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Lydia Bentin Blalock

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DOES ACHIEVING SOCIAL POLICY GOALS INSURE POSITIVE OUTCOMES: 
FROM WELFARE RELIANCE TO WAGE WORK IN RURAL LOUISIANA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the 
Louisiana State University and 
Agricultural and Mechanical College 
in partial fulfillment of the 
requirements for the degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Ecology

by
Lydia Blalock
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1993 
M.S., Louisiana State University, 1997
August 2002
Acknowledgments

Prayerful thanks must go first to my Father in Heaven, without whose blessings, guidance, and extraordinary assistance I would not have completed my program of study or this dissertation. I am grateful to my committee members for the support and guidance they provided. I appreciate the confidence Dr. Pam Monroe had to unleash me upon this project, and the continued support and friendship of Dr. Betsy Garrison. I thank them for being my friends as well as mentors. I also wish to thank Dr. Jim Garand, Dr. Gerri Holmes, and Dr. Nena Cross for their valuable insights as I completed this work.

I am indebted to the many individuals who assisted in some way with this project, you know who you are. Kelly, you were an invaluable assistant and supporter. I am also very appreciative of my students, who through their questions helped me to refine this project and who always believed I would one day be “Dr.” Blalock. Thanks also for the support of various graduate students as they have passed through and in many cases completed their programs: Michele D., Jeanette, Pete, Denese, Elizabeth A., Michelle K., and Elizabeth B. to name a few.

Words of appreciation and love do not begin to convey my feelings for my co-researcher, Vicky Tiller. I’ll settle for a few key words instead: fried bread, cane fields, bridges, Franklin, tape recorders, bridges, maps, New Iberia, bridges, goats in the road, gesticulating wildly, Alexandria, files, Raceland, bridges, Thibadeaux, batteries, good food, sandbags on highways, bridges, Dollar General, fallen trees, Ferriday, bridges, not so good food, thunderstorms, and picnics – wait, we never did get to do that did we! Oh, and did I mention the bridges? I love you, and as far as I’m concerned this project and degree are at least half yours! I owe you far more than I can ever hope to repay.
I owe a great deal to my mom and dad, Blanca and Ed Bentin, for driving into this very dense head the desire to question and learn, and for instilling in me the belief that there is nothing I can not do. Mom, thanks for the thousands of prayers and candles and daddy, thanks for never losing faith in me. There was at least one point that I would have quit, but the thought of disappointing you kept me going.

I cannot sufficiently express my feelings of gratitude for the special spirits and long-suffering support of my children: Kenneth, Kelsey, Aaron, and Lindsey. Thanks for putting up with all the craziness, and for all the help you provided. I only hope that having struggled with me to accomplish this goal, you will have learned that you, too, can accomplish anything you set your hearts and minds upon.

And finally, I want my husband Kenny to know that forever is too short. Thank-you.
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Abstract

This research was Wave II of a longitudinal, qualitative study designed to describe the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This particular study looked at a subset of women ($n=12$) from Wave II and explored two questions: (a) Whether the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translated into rural women finding and keeping jobs; and (b) What is the likelihood that the women employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and realize self-sufficiency.

Human ecology, rational choice, and behavioral change theories guided this research. Whether women adapt to changed societal expectations and successfully transition from welfare dependence to self-sufficiency is dependent upon the women’s micro and macro-environments and whether they can make a second-order behavioral change regarding work. Sustained second-order change requires that the women’s environments must also change. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the women in their homes using a semi-structured interview approach. The data were analyzed using predictor-outcome matrices.

The simple answer to whether the women had found jobs was “no,” as only two (17%) of the twelve women were employed for pay. The women not employed, however, represented three distinct sets: volunteers, students, and women not engaged in any work-related activities. The volunteers and students were engaged in activities that allowed them to maintain their benefits. The second research question addressed whether the employed women would be likely to maintain their work effort and achieve self-sufficiency. This research provided evidence that these women may be likely to sustain work, but will probably not attain self-sufficiency without either altering the definition of self-sufficiency, or fundamentally restructuring the supports
available to them in the socio-cultural environment. Implications for future research, policy, and programming include additional longitudinal studies on child outcomes, and policy and programming that considers the environmental factors that may assist or hinder women’s transition from welfare reliance to self-sufficiency.
Introduction

Today, we are ending welfare as we know it. But I hope that this day will be remembered not for what it ended, but for what it began -- a new day that offers hope, honors responsibility, rewards work, and changes the terms of the debate (President William Jefferson Clinton).

In 1996 welfare as we knew it ended with passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) (P. L. 104-193). In addition to devolving power back to the states, PRWORA promised to: reduce welfare rolls, decrease out-of-wedlock childbearing without increasing abortion, substantially increase child support collections from non-custodial fathers, and encourage the formation of two-parent families. It is hard to identify another social policy in recent history that has stirred as much controversy, generated as much debate, or stimulated as much research as has this piece of legislation.

It is generally accepted that welfare reform has “far exceeded expectations of proponents and skeptics alike” and that most objectives outlined in PRWORA have been achieved (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; National Governors’ Association [NGA], 1998a). The 40% nation-wide decline in welfare caseloads within two short years of implementation was evidence of the success of PRWORA. The State of Louisiana has seen a greater than 50% decline in welfare caseloads in the past few years, and is well on the way to achieving the 80% reduction required by 2002. These reductions have been attributed generally to increased employment levels for former recipients.

Despite indications of progress toward reducing welfare dependence, much remains unknown about how families fare after leaving welfare with respect to economic stability and family wellbeing. Researchers are carefully examining the challenges faced by families making the longer-term transition from welfare reliance to employment and self-sufficiency.
The term *self-sufficiency* is used extensively in poverty and welfare research literature, yet exactly what constitutes *self-sufficiency* is rarely described or explained. Federal and state welfare reform guidelines often refer to the importance of increased *self-sufficiency* among government assistance recipients, but the publications also fail to provide a working definition of the term. The unspoken rule of thumb seems to be that welfare dependence is the antithesis of self-sufficiency. Edin (1995) provides a succinct discussion about the overall absurdness of the idea that a woman and her family can "depend" exclusively upon welfare to meet her family's needs. Conversely, the typical entry-level minimum wage job commonly available to a woman exiting welfare can hardly be expected to provide for that woman and her family without some kind of assistance. So, if government entities and poverty scholars use *self-sufficiency* to imply 'meeting basic family needs,' then at the very least it should also include 'without government assistance.' Therefore, the term *self-sufficient* can be applied to anyone able to meet his or her family's basic needs without government assistance traditionally associated with poverty: TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance, or childcare subsidies (Dill, 2000; Rogers & Weil, 2000).

While indeed many, and perhaps a majority, of families may be faring better since implementation of PRWORA, there have been some indications that many families are suffering hardships (Guyer & Mann, 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Lehman & Danziger, 1997; Sherman et al., 1998). Researchers predict that children will experience the greatest hardships: child poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, increased child welfare agency participation rates, and failure to have basic needs met (Division of Economic Support, 1999; Duncan, 1998; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; McLanahan, 2000; Sherman et al., 1998; Wellstone & Edelman, 1997).
In 1998 the National Governor’s Association expressed the need for follow-up studies to provide feedback critical to state policy makers and program administrators. It is important for each state to know whether the reforms adopted are working or whether program modifications are needed to ensure that families not only move successfully from welfare to work, but remain securely attached to the labor force, thus perhaps achieving some measure of self-sufficiency. As reauthorization of PRWORA approaches, the federal government, state governments, social services advocates, academic researchers, and a host of others are attempting to understand the legislation’s effects, impacts, and ramifications.

The need to understand the possible consequences of PRWORA legislation drove the conception, formation, and implementation of this research project. The purpose of this research was to describe and contrast the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by PRWORA. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted in 1998-99 with 54 women attempting to achieve self-sufficiency without welfare reliance. This constituted Phase II of a longitudinal project; the participants were first interviewed in 1996-97.

Of primary interest was exploring what welfare reform policy success meant in the lives of affected rural families. Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs? What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and reach self-sufficiency? In other words: Does achieving social policy goals insure positive family outcomes?
Review of Literature

Poverty

Introduction

Families who rely upon welfare for any or all of their “income” are in poverty; they lack sufficient resources to obtain services and goods needed to achieve a bare minimum standard of living. There is a great deal of poverty research available from a wide range of fields including social work, policy studies, economics, political science, health and medicine, labor and development, and human ecology. It is beyond the scope of this document to include a comprehensive discussion about poverty. Therefore, this section will provide only a brief overview of the theoretical causes of poverty, rural poverty, and the effects of being poor.

The original poverty standards were developed over forty years ago based upon three times the amount of money needed to feed a family on the USDA’s “thrifty food plan.” The rationale at the time was that food made up about one-third of a family’s expenditures. The U.S. Census Bureau updates the poverty threshold annually for inflation, and rates are computed based upon total money income before taxes (Bell, 1995; Dalaker, 1999; Renwick & Bergmann, 1993).

It should be noted, however that many poverty scholars and economists believe that this definition is problematic, thus there is continuing debate over the appropriateness of the measure. First, families currently spend only about 15% of their incomes on food, indicating a need to revise the 33% standard (Bell, 1995). Some researchers advocate that including transfer payments and all other forms of government assistance in addition to actual “money” income would provide a more accurate standard to measure against the federally defined poverty threshold (Renwick & Bergmann, 1993). Standards based upon consumption needs also have been suggested (Jorgenson, 1998; Renwick & Bergmann, 1993; Slesnick, 1993). Some theorists
propose using a “relative” measure; an individual’s economic status would be measured against some predefined norm for that population (Bell, 1995; O'Boyle, 1999).

Regional differences in the cost of living pose problems, as does the additional factor of whether these families are working. A household that registers just above the poverty line based upon the standard money income definition may still be impoverished if a member of the family is in the workforce, because of the costs associated with work (Edin & Lein, 1997; Ellwood, 1988). Alternate measures of poverty may affect who is classified as poor, but overall poverty trends should not be affected (Dalaker, 1999). To debate the pros and cons of each position is also beyond the scope of this work, so for convenience this discussion uses the traditional federal threshold.

Poverty in the United States

The data for this study were collected during a nine-month period that spanned 1997-1998. The national poverty rates reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the period included the proverbial good news/bad news scenario. In 1998, the total poverty rate for the U.S. was down from 13.3% in 1997 to 12.7%. This represented 1.1 million fewer persons in poverty in 1998 than in the preceding year. The poverty rates for whites (not of Hispanic origin) declined from 8.6% in 1997 to 8.5% in 1998, for a total of 692,000 individuals escaping poverty. The Hispanic population improved their rate from 27.1% in 1997 to 25.6% in 1998, a net decrease of 238,000 people. Perhaps the most significant improvement in any of the reported rates was for children. In 1997, the total poverty rate for children under 18 was 19.9%. The 1998 rate dropped significantly to 18.9%, meaning that 600,000 fewer children were living in poverty conditions (Dalaker, 1999).
Regional poverty rates also improved. The poverty rate for the South dropped from 14.6% in 1997 to a new low of 13.7%. The U.S. Census Bureau also classifies poverty according to family structure. In 1998 the poverty rates for Black as well as Hispanic married-couple families decreased. White non-Hispanic and Hispanic single-mother families also experienced declines (Dalaker, 1999).

