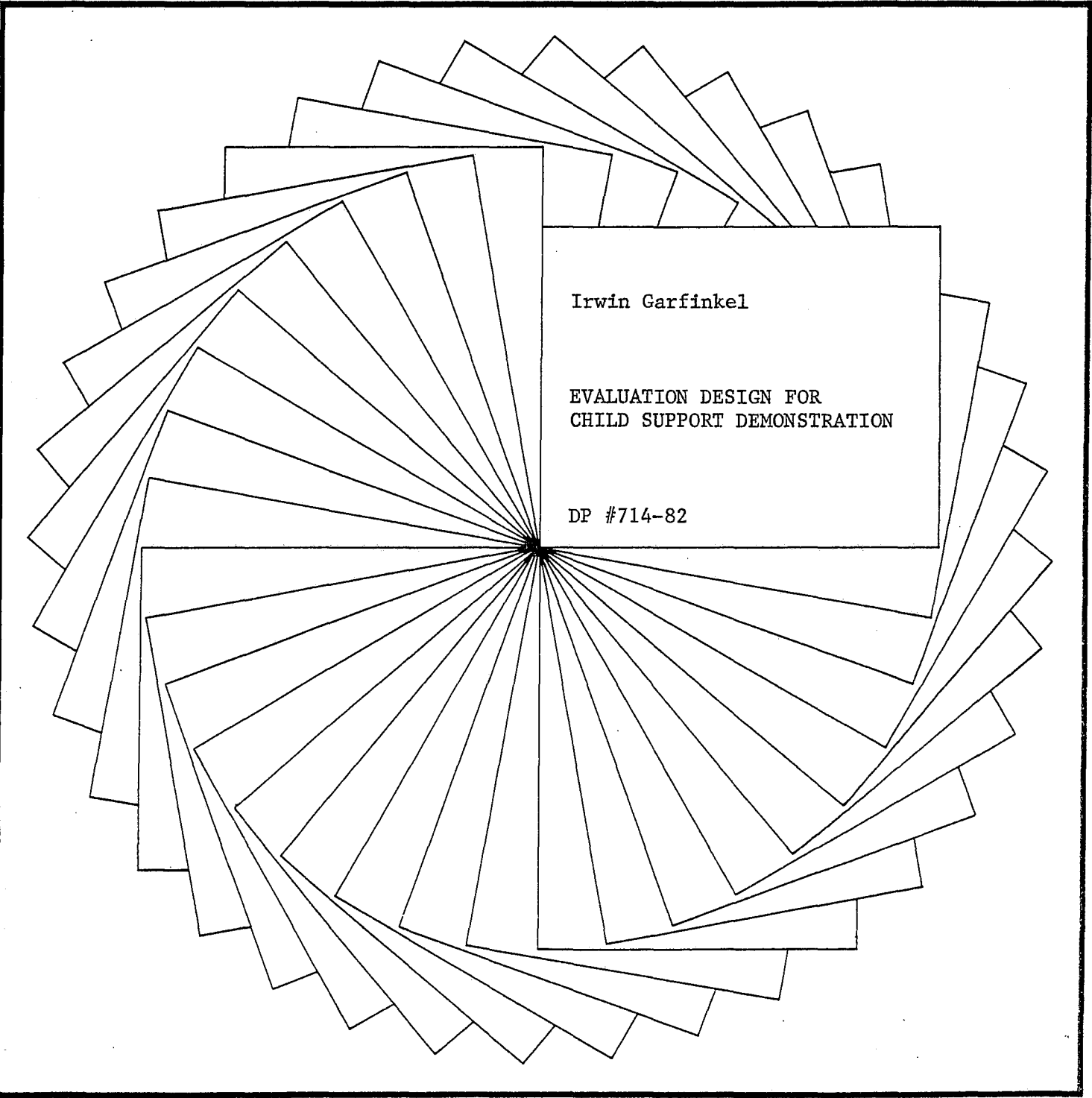


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# IRP Discussion Papers

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Irwin Garfinkel

EVALUATION DESIGN FOR  
CHILD SUPPORT DEMONSTRATION

DP #714-82

Evaluation Design for Child Support Demonstration

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## Abstract

In February 1982, IRP delivered to DHSS a three-volume report entitled Child Support: Weaknesses of the Old and Features of A Proposed New System. The report recommends that Wisconsin adopt a new child support system. The first step in that direction would be to demonstrate the new system in several Wisconsin counties. This paper presents a design for both the demonstration and its evaluation.

In the first part of the paper the major findings of the report are briefly summarized. In six short sections we discuss the weaknesses of the current child support system, the goals and constraints underlying the new program, the major features of the new system, the rationale for key recommendations, the estimated savings of the new system, and the need for a demonstration. The second part of the paper focuses on the proposed demonstration. It consists of eight sections which discuss (1) what will be demonstrated in a county; (2) what we want to learn from the demonstration; (3) data required and available data sources; (4) the evaluation design; (5) how long the demonstration will last; (6) whether the demonstration should be limited to new cases; (7) the nature and size of samples; and (8) the statistical analysis design. The third part discusses a special related study of teenage parenthood.

## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1980, a research team from the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) contracted with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to examine the existing Wisconsin child support system in order to design and evaluate alternatives to it. In February 1982, IRP delivered to DHSS a three-volume report entitled Child Support: Weaknesses of the Old and Features of A Proposed New System.<sup>1</sup> As the title suggests, the report recommends that Wisconsin adopt a new child support system. The first step in that direction would be to demonstrate the new system in several Wisconsin counties. This paper presents a design for both the demonstration and its evaluation.

In the first part of the paper the major findings of the February 1982 report are briefly summarized. In six short sections we discuss the weaknesses of the current child support system, the goals and constraints underlying the new program, the major features of the new system, the rationale for key recommendations, the estimated savings of the new system, and the need for a demonstration. The second part of the paper focuses on the proposed demonstration. It consists of eight sections which discuss (1) what will be demonstrated in a county; (2) what we want to learn from the demonstration; (3) data required and available data sources; (4) the evaluation design; (5) how long the demonstration will last; (6) whether the demonstration should be limited to new cases; (7) the nature and size of samples; and (8) the statistical

analysis design. The third part discusses a special related study of teenage parenthood.

## I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Weaknesses of the Current Child Support System

The U.S. child support system fosters parental irresponsibility. It is inequitable and therefore exacerbates tensions between former spouses. Finally, it impoverishes children. Although Wisconsin is much better than average, the same criticisms apply here--only with less force.

Evidence of parental irresponsibility is contained in national statistics.<sup>2</sup> Only 59% of women potentially eligible to receive support have child support awards. Of those awarded child support, only 49% received the full amount due them, and 28% received nothing. Child support is collected from only 10% of the absent fathers of AFDC children. In Wisconsin, it is collected from 15%.

