

**THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND BASIC SKILLS TRAINING (JOBS) PROGRAM
CHILD OUTCOMES STUDY**

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To Appear in

**YOUNG CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND DEVELOPMENT SYNTHESIS
AND PROFILE PROJECT (Forthcoming)**

A. History

• How did this initiative come about?

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program was the programmatic implementation of the 1988 Family Support Act (FSA), the round of national welfare legislation that antedated the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The JOBS Program was designed to provide recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with education, training and employment, with the goal of avoiding long-term welfare dependency. While previous welfare-to-work programs primarily involved parents with older children, the JOBS Program also included parents with pre-school-age children. Participation in the JOBS Program was mandatory for all AFDC recipients with a youngest child of three or older (the age requirement could be younger at state option). The JOBS legislation required states to guarantee child care for participants if such care was necessary to attend JOBS activities. Medicaid and child care benefits were provided for a transitional period of 12 months after moving off of AFDC to employment. The legislation also established new procedures for child support enforcement and establishment of paternity, and required states to offer a program (AFDC-UP) for two-parent families in which the principal wage earner was unemployed.

The JOBS Child Outcomes Study, which was designed to examine the impacts of the JOBS Program on the well-being of children, is nested within three sites in the larger seven-site JOBS Evaluation. Using a random assignment design, the JOBS Evaluation examines the economic impacts of the program (examining such variables as receipt of welfare, employment, earnings, and total family income) in a sample of over 55,000 families in seven sites. The effects of various welfare-to-work strategies are being measured in each of the seven JOBS Evaluation sites. In the three sites in which the JOBS Child Outcomes Study is nested, families that had applied for or were receiving AFDC were randomly assigned to be in

permit a detailed examination of the question of whether participation in JOBS affects mother-child interaction and, further, whether the quality of mother-child interactions helps to shape any program impacts on children's development.

The Family Support Act called for an evaluation of the JOBS Program to determine the effectiveness of different ways of operating welfare-to-work programs. Reflecting a desire among legislators to get the most reliable estimates of program effects--estimates that would take into account normal welfare dynamics--the Act specified an evaluation using a random assignment design. When considering its options for carrying out this mandate, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recognized the importance of the context in which JOBS would be implemented, and decided to focus the JOBS Evaluation on innovative features of JOBS and to address new questions about the operation, effects, and cost-effectiveness of various types of welfare-to-work programs. Given that one of JOBS' innovations, relative to prior programs, was mandated participation by women with preschool-age children, DHHS requested a special study examining how parents of young children--as well as the children themselves--fared under the JOBS Program. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study breaks new ground in that this is the first time national welfare policy is being evaluated from the perspective of implications for children.

- **What were the theories and/or research findings that were critical in the evolution of the initiative?**

Two bodies of research were critical in the evolution of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study: (1) evidence of the success of welfare-to-work programs; and (2) evidence pointing to linkages between developmental outcomes for children and parental variables that were likely to be affected by participation in JOBS.

Previous research on welfare-to-work programs shows that these programs can be effective in terms of economic outcomes. For example, in the evaluation of the GAIN welfare-to-work program in California, families in the experimental group were earning more and receiving less in average AFDC payments two years after baseline, and these results were statistically significant (Friedlander, Riccio & Freedman, 1993). The average earnings impact for the two-year period was \$785, representing a 21 percent increase relative to the average earnings of control group members. When measured earnings gains were compared to welfare reductions and other losses in government assistance over a five-year period, welfare recipients in five of the six studied California counties were, on average, better off financially as a consequence of GAIN (Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman, 1994).

The finding that welfare-to-work programs can bring about significant increases in earnings is important from the point of view of children. A substantial body of research

one of two program groups (the human capital development group or the labor force attachment group), or in a control group (that was free of the mandate to participate in the JOBS Program yet eligible for all AFDC benefits). The program groups involved two distinct variants of the JOBS Program. The human capital development approach focused on providing basic education and training to enhance recipients' employability, while the labor force attachment approach focused on job search activities to facilitate a rapid transition to employment. For those assigned to the program groups, participation in these self-sufficiency activities was mandatory. Non-participation could result in sanctioning, or a reduction in benefits.

The impact analysis of the seven-site JOBS Evaluation relies on data from both administrative records and from surveys, with the survey waves occurring two and, in some sites, five years after "baseline" (enrollment in the evaluation). During the first survey wave, some respondents completed tests of reading and math literacy. The JOBS Evaluation also encompasses a study of the program's implementation in the seven sites, and a cost/benefit assessment. The JOBS Evaluation is being carried out by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC).

The JOBS Child Outcomes Study is being carried out by Child Trends, Inc., under subcontract to MDRC, in three of the seven sites of the full JOBS Evaluation: Fulton County, Georgia, Kent County, Michigan, and Riverside County, California. Within these sites, families are included in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study if they had a youngest child of between three and five years at baseline. The experimental design of the evaluation permits an assessment of program impacts on children in families assigned to each of the experimental streams. Child outcomes are being assessed two and five years after baseline through a combination of methods: direct assessments of cognitive development; mother and teacher reports of the child's social development, adjustment and academic progress; mother reports of the child's health; and interviewer ratings of the child's behavior. The assessment of child outcomes in multiple domains of development, and the reliance on multiple informants for the examination of child outcomes, are important features of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study.

In one of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study sites (Fulton County, Georgia), a special study was carried out with the aim of describing the families' circumstances and the children's development close to individuals' enrollment in the JOBS Evaluation. This special study, the JOBS Descriptive Study, involved an in-home survey approximately three months after baseline. Because it was conducted so close to the start of the evaluation, the focus of the Descriptive Study was a detailed portrayal of the families and children rather than an examination of the impacts of the program.

A further special study being carried out only in the Fulton County site involves direct observations of mother-child interaction. This study, the JOBS Observational Study, will

indicates that family economic variables (e.g., earnings, total household income, family socioeconomic status) are strong predictors of child outcomes. For example, Duncan, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov (1994) present evidence of a linkage between family income and such important markers of children's development as IQ scores and behavior problems. These findings raise the possibility that if family income increases because of participation in a program such as JOBS, then outcomes for children might improve.

