Chapter 2
Child Support Disregard Policies and Program Outcomes:
An Analysis of Microdata from the CPS

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I.   Introduction

Disregards that are applied to child support collections by state agencies that administer federal Title IV-A programs (AFDC and TANF) have historically been the topic of substantial policy discussion, but have seldom been studied in an empirical context.[2] Advocates believe that these disregards provide a real and immediate economic incentive for AFDC/TANF recipients to cooperate with paternity determination and child support enforcement requirements. Others are skeptical that disregards have any influence on recipients, independent of stringent administrative requirements for cooperation and sanctions for failure to cooperate. This study uses data from the March Current Population Surveys, conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau, to test for cooperation-incentive effects associated with disregards. Studies of such effects are in general absent from the child support literature (exception noted later in context of review of Sorensen-Halpern study, 1999), at least in part because it is very labor-intensive to develop historical state-level data on disregard practices, including those associated with *variable* disregards (frequently referred to as "fill-the-gap" practices, discussed in Section III).

The act authorizing the establishment of the federal/state Child Support Enforcement (IV-D) Program in late 1974 was soon followed by federal rules mandating state disregard practices for welfare (IV-A) clients. Federal mandates for state disregard practices continued until 1996, when they were made voluntary under the welfare reform initiatives enacted as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Nearly half the states then ceased all disregard practices for their welfare clients, despite the lack of evidence on the effects of disregards on paternity and child support enforcement outcomes.[3]

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[2]The term "disregard," as used in this paper, refers to the portion of a child support collection that is excluded from official budget calculations in determining the size of a welfare recipient's monthly AFDC/TANF cash assistance. In other words, the benefit reduction rate as applied to child support collected for AFDC/TANF families is zero. While "disregard" may apply to other forms of income and types of assistance (such as Food Stamps), the term in this report applies only to the treatment of child support by state/federal welfare programs. "Pass-through," which is often confused with the term "disregard," instead refers to the distribution of a check or direct deposit that is distinct from a welfare check and is clearly identified as child support from the nonresident parent.

[3]The $50 disregard was incorporated in federal regulations beginning in October 1976 (42 USCA s.657). However, implementation across the states was gradual, as each state's IV-D program was developed and accounting practices were coordinated with those of the IV-A (AFDC) program that was responsible for administering the disregard. The $50 disregard replaced an even more limited disregard: the original federal legislation establishing the IV-D program required that the state AFDC programs allow for a one-time-only disregard with a ceiling set at one-half of the first $40 collected for any child in an AFDC family unit.

Until quite recently, the apparent lack of interest in empirically exploring the effects of disregards has been of little fiscal consequence to states, as the option of providing for disregards has been unavailable to them. After PRWORA, states were no longer federally mandated to provide for a fixed disregard in the amount of $50, as they had been for twenty years. But along with congressional action rescinding the mandate came greater state fiscal responsibility for the costs of providing any disregard amount that each state chose to allow its welfare recipients. While this shift in fiscal responsibility to states that chose to continue providing disregards to clients was later modified under federal law, questions about the advisability of assuming the burden of costs for this policy continue among the states. The underlying empirical policy question then became whether the state costs of providing a disregard could be offset, at least in part, by increases in the rate of paternities determined and in collections that might result from a disregard of any given size.

The first step in answering this question is to derive empirical evidence of the effects of disregard practices, if any, on key child support outcomes. Only then can the economic benefits of state disregard practices be estimated and weighed against the fiscal costs of providing for such disregards.

Prior research relevant to these issues falls into four general categories:

1. *Empirical research findings* that have helped to identify other state-level laws and policies that may have an impact on child support receipts. The findings suggest the need for policy *controls* for these factors when seeking to sort out the independent effects of disregards.

2. *Indirect evidence* obtained from empirical research that suggests that there may be a relationship between state disregard practices and reported child support receipt (Sorensen and Halpern, 1999).

3. Results of a single *controlled experimental* state-level study that has produced estimates of the effects of alternative disregard practices on various child support outcomes.

4. Results from state and national studies using court record and administrative data that provide some *direct evidence* of disregard effects on child support outcomes.

The experimental findings, which this study complements, are discussed in Volume I, Chapter 2 of this larger volume and will not be summarized here. Briefly discussed, however, are four studies that use sample data from the March and April Current Population Surveys to explore the effects of state laws and policies designed to enhance child support enforcement outcomes.

The summary of key findings from the recently completed study of state IV-D program outcomes that used administrative data from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and additional data pertaining to state historic disregard practices may be found in the previous chapter (Volume III, Chapter 1).

The next sections of this report discuss the benefits and limitations of the March CPS data as a source of evidence concerning the effects of state disregard practices on child support outcomes and describe the empirical model employed for estimating the size of these effects. The final sections summarize key findings from this study, discuss their implications for policy, and suggest additional research that may help to give further definition to policy options.

II.   Factors That Influence Child Support Outcomes

Among the four recent studies that have immediate implications for the present study, three do not attempt to capture the effects of disregards but offer important evidence of the effects of specific laws and

policies. Only one of the four explores disregard effects: Sorensen and Halpern (1999) compared respondents' reports of child support receipt in the years before and after 1984, the year that represents the most likely timing of full implementation of the original federal mandate to state IV-A agencies to disregard the first $50 per month of any child support collected for welfare families. They concluded that study subjects reported receiving more support following full implementation of the $50 disregard across all states. The years that are covered by the Sorensen and Halpern study extend shortly beyond enactment of PRWORA, allowing the authors to capture some of the effects of rescinding the federally mandated $50 disregard, as well. Child support receipts were higher during periods when the $50 disregard was in effect.

Researchers who conducted the four studies discussed here used survey data from the March CPS and/or the April Special Child Support Supplement, along with state-specific data on statutes, policies, and economic features, to derive estimates of the effects of these variables on mothers' reports of child support receipts. These studies are of importance in selecting key policy, demographic, and state economic factors as control variables for the present study. Meaningful control variables will help to ensure that any observed effects associated with the measure of state disregard levels are not inadvertently capturing the effects of variables that are not otherwise included in the model. The four research articles are all national in scope (Beller and Graham, 1993; Freeman and Waldfogel, 1998; Garfinkel and Robins, 1994; and Sorensen and Halpern, 1999). Together they exploit a wide range of individual demographic data and state demographic and economic data, offering important clues as to which factors most consistently demonstrate significant influence on women's reports of child support receipts. Taken as a whole, they indicate the dynamic and complex process that leads to higher child support receipts by female heads of families with minor children. These studies include both poor and nonpoor respondents, and not all of their findings have immediate relevance for the research focus in this document. While each research team acknowledges the limitations of the CPS data for the purposes of these kinds of analyses, their measures, research methodology, and theoretical frameworks vary considerably from study to study, offering a range of insights into the dynamics that shape child support outcomes. (A fuller discussion of data limitations is in Section III.)

