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Taking a Couples Rather than an Individual Approach to Employment Assistance

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Abstract

In contrast to the standard individualistic approach to employment services delivery, we present evaluation results for an employment program in which both partners in a couple relationship simultaneously participate. We find that participating mothers had larger gains in employment and earnings and decreases in TANF receipt immediately upon program exit relative to mothers who participated as individuals. These gains eroded in the two years following program completion. Fathers show similar though weaker results. We suggest directions for future couples-oriented employment programs based on couples interventions in other fields and encourage program developers to consider the range of mechanisms associated with a focus on couples, including potential unintended consequences.

Taking a Couples Rather than an Individual Approach to Employment Assistance

Historically, employment assistance programs have taken an individualistic rather than a couples-focused approach. Although more often concerned with a family unit, welfare programs have also rarely taken comprehensive views, frequently failing to consider relationships that are not defined by marital ties or household boundaries. Recent developments are altering these traditional approaches. Increasingly, policymakers and program staff are concerned with a long-neglected family member: the noncustodial father. And, although controversial, the marriage promotion goals included in welfare reform legislation have produced considerable discussion about services to strengthen marital bonds, particularly among low-income, underemployed couples.

Clearly, the family is important for employment outcomes, particularly among parents. New parents, most frequently mothers, often leave the labor force at least briefly when a child is born (Berger and Waldfogel, 2003; Drobnič, Blossfeld, and Rohwer, 1999). And once they return to work, child care problems are an impediment to continued labor force attachment (Connelly and Kimmel, 2003; Henly, 2003). Balancing family responsibilities with employment may also lead parents to prefer different jobs from those they would have chosen if childless (e.g., part-time versus full-time work, evening or weekend versus day shifts, jobs with less travel, etc.; Clarkberg and Moen, 2001; Drobnič, Blossfeld, and Rohwer, 1999). The differences in workforce participation with and without consideration of family obligations may be particularly pronounced if spouses' "traditional family values" differ (e.g., spouses who value wives' homemaking may especially restrict a woman's employment status, job choices, and career advancement; Moen and Yu, 2000; Shelton and John, 1996). The quality of partner relationships can also influence job outcomes; for example, conflictual relationships can disrupt job performance (Bolger et al., 1989; Doumas, Margolin, and John, 2003). Yet surprisingly few employment interventions take into account family relationships (Iversen, 1998).

In this paper, we present an evaluation of a demonstration program providing short-term job readiness and job search services to help both parents in young, low-income, primarily African American couples secure a first or better job. The program's design preceded the focus on marriage and two-parent families in welfare reform legislation. It reflects a grassroots recognition by program administrators and staff that helping both parents, rather than one, secure a (better) job is more likely to move the family out of poverty. In Part I of this paper, we present results from statistical models that assess whether each parent was more likely to be employed, to increase their earnings, and (for mothers) to not participate in welfare if they were assisted simultaneously with their partner rather than as an individual. Although we were unable to implement an experimental design, we use statistical methods with longitudinal data to adjust for many selective differences between the demonstration participants and comparison groups. Because this program focused on the most basic couples approach—simply offering assistance to both partners simultaneously—in Part II we draw on couples interventions in other fields and descriptive findings from this study to inform the design and evaluation of future programs.

PART 1. ECONOMETRIC ANALYSES OF PROGRAM EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS, EMPLOYMENT, AND WELFARE RECEIPT

Literature Review and the Studied Program

Traditional Employment Assistance Approaches

Many employment assistance programs, large and small, operate in the United States. The federally funded Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and its predecessors, most notably the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), are the largest, with local service providers offering an array of services, including job search, job readiness, job skills training, and basic/remedial education to economically

disadvantaged youth, economically disadvantaged adults, and dislocated workers (LaLonde, 1995) .[1] As society's approach to assisting poor families changed, similarly structured programs emerged that focused on moving welfare recipients to employment and, more recently, on raising the earnings of noncustodial parents. Reviews of evaluations of JTPA and its predecessors consistently find positive effects on adult women's earnings, but generally no effects or negative effects for adult men and youth (LaLonde, 1995; Greenberg, Michalopoulos, and Robins, 2003). For example, in their recent meta-analysis, Greenberg and associates find that average annual earnings effects across evaluations are $1,417 for adult women, $318 for adult men, and -$92 for youth, in 1999 dollars.

Evaluations of employment assistance for single mothers and noncustodial fathers in the welfare population parallel results for JTPA. Like JTPA, "work first" programs that quickly move welfare recipients into employment have typically been found to reduce single mothers' welfare reliance and increase their employment (Long, 2001). Because of the current study's focus on young parents, it is of interest that three recent major studies of programs for teenage mothers (New Chance; Learning, Earning and Parenting; and the Teenage Parent Demonstration) found fewer positive results for employment outcomes than programs that included older mothers (Kisker, Maynard, Rangarajan, and Boller, 1998; Granger and Cytron, 1999). For noncustodial fathers, the only large-scale random assignment evaluation to date, Parents' Fair Share, replicates the general lack of success of employment assistance targeted at men. No overall effects were found on fathers' employment and earnings, although some subgroups did show positive results (e.g., those fathers served later in the program, when the services had expanded and improved, and those with low education levels and limited work experience; Martinez and Miller, 2000).

Other recent and ongoing nonexperimental studies of noncustodial parent programs have documented the challenges of working with this population, including difficulty recruiting participants

[1]The Workforce Investment Act replaced the JTPA program on July 1, 2000, the month after we stopped selecting participants for the evaluation. We do not include Job Corps in this review because its structure differs markedly from the other reviewed programs, particularly its residential component (LaLonde, 1995).

and considerable employment barriers (Center for Policy Research, 2003; Martinson, Trutko, and Strong, 2000; Perez-Johnson, Kauff, and Hershey, 2003). Although some of these nonexperimental studies have described increases in noncustodial fathers' employment and earnings after participating in the program, they have not been designed to identify whether such changes exceed what would have happened if the fathers had not participated in the program (Center for Policy Research, 2003; Fraker et al., 2004; Perez-Johnson, Kauff, and Hershey, 2003).

Programs aimed at the welfare population also provide a window into employment assistance for couples. Historically, two-parent families faced greater barriers than single-parent families in accessing cash assistance, most notably a requirement that the principal earner in a two-parent family have significant recent labor force participation and current underemployment. Most states lifted these additional requirements in the 1990s under state welfare waivers and federal reforms (State Policy Documentation Project, 2004) and a handful of welfare-to-work evaluations provide results specific to two-parent families. Three of the largest recent studies failed to find positive effects on employment, earnings, or welfare receipt among two-parent families (Long, Nightingale, and Wissoker, 1994; Miller et al., 2000; Scrivener et al., 2002).