The child support system is inequitable because the amount of support an absent parent pays depends not just on ability to pay, but on the varying attitudes of local judges, district attorneys, and welfare officials, the beliefs and attitudes of both parents, the current relationship between the parents, and the skills of their respective lawyers.<sup>3</sup> Nearly every absent parent can find someone earning more who pays less. Nearly every custodial parent knows someone who is receiving more though the child's father earns less. Because of this and the absence of firm determinative legislative guidelines, child support is a major source of continuing tension between many former spouses. Perhaps the most

inequitable aspect of the current system is its capriciousness of enforcement. More absent fathers than not pay no child support. Most who do not pay suffer no consequences. Yet others, albeit a small percentage, get thrown in jail.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the widespread failure of the system to ensure that absent parents pay child support impoverishes their children and shifts the burden of financial support to the public sector. Nearly half of all children living in female-headed households are poor and on welfare.<sup>5</sup> Welfare--which was designed to aid those not expected to work--is no longer the best way to provide aid to children with single mothers, because we now expect single mothers to work.

In view of the fact that nearly one of every two children born today will spend some time in a single-parent family before reaching age 18,<sup>6</sup> the inadequacy of our child support system constitutes a major social problem.

#### Goals and Constraints for a New Child Support Program

The principal goals of the proposed reform are (1) to establish and collect child support equitably and efficiently; (2) to assure a minimal level of support to children with a living absent parent; (3) to improve the economic opportunities available to single-parent families; and (4) to reduce the number of single-parent families on welfare. The major constraints are (1) to avoid increasing costs to general taxpayers; (2) to guard against overtaxing absent parents; and (3) to prevent any reduction in the well-being of AFDC beneficiaries.

Recommendations for a New System

Our analysis suggests these goals and constraints would best be obtained by enacting legislation which would create a new system of establishing, collecting, and distributing child support payments. The most equitable method by which to establish child support obligations is to legislate a simple normative formula for child support. The most effective way to collect support from the absent parent would be to assess it as a tax and collect it through a wage withholding system. The best way to guarantee a minimum level of support to all children with a living absent parent, and to reduce the dependence of such children on welfare, would be to pay benefits to all eligible children, rich and poor alike. In short, under the new child support program all absent parents are required to share their income with their children. All children who have an absent parent are entitled to the child support paid by their absent parent or a publicly guaranteed minimum, whichever is larger. In cases where the absent parent cannot pay child support equal to the minimum, a supplement would be provided out of general revenues that otherwise would be spent on welfare. Finally, in order to avoid public subsidies to families who are not in need, and to reduce budget costs, the custodial parent would be subject to a special surtax up to the amount of the public subsidy in cases where the absent parent pays less than the minimum.

We make no recommendations on the level of either tax rates on absent parents or minimum child support benefits. Instead we report the effects on public savings or costs of adopting alternative tax rates and minimum

benefit levels in Table 1. Ultimately, these fundamental decisions about tax rate and benefit levels will emerge from the political process.

#### Rationale for Key Recommendations

There are three major arguments for establishing child support obligations by legislation rather than judicial discretion. First, because of the large financial obligation already borne by the state, the apportionment of support for poor children among the custodial parent, the absent parent, and the public is more appropriately a legislative function. Second, the use of courts is too costly to society and the families affected, both in direct fiscal impact and judicial time. Third, a legislated formula would reduce inequity.

The principal argument for using general revenues to supplement inadequate child support payments from absent parents is that doing so will improve the economic opportunities available to single-parent families and thereby reduce welfare costs and caseloads.

The argument for a universal, automatic income assignment for child support obligations is that taxing income at source is the most effective collection tool available. Improving the collection of child support is essential to preventing a publicly funded minimum child support benefit from increasing costs. However, it is possible that improving the response to delinquent payments in the current collection system through the use of an automated system for case management may achieve significant efficiency gains in the absence of universal withholding. Consequently, we recommend that both collection approaches be tried on an experimental basis in several Wisconsin counties.



Table 1

## Estimated Benefits and Costs of Alternative Child Support Reform Plans for Fiscal 1980 in Wisconsin

Description of Plan			\$ Millions					% Who Pay At Least the Minimum	
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Benefit	Tax Rate %		Benefits	Tax on Absent Parent	Tax on Custodial Parent	AFDC Savings	Net Savings (2)+(3)+(4)-(1)	Absent Parent	Absent Parent Plus Custodial Parent
1st Child	\$3500	20	\$590	\$419	\$83	\$169	\$81	40%	57%
2nd Child	1500	10							
Maximum		40							
1st Child	3500	15	547	340	81	165	39	30	44
2nd Child	1500	10							
Maximum		30							
1st Child	2000	20	461	393	46	146	125	60	77
2nd Child	1000	10							
Maximum		40							
1st Child	2000	15	397	314	48	122	87	51	68
2nd Child	1000	10							
Maximum		30							

Source: Survey of Income and Education, Wisconsin, 1975, and author's estimates.

Savings of a New System

Crude cost estimates suggest that the proposed new child support program could result in modest to substantial savings. The estimates are crude for several reasons. First, the data used are for 1975. Substantial changes in the eligible population have since occurred. Second, because there are no direct data on the incomes of absent parents, we had to rely on the characteristics of custodial parents to estimate this crucial piece of information. Third, in the absence of any experience with the effectiveness of the new collection system, we could only guess how much more efficient the new system would be. Despite these and other shortcomings, we believe the cost estimates give us the right order of magnitude. Table 1 presents estimates for four different proposals, ignoring administrative costs. In all cases, it is assumed that 100% of potential absent-parent tax revenue is collected.

In the first two plans, minimum benefits are equal to \$3500 for the first child and \$1500 for each subsequent child. In the third and fourth plans, minimum benefits are equal to \$2000 for the first child and \$1000 for each subsequent child. Tax rates on the absent parent are 20% for one child, 30% for two children, and 40% for three or more children in plans 1 and 3; and 15% for one child, 25% for two children, and 30% for three or more children in plans 2 and 4. Tax rates on custodial parents, not shown in the table, are one-half those on absent parents. Gross benefits paid out are given in column 1, absent-parent and custodial-parent tax revenues in columns 2 and 3, AFDC savings in column 4, and net savings in column 5. Net savings equal the sum of absent- and custodial-parent tax revenues and AFDC savings minus gross benefits. In column 6

the percentage of absent parents who pay as much as or more than the minimum is presented. Column 7 presents the percentage of cases where the absent-parent tax plus the custodial parent tax equals the child support minimum.

Savings range from a low of \$39 million to a high of \$125 million. These figures are nontrivial. They amount to one-seventh to two-fifths of AFDC federal and state expenditures in Wisconsin in 1980.

The estimates of savings are too high because they assume that 100% of absent-parents' liability for child support will be collected. Currently, about 65% of this liability is collected. Our best guess is that under the new system we will collect 80% of potential revenue from absent parents. In this case, net savings for the four plans would equal \$27, \$-8, \$80, and \$48 million.

On the other hand, the estimates of total savings are too low because receipt of AFDC benefits are underreported and therefore AFDC savings are underestimated.