A careful reading of the U.S. Census Bureau report uncovered the not-so-good news. The Black poverty rate remained unchanged from 1997 to 1998 at 26.1%. Poverty rates increased for White married-couple families (161,000) and Black single-mother families (6,000). The rest of the story is even more revealing. A look at the actual numbers of people in poverty paints a more detailed picture than looking only at the rates. In 1998, a total of 34,476,000 men, women, and children lived below the federally established poverty level. The breakdown by ethnicity was White 23,454,000 (15,799,000 White not Hispanic), Black 9,091,000, Asian 1,360,000, and Hispanic origin of any race 8,070,000 (Dalaker, 1999).

In spite of an impressive drop in the poverty rate, 13,467,000 children under the age of 18, lived in impoverished circumstances. This represents 39% of the total population in poverty. In 1998, children comprised only 23% of the U.S. population indicating that a disproportional number of children are in poverty. In addition, the rate of poverty for children was higher than for all other age groups. Married-couple families in poverty included 2,400,000 White, 290,000 Black, and 775,000 Hispanic all races. There were 2,123,000 White single-mother families, 1,557,000 Black single-mother families and 756,000 single-mother families of Hispanic origin (all races) in poverty. Single-mother families made up 53% of all poor families.

The 1998 reports by regional stratification numbered 12,992,000 (13.7%) people in poverty in the South. Other regions were Northeast with 6,357,000 (12.3%) individuals, the
Midwest with 6,501,000 (10.3%), and the West with 8,625,000 (14.0%). Inner cities had a total of 14,921,000 (18.5%) individuals in poverty and outside metropolitan areas totaled 7,479,000 (14.4%).

Poverty in the United States is a long way from eradication. A comparison of 1998 rates to 1989 rates indicates the poverty rate in most categories has remained fairly stable over the past decade, no mean accomplishment given the incredible economic recovery of the 1990s. Poverty rates that did manage to decline substantially were for total Blacks (from 30.8% to 26.1%), total Black families (from 27.9% to 23.4%), Black married-couple families (11.7% to 7.3%) and Black single-mother families (46.7% to 40.8%).

In 1997, the total poverty rate for the state of Louisiana was 18.4% of the population, or 800,725 individuals, of which 40% (316,991) were children under the age of 18. Thirteen percent of Louisiana’s children were in deep poverty, defined as income below 50% of the poverty level (Figure 1). Poverty data from 1994 (Figure 2) indicated that 54.1% of non-white residents were in poverty, compared to a national rate of 35.5% (www.lhaonline.org/la_hc_facts.html). Information available from the Census Bureau for 1997 revealed that 25.7% of families with children under the age of 18 lived in poverty. Sixty percent of all single mother families in Louisiana were in poverty. By race, 36% of White and 71.4 % of Black single-mother families were in poverty. Perhaps most distressing was that 73.4% of single mother families with children under the age of five were poverty-stricken (Figure 3). In addition, the 1990 census reported that over half
(56.5%) of Louisiana’s Black children under 18 were impoverished, as were 15.4% of White children.

Antecedents of Poverty

What do poverty scholars believe are the precursors to poverty? There are many possibilities described in the research literature, ranging from individual deficits to government economic policies to increased income inequality. Following is a brief summary of several of the major predictors or theories of poverty. It should be understood that for virtually every indicator or perspective supported by published research, an equal body of literature is found that disputes the point. The following discussion is not an attempt to support or reject the various predictors of poverty, but rather to demonstrate the complexity of plausible factors and situations that must be considered by scholars, advocates, and policymakers when trying to develop responsible solutions.

A major indicator or predictor of poverty is educational attainment. Individuals in poverty generally have completed less formal education than individuals above the poverty line (Hale, 1997; Horton & Allen, 1998; Mauldin, 1990; Mayer, 1997). Many researchers ascertain that a high school education is no longer enough to protect against poverty due to the decline in
manufacturing jobs and the increase in service sector jobs. Younger workers experience the most hardship if not college educated. Advancing technology favors skilled labor and a college education. This is particularly prevalent in industries heavily dependent upon computer technology (Cooper, 1998; Danziger & Reed, 1999; Haveman, 1994; Katz, 1996; Mauldin, 1990; Mayer, 1997; Plotnick, Smolensky, Evenhouse, & Reilly, 1998; Wilson, 1996).

Family structure has been implicated as a root cause of poverty. The research is fairly conclusive that single parent families not only run a high risk of experiencing poverty, but that the duration of poverty spells will be longer (Eggebeen & Lichter 1991; Ellwood, 1988; Geltman, Meyers, Greenberg, & Zuckerman, 1996; Gottschalk, McLanahan, & Sandefur, 1994; Haveman, 1994; Horton & Allen, 1998; Plotnick et al., 1998; Rank & Hirschl, 1999). Especially at risk are female-headed households, women with physical custody of their children (Foster & Furstenberg, 1999; Mauldin, 1990; Mayer, 1997; Rank & Hirschl, 1999). Research indicates that the rapid increase in teen parents and single mother families is responsible for as much as 50% of the increase in child poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 1998 the rate of poverty for children under age six living in single mother homes was five times the rate of children under six in married-couple homes (Bianchi, 1999; Dalaker, 1999; Eggebeen & Lichter, 1991; Geltman et al., 1996).

Poverty may be the result of national or global economic factors. Low wages and underemployment are major problems. Over the past two decades, manufacturing jobs have declined steadily while service sector jobs have increased. Manufacturing jobs traditionally provided low-skilled workers with a good living wage and many benefits. Service sector jobs typically hire low-skilled workers at the prevailing minimum wage, usually without benefits. Often individuals work less than full time hours. Research indicates, however, that even with
full-time employment, most families would remain in poverty because of inadequate wages. High unemployment rates across the nation or within sub-populations usually affect the poor much worse than other economic segments (Albelda, 1999; Bianchi, 1999; Blank, 1994; Danziger & Gottschalk, 1986, 1995; Ellwood, 1988; Geltman et al., 1996; Haveman, 1994; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Hill, 1998; Thompson & McDowell, 1994; Tobin, 1994).

Race appears to be a factor that contributes to the likelihood of experiencing poverty. Favorable economic opportunities for Black men have steadily declined for the past 20 years. Research suggests that there is evidence of continued discrimination against Black individuals regarding employment, promotion, and wages. Studies have documented that even when using statistical controls, race is a significant factor in predicting economic wellbeing (Albelda, 1999; Cooper, 1998; Corcoran, 1995; Lichter & Eggebeen, 1993; Mauldin, 1990; Rank & Hirschl, 1999; Skolnick, 1995). For Blacks, race is more significant than education, occupation, and region, even though these variables are significant predictors of poverty for whites (Horton & Allen, 1998).

Many scholars employ the “Culture of Poverty” theory to explain the intergenerational nature of poverty. The original intent of “culture of poverty” author Lewis (a Marxist) was to praise the incredibly creative and adaptive behaviors of the poor, rather than condemn them for their condition. Lewis argued that these behaviors are necessary for people to survive in otherwise bleak and threatening environmental conditions. Communities that seem immersed in this “culture” demonstrate high levels of creativity, resourcefulness, and flexibility. The only way for the following generations to survive is to be schooled in these adaptive strategies and accumulated “wisdom” (Harvey & Reed, 1996; Lewis, 1966; Stack, 1974).
The “Culture of Poverty” theory was somewhat misinterpreted as an indictment against the poor, and became something of a rallying cry for conservatives in the mid-80s (Ellwood, 1988; Kaus, 1986; Murray, 1984; Stack, 1974). Many policymakers and scholars did not view this theory as a testament to adaptation and survival. Instead the culture of the poor was restated in terms of intergenerational laziness, moral decline, and lack of responsibility for self or others. People lived in poverty by choice because there was more “wisdom” in surviving on government largess than on paid work. Murray (1984) used the culture theory to support his thesis about the welfare trap – public assistance programs were directly responsible for the impoverishment of the very families relying upon cash transfers for the majority of their income. Families dependent upon government aid were “trapped” because incentives to leave welfare for paid work were nonexistent. Once families were caught in this government-sponsored trap, then it was natural that traditional values would begin to crumble (Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Garfinkel & McLanahan 1994; Kaus, 1986; Murray, 1984; Rank & Cheng, 1995; Seccombe, 1999)

Murray was roundly criticized (Duncan, 1998; Duncan, Hill, & Hoffman, 1988; Ellwood, 1988). Noted poverty scholar and researcher Christopher Jencks countered that low wage employment was what trapped families in poverty, not welfare (Jencks, 1992). Poverty researchers do not deny support exists for the theory that people born into poverty are likely to remain in poverty. But these scholars do deny the conclusion that poverty is caused by the transmission of a tainted value system (Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, & Seefeldt, 2000; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Gottschalk et al., 1994; Hill, 1998).

Income inequality, the difference between the lowest and the highest incomes in the nation, has been implicated as a factor in keeping people poor. The pattern of income distribution in the United States is skewed in favor of the wealthiest top quintile (Burtless, 1999; Cooper,
The income gap widened significantly between the 1980s and 1990s as the top quintile grew and the bottom and middle remained stagnant at best. This is surprising in light of the economic boom of the 1990s. By the end of the decade, the average income in the top quintile was 10 times more than the bottom. Louisiana reported a gap 11 times greater. In 18 states the income of the poorest quintile actually declined from 1970s through 1990s (Bernstein, McNichol, Mishel, & Zahradnik, 2000; Cooper, 1998; Danziger & Reed, 1999; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Lichter & Eggebeen, 1993; Plotnick et al., 1998).

The current income differential between the highest and lowest paid is attributed to many things, including failure of macro-economic policy to address the structural causes of poverty. Trickle-down economic theory began to fail middle and lower income workers in the mid-1980s. Globalization resulted in increased international competition. As discussed previously, well-paying manufacturing jobs declined and an increased immigrant population provided an inexhaustible source of low-wage workers. Minimum wage lost relative value. The decline of the once powerful labor unions paralleled the widening income gap (Autor, Katz, & Krueger, 1998; Bernstein et al., 2000; Blank, 1994; Cooper, 1998; Cutler & Katz, 1992; Danziger & Gottschalk, 1995; Danziger & Reed, 1999; Katz, 1996; Plotnick et al., 1998; Wilson, 1996).