On the whole, there is room for program innovation in trying to connect young parents to good jobs, help them keep the jobs they secure, and help them move into better jobs. One rationale for such innovation stems from the body of evidence on who does, and who does not, benefit from employment assistance. Although past programs have had success with adult women, including single mothers, they have had less success with adult men, youth, and teenage mothers. Might a couples-oriented program fare better with fathers and young mothers? Although the results of prior two-parent programs are discouraging, they differ from the demonstration studied below in requiring only one parent rather than both to be employed and not being focused on youth. A second rationale for a couples approach emerges from critiques that "work first" defines success as getting a job rather than moving out of poverty (Long,

2001). Raising the incomes of both rather than one parent might produce better results on the poverty criterion. A final rationale for a couples approach stems from the changing tides in orientations to moving families (particularly children) out of poverty. The lion's share of employment programs targeting fragile families are oriented toward increasing child support after families' dissolve rather than increasing earnings prior to dissolution. On the other hand, the mainstream discourse around two-parent welfare families and marriage promotion has concerned the goal of marriage as the outcome, rather than employment of partners. A consistent, minor discourse on the importance of jobs for marriageability and marital stability has less often translated into programs (McLanahan, Garfinkel, and Mincy, 2001; Ooms, Bouchet, and Parke, 2004; Ooms and Wilson, 2004). Thus, there is room to contribute to the discourse on promoting couples' employment, as we will discuss further in Part II.

The Jobs for Youth/Chicago Full Family Partnership Program

The program we evaluate is the Jobs for Youth/Chicago (JFY) Full Family Partnership (FFP) program, designed to help young, committed couples improve their economic situation (see Gordon and Heinrich, 2004 for more details about JFY and the FFP program). For more than two decades, Jobs for Youth/Chicago (which began in 1979) has provided short-term (1–3 week) employment and training services to help young men and women (ages 17 to 24 years) from low-income families enter the workforce. Over time, JFY learned that a number of parent participants were in stable relationships with a partner. The FFP program (which began in 1998) was designed to extend JFY's core services (10- and 15-day job readiness workshops, GED instruction, and job placement) to help both partners in these committed relationships find employment. The program was designed with four eligibility requirements: (1) both parents had to have low incomes and at least one needed to be receiving TANF, (2) the couple was to be in a stable relationship (a largely self-defined criterion, as the couple did not have to be married or cohabiting), (3) at least one of the partners had to be a parent, although the couple did not need to have

a child together, and (4) at least one partner had to meet JFY's usual age eligibility requirement of 17 to 24 years.

The FFP couples program builds on the basic JFY service-provision structure. Those without a high school diploma or GED can first complete JFY's GED program and then receive employment assistance. Those with high school credentials—the majority of applicants—complete either a 10-day or 15-day employment workshop. To enter the 10-day workshop, the student must read at the 9th-grade level or above, consistent with the state of Illinois' definition of workforce literacy. The major elements of the workshop are: (1) self-assessment and labor market exploration, (2) goal planning and conflict resolution skills, and (3) job search skills, including practice interviews and resume and cover letter writing. Students who read below the 9th-grade level are offered additional training and preparation in the 15-day workshop. The 15-day workshop adds to the curriculum test-taking, reading, and math skills to prepare youth for pre-employment tests. Both workshops also model the employment environment, with strict policies regarding tardiness, absences, and dress.

JFY participants also receive one-on-one assistance throughout the program. Each workshop participant is assigned to a youth services counselor. Students make appointments to meet with their counselor to discuss personal challenges, especially those that may affect their employment prospects. Once students have successfully completed the workshop, an employment counselor helps match them with job opportunities. One of JFY's strengths is its extensive network of more than 400 Chicago-area employers who regularly hire JFY graduates. These business connections are particularly important in a "work first" climate, potentially allowing JFY an advantage in connecting youth with above-average entry-level jobs (Lundgren and Rankin, 1998).

JFY used its youth services counseling structure to offer enhanced program services to meet the family needs of the FFP participants. One counselor was assigned to coordinate the day-to-day operation of the FFP program. She served as the youth services counselor for all FFP participants. She also worked

to build upon JFY's existing in-house and referral services (e.g., sources for free or low-cost professional clothing) and to develop or enhance services needed by FFP families, including assistance in dealing with TANF caseworkers, help using the local child care resource and referral services, or personal counseling about child care and housing decisions. In Part II we describe the couples' utilization of these enhanced services and how they could be expanded upon in future programs.

Our analyses in Part I focus on parents rather than couples. This is appropriate in that a major goal of the evaluation is to examine the major innovation of the program—simultaneous enrollment—by contrasting how mothers and fathers fare when participating along with their partners to how they would have done had they received services as an individual. This is also necessary because we have partner information only for the FFP parents and not our two comparison groups.[2] We examine employment, earnings, and welfare receipt to address the program's fundamental goal of better helping both partners enter the workforce and achieve economic self-sufficiency. We present basic descriptive statistics for these outcomes and then use statistical techniques to adjust for measured and unmeasured baseline differences between participants in the FFP program and two comparison groups.

Samples and Measures

Samples

We compare the FFP participants to two nonexperimental comparison groups: parents receiving the standard JFY services as individuals, and young parents receiving JTPA services in the same local labor market area (Chicago and suburban Cook County JTPA parents).We have information about all young mothers and fathers who enrolled in each program between July 1, 1997, and September 30, 1999. As noted, JFY traditionally has served youth ages 17 to 24. (Data about minors who participated in the

[2]Standard errors are not biased by statistical nonindependence in the approach we take because we do not combine pairs of partners in the same analysis in Part I.

FFP program were not included in the evaluation.) To accommodate older partners, JFY extended the upper age limit, in almost all cases for enrolling fathers who were in their late twenties. For comparability, we restrict our JFY and JTPA comparison groups to 18- to 24-year-old mothers and 18- to 30-year-old fathers. Although the programs' data systems do not contain sufficient information to restrict comparison group members to parents who are in committed relationships, our statistical models adjust for many measured and unmeasured differences among program participants.

The fundamental objective of the FFP program to serve partners together is reflected in the gender of the FFP participants. Between July 1997 and September 1999, we have information about 110 mothers and 111 fathers who participated in the FFP program. Gender is substantially less balanced in the comparison groups. Among the 1,521 JFY parents who were not FFP participants, approximately 85 percent were mothers, with only 235 fathers. Similarly, the sample of Chicago-area JTPA participants that form the second comparison group includes 1,156 young mothers and 272 young fathers. The samples were majority African American (95 percent of the FFP program participants, 93 percent of standard JFY program participants, and 70 percent of JTPA participants were African American).

Measures

Quarterly Earnings. Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) records provided data from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program on parents' quarterly earnings from the second quarter of 1997 through the second quarter of 2001. We use these records, and the dates of each parent's enrollment and completion (or dropout) of job training, to indicate whether the parent was employed (had any IDES earnings) and the amount of the parent's IDES earnings in up to four quarters before program enrollment and up to eight quarters following program exit. Earnings were adjusted to 1998 dollars using the annual Consumer Price Index (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).

TANF Participation. Illinois Department of Human Services records provided monthly measures of whether the parent was a grantee in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Temporary

Assistance for Needy Families (AFDC/TANF) programs between February 1989 and February 2001. Similar to the IDES earnings and employment measures, we create dummy indicators of whether the parent received AFDC/TANF in the 12 months before program enrollment and in the period up to 24 months following program exit.

Background Characteristics. Management information system (MIS) files at the JFY and JTPA programs provided the participant's age, number of children, marital status, race/ethnicity, highest grade completed, and math and reading scores on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). All variables were assessed at the time the participant enrolled in the program. Appendix 1 presents descriptive statistics for these variables.