#### What Remains to be Done?

The contrast between the dismal reality of the current system and the bright promise of the proposed reform is sufficient to warrant a demonstration of the reform concepts as well as continued work on the cost estimates and program design. Currently, the savings, or cost estimates, are being improved by making use of newly available data sources which have larger samples and better measures of the income of absent fathers. While the report makes many recommendations, there are issues that are not addressed. These issues are being addressed as work on

operationalizing the reform concepts proceeds. Furthermore, existing program design recommendations are being reconsidered in response to feedback from public officials and the broader community. Finally, because bright promises can often turn into dismal reality, the proposed new system will be tried in a small number of counties before it is adopted for the whole state. The rest of this paper deals with the demonstration of the new system.

## II. THE DEMONSTRATION

### What Will Be Demonstrated in the Counties

The new system consists of four elements: (1) a simple formula for establishing child support obligations; (2) a collection procedure that relies upon universal wage withholding; (3) a guaranteed minimum benefit; and (4) a custodial-parent tax. The demonstration will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase (July 1983 - June 1984), the child support formula and universal wage withholding will be instituted. In the second phase (January 1985 - December 1985), the minimum benefit and custodial-parent tax will be added.

The most important reason for this two-phase design is to determine whether or not the use of automatic wage assignments (i.e., the concept of taxation at the source of income) and a simplified normative standard based upon the absent parent's ability to pay will improve support obligations sufficiently to warrant the phase II interventions, which might prove costly. In contrast, based on previous research, we can simulate the effects of the minimum benefit and custodial-parent tax on costs,

caseloads, and poverty. In short, the two-phase design minimizes fiscal risk, makes change more gradual, and lengthens the time for planning how to administer and how to examine the effects of the minimum benefit and custodial tax.

This paper devotes more attention to phase I than phase II of the demonstration because phase I is imminent, and therefore more thought has been devoted to it. Whereas the general outlines of phase II are known and described below, intensive planning for phase II will not begin until phase I becomes operational in summer 1983.

The focus of the first phase of the demonstration will be on wage withholding. Wage withholding is central because its success or lack thereof will make or break the program fiscally and because we have no direct evidence on how successful it will be.

In a few counties universal wage withholding will be achieved by executing a wage assignment in all new cases as soon as the case is opened. Current law in Wisconsin gives judges and family court commissioners authority to immediately execute wage assignments. A few judges in the state come close to adopting this practice. When wage assignments are executed immediately instead of being a response to delinquency, they achieve the effect of automatic wage withholding. The distinction is that between prevention and reaction.

In some other counties, rather than adopting universal wage withholding, we will improve the response to delinquent payments in order to compare wage withholding not only to average practice under the current reacting system, but to the best that is possible within the current system. Current law in Wisconsin provides for a "contingent wage

assignment" in all cases when child support is awarded. The contingent wage assignment gives legal authority to county clerks of courts to initiate a process to require employers to withhold child support from wages if the absent parent is delinquent for 20 days. Before the wage assignment is issued, the obligor must be notified of his right to request a hearing (within 10 days) to explain why the delinquency exists and why a wage assignment should not be issued. (The clerk cannot immediately impose the wage assignment because, unlike a judge or family court commissioner, the clerk doesn't have such authority. Otherwise, we could dispense with the hearing, which would be efficient).

Present law also requires absent parents to make child support payments to the county clerk of courts rather than directly to the custodial parent. Therefore the appropriate government officials are required by law to know if payments are delinquent.

Unfortunately, in practice, delinquencies are not normally detected and/or responded to for three to four months. There is no routinized, computerized response to delinquencies comparable to that of credit card and utility companies. The notification of a right to hearing, the response, and the hearing are time-consuming and expend resources. The arrearages built up during this lag are very difficult to collect. The absent parent is likely to use the money for other purposes. Nonpayment begins to be the norm. Experience suggests that the greater the lag in detecting a delinquency, the smaller the likelihood of collecting.

What we propose to do in the counties in which we want to enhance the response to delinquencies is to install or modify an existing computer system which would give these counties capability similar to that of cre-

dit card and utility companies. When a payment is 10 days delinquent, a warning letter will be sent to the obligor informing him that if the payment is delinquent for 20 days the process for executing the contingent wage assignment will be initiated. Then, when the payment is 20 days delinquent, the absent parent will be notified that unless he schedules a hearing within 10 days, the wage assignment will be executed. (DHSS is proposing to reduce from 20 to 10 days the delinquency period before the process of executing a wage assignment can begin. If this proposal is adopted by the legislature, the warning letter will be eliminated. The notification of a right to a hearing will be sent after 10 days delinquency.)

In still other counties a taxlike child support formula will be used to set support obligations in all new child support cases. The taxlike formula will operate in one of two ways depending upon whether the state legislature acts upon a request of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services to give judges and family court commissioners authority to order child support payments as a percentage of income rather than as an absolute amount. We expect to have the authority to do so by summer 1983. Even if such legislation fails, it is possible within current law to approximate a percentage of income as a basis for child support orders by combining a schedule based upon percentage of income with a standard procedure for adjusting orders for changes in income.

In principle it would be desirable to use at least two different formulas. Doing so would enable us to gain some information about the extent to which perceptions about the equity of a child support formula depend upon particular aspects of the formula. DHSS officials, however,

do not look favorably upon the idea of using different child support formulas. Whether we have variations in the child support formula will ultimately depend upon the wishes of local judges and family court commissioners.

In the second phase of the demonstration, the minimum benefit and custodial-parent tax will be added, provided that collections are improved sufficiently by the wage withholding system and the normative standard. It is assumed that we will add the minimum benefit and custodial tax in only 2 or 3 counties in which, ideally, both wage withholding and the child support formula were already in effect. It is also possible that we will vary the benefit level. One critical design issue which will be addressed during the latter part of 1983 is how to approximate on a county level the administration of the custodial-parent tax through the state Department of Revenue.

#### What We Want to Learn

It would be desirable to learn the following from the demonstration:

- (1) What unforeseen administrative problems are associated with the new system?
- (2) What are the new system's administrative costs?
- (3) How effective in collecting child support is universal wage withholding?
- (4) What are the effects of increased collections, the minimum benefit, and the custodial tax, on poverty, AFDC costs and caseloads, and the costs of the proposed new system?
- and (5) What advantages and disadvantages for absent and custodial parents and their children are associated with the new system?



The first question indicates that the demonstration is, in part, a pilot project. The assumption underlying a pilot is that the new system is superior to the old. The objective is to iron out the bugs in the new system. There are good reasons for believing that the use of a child support formula and wage withholding will substantially enhance both the equity and efficiency of collections and that a minimum benefit will substantially reduce welfare costs and caseloads. Consequently, piloting a new system which incorporates these features is warranted. We hypothesize that no unmanageable administrative problems will surface and that responsible administrators will find the new system more equitable and more efficient than the old.

At the same time the demonstration provides an opportunity to measure the administrative costs of universal wage withholding to employers and to government agencies and the administrative costs of paying out the minimum benefit and collecting the custodial tax. We hypothesize that the administrative costs to both the public and private sector will not change dramatically.