Gender seems to be an indicator of poverty, demonstrated by rates consistently greater for women than men over time. The poverty rate for women has continued to rise over the past two decades in spite of a booming national economy, geographic location, or women’s increased workforce participation. This phenomenon of increasing poverty for women has been labeled “The Feminization of Poverty.” Women’s wages and limited occupational choices continued to

The highest poverty rates for any family type are found in female-headed households, women with children and no partner present. Poverty for this family type lasts longer and is deeper than for two-parent families, and this type of poverty does not track with the national economy’s ups and downs (Duncan, Hill, & Hoffman, 1988; Eggebeen & Lichter, 1991; Ellwood, 1988; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Rank & Hirschl, 1999; Rodgers, 1994; Taylor, 1994; Thompson & McDowell, 1994). The number of mother-only families has increased over the past two decades, increasing the risk that more children will experience poverty at some point before reach 18 years of age (Blank, 1994; Danziger & Gottschalk, 1986; Ellwood, 1988). Many of these families are thrown into poverty as a result of a change in family structure, out-of-wedlock childbearing, divorce, or breakup of a long-term relationship (Duncan, Hill, & Hoffman, 1988; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Heath & Kiker, 1992).

Rural Poverty

Researchers who study poverty from a spatial perspective indicate that geographic location can influence an individual’s risk of impoverishment. Residents of rural communities are more likely to experience poverty than urban or suburban dwellers. Therefore, the dynamics of rural poverty warrant special consideration (Brown & Hirschl, 1995; Horton & Allen, 1998; Jones & Kodras, 1990; Kodras, 1997; Tigges & Tootle, 1990).

Rural communities differ from other areas across several important dimensions. Typically, rural areas provide a less than ideal education system, fewer employment
opportunities, and an infrastructure that cannot support sustained economic growth. One or two major industries may dominate the area. Rural residents are geographically isolated from cultural centers and vocational training facilities (Brown & Hirschl 1995; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Kodras, 1997; Lichter & McLaughlin 1995; Tickamyer & Duncan 1990; Triest, 1997).

An individual’s susceptibility to poverty is dependent upon a combination of the amount and kind of human capital possessed and available economic opportunities. In rural areas, residents generally have lower educational attainment rates and fewer marketable skills than do residents of urban areas. But even if rural individuals have comparable education and skills as urban dwellers, the relative economic value of such would be less in a rural community. Additional levels of education or skills have lower exchange rates in rural economies than urban, therefore increasing human capital may provide little additional protection against poverty. That different labor markets pay different wages for the same jobs demonstrates that increased educational attainment and/or skill training does not necessarily increase an individual's employability or wages (Hanson, 1982; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; McLaughlin & Perman 1991; Tigges & Tootle, 1990).

The poverty level for Blacks in the United States is higher than for any other racial or ethnic group. Evidence suggests that Black poverty levels in rural communities are higher than levels found in inner cities (Duncan & Rogers, 1988). Women already at greater risk for poverty by virtue of gender, also experience higher rates in rural areas than in cities, possibly as a result of the lack of educational and employment opportunities. Gender segregation of occupations occurs often in rural environments, potentially limiting job availability for women. In addition, rural women tend to have more children than urban women, which may contribute to difficulties securing or maintaining secure ties to work. Women also experience higher unemployment rates

Low wages, high unemployment, and underemployment are problems for both men and women in rural communities. As in urban areas, rural job availability seems to be concentrated in the services sector, especially food service, retail, and health care. These jobs typically pay low wages, are for less than full time, offer little to no opportunities for advancement, and carry few if any employee benefits (Lichter 1989; Lichter, Johnson, & McLaughlin, 1994; Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990; Tigges & Tootle, 1990). Rural areas also tend to have little economic diversity, relying on only a few industries. In addition, recent business trends also indicate that most rural communities are having difficulty sustaining economic development, so fewer jobs are available (Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Horton & Allen, 1998; Lichter, Johnson, & McLaughlin, 1994; McLaughlin & Perman, 1991).

Effects of Poverty

The effects of poverty on families and children cannot be overlooked, or overemphasized. Adults generally lack quality, affordable housing and are therefore at risk for homelessness or living in nonstandard housing, both of which can lead to health risks. Maternal depression is quite common among adult women, and men and women are likely to experience chronic health problems, poor nutrition, and increased mortality rates (Hill, 1998; Oh, 2001; Skolnick, 1995). Many of these problems have roots in childhood poverty.

Children without a doubt suffer the most from impoverishment, and the United States has the highest child poverty rate of all developed countries (Duncan, 1998; Geltman et al., 1996). Bianchi reported in 1999 that for the last three decades, children have experienced increased poverty levels. This trend is evident regardless of location, age, or gender. Rank and Hirschl
(1999) estimate that at least one-third of all children will live in poverty at some time before their 18th birthday.

There are an impressive number of mental, physical, and social consequences reported as a result of child poverty. In addition to the effects for adults listed above, children in poor families are more likely to have low birth weights, frequent hospitalizations, higher rates of childhood mortality, and developmental delays than children from more advantaged environments. Impoverished children are more likely to drop out of school, and are more often required to repeat grades. Young women in poverty have higher rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing (Duncan, 1998; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Foster & Furstenberg, 1999; Geltman et al., 1996; Guo, 1998; Hill, 1998; Powers, 1996).

Emotionally, poverty can have such a demoralizing effect that young people cannot truly envision good career opportunities for themselves, or even a future in somewhat improved circumstances. A fatalistic feeling often sets in these children at young ages. This can have an incapacitating effect, rendering individuals incapable of moving beyond their poor environments. This feeling of powerlessness may in fact be responsible for much of what is described as intergenerational poverty (Ellwood, 1988; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Lewis, 1998; Weinger, 1998).

There are indirect risk factors associated with poverty that may interfere with children’s development (Duncan, 1998). For example: research indicates that family violence is found at higher levels among families in poverty, possibly the result of increased economic pressures. Financial stress can lead to conflict, which can escalate into family violence. Children in poverty are abused at seven times the abuse rate of children not in poverty, which often results in serious injury or even death. Even if the children are not themselves abused, witnessing abuse may have
lasting effects including: problematic early brain development, inability to trust caregivers, poor quality relationships, and decreased readiness to learn. Additionally, individuals who experience family violence as children tend to form relationships that include violence (Cowen, 1999; English, 1998; Kirkman-Liff, 1991).

Discussions found in research literature, editorial commentaries or popular media about the potential effects of poverty never suggest that positive effects exist for being born into, growing up in, or living in poverty. But Mayer (1997) proposed that income level might have less affect on child well being than previously understood. Mayer’s discussion points to evidence that the source of family income may be more important than the actual amount of income. Evidence suggests that children in families whose major source of income is derived from welfare payments seem to have poorer outcomes than children in families that do not rely upon welfare, even if the total amount of family income is identical. The author does not believe that welfare receipt itself is the culprit, but rather that some as yet unidentified characteristic of welfare-reliant parents may be more influential in determining children’s overall life chances. Mayer (1997) concludes that welfare receipt could indicate certain character deficits not exhibited in non-welfare recipients.

Governmental Responses to Poverty

The preceding summary of poverty research in the United States now brings up the debate whether government should, or even can, develop policies to alleviate poverty and reduce its effects. Some researchers believe that the federal government could develop antipoverty policies (Danziger & Danziger, 1993). A recent cross-national longitudinal study on the effectiveness of government antipoverty programs revealed evidence that several nations have designed programs that significantly reduced poverty (Kenworthy, 1999).
Historically, “welfare” was developed as an anti-poverty program designed to provide for widows and their children in the event of the husband’s death. Passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 was policymakers’ acceptance of the federal government’s responsibility to assist women who through no fault of their own were now single mothers attempting to raise families.

The Social Security Act included Old Age Insurance (OAI) for the elderly, and later included insurance for disabled citizens (Medicare). Old Age, Survivors, Disabled, and Health Insurance (OASDHI) was also part of this act, created to provide insurance protection for the dependents of the disabled and deceased. This provision became known as Social Security, arguably the nation’s most successful anti-poverty program to date, though not labeled as such. The poverty rate for the elderly plunged from a high of 35.2% to about 10% between 1959 and 1996 (Cutler & Katz, 1992).

Through the years the original program designed to assist widows and their children developed into an entitlement program that allowed any woman regardless of marital status to receive cash assistance from the federal government. Aid for Children and Families (ACF) – then Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) soon became available to families regardless of marital status or family composition. As the public assistance rolls continued to swell, in the minds of the general public AFDC became synonymous with welfare and a handout (Wilcox, Robbenmolt, O'Keeffe, & Pynchon, 1996).

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 formed the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), effectively creating an anti-poverty role for the federal government. The purpose of this department was to supervise training and empowerment programs designed to help people out of poverty rather than to simply provide cash assistance. In 1975 the Earned Income Tax Credit was
created to benefit the working poor. This tax policy subsequently became a larger cash transfer program than welfare (Besharov & Germanis, 2000; Blank, 1994; Plotnick et al., 1998).

In 1981, the Reagan administration sought to reduce the size and cost of the welfare program with passage of The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA). This policy lowered the income eligibility levels and the set-aside amount a recipient could earn from paid work before benefits were terminated. Welfare caseloads declined by 14% within two years of implementation (Danzinger, 2001; Duncan, 2000).

These results did not satisfy the critics of cash transfer programs. Publication of Charles Murray’s (1984) work attributing poverty to welfare receipt and dependence renewed public criticism leveled against government assistance programs. Welfare was blamed for causing poverty, increasing the number of single family homes, and rewarding laziness (Corcoran et al., 2000; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Murray, 1984).

Conservative wisdom at the time maintained that stronger mandates were needed to push recipients into work (Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Mead, 1986). The Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988 was passed as a result. The act created the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. The major objective of JOBS was to encourage self-sufficiency among AFDC recipients by requiring education, training and job search activities. The rationale behind the program was that participants in similar programs did exhibit increased earnings from income and less reliance upon government assistance (Gueron & Pauly 1991). Success rates for JOBS were low in the 1990s, with states’ reporting participation rates no greater than 15% of eligible AFDC recipients. The FSA also provided for increased child support and benefits for two-parent families (Corcoran et al., 2000; Plotnick et al., 1998).
Many researchers concluded that AFDC was structurally flawed and in need of a complete overhaul. The program was often criticized because it did not contain either economic incentives to work or disincentives for not working, and because of perceived “anti-family” effects (Bane, 1997; Edelman, 1997; Ellwood, 1988; Geltman et al., 1996; Jencks, 1992; Murray; 1984; Schorr, 1997; Wilcox et al., 1996). Public antagonism toward any form of welfare reached a critical point during the 1992 presidential elections, but it was not until passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 that a completely restructured program was mandated.

PRWORA

Introduction

The new law eliminated the AFDC program and replaced it with block grants to the states to establish Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The grants to individual states were based upon 1994 funding levels for AFDC. The States were in turn required to establish and implement their own government assistance programs within guidelines mandated by PRWORA. Devolution of cash assistance programs from the federal government to state governments would evolve programs more suitable and responsive to needy families in each state (Schorr, 1997).