Statistical Models and Results

Mothers' Employment, Earnings, and TANF Receipt

Outcome Trajectories. Figure 1 presents unadjusted employment, earnings, and TANF outcomes of mothers by program type and program timeline. All mothers show apparent gains from the programs, with higher levels of employment and earnings and lower levels of TANF participation in the period after program exit versus before program participation. At a glance, the figures suggest that the unadjusted outcomes of FFP participants may be better than those of mothers receiving standard JFY services but more similar to those of JTPA participants. However, the complex trajectories of outcomes makes it difficult to summarize the figures in a simple way. In most cases, there is an immediate jump in employment and earnings, or fall in TANF receipt, upon program exit. Then, across the first two post-program years, the groups show continued change in outcomes, with general declines in TANF receipt but in some cases increases and in other cases decreases in employment and earnings. Indeed, in some cases, a large improvement immediately upon program exit is offset by a less favorable rate of change across the post-program years (e.g., see FFP mothers, indicated by the circle symbol, in the top panel of

Figure 1
Employment, Earnings, and TANF Outcomes of Mothers, by Program Type and Timeline

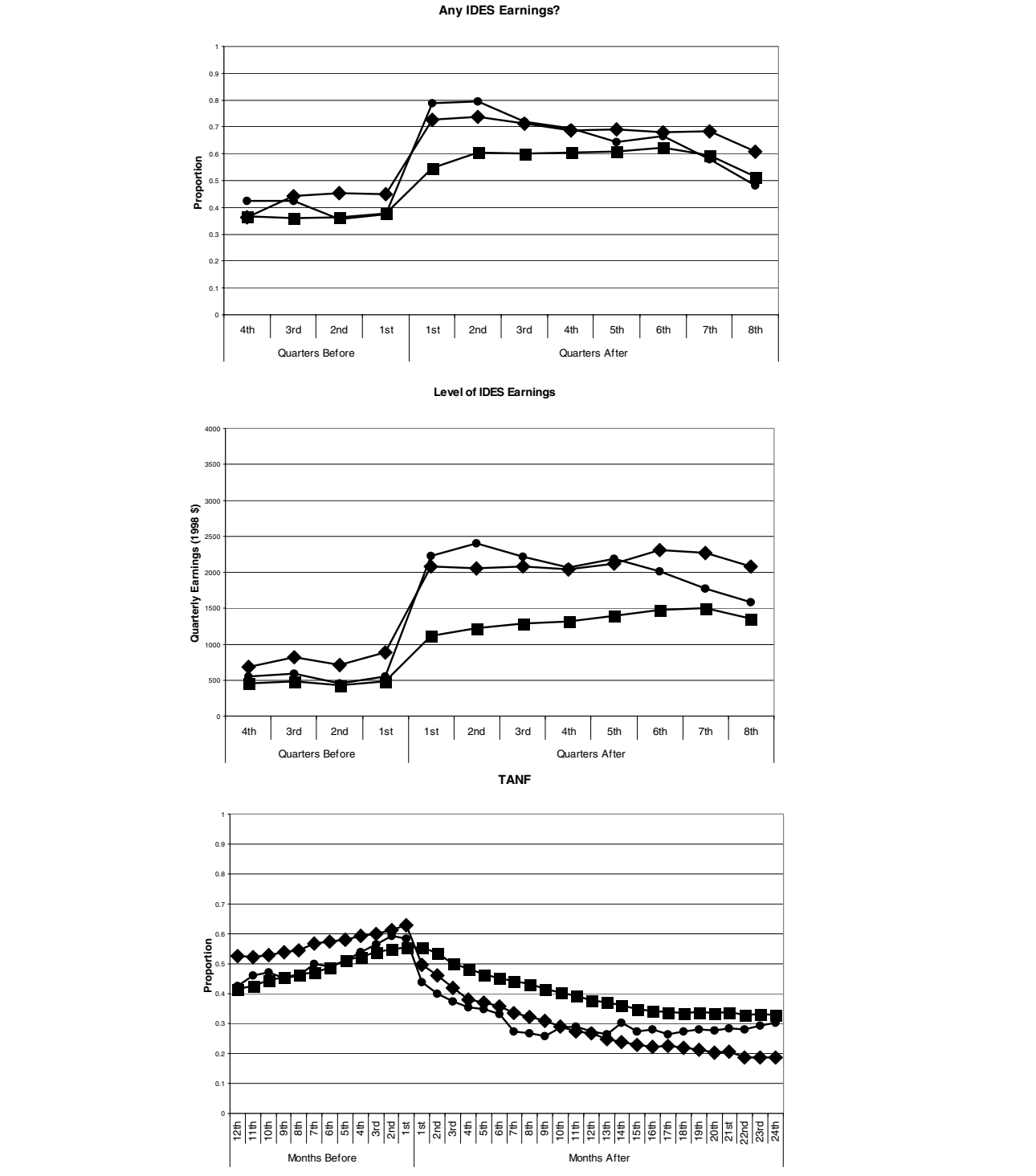

Figure 1, "Any IDES Earnings?"). We next present statistical models that capture these varying trajectories.

Statistical Models. Our statistical models are either logit (employment and TANF) or linear regression (earnings) models. The data file includes one record per person for each time period (quarter or month), and predictor variables model three aspects of the trajectories in outcomes: (a) the *pre-program slope* (month-to-month or quarter-to-quarter rate of change in the pre-program year), (b) a *program-exit jump or fall* (between the first pre-program and first post-program month or quarter), and (c) the *post-program slope* (month-to-month or quarter-to-quarter rate of change in the two post-program years; see Gordon and Heinrich 2004 for details). The models also include dummy variables indicating participants in the standard JFY and the JTPA programs. Interactions between these program indicators and the trajectory variables allow us to assess the degree to which the program-exit jump/fall and post-program slope are smaller (or larger) for the two comparison groups versus the omitted group, the FFP couples program participants. Standard errors are adjusted for the clustering of time points within persons (Wooldridge, 2002).

We present both *no controls* and *fixed effects* models. The no controls models estimate the parameters associated with the descriptive charts in Figure 1, without adjustments for covariates. The fixed effects specification adjusts for the measured characteristics shown in Appendix 1 as well as additional stable but unmeasured characteristics of mothers that may influence their employment, earnings, or TANF receipt (Wooldridge, 2002). For the earnings outcome, this adjustment is achieved by including a dummy variable to indicate each parent in the sample. Such a model is estimable because we have two or more observation points for each parent. Intuitively, the coefficients for these dummy variables allow the intercept to shift up or down depending on the collective effects of any characteristics of the parent that are stable across time. Importantly, these characteristics need not be measured in the study.

For the logit model, including dummy variables for each sample member results in an inconsistent estimator. Thus, we use an alternative conditional fixed effects logit approach for the employment and TANF outcomes that conditions on the sum of the outcome variable for each parent across time (i.e., the number of quarters of employment or the number of months of TANF receipt; Wooldridge, 2002). The sample size reported for these conditional fixed effects models differs from those for other models because parents with no change in the outcome variable (continuously employed or continuously unemployed; continuously receiving TANF or continuously not receiving TANF) are excluded from the conditional estimation.

