benefit increases for later births, requiring that teenage recipients live with their parents, and so forth. The existing studies are nevertheless indirectly

TABLE 2 Studies of Effects of Welfare on Marriage and Fertility by Nature of Findings and Method

	All Races			Nonwhite or Black			White		
	Insignificant	Negative and Significant	Mixed	Insignificant	Negative and Significant	Mixed	Negative and Insignificant	Significant	Mixed
All Methods	8	5	1	8	13	5	10	12	6
By Method:									
Cross-State Levels	6	3	1	2	9	4	7	6	3
Cross-State Changes	1	2	—	4	4	—	1	5	2
Within-State	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Time-Series	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	1

Note: Entries denote number of studies of each type showing no statistically significant effect of welfare ("Insignificant"), a significantly negative effect of welfare on marriage or a positive effect on fertility or both ("Negative and Significant"), or a mixed pattern of results ("Mixed," implying some significant and some insignificant results). Studies listed under "All Races" did not report results separately by race. If a study presented more than one estimate or model, the author's preferred estimate is tabulated.

Source: Moffitt (1996).

relevant to the current issues, in Moffitt's view, by testing the general proposition that recipients and potential recipients change their marriage and fertility behavior in response to financial incentives in the welfare program. A further problem with the existing fertility studies, according to Howard Rolston, is that they do not usually differentiate first from subsequent births; it is only the latter that are directly affected by the family cap provisions.

The final point emphasized by Moffitt is that, even though there is a rough consensus that welfare has some effect on marriage and childbearing, the welfare system cannot explain the rise in nonmarital childbearing over the 1980s and 1990s because welfare benefits have been falling over that period (see the section above on trends in the welfare system). To explain that rise, some other factor must have been at work. Leading candidates are a rise in the earning power of women, even low-income women, leading them to be able to support themselves and their children without the earnings of a husband; a decline in the incomes of less educated men, which could have decreased their attractiveness as marital partners; and a decline in the numbers of men available, a hypothesis suggested for disadvantaged blacks (Wilson, 1987). There is considerable research on these other factors, but less research that compares welfare benefits to those facts and attempts to parcel out their relative influences (studies that have attempted to control for some of these other factors include Acs, 1995, 1996; Danziger et al., 1982; Darity and Myers, 1993, 1995; Duncan and Hoffman, 1990; Hoffman and Duncan, 1988, 1995; Lichter et al., 1996; Lundberg and Plotnick, 1990; Schultz, 1994). At the workshop, June O'Neill emphasized that the decline in male wages may have been so great than welfare benefits could have increased in *relative* attractiveness, whereas William Darity believed that it has been the decline in the pool of marriageable men that is the most important.

Disagreement about the results of past studies may also be due to a failure to focus on the populations in which a welfare difference is really to be expected (Rosenzweig, 1995) or a failure to distinguish intended from unintended pregnancies. At the workshop, Larry Bumpass reported that preliminary results of an analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households showed an effect of AFDC benefits where one would be expected: among low-income people (since AFDC benefits do not figure prominently in the plans of high-income people) and for intended pregnancies. But there were no effects on fertility of persons well above the poverty level or on unintended pregnancies for anyone (Bumpass and Brandon, 1996). The great majority (88 percent) of pregnancies to unmarried women are subsequently reported as unintended (Brown and Eisenberg, 1995).

Maynard et al. (1997) argue that the effects of AFDC/TANF family cap provisions on nonmarital fertility rates are likely to be small. The cap-induced changes in income associated with fertility decisions of welfare recipients are small in any case, both in proportion to the costs of childrearing and in absolute amounts. (Even before family caps, AFDC programs provided widely varying