The 1996 legislation was based upon the theoretical perspective that poverty is due to micro level individual characteristics rather than macro level failures within the societal, political or economic systems. PRWORA includes four major objectives geared towards changing certain proscribed behaviors of welfare-reliant families:

1. Reduce welfare caseloads through employment.
2. Increase child support collections and paternity identification.

4. Encourage formation of two-parent families.

PRWORA Objective 1: Reduce Welfare Caseloads

An important difference between the previous programs and TANF is the focus on ending welfare reliance by promoting individual responsibility, job preparation and work. Among other provisions, the law requires states to impose work requirements for healthy able-bodied adults, and enforce time limits on receiving federal assistance. Families must work after two years on welfare, and benefits have a lifetime maximum of five years. Work has been defined as employment, participation in on-the-job training programs, job search activities, vocational training, community service, or providing childcare. States have implemented education and skills building programs to increase welfare recipients’ human capital, thus allowing these individuals to comply with PRWORA work requirements (Groginsky & Smith, 1997).

There are exceptions to the requirements. Single parents with children under six unable to find employment and parents with children under one year of age are not required to engage in work activities. In addition, states may exempt up to 20% of their 1996 caseloads from the five-year limit on cash assistance (Greenberg, Savner, & Swartz, 1996). Proponents of time limits predict that welfare moms will be forced into the labor force. Critics of time limits and sanctions indicate that families with children will suffer severe hardships, especially since welfare recipients quite often have repeated spells of welfare use (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Duncan, Harris, & Boisjoly, 2000; Gottschalk et al., 1994; Harris, 1996; Seccombe, 1999; Rose, 2000).
Statistics on state caseloads inarguably demonstrate a decline in welfare caseloads and an increase in employment of former recipients. The 1998 report issued by Administration for Children and Families indicated that as many as one-third of 1996 welfare recipients (1.7 million people) were working in March 1997. Before enactment of PRWORA, only one-fifth of welfare recipients found employment in the year following welfare receipt. Most studies indicate that between one half and three quarters of recipients who leave welfare do so because the recipients have found employment. These findings are not surprising given a strong national economy (Cooper, 1998; Corcoran et al., 2000; Division of Economic Support, 1999; Ellwood, 2000; Gault, Hartmann, & Yi, 1998; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Parrott, 1998; Tweedie & Reichert, 1998).

There is also evidence to indicate that although many recipients leave welfare for work, their tenure in the workplace can be very short (AFC, 1998). The nation’s strong economy has created many job opportunities for families leaving welfare for work, but few good jobs exist for this population of traditionally low-skilled workers (Lehman & Danziger, 1997; Schorr, 1997). In spite of PRWORA’s emphasis on increasing human capital, education and skills-training often have little effect on job retention rates (Fishman, Barnow, Gardiner, Murphy, & Laud, 1999).

The quality of available jobs for women attempting to establish some measure of self-sufficiency was not addressed by welfare policy reforms. Most women who have left welfare find work in the service sector. Employed recipients find jobs in sales, food preparation, clerical support, or other service sector jobs that require few skills. Traditionally these jobs pay not much more than minimum wage, are often part-time, and do not offer opportunities for advancement. Benefits are few, and those companies that do offer benefits such as employee health care coverage do so on a cost-shared basis at rates that the women can ill afford. These jobs provide
little to no opportunity for families to come close to, much less surface above official poverty
lines. Such jobs provide little hope for long-term economic well being. In Wisconsin, two-thirds
of former recipients had lower income (employer earnings plus AFDC/TANF and food stamps)
than during the 3 months before leaving welfare (Boisjoly, Harris, & Duncan, 1998; Caron,
2000; Division of Economic Support, 1999; Edin & Lein, 1997; Eishman et al., 1999; NGA,
1998c; Parrott, 1998; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998; Sherman et
al., 1998).

Welfare-reliant women face barriers to employment that can severely restrict their
capacity to find and keep steady, paid work. Impediments to wage-based work can be grouped
roughly into three categories: (a) human capital deficits, (b) relationships, and (c) structural and
socio-cultural barriers.

Human capital deficits. Lack of appropriate education and/or job skills is perhaps the
most common individual level barrier that welfare-reliant women must overcome to achieve
wage-based self-sufficiency. These women are less likely to have a high school education or
equivalent than women who are not reliant upon government assistance. This presents a serious
stumbling block, especially since most employers require a minimum of a high school degree. In
addition, the average literacy level of welfare reliant women is below that of the general
population of unskilled workers (Fishman et al., 1999; NGA, 1998b; Poverty Research &
Training Center, 1999; Rose, 2000; Sherman et al., 1998).

Welfare-reliant women typically face challenges finding work that is consistent with their
low skill level. For many women, there is a mismatch between the skills they possess and the
skills or competencies required by area employers. Job training programs are offered as a quick
remedy, but many women become disillusioned with these programs because of perceived lack
of job relevance, or the programs are more remedial than substantive. (Edin & Lein, 1997; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Fishman et al., 2000; Jencks, 1992; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998; Rose, 2000).

Welfare-reliant women’s lack of work readiness, while not strictly a skill or a matter of education may also be a barrier to employment. Work readiness can be described as an intrinsic desire to work, coupled with the determination to overcome barriers to employment. The work readiness of welfare-reliant women may predict whether skills acquired in training programs will be used (Monroe, Blalock, & Vlosky, 1999). Inexperience in the work place is also a barrier to sustained employment. This lack of work experience often translates into inadequate job search skills, limited self-confidence, low ability to communicate clearly in the workplace, and problems describing relevant qualifications or successfully completing job applications (Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998).

A barrier to sustained employment welfare recipients often face is that impoverished families often experience poor health outcomes. Personal health difficulties often contribute to job loss. Women whose children suffer from chronic health problems or even routine childhood illness often have trouble balancing care responsibilities with job requirements. In addition, women’s fear of losing Medicaid proved a compelling reason to remain on government assistance (Besharov & Germanis, 2000; NGA, 1998b; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998; Rose, 2000; Sherman et al., 1998).

Women with untreated mental health problems commonly experience difficulties maintaining employment. Research indicates that mental illness is experienced at higher rates for welfare-reliant women than for all women. Depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and generalized anxiety disorders were most often reported. These conditions may be outcomes of
poverty, or may be related to increased role strain as these women attempt to balance the competing demands of work and family (Fishman et al., 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998).

Relationships. Domestic violence has been identified as a potential barrier to finding and keeping a job. Recent studies indicate that welfare reliant women are four to five times more likely to experience domestic violence than women in general. A woman’s partner may not only sabotage her efforts to work but may resort to physical violence to prevent her from working, often because he feels threatened by her independence. Women in this situation may be forced to quit their jobs, or they may be terminated because the additional stress results in decreased productivity or inattention. Victims of domestic violence often lack the self-esteem, skills, and education necessary to be competitive in the workplace (NGA, 1998b; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998; Sherman et al., 1998).

A relationship may exist between a woman’s personal support network and her ability to endure the challenges faced in the workplace. A support network can consist of a woman’s partner, friends, or family, anyone who the women can turn to in times of crisis or stress for material, mental, and/or emotional assistance. Women who have fragile or nonexistent support networks may find it much more difficult to cope with the stress of raising children and performing adequately in a job. These women may have lost their support networks as a result of working. A related problem is that without a functioning support network, women often do not have anyone to help them with a sick child. The result is that a mother often must choose between caring for a sick child and potentially losing her job, or leaving the child at home to fend for him or herself (Fishman et al., 1999; Rangarajan, 1996).
Structural or socio-cultural barriers. PRWORA legislation presupposed that jobs would be available for welfare-reliant women required to transition to wage work. These women face major barriers to full employment even in a healthy national economy. It may be surprising to note that in spite of a historically low level of national unemployment, many welfare reliant women cannot find satisfactory employment because available job openings are not located in proximity to their homes (NGA, 1998b).

Job opportunities for women leaving welfare are concentrated in the services sector. As previously discussed these jobs pay low wages; most women receive less than $6.00 per hour. Even working full time this wage is inadequate to raise a family above the national poverty line (Parrott, 1998; Sherman et al., 1998). The low wage problem is further compounded by a reduction in or loss of government assistance benefits, leaving women and their families in worse shape than when they were on welfare. These women often do not receive any employee benefits such as paid health insurance, sick leave, personal leave, or other perks commonly associated with employment. Former aid recipients may return to welfare to receive Medicaid coverage because their employer does not provide paid health insurance (Edin & Lein, 1997; Parrott, 1998; Rangarajan, 1998).

A related barrier is the costs associated with holding a job. While increased transportation and childcare costs are often cited, “up front” costs can be problematic for these women. Many service industry jobs require employees to purchase uniforms or other special attire as a prerequisite to employment. Women seeking clerical jobs may feel compelled to put together a suitable work wardrobe. Often, women do not have the cash reserves necessary to finance such purchases, resulting in missed opportunities for employment (Besharov & Germanis, 2000; Edin & Lein, 1997; NGA, 1998b; Rangarajan, 1998).
Barriers to employment success for welfare-reliant women have been identified in the workplace environment. The size of the company can affect women’s chances of retaining employment. Monroe, Blalock, and Vlosky (1999) suggest that the environment of a large company could overwhelm these women. Welfare-reliant women new to the workplace would perhaps fare better in smaller, less structured firms or businesses with a supportive atmosphere.

Current research is somewhat divided on whether welfare-reliant women understand what socially defined behaviors and norms are expected in the workplace. Some studies indicate that many of these women do not understand workplace demands or appropriate behaviors. The women often exhibit problems understanding employers’ expectations, more than likely because of inexperience in the work environment. Chronic tardiness and failure to comply with work schedules contribute to job loss. In addition, many women do not know how to successfully balance workplace demands and family demands. On the other hand, current and former welfare recipients are able to predict accurately the proper course of action in simulated workplace scenarios (NGA, 1998; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998).

Along the same lines, welfare-reliant women often lack the social and communication skills suitable for the work world. Communication problems may arise primarily as a result of the women’s inexperience in the work environment. Many women have trouble getting along with coworkers or immediate supervisors. Poor social and communications skills may lead to interpersonal conflicts (NGA, 1998A; Rangarajan, 1998).

Obtaining childcare is one of the most pervasive impediments to work force participation. Volumes have been written about the problems women face finding quality, affordable, and reliable childcare, particularly from the perspective of urban and suburban dwellers. Obtaining childcare is an especially difficult challenge for women in poverty to overcome (Corcoran et al.,
Women find it extremely difficult to locate childcare openings compatible with their service sector jobs. Positions as cashiers, food service workers, and gas station attendants generally involve odd shifts, nights, weekends, and holidays, but most childcare centers are open only during standard workday hours, usually from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This leaves a tremendous gap in childcare services for women employed in service jobs (Edin & Lein, 1997, 1998; Fishman et al., 1999; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998).