The fixed effects approach is limited by the fact that we cannot estimate the separate effects of measured variables that do not change over time, including our program type indicators, because they are collinear with the dummies for each parent. However, we can include interactions between the program indicators and our trajectory variables, and this allows us to capture the key contrasts of interest (i.e., a smaller program-exit jump/fall; a smaller post-program slope). Similarly, although we cannot estimate the separate effects of the variables from Appendix 1 because their values are measured at baseline and do not change over time, we can include interactions between these control variables and the program-exit jump/fall and the post-program slope, allowing us to adjust in the fixed effects model for differences in post-program outcomes that are associated with pre-existing characteristics (e.g., is a FFP mother's greater jump in earnings at program exit due to her greater education at baseline?). In the statistical models, we code the baseline variables such that the estimated trajectory that we present for FFP parents applies to a typical person in the sample (an African American, unmarried parent with one child who is a high school graduate, has reading and math skills at a 9th-grade level or above, enrolled in the program in July 1998, and was age 20–21).[3] It is important to point out that the fixed effects models do not adjust for

[3]This interpretation of the coefficients of the trajectory variables follows from the fact that the trajectory variables are interacted with all of the baseline characteristics as well as the program indicator variables. Thus the coefficients on the trajectory variables apply to a person coded zero on the baseline characteristics and program

unmeasured characteristics that change over time (e.g., a mother marrying or giving birth to an additional child).

For the earnings' outcomes, we also specify a multilevel model (see Gordon and Heinrich, 2004 for a detailed description of this model) because of its increasing popularity in evaluation research and because the fixed effects and multilevel models differ in their assumptions about the unmeasured, stable components of the error. For example, the random effects approach of the multilevel model assumes that these terms are conditionally uncorrelated with measured predictors; the fixed effects model allows them to be correlated. We use a two-level model in which time points (quarters) are nested within individuals. Earnings at each quarter, as well as the indicators for the pre-program slope, program-exit jump/fall, and post-program slope are included at the first level. The indicators of program type (standard JFY or JTPA versus the FFP couples program) and baseline characteristics of participants are included at the second level. Mirroring our fixed effects specification, the multilevel models are specified such that the level one intercept, pre-program slope, program-exit jump/fall, and post-program slope are predicted by the level two variables. Based on initial model results, we also allow for random effects associated with the level-one intercept, pre-program slope, and post-program slope.

Results of Statistical Models. Table 1 presents the results of these models. We first discuss the statistically adjusted outcome trajectories of mothers in the *FFP couples program* which can be read in the top panel of Table 1. (Recall that the control variables are coded so that these results apply to a typical mother, as noted below the table. The predicted trajectories for FFP mothers with other sets of characteristics are of the same sign and significance level and are available from the authors.) Across all outcomes and all model specifications, there is an immediate improvement in outcomes upon program exit. For example, the odds ratio of 8.75 in the column labeled "Any IDES Earnings" and "No Controls"

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dummies. Note that the difference between FFP parents and parents in each comparison group on their program exit jump/fall and post-program slope does not depend on the baseline characteristics because we do not include three-way interactions between trajectories, baseline characteristics, and program dummies.

Table 1
Statistical Models of Mothers' Employment, Earnings, and TANF Receipt

	Logit Model of Any IDES Earnings [Odds ratio (SE)]		Linear Regression Model of Level of IDES Earnings [Coefficient (SE)]			Logit Model of TANF Receipt [Odds ratio (SE)]	
	No Controls	Fixed Effects	No Controls	Multi-Level	Fixed Effects	No Controls	Fixed Effects
FFP							
Pre-program slope	0.91	0.83	-10.65	-27.71	-56.34	1.06**	1.14**
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(54.51)	(101.16)	(87.30)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Jump/fall at exit	8.75**	10.63**	1,965.40**	1,904.15**	1,923.97**	0.41**	0.10**
	(2.49)	(3.42)	(212.45)	(176.54)	(208.20)	(0.10)	(0.02)
Post-program slope	0.83**	0.77**	-94.02**	-84.77*	-82.53**	0.98	0.94**
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(32.23)	(34.58)	(29.66)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Standard JFY							
× Pre-program slope	1.12	1.11	11.67	3.71	35.92	1.00	0.98
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(55.72)	(96.27)	(82.97)	(0.02)	(0.02)
× Jump/fall at exit	0.34**	0.33**	-1,159.55**	-1,191.25**	-1,026.66**	2.09**	3.52**
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(206.34)	(166.24)	(183.00)	(0.50)	(0.77)
× Post-program slope	1.20**	1.33**	140.19**	174.69**	174.79**	0.98	0.97**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(33.30)	(32.58)	(27.95)	(0.02)	(0.01)
JTPA							
× Pre-program slope	1.23*	1.30*	61.40	57.18	85.94	0.98	0.98
	(0.12)	(0.15)	(58.27)	(98.65)	(85.06)	(0.02)	(0.03)
× Jump/fall at exit	0.44**	0.32**	-671.60**	-1,010.08**	-869.21**	1.24	1.51+
	(0.12)	(0.09)	(217.93)	(170.43)	(187.64)	(0.30)	(0.34)
× Post-program slope	1.13**	1.21**	116.27**	144.91**	147.72**	0.96*	0.96**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(34.51)	(33.41)	(28.66)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Number of Mothers	2,535	2,226	2,535	2,535	2,535	2,514	1,843
Number of Data Points	28,945	25,471	28,945	28,945	28,945	83,043	61,480

Note: JFY=Jobs for Youth/Chicago. JTPA=Job Training Partnership Act. Two-sided significance levels: ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$. Robust standard errors are reported for the "no controls" models that adjust for the clustering of time points within persons. In the "fixed effects" and "multilevel" models the top three rows describe the employment, earnings, and TANF trajectories of FFP mothers who are unmarried, African American, high school graduates who are ages 20–21, have one child, have reading and math skills at the 9th-grade level or above, and enrolled in the program in July 1998.

and the row labeled "Jump/fall at exit" indicates that FFP mothers' odds of having any IDES earnings are over 8 times higher in the quarter after program exit than in the quarter before program enrollment. Likewise, in the same row, the regression coefficient of 1,965.40 in the "Level of IDES Earnings" and "No Controls" column estimates that between these same two periods, FFP mothers' average quarterly earnings increase by nearly $2,000. And the odds ratio of 0.41 in the same row under the "TANF Receipt" and "No Controls" column indicates that FFP mothers' odds of receiving TANF are about 60 percent smaller in the month after program exit than the month before program enrollment. In contrast to this similar pattern of improvement across all measures of economic self-sufficiency immediately upon program exit, the findings in the "Post-program slope" row differ across outcomes. Whereas FFP mothers' TANF receipt holds steady or declines across the post-program years, there is also evidence of job loss and earnings declines across the post-program years (odds ratios less than 1 for "Any IDES Earnings" and negative coefficients for "Level of IDES Earnings").

The middle panel of Table 1 contains the interactions between the trajectory variables and the indicator of enrollment in the *standard JFY program*. The highlighted rows estimate how the post-program outcomes of these mothers differ from those of mothers in the FFP couples program. We again see consistency across outcomes and models in the immediate change at program exit ("Standard JFY x Jump/fall at exit"). In particular, the odds ratios for "Any IDES Earnings" are less than 1, indicating less of an employment gain; the "Level of IDES Earnings" coefficients are negative, indicating a smaller increase in earnings; and the odds ratios for "TANF Receipt" are greater than 1, indicating less decrease in TANF receipt at program exit for mothers enrolled in standard JFY services in contrast to those enrolled in the FFP couples program. But we also see that the coefficient for the post-program rate of change is consistently larger for employment and for earnings (odds ratios greater than 1 and positive earnings coefficients) for mothers in the standard JFY program than for FFP mothers. Indeed, whereas FFP mothers show statistically significant declines in earnings across the two post-program years, other

JFY mothers show a statistically significant earnings gain. (The post-program slopes for other JFY mothers are calculated using the coefficient in the top panel and the interaction coefficient in the middle panel; standard errors were calculated to conduct hypothesis tests; details available from authors.) Similarly, while employment was estimated to decline for FFP mothers, it holds steady for other JFY mothers.