More detailed discussion of the methodology and findings from these four background studies is included in the previous chapter (Volume III, Chapter 1), hereafter referred to as the "OCSE study" because it relies largely upon administrative data from the federal OCSE, and is not reiterated here. Table 1 lists the variables that each research team found to be positive and statistically significant in their attempts to explain the observed variance in women's reports of child support enforcement outcomes. Although the direction and magnitude of the coefficients reported in these four studies were frequently ambiguous, varying from one study to another and between models explored by each team, a few consistencies among them may be observed. Most important among them appear to be the following: Mothers' demographic variables, when included in the models, more consistently demonstrate their importance in estimations of most child support outcomes than other categories of variables; direction and significance of most policy variables used in these researchers' models appear to be very sensitive to specification, with ambiguous findings not uncommon; and child support enforcement program efficiency measures are more often found to be positive and significant than are straightforward measures of expenditures for state IV-D programs. Some research teams that employed controls for state and regional effects indicated the importance of individual state or regional effects as well. In sum, the factors that influence child support outcomes among similar sample populations of female heads of families appear to be multi-faceted and a complex mix of state or regional features, including economic "health," mother's individual and household demographic characteristics, and, to a lesser and more ambiguous extent, "tools" designed to strengthen enforcement.

Only one of the above-noted studies (Sorensen and Halpern) sought to measure the effects of a state disregard, and it examined only the federally mandated $50 disregard. But in most of the years covered by that study, states were obliged by law to disregard this $50, reducing the variance on which estimates of the impact may be made. The study reported here builds on this initial effort. As discussed

TABLE 1
Significant, Positive Explanatory Variables Found in Earlier Child Support Outcomes Research

Significant Variables	Beller and Graham	Freeman and Waldfogel	Garfinkel and Robins	Sorensen and Halpern
	April CPS CS Supplement, 1979, 82, 84, and 86	SIPP 1987, 92, and 94; March CPS (pooled), 79,82, 84, 86, and 88	April CPS CS Supplement 1979, 82, 84, 86, and 88	March CPS (pooled), 1976-97
Policy (state legal "tools" and policies):				
Wage withholding	**		**	***
IV-D expenditures (total and ratios)			*	
IV-D program efficiency	***	***	**	***
Voluntary agreement (for support)			@	
C.S. guidelines				*
Paternity to age 18			**	
In-hospital paternity registration				
$50 disregard				**
Tax refund offset	*			***
IV-D agency-sole state collection and distribution entity			***	
Advertising state cs enforcement services			**	
Liens on property	***			
Criminal penalties	**			
Maximum IV-A benefit in state				***
Bonded or secured guarantee	*			
All legal and administrative "tools"		@@note below		
Economic (state and individual):				
State average earnings (male)	No coefficients provided			***
State unemployment rate or employment ratio (male)				***
Respondent IV-A status				***
Demographic (household and head):		Controls only		
Mothers' demographic characteristics (including age and race)	***	No coefficients provided		***
Number and ages of children	***	No coefficients provided		***
Marital status	*	Never-married, only		***
Years since marital disruption	**			

Note: These variables were not necessarily measured in the same way nor employed in the same types of empirical models, so table entries of coefficients do not allow for meaningful comparisons. Further, some variables produced negative, significant or ambiguous results when employed in alternative variations of the models.
* = p < .10
** = p < .05
***= p < .01
@= p < .15 ("Significance" at this non-traditional level represents choice of researchers.)
@@ Researchers found their composite "index" of most state child support laws to be significant in the absence of state and year effects. However, with these controls added, statistical significance for both the index of state laws and IV-D expenditures/efficiency variables dropped markedly and lost robustness.

below, a more detailed measure of the disregard is used, over more years, and thus captures more cross-state and over-time variation.

At least two reasons are possible for the absence of a robust measure of total size of state disregards in the literature to date. First, data related to the size of each state's "variable" disregard did not exist in any central repository or database before it was collected for the earlier disregard study employing OCSE administrative data. Second, March and April CPS data do not allow for the level of measurement detail that is required to estimate a continuous relationship between the size of a state's total effective disregard for each individual case and the magnitude of the effects on various interval measures of child support.

A further problem is that when data from other research into state pass-through practices were examined, uncertainty arose as to what was being measured. It is often *assumed* that the research was actually measuring disregards (though the term "pass-through" was used), but some ambiguity remains.[4] Without accurate and consistent terminology it is difficult to interpret results in studies that use measures called "pass-throughs," in which the context suggests that they pertain to *disregard* practices. Discussion of the measurement of total disregard and the very important real and theoretical distinctions between pass-through and disregard effects is in the next section. The limitations inherent in the choice of CPS data for the kinds of policy analyses described and conducted are also discussed there.

III.   Data and Methods

The previous chapter, the OCSE study, stands apart from the four studies summarized in Table 1 in several key ways. First, state IV-D program data, rather than individual-level data from the CPS, were used in order to focus more clearly on child support outcomes for the AFDC/TANF population of IV-D clients,[5] the only women who could reasonably be directly affected by the incentives associated with a child support disregard policy. The present study includes a sample of female heads of household who reported having received some state public assistance benefits during the preceding year. The surveys were administered in March of the years 1985 through 2000, reporting on experiences in the preceding year (1984–1999).

The chief reason for utilizing CPS data is that they offer a view of the individual characteristics of female-headed families, which is lacking in IV-A and IV-D administrative data. By choosing to use CPS data, however, other key variables were lost, variables that were included in the OCSE study. The CPS provides individual-level demographic data, but the trade-off is the loss of ability to measure total child support paid for each welfare case, as the CPS includes only how much they received. Given information only on child support received, there is uncertainty about how much was actually paid by the obligors, because of varying state disregard and pass-through practices.

The practice of disregarding varying amounts of monthly child support collected on behalf of AFDC/TANF recipients existed in some states before the inception in 1974 of the federal child support enforcement program. In that earlier period, several states had in place practices whereby unearned income

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[4]For example, data from Lewin and Associates state survey, as cited in 1999 Report to Congress by the Administration for Children and Families and the Office of Child Support Enforcement. This report is based upon a study by BETAH Associates and is entitled *Analysis of the Impact on Recidivism of PRWORA Child Support Arrears Distribution Policy Changes, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*. See pages 12 to 14.