The costs of formal childcare, if not government subsidized, can be quite high compared to women’s earnings. As much as 38% of women’s wages can go to childcare payments. Government subsidies can ease the financial burden for these women, but only if child care slots are available within the community. In addition, there are shortages of subsidized funding in some states, so not all women can benefit from this assistance. Many women also experience difficulties negotiating the bureaucracy of subsidized childcare, and therefore chose not to participate (Rangarajan, 1996).

Lack of transportation is almost unanimously identified as a barrier to employment for welfare-reliant women. Most of these women do not own their own car or even have a driver’s license, depending instead upon either public transportation or friends and neighbors to fill basic transportation needs. Dependence upon public transportation can be problematic. The cost of busses, railways, and subways, can become overwhelming, especially if women must transport children to and from school and/or childcare. In most areas, public transportation is not available at night or on weekends, leaving a substantial proportion of women employed in service sector jobs without transportation. In areas where public transportation is available during nonstandard
hours, many women do not feel safe using these services (Brayfield & Hofferth, 1995; Corcoran et al., 2000; Edin & Lein, 1997; Fishman et al., 1999; Poverty Research & Training Center, 1999; Rangarajan, 1998; Sherman, et. al., 1998).

The PRWORA was framed with the underlying assumption that jobs would be available for welfare-reliant women as they moved from government dependence to wage based independence (Cooper, 1998; Corcoran et al., 2000; Schorr, 1997). It is at this point that the importance of place on policy outcomes is critical. The booming economy of the 1990s did not spread evenly throughout all areas of the nation. Many rural and remote rural regions were left behind as the rest of the country prospered. Researchers and public officials struggled to identify the means and methods by which rural communities could sustain economic development, but area businesses and industries continued to decline at an alarming rate. The net effect to these communities has been fewer employment opportunities for residents and their families, resulting in pockets of persistent rural poverty. The issue of job availability is especially troubling because poor families in rural and remote rural areas of the South represent some of the most disadvantaged welfare cases because of their multiple barriers to long term employment. (Jencks, 1992)

Former welfare recipients in rural communities are also challenged by many of the same barriers to employment faced by their urban sisters. Often, women are unable to find or sustain employment because available job openings are not located in proximity to their homes, a classic example of spatial mismatch. Rural women typically do not have access to public transportation, making it nearly impossible for them to work outside of their rural neighborhoods. Thus, these women are even less likely to receive adequate wages or benefits because they tend to be employed in smaller companies (Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Findeis & Jensen, 1998; Porterfield,
In addition, rural women tend to have lower levels of educational attainment, lack access to private transportation, and experience mental and/or physical health problems or have children with health problems. Women in rural communities may also have trouble finding jobs that match their skill level, and job-training opportunities are less prevalent. The problem of finding quality childcare is even more critical in rural areas. Rural areas have fewer childcare facilities than urban areas, so more women are dependent on care given by relatives and friends (Rangarajan, 1998; RUPRI, 1998; Wojan, 2000).

The literature indicates that facilitating conditions can make the transition from welfare to work much easier. Removal of the previously mentioned barriers increases women’s ability to find and sustain employment. Wages that provide families with a living wage, rather than minimum wage, is a strong predictor of tenure in the work place. Employment opportunities that allow the women some kind of job flexibility, perhaps allowing a choice or days or hours to work has proved beneficial. Research indicates that entry level and minimally skilled employees have greater rates of job success if provided with a mentor or job coach. Continuing on-the-job training helps to upgrade employees’ skills, increasing human capital and providing an opportunity for future advancement. Employer subsidized benefits can effectively replace the government safety net. Women who are able to procure health insurance, flextime, sick leave, paid holidays, and paid personal leave through employment are more likely to remain attached to the labor force. Increased transitional government supports for working women such as Medicaid for self and children, and continued childcare and housing subsidies also ease the sometimes-bumpy road from welfare reliance to self-sufficiency (Blank, 1994; Edin & Lein, 1997; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Ellwood, 2000; Fishman et al., 1999; Jencks, 1992).
PRWORA Objective 2: Child Support Collections and Paternity Identification

Policymakers included a provision requiring increased financial support for non-custodial fathers. This has been a long-overlooked means of providing women and their children with additional financial support. Increased child support payments can provide the little bit of extra support a welfare-dependent family needs to successfully leave government assistance and become wage reliant. PRWORA provided the means for states to improve the rate of collections, including withholding from wages, a federal case registry, and paternity establishment. These provisions were expected to increase the amount of child support collected (Ellwood, 1997; Fishman et al., 1999; McLanahan, 2000; Meyer & Hu, 1999).

Reports indicate that PRWORA appears to have dramatically increased child support collections and doubled the number of families receiving support. There was a 68% increase in child support collections from $8 billion collected in 1992 to $13.4 billion in 1997. Paternity establishment doubled in the same time period, from 510,000 in 1992 to 1.3 million. For the first time established paternities equaled the number of out-of-wedlock births (ACF, 1998).

No one doubts that these figures represent more cash assistance flowing into more families. Research that examined the antipoverty effectiveness of child support in mother only families, however, concluded that only six to seven percent of these impoverished families surpassed the poverty threshold as a result of receiving child support (Meyer & Hu, 1999; Wolk & Schmahl, 1999). The available evidence casts serious doubts upon predictions that increased child support collections would be a major force in helping women and their families successfully transition from welfare dependence to work. The argument presented here is that the extra income provided by child support payments added to women's work income would provide
a more attractive package than welfare alone, perhaps mitigating the shortages caused by reduced benefits.

PRWORA Objective 3: Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies and Teenage Births

A study reported by the Bureau of the Census (1995) reported that 29% of the mothers on AFDC were under 18 when their first child was born, compared to a 15% rate for non-recipients, and that nearly half of the 3.8 million mothers receiving AFDC had never been married. PRWORA legislation included provisions to prevent and/or reduce teenage and out-of-wedlock births, without increasing abortions (Acs, Coe, Watson, & Lerman, 1998). Proponents of the new welfare legislation hope to change childbearing and marriage behavior based on the assumption that reducing welfare assistance will reduce single motherhood. Here, the argument is that women have children to gain additional benefits -- thus welfare encourages childbearing for increased income. A reduction in benefit levels would therefore render it less rewarding to have additional children. Research in this area is controversial, with evidence on both sides of whether welfare receipt increases fertility (Boisjoly et al., 1998; Duncan, Hill, & Hoffman, 1988; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1994; Jencks, 1992; Kaus, 1986; Rose, 2000; Wilcox et al., 1996).

Many states adopted the use of family caps as a disincentive to further child bearing for women receiving benefits. States will not pay additional funds for additional children born after initial application for benefits, even though the evidence is mixed at best that this concept is effective (Corcoran et al., 2000; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Hayward, 1998; Nathan & Gais, 1999; Rose, 2000). It is especially interesting to note that Senator Long from Louisiana is credited with stating (in a manner much less subtle than reported here) that women have more kids to get more money (Wilcox et al., 1996).
Successful results are reported for this objective based upon declining birth rates. Birth rates for unmarried women aged 15-44 years decreased slightly between 1995 and 1996. The birth rate for teenagers continued to decline in 1996, and fell 12 percent compared to 1991 rates. AFC (1998) reported that states have been successful in lowering the birth rate for both young and older teens, with rates for those 15-17 years of age down 13 percent between 1991 and 1996, and the rate for 18 and 19 year old mothers down 9 percent. The rate for Black teens experienced the largest decline, down 21 percent from 1991 to 1996 to reach the lowest rate ever reported for young Black women.

PRWORA Objective 4: Encourage Formation of Two-parent Families

The 1996 welfare reform legislation included this objective as a means to provide increased stability to single welfare-reliant mothers and their children. The foundation of this assumption was that government transfer programs provided a disincentive for marriage, or encouraged marital dissolution. Little evidence exists to support the apparently widely held belief that welfare is largely responsible for the breakdown of the traditional married-couple family (Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1994; Jencks, 1992; Lichter, McLaughlin, & Ribar, 1977; Rose, 2000).

Concerns about PRWORA

Policymakers’ primary objective of reducing welfare caseloads through an emphasis on work may be a good one, especially if self-sufficiency follows employment. Achievement of the primary directive, however, includes eliminating many basic forms of assistance to working families and their children. Poverty scholars and advocates are concerned that many families forced off welfare will experience deleterious consequences, including increased child poverty, homelessness, increased child welfare agency participation rates, and the inability to provide for
basic needs (Corcoran et al., 2000; Division of Economic Support, 1999; Duncan, 1998; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Sherman et al., 1998; Wellstone & Edelman, 1997).

Critics of the reformed welfare policies claimed changes did not take into account what programs worked or failed in the past. For example, research has indicated family caps do not produce significant changes in adolescent childbearing behavior, and adherence to these limits will actually increase child poverty (Wilcox et al., 1996). Scholars and advocates insisted that welfare reforms based upon the individual deficits theory were tantamount to a “war on the poor” and that families could not attain self-sufficiency without fundamental changes in the social, political, and economic systems of the nation (Bane, 1977; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Schorr, 1997). Instead of improving poverty circumstances, families would experience an increase in the depth of poverty if they cannot achieve some measure of self-reliance (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Ehrenreich et al., 1986).

Issues have been raised about the effect PRWORA will have on families’ health (Geltman, Meyers, Greenberg, & Zuckerman, 1996; Jencks & Swingle, 2000). PRWORA eliminated the automatic link between welfare benefits and Medicaid eligibility. States were required to establish and maintain two separate eligibility determinations for those programs (Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Schneider, 1998). Previous research indicated that the prospect of losing Medicaid was a significant disincentive to leaving welfare. Policymakers anticipated that severing the link between the two programs would serve to mitigate those effects (Acs et al., 1998).

The decision to require separate application procedures resulted in a quick lesson for policymakers about how unintended consequences can result from well-meaning policies. Quite a few families lost benefits they were entitled to and desperately needed as a result of uncoupling
ties between the Medicaid and TANF. Many employed women were eligible for Medicaid for their children, and if the woman was already enrolled in Medicaid when employed, then she was eligible for transitional Medicaid assistance (Guyer & Mann, 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000). Research indicates that former recipients either were not told about the policy changes, or did not understand them (Acs et al., 1998; Pear, 1999). A notable exception was the state of Wisconsin, where 61% of former welfare recipients knew working adults could qualify for transitional Medicaid and 76% knew children receive Medicaid after the transitional period (Division of Economic Support, 1999). A large segment of working poor parents remained uninsured in 1997 as 46% of poor working parents did not have basic medical benefits. Few states covered low income working parents via Medicaid unless they were already receiving benefits (Guyer & Mann, 1999).