The results for the contrasts with *JTPA mothers*, shown in the bottom panel of Table 1, reveal that JTPA mothers also show more positive rates of change for employment and earnings as well as more negative rates of change for TANF receipt in the post-program years than do mothers in the FFP couples program (JTPA × Post-program slope). The immediate fall in TANF receipt at program exit for JTPA mothers is statistically equivalent to that of FFP mothers, although like mothers in the standard JFY program, JTPA mothers show a smaller employment and earnings gain at program exit than do FFP mothers (JTPA × Jump/fall at exit).

In sum, mothers who participate in the FFP couples program demonstrate better employment and earnings gains at the point of program exit in contrast to both JTPA and other JFY mothers and larger immediate declines in TANF receipt in contrast to other JFY mothers. But the post-program slopes also suggest that these improvements do not continue steadily in the post-program period, as FFP mothers show erosion in their employment and earnings gains over the two post-program years. Consistent with other recent research (Bloom and Michalopoulos, 2001; Hotz, Imbens, and Klerman, 2000), additional analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered for the study suggest that the short-term job search assistance provided by JFY explains a large portion of these immediate gains that then diminish over time in the absence of other supports. Although JFY allows graduates to return for assistance for up to two years, our follow-up interviews with the FFP parents one year after program completion suggested that many were not aware that they could do so. Indeed, although new pregnancies and child care problems were cited by the majority of women who were unemployed at follow-up, most had not turned

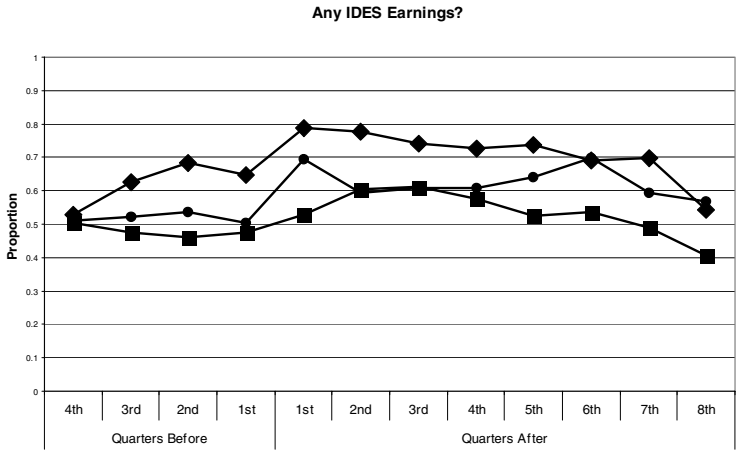
to JFY for help with child care in the post-program period (Gordon and Heinrich, 2004). Although we do not have measures of new pregnancies in the comparison group, the greater erosion in employment of FFP mothers may reflect an "unintended consequence" of programs designed for intact couples—women in continuing sexual partnerships will have higher fertility than women whose relationships dissolve (Stover, 1998).

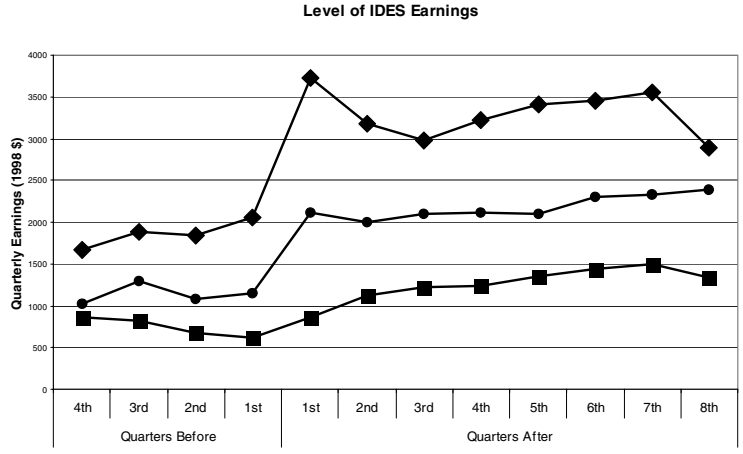
Fathers' Employment and Earnings

We conducted similar analyses for FFP fathers, although we excluded the TANF outcome because very few fathers were TANF grantees (e.g., in the month before program enrollment, only 2 percent of fathers were TANF grantees in contrast to 59 percent of mothers). Figure 2 presents the descriptive trajectory of outcomes and Table 2 presents the statistical models for fathers.

The pattern of employment outcomes displayed in the top panel of Figure 2 ("Any IDES Earnings") is somewhat more difficult to interpret than were mothers' outcome trajectories, perhaps in part due to the greater statistical noise attributable to smaller numbers of fathers enrolled in the comparison programs and the fact that a larger proportion of fathers than mothers were employed before entering the programs. For "Level of IDES Earnings" in the bottom panel of Figure 2, a post-program jump is easier to discern, particularly for fathers in the FFP couples and JTPA programs. The statistical models confirm and expand upon these visually discernible patterns (see Table 2). Fathers in the FFP couples program with typical characteristics show statistically significant increases in earnings upon program exit that are statistically larger than those seen for JFY fathers but not for JTPA fathers. Although these FFP fathers also show a statistically significant increase in employment immediately upon program exit, these employment gains do not differ statistically from those seen for other JFY and JTPA fathers. Together, these results suggest that employment and earnings for fathers who participate in the FFP couples program are higher after they exit the program than they were before program entry. However, participation in the simultaneous enrollment program has only enhanced their earnings beyond

Figure 2
Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Fathers, by Program Type and Timeline





●Full Family Partnership Program ■Jobs for Youth Standard Services ◆Job Training Partnership Act

Table 2
Statistical Models of Fathers' Employment and Earnings

	Logit Model of Any IDES Earnings [Odds ratio (SE)]		Linear Regression Model of Level of IDES Earnings [Coefficient (SE)]		
	No Controls	Fixed Effects	No Controls	Multi-Level	Fixed Effects
FFP					
Pre-program slope	0.99	0.70+	13.26	-211.95	-245.82+
	(0.08)	(0.13)	(61.80)	(146.81)	(131.38)
Jump/fall at exit	1.77**	3.95**	800.82**	1,019.52**	1,089.30**
	(0.37)	(1.72)	(203.44)	(261.95)	(298.63)
Post-program slope	0.97	1.01	49.10	98.29	110.92*
	(0.03)	(0.07)	(40.60)	(63.12)	(43.92)
Standard JFY					
× Pre-program slope	0.97	0.92	-100.30	-128.81	-150.45
	(0.10)	(0.14)	(69.76)	(124.61)	(112.66)
× Jump/fall at exit	1.03	0.84	-456.35*	-584.54**	-476.39+
	(0.24)	(0.29)	(201.74)	(217.93)	(244.20)
× Post-program slope	0.95	0.99	24.16	79.19	84.88*
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(46.26)	(52.86)	(37.05)
JTPA					
× Pre-program slope	1.20+	1.45*	99.48	102.20	166.05
	(0.12)	(0.26)	(88.09)	(135.31)	(126.52)
× Jump/fall at exit	1.08	1.50	513.67*	94.92	41.24
	(0.27)	(0.61)	(257.38)	(239.30)	(277.46)
× Post-program slope	0.90*	0.84**	-76.21	-66.59	-109.67**
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(53.80)	(57.67)	(41.54)
Number of Fathers	615	493	615	615	615
Number of Data Points	6,977	5,579	6,977	6,977	6,977

Note: JFY=Jobs for Youth/Chicago. JTPA=Job Training Partnership Act. Two-sided significance levels: ** $\underline{p} <$ .01. * $\underline{p} <$ .05. + $\underline{p} <$ .10. Robust standard errors are reported for the "no controls" models that adjust for the clustering of time points within persons.

what they would have been if they had participated in the standard JFY program; their earnings do not differ from those they would have attained had they participated in the JTPA program.