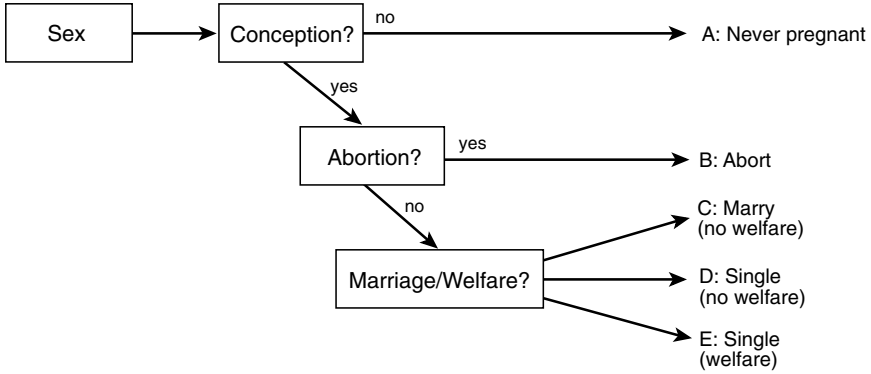

FIGURE 3 Schema of decisions facing unmarried woman. Source: Klerman (1996).

increments for additional children, varying from $24 to $247 per child, depending on the state and the family size.) Additional children still produce additional benefits from the food stamp and housing programs; Medicaid benefits are unaffected by family caps.

The debate at the workshop surrounding the probable effect of family cap provisions on abortions served as a reminder that abortion decisions can be affected by a large number of considerations and conflicting pressures. Jacob Klerman proposed a schema for categorizing and analyzing the sequential and interlinked choices facing an unmarried woman (Figure 3). By closing off the possibility of outcome E (having a baby, staying single, and receiving higher welfare payments), welfare reformers usually hope that they are increasing the probabilities that women will follow path A (never getting pregnant in the first place, either through abstinence or effective contraception) or outcome C (getting married, before or after getting pregnant). They are willing to accept the likelihood that some women and their children will end up on path D (still single, with no increased payment or, under some welfare reform models, with no payment at all). Pro-life opponents of welfare reform fear that the effect of closing option E will be to increase the number taking option B, abortion.

At first glance, according to Klerman, closing off one of the options has to make each of the others more likely to be chosen. In practice, there are likely to be interactions among the choices. Much depends, Klerman argues, on the consistency over time and foresight that women have (and on the degree to which conceptions can be planned). For example, women considering having sex might be less likely to do so if welfare benefits are reduced, leading to fewer pregnancies and therefore fewer abortions. In general, welfare reforms need not lead to an increase in abortions if women can take steps before conception to avoid the abortion/welfare choice that would face them during pregnancy.

Since more than 20 states have implemented family caps under AFDC waivers and more will do so under TANF, the issue could theoretically be decided by observing what happens to the number of births and the number of abortions in states varying in their eligibility rules. But valid data on abortion are hard to come by. Klerman reviewed the major sources of data on abortion and their limitations for research on welfare effects:

- provider surveys (conducted biennially by the Alan Guttmacher Institute),
- household surveys,
- registration systems (in 14 states), and
- surveillance data reported by states to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Self-report data from household surveys would be most useful for most analyses (because they are linked to data on individual characteristics), but abortions are severely underreported in such data. The provider surveys show less underreporting but are usable only at the state level, and there are further problems in distinguishing the state of provision from the state of residence.

Klerman reviewed six studies that used state-level data on welfare benefits and abortions to examine their relationship (with various methods for correcting for unobserved factors potentially affecting both abortion rates and AFDC generosity). The studies showed mixed results. Two found that higher AFDC benefits are associated with *higher* abortion rates, not lower, implying that welfare generosity indeed figures in the decisions (Matthews et al., 1995; Blank et al., 1994). But the size and significance of effects are dependent on model specification, and other well-designed studies have found no effect of AFDC generosity on abortions (e.g., Argus et al., 1997).