The JOBS Program, particularly in its human capital development stream, set as a further goal the enhancement of welfare recipients' basic education and job skills. A body of evidence also points to a connection between maternal educational attainment and children's developmental outcomes (e.g., Desai, Chase-Lansdale & Michael, 1989; Hauser & Mossell, 1985). Thus, changes in maternal education resulting from JOBS participation might also serve as a basis for improved child outcomes.

It is important to note that, while JOBS directly targets family income and parental education, it is also plausible that participation in JOBS might bring about changes in further "non-economic" variables within families that have been found to be linked with children's developmental status (Zaslow, Moore, Morrison & Coiro, 1995). For example, changes in maternal psychological well-being, the home environment, and participation in child care brought about by participation in JOBS could all potentially affect child outcomes. While it is reasonable to hypothesize that JOBS would have *positive* impacts on earnings and maternal education (with positive implications for child outcomes), there is no strong basis on which to make unidirectional predictions for these further variables. Indeed, it is plausible that maternal psychological well-being, the home environment, and child care experiences, could be altered by JOBS participation or increased labor market participation in a *positive or negative* direction.

Thus, for example, positive program impacts on maternal psychological well-being could be predicted on the grounds that employed mothers, in general, tend to show better mental health than mothers who are full-time caregivers (Repetti, Mathews, & Waldron, 1989; Warr & Parry, 1982). The involvement outside the home required by the JOBS mandate (through program participation and ultimately employment) could result in greater self-esteem and sense of control over events. Yet, at the same time, if participation in JOBS or employment involved substantial stress to mothers, then participation could have negative impacts on maternal psychological well-being. Wilson, Ellwood and Brooks-Gunn (1996) identified such potential sources of stress as the need to make substantial changes in daily routines for both mothers and children, and to locate child care for young children under time pressure. Further, mothers could experience stress if they were being required to participate in out-of-home activities although they felt that children required maternal care.

Similarly one can make divergent predictions regarding changes in the home

environment and in child care experiences. On the one hand, the home environment could improve if greater family income results in a move to a safer physical environment, if income is used to purchase books and toys, or if stimulation that mothers experience on the job comes to be manifested in more stimulating mother-child interactions. Yet, if mothers are substantially stressed by JOBS participation, research suggest that this would affect mother-child interactions negatively (McLoyd, 1990). Child care of high quality could have positive implications for children's development, yet unstable care or care of poor quality would have negative implications (Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow, 1990).

Thus, the JOBS Child Outcomes Study recognizes that welfare-to-work programs potentially carry both benefits and hazards for children. This is particularly true for young children, for whom the quality of mother-child interaction and out-of-home care are especially important.

It is important to note that while existing research documents linkages with child outcomes of such measures as family economic status, maternal education and maternal psychological well-being, this evidence is *correlational* in nature. That is, this evidence examines the associations between the maternal variables and measures of children's development *when the mothers spontaneously determine their own "places" on these variables*. For example, the mother chooses, within the constraints of her life circumstances, how much education to pursue. The associations between such maternal variables and child outcomes may be different when mothers are *mandated* to participate in educational or employment activities. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study is an unusual opportunity to examine whether changes occur on measures of children's development when educational and employment activities are mandated (Zaslow, Moore, Morrison and Coiro, 1995).

In sum, there are multiple pathways by which maternal participation in the JOBS Program may affect children. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study builds on the evidence showing that 1) welfare-to-work programs affect family economic status positively, and 2) the evidence linking child outcomes to family income, maternal education, maternal psychological well-being, the quality of the home environment, and the quality of child care. While the JOBS Child Outcomes Study builds on the body of work showing linkages between these variables and child outcomes, it is nevertheless important to note that the pattern of associations with child outcomes may be different under circumstances of a mandatory program than when families make their own decisions regarding their employment, income, and educational level.

B. Current Status

- **What is the timeline of the project?**

Table 1 summarizes the chronology for the JOBS Child Outcomes Study and the JOBS

Observational Study.

- **What is the current status of the project?**

Random assignment took place between September 1991 and January 1994. Information on the background characteristics and attitudes of sample members was collected just prior to random assignment.

Findings for the JOBS Descriptive Study, carried out in the Fulton County site approximately three months after baseline, were published in 1995 (Moore, Zaslow, Coiro, Miller & Magenheim, 1995).

The Two-Year Follow-up was conducted between 1993 and 1996. The data from the Two-Year Follow-up of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study are currently being analyzed.

The Five-Year Follow-up Survey and the School Progress Survey (completed by the children's teachers) are currently in the field.

The JOBS Observational Study involves two waves of data collection. The first wave of data collection, carried out 4-6 months after baseline, is complete, while the second wave, carried out approximately 4 ½ years after baseline, is still in the field. The Wave 1 data are now being analyzed.

- **Have any results been published or otherwise disseminated publicly?**

The following publications focus on the full JOBS Evaluation:

Gueron, J. M., & Pauly, E. (1991). *From Welfare to Work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Friedlander, G., & Hamilton, G. (1993). *The Saturation Work Initiative Model in San Diego: A Five-Year Follow-up Study*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Hamilton, G., & Brock, T. (1994). *The JOBS Evaluation: Early Lessons from Seven Sites*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education.