The fathers' post-program slopes are less often statistically significant and more variable across specifications than was the case for mothers, again perhaps due to the smaller sample sizes. Generally, FFP fathers show no statistically significant change in employment or earnings across the two post-program years in these models (post-program slopes). The exception is an increase in earnings evident in the fixed effects model. Alternatively, a more consistent post-program finding is that of employment loss for the JTPA fathers, whereas employment holds steady in the post-program period for the FFP fathers. Because some fathers' post-program trajectories appear nonlinear (see again Figure 2), we also estimated quadratic and cubic forms of post-program change. These models do not alter the findings regarding employment and earnings gains at program exit and do not clarify the pattern of post-program slopes associated with program participation (details available from the authors).

PART II. DESIGNING A COUPLES-ORIENTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The results in Part I indicate that mothers who received employment assistance simultaneously with their partner in the FFP couples program exhibited greater immediate benefits in employment, earnings, and TANF receipt than did mothers who received employment assistance as individuals. Fathers showed a similar but weaker pattern of results. Mothers in the FFP program also showed an erosion of their employment and earnings gains over time, which appears due to the absence of continued supports from the program after securing a job. In this section, we use information from follow-up interviews with 67 FFP couples in our analysis. We document that there are ways in which JFY's couples-oriented employment assistance program could be improved. We then argue that couples interventions and marriage education in other fields provide useful direction for the design of future

employment assistance programs for couples, and in particular, for moving beyond simple simultaneous enrollment to a broader spectrum of couples-oriented program components.

The FFP Couples' Views of the Program

Our process evaluation and couples' responses to open-ended questions in the follow-up survey suggest that JFY left room to enhance its couples-oriented services. Parents most often cited JFY's core services of training in job search skills and assistance in job placement as their "favorite things" about the program. Said one FFP mother: "JFY taught me how to dress for interviews and how to respond to questions during interviews. Because of JFY, I am not as nervous on interviews and I have more confidence." Another FFP mother commented: "JFY gives youth a chance. It lets them know that you don't have to settle for just fast food jobs and minimum wage, there are other job opportunities out there." Other FFP parents stated that even when they did not find a job within JFY's job pool, the skills that they acquired helped them find a job on their own. In contrast, few parents cited things that they liked about JFY that were specific to the FFP program. One parent did say that what he liked best was "The fact that a participant's partner could take advantage of the services," although another parent noted that "JFY should offer more assistance to participants' mates."

Indeed, it may be that the FFP program achieved its immediate success not through its couples focus but through its more intensive counseling oriented toward parents than was the case in the standard JFY program. Although we do not have comparable data for other JFY parents, we find that about one of three FFP mothers and one of five FFP fathers emphasized the caring staff and one-on-one counseling as the things they liked most about JFY. One mother said that she liked the fact that "the people with children were given a certain counselor." Indeed, through our process evaluation, we found that the FFP counselor spent considerable time amassing information and knowledge about local support services for

parents (Gordon and Heinrich, 2004). Although relevant to couples, much of this information would have benefited single parents as well.

What additional services did FFP parents receive? The FFP counselor reported providing services to both parents in 60 percent of couples, the mother only in 24 percent of couples, the father only in 3 percent of couples, and neither parent in 13 percent of couples. Among couples who received services, the most frequently provided assistance was help arranging child care (received by 70 percent of couples) followed by help with TANF reinstatement (received by 37 percent of couples). Assistance with health care and a pilot program of parenting classes were received by a smaller fraction of couples (10 percent and 3 percent respectively).

Improving Couples-Oriented Employment Services

If JFY could do more to improve services to couples beyond its core innovation of simultaneous enrollment, what more might be done? In this final section, we discuss the challenges and benefits of a couples employment intervention. In doing so, we consider the extension of couples therapy from interventions aimed at couples experiencing marital distress to situations such as our own, serving partners simultaneously in order to better achieve behavioral change for one or both of the partners. The latter kind of couples interventions have occurred for such wide-ranging behaviors as weight loss, smoking cessation, diabetes management, and cardiac risk reduction. We suggest that this literature can be productively used as a basis for building up couples-based employment programs. We also draw on the growing public provision of marriage education to suggest program components.

By making these connections, we do not mean to imply that employment programs need to offer intensive couples therapy for relationship distress or that unemployment itself is analogous to a psychological disorder. Rather, we argue that the emergence of couples approaches to facilitating interventions for individual behavioral change in other fields has important parallels with couples

employment assistance programs for couples. As we will elaborate next, these parallels include identifying mechanisms through which simple simultaneous enrollment, without further supports, might be beneficial, such as the potential for the partners' attendance and success to be mutually reinforcing, the avoidance of labeling one partner as causing the family's financial problems, and better empathy and understanding that may facilitate the partners' social support of one another. The couples intervention literature also indicates that not all couples will achieve the ideal benefits from simultaneous enrollment. Some partner's behavior may be neutral or unsupportive, ranging from ignoring the other partners' efforts to change, to communicating pessimism about their ability to succeed, to openly discouraging or sabotaging their efforts. Additional challenges of simultaneous enrollment programs are that both partners may not need the same type or level of assistance and that each partner must deal with the stress of their own labor market transitions at the same time that they are being called upon to support their partner.

Programs may also decide to move beyond simultaneous enrollment to offer some form of intervention above and beyond simultaneously providing both partners with employment assistance. Programs might encourage, model, and train partners to help them achieve the kinds of mutual reinforcement and supports noted above, as well as help them avoid unsupportive behaviors. When partners are transitioning toward more stable, dual-earner roles, they will face increased demands and potential disagreements around child care, household chores, time management, and budgeting. Programs can also offer training at a fairly practical level in how to deal with these challenges. It is unlikely that program designers and participants would desire intensive couples therapy to be a regular program component, but programs might integrate marriage education into their services and should be well equipped to offer couples access to more intensive assistance as needed, particularly through referrals.

Couples Interventions for Individual Behavioral Change

Couples therapy was initially developed for situations in which the apparent problem is relationship distress. The most widely evaluated treatment is Behavioral Couples (Marital) Therapy (BCT), which is a social learning approach to relationship change (Baucum et al., 1998; Christensen and Heavey, 1999; Jacobson and Addis, 1993). Three interventions are used in BCT: (1) behavior exchange, in which therapists "help couples identify positive acts that each can do for the other, encourage couples to engage in these behaviors, and train them to show appropriate acknowledgment for them," (2) communication training, in which therapists "teach couples to express themselves without blame and accusation and to employ active listening skills," and (3) problem solving training, in which therapists teach couples to "define problems explicitly, how to generate potential solutions to these problems, how to negotiate and compromise on possible solutions, and how to implement and evaluate solutions" (Christensen and Heavey, 1999, p. 5).