Many scholars registered concerns over using declining caseload numbers as the primary measure of PRWORA success. The national economy experienced several years of unprecedented growth at the same time that welfare reform policies were implemented. It is important to assess with accuracy exactly how much of the purported success is due to the reforms, or to the economy as PRWORA reauthorization rapidly approaches (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Fishman et al, 1999; Sherman et al., 1998; Wellstone & Edelman, 1997). Economic models and randomized experiments indicate that the new policies may have contributed less than 20% to reduced rolls, the economy may be responsible for as much as 80% of the declines in caseloads and increased employment rates (Hayward, 1998; Besharov & Germanis, 2000; Jencks & Swingle, 2000).

This discussion returns now to poverty. Evidence indicates that even though welfare caseloads declined, there were no similar declines in poverty levels. Women who successfully
navigate the transition from welfare reliance to work do not necessarily improve the poverty status of their families. Child poverty is slightly reduced, but deep child poverty, children who live in families with poverty rates 50% below the official poverty line, has increased. Single mother families still have a poverty rate of 49%. In fact, the incomes of the poorest mother-only families may have declined in this period. Welfare-to-work training programs have not improved participants’ stock of human capital enough to raise families out of poverty unless the women continue to receive other government assistance while working (Blank, 1994; Burtless, 1994; Caron, 2000; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1994; Michalopoulos, Schwartz, Adams-Ciardullo, 2000; Rose, 2000). Policy scholars warn that not only will lower benefits, time limits, and sanctions fail to reduce poverty, but that poverty rates will increase over the long term (Besharov & Germanis, 2000; Blum & Berrey, 2000; Caron, 2000; Gottschalk, McLanahan, & Sandefur, 1994; Primus, 2000; Rose, 2000).

It is vitally important that as congressional reauthorization of PRWORA draws near, policymakers begin to form a well-defined picture of the effects of PRWORA on families and children. Policymakers must also understand these effects within the environmental context where these families live and work. This information can be provided by continuing research designed to track former welfare-reliant families (AFC, 1998; Blum & Berrey, 2000; Duncan, Harris, & Boisjoly, 2000; Ellwood, 2000; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Lehman & Danziger, 1997; Sherman et al., 1998; The Brookings Institution, 1999; Tweedie & Reichert, 1998; Wellstone & Edelman, 1997).
Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to describe and contrast the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by PRWORA. Human Ecology Theory was selected as the broad perspective for this particular effort, as the effects of policy on individuals and families may depend upon the environmental context in which the policy plays out. The importance of environment in studying poverty, welfare dependence, and welfare reform has been stressed repeatedly in the research literature (Brown & Hirschl 1995; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Jones & Kodras, 1990; Lichter & McLaughlin 1995; O'Connon, 2000; Seccombe, 1999; Tickamyer & Duncan 1990; Tigges & Tootle 1990; Wilson, 1996). Rational choice theory and change theory also provide important guidelines for understanding human behavior within any given environmental context.

Human Ecology Theory

Human ecology is the study of human beings (families) interacting with their near and far environments. It is a general theory, and can be used to explain and understand a wide variety of phenomena. This theory borrows from general systems theory with its emphasis on social systems, boundaries and exchanges, and ecological theory (Bubolz, 1991; Klein & White, 1996).

The development of ecological theory started in the late 1800s, and was directed towards the study of organisms within their environment. The environment is composed of all things that surround and influence living organisms. Environmental change requires the organism to adapt in order to survive. This concept is reflected in Darwin’s (1998) theories of evolutionary development. Systems theory emphasizes how units of a system react and/or interact with each

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other. Combining ecological theory with systems theory helps researchers understand the
dynamic interactions of units (individual, family, society) within and with their environment.
The reciprocal effects of these interactions are also important to researchers; a change in one
system will produce changes in the other systems - not unlike the domino effect. Those changes
are the adaptations that the affected systems must make in order to maintain equilibrium within
the larger system (Bailey, 1998; Bubolz, 1991; Klein & White, 1996; Strickland & Hamner,
1988).

In the early 1900s, E. S. Richards, the founder of Home Economics, promoted the use of
science and scientific principles to improve the quality of life of families. She understood the
importance of the interplay between the physical and social worlds and the family. Burgess
(1926) drew upon this idea when he conceptualized the family as a unity of interacting
personalities. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) pushed human ecology theory to the forefront of
family theories by using the theory to explain child development. He emphasized the concept
that the child is a product of environment as well as biology. The environmental typology
developed by Bronfenbrenner included: (a) the microlevel, characterized by family; (b) the
mesolevel, the environment of school and child care; (c) the exolevel, environment of work and
community; and (d) the macrolevel, consisting of all outside societal forces.

**Context and Human Ecology Theory**

The model of human ecology used in family resource management has traditionally
focused upon relationships between three distinct systems each nested within the other: (a) the
Microenvironment functions within the (b) Societal Macroenvironment, which functions within
(c) the Natural/Structural Macroenvironment (Strickland & Hamner, 1988).
The family (or individual, as appropriate) is placed in the middle of the three systems. The system the family is closest to is the Microenvironment. This environment is the most intimate of the three, and includes the family’s immediate physical and social surroundings. This is the setting that the family routinely interacts with, and includes the neighborhood or community where the family resides, attends school and work, and close friends and family regardless of geographic location.

The Microenvironment is nested within the Societal Macroenvironment. This system is composed of four discrete environments or subsystems, each of which may interact with or react to the other. The technological environment includes anything that involves the physical tools or special skills used to work and/or create things. Computers belong to this system, but this technology has had immeasurable effects upon all other systems.

The political environment includes government structures, systems, and processes and the laws, rules, regulations, and policies implicitly or explicitly adopted by that government. Political parties are an integral part of the political environment, as are political values, thoughts, ideas, and behaviors. Policy studies naturally belong to this system. For example, research designed to study the effects of PRWORA would include the legislation and perhaps the political climate at the time of its passage.

The socio-cultural environment includes the values adopted by society as a whole and those adopted by different groups within the larger society, regional customs and cultures, and religion. Theories that include the “culture” of poverty and welfare dependence are formed from the perspective that value systems are passed on to succeeding generations as part of the socialization process (Ellwood, 1988; Murray, 1984).
The economic environment includes market conditions, the labor force, monetary policy, and exchange systems. Terms such as “the economy” or “economic conditions” or “economic opportunities” refer to this system. Many scholars emphasize understanding the context of the economic environment when studying social issues such as poverty and welfare (Seccombe, 1999; Wilson, 1996) For example, Haynie and Gorman (1999) stated that other indicators of poverty could “be better understood in the context of the economic activities and opportunities available. . .” (p. 82). Interactions between and within these systems are important. The effects of local or national economies on labor markets within particular geographic areas can influence poverty and economic wellbeing (Brown & Hirschl 1995; Gault et al., 1998; Lichter & McLaughlin 1995; McLaughlin & Perman, 1991; Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990; Tigges & Tootle, 1990).

The Societal Macroenvironment operates within the Natural/Structural Macroenvironment. This system is composed of three subsystems: biological, physical, and human made or structural. The biological system is broadly defined as including anything that is alive. Plants, animals, fish, disease, even germ warfare are within the sphere of this system. Industries based upon living resources such as timber, fishing, and agriculture may form the foundation of a community’s economy. The physical system includes nonliving natural resources, geological processes, the ozone, and climate and weather. Depletion of natural resources often causes irreparable damage to communities that exist in close proximity. This effect is evidenced by the many areas of the United States largely abandoned when coal mines closed. Negative shifts within the other areas of this system can have devastating and lasting global effects. The human or structural environment includes the infrastructure of a given area.
All buildings and transportation systems such as railroads, highways, and shipping ports, and airlines are included in this system. The importance of this environment is self-evident.

The family carries out its functions within an incredible array of systems, usually unaware of minor ripples that occur in the other environments. Major shifts in any system, however, may cause a disruption in the family unit that requires some kind of adaptive response, or the family will not survive. Women and their families affected by welfare reform must change some aspect of their lives to survive the environmental shifts invoked with passage of the PRWORA (Douglas, 1997). The study of change requires some discussion about the change process and the role of rational choice.

Change and Rational Choice

The science of “change” is of interest to researchers in many fields of study, including psychology, cultural anthropology, education, and management. It is universally accepted that behavioral change requires individuals to recognize and believe that a change is necessary. In the past, behaviorists defined change simply as the difference between two states, but in recent years this approach has been challenged by researchers who claim that change is a process rather than a state of being (Eddy, Dishion, & Stoolmiller, 1998; Gibb, 1962). In this vein, change does not happen overnight, in a strictly linear manner, but rather it is somewhat evolutionary, requiring the combined efforts of the organism and the environment to initiate and sustain the newly adopted behavior.

The catalyst for change is usually a condition or idea that is in some respect new to the individual. Researchers generally divide the change process into two types, first and second order change (Douglas, 1997; Garrison & Prawitz, 2001). First order change is associated primarily with small psychological shifts within the individual. The innovation generally fits into
the person’s existing patterns of thoughts and beliefs, or paradigm, with only minor changes needed for total integration. A corresponding behavioral change may or may not occur at this point. Often an individual knows what behavior is appropriate, but the behavior may not occur without some external stimulus. If the idea does not fit into the person’s existing schema, it may be rejected out of hand, resulting in neither psychological nor behavioral changes. If this option is selected, then adaptation has not occurred. Whether survival is threatened depends upon the nature of the stimulating condition.

The other option available to an individual is to change her existing schema or paradigm to fit the innovation. The motivation or stimulus must be of sufficient magnitude to disrupt the individual’s equilibrium state (Gibb, 1962). This produces second order change, also known as a paradigm shift. Second order change has the potential to cement permanent behavioral change, because motivation for change is shifted from an external to an internal locus of control.

An individual’s decision to initiate second order change is primarily a result of the person’s past experiences with her environment. Behavioral researchers indicate that previous environmental interactions provide much of the information needed for an individual to decide whether a behavioral change is required (Gibb, 1962; Mattaini & Thyer, 1996). The outcome of the interaction, or consequences of the previous behavior, forms the basis from which the individual can assess her options. If the behavior resulted in positive reinforcement, then the individual was rewarded in some way. If the behavior resulted in negative reinforcement, then a negative condition was removed. Both types of consequences will serve to increase desirable behaviors. Punishment is also a potential consequence, but is used to diminish inappropriate behaviors. Punishment creates an adverse condition for the individual, or it may cancel positive reinforcement (Mattaini & Thyer, 1996). Put another way, attitudes, beliefs, and values do not
drive behavior, but rather social learning experiences shape attitudes, beliefs, and values, which in turn shape behaviors.

At this point the individual must decide upon the course of action required to regain system equilibrium. The person must assess the situation, environment, resources, and personal capital, and then choose the course of action that will provide maximum rewards, or at the very least lessen the possible negative consequences of inaction. This is the premise of rational choice theory (Bennet, 1996; Bianco, 2001; Cocking, 1994; Eddy et al., 1998; Rule, 1997).