Friedlander, D., & Burtless, G. (1995). *Five Years After: The Long-Term Effects of Welfare-to-Work Programs*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Pauly, E. (1995). *The JOBS Evaluation: Adult Education for People on AFDC--A Synthesis*

of Research. U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Freedman, S., and Friedlander, D. (1995). *The JOBS Evaluation: Early Findings on Program Impacts in Three Sites*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Hamilton, G. (1995). *The JOBS Evaluation: Monthly Participation Rates in Three Sites and Factors Affecting Participation Levels in Welfare-to-Work Programs (1995)*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Hamilton, G., Brock, T., Farrell, M., Friedlander, D., and Harknett, K. (1997). *Evaluating Two Welfare-to-Work Program Approaches: Two-Year Findings on the Labor Force Attachment and Human Capital Development Programs in Three Sites*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

The following publications focus on the JOBS Child Outcomes Study:

Moore, K.A., Zaslow, M.J., Coiro, M.J., Miller, S. & Magenheim, E. (1995). *How Well Are They Faring? AFDC Families with Preschool-Aged Children in Atlanta at the Outset of the JOBS Evaluation*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Zaslow, M.J., Moore, K.A., Morrison, D.R., & Coiro, M.J. (1995). The Family Support Act and children: Potential pathways of influence. *Children and Youth Services Review, 17*, 231-249.

Zaslow, M.J., Oldham, E., Moore, K.A., & E. Magenheim (under editorial review). The implications of participation in formal child care arrangements for the cognitive and social development of children from welfare families.

The following papers have been presented focusing on issues raised by the JOBS Child Outcomes Study, or using data from the JOBS Descriptive Study or JOBS Observational Study:

Coiro, M.J. (April, 1997). Maternal depressive symptomatology as a risk factor for the

development of children in poverty. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Factors in the Development of Children in Welfare Families: An Ecological Perspective" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

Dion, M.R. (April, 1997). Implications of child characteristics for children's developmental outcomes in a welfare sample. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Factors in the Development of Children in Welfare Families: An Ecological Perspective" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

McGroder, S.M. (April, 1997). Parenting among low-income African-American single mothers with preschool-age children: Patterns, predictors, and developmental correlates. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Factors in the Development of Children in Welfare Families: An Ecological Perspective" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

Susman-Stillman, A. (April, 1997). Neighborhood influences on preschool children whose mothers are on welfare: What are the effects on child outcomes? Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Factors in the Development of Children in Welfare Families: An Ecological Perspective" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

Zaslow, M.J., Coiro, M.J. & Moore, K.A. (January, 1993). Methodological work within the Child and Family Subgroup Study of the JOBS Evaluation. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Statistical Association.

Zaslow, M.J., Dion, M.R., & Morrison, D.R. (April, 1997). Effects of the JOBS Program on mother-child interaction during the early period of maternal program participation. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Mother-Child Relations in the Context of Contrasting Programs for Welfare Families" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

Zaslow, M.J., & Eldred, C. A. (November, 1993). Observational research within contrasting two-generation interventions: The JOBS and New Chance embedded observational studies. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Evaluating Two-Generation Interventions: Recommendations for Design, Analysis, and Field Implementation" at the Second National Head Start Conference, Washington, D.C.

Zaslow, M.J., & Eldred, C.A. (August, 1994). Observational research within the evaluations of contrasting programs for welfare families: JOBS and New Chance. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Child Development and Public Policy" at the meetings of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.

Zaslow, M.J., Moore, K.A., Coiro, M.J., & Morrison, D.R. (September, 1993). The Family Support Act and children. Paper presented at the National Health Policy Forum meeting entitled "Helping AFDC Children Escape the Cycle of Poverty," Washington, D.C.

Zaslow, M.J., Moore, K.A., Coiro, M.J., and Morrison, D.R. (December, 1994). Programs to enhance the well-being of welfare families: Working towards a model of effects on children. Paper presented at the Workshop on Welfare and Child Development, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

Zaslow, M.J., Oldham, E., Moore, K.A., & Magenheim, E. (April, 1997). The implications of participation in community-based child care for the cognitive and social development of children from welfare families. Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Child Care Arrangements of Low-income and Welfare Dependent Families: How Do Children Fare?" at the meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington, D.C.

C. Goal

- **What are the stated goals of the project?**

The goal of the project is to examine whether and how mothers' mandatory participation in a welfare-to-work program, with temporary grant reductions imposed for lack of compliance with this mandate, affects the well-being of children. More specifically, this project aims to assess the impact of the JOBS welfare-to-work program in three sites on young children, and to examine the mechanisms by which any such effects occur.

Because the JOBS Program was the first time that mothers with *pre-school age* children were required to participate in activities to enhance economic self-sufficiency, it was considered particularly important that, at minimum, the program and policy *do no harm* to the young children involved. Pre-schoolers were considered particularly likely to experience changes in their daily routines, extent and quality of contact with their mothers, and out of home care as a result of the JOBS Program. Thus, it was considered important to examine program impacts in general, and to consider in detail whether the program had any negative impacts on children who were pre-schoolers when their mothers enrolled. The study set as its criterion for a "policy relevant difference" an impact on a child outcome with an effect size of at least .2 of a standard deviation. This was considered a sensitive criterion for the possibility of any negative program impacts on children, and therefore also of any positive program impacts.

Four domains of child development are included in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study: cognitive development and academic achievement; physical health and safety; social development; and child adjustment and problem behaviors. The inclusion of these four child outcome domains was considered necessary to provide a broad examination of possible child

impacts.

Besides assessing differences in these key child outcome domains among the three program groups, the project assesses the influence of intervening variables. The study asks how any discovered program impacts on child outcomes are mediated by changes in family economic status, maternal education, maternal psychological well-being, the home environment, and/or children's experiences of child care.

In addition to examining the impacts of the JOBS Program on all of the children in the study sample, the JOBS Child Outcomes study will also examine program impacts for key baseline subgroups of children. For example, the study will examine whether impacts occur for children of mothers who had and had not completed high school at baseline; whose mothers were at greater or lesser risk for clinical depression at baseline; and whose mothers had more or less of a sense of social support at baseline. The study will also examine impacts on child outcomes for families with differing *numbers* of risk factors as well as protective factors at baseline. That is, the study will ask whether an accumulation of risk factors has deleterious implications for development; whether protective factors function cumulatively; and whether the number of risk and protective factors exert a joint influence.