More recently, therapeutic interventions have been developed in which the partner is brought into therapy even when the goal of the therapy does not involve the couple's relationship. In these situations, couples interventions can be beneficial even if the individual's apparent problem is not psychological. In their review of the literature, Baucum et al. (1998) define three types of such couples-based interventions for adult individual disorders: (1) partner-assisted interventions in which the partner acts as a surrogate therapist or coach, (2) disorder-specific couples therapy, and (3) general couples therapy. In the first type, the focus of the intervention remains the individual, and the partner provides support, often to help the individual adhere to the intervention. In the latter two, the couples' relationship is a focus of intervention, the distinction being whether the intervention is specifically tailored to ways in which the partner relationship may maintain or exacerbate the targeted disorder or behavior, versus whether the goal is to treat or prevent general relationship distress. Although Baucum and associates use these three categories conceptually, in practice they find that treating individual disorders with general

couples therapy is rare, and that most often partner-assisted interventions and disorders-specific couples therapy are combined in the same treatment.

Most of the literature on couples-based interventions has examined interventions in which one of the partners is the "index" client with the targeted disorder or desired behavior change. The goal of the intervention is to relieve the index client's distress or change the index client's behavior with support from the partner or by improving the couple's relationship. In contrast, in the FFP couples program, the goal was to intervene and improve individual-level employment outcomes for both partners (what we refer to as *simultaneous enrollment* of both partners in treatment). Although this is less typical of the existing couples intervention literature, there are examples in which simultaneous enrollment is a goal or byproduct (Murray et al., 1995, McLean et al., 2003). For example, in cases of weight loss, changing the eating behaviors of both partners may be a goal in order to facilitate better eating habits in the index client. And, in some cases, both partners happen to display the problem (e.g., be overweight, smoke, abuse alcohol). The literature suggests that there are both potential advantages and potential disadvantages to simultaneously enrolling both partners in treatment, as we discuss below.

Mechanisms of Simultaneous Enrollment

When both partners are targeted for change, their positive behavior may be mutually reinforcing, and each partner might motivate the other to do better in the program. In the FFP context, sharing the experience with a partner rather than participating as an individual, the parent might put more effort into showing up for workshops, engaging in workshop discussions, seeking out counselors, attending job fairs, and making job applications. In an interview, one JFY workshop teacher described this mechanism as follows: "the partners tend to motivate each other. There's a kind of synergy that begins to happen there. And one doesn't want to be the one to fall by the wayside, so to speak." For some couples, an employment and training program would need do no more than simultaneously enroll both partners in order for them to benefit from this mechanism.

More active forms of support that partners provide may include *esteem support* (encouragement, appreciation, listening to concerns), *informational support* (modeling, reinforcing, and monitoring skills and behaviors), and *instrumental support* (directly assisting the client or helping in problem solving; Black, Gleser, and Kooyers, 1990). In the context of employment assistance, instrumental support may involve watching the child, cooking dinner, or driving the partner to an interview. Informational support may include sharing a job notice picked up at a job fair, providing advice on a resume, or talking about job options. Esteem support might include "cheerleading" statements such as "I'm proud of you for making it to class after that late night with the baby," or "I know you're disappointed because that interview didn't go well, but I know you'll do better the next time."

By going through the program simultaneously, partners may have particular empathy and understanding that facilitates offering such supports. Some of this support may occur naturally, but interventions might also encourage, model, and train partners in providing such support. By working with both partners together, the program also can avoid labeling one of the partners as causing the couples' financial difficulties. Indeed, there is also a potential for unsupportive behaviors from partners, some of which have been identified in the couples literature, including partners' teasing, openly discouraging, openly sabotaging, ignoring efforts to change, communicating pessimism about success, and making critical comments. For employment programs, this might include pessimism that the partner will stick with the program, sabotage if one partner doesn't believe the other should be working, or negativity if one partner feels guilt about not earning enough so that the other parent can stay home with the children.

Moving into the labor force may alter established family routines and lead to personal growth. Stress may result as the couple deals with these transitions (Rohrbaugh et al., 2001). It may also be the case that when both partners need assistance, but only one is successful in locating a job, a relationship may be strained; and when one partner succeeds and the other fails, there is a potential for the partner's failure to have a negative effect on the more successful partner. A particular problem in the simultaneous

enrollment approach of the FFP program is that the partners are experiencing the stress of their own transition to the labor force at the same time that they are called upon to support their partner (Murray et al., 1995). In the long run, there is the potential for greater economic stability to increase relationship stability, but during the employment transition, stress may derail the relationship (Rogers and DeBoer, 2001; Ström, 2003). The potential to derail a relationship is particularly likely if, like the FFP intervention, many of the relationships involve "fragile families," in which most couples are unmarried and not cohabiting (McLanahan, Garfinkel, and Mincy, 2001). Such relationships are likely among the welfare population.

An additional challenge to a program wishing to offer simultaneous enrollment is that both partners may not need assistance, or may not need the same type and level of assistance. This issue was clearly relevant for JFY, which had a well-defined service delivery program of short-term job readiness skills and job placement services. Although a GED program served participants who needed a high school credential before seeking a job, the program as a whole was oriented toward quick placement of job-ready youth. Some partners who came into the program needed a broader array of more basic services. At the other extreme, some partners had higher skills or were already working, making it difficult to find a match in JFY's typical job pool. This heterogeneous pool is reflected in participants' contrasting comments. One parent told us: "JFY should have more jobs for the more experienced participants. I have computer skills," whereas another said "JFY should be able to place people who do not have a GED."

Simultaneous enrollment highlights such stresses for dual-earner families because it works with both parents at once. However, such stresses would exist if the parents were each going through employment assistance on their own, or both were already employed. Adding a couples focus to employment assistance has the potential benefit of helping those couples who are vulnerable to such challenges stay together while moving into the workforce. Indeed, the couples approach may be a more

effective way to deliver services to dual-earner families, since both parents must juggle their work schedules, child care needs, and family responsibilities. By serving both partners, program staff may be better able to understand and address parental desires and resources for child care. Do some parents want to seek jobs with shifts that allow them to keep their children in parental care as much as possible? Do others desire to maximize full-family time and to have parents' schedules overlap as much as possible? While other programs can ask parents individually about such desires, a couples-oriented program provides the opportunity for both parents to discuss these issues together with a counselor and to come up with preferred strategies for their family. Doing so may allow parents to bring to the surface issues that they would not otherwise have identified. We now turn to a discussion of enhanced services that programs may wish to offer.

Enhanced Couples-Oriented Services

Employment programs may hesitate to adopt service components that address family life per se due to a belief that parents may find intrusive any efforts to address their relationship. The increasing use of marriage education programs across the country, and associated research efforts, provide a knowledge base for evaluating the validity of such concerns and for appropriately implementing such a focus. Indeed, as Larson (2004, p. 421) notes "Compared with marital therapy, marriage education is ... less stigmatizing, less risky, less intrusive in the couple's private life, and less expensive." Peer mentoring by other couples is a particularly comfortable approach frequently used by contemporary programs. Furthermore, consistent with published research (Edin, 2000; Lichter, Batson, and Brown, 2004), statewide marriage education initiatives have found that residents value marriage and embrace efforts to strengthen relationships. A statewide survey in Oklahoma found that a solid majority of residents would consider using relationship education to strengthen their relationship (64 percent of those who had never received public assistance and 72 percent of those who had ever received public assistance; Johnson et al., 2002, p. 37).