[5]The data that we use to represent IV-A cases in IV-D caseloads includes both active and former AFDC/TANF clients.

of several types was disregarded in amounts that "filled the gap" between the state's official Needs Standard, adopted for annual use in a state by its legislature, and the AFDC/TANF payment standard. In order to develop an historical record of the size of each state's variable disregard as it was applied to child support, it was necessary to track annual changes in both the IV-A benefit schedule and the size of the official Needs Standard. The difference between them, for any family of a given size, was the maximum size of the disregard available to the family in a "fill-the-gap" state. As the number of persons in a family's IV-A eligibility unit changed, sometimes frequently, their position with regard to the Needs Standard changed and so, therefore, did the potential maximum size of the disregard for which they were eligible. In addition to the welfare benefits schedule and Needs Standard, in order to measure the precise size of any given family's annual *potential* disregard, one must know both the total size of the disregard (fixed plus variable types) to which the family was subject in all months of the year covered by the survey, and the size of the AFDC unit in each month that they received AFDC. This level of detail is not possible in the March CPS.[6]

To estimate from survey responses the actual total disregard to which a welfare recipient family unit was subject in any given year, one would further need to know a state's pass-through policy, the monthly amount that was actually collected for the family by the state's IV-D agency, other family income, and how that income was treated by welfare rules. Because the March CPS respondents are asked only how much child support they received in the prior year, the reported amount is likely to include the amount passed through, possibly including the amount subject to a disregard. If the amount reported is less than the full amount for which a respondent is potentially eligible according to these calculations, it may be assumed that the amount collected from the nonresident parent was less than the full amount that the family was eligible to receive.

Because no known studies have accounted for disregards and pass-throughs in such a detailed way, reliance upon the results of studies which use CPS respondents' reports of child support received, as approximations of support actually collected by the IV-D agency, are not dependable. As noted above, in Texas, for instance, 100 percent of all amounts collected for AFDC/TANF recipients is passed through as a separate check to each client family. However, the maximum amount ever disregarded by the IV-A agency was $50. Thus researchers might assume that the amount an AFDC/TANF recipient reported in the CPS survey represented 100 percent of what was collected in child support. Based upon the woman's report, however, nothing can be assumed about the size of the disregard to which she was subject. As most of the literature which addresses pass-throughs and disregards tends to assume that they are one and the same, the important real and theoretical differences are easily lost in the methodological constructs. This discussion will be expanded in the section that follows. Suffice it to say that findings from studies of disregard effects using CPS data are probably only suggestive, given the substantial limitations in the data.

The initial objective was to focus the sample selection criteria in such a way as to maximize the likelihood of including female householders with children who had been IV-A (AFDC/TANF) recipients at some point during the year covered by the survey. Even though this sharper focus entailed the loss of some level of comparability with the other studies, it was necessary to reduce the sample in this way in order to help ensure that the impact of state IV-A disregard practices would not be diluted by including female family heads and householders not subject to IV-A disregard rules. The technical report included in the Appendix shows the criteria used to exclude from the sample persons with particular characteristics and the numbers of observations lost from the initial sample.

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[6]The CPS Child Support Supplement, administered in April, comes closer to allowing for this level of measurement, but lacks the number of years required for meaningful results on a sizable number of variables because the survey population of female heads of households who received AFDC is so limited.

In the OCSE study, the principal finding was that the size of state disregards appears to have had positive and significant effects in paternity determination and on the rate of collections in AFDC/TANF caseloads, increasing the likelihood that new orders for support will be issued and support collected. Not found, however, was a positive and significant association between the size of the disregard and average collections for that portion of the AFDC/TANF caseload with any collections greater than zero.

From the inception of the federal IV-D program, federal law required that states disregard a portion of the monthly child support collected on behalf of a welfare recipient household.[7] However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many states did not implement the early "one-half-of-the-first-$40 collected" rule, or the $50 disregard rule that replaced it. Because of the accounting and distribution complexities of implementing disregard policy in an essentially "manual world," technological capability may have needed to progress beyond its status at the time of the original disregard requirements.

A 1984 amendment to the Social Security Act regarding state IV-A program operations also closed a loophole in disregards. The new amendments eliminated the practice of excluding a child from an AFDC filing unit in order to ignore that child's father's support contributions. All children of an AFDC recipient were required to be included in the AFDC filing unit, irrespective of how many fathers were associated with the unit. The new law required that all support contributed by all fathers of children in the filing unit be pooled for the purpose of adding to the fixed $50 disregard limit (plus any variable disregard limit in effect in a few states). The 1984 filing unit rules made it far less likely that states could avoid implementation of federal disregard law.

A full discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of choosing data from either the March or April CPS for this study may be found in the Appendix to this chapter. In summary, the intention in choosing the March and not the April CPS and developing an exclusion strategy for sample respondents was to maximize the sample size while ensuring that respondents were those most likely to have been subject to disregard policies in the prior year. Each of the exclusion criteria undoubtedly cost some number of respondents who would have been good candidates, had there been a greater level of detail about their living arrangements and the welfare/child support enforcement benefits structure and eligibility to which they were subject. Neither March nor April CPS data allow for fully addressing the concerns, though the balance favored the choice of the March CPS data.

IV. The Estimation Model and Variables Included

Overview of the Model

The central prediction is that the size and direction of the beta value associated with the principal independent variable, *total disregard by state/year*, will demonstrate the effectiveness of the disregard in eliciting parents' cooperation with IV-D program objectives, thereby increasing the likelihood of receiving a child support payment.

Control variables of three types were selected for inclusion in the models—two demographic categories, representing the state economic environment and the demographic characteristics of the survey respondent, and explanatory variables that represent the policy environment of state child support enforcement systems. Similar variables representing the policy environment were the focus of the four studies discussed earlier; the OCSE study included other key features of the IV-A and IV-D systems,

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[7]The $50 disregard was incorporated in federal law (42 USCA s. 657), to be implemented by the states in October 1976.

including the disregard that is the subject of the present research. These policy variables may be said to "mediate" between the need for child support and the willingness to provide support. Although alternative theories suggest that some of these variables may belong in more than one category, these categories were chosen because they best reflect previous overall findings (see Table 2), with one possible exception, noted below.

<u>Independent Variables</u>

Independent Variables Representing State Policies and Laws. The variable of keenest interest—the total disregard available to AFDC/TANF recipients under federal/state policy—is measured here as the sum of the federally required fixed disregard ($50 after 1975) and the variable disregard that occurs in some states that pay welfare benefits that are less than that state's official Needs Standard.

After 1996, many states abandoned the practice of disregarding $50 of the child support collected every month and a few states abandoned their historic variable disregard practices. Some states increased their disregards and one state reduced the size of its disregard. These changes, along with differences in the size of variable disregards, were the source of considerable variance in disregards from 1985 to 1998. Thus, these data were employed as a continuous measure in the model, adjusted to 1999 dollars. Because child support disregards offer a real economic incentive for recipients to cooperate fully in paternity determination and enforcement efforts, it is anticipated that the effects of this variable will be found to be positive and at least marginally significant. However, because of deficiencies in the CPS data that relate to the particulars of welfare receipt and IV-D client status, it is possible that any relationship will be difficult to measure.

The second administrative variable of interest relates directly to the capacity of the IV-D system to affect child support collections. The previous study, relying largely on OCSE administrative data, suggested a strong relationship between the average amount of child support collected (among those with collections) and full compliance with all criteria necessary for *federal certification* of the state electronic system for the distribution of child support collections. It is quite probable that fully certified systems represent better state and interstate IV-D agency coordination, optimal communication with IV-A agencies, better and more responsive distribution of child support, and better response to client questions about such matters as the status of their child support receipts. This variable is expected to be positive and significant in the present model, to the extent that the study population focus strategy has been successful. In the OCSE study, full certification status for the state's electronic IV-D management system was found to be positive and significant in the mean amount of child support collected, for the portion of the AFDC/TANF IV-D caseload for which there were *any* collections, (though not for the non-AFDC/TANF or combined segments of the caseloads.) This suggests that optimal system design and management are especially important to AFDC/TANF-related child support outcomes, in ways that increase the level of collections when some collections are already forthcoming.

The third of the six administrative variables chosen for the model is *implementation of immediate wage withholding requirements* by state/year, lagged by (i.e., given a value of "1") one year following adoption in order to allow for a greater likelihood that the effectiveness of this new enforcement tool will show up in the results. Although the OCSE study failed to find any evidence of positive effects attributable to immediate wage withholding, the effects of this independent variable using CPS data will be explored in an attempt to add support to the findings of other researchers regarding wage withholding effects.

Maximum AFDC/TANF benefit level by state/year is very important, for three principal reasons. First, the size of a state's maximum IV-A benefit contributes to the relative value that clients place on the size of the disregard and income alternatives, such as their own earnings from labor force participation, given the general economic climate and demand for their labor in the state. (As such, this variable might be

TABLE 2
Theoretical Classification of Independent Variables Used in Model

IV-A/IV-D System Administrative and Legal Variables (Policy)	Variables Representing Female Householder Economic Need	Household and Householder Demographic Variables
Total amount of state disregard	State female unemployment rate	Age of female householder (age and age-squared)
Full certification status of state electronic system	Unemployed	Number of children age 6 to 18
Immediate withholding (lagged)	Not in labor force	Number of children less than 6 years of age
Maximum state AFDC/TANF benefit level for family of three (one adult)	Median household income in state	Hispanic
New-hire reporting requirement implemented by state		Black
IV-D expenditures (adjusted)		Race other than Hispanic or black (including American Indian, Asian American)
		Elementary school highest attended
		High school attended, no diploma
		High school graduate
		Divorced
		Separated

viewed as reflecting the mother's demand for child support, placing it in the next category of variables.) Second, the maximum AFDC/TANF benefit available to a family of three in a state may be viewed as a measure of state fiscal capacity coupled with its political will to ensure a "livable" level of support for poor children. Third, higher benefits, other factors being equal, attract women with more and better alternatives to welfare, those that may be more likely to use the opportunity to secure child support that can, in turn, foster earlier escape from welfare. The classification of maximum welfare benefits for three persons as a policy variable is primarily because it is a structural component of the relationship between the disregard, child support collection, and welfare maximum, all of which are set by state policy. As such, this variable may be viewed as an essential control variable for inclusion in any multistate test of disregard effects.

New-hire reporting and immediate wage withholding are viewed as companion measures, because of the difficulty in separating their theoretical underpinnings. Even though the courts or administrative processes are the originators of the orders for immediate wage withholding, the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy tool rests upon the cooperation and capacity of employers and employees—as, indeed, does the effectiveness of new-hire reporting. Further, it is posited that this variable also captures the willful and nonwillful avoidance of the state's new-hire and wage withholding requirements by diverting parents' workforce participation to cash-wage types of employment and work within the "irregular" economy. But in the absence of direct measures of obligors' labor market activities, it is not possible to confirm or refute this speculation within the context of this model.

The last of the independent variables that reflect the policy environment is *the level of federal/state expenditures for the state IV-D program operations*. This is measured as expenditures that are included in the formula for federal matching. These annual figures, along with all other dollar measures used in the model, have been adjusted to 1999 dollar amounts in order to make them comparable in current dollar terms.

Independent Variables Representing the Economic Environment and Female Householder Economic Need. At least two of the variables that were chosen to represent the level of female householder need for child support may also be categorized as state demographic variables, reflecting the relative health of a state's economy. These two variables, *female unemployment rate* and *state median income*, were also used in the OCSE study.

Theory suggests that the second variable, *state median household income*, may reflect multiple influences on the child support outcome measure. It is anticipated that state median income could be significant, positive, or negative, insofar as it reflects the supply or demand side of the child support system: i.e., the ability of fathers to generate sufficient income to contribute to the support of their children or the need for mothers to pursue support as an alternative or supplement to welfare and own earnings. Unlike the female unemployment variable, median income is not disaggregated by sex. It most likely captures merely the relative health of the state economy and little else.

Other selected measures of demand for child support are two that were not included in the OCSE study, owing to the absence of individual-level data in the administrative database. Those chosen for this study include *unemployment status* of the female householder, in order to capture labor force effects; in the labor force but unemployed (looking for work), employed or out of the labor force (resulting in two dummy variables and one omitted category). This variable captures something of the motivation for self-support and the desire to improve one's economic well-being, with or without welfare assistance or child support. It is important to remember that the survey participant responds early in the year to questions about welfare participation and child support receipts in the *prior* year, but the timing and duration of each event is unknown. Thus, no conclusions can be drawn about the order of the events or about causation.

The results connected with these measures reflecting the demand or need for child support—or the failure to receive any at the prior time—should offer clues to the conflicting results of the earlier studies

using administrative data and other CPS databases and samples, both those of this author and those of the others noted in this study

  Household and Householder Demographic Variables. The choice of these variables capitalizes on a range of individual and household demographic variables in the CPS database, beginning with the *age of the female householder.* Although others have found that age increases the likelihood of reported child support receipts (Garfinkel and Robins, 1994), it may be that this results from using subfamily household data and an older age limit for the female head. The "fuzziness" at the borders between multiple families in households may have led to an overestimation of the positive effects of older age of the householder.

  To address this concern, the upper limit of the study population was set at 45 years of age and those who reported no welfare benefits in the year prior to the study were eliminated. Additionally, all subfamilies were eliminated from the sample in order to improve model specification. This process may help identify the net effect of age. Second, both age and age-squared will be regressed simultaneously to assess the linearity of the relationship versus its curvilinearity.[8]

  The *age and number of children* are essential control variables to aid in the interpretation of the meaning of the age of female householder. Their inclusion in the model may offer further evidence as to the independent effect of the total number of children in given age ranges upon child support receipt. Other researchers have noted the importance of both number and age of children in predicting particular child support outcomes (Beller and Graham, 1993; Sorensen and Halpern, 1999). The two categories that were available are included in the model: number of children age 6 to 18 born to or adopted by the householder, and number of children younger than 6.

  Though not ideal, these two interval measures allow for the estimation of the effects of the number of children in each of the two age ranges. For instance, a positive and significant beta value for the variable reflecting number of older children may suggest better child support outcomes associated with a longer history of welfare dependence, thus increasing the length of "exposure" to paternity determination and child support enforcement requirements. A positive and significant finding for the variable reflecting number of very young children in the household may indicate that efforts to seek paternity determination and an order for support for young children are especially fruitful, controlling for all other factors in the model. A significant and positive beta value for either variable may also reflect the possibility that the greater the number of children in either age range, the greater the likelihood that multiple fathers have been associated with these households. More fathers per household may increase the likelihood that *any* child support will be forthcoming.

  The next series of independent variables is designed to capture the effects of a mother's membership in a racial or ethnic minority group that has a lengthy history in this country of social and economic discrimination and segregation. These binomial variables reflect status in three categories: *Hispanic (ethnicity)*, *black*, and *any minority "race" or minority group other than Hispanic or black*. The omitted category is white. Positive and significant values for any of the three measures would indicate that membership in minority groups would be more likely to be associated with child support receipt at some time during the prior year. Negative and significant values for any of the three would, of course, suggest that being white would favor the probability of child support receipt; this would be consistent with

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  [8]If the age variable beta value is significant and positive and the age-squared coefficient is significant and negative, a curvilinear relationship is suggested: that is, the likelihood of child support receipt would increase, but at a declining rate. If the age-squared specification is insignificant but the linear age specification is significant and positive, these results will agree with others' findings that age appears to enhance the likelihood of child support receipts.

previous findings (Cassetty, 1978). There is no readily apparent reason to believe that any of the minority status variables will be found to be associated with higher reports of child support receipts, given consistent findings of this sort by other researchers over a long period of time.

The next three binomial variables in the model are chosen to measure different levels of educational attainment: *elementary school*; *some high school, no diploma received*; or *high school graduate*. The omitted category is any postsecondary education. Positive values for any of the three would suggest that that level of educational attainment is associated with a higher frequency of reports of child support received in the prior year, relative to the omitted category. Given the consistent findings from other published research spanning many years, it is not likely that any of these three categories will be positive and significant, with the possible exception of twelfth-grade attainment.

The last two variables included in the model, representing marital status, are *divorced* and *separated*. The omitted category, never-married, includes women who presumably required paternity determination services as a threshold to child support orders and receipt. It is expected that, consistent with other findings (Sorensen and Halpern, 1999), the fact of being or having been married will have a positive and significant association with receipt of child support. This would suggest, then, that the omitted category, never having been married, is negatively related to child support received in the prior year, possibly because of the greater challenges entailed in first determining paternity, the prerequisite to obtaining an order for support and collecting on that order.

Also, as in the OCSE study, a series of fixed-effects measures were employed to isolate the independent influence that any given year or state may exert on the dependent variable, child support receipt in prior year. Although other researchers have controlled for various years, states, and/or regions in their models estimating a range of child support outcomes, none who have used these CPS data have simultaneously controlled for both state and year effects. This strategy allows for capturing the fixed influences of states and years that cannot be readily captured by more direct means. These may include such factors as population characteristics and state legislative "will" to enforce the parental child support obligation or to pursue this strategy for reducing the public cost of welfare.

Dependent Variable

The model that has been designed and utilized in this study involves only one dependent variable: receipt/nonreceipt of child support in the year preceding the CPS interview. Because of insufficient data pertaining to such factors as the exact number of persons in the AFDC filing unit and the period of time during the prior year over which the family received IV-A assistance, an interval-dependent variable would offer no meaningful results. The model, then, seeks to estimate the effects of a wide range of independent variables on a *binomial measure* of reports of child support receipt in the prior year. The model is estimated using logistic regression.

V.   Principal Findings

Findings with regard to the independent variable of greatest interest in this study—size of the total disregard available through state welfare program policy—tend to support those found earlier using OCSE administrative data and those of Sorensen and Halpern (see Table 3). The estimates from the current study suggest a positive and significant ($p < .10$) relationship between receipt of child support and the level of the disregard.[9] This is somewhat surprising given the substantial limitations in the March CPS data. The

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[9]The coefficient suggests that a $50 increase in the disregard would be associated with an estimated 7 percent increase in the odds of receiving support.

TABLE 3
Likelihood of Reporting Any Child Support Receipt, 1984–1999

Independent Variable	Beta	p-value
Policy Variables		
Variable + fixed disregard	0.00138	**0.0841***
Full certification status	0.033	0.8513
Immediate withholding	0.0438	0.6596
Maximum AFDC benefit	0.000291	0.7165
New-hire legislation	0.0493	0.5796
IV-D program expenditures	-0.0009	0.2188
Economic Environment		
Female unemployment rate	0.0508	**.0226****
Median income	-0.0084	0.4858
Unemployed	-0.2406	**0.0008*****
Not in labor force	-0.3054	**<.0001*****
Demographic Characteristics		
Age of recipient	0.0757	**.0194****
Age squared of recipient	-0.00139	**.0058*****
Divorced	0.7899	**< .0001*****
Separated	0.3312	**< .0001*****
No. of children 6–18 years old	0.0688	**.0020*****
No. of children < 6 years old	0.0763	**.0055*****
Hispanic origin	-0.4208	**< .0001*****
Black	-0.7129	**< .0001*****
Other minority race/ethnicity	-0.4548	**< .0001*****
Elementary education	-0.673	**< .0001*****
H.S. education, no diploma	-0.3665	**< .0001*****
H.S. graduate	-0.1981	**.0003*****

Bold print indicates statistical significance:
* = p. < .10
** = p. < .05
*** = p. < .01
N = 17,829
Log Likelihood = -7584.471

greater attention given to limiting the subsample to those most likely to have been clients of state IV-D programs increases our level of confidence in these findings. However, the unavoidable inclusion of some women who were only "marginally" poor or had not spent very much time as AFDC/TANF recipients may have limited the level of significance found for the key measure.

Surprisingly, however, no discernible relationship between the likelihood of receiving child support and any of the other variables reflecting state IV-A and IV-D policy and program characteristics was found. It is also somewhat surprising that none of the enforcement tools that the OCSE study found to have significant and positive results for some measures of child support outcomes had any discernible effect on child support receipts in this CPS sample. This may suggest a need for further investigation, especially one that better captures the period of time that welfare recipients are "attached" to the IV-D system as a consequence of their welfare receipt.

The measure of state maximum AFDC/TANF benefit level for a family of three, included to control for the effects of the structure of state benefit schedules, was not statistically significant. In other words, the maximum size of a welfare benefit to which a person is potentially entitled has no discernible impact when the size of the disregard is included. The size of the potential disregard offered by a state, then, stands out as the only policy variable in the model that has an independent, positive, and significant impact upon mothers' reports of child support receipts.

The findings for the three measures that reflect female householders' need for child support present a mixed picture, given the hypotheses. Respondents who reported being unemployed or not in the labor force were significantly less likely to have received any child support in the prior year, compared to those who were employed. Being in the labor force seems, therefore, to have a highly significant, positive association with child support receipt at some point during the prior year. This *may* indicate that the impetus for self-support, through both labor market engagement and pursuit of child support, may spring from the same unmeasured characteristics of the mother. Whether there is a causal connection in either direction cannot be ascertained from the present methodology and data.

Results for the state female unemployment rate, on the other hand, were positive and significant, suggesting that more limited employment opportunities for women may increase their need and desire for child support, at least for a population of those who have some immediate history of welfare receipt.

The last set of variables, around which the rationale for using CPS data centers, includes most of the demographic variables that other researchers have used in CPS-based studies of policy and demographic influences on child support outcomes. Without exception, these variables produce beta values that fall well within the highly significant range. All variables relating to race and educational attainment are significant and bear negative signs. The results suggest that in every case, those with minority status have significantly less likelihood of receiving child support than their white counterparts. Similarly, the negative signs for all categories of educational attainment suggest that when compared to the omitted category, "more than a high school diploma," each of these lesser levels of educational attainment is associated with significantly less likelihood of child support receipt.

The result for the age variable tends to support the findings of other researchers that mother's age, independent of all other factors in the model, substantially affects the likelihood that child support will have been received at some time during the previous year. Both age specifications were found to be significant: the age variable parameter positive, and the age-squared specification coefficient negative. This finding supports the hypothesis that as a female head of a family with children ages, the likelihood of collecting child support improves at a declining rate, at least up to the cutoff point (age 45) for this study. Because these results, as others resulting from this study, are restricted to a subpopulation of CPS respondents who received state welfare benefits at least once in the prior year, it cannot be said whether

increasing age is associated with declining frequency of child support receipt for a broader population of female householders.

Variables reflecting the independent effects of numbers of children in each of the two age categories are found to be highly significant and positive. These results are not surprising, but also are not particularly easy to interpret, given the distortions introduced by such a broad categorical range for number of older children. It is possible that the positive, significant results for both of these variables to some extent reflect the increased likelihood that multiple fathers have been associated with householders' children as the number of children in each category rises.

Like the findings of other researchers, marital status is found to be positive and significant. For instance, Sorensen and Halpern (1999) found that CPS respondents were far more likely to report positive child support outcomes if they had been married. (Note that widows were excluded from the sample because information was lacking about the living or deceased status of each child's father.) The positive direction for each of the two measures of marital status, divorced and married but separated, suggests that having been married at least once, rather than never, is associated with a greater likelihood of child support receipt. This is probably in part due to the challenge of securing determination of paternity as a necessary condition to receiving an order for support. If paternity is already presumed by marriage, the legal timetable for securing an order for support may be considerably reduced.

VI.   Conclusions, Policy Implications, and Recommendations

The more important conclusion here relates directly to the topic of greatest interest: the relative power of a state IV-A program disregard, as applied to child support collections, to affect the likelihood that child support receipts will be forthcoming. The results for the key variable, disregard amount, are positive and significant, especially in light of the influence of the variables that capture demographic features of the population of CPS respondents and the controls for fixed effects. Current results appear to support those of the OCSE study regarding the apparent influence of the amount of the total state disregard on child support outcomes, suggesting that increasing the size of a state disregard on child support collections for welfare recipients has a strong likelihood of increasing the receipt of child support payments.

In order to test for the sensitivity of our findings to alternative specifications of the models employed here, models were tested without state effects, without year effects, and with neither state nor year effects. The finding of a positive and statistically significant relationship between the size of the total disregard and whether child support was received was robust to the alternative specifications: the coefficient remained roughly the same. The model was also estimated on a sample of women who did *not* receive AFDC/TANF—for whom disregard policy should not have an effect on child support receipt. As expected, there was no significant relationship between state disregard practices and child support receipt for this sample. The results of the sensitivity tests, discussed in greater detail in the Appendix that follows the main body of this chapter, add confidence to our conclusions about the influence of state disregard policy.

Because of the limitations connected with the present methodology and data, a range of numbers of AFDC/TANF families, individuals, or actual child support cases that might be affected by increases in state disregards cannot be calculated. It is strongly recommended that future research into the scope of disregard effects use data that can provide demographic variables for fathers and those associated both with varying lengths of time spent on welfare and with state child support enforcement programs. Further, it is also strongly suggested that both pass-through and disregard effects be explored, as they theoretically influence welfare recipients' child support behaviors in different ways. With controls representing many of the other policy variables and the state economic environments, it may be possible to more precisely define

the relative importance of each of these types of variables for estimating child support outcomes. Future research should also include more detail related to welfare participation and its timing and other sources of income for a national sample of female-headed families.

A related recommendation for future research is that estimates of state pass-through amounts as an additional administrative measure be included in any further studies of the effectiveness of disregards, both as an independent variable and in interaction with state total disregard amounts. In the absence of empirical research which distinguishes between the independent effects of pass-throughs and disregards, the possibility that results indicating the positive influence of disregards on child support outcomes are "contaminated" by state practices related to pass-throughs must be borne in mind. It is possible, further, that accurate historical data related to state pass-through policy will demonstrate that there is sufficient overall variance in state pass-through practices, considered separately from disregard practices, to warrant attempts to sort out the independent effects of each.

Moreover, theory certainly supports isolating the possible independent effects of pass-throughs vs. disregards. To the extent, for instance, that the regularity and size of the child support payments convince AFDC/TANF recipients of their adequacy, they may pursue other means of self-support, leading to training in preparation for entry into the labor force or more effective job-seeking behavior. Disregards, unlike pass-throughs, add money to a welfare recipient's budget and enhance the economic well-being of the family, independent of any pass-through. It is also suggested that interaction effects may be observed between the size of a state's disregard and its pass-through, reflecting an independent, enhanced effect on child support outcomes when disregard practices are combined with pass-through practices, but the present model does not control for these effects.

In short, the current research appears to support many earlier findings pertaining to factors that influence child support outcomes, including child support disregards, such as the previous chapter and Meyer and Cancian (2001), and the larger report of which this study is a part. The present study results argue for additional work to refine estimates for disregard and pass-through effects.

An additional policy question remains unanswered and largely unaddressed: Why, despite state IV-D program efforts, do women who report minority status persistently report lower child support receipts than their white counterparts? Is it largely because (presumably) minority ex-partners are less able to generate earnings in excess of what they require for their own self-support? Or does much of the answer lie in the nature of institutional barriers that discourage minority women from learning about and responding to the economic incentives of disregard effects that are suggested by the findings reported here?

Royce Hutson

Sample Exclusions

The data from the early years of the Special Child Support Supplement to the April CPS were not used because they preceded the period in which there can be reasonable certainty of full implementation of federally mandated disregards. Also, choosing data from the Supplement would have severely limited the number of observations for the study, reducing the sample size to those included in the biennial or triennial surveys from 1986 forward. Prior to 1991, the April CPS excluded women who had a child before they were married and subsequently had a child after marriage to someone other than the first child's father. It is likely that this practice reduced the number of survey households potentially eligible for the sample, reducing the number and types of female heads in that sample.

Given that state disregard policies and practices fall within the administrative purview of state IV-A programs, there were challenges to selecting a sample from the March CPS of female heads of households who reported receipt of AFDC/TANF benefits at some time during the year preceding the survey. It was essential that the CPS sample be pared to those most likely to have been in a position to have directly benefited from state disregard policy, i.e., AFDC/TANF recipients.

As well, all *subfamilies* residing in households headed by others were eliminated from the sample, even if those subfamilies were headed by divorced, separated, or unmarried women with children of their own. The preliminary examination of the data for these women who headed subfamilies in households headed by others revealed a number of curious responses to interview questions, responses that led us to question whether or not these women could be said to have *themselves* been welfare recipients in the prior year or were simply included in the AFDC/TANF filing unit of the household head.[10] In any case, many of these subfamilies would have been excluded on the basis of the age criterion for selection, i.e., excluded were all who fell outside the 19 to 45 age range. Preliminary analysis of the data indicated that most of these subfamilies would have been excluded on the basis of their youth, irrespective of their status as a subfamily of the householder.

The primary reason for restricting the age of sample members was the inability to determine that a significant portion of this relatively small population had a profile that was clearly consistent with that of the target population. Those that were less than 18 years of age were less likely to be receiving IV-A benefits in their own names and, therefore, were of questionable eligibility for mandatory child support enforcement services. Very few of these young women were identified as family heads or receiving child support, even if the data suggested they had children of their own. This led to doubt that they could be assumed to have AFDC/TANF recipiency status in their own right. In short, the limited number of these subfamilies headed by women older than 18, along with the absence of other information about them that

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[10]For example, these female subfamily heads would occasionally respond in the affirmative when asked if they received AFDC/TANF benefits at any point during the prior year, yet when asked if they had any of their own children residing with them would answer "no." We found no similar discrepancies in the responses of the female householders in whose homes the subfamilies lived. Similarly, inconsistencies in the information pertaining to the subfamilies in these households led to no clear profile for these families. We had many possible explanations for the discrepancies and inconsistencies in subfamily responses, but in the absence of any data that clearly pointed to one that justified the inclusion of these householders, we decided against including them. The presence of these subfamilies in the households headed by women who otherwise met our selection criteria did not preclude our selection of the latter into our sample, however.

presented a clearer and less unambiguous picture of the likelihood of their attachment to the welfare and child support systems, made omitting them from the sample the better choice. The sample was further limited to those women under the age of 46 because of concerns about data accuracy.

Marital status was another criterion for restricting the sample. The sample was limited to those female heads of households who were either separated, divorced, or had never been married. The rationale for this choice was that: (1) if the person were married, it would not be possible to determine that her husband was or was not the father of her child(ren); and (2) if the female were remarried, it would not be possible to ascertain whether the stepfather had adopted the child(ren) or possibly that the woman married the father of the child(ren). In either case, the person would not be eligible for AFDC-related mandatory IV-D services. Widowed female householders were also excluded, along with married householders with an absent spouse. These latter were most likely to have been wives of military men, men working abroad or offshore, and men in jail or prison. In any case, although they may have had children for whom they were potentially eligible for child support enforcement services or welfare, and many reported having received welfare at some point in the year prior to their interviews, they were unlikely to have been given high priority for services by the IV-D agency. Also, these women may have reported in their CPS interviews that they received "child support" when they were referring to a military dependents' allotment or funds sent by their husbands in prison or working abroad. In any case, those who reported nonreceipt of child support would not necessarily have been potentially eligible for support, giving us another source of concern.

Appendix Table A describes the impact of these exclusions on the sample figures.

A Note on Use of the March CPS

To maximize the numbers of years of data for analyses, the losses connected with not using data from the Special Census on Child Support, the April Supplement, were weighed against the potential gains from using the March CPS. The Special Child Support Supplement data were not available on an annual basis, and it was determined to be of greater importance to favor the larger number of observation points, especially for the most critical independent variable for the purposes of the model, total disregard. In sum, the primary reason for choosing the annual March survey data, instead of those from the April survey, was the availability of a greater number of years of data over the span of years offering a much larger total number of survey respondents and data points for analysis. The main "cost" of this decision, however, was that the richer detail about child support orders and payments that is found in the Special Supplement had to be forgone. What level of detail may have been gained (a moderate amount, given the central purpose of the research) by using the Special Child Support Supplement data was far more than offset by the gains in the form of increased degrees of freedom for the analyses by using the March data. This adds, as well, to increased confidence in the results.

Further, the April supplement was last conducted in 1992. As implementation of several key policy variables had not been accomplished by a sizable number of states by then, it would have been of greater necessity to exclude one or two policy or demographic controls that previous research had shown to be significant in explaining child support receipt, just to preserve sufficient degrees of freedom for the analysis. This added to the weight of arguments favoring use of the March CPS data.

Sensitivity Analysis

A sensitivity analysis was performed to test the sensitivity of the key result of the model, as specified. Results from this analysis are displayed in Appendix Table B. Results from the full model

APPENDIX TABLE A
Sample Exclusions and Resulting Numbers of Observations

EXCLUSIONS	TOTAL N
All female heads of households receiving AFDC/TANF	22,973
Number of children in family > 1	21,101
Never married, divorced, separated	18,977
Age 19–45	17,829 = Final N

Sensitivity Analysis for Likelihood of Collecting Support

Variables	Full Model		State Effects Only		Year Effects Only		Neither State nor Year Effects	
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
Policy Variables								
Variable + fixed disregard	0.0014	**0.0841***	0.0015	**0.0522***	0.0010	**0.0024*****	0.0011	**0.0003*****
Full certification status	0.0330	0.8513	0.0730	0.6682	-0.0872	0.5785	-0.0157	0.9180
Immediate withholding	0.0438	0.6596	0.3703	**<.0001*****	-0.1489	**0.0825***	0.3092	**<.0001*****
Maximum AFDC benefit	0.0003	0.7165	0.0013	**0.0724***	-0.0002	0.1859	-0.0004	**0.0014*****
New-hire legislation	0.0493	0.5796	0.0722	0.3187	-0.0882	0.2360	-0.0138	0.8127
IV-D program expenditures	-0.0009	0.2188	0.0008	0.2574	-0.0012	**<.0001*****	-0.0007	**0.0074*****
Economic Environment								
Female unemployment rate	0.0508	**0.0226****	-0.0289	0.1127	-0.0135	0.3893	-0.0559	**<.0001*****
Median income	-0.0084	0.4858	0.0159	**<.0001*****	0.0050	0.3188	0.0132	**<.0001*****
Unemployed	-0.2406	**0.0008*****	-0.2240	-0.2240	-0.2182	**0.0022*****	-0.2128	**0.0017*****
Not in labor force	-0.3054	**<.0001*****	-0.2851	**<.0001*****	-0.3165	**<.0001*****	-0.2995	**<.0001*****
Demographic Characteristics								
Age of recipient	0.0757	**0.0194****	0.0767	**0.0173****	0.0803	**0.0121****	0.0819	**0.0101****
Age squared of recipient	-0.0014	**0.0058*****	-0.0014	**0.0054*****	-0.0015	**0.0031*****	-0.0015	**0.0028*****
No. of children 6–18 years old	0.0688	**0.0020*****	0.0693	**0.0017*****	0.0665	**0.0024*****	0.0644	**0.0032*****
No. of children < 6 years old	0.0763	**0.0055*****	0.0804	**0.0033*****	0.0643	**0.0173****	0.0690	**0.0104****
Hispanic origin	-0.4208	**<.0001*****	-0.4146	**<.0001*****	-0.5254	**<.0001*****	-0.5345	**<.0001*****
Black	-0.7129	**<.0001*****	-0.7187	**<.0001*****	-0.6306	**<.0001*****	-0.6349	**<.0001*****
Other race/ethnicity	-0.4548	**<.0001*****	-0.4336	**0.0002*****	-0.4495	**<.0001*****	-0.4311	**<.0001*****
Elementary education	-0.6730	**<.0001*****	-0.7204	**<.0001*****	-0.6586	**<.0001*****	-0.7312	**<.0001*****
H.S education, no diploma	-0.3665	**<.0001*****	-0.3869	**<.0001*****	-0.3537	**<.0001*****	-0.3875	**<.0001*****
H.S graduate	-0.1981	**0.0003*****	-0.2076	**0.0001*****	-0.1788	**0.0009*****	-0.1998	**0.0002*****
Divorced	0.7899	**<.0001*****	0.7690	**<.0001*****	0.7523	**<.0001*****	0.7251	**<.0001*****
Separated	0.3312	**<.0001*****	0.3173	**<.0001*****	0.3420	**<.0001*****	0.3243	**<.0001*****
Log Likelihood	-7584.5		-7635.5		-7721.5		-7780.5	

Bold print indicates statistical significance:

* = p. < .10

** = p. < .05

*** = p. < .01

N = 17,829

reported in the body of this paper are included in this table to allow for easy comparison with the alternative specifications. As one can see, for the independent variable of interest—the fixed plus variable disregard—the finding remains robust throughout all specifications and the magnitude of the coefficient remains roughly the same. However, the findings for other policy variables are not so consistent. The immediate withholding variable not only is found to become significant when we exclude any one or all of the fixed effects, but the sign changes from positive to negative when we exclude state effects only. As for AFDC benefit levels, when all of the effects or the year effects are excluded, the maximum AFDC benefit variable is found to become significant and the coefficient becomes negative. As one can see in the original specification, though not significant, the maximum benefit level coefficient was positive. Lastly, a significant and negative coefficient is observed for the IV-D program expenditures variable when state effects and both state and year effects are excluded. This was not consistent with the original findings of a nonsignificant and positive relationship.

For the economic variables, inconsistencies are found from specification to specification for female unemployment and the median income level for the state/year. However, for all specifications, being unemployed or not in the labor force remains significant and negatively associated with child support receipt. For the demographic variables, all of the variables are consistent and significantly associated with the likelihood of child support receipt.

The second sensitivity analysis conducted compared the results for the original model using an AFDC/TANF population to the results for the same model using a sample of female heads of families that did not report AFDC/TANF benefit receipts. It was anticipated that disregard findings would not be significant for this sample population, as states' disregard policies are appropriate only for AFDC recipients. If a significant relationship were to be found between the disregard policy and child support receipt for this population, it might well be suspected that some other factor that influences child support outcome measures was being captured.

"Non-AFDC-recipiency status" was defined as any female householder with children who responds negatively to survey questions related to her receipt of public assistance or AFDC/TANF in the previous year. As in the original model, this sample was limited to female householders who were between the ages of 19 and 45 and whose children were less than 18 years of age. Additionally, as with the research model utilizing an AFDC/TANF sample, the analysis was limited to those women who were either separated, divorced, or never married. The results of these analyses are presented in Appendix Table C.

As one can see, none of the policy variables except the AFDC benefit level are significantly associated with child support receipt. As predicted, there was no significant relationship between the disregard policy and child support receipt. Because a significant, positive relationship between the AFDC benefit level and child support receipt is observed for a non-AFDC population, it can be concluded that this variable may, in fact, be capturing another feature of state policy. For instance, the higher state welfare benefits are, the larger the population of those who are income-eligible for benefits; thus, the higher the welfare participation rate, the more women will have been "exposed" to IV-D services, raising child support receipt rates in the general population.

Female unemployment is not significantly associated with child support receipt for the non-AFDC population. This is different from findings for the AFDC/TANF sample population. It may be that the AFDC population, often being those first hired, first fired, may be more sensitive to changing labor demand. In other words, the AFDC population may seek and participate more readily in the process of establishing child support from the nonresident father when job prospects are bleak. This finding is consistent with the original "demand-side" theory presented in the body of the paper.

APPENDIX TABLE C
Comparison of AFDC and Non-AFDC Populations

Variables	AFDC		Non-AFDC	
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
Policy Variables				
Variable + fixed disregard	0.0014	**0.0841***	-0.0001	0.7463
Full certification status	0.0330	0.8513	-0.0353	0.6833
Immediate withholding	0.0438	0.6596	-0.0609	0.2703
Maximum AFDC benefit	0.0003	0.7165	0.0009	**0.0457****
New-hire legislation	0.0493	0.5796	-0.0498	0.3526
IV-D program expenditures	-0.0009	0.2188	0.0000	0.9055
Economic Environment				
Female unemployment rate	0.0508	**0.0226****	-0.0014	0.9084
Median income	-0.0084	0.4858	0.0056	0.3296
Unemployed	-0.2406	**0.0008*****	-0.3147	**<.0001*****
Not in labor force	-0.3054	**<.0001*****	-0.5484	**<.0001*****
Demographic Characteristics				
Age of recipient	0.0757	**0.0194****	0.1415	**<.0001*****
Age squared of recipient	-0.0014	**0.0058*****	-0.0021	**<.0001*****
No. of children 6–18 years old	0.0688	**0.0020*****	0.1884	**<.0001*****
No. of children < 6 years old	0.0763	**0.0055*****	0.0962	**<.0001*****
Hispanic origin	-0.4208	**< .0001*****	-0.6706	**<.0001*****
Black	-0.7129	**< .0001*****	-1.0681	**<.0001*****
Other race/ethnicity	-0.4548	**< .0001*****	-0.5876	**<.0001*****
Elementary education	-0.6730	**< .0001*****	-1.0839	**<.0001*****
H.S education, no diploma	-0.3665	**< .0001*****	-0.5401	**<.0001*****
H.S graduate	-0.1981	**0.0003*****	-0.2564	**<.0001*****
Divorced	0.7899	**< .0001*****	1.2579	**<.0001*****
Separated	0.3312	**< .0001*****	0.5249	**<.0001*****
Log Likelihood	-7584.5		-22444.2	
N =	17,829		39,906	

Bold print indicates statistical significance:
* = p. <.10
** = p. < .05
*** = p. < .01

For all demographic variables included in the model, the findings for the non-AFDC population are consistent with findings for the AFDC population.

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