- **Are there other secondary goals?**

A further goal of the study is to carry out descriptive analyses focusing on the development of the children in the sample. Studies of children's development focus disproportionately on middle-class families. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study is an important resource for examining the development of children in poverty. Findings from the JOBS Descriptive Study found that close to the start of the evaluation, children in the Child Outcomes Study's Fulton County site were already at risk, particularly in measures of cognitive development. Yet the children in the sample also showed substantial heterogeneity. Variation in the development of the children in the Descriptive Study sample has been examined from multiple perspectives (e.g., by Coiro, 1995; Dion, 1997; McGroder, 1997; Moore et al., 1995; Susman-Stillman, 1997), and found to be predicted by characteristics of the children, maternal depressive symptomatology, parenting behavior, neighborhood characteristics, as well as by the accumulation of risk and protective factors in the children's families. The longitudinal nature of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study will make it possible to extend these descriptive analyses, permitting an examination of factors associated with development over time extending into middle childhood.

Methodological work is also a goal of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study. In preparing the surveys for the study it became apparent that existing measures of family processes and child outcomes have limitations, particularly when used with low income samples. Accordingly, in developing the surveys for the JOBS Child Outcomes Study we have

developed new measures. For example, we sought to develop a measure of cognitive stimulation that focused less on the possession and use of material possessions (e.g., books, toys). Methodological analyses, being carried out as part of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study and also through a grant from NICHD to improve survey measures of parenting (1R01 HD31056-01), are examining the characteristics and functioning of the new measures. For example, analyses contrast the internal consistency reliability of the existing and new measures of parenting, and compare the existing and new measures as predictors of child outcomes.

- **What are the major research questions?**

Does the JOBS Program affect children's development?

How consistent are the findings? That is, if program impacts are found, are findings consistent across the research sites? Across domains of child development? Are findings similar for the two program groups, or do we see different patterns for the human capital development group and the labor force attachment group?

Do program impacts, if any, occur across baseline subgroups, or do they occur in a more delimited set of subgroups? Can we characterize the baseline subgroups for which significant impacts occur? For example, do we see impacts particularly among those subgroups more economically disadvantaged at baseline?

Do program impacts, if any, occur at the Two-Year Follow-up, Five-Year Follow-up, or both? Does it take a period of time for impacts on child outcomes to emerge? Is it the case that impacts are seen on intervening mechanisms early, but on child outcomes later?

Which intervening mechanisms (e.g., family income, maternal educational attainment, maternal psychological well-being, the home environment, the child's experience of child care) help to explain program impacts, if any, for children? On which of the potential mediating variables are there program impacts? What direction of effects do we see on these mediating variables? For example, are program impacts on maternal psychological well-being positive or negative? Are all findings on mediating variables in the same direction, or do we see a pattern in which impacts on mediating variables occur in different directions and might have counterbalancing influences on children? Which of the mediating variables fully or partially account for impacts on children?

What are the implications for children of greater maternal program participation? How can we describe the mothers who participate more in JOBS Program activities? Above and beyond the characteristics of the mothers that predict greater program participation, do we

see any association between program participation and child outcomes?

Do we see an association between maternal employment and children's outcomes? The JOBS Program's ultimate goal is to increase family economic self-sufficiency through employment. Is such employment associated with more or less positive development in children? Do we see different patterns for children when employment comes about spontaneously (in the control group) or through a mandatory program (the program groups)? Do such associations, if they occur, persist even when we control for initial characteristics of the mothers that predict employment and may also be associated with child outcomes?

Apart from issues of program impacts, program participation, and maternal employment, are the children in this sample, on average, at risk for poor developmental outcomes? Can we document heterogeneity in their development? What are the factors that predict more and less positive developmental outcomes for the children in the sample? Are the same factors important to the children's development during the preschool and elementary school years? Do we see that children facing an accumulation of risk factors show less positive developmental outcomes? Which factors can be said to be protective for the children's development? Do protective factors also function cumulatively? Do we see a relationship between development and the simultaneous functioning of risk and protective factors? For example, are protective factors more important for those at the highest level of risk?

- **What are the underlying principles of the program? Are they published anywhere?**

The underlying assumption of the Family Support Act was that the needs of poor families are best addressed through increasing parental education, job skills and actual employment. At the same time, the Family Support Act saw a reciprocal obligation between the government and families. While it was the government's role to provide services to enhance employability, families receiving such assistance were obligated to take steps to improve their economic self-sufficiency. Failure to take such steps could result in a reduction in welfare benefits.

The publication *The JOBS Evaluation: Early Lessons from Seven Sites* (Hamilton & Brock, 1994), provides a brief history of the JOBS Program and gives an overview of the key provisions of JOBS.

D. Theory of Change

- **What are goals and what are practitioners' and researchers' expectations for change?**

The impact of the JOBS Program on children is likely to occur through multiple pathways, and both economic and noneconomic mechanisms of influence are expected to be consequential. Maternal education and family income, which are directly targeted by the JOBS Program, have well-documented positive associations with child outcomes. But children may also be expected to be affected by their increased exposure to non-maternal care, and the quality of this care is of crucial importance to young children's well-being and development. And while employment may improve maternal subjective well-being and thereby the quality of mother-child relations, it is also possible that the changes brought about in the course of a transition to employment may be stressful to family members, and may have negative implications for family relationships and the home environment.

Little research is available to date which evaluates these *multiple* potential pathways of influence on young children in the context of programs for low income families (Zaslow et al., 1995). We know little about how programs affect each of these pathways, and we know little about how the multiple pathways combine and interact to influence children's development. Thus, we cannot say that the JOBS Child Outcomes Study is guided by a fully articulated theory of change. Rather, we can say that based on previous evidence, we have sufficient information to know that it will be critical to assess program impacts on these multiple "pathway" variables (both direction and magnitude of such impacts), and to ask whether and how impacts on these variables contribute to child outcomes.