Indeed, general marriage education can help couples improve their communication and conflict resolution skills, which may benefit their resolution of disagreement and tension around such areas as budgeting, chores, and child care. The most extensively used marriage education program is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP; Stanley et al., 1995). PREP has been extensively evaluated, and is regarded as efficacious in a recent review of marriage education programs (Jakubowski et al., 2004), although evidence of its effectiveness among a broad range of low-income and minority populations is still accumulating (Ooms and Wilson, 2004). Recent large-scale uses of the program, such as in the statewide Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and its evaluations, will further inform programs about implementation in a range of contexts. We complement recent calls to locate marriage promotion initiatives in contexts that offer parents other "hard" services, like job training (Ooms and Wilson, 2004; Ooms et al., 2004) by suggesting that such service integration may also be beneficial from the perspective of employment assistance programs seeking more effective ways to help parents transition into the labor force.

Programs might also offer more specific family life education to parents around the practical challenges of time management, budgeting, household chores, and child care. Cooperative extension offers one approach to providing such training for couples, with the advantage of having curricula developed for wide use in communities and educators located in nearly every county across the country (Goddard and Olsen, 2004). Extension educators could partner with programs to develop practical training for couples, although efforts would be needed to evaluate which programs can be most successfully integrated with employment assistance programs and have the greatest efficacy among couples. Employment assistance programs can also borrow from other simultaneous enrollment interventions as they move toward enhanced services for couples. For example, Rohrbaugh and associates' (2001) family consultation model attempts to help partners anticipate the relationship

difficulties that may accompany each partner's behavioral change and to devise strategies for dealing with such difficulties.

Simultaneous enrollment programs must also deal with the challenges noted above: both partners may not need the same type or level of assistance, and having partners participate in lockstep may diminish their ability to support each other. Programs should explore strategies for addressing these challenges, such as by partnering with other employment assistance programs and staggering the partner "of focus." For example, whereas JFY generally extended services to the male partners of female participants, another local program that had historically served noncustodial fathers was moving toward bringing their female partners into the program. Other area programs served client populations for which JFY had minimal experience, but were increasingly needed for male partners, such as employment assistance for persons who had criminal records. In addition, simultaneous enrollment need not mean that the partners participate in all activities at the same time. Rather, the program could help the couple develop a long-term strategy for how to move both partners forward in the labor force, recognizing the need to allow one to advance a step while the other offered support, and vice versa.

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation identifies some of the promise and challenges of providing employment assistance to couples. One approach employment providers can take is to simultaneously enroll the partners of participants. Quantitative results from our evaluation of the Full Family Partnership program suggests that such an approach may be beneficial. Using nonexperimental econometric models to adjust for baseline differences among program participants, we find that young mothers who participated in the simultaneous enrollment program showed immediate gains in employment and earnings that exceeded those of young mothers who participated as individuals. Fathers in the couples program showed a similar, although weaker, pattern of findings. Elsewhere we have shown that the magnitude of the effects are in

line with the program developers' goal of using simultaneous enrollment to better help couples escape poverty. Whereas the average earnings of the mothers and fathers alone remained below the poverty threshold after program completion, the couples' average combined earnings went from just half of the poverty threshold in the pre-program period to nearly 125 percent of that threshold in the post-program period (Gordon and Heinrich, 2004).

On the other hand, FFP mothers' greater immediate gains were not maintained in the two years following program exit. Additional analyses reported elsewhere suggest that this may be due to the focus on quick job placement and the lack of utilization of post-placement assistance, particularly around child care problems. An "unintended consequence" of programs that focus on intact couples is that women in ongoing relationships will have greater exposure to the risk of becoming pregnant (Stover, 1998). This is important in employment assistance programs, since their provision of supports for maintaining dual-earner families must deal with the eventuality that the family may need to deal with labor force interruptions and revised child care arrangements surrounding a new birth. In addition, JFY's post-program assistance was passive, with little outreach by program staff and no ongoing contact among graduates. Several FFP parents expressed interest in continued interactions with their peers following program completion, suggesting newsletters and events where they might share information (including about job openings where they worked). Couples-oriented assistance programs might look to recent broader efforts at job retention (Wagner, Brooks, and Herr, 2004; Strawn and Martinson, 2000), with the particular needs of dual-earner couples in mind.

Our observations of the program and interviews with participants also suggested that the program did not fully achieve the potential of a couples-based employment program. We propose that the literature on couples interventions designed to assist individuals with behavioral change, such as diabetes management, weight loss, and smoking cessation, can be productively used by designers of future couples-oriented employment assistance to understand the potential mechanisms of simultaneous

enrollment. We further suggest that existing initiatives to offer broader public access to marriage education are a useful source of information about the willingness of couples to engage in such services and strategies for offering them within employment programs.

The results of this evaluation must be extrapolated with care to other contexts. They apply to one program in one city with services primarily provided by a single counselor. Our study is also limited by its nonexperimental design, the demonstration nature of the studied program, and our inability to empirically examine the potential mechanisms of simultaneous enrollment. Yet the study offers important ideas, as policies and programs for couples remain in the national spotlight. Prior research finds that most single mothers want to marry, but many are not able to achieve this goal (Carlson, McLanahan, and England, 2004; Lichter, Batson, and Brown, 2004; McLanahan, Garfinkel, and Mincy, 2001). By facilitating the labor force transitions and subsequent financial security of young couples, programs like the Full Family Partnership program have the potential to remove some of the barriers that such mothers confront.

Appendix 1
Baseline Characteristics of Program Participants by Gender and Program Type

	Mothers			Fathers		
Dummy Variables (1=Characteristic Present)	Full Family Partnership Program (n=110) [1]	Jobs For Youth Standard Program (n=1286) [2]	Job Training Partnership Act Program (n=1156) [3]	Full Family Partnership Program (n=111) [4]	Jobs For Youth Standard Program (n=235) [5]	Job Training Partnership Act Program (n=272) [6]
Demographic Characteristics						
Married	.14	.03*	.05*	.15	.04*	.56*
Age						
18 to 19	.39	.43	.18*	.20	.34*	.03*
20 to 21	.36	.33	.21*	.23	.31	.08*
22 to 24	.24	.24	.61*	.34	.34	.25
25 and older	.01	.00[a]	.00[a]	.23	.01[a]	.63*
Number of children						
Missing	.05	.05	.00[a]	.07	.06	.00[a]
One	.55	.61	.53	.53	.66*	.45
Two	.33	.25	.33	.24	.21	.31
Three or more	.07	.08	.15*	.15	.06*	.25*
African American	.95	.93	.71*	.95	.93	.64*
Human Capital Characteristics						
High school graduate	.92	.74*	.68*	.74	.73	.78
TABE grade level score						
Not reported (reading or math)	.07	.20*	.01*	.39	.20*	.02*
If reported: Reading 9th grade or higher	.71	.56*	.71	.79	.61*	.74
If reported: Math 9th grade or higher	.42	.33	.49	.60	.39*	.57

Note: Numbers are percentages. TABE=Test of Adult Basic Education. Statistical significance not calculated due to cells with a sample size of less than 5.
*Statistically significant at $p<.05$ compared to FFP demonstration participants of the same gender.

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