Another source of evidence, in addition to the mainly observational studies reviewed by Moffitt and Klerman, is evaluations of demonstration programs for teenage parents already on welfare or at high risk of going on welfare, which were intended in part to affect their fertility behavior. About half of all welfare recipients are current or former teenage parents, and the rates of repeat pregnancies are particularly high for this group (Maynard et al., 1997). Maynard and her colleagues (1997) reviewed the results of seven demonstration projects aimed primarily or exclusively at teenage parents (Table 3). These included employment and training programs (Job Corps and Job Start); comprehensive education and training programs (New Chance and Project Redirection); education and employment programs mandating education and job preparation services for teenage parents on welfare (Ohio Learnfare and the Teenage Welfare Parent Demonstration); and two health-care-focused programs for first-time parents. The only two that had a substantial effect on repeat pregnancy rates were the two health care programs: the Teenage Parent Health Care Demonstration and the Elmira

TABLE 3 Impacts of Welfare/Health Programs on Subsequent Fertility of Teenage Parents

	Estimated impact[a] on:		
Program	Pregnancies	Abortions	Births
Job Start	12.7	n.a.	17.1
New Chance	7.5	34.2	8.4 (n.s.)
Project Redirection	6.9 (n.s.)	–41.5	20.0
Ohio Learnfare	n.a.	n.a.	4.3 (n.s.)
Teen Parent Welfare Demonstration	0.1 (n.s.)	–16.9 (n.s.)	6.6
Teen Parent Health Care	–57.1	n.a.	n.a.
Elmira Nurse Home Visit	–43.1	n.a.	n.a.

[a]Impact = difference between treatment group rate and control/comparison group rate, as percentage of control/comparison group rate.

n.s. = not statistically significant at the 10 percent level

n.a. = not available

Source: Adapted from Maynard et al. (1997: Table 5).

Home Visiting Demonstration, which showed reductions of 57 and 43 percent, respectively. Pregnancy rates increased among participants in the Job Start and New Chance demonstrations. For New Chance participants, abortion rates rose sufficiently to offset the effect of the higher pregnancy rate, leading to lower birth rates, whereas in Project Redirection and the Teen Welfare Parent Demonstration, the abortion rate declined to such an extent that program rates had higher birth rates, even though repeat pregnancy rates had not increased (Maynard et al., 1997).

The conclusion from evaluations of the education, training, and "workfare" demonstration projects is again ambiguous: they seem to affect pregnancy, abortion, and fertility in different ways, for reasons that we don't fully understand. The apparent success of the health-care-related projects in reducing subsequent pregnancy rates suggests that fertility is most affected by health care interventions, not by labor force interventions.

Jacqueline Darroch pointed out that, in recent years, abortion rates have been declining for all groups. She noted as well that short-term impacts of welfare reform may differ from long-term impacts; for example, marriage and contracep-

tive behaviors may be harder to change in the short run than abortion choices. Another long-term change that could affect abortion choices is a trend toward making adoption easier and providing maternity homes and support for unwed mothers. As Wade Horn pointed out, such policies and programs could allow women to perceive more options and could result in more pregnant women choosing to carry a baby to term.

EFFECTS OF WELFARE ON THE FAMILY

Childbearing and childrearing decisions are inextricably linked (Rindfuss and Brewster, 1996). A discussion of the effects of welfare on fertility requires some consideration of how welfare affects child outcomes and how welfare (and other policy instruments), may affect fathers' decisions and involvement in childrearing. These are large topics in their own right,[2] so the workshop discussion was necessarily selective.

Effects on Children

Janet Currie selected for review eight large federal programs providing either cash transfers (AFDC, Earned Income Tax Credit) or in-kind benefits (housing assistance, food stamps, the Women, Infants, Children [WIC] feeding program, school lunch and breakfast, Medicaid, and Head Start) to poor families with children. She summarized studies of the impact of these programs on various child outcomes: health, schooling, and long-term outcomes (see Table 4). Her first conclusion was that, in general, the in-kind transfers providing direct benefits to children tend to have clearer and larger impacts than cash transfers or housing. Although benefits are generally fungible (food stamps, for example, can be resold, or they can be used to free up money for purchases of other things), families receiving benefits in kind (food, housing, preschool programs, medical care) do seem in general to end up consuming more of those services than they would without the in-kind benefit.