One central question that phase I of the demonstration is designed to answer concerns the effectiveness of universal wage withholding. It is desirable to compare universal wage withholding both to the existing operation of the current system and to the optimal operation of the system. There are two reasons for including an enhanced version (the quick response variation) of the current system in the demonstration. First, there are drawbacks to universal wage withholding. Some consider it an invasion of privacy. It creates an additional administrative burden for employers. As a consequence, some employers may refuse to hire

or may fire employees with child support obligations. Second, enhancing the existing system so that the initial response to delinquent payments is not more than ten days may conceivably improve collections nearly as much as universal wage withholding. We hypothesize that quick response will improve collections somewhat and that universal wage withholding will improve collections dramatically.

Measuring the new system's effect on poverty and on AFDC caseloads and costs is also important, as is measuring the cost of the proposed new system. We have already developed simulation estimates of these effects. But extrapolating from actual experience will give us an independent estimate of these effects and will add to the credibility of the whole enterprise. We hypothesize that universal wage withholding, the child support formula, and the minimum benefit will all lead to substantial decreases in poverty and AFDC caseloads and costs and that the system as a whole will lead to modest decreases in general revenue costs.

Finally, in measuring the effects on parental attitudes and interactions, the demonstration is unique. Under the current system, both absent and custodial parents frequently feel they have been treated inequitably. The adversarial nature of the system often exacerbates already existing tensions between former spouses and, in some cases, worsens relations between one or both parents and the child. The demonstration will enable us to examine whether the new system would improve matters in this domain. We hypothesize that use of a child support standard will lead parents to perceive the system as more equitable and will therefore decrease quarrels about child support between ex-spouses; that universal wage withholding will increase visits by the absent parent to the child

and decrease the incidence of jailing absent parents. Finally, we expect both universal wage withholding and the minimum benefit to increase the financial security of the custodial parent.

#### Data Required and Data Sources

The data required to address the five questions we would like to answer will come from different sources and therefore have different costs. Data on unforeseen administrative problems associated with the new system will be generated from the ongoing operation of the demonstration. We propose to interview local officials involved in the operation of the new system.

Ascertaining administrative costs of the new system will require additional effort. A new accounting system will have to be developed. Furthermore employers and related government agents such as sheriffs will have to be interviewed to determine the amount of time they spend on child support activities under the old and new systems.

In order to determine how much more effective the new system is than the old in collecting child support, we will need data on child support payments and child support orders under both the old and new systems. Data on payments and awards may be obtained in most cases from records in the office of the county clerk of courts. Although the law requires that all payments be made through the court, in some cases payments are made directly. Phone interviews will probably be necessary to check on such direct payments. In counties that adopt our new child support formula, child support orders will be expressed as a percentage of income rather than as an absolute amount. This means that in order to measure how much

someone should be paying, we need information on his/her total income. The information should be available in these cases at the county clerk's office, because where the new formula is adopted, payers will be required to file copies of their income tax returns with the clerk of courts. Other useful data from the records of the county clerk of courts would include enforcement actions such as wage assignments and jailings, and the date of the court order. It would also be useful to have data on income, marital status, and other demographics for the analysis of payments. Because these factors affect payments, including them in the analysis will sharpen our estimates of the effects of wage withholding.

Data on effects of the new system on AFDC costs and caseloads can be obtained from the state's computer reporting network (CRN). Data on the new system can be obtained from the CRN and the fiscal accounting system of the demonstration itself.

To use the results of the demonstration to project effects of the new system on poverty, we need data on income, which can come from either income tax data or individual interviews. By obtaining social security numbers from the clerk of courts records, we can get data from income tax returns in most but not all cases. In cases where we cannot get income tax data we will have to collect data by phone or personal interview.

Finally data on parental attitudes and interactions with each other and their children will be obtained from telephone or personal interviews. The data and sources needed to address the five questions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2  
Questions, Data, and Sources

Questions	Data Needed	Source
1. Unforeseen administrative problems	Real program experience	Personal interviews of local officials
2. Administrative costs	Costs to employers and all public sector agencies	Accounting system plus interviews of local officials
3. Effects on collections	Payments/orders	Clerk of court records Wisconsin income tax returns Phone interviews
4. Effects on AFDC costs and caseloads New system costs Poverty	County AFDC costs and caseloads Income Income	CRN Telephone interviews Telephone interviews
5. Effects on parental attitudes and interactions with each other and children	Perception of equity Visitation Fights Security	Telephone interviews

### Demonstration Evaluation Design

This section deals only with how to measure the effects of the demonstration on collections. The same logic extends to the other effects we wish to measure. To simplify the discussion, we proceed in the first two subsections as if the only difference between the old and new system is universal wage withholding. In the first subsection, the arguments for and against a classical experimental design are briefly discussed. The second subsection offers an alternative evaluation design which, while less robust than the classic experimental design, will afford us the kind of empirical data upon which to make sound policy decisions. In it we attempt to balance reliability of results and cost in determining the scope of the experiment.

A Classical Experimental Design. An essential element of an experiment is random assignment to either treatment or control status. In the case of the child support demonstration, use of a classic experimental design, therefore, would require the judge or some agent of the court to randomly assign some absent parents to the universal wage withholding group and others to the current system. The rationale for random assignment is that it is the only way to ensure that the difference between the treatment and control group is attributable to the treatment.

There are some problems, however, with randomly assigning individuals within a jurisdiction to different treatments. First, it is possible that doing so would not be legal. Second, even if it is legal, it will probably be more difficult to convince judges to participate if random assignment is involved. Third, it is likely that the demonstration would be less useful as a pilot program if random assignment were used rather

than trying the system out in several counties. Fourth, based on all these considerations, some key state officials already indicated that they think it absurd to consider random assignment of individuals.

Random assignment of counties for the experimental or control status, unfortunately, would be pointless. There are too few counties involved to ensure no differences between experimental and control counties except those caused by the experiment. Random assignment only works when large numbers are involved. If you flip a coin only 10 times, it is quite unlikely that you will get 5 heads and 5 tails. If you flip it 500 times, however, you will get very close to 250 heads and 250 tails.

In view of these drawbacks to the classic experimental design, an alternative is offered in the next section. Note, however, that in the evaluation of the minimum benefit and custodial-parent tax, the first two arguments against random assignment (legality and judges) do not pertain.

A Before-After and Comparison of Sites Design. The demonstration of the new system will take place in certain counties. To evaluate its effects, we will compare collection effectiveness in the counties with the new system to collection effectiveness in the same counties before the new system was installed and to collection effectiveness in similar counties without the new system during the same time period. The weakness of only a before-after comparison in the counties with the new system is that something else may have changed during the two time periods besides the creation of the new system. For example, by summer 1983, the economy may improve. This would lead to improvements in child support collections that would be attributed to the new system if only a

before-after comparison was used. By using matched comparison sites as well, we can control for improvements in the economy and other general changes that affect all counties alike over time.

Similarly, the weakness of using only cross-site comparisons is that the counties may differ in other ways besides the presence or absence of the treatment. For example, higher-income counties are likely to have better child support payment records. Matching counties perfectly is likely to prove difficult. By using historical data for each site, we can control for differences across sites.

Of course, even the combination of before-after and cross-site comparisons does not assure an unbiased estimate of the treatment. For example, a major plant closing in a comparison site would lead to lower child support collections in that site than in the demonstration site. Changes like these, which are peculiar to either the demonstration or comparison counties, will be reflected inappropriately in the estimated treatment effect. The best protection against this is to have as many different sites and to collect as much historical data as we can afford.