Rational choice theory postulates that human actors will choose from all known alternatives the option that will provide the most benefit or satisfaction for the least investment. It is requisite the individual know what behavioral alternatives are available and the potential rewards or consequences of each (Bianco, 2001; Douglas, 1997; Rule, 1997). Ultimately, the individual will act based upon her rational assessment of the risks or uncertainties involved, preferred level of investment, and preferred choice of consequences (Bianco, 2001; Bennet, 1996). Marzano, Zaffron, Zraik, Robbins, and Yoon (1995) suggest that behaviors chosen in this manner by the individual, as opposed to behaviors that are proscribed by the socio-cultural milieu, are necessary for second order change.

Environmental Context and Change

All of this activity occurs within an environmental context (Bennet, 1996). Behavioral researchers emphasize that even though second order behavioral change is more likely to be sustained over time than first order change, individuals engaged in the change process must have a supportive environment. It is at this juncture that behavioral change, rational choice, and human ecology form a seamless backdrop for this research.
As the need for change is culturally and socially determined, behaviorists argue that the societal macro-environment is critical for encouraging, facilitating and sustaining second order behavioral change (Douglas, 1997; Eddy et al., 1998; Gibb, 1962; Mattaini & Thyer, 1996; Sigman-Grant, 1996; Thyer, 1996). Of particular importance are the groups and networks with which the individual closely associates. Researchers indicate that changing the environmental systems the individual is embedded in may be a more effective change agent than targeting the individual. Indeed, for second order change to be sustained, the systems in which the individual acts must also be changed. A suitable structure of contingencies must be initiated to support the individual’s behavioral change over the long term.

So in effect adaptation, or sustained second order behavioral change for any individual requires: (a) a motivation or stimulus (usually external); (b) a shift in personal values and beliefs; (c) the individual to make a rational choice between competing alternatives; and (d) an alteration of the individual’s environmental conditions, so as to make the old behavior less rewarding while enhancing the consequences of the new behavior. If all these conditions are not successfully achieved, adaptation fails and the individual, family, or even system cannot survive.

PRWORA legislation severed many of the threads used by welfare-reliant women to sustain their families, and now these women struggle to weave together new threads to hold their lives together and regain some sense of equilibrium in this new political environment. Human Ecology theory is ideally suited to study the outcomes of this legislation on affected families as they attempt to adapt their lives to the changing political environment. Research designed to include the environmental context of welfare-reliant women’s lives will provide a much more complete and detailed picture to policymakers’ and others about the women’s lived experiences (Gruenewald, Millar, & Treno, 1993; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; O'Connor, 2000; Schorr, 1997).
This information can be used to finely tune policy improvements to provide the utmost assistance to the women as they reshape their lives during their journey from welfare reliance to wage-based self-sufficiency.
Research Design

Introduction

Advocates, policymakers, and scholars are acutely interested in the effects of PRWORA legislation on the wellbeing of families and children. Therefore, it is necessary to document and describe the adaptation efforts of welfare-reliant women as they move from welfare to wage work. Poverty scholars and advocates are particularly interested in revealing and understanding the multiple barriers the women face in not only obtaining, but in sustaining employment. The problems faced by these women and their families in adjusting to wage reliance is also important to understand. This information is critical to inform policymakers, service providers, and the general public about the overall outcomes and impacts of PRWORA, especially in light of upcoming reauthorization discussions (Blum, 1996; Ganzglass, Golonka, Tweedie, & Fialkoff, 1998; University of Wisconsin, 1996).

Published research indicates that scholars are using a variety of research designs to understand the effects of welfare reform. Researchers often suggest using multiple instruments and methods to provide data that has depth as well as breadth. The use of qualitative and quantitative research techniques in tandem is often characterized as ideal for quantifying and understanding the complicated processes and interactions resulting from social policy (DeLeon, 1998; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Schorr, 1997).

More specifically, Ganzglass et al. (1998) suggested that the best methods for evaluating PRWORA effects include survey instruments, administrative data, and qualitative home visits. Home visits are especially well suited for completing the picture of environmental context, and women may feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts and concerns in familiar surroundings. It is extremely important that researchers use interview techniques that allow the
women to freely express their feelings without resorting to “forced choice” answers (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Edin & Lein, 1997; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; McDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Seccombe, 1999).

Several examples of qualitative research conducted with women in poverty in their environments demonstrate how effective this method can be in bringing the reader into the women's worlds. Carol Stack (1974), author of *All My Kin*, was an early pioneer of this method. Several new qualitative studies about families in poverty or on welfare have been published in book format. *Making Ends Meet* (Edin & Lein, 1997), *Don’t Call Us Out of Name* (Dodson, 1999), *Lives on the Line* (Shirk, Bennett, & Aber, 1999), *No Shame in My Game* (Newman, 1998), and *So You Think I Drive a Cadillac* (Seccombe, 1999), are dedicated to letting readers experience in some small way the context of these women’s lives. It is worth noting at this point that these major works focused upon poverty in metropolitan areas. To date, there is little published literature using this type of qualitative contextual methodology that looks at the effects of welfare reform in rural communities.

**Project Background**

This research project was Phase II of a longitudinal project directed by Pamela A. Monroe, Ph.D. In 1997, the original research team launched Phase I of an in-depth, qualitative study of the impact of welfare reliance and the welfare reform law on rural Louisiana families. Phase I was part of a larger project conducted jointly by the School of Human Ecology and the Louisiana Forest Products Laboratory, and was funded by the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, and a state non-profit forest products association.
In the Fall of 1997, the first phase of an intensive data collection effort was undertaken that included, but was not limited to, qualitative interviews with 84 women in 7 parishes at the sites where the women participated in GED classes or training programs. Areas of particular interest to the researchers included: a) what events precipitated the women’s current welfare spell, b) how much government assistance the women depended upon, and c) the women’s future plans for wage reliance. The first phase of the research was completed in May 1998. (See Appendix A for a more thorough discussion of the Phase I data collection procedures.) As of this writing, the data collection portion of Phase III (2000-20001) of the larger longitudinal study is complete. The lead investigator will initiate Phase IV, the final phase of the project within the year.

Limitations of the Study

Information obtained from the participants was based on self-reports, and no other sources of administrative date were used to verify the accuracy of the information reported. The original Phase I respondents, however, were compared to government data to verify that the women were "typical" welfare recipients. Another limitation of this research concerns the transferability of inferences made from these data to other groups outside of this population, especially to women living in larger metropolitan areas.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to describe and contrast the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by PRWORA. This project focused particularly upon the women's journey from welfare reliance to wage work. Two primary research questions were developed:
1. Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs (1st order change)?

2. What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and reach self-sufficiency (2nd order change)?

Participant Selection and Access

The Phase II research team consisted of Monroe, principal investigator, Tiller, research associate, and Blalock. The first step was to initiate contact with the women initially interviewed in Phase I of the study. The goal was to locate and conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with 100% of the original participants. The research team anticipated the need to use several strategies to contact these women, as this is traditionally a difficult group to follow due to high mobility (Blum, 1996).

Initial contact with the original participants was attempted in early Fall 1998. A letter was sent to each woman via first class mail, expressing the desire to talk with her again to see how things were going (Appendix B). Current contact information was requested, and a copy of a newspaper article reporting on the earlier research was included. A self-addressed stamped postcard was enclosed for the woman to return, and she was told that as with the first interview, she would be paid $10 upon completion of the interview.

As postcards were returned, the researchers followed up with telephone calls to each woman to make an appointment to visit with the woman in her home, or any other site of her choosing. Letters from the initial mailing returned as “undeliverable” (n=6) required the research team to search out different addresses for those women. A pre-interview questionnaire was mailed to the women who scheduled appointments in order to allow more time for probing the information reported. Interviews for Phase II began in late Fall of 1998, even as efforts
continued to attempt contact with the women who had not yet responded. It is important to note that almost all of the initial respondents kept their appointments.

In January 1999, a second mailing of the initial contact letter and enclosures was sent to non-respondents. This mailing also included a modified pre-interview survey. If the women returned the survey, the researchers contacted them by phone to request a face-to-face interview.

The list of “responsive” participants from the first and second mailing (n = 23) was quickly exhausted, so the researchers engaged in a physical search for the non-respondent women in the rural and remote rural communities where we believed the women resided. In most cases, once a woman was found, she agreed to speak to us later that day, the next day, or in the near future, and an appointment was made. One member of the research team was particularly tenacious in securing these appointments, so not one woman who was located begged off without an interview. These respondents were no less forthcoming in conversation than the women who returned the postcards. The team determined that formal mail contact might be of limited effectiveness with this sample of women.

By spring 1999, participants were even harder to find. Quite often, streets were misnamed, and in one community the houses actually had been renumbered. Many women did not have telephones in operation, or were not home whenever we tried a “cold call.” We repeatedly left notes and questionnaires in screens, attached to mailboxes, and with neighbors, pleading for a response. Particularly frustrating was the number of women who used post office boxes as their mailing address. Researchers in Phase I did not anticipate the problem of perhaps having to literally track down the initial participants in the future. What may seem to be non-standard research strategies were employed in attempt to locate the “missing” women. Methods included visiting area post offices, city halls, gas stations, or eateries (McDonald’s was often the
best place for information), visiting with curious neighbors, and simply asking anyone who happened to be in these locations if he or she knew the woman we were tracking at that time. Quite often we asked pedestrians, bicyclists, and even young children along the roadways about the women we were searching for, and more often than not we were rewarded with the information that we needed. Perhaps the most memorable experience was in the city hall of one small community. The person who offered to help us was none other than the mayor, and the woman we were searching for was his cousin! Again, we were seldom turned away by the women once we found them. An examination of the interview data did not reveal any differences in quality or quantity between the initial respondents and the “found” women.

Eventually 52 of the original 84 Phase I participants were interviewed. Seven of the women not interviewed had moved out of the state or refused to participate, and one woman was dropped because she did not meet the original criteria for inclusion in Phase I. The remaining 24 women not interviewed simply could not be located. The researchers made an effort to elicit the cooperation of the Louisiana State Department of Social Services for help in contacting these 24 women again by mail to request an interview; this strategy yielded no additional interviews.

Data Collection Methods

The primary data were collected via qualitative semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a questionnaire used as a guide for obtaining information on a variety of topics. This insured that all participants were given the opportunity to respond to a core set of questions. Probes were used as needed to gain more insight or a deeper understanding about the topic of interest. The interviewer as “learner” was free to ask about anything that seemed relevant to exploring the lived experiences of the participant.
Following accepted interview techniques, the researchers went as a pair, with one member of the research team as the interviewer, and one member as the note-taker, observer, and distracter of young children. Every interview was recorded with the woman’s consent on a fresh cassette tape. Each participant was ensured of confidentiality of the interview and informed that she could ask at any time for the recorder to be switched off. This only happened during two interviews. Interviews were completed within 60 to 90 minutes. The quality of the interviews, based upon the woman’s volubility and the content of response, improved noticeably over the length of the interviews. There was no indication of interviewee fatigue, or any tendency for participants to truncate responses towards the latter portion of the meeting.