The policy implication is that general-purpose cash benefits have less effect on children than do benefits targeted to children. Her second conclusion was that there are too many empty cells in the table; she noted a particular lack of studies of the long-term outcomes. Although the situation is a lot better than it was a decade ago, we know too little about the effects of these programs, singly and especially in their various combinations, on child outcomes.

[2]The Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine is cosponsoring a series of workshops on recent research on effects of welfare on children with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (see especially Bridgman and Phillips, 1995).

TABLE 4 Summary of the Effects of Welfare Programs on Measures of Child Well-Being

Measure	AFDC	EITC/NIT	Food Stamps	Housing	Medicaid	WIC	School Nutrition	Head Start
Health								
Infant Mortality or Birthweight	0				+	+		
Nutrition/Food Expenditure		+?/?	?/+			+	?/?	
Preventive Care					+	+		+
Primary Education								
Test Scores	0	+?				+	+	+
Schooling Attainment		+		+?				+
Long-Run Measures								
Welfare Dependence	?							
Teen Pregnancy	?							?
Employment		–		+?				
High School Graduation								?
Crime								?

Notes: AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependent Children. EITC = Earned Income Tax Credit. NIT = Negative Income Tax. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Source: Currie (1996).

It is difficult to make predictions about the effects of even large changes in programs, when so little is known about their impacts on parental behaviors, and when past studies have shown such large variation in impacts across subpopulations.

> "There are 'striking and largely unexplained differences in the effects of some programs by race, ethnicity, and/or natality.'"
>
> — Janet Currie

Much of the enthusiasm for increased work requirements is motivated by a belief that welfare teaches dependency in all sorts of ways to children growing up in welfare households. Greg Duncan listed the ways in which jobs and training programs are thought to change family life: daily routines are established, the family is put in touch with networks, both of general "social capital" and of specific information about jobs; self-esteem is raised. These effects are more relevant for older children than for preschoolers, he noted. All could be important, but very little research has been done on how the AFDC system or proposed alternatives actually affect family life. Neighborhood effects might matter, in addition to the household environment (Hill and O'Neill, 1994). A basic question, emphasized by both Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and William Darity, Jr., is whether the welfare system does indeed keep children out of poverty and whether proposed changes will increase the number of children in poverty.

The Missing Fathers

The Family Support Act of 1988 required all states to provide AFDC in some forms to eligible two-parent families and to make serious efforts to establish paternity and to collect child support payments from absent fathers. But as Joseph Hotz argued, the implementation of these efforts has varied widely from state to state.

The great majority of never-married mothers have no child support awards. In 1991, there were just under 10 million women caring for children in the absence of fathers (including both divorced and never-married women). For poor women, only 39 percent had received child support awards, and only 70 percent of those who had received awards were receiving payments (Wiseman, 1996:611).

Those who do receive awards generally get much lower awards, on average, than divorced or separated mothers. But earnings of unmarried fathers tend to rise with age, just as for other men (Meyer, 1995), so it could make sense, according to Hotz, for initially low child support awards to be adjusted periodically. Brien and Willis (1996) have shown that, under the Wisconsin child

support standards, unmarried fathers could provide almost half of the welfare payments that female-headed families expect to receive. The early results from the pilot studies of the Parents' Fair Share Program in nine sites around the nation showed that two-thirds of noncustodial fathers subject to requirements participate in an employment or training or peer-support activity, and many found jobs on their own (Bloom and Sherwood, 1994).

Horn called attention to the great differences in the emphases of social science research on coresident fathers and on absent fathers: there is interest in whether the coresident fathers help with child care and how well, whereas absent fathers are interesting only insofar as they have money and transfer some of it to the mother. The message seems to be "If you're in the home, pay attention; if you're out of it, just pay." Given the large and growing number of absent fathers, Horn believes more research is needed on what they do to help with childrearing and how programs and policy could encourage a larger contribution. We do not know, for example, how the father's involvement is associated with payment of financial support. It is also very important to learn more about the effects of paternal involvement on the child at different ages. From the limited evidence available, it appears that unmarried fathers who do get involved with their children do so only for the first few years of their lives. There may not be much net benefit for the child in having such involvement followed by early abandonment.