In sum, "rather than beginning with a clear unidirectional hypothesis" for program impacts on children within the JOBS Child Outcomes Study, "the possible direction of effects, and even the possibility of any effects, remain open" (Moore et al., 1995, p. 57). While it is not an *expectation* of researchers and practitioners that there will be negative program impacts on children, it is a central goal of the Child Outcomes Study to examine the "do no harm" hypothesis, that is to establish whether there are any negative impacts on children (of a magnitude that can be considered policy relevant) of the JOBS Program.

E. Design and Methods

- **What are the years of birth of the children in the sample?**

1986-1990.

- **At what ages do children provide data?**

In the JOBS Child Outcomes Study, children are ages 3-5; 5-7; and 8-10 at baseline, the Two-year Follow-up and the Five-year Follow-up respectively.

In the JOBS Descriptive Study, carried out about 3 months after random assignment, children were between 3 and 5 years of age.

The JOBS Observational Study involves two waves, the first 4-6 months after random assignment, and the second 4 ½ years after random assignment. Children are restricted to the age range of 3-4 years at the first wave, and are between 7 and 9 years of age at the second wave.

- **How is sampling done?**

Of the seven JOBS Evaluation sites, three sites were chosen for the child outcome study: Fulton, GA; Kent, MI, and Riverside, CA. As part of the JOBS Evaluation, in which the JOBS Child Outcomes Study is nested, JOBS-mandatory AFDC recipients in the three sites were randomly assigned to research groups when they attended a JOBS orientation, the first step in the path towards participation in JOBS. Within each site, individuals were randomly assigned to a group eligible for a labor force attachment approach to JOBS, a group eligible for a human capital development approach to JOBS, or a control group.

Families eligible for the JOBS Child Outcomes Study sample were those in the three JOBS Evaluation research groups in the three sites who had at least one child between the ages of three and five years at baseline (i.e., at random assignment). Identification of the families was based on information that was collected at baseline, specifically, data provided by mothers on the names and birth dates of all of their birth children who were between three and five years of age. From among those families with a three- to five-year-old birth child, a stratified, random sample was drawn. One child in each selected family was designated as the focal child for the study. If there was more than one child in the family between the ages of three and five, one child was selected at random to be the focal child.

- **What are the inclusion/exclusion criteria?**

All AFDC applicants and recipients whose youngest child was age three or over were required to participate in JOBS; some states required those with children age one or over to participate. Exemptions were granted to recipients who were ill or incapacitated, were caring for a household member who was ill or incapacitated, were under 16, were pregnant past the first trimester, or were living in areas where program services were unavailable. For the JOBS Child Outcomes Study, only families whose youngest child was age 3-5 were included, i.e., in states where families with children as young as age one were required to participate, those with a child age 3-5 who was not the youngest child were not included. Additionally, recipients who did not speak either English or Spanish were not included.

- **How many data collection sites? How many families per site?**

There are three data collection sites in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study: Fulton County (Atlanta), GA; Riverside County (Riverside), CA; and Kent County (Grand Rapids), MI. The total sample is approximately 3,000 families; approximately 1,125 of these are from Fulton County, approximately 1,125 from Riverside and approximately 750 from Kent. The sample at the Five-year Follow-up will be slightly smaller (approximately 2,250 respondents who complete both the Two-year and Five-Year Surveys).

- **What are the data collection procedures?**

As part of the JOBS Evaluation, baseline information from the mothers in the study was collected by JOBS intake employees just prior to random assignment. JOBS-eligible clients also took math and reading literacy tests at that time, and completed a short survey (the Private Opinion Survey) with questions about attitudes towards welfare and employment as well as maternal psychological well-being.

The Descriptive Survey was conducted with 790 families in the Fulton County site on average three months after random assignment, generally in the family's homes. Mothers were interviewed, and children were given assessments of school readiness and receptive vocabulary, by specially trained survey interviewers. During the maternal interview mothers were asked to describe the child's health and social maturity. A range of further topics was also addressed, including maternal employment, child care, maternal psychological well-being, parenting and the home environment, social support, contact with the child's father and with extended family. Mothers also completed a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) with questions on some of these topics, and interviewers completed ratings concerning the home environment and behaviors of the mother and child.

The Two-Year Survey was conducted two years after random assignment. It consists of a core interview with parents addressing questions of welfare dependence, family economic self-sufficiency, and JOBS participation, as well as a 20-minute interview specific to the Child Outcomes Study. Mothers reported on the children's behavior problems, positive social behaviors, academic progress and adjustment to school, and health. The Bracken Basic Concept Scale School Readiness Composite was also administered at this time, again by specially trained survey interviewers. The Two-Year Survey also includes questions about each of the intervening mechanisms we have identified as potential pathways of influence on children (family economic status, maternal education, maternal psychological well-being, home environment and child care). Interviewers again completed ratings, and mothers completed SAQs.

The Children's School Progress Survey is a mailed, self-administered questionnaire.

Data are being collected from children's teachers about five years after baseline. In the School Progress Survey, the teacher is asked to describe the student's academic achievement and ability, behavior in school, days absent and tardy, need for and use of special resources and services in school, contact with the child's mother, and the school environment.

The Five-Year Survey, administered to parents five years after random assignment usually in the family's home, consists of a core mother interview which addresses questions of educational attainment; participation in educational and employment training activities; employment and job seeking behavior; and other questions about benefits central to the larger JOBS evaluation. In addition, there is a 10-minute mother interview specific to the Child Outcomes Study; a child assessment; and parent and child self-administered questionnaires. Interviewers again complete ratings of behavior and the environment of the home and neighborhood. As part of the Five-Year Survey, mothers and children complete sections of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS); mothers rate the child's health; and the children are assessed with sections of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement-Revised (Letter-Word Identification; Passage Comprehension; Calculation; and Applied Problems). As for the other survey waves, mothers also responded to questions (in interview format and in SAQ format) concerning each of the possible "pathway" variables, and interviewers complete ratings.