A criticism of the original Phase I data collection methods often mentioned by outside scholars was in the area of interview context, because initial interviews were conducted at the women’s training sites. It was proposed that this problem could be significantly improved by interviewing in an environment chosen by each woman. Interviews in the second round were conducted in the woman’s home or on her porch, or in her yard or a neighbor’s or family member’s yard. If the interview was in the woman’s home, it was of primary importance that no hint of negativism or disdain was imparted about the often-meager situation the woman lived in. For the most part, homes and apartments were neat and well kept, but the researchers’ professionalism was sorely tested in a couple of homes as little critters scurried up and down walls, on couches, and across floors during the visit. A few interviews were conducted at the woman’s school or place of work, one interview was held in a hotel lobby, and one was given through a screen door, with the note-taker’s foot propped between the screen and the doorframe (the woman had male guests in the house).
In general, the interview began with a brief review of basic information collected in Phase I such as name, address, phone number, and number of children. If the participant had already completed a written questionnaire, the interview then proceeded with several open-ended questions prepared in advance. The researcher then went back through the questionnaire with the woman to give her the opportunity to add or expand upon any information she originally provided. Reviewing the data also allowed the interviewer to probe for additional details that the questionnaire may not have captured adequately. If the woman had not completed the questionnaire before the visit, the researcher would usually begin with some basic questions from the instrument, interspersed with the qualitative questions at appropriate times.

**Instruments**

The human ecological perspective emphasizes the context of the lives of families under consideration. This research project was designed from this theoretical base, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to triangulate the information and perhaps begin to capture the complicated dynamics at work in the lives of former welfare recipients as they adapt to the new welfare reform mandates.

Macro level data were collected in order to describe the larger societal and physical environmental contexts of the women’s lives, and came primarily from secondary sources. The data collection effort centered primarily upon 1997 and 1998 statistical indicators for the State of Louisiana and each parish where participants resided. Data included descriptions or indicators of: the geographic area, the composition of the population, community resources, economic opportunities, adult education facilities, the transportation infrastructure, area poverty, and welfare participation (see Appendix C). The researcher’s impressions of the geography and culture of each area were recorded so as to provide depth, richness, and a “three dimensional”
sense to the contextual picture of where the women carry out the tasks of their daily lives (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994).

The individual or micro level data were derived primarily from in-depth qualitative interviews guided by a questionnaire (see Appendix D). This is an especially good method to use to reveal and understand adaptive processes (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). A variety of previously published sources informed development of the questions used in the questionnaire and the interviews (Blum, 1996; Edin & Lein; 1997; Stack, 1974; University of Wisconsin, 1996). The researchers wanted particularly rich details about: (a) participants’ experiences moving into the work force, (b) resource acquisition and management strategies, and (c) what kind of future the women envisioned for themselves and their families.

Great care was used to develop a questionnaire and interview questions that were easily understood by the population under consideration and that provided accurate information to the researchers (see Tables 1 and 2). Questions were analyzed and edited several times for clarity and to eliminate any evident response bias (Ganzglass et al., 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Topic Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>Education level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are you going to any training programs or GED classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How many hours per week are you in class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Family Status &amp; Background</td>
<td>What is your marital status?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How many children do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How old are your children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is your parents’ marital status?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother is deceased or disabled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does your mother have a job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is it full-time or part-time work?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Father is deceased or disabled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does your father have a job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is it full-time or part-time work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Living Arrangements</td>
<td>• Do any other adults live with you in your household?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How many of your children live with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are you satisfied with where you live? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you feel you and your children are safe in your home? Your neighborhood? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>• Are you currently working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What kind of work are you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How many hours per week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What shift do you work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you like your job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What benefits do you receive at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is there someone at work that has made work easier for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you have difficulty getting to work on time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are there rules at work that you don’t like or have trouble following?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explain the most difficult part of keeping your job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is there other paid work that you would prefer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>• Do you have a valid driver’s license?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you own a car?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What forms of transportation can you find in your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Which forms of transportation do you use most often?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is this transportation something you can count on when you need it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How much money do you spend on transportation every week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Child Care and Child Support</td>
<td>• Who provides childcare for younger children (4 years and younger)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who provides childcare for your older children (5 to 11 years?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is childcare always available when you need it for work or school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How much do you pay per week for childcare (total all children)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the father of your children pay court-ordered child support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the father of your children help you out with any other expenses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Possible Work Impediments</td>
<td>• Do you have any health limitations or disability that would affect your ability to get and/or keep a job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the problem(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have you ever been treated for any mental health problems, for example, depression?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                 | Possible Work Impediments    | • Have alcohol and/or drug use ever made it more difficult for you to get and/or keep a job?  
                    |                              | • Does your spouse/partner hit you or physically abuse you in any way?  
                    |                              | • Does this problem affect your ability to get and/or keep a job?    |
| 2                 | Government Assistance        | • What government benefits do you currently receive?  
                    |                              | • Does your children’s school serve breakfast?  
                    |                              | • Do your children eat breakfast provided at school?  
                    |                              | • Does your children’s school serve lunch?  
                    |                              | • Do your children eat lunch provided at school?  
                    |                              | • Do any of your children receive free or reduced meals at school?  
                    |                              | • How much money do you spend for food each month that food stamps do not cover?  
                    |                              | • Do you use church or community food pantries/banks? How often?     |

### Table 2: Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1                 | If woman was not working     | • Have you turned a job down in the past year? Why?  
                    |                              | • What are the problems that you are having with finding a job?  
                    |                              | • Would you work in a job that is usually held only by men? Why or why not?  
                    |                              | • If you were interviewing for a job, what would you say are your job-related skills?  |
| 1                 | Transition to work           | • How much do you make per hour?                                     
                    |                              | • Do you have flexible work hours? Can you choose the hours and days you work?  
                    |                              | • What has been the biggest problem or adjustment? Biggest success or pleasant surprise?  
                    |                              | • If you were interviewing for a job, what would you say are your job-related skills?  
                    |                              | • Do you have a job coach or mentor? Who has helped you get started? On the job? Outside the job? Job contacts process? Support persons at work and home?  
                    |                              | • What do you need to successfully find and/or keep a job?            |
The interviewer was often required to probe for additional information. Sample probes are shown in Table 3; the actual probes used may or may not have been worded in the same manner. Often additional questions were suggested by a participant’s response to a previous question. This gave the interview quite a bit of flexibility, and information flowed more freely and in a more intimate and conversational form.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demo</td>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>• No probes unless missing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>• Can you tell me about how much you pay per month for rent? Does that include utilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are you able to pay your rent each month? Are you current on your rent payments? If not, how far behind are you? How do you plan to catch up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>• Have you missed work or classes because transportation was not available or you did not have the money to pay for transportation? How often does this happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Child Care and Support</td>
<td>• Have you missed work or classes because you did not have childcare?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you receive any kind of government childcare subsidies or support? About how much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have you named the father of your children? (If no) Can you tell me why not? Do you feel that you would be threatened in any way is you named the father?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does anyone else help you pay for things for your children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Government Assistance</td>
<td>• Do you know when this benefit will run out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are you currently using Louisiana Purchase (EBT)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you do to get food for your family if you don’t have enough money or food stamps at the end of the month?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>• Do you have any techniques that you use to stretch your food dollars and/or food stamps?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>• Are you and your children able to receive the medical care that you need? Why not? Do you expect this to change next year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal Health</td>
<td>• How long has it been since you last had this problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>• Does your partner object to your participating in education and/or training programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does your partner object to you getting a job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Has your partner physically kept you from working are going to training/education programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>• Is there anything else that you would like to add or take back?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Is there anything we missed you feel is important for us to know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The unstructured nature of the interviews required understanding of a concept unique to qualitative research known as “interviewer as instrument.” This terminology refers to the dynamic nature of the conversations between the researcher and participant. The interviewer must be able to immediately connect with the subjects. To do this effectively a certain amount of openness, sensitivity, and empathy are required. A good qualitative researcher “feels” the environmental context of the interview, and is able to use this to gently probe the other discussant about aspects of her life that may otherwise go unnoticed. Based upon the quality of the women’s responses, this researcher is confident that to a great extent she successfully adopted the role of “learner” during the interviews. Effort was made to ensure that the “interview” was a conversation between equals. This researcher was often required to suspend her belief and value systems to arrive at a greater understanding of the women’s lives and feelings (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994).

Validity, Reliability, and Bias

The quality of quantitative research is judged according to the validity and reliability of the research instruments and the generalizability of the results. The quality of qualitative research has been suspect because statistical techniques similar to those used in quantitative research do not exist (Bailey, 1996; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Even so, qualitative research methods include parallel techniques to insure reader's confidence in the integrity, validity and accuracy of the research findings. Indeed, perhaps because qualitative inquiry is so thoroughly scrutinized, the qualitative researcher makes every effort to insure the readers' comfort with the process. The researcher's diligence in this respect insures that the final conclusions rest upon the strongest threads possible.
Validity

In quantitative research, the concept of internal validity is concerned with whether the instrument used in the study accurately measured the construct it was supposed to measure. The parallel concepts in qualitative research are credibility and trustworthiness of the researcher, the research design, and the theoretical assumptions used to design the project (Bernard; Patton, 1990). For the qualitative analyst to gain the reader's confidence and trust the research process must be clearly articulated, from theoretical foundation to research design to data analysis and interpretation. The researcher must guide the reader through every step in the process, allowing the reader to actually participate in the analysis. The expectation is that eventually the reader will arrive at similar conclusions as the researcher, or at the very least clearly understand how the researcher derived her conclusions. This process of necessity must include an open discussion about outliers and extreme or negative cases, and must examine rival explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

External validity in quantitative research refers to whether conclusions can be applied or generalized from a sample to the population under consideration, or to other populations. In qualitative research, generalizability is referred to as transferability, whether results can be applied to other cases, contexts, or settings, not necessarily to populations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The qualitative analyst can increase the reader's comfort with the transferability of results by thoroughly documenting the individual cases in the study as well as the overall context of the study.

Reliability

Quantitative researchers demand some level of reliability in the instruments used in a research project. Reliability refers to whether an instrument will provide similar results if applied
across different individuals, or multiple times to the same individual. Here, the dual problems for qualitative research are that the researcher is part of the instrument, and that the exact context of any interview cannot be duplicated across participants, or even with the same participant. Therefore, qualitative analysts use the concept of dependability (Bernard; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Interviewers and respondents must be evaluated. To begin with, the interviewer must demonstrate some level of consistency in her approach to each participant interviewed. Interview procedures and techniques were documented previously under the Data Collection section