Bumpass added that little is known about such basics as whether unwed fathers who do get married are marrying the mothers of their children. O'Neill called for more research on the effects of welfare and nonmarital fatherhood on men's lives: if they are not expected to take care of their own children, does that lessen social pressures for other types of responsible behavior?

AFDC rules about child support pass-through payments may have discouraged provision of direct financial support by absent fathers and encouraged substitution of informal sources of support. Provisions of the AFDC-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program may have discouraged marriage or coresidence. Several workshop participants proposed that design of new welfare programs should encourage child support payments by treating them comparably to the mother's earnings and not reducing the welfare benefits by their full amount.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION NEEDS

Evalutions of State Reforms Under AFDC Waivers

In Isabel Sawhill's view, AFDC waivers were sought and granted in the 1990s, not so much to inform national policy as to get around it. Beginning in the last years of the Bush administration and increasingly during the Clinton administration, waiver applications were motivated less by the desire to learn from controlled experiments and more by a desire to "bring devolution in by the back

door." Previously, waivers had usually allowed testing of new rules on a small subset of a state's caseload, with the majority subject to the old AFDC rules and serving as a comparison group. In recent years, waivers have allowed states to change several rules at once for almost their entire caseload. The 1996 act allowed existing waivers to continue and gave states a great deal of freedom to change rules on their own. It is far from clear whether they will use this freedom to test innovations in some counties for comparison to others and to evaluate the effects as they were required to do under the old waivers, or whether they will simply adopt new programs statewide and see what happens.

Thomas Corbett presented the early results of a review of what can be learned from evaluations of the demographic effects of state waivers to inform the design of new programs (Maynard et al., 1997). The most direct attempts to influence fertility decisions, family cap provisions, have become common only in the last few years. By January 1996, 20 states had such waivers approved, but in all but 5 cases the waiver was less than 36 months old, so there is as yet less experience to evaluate than is the case with work and training requirements and other modifications in eligibility rules.

A second common type of waiver with potential demographic effects identified by Corbett and his colleagues is that reforming the AFDC-UP program, which offers benefits to two-parent families. Many states reduced the 100-hour rule restricting work levels of earners in AFDC-UP families, and other states extended eligibility to families with more spotty employment histories than had heretofore been the case. These reforms are aimed at increasing provision of benefits to married couples and hence indirectly have demographic effects. Like the family cap waivers, there are no evaluation results to date of these waivers.

Although presumably evaluations of these waivers will continue under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, Corbett et al. caution that evaluation will not be easy. Family caps are embedded in complex packages of reforms. For example, the typical waiver entailed 10 potentially significant changes in AFDC rules; Wisconsin has 15 separate demonstrations going on at once. This complexity makes it very difficult to get a "clean" test of the effects of family caps or of other provisions on behavior, because the effects of any one provision cannot be separated from the others. Quick evaluations are unlikely to be worth much, in Corbett's view. Researchers need to construct and update databases that will allow identification of exactly what benefits persons with particular characteristics are eligible for at different times; they then need to translate program rules into a context of incentives.

A further complexity is introduced by the fact that social policy reforms both reflect and shape public attitudes. Rolston commented on the potential "contamination" in the early evaluations of the New Jersey family cap. The new provision was widely announced, but it was a complex change in already complex rules, and the fact that it applied in only a few counties was probably not clear, so

behavior in comparison areas could have been affected at least as much as behavior in treatment areas.[3] O'Neill described problems in getting the data on births for the New Jersey evaluation. Changes in eligibility that are intended to affect demographic behavior may also affect the incentives of both clients and program staff to report events, as well as the ability of the system simply to process reports. With complicated program reforms, a great load is put on administrative data systems, which may become less reliable as sources of data for evaluations.