The JOBS Observational Study involves a further visit to respondents' homes approximately 4-6 months after baseline, and again 4 ½ years after baseline. As we have noted, this study is being carried out only in the Fulton County site of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study. During the observational study visits, mothers and children are videotaped engaging in a series of structured interaction tasks (e.g., reading a book together, playing a word guessing game, assembling blocks to match a model). Mothers are also given a brief interview and SAQ, and interviewers complete ratings. The videotapes of mother-child interaction are coded in two university research laboratories. A team led by Byron Egeland, Nancy Weinfield and John Ogawa at the University of Minnesota code the tapes from the point of view of the affective quality of mother-child interaction; and a team led by Catherine Snow, Patton Tabors and Jeanne De Temple at Harvard University code the tapes from the point of view of literacy-related behaviors.

- **How is language use being addressed for participants who are Spanish-only speakers or other non-English speakers?**

Spanish-only speakers are present in the Riverside and Kent samples only. All surveys and assessments were translated into Spanish, and bilingual interviewers were used. Recipients who did not speak English or Spanish were excluded from the JOBS Child Outcomes Study.

- **What family structures are included?**

Family structure was not a criterion for inclusion or exclusion for the study, though information on respondents' marital status was obtained. However, since all families in the study were receiving AFDC as of baseline (random assignment), the vast majority of the sample children were living with their mother only, or with their mother and other relatives, at baseline. Marital status is captured in each subsequent survey wave, in order to track any changes that occur after baseline.

- **Is there a control group or baseline comparison? How are program effects estimated?**

The study contains three randomly-created research groups: a control group and two program groups: the human capital development group (which emphasizes education and training activities) and the labor force attachment group (which emphasizes quick entry in the job market). Since random assignment was used, individuals in the three groups did not differ systematically in their measured and unmeasured background characteristics. As a result, any differences in their subsequent job search, education, training, employment, or welfare experiences, as well as the well-being of their children, can be attributed with confidence to the effects of a particular welfare-to-work approach. Program effects are examined by testing for significant differences between groups on means. These analyses contrast scores on child outcomes separately for the human capital development group and the control group; and for the labor force attachment group and the control group. Subgroup impacts are examined by testing for significant differences on the child outcome measures within subgroups defined according to baseline variables. Where significant program impacts are found, effect sizes are calculated. This study uses as a criterion for "policy relevant" differences an effect size of at least .2 of a standard deviation.

- **To what extent are (a) program implementation and (b) program "processes" assessed?**

As part of the JOBS Evaluation, MDRC is carrying out an implementation, participation, and cost analysis in all sites. Results for the three sites included in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study are detailed in Hamilton, Brock, Farrell, Friedlander, and Harknett (1997).

F. Measures

- **What information is collected on:**

- child

Assessments of cognitive development: the school readiness component of the Bracken Basic Concept Scale two years after random assignment; the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Achievement test five years after random assignment.

Further measures of cognitive development: maternal report measures of school progress/adaptation; engagement in school; learning problems requiring special education. Teacher report measures (on School Progress Survey) of academic ability and achievement, behavior in school, need for and use of special services, absences and tardiness.

Physical health and safety outcomes: maternal rating of child health; accidents/injuries; insurance coverage; health care utilization.

Adjustment and social behavior: maternal report of behavior problems (Behavior Problems Index; Social Skills Rating System), behavior in school (Social Skills Rating System); and positive social behaviors (Positive Behaviors Index; Social Skills Rating System). Child self-report using the full Social Skills Rating System.

Current child care use and child care history

- parents

Mother:

Maternal psychological well-being (depression using the CES-D scale, social support, use of/need for counseling, time stress).

Difficult life circumstances

Literacy tests (Test of Applied Literacy Skills; GAIN Appraisal math test)

Education and employment (educational attainment; participation in educational programs and JOBS skills training; current employment; employment history)

Current AFDC receipt and AFDC history

Health (health status; substance use/abuse)

Attitudes toward work, maternal employment and welfare

Parenting behaviors

Father:

Child's contact with father and with father's family

Child support

- family

Household size/composition

Mother's own children in the household and outside of the household: developmental or school problems; whether children have ever been removed from her care; schooling; special classes; disability; health insurance; whether children have had or fathered a baby

Family income; sources of income; non-cash benefits; child support; support from father's family

- peers

Teacher assessment of child's social skills

- school

Teacher assessment of child's school progress/adaptation, achievement, school engagement, behavior in school and social skills

- other

Neighborhood (interviewer description of the street; condition of exterior of neighborhood homes)

Physical characteristics of the home

Residential stability

- **How are variables such as ethnicity, income and poverty being measured and coded?**

Ethnicity, earnings in the past 12 months, employment status and information on public assistance status and history were collected as part of the JOBS intake process prior to random assignment. Ethnic groups include white non-Hispanic; Hispanic; black non-Hispanic; black

Hispanic; Native American/Alaskan Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; and other. Detailed information on AFDC spells, total prior AFDC receipt, and whether the respondent resided in an AFDC household as a child is available. Each of the survey waves includes a set of questions aimed at obtaining total family income, by source, as of the month prior to the survey interview.

- **Have measures been modified to be relevant across cultures? If so--how?**

Efforts have been made to extend the measures of parenting to be more sensitive to low income samples. For example, many of the questions concerning cognitive development available in existing measures focus on possession and use of materials like books and toys, or outings that may require expenditures. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study includes items that focus on cognitive stimulation that occurs without reliance on physical objects or the expenditure of money.

- **Does the study include/exclude children with disabilities? Have measures been altered to accommodate children with disabilities?**

Disabled children are included in the study, although mothers who had a disabled child who required a great deal of care were exempt from the JOBS Program. In the two-year survey mothers were asked whether the focal child or any of their other children were currently getting help for any emotional, mental, or behavioral problem, and if any of their children had an illness or disability that demanded a lot of their attention and affected their job or school attendance. Measures were not altered to accommodate disabled children.

- **How is the home environment being assessed?**

Each of the survey waves of the JOBS Child Outcomes Study includes interview questions concerning parenting, as well as interviewer ratings of the home environment.