There is no scientific way to ascertain exactly how many counties to include in the demonstration or how much historical data to collect precisely because of the question of cost. The greater the number of counties included and the more data collected, the more costly will be the demonstration. For this reason our tentative recommendations below reflect our own attempt to balance the desire to increase the confidence of answering the questions the demonstration is designed to address against the concern to minimize the costs of the demonstration. Our recommendations (especially with regard to counties) are tentative for



two additional reasons. First, before we finalize the design we will consult with several experts in experimental design. Second, our ability to carry out any design which requires counties to adopt particular features of the demonstration will depend upon the cooperation of county officials.

For the before-after comparison, we recommend that payment data be collected in all designated counties for a period of two years prior to the start of the demonstration and at least two years after the start of the demonstration. With respect to the across-site comparisons, we recommend that (1) four counties adopt universal wage withholding; (2) two separate counties adopt the quick response variation; (3) at least two but no more than three of the wage withholding counties and one of the quick response counties adopt a reformed child support standard; (4) one county use the reformed child support standard without any change in collection strategy; and (5) at least three control counties continue to operate the way they do now. Data will then be obtained in a minimum of ten counties.

The rationale for the cross-site experimental design is as follows. First, the wage withholding feature is the most important behavioral focus of phase I of the demonstration. Hence, this intervention is used in four counties. Quick response is much less important. The child support formula falls somewhere in between. We expect differences in standards to have only a small effect on collections. On the other hand, differences in standards may have a large effect on perceptions of equity. Therefore, we will introduce a normative standard in at least four and perhaps five different counties. (The character of that stan-

dard and how it may vary across counties will be decided in spring 1983.)

The large overlap between standards and the other features is justified by the fact that the independent effects on collections of the child support formula and either wage withholding or quick response can be separated out algebraically in counties which have both. The formula's effect on collections will be primarily through the amount owed, while the effect of wage withholding and quick response will be exclusively on the percentage of the obligation paid. (Presumably, the lower the obligation, the greater the percentage of it that will be paid. We should be able to measure this potential effect nonexperimentally and control for it.)

#### How Long Should the Demonstration Last?

The longer the demonstration goes on, the more we can learn from it. In a shorter design, experimental costs will be smaller but a less precise understanding of the concepts of the reform would be available. Our recommendation is that the demonstration last two years.

At least two studies have found that payment behavior varies over time: Eckhardt found that in Dane County, Wisconsin, the proportion of absent fathers who paid support declined steadily.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Chambers found that in Genessee County, Michigan, the opposite was the case.<sup>8</sup> The differences appear to be attributable to differences in child support enforcement in the two counties and learning behavior on the part of the absent fathers. In Dane County in the early 1960s, nonpayment was not punished. In Genessee County it was. Apparently, the men learned

this and behaved accordingly. In any case, because payments can vary over time, it is essential to see how the effectiveness of wage withholding varies over time. Two years of experience would appear to be a minimum amount of time. Three years would be preferable.

Moreover, wage withholding is complicated by job changing. Each time an absent parent changes jobs he (or she) must inform the child support enforcement agency that he has a new employer, and he must inform the new employer of his obligation to have his child support payment withheld from wages. The longer the demonstration lasts, the more absent parents will change jobs. Again at least two years duration would seem to be the minimum amount of time required to gain experience with how well wage withholding holds up over time in the face of job shifts.

A third reason for extending the demonstration beyond one year is that new administrative processes take time to shake down. It is possible that the counties with universal wage withholding will do worse at first because the procedures are new. Conversely they could do better because of the excitement generated by being part of a demonstration. In either case, because we want to measure how wage withholding would work routinely, the first six months or so of operations should be given less weight than the next year or so. Similarly as the demonstration draws to a close, there could be adverse effects on employee morale. Consequently if we allow for six months of possible wind-down effects at the end, a two-year demonstration would give us a minimum of twelve months which would approximate normal functioning. A three-year demonstration would give us two years of routine functioning.

The monetary costs of running and evaluating phase I of the demonstration for three rather than two years are not very large. The costs of operating the demonstration should be negative in the sense that we expect the experimental counties to improve their collections. Indeed the chief costs may be the costs of foregone enhanced collections caused by postponing the implementation of the new system in the control counties. In view of the fact that we are not certain how much better the new system will work in practice, however--indeed this is the justification for the demonstration--this cost should be borne.

The same arguments apply on the benefit side. It will take time for beneficiaries to gain information about and experience with the new child support benefit system. One year is a very short time. Two practical considerations led us to recommend evaluation of only one year of experience with the benefit side. First, key state officials want results by 1986. Second, requesting a funder to support an evaluation for more than three years is probably not feasible in these tight fiscal times. If a longer evaluation is justified, the results after two years' operation (including one of the benefit system) will amply justify it.

Because of limited state resources, not all counties will begin operation at the same time. The planned starting dates for the seven experimental counties are as follows.

- July 1, 1983--3 wage withholding sites
- January 1, 1984--2 quick response sites
- July 1, 1984--fourth wage withholding site
- January 1, 1985--2 or 3 minimum benefit sites.

The quick response sites are scheduled to begin later for two reasons. First, as noted above, quick response is less important than wage withholding. Second, to institute quick response requires more state effort than instituting wage withholding. Milwaukee is the principal candidate for the fourth wage withholding site. State officials won't consider introducing the reform in Milwaukee until it has been tried out elsewhere. Hence the July 1, 1984, starting date for the fourth wage withholding county. The starting dates, probable sites, and experimental interventions are displayed in Table 3.

Should the Demonstration Be Limited to New Cases?

The easiest way to pilot the new system would be to confine its application to new cases. When cases appear before the court, wage withholding orders would be issued as a matter of course. To effect wage withholding orders in old cases would require informing the absent parent, ascertaining where he is employed, and notifying his employer.

Including old cases in the demonstration would raise several other problems. First, it is unlikely that the old cases could be analyzed together with the new cases. The treatment they receive will be quite different. Consider the use of the child support standards. If the standard is applied to old cases, it will require changing the amount of child support owed as well as the manner of collecting it. A change in the amount of support owed may have different effects than if the same amount was established from the outset. If the standard is not applied, then old and new cases will differ in the obligation owed. So any gains in sample size would be illusory. Second, it may be more difficult to

Table 3

## Basic Design

	Date	Probable Site	Intervention
<u>Phase I</u>			
group I	July 1983	Racine	AWA and NS
	" "	Outagami	" "
	" "	Waukesha	" "
	" "	(unknown)	" " (if Milwaukee Co. is not included)
	July 1983	Dane	Control
	" "	Brown	"
	" "	Kenosha	"
	July 1983	(unknown)	NS
group II	Jan. 1984	Walworth	QR and NS
	" "	Jefferson	QR
group III	July 1984	Milwaukee	AWA
<u>Phase II</u>	Jan. 1985	Racine,	AWA, NS, MB, CPT
	" "	Outagamie, or Waukesha (2 sites)	" " " "

AWA = Automatic Wage Assignment.