AFDC waivers required either random assignment of individuals to programs or else a quasi-experimental evaluation model, with changes introduced in one or two counties, to be compared with other counties where no changes had been introduced. Moffitt felt these quasi-experimental designs were ineffective; too many other differences could exist between treatment and comparison areas, or local economic conditions affecting both could swamp any effects of the program changes in short-term evaluations. The great variation across states and over time, as described by Corbett, could be used to good effect by researchers, if they could link accurate program descriptors to good-quality, household-level data.

Does Research Matter?

Several times during the workshop, participants (both those engaged in producing research and those engaged in producing laws and regulations) raised the question whether research on these issues really matters for policy. The prevailing view was that research matters, eventually; it is worth figuring out why studies have disagreed, evaluating the new program changes, and improving data and methods. The welfare reform debate does not end with the passage of federal legislation, nor even with the first round of changes at the state level.

Moffitt distinguished between the academic studies (typically analyses of individual-level data from panel surveys that compare sample households in different states over time) and the evaluations of specific programs. The former can test a wider range of variation of benefits and rules, controlling for varying economic conditions and social and political background, thus presumably allowing more confident statements about the likely effects of changes being considered by a state. But this potential cannot be fully exploited now, according to Moffitt, because the results of academic studies are so mixed, and no one can say with confidence *why* the results are mixed. Studies differ in the datasets analyzed and in the models used to overcome confounding effects. Far too little invest-

[3]The Human Services Commissioner for New Jersey dismissed the evaluation results showing no difference in fertility between treatment and control groups: "We didn't isolate the control groups on a Pacific Island and keep them incognito. The control group may have been impacted by the public message as well" (quoted by the Associated Press, September 12, 1997).

ment has been made in what he called the "three R's": replications (of a particular result), studies of robustness (reanalyzing data to see if different reasonable choices about the model lead to very different results), and reconciliation studies (reanalyzing the data used by one study with the models used by others, to see how much of the difference in results can be explained by differences in models).

Another problem in conducting research on welfare is the difficulty in determining what policies are in place. It is exceptionally difficult to figure out exactly what AFDC rules prevailed in different states (and counties within states, since the waivers provide for within-state variation) at what times. Lacking that information, analysts cannot use the national survey data effectively for analyses of impact in an era of ever-widening policy variation. There are various lists of the number, timing, and type of AFDC waivers that have been granted, but these are not kept in a form that would allow researchers to map them onto the location codes in datasets such as the National Survey of Families and Households, the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS), the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the Survey of Income and Program Participation, etc. Trying to figure out exactly what rules prevailed in a particular location at a given time is an arduous task, as Bumpass could testify, and he urged the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to maintain a county-level database available to all as a way to facilitate useful research.

This problem of uncertainty in matching survey data with the welfare rules applying at a particular place and time will only become worse as state programs diverge even more under the 1996 act. Since reforms can now be introduced by states without any requirement to collect data and report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there will be no federal agency from which, in theory, researchers could collect the information needed for a geocoded dataset of welfare rules.

Currie noted that newly available data from the National Longitudinal Survey Child-Mother File will allow long-term studies of effects of childhood participation in AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid, and WIC, with representative samples, if continued waves of the panel study are funded. Another approach to data collection at a national level is adding supplementary questions to panel studies that contain information about welfare participation from previous rounds, as was done for a 1995 supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

Several participants called for more research and evaluation on effects of the welfare system on children. There was some discussion about the need to agree on sets of outcome measures for children, although Daniel Lichter argued that the child development literature already provides a good set of outcome variables with well-studied psychometric properties, which the welfare evaluation literature has not used. Ron Haskins listed some of the provisions for monitoring and evaluation included in welfare reform bills. These include efforts to improve state collection of data from child protective services systems and expansions of the Survey of Income and Program Participation sample for state-level estimates.