The measures of parenting and the home environment include items from the short form of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) Inventory, as well as further items developed specifically for this study. The new measures seek to describe aspects of cognitive stimulation that do not require material possessions (e.g., toys, books) or expenditures (e.g., for trips to museums); extend the construct of discipline beyond the issue of physical punishment; and attempt to sharpen the construct of emotional support in the mother-child relationship. Methodological work within the Descriptive Study sample (funded through NICHD grant 1R01 HD31056-01) will contrast the HOME-short form scales and parenting scales that integrate the new items from the point of view of internal consistency reliability and prediction to child outcomes.

The JOBS Observational Study will provide a detailed examination of parenting behavior for a subsample of 370 families from the Fulton County site, based on direct observation of mother-child interactions.

- **How is the child care environment being assessed?**

All child care information is being provided by the mother. Information being collected includes type of care, number of days/hours in care, the child's history of non-maternal care, whether the mother missed work because of problems with child care arrangements and child care subsidies received.

- **Is the quality of child care being measured?**

Besides collecting detailed information from the mother on characteristics of current care, a few maternal report measures of the quality of child care are included: the current group size/ratio and caregiver training, as well as costs of care and the amount of subsidies.

- **How is health care being measured?**

The physical health and safety outcomes being measured for the focal child include the mother's rating of child health; health care utilization, including doctor and dentist visits; insurance coverage; and whether the child has any hearing or seeing problems. Other measures are collected for all of the mother's own children in the household: whether any have a disability, illness, emotional problem or mental condition that limits the child's ability to attend school or engage in other activities; accidents/injuries; and whether there was a lapse in insurance coverage.

- **Are research subjects' access to and participation in social services assessed? If so-how?**

As part of the JOBS Evaluation program implementation and participation assessment mentioned above, mothers are interviewed -- at the two-year and five-year point -- about their participation in education and training activities and work experience, employment and job-seeking behavior, and other activities. Respondents are also asked to evaluate their experiences in these programs. In addition, data are collected on the use of AFDC, Food Stamps, and transitional Medicaid and child care. Finally, data are collected on children's receipt of services for physical and emotional problems. These data are collected for individuals in all three research groups, in order to provide an estimate of the participation and services that occurred as a result of JOBS, i.e., beyond what normally occurs within low-income populations.

Observations of program operations, interviews with program staff, and reviews of individuals' program case files were also conducted, to assess the mothers' access to program activities and social services. These methods were also used to provide information on the nature, quality, and "dosage" of these activities and services.

- **How does the 1996 welfare bill affect the initiative? What steps, if any, are being taken to deal with that?**

Depending on how states respond to the 1996 welfare bill, and the speed with which they respond, the bill has the potential to affect the "treatment" received by the three research groups in each site involved in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study.

The State of Georgia, for example, responded to the 1996 welfare bill by implementing welfare time limits throughout the state in late 1996. MDRC's position is that if research sample members are subject to welfare time limits, then they must be eligible to receive some type of welfare-to-work program services in order to enable them to find employment as quickly as possible and "stop the clock." As a result, the Fulton JOBS Evaluation site was given permission to allow control group members to receive welfare-to-work program services in late 1996. As of that point, all Fulton sample members had at least three years of follow-up; some had as much as five years of follow-up. In addition, at the same point in time, all sample members became subject to Atlanta's new "work first" program, consisting of applicant job search and quick employment-focused activities. Using data from the five-year client survey, it will be possible to assess the extent to which the treatment group differentials in Fulton become blurred in the last one to two years of the five-year follow-up period.

In contrast, the State of Michigan is not planning to implement welfare time limits. For approximately one-half of the Kent sample, the "no-services" control group was preserved for three years; for the other one-half of the sample, the control group is being preserved for five years. The labor force attachment and human capital development programs are still both in operation.

As of this writing, the State of California is debating its welfare reform plan. Welfare time limits, however, are unlikely to be part of the plan. By the time a state plan is agreed upon and fully implemented, almost all Riverside sample members will have had five years of follow-up.

G. Units of analysis

- **What level data are there?**

The unit of analysis differs for different questions. Child impacts are assessed at the level of the individual child, with one child serving as the focal child in each family. The mother is the unit of analysis for such issues as maternal psychological well-being. The family is the unit of analysis for such

- **Are data analyzed by research question?**

Analyses address the series of research questions noted above. Such analyses are currently in progress for the Two-year Follow-up.

- **For multi-site initiatives--are there site-level analyses?**

Yes; most results will be presented at the site level since the programs and populations being served in each site vary greatly.

- **Are data analyzed by policy-related variables such as race, ethnicity, income? If so, how are these variables coded?**

As noted above, race and ethnicity were coded via respondent self-report at baseline. The primary analyses for the JOBS Child Outcomes Study will examine program impacts by group within site. However, subgroup impacts will be examined, where appropriate, by race/ethnicity. The study will examine program impacts on family income, and will also assess whether changes in family income play a role in shaping program impacts on children.

H. Results/findings

- **If data on the primary research questions have been analyzed, briefly, what are the findings?**

The brief summary below of findings from the initial Descriptive Study is taken from the Executive Summary of the study:

“A clear theme is that the mothers in the Fulton Descriptive sample are in many ways highly disadvantaged. On average, their reading and math literacy skills are low. Although they enjoy social support from family and friends, they report minimal economic or non-economic assistance from the father of their children. In addition, they have high rates of depressive symptoms and they experience numerous difficulties in the course of everyday life. At the same time, however, we note that most of the mothers in the sample had completed high school or a GED, most had positive attitudes

about maternal employment, and most had taken steps to limit their childbearing.