NS = Normative Standard.

QR = Quick Response Approach.

MB = Minimum Benefit.

CPT = Custodial-Parent Tax.

Control = Control County: No experimental intervention.

get jurisdictions to participate if we include the old cases. This is especially likely if we wish to apply the child support formula and therefore readjust old orders. Third, including old cases may overtax the administrative capabilities of the participating counties, at least in the early stages of the demonstration.

There are two arguments for including old cases in the new system. First, if old cases are not included, we will gain no experience of what is involved in introducing the fully implemented form. Under the proposed reform, any custodial parent may apply for the public child support benefit. Such an application brings both the custodial and absent parent into the new system. Consequently, many old cases will be incorporated into the system. Foregoing the opportunity to examine what this entails, therefore, is no minor matter.

Second, if we only take new cases, we will learn nothing about the effectiveness of wage withholding on collecting child support from parents who have been living apart from their children for more than a few years. As noted above, some research indicates that nonpayment becomes a more serious problem over time. Consequently, taking only new cases may omit the toughest cases from the analysis.

Perhaps the best resolution is to include only new cases in the first part of the demonstration and then to phase-in old cases after six or nine months. For evaluation purposes we will proceed as if only new cases will be included during the first year. If old cases are included during the second year, we will collect additional data at that time.

### The Nature and Size of Samples

The kind of cases on which we will want to collect data depends upon whether just new, or old and new, child support cases are included in the demonstration. If only new cases are included, only new cases should be selected for controls. Thus, when we get payment records for the twenty-four months prior to the start of the demonstration, we will want payment records for only those cases which began during that time period. Further, when we analyze only nine months of past demonstration experience, we will use only the first nine months of data for the controls.

If we use old cases as well, we will get up to two years of data on the previous payment experience of the old cases selected to participate in the demonstration. In the control sites, the way the old cases were chosen for inclusion in the treatment would be replicated to obtain a set of controls for old cases.

The size of the sample depends upon how much money we are willing to spend to get better estimates of the effects of wage withholding. A larger sample produces better estimates but costs more money. Once the sample gets into the thousands, the costs per additional case and the precision of the estimates remain relatively constant. When the sample gets very large--say 10,000--increasing sample size does not improve the estimates to any measurable degree.

How much estimates improve with increases in sample size can be measured by a statistical formula. The quality of the estimates is measured in terms of (1) how small an effect is programmatically significant, and (2) how certain we want to be of detecting that effect. In the



context of child support collections, the size of the effect translates into how small an increase in child support payments warrants the adoption of the reform program. If collections in the reform counties did not increase by at least 20% (a potential outcome), phase II of the demonstration might be in jeopardy from a policy perspective. For example, if wage withholding only increases payments by 5%, it might as well not increase payments at all, since we would not recommend going to universal wage withholding merely to increase payments by 5%! This is important because we would need a much bigger sample to detect a 5% increase in payments than a 20% increase. On the other hand, if quick response to delinquencies increased payments by 40%, and wage withholding increased them by another 10%, would we care about the 10% difference between the two treatments? For the moment, however, to continue with the example, suppose we want to be able to say with scientific confidence that a 20% increase which we found really happened. What size sample would be required for that?

The second question is how likely is it that the true increase is 20%? It is a trade-off between cost and experimental certitude. Do we want our chance to be 1 out of 2, 3 out of 4, or 95 out of 100? The more certain we want to be of detecting a particular size effect, the bigger the sample must be.

Another consideration is how many ways we want to split the sample. We are likely to want to do separate analyses for AFDC and non-AFDC cases. Will we also want to disaggregate the results by several demographic factors. Prior research, for example, indicates that payment patterns differ substantially by race. On the other hand, analyses of

selected subsamples necessitates a larger aggregate sample. To get a sufficiently large sample of blacks in Wisconsin will require us to involve particular areas, such as Milwaukee or Racine and Kenosha, and probably also to oversample blacks in these areas. In some cases it will also be desirable to disaggregate by county. This would enable us to analyze the effects on perceptions of equity of different child support formulas. Other desirable disaggregations include marital status of the custodial parent (never married, separated, divorced, remarried) and residence of the absent parent (whether in or out of the state).

To summarize, a larger sample size will enable us to detect a smaller empirical effect and enable us to disaggregate the analysis in important policy-relevant ways.

On the cost side, there are very big differences depending upon the data source. Telephone interviews are quite expensive. Based on previous experience with the Wisconsin Survey Lab, which is far cheaper than alternative professional survey organizations, our tentative estimate is \$50 per interview. (We currently lean towards conducting the survey ourselves, which could reduce the cost. But for budget purposes we have assumed a cost of \$50 per interview.) The next most expensive are data on payments and orders collected from the clerk of courts. Our tentative estimate is \$4 per case. The cost could be even lower if more counties than we have assumed have computerized records. Finally, the cost of obtaining CRN data is practically zero.

With respect to court records, we propose the sampling scheme described in Table 4. There would be a total of 9000 cases, of which 7000 would be drawn from the experimental counties and 2000 from the

Table 4

Number of Court Cases Sampled by Time of Case Opening  
and Type of County

Date Cases Begin	4 Wage Withholding Counties <sup>a</sup>	2 Quick Response Counties <sup>b</sup>	County with Child Support Standard Only	3 Control Counties	Total
July 1, '81- June 30, '82	600	300	100	250	1,250
July 1, '82- June 30, '83	600	300	100	250	1,250
July 1, '83- May 1983	3,000	1,500	500	1,500	6,500
Total	4,200	2,100	700	2,000	9,000

<sup>a</sup>Two or three of these also have child support standard.

<sup>b</sup>One of these also has child support standard.

control counties. Five-sevenths of the cases drawn from experimental counties would be postexperimental cases.

This is a very big sample. It would give us a 95% chance of detecting a 10% increase in payments for only half the sample. We have deliberately erred on the side of collecting too large a sample for several reasons including the small cost of data collection, the importance of getting good estimates of the effects of withholding on collections, and the probability that we will want to disaggregate more than by just dividing the sample in half.

We plan to collect data twice for each case. We will collect data on cases that began in 1981 and 1982 during summer of 1983 and once again in summer 1985. For cases that began after July 1, 1983, we will collect data in summer of 1984 and summer 1985. By waiting till summer 1984 to collect data on cases beginning after July 1983 we will get payment data for up to one year in order to prepare a report by the end of 1984. Although we do not anticipate negative results, the report will be prepared in time to permit last-minute postponement or even cancellation of phase II if phase I results are sufficiently negative. Data collection during summer 1985 will give us an additional year of payment data on experimental cases and an additional two years of payment data on pre-experimental cases. The timeline for data collection and analysis is given in Table 5. Because of the much greater cost of telephone interviews, however, we are tentatively recommending a much smaller sample, of only 900 cases. The sample will be drawn randomly from the court sample, one case for every ten in each cell of Table 4. Each case involves two interviews, one of the absent parent and one of the custo-

Table 5

## Timeline for Data Collection and Analysis

	1983					1984					1985					1986																									
	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M																	
Pre-Demonstration Court Records	C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>															C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R	A	A	A								
Pre-Demonstration Phone Interviews						C	C	C	C	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>																												
Post-Demonstration Court Records													C	C	C	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>	A	R <sup>F</sup>					C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>				
Post-Demonstration Phone Interviews																							C	C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>										
CRN Pre & Post													C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>											C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>	
Administrator Interviews		C				C					C	P	A	R <sup>P</sup>			C									C	P	A	R <sup>P</sup>			C						C	P	A	R <sup>F</sup>

Pre-Demonstration refers to court cases which begin prior to the start of the demonstration.

Post-Demonstration refers to court cases which begin after the start of the demonstration.

C indicates data is collected during the month.

P indicates data is prepared for analysis during the month.

A indicates data is analyzed during the month.

R indicates a report is presented. The P and F superscripts indicate, respectively, that the report is preliminary or final.

Table 5

Timeline for Data Collection and Analysis

	1983					1984					1985					1986																												
	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M																				
Pre-Demonstration Court Records	C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>															C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R	A	A	A											
Pre-Demonstration Phone Interviews						C	C	C	C	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>																															
Post-Demonstration Court Records													C	C	C	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>	A	R <sup>F</sup>										C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>		
Post-Demonstration Phone Interviews																		C	C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>							C	C	C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>				
CRN Pre & Post													C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>										C	P	P	A	A	R <sup>P</sup>	A	A	R <sup>F</sup>					
Administrator Interviews						C							C																				C					C	P	A	R <sup>P</sup>			

Pre-Demonstration refers to court cases which begin prior to the start of the demonstration.

Post-Demonstration refers to court cases which begin after the start of the demonstration.

C indicates data is collected during the month.

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dial parent. Thus, if both parents are interviewed once, 900 cases leads to 1800 interviews.

As Table 5 indicates, the telephone interviews for the pre-July 1, 1983, cases will be conducted in late 1983. Phone interviews cannot begin until after the court records sample is drawn, coded, and put on tape. Phone interviews for post July 1, 1983, cases will not be conducted until late 1984 in order to allow up to one year's experience with the new system. The second round of phone interviews conducted in late 1985 will serve two purposes. First it will give us an additional year of data on how parents behave under the new collections parts of the system and how they feel about them. Second, it will give us the first data on how the minimum benefit and custodial-parent tax affect custodial parents. The sample for this second round of phone interviews will be half as large as that for the first--450 cases. (But all cases in sites with the minimum benefit and custodial tax will be included.) The total number of phone interviews therefore comes to 2700.

The CRN sample will consist of all cases in the court record sample who appear in the CRN sample plus everyone else in the CRN sample who resides in either an experimental or control county. Because the CRN sample is the cheapest and quickest source to access, we will draw our samples from CRN on three different occasions, summer 1983 for pre-demonstration cases and summer 1984 and winter 1985 for both pre- and post-demonstration cases.

Interviews of local administrators will take place immediately after the program begins and be conducted at periodic intervals throughout the course of the demonstration. Most of the officials interviewed will be

personally visited only once or twice. For purposes of budgeting we have assumed we will be conducting no more than 200 personal interviews.

### Statistical Analysis

This section focuses on the approach that will be used to analyze the major experimental outcomes. Although some of the research such as the study of administrators' reactions to the new system and the administrative cost study will not involve the kinds of statistical analyses described below, most will. For ease of exposition, assume the demonstration is conducted in the calendar year 1983 and that wage withholding and quick response are the only variations. The following regression will be run to ascertain the effect of universal wage withholding on child support collections:

$$\frac{P}{O} = a_0 = a_1Tr_1 + a_21981 + a_31982 + \sum_{i=0} b_i S_i + \sum_i c_i Z_i,$$

where

$P$  = child support payments (probably per year);

$O$  = child support order (probably per year);

$Tr_1$  = sites with universal wage withholding;

$Tr_2$  = sites with quicker response to delinquency

1981 = a dummy variable for cases which began in 1981;

1982 = a dummy variable for cases which began in 1982;

$S_i$  = a dummy variable equal to 1 for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  site;

$Z_i$  = a set of demographic variables including income, race, age, etc.; and

$a_0, a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, b_i,$  and  $c_i$  are parameters to be estimated.



The parameters of most interest are  $a_1$  and  $a_2$ . The former measures the impact on collections of universal wage withholding. The latter ( $a_2$ ) measures the effect of quicker response to delinquency. The difference between  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  measures the effect of wage withholding vis-à-vis an enhanced version of the current system.

The effects on poverty, costs, caseloads, parental attitudes, and parental interactions with each other and their children would be measured in the same way. Only the dependent variable would change. The effects of different standards on these dependent variables would be captured both by dummy variables and by variables measuring support orders in relation to income.

### III. SPECIAL STUDY ON TEENAGE PARENTHOOD

#### Rationale

A special study of teenage childbearing in conjunction with the evaluation of the child support reform project is warranted for several reasons. First, a large and increasing proportion of AFDC costs and caseloads is traceable to teenage childbearing. Second, the current child support system performs least well in cases of out-of-wedlock births. Child support awards are obtained in only 11% of such cases. Third, in the absence of a special study, there will not be a sufficiently large sample of teenage birth cases to analyze.

Kristin Moore has clearly documented the relationship between teen birth and welfare in several studies.<sup>9</sup> In 1975, over half of all mothers who received AFDC were teenagers when they first became mothers; a com-

parison of age at first birth for AFDC mothers under age 30 and all first-time mothers under 30 years of age found that over 70% of AFDC women bore a first child by age 19, compared to 37% of the general population. A major portion of the costs of public assistance goes to these young women and their children; the 265,000 teen recipients in the nation in 1975 and 870,000 recipients between 20 and 30 years old who had been teen mothers resulted in a total of \$5 billion, excluding Food Stamps and Medicaid expenditures. In Wisconsin, over 3000 single mothers under age 18 gave birth in 1978 and 1979, and in 1980, 455 were receiving financial assistance from county agencies.<sup>10</sup>

Typically, teenagers who bear children are unmarried at the time of conception and are at long-term increased risk for (a) reduced educational and economic opportunities; (b) greater numbers of children; (c) higher rates of marital instability; and (d) greater reliance on welfare support. Additional disadvantages to maternal and child well-being have been well documented in the literature. However, many questions remain about the role of the absent parent, who may be a teenager himself but in any case lives apart from the teen mother. Whether or not these couples marry or share a household at the time the child is born, they face a greater likelihood of separation than couples who marry and bear children when they are older. While the prevalence of young parents in the court cases and welfare rolls may be low at any one point in time, the event of early family formation may be a critical causal factor that leads eventually to reliance on child support.

### Major Questions to be Addressed

This demonstration project provides the unique opportunity to focus on the adolescent parent population as a family unit, to assess (1) the extent to which young men are financially and socially responsible for their children and (2) how young mothers cope with the lack of paternal support. Three sets of questions will be addressed in this effort. The first deals with the extent to which fathers are identified and subsequent receipt of financial support among young mothers.

Very little information is available to explain the incidence of paternity identification in this population. In a recent Milwaukee study of adolescent mothers,<sup>11</sup> 60% of the sample reported that the fathers interacted with the child at least several times a week, and as many reported some financial assistance from him. Among those who were not in contact, the most common reasons were (1) the father's preference not to see the child; (2) the father's moving away from the city; or (3) the break-up of the relationship between the parents. The most common response of the women to the lack of financial assistance was anger toward the father and, secondly, indifference. Economic and personal support from the father is related in this study to higher levels of well-being in both mother and child. Table 6 gives a breakdown of some of the demographics of the group in which these results were found.

Table 6

## Characteristics of Milwaukee Teen Mother Sample, 1979

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N = 296	
Mean Age of Baby at Interview	14 months (8-21 months range)
% Married	25%
% Nonwhite	69%
Mean Age	17.5 years
% on Welfare	69%
% Absent Father (from household)	68%

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Source: M. Thompson, "Adolescent Parenthood: Social Support and Planning," U.W. Ph.D. dissertation, Madison, 1982.

In this project, we propose to first assess, then, to what extent young women who bear children identify the fathers and participate in financial support programs? Why are there so few young parents who appear in the court cases and in the proposed child support experimental program in the counties of this study? Finally, how will the incidence of father identification and pursuit of child support in teen parents compare in pre- and post-program samples and in experimental and control counties?

The demonstration could increase the number who seek financial assistance through public channels or it could reduce this reliance among young women who are reluctant to involve their boyfriends. In addition to levels of participation in AFDC and the experimental program, it would

be important to document (a) the extent to which these young women recognize the program's goal of shifting the burden of responsibility, and (b) the degree to which they come to share this view.

In addition to documenting the receipt of child support in the teen parent population and variations in participation rates and benefit levels, we address a second question on the consequences of these arrangements for both parents and children. While the disadvantages of early family formation for young mothers and their children are clear, it is not known whether certain family arrangements and interpersonal relationships might offset or prevent the economic and social problems that typically result. Thus, we focus on how personal and social resources may be mobilized to cope with the pressures of child care demands and vocational/economic pursuits. In situations where parenting is shared by the young woman with others including the father, is she freer to obtain more training/employment? What are the risks and benefits to the child (children)?

A related question on which very little previous information exists is, what are the consequences of early family formation for young men. Available data are exclusively from the mothers. The fact that those mothers who marry are no better off than their peers who remain single suggests that teenage fathers who take responsibility for their children seriously jeopardize their own economic futures by, for example, dropping out of school to take unskilled jobs. Furstenberg suggested in a study of Baltimore unwed teen mothers and their nonparent peers<sup>12</sup> that most of the pregnant teens were unwilling to marry young men who were not working and who were unable to support a family. How is the male affected by

becoming a parent and how does this differ by type of family situation? It would be exciting to find out whether increasing the financial responsibility of the father reduces his absence in the child's life. Does the demonstration result in greater involvement of teen fathers in parenting?

The third and final question we address is related to long-term consequences of teen parenthood. The data on increased probability of marital instability comes primarily from studies of adolescent parents. A different approach available in this demonstration would be to ask how common is a history of early family formation among the population experiencing marital dissolution. At what age did those who are now absent and custodial parents first become parents? What financial and marital arrangements were made at the time? How important is this background characteristic, age at first parenthood, relative to other demographic factors in the chain of events resulting in participation in the child support system?

#### Data to be Gathered

These questions entail four additional sources of data, most of which require only moderate modification of the general experimental design and analysis. We propose to collect additional public record data to obtain ratios of teen birth rates (from state birth certificate records) to program participation rates of teen mothers (in AFDC, child support programs, and court cases). These will provide accurate rates of paternity identification and prevalence of receipt of child support. However, to understand these figures, we propose to attach additional questions to

our exploratory administrator interviews on the issues involved in identifying fathers of adolescent mothers.

To assess the second question, the role of paternal involvement in adolescent parenting, and its consequences, we will attach questions on family arrangements and well-being to the telephone interviews done with adolescents who appear in the experimental and control samples. Because we expect program participants to be rare in the general adolescent parent population, we will administer the same telephone interview to an additional sample of 300 cases of teen parents in all ten counties of study, drawn from birth certificate or hospital data. Design decisions will have to be made concerning the appropriate sampling frame for including teen parents (e.g., all those women who gave birth at age 20 or under within the previous two years and the fathers whom they identify).

For our interview of teen mothers (sampled from birth certificate data), we will develop a set of questions about family dynamics, relationship between the parents, and extent of father's involvement in parenting roles. We will also collect the more standard information on socioeconomic characteristics and indicators of well-being. In addition, we will obtain a sample of the fathers, both from the birth certificate sample of young mothers and from the program participant samples.

Finally, to establish the prevalence of early family formation among child support/AFDC mothers and fathers, we will add a few questions to the survey of all of the samples who will receive telephone interviews. These questions will cover parenting history, age, and economic and marital arrangements at time of first having children.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Irwin Garfinkel and Marygold Melli, Child Support: Weaknesses of the Old and Features of a Proposed New System (Madison, Wis.: Institute for Research on Poverty, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>Child Support and Alimony: 1978, Current Population Reports, Special Studies Series, P-23, No. 112 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, September 1981).

<sup>3</sup>For example, see Lucy Marsh Yee, "What Really Happens in Child Support Cases: An Empirical Study of Establishment and Enforcement of Child Support Orders in the Denver District Court," Denver Law Journal, 57, (1979), 1.

<sup>4</sup>David L. Chambers, Making Fathers Pay: The Enforcement of Child Support (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

<sup>5</sup>See Sheldon Danziger, "Children in Poverty: The Truly Needy Who Fall Through the Safety Net," Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper #680-81 (1981), Figures 2 and 4. About 43% of female-headed households are poor. The percentage of children who are poor is larger, and therefore closer to 50%. About 46% of children who live in female-headed households are in households that report receiving AFDC. Because AFDC receipt is underreported in surveys, the true proportion is almost certainly over 50%.

<sup>6</sup>See the statistical appendix in Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Welfare Reform's 1971-72 Defeat: A Historic Loss," Journal of the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies, 6 (Spring 1981), 1-20. His estimate applies to children living in single-parent families. Since most of these result



from widowhood, the percentage eligible for child support will be smaller.

<sup>7</sup>Kenneth Eckhardt, "Deviance, Visibility, and Legal Action: The Duty to Support," Social Problems, 15 (1968), 470.

<sup>8</sup>Chambers, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Kristin Moore and Martha Burt, Teenage Childbearing and Welfare (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1981).

<sup>10</sup>Sandra Danziger, Betty Chewning, and Mary Beth Plane, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention in Wisconsin: The Need for Comprehensive Policies (Madison, Wis.: Report to Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, 1980).

<sup>11</sup>Maxine Thompson, "Adolescent Parenthood: Social Support and Planning," University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. dissertation, Madison, 1982.

<sup>12</sup>Frank Furstenberg, "The Social Consequences of Teenage Parenthood," in C. Chilman, ed., Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing: Findings from Research (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1980), p. 267.