Haskins proposed a small list of child outcomes about which policy makers would be most concerned: whether children stay in school, whether they get a job, and whether they avoid arrest.

Social science research needs to focus more on marriage, as distinct from nonmarital fertility, in Lichter's view. Current AFDC rules probably lower the probability that a cohabiting couple will decide to marry, and they lower the probability of remarriage for divorced women. There is a large research literature on "assortative mating," and it would be useful to know, for example, how AFDC affects the probability that a woman can "marry up" in the ranking, whether the income from AFDC allows women to be choosier about potential mates, just as unemployment insurance allows those out of work to be choosier about potential jobs. Researchers have relatively little to offer policy makers who want to know how policies of all sorts (not just AFDC/TANF) may promote marriage, rather than just discourage female headship. To this Bumpass added a concern about understanding cohabitation. One-third of nonmarital births are to cohabiting couples, yet little is known about their childrearing practices or the effect of the stability of the relationship on the children of either partner or their common children.

Welfare reform at the federal level is likely to increase, not to end, the need for policy-relevant research findings on the effects of income transfers on demographic behavior and families. At the same time, however, the character and pace of reform are likely to make it more difficult to produce useful and timely research, unless efforts are made to improve the availability of data.

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APPENDIX
WORKSHOP AGENDA

Effects of Welfare on the Family and Reproductive Behavior

Thursday, May 2—NAS Members' Room
Chair: Robert Moffitt

6:00-6:30 p.m.	Drinks	
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Dinner	
7:00-7:30 p.m.	Welcome and Introduction	Barbara Boyle Torrey William O'Hare Robert Moffitt
7:30-8:15 p.m.	Overview: Trends in Marriage and Fertility Discussant	Christine Bachrach William Darity
8:15-9:00 p.m.	Overview: Trends in the Welfare System Discussant	Rebecca Blank William Dickens

Friday, May 3—NAS Board Room
Chair: Ronald Lee

8:30-9:00 a.m.	Continental breakfast available	

Session I: The Effect of Welfare on Childrearing and Child Outcomes

9:00-9:25 a.m.	The Effect of Welfare on Child Outcomes: What We Know and What Do We Need to Know?	Janet Currie
9:25-9:35 a.m.	Discussant	Greg Duncan
9:35-9:45 a.m.	Discussant	Lindsay Chase-Lansdale
9:45-10:10 a.m.	Open Discussion	
10:10-10:25 a.m.	Break	

Session II: The Effect of Welfare on Marriage, Fertility, and Abortion

10:25-10:50 a.m.	The Effect of Welfare on Marriage and Fertility: What Do We Know and What Do We Need to Know?	Robert Moffitt
10:50-11:00 a.m.	Discussant	Daniel Lichter
11:10-11:35 a.m.	Open Discussion	
11:35 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Welfare Reform and Abortion: Research Perspectives	Jacob Klerman
12:00-12:10 p.m.	Discussant	Jacqueline Darroch
12:10-12:30 p.m.	Open Discussion	
12:30-1:30 p.m.	Lunch	

Session III: Evaluation of Welfare Reform in the States Effects on Marriage and Fertility

1:30-1:55 p.m.	Welfare Waivers and Family Outcomes	Rebecca Maynard and Thomas Corbett
1:55-2:05 p.m.	Discussant	Isabel Sawhill
2:05-2:25 p.m.	Open Discussion	
2:25-2:50 p.m.	Welfare, Fathers and Child Support Research issues	Joseph Hotz
2:50-3:00 p.m.	Discussant	Wade Horn
3:00-3:20 p.m.	Open Discussion	
3:20-3:30 p.m.	Break	

Session IV: Panel Discussion—Priorities for Future Research Needed for Welfare Policy Formulation

3:30-4:25 p.m.	Panel Discussion	Andrew Cherlin Larry Bumpass Ron Haskins June O'Neill
4:25-5:00 p.m.	Open Discussion	
5:00 p.m.	Adjourn	