Similarly, the three-to-five-year-old children are also clearly disadvantaged at the outset of the JOBS program. As rated by their mothers, the children's maturity does not represent a problem; however, the children's receptive vocabulary is substantially below the mean for a national sample of children; and many of the children appear to lack the skills and knowledge that would make them ready to enter school. While a large majority of mothers in the sample described their children as in excellent or very good health, these ratings are somewhat less favorable than those reported in a national sample of nonpoor children. Given that these children are already faring poorly in some respects, it seems entirely appropriate that policy makers, program providers, and the public consider whether and/or how the JOBS program may affect children.

A second recurring theme of the analyses is the heterogeneity of the population of welfare mothers eligible for JOBS. For example, some mothers hold positive attitudes about becoming employed, while a minority feel that mothers with young children should not work. Some mothers have received AFDC for a much longer period of time than others. A substantial proportion of women have high levels of depressive symptoms, but many others do not...

Had the mothers proven to be more uniform in their work attitudes, goals, psychological well-being, skills, and the social support they receive, the JOBS mandate might have more uniform implications for children. However, early results indicating substantial subgroup variation suggest that the JOBS program is likely to elicit varied responses from both mothers and children. Hence, subgroup differences should be a critical component of further analyses. In particular, multiple risk families stand out as a group whose children are especially disadvantaged. On a more positive note, we were also able to identify a set of protective factors, greater numbers of which were associated with more positive child development. The mutual influence of risk and protective factors present at the start of the JOBS program may be an important determinant of both participation in, and impacts of the program.

Finally, the data suggest that the JOBS mandate is translating into initial changes in the lives of many AFDC mothers and their children. [Note: There were already increases in child care participation in both experimental groups, and in maternal employment in the labor force attachment groups several months after baseline]. The effects of these apparent early changes will combine with any later program impacts on maternal education, earnings, and self-sufficiency. Thus early data suggest that the JOBS mandate has the potential to affect the lives of two generations, and provide strong reason to track the well-being of both generations over time." (Moore et al., 1995, pp. xxx-xxx)

I. Limitations

- **What aspects of the study limit its generalizability?**

The study is generalizable to young children in the AFDC population whose mothers were required to participate in the JOBS Program. However, the number of sites is limited, and the sample is not nationally representative. This is an issue of concern since the programs available and population characteristics vary greatly from site to site. The focus of the study is limited to children age three to five at the outset of the mother's participation in JOBS.

- **What aspects of the study limit its validity (internal and external)?**

While the study does contain direct assessments of the children's school readiness and achievement at multiple points in time, as well as teacher report of the child's adaptation to school (and observational data for a subset of the human capital development and control groups), other information about the child is collected largely through mothers' self-report (e.g., ratings of the child's health and health care use) and has not been corroborated by other external sources. Information about child care is collected from mothers' reports without verification from providers. Similarly, measures of father involvement and child support are maternal report measures.

J. Public Use Files

- **Are the data available for public access?**

Data from the Descriptive Study will be available for secondary analysis in the near future from Sociometrics. The videotapes and data from the JOBS Observational Study will be available for secondary analysis from the Murray Center at Radcliffe College. Use of the video archive requires approval of a written proposal, indicating that the tapes will be used for research purposes only, laying out the research questions and analysis plan, and providing written assurance that the confidentiality of the data will be protected.

- **If not, when will public use files be available?**

Data from the Two-year and Five-year Follow-ups in the JOBS Child Outcomes Study are contractually scheduled to be made public in 1999. MDRC and Child Trends are in the process of exploring the feasibility of creating these public use files earlier and making them available by mid- to late-1998.

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Table 1, continued

DATES	JOBS Child Outcomes Study				JOBS Observational Study	
	Descriptive Survey	Two-Year Survey	Five- Year Survey	Children's School Progress Survey	Wave 1	Wave 2
Fall 1995		Two-Year Survey data collection ends in Riverside County	Draft of survey submitted to HHS			
January 1996						Wave 2 Pretesting begins
May 1996			Five- Year Survey submitted to OMB	Survey submitted to OMB		
July 1996		Two-Year Survey data collection ends in Fulton and Kent Counties				
August 1996						Wave 2 observational data collection begins
September - October, 1996			Five- Year Survey data collection begins in Riverside County	CSPS data collection begins in Riverside County		
February, 1997		Two-Year Survey analysis file available				
March, 1997			Five-Year Survey data collection begins in Fulton and Kent Counties	CSPS data collection begins in Fulton and Kent Counties		
August 1997					Merged data file for Wave 1 Observational Study and Descriptive Study Analyses begins on merged file	Fieldwork complete

Table 1
Chronology for the JOBS Child Outcomes and Observational Studies

DATES	JOBS Child Outcomes Study				JOBS Observational Study	
	Descriptive Survey	Two-Year Survey	Five- Year Survey	Children's School Progress Survey	Wave 1	Wave 2
March 1992	In-Home Descriptive Survey data collection initiated					
Oct. 1992					Wave 1 Observational data collection initiated	
Aug. 1993	Preliminary Descriptive Survey data file available					
Fall 1993		Two-Year Survey data collection initiated in Riverside County			Wave 1 Observational data collection ends	
Dec. 1993	Descriptive Survey data collection ends					
Jan. 1994	Descriptive Survey analysis file available				Wave 1 Observational analysis file available	
March 1994		Two-Year Survey data collection initiated in Fulton and Kent Counties				
Fall 1994	Draft of Descriptive Report completed					
May 1995	Final Draft of Descriptive Report Submitted to HHS		Survey collection approved by DHHS			

Table 1, continued

DATES	JOBS Child Outcomes Study				JOBS Observational Study	
	Descriptive Survey	Two-Year Survey	Five-Year Survey	Children's School Progress Survey	Wave 1	Wave 2
Fall 1997					Merged data file including Two-Year survey available	
Winter 1997					Final report on Wave 1 Observational Study	
Spring 1998		Final report on Two-Year Survey data				
Summer 1998						Merged survey and observational analysis file available
Summer 1999			Final file available	Final file available		
Fall 1999						Final report on Wave 2 Observational Study
Summer 2000			Final report Five-Year Survey data	Final report on School Progress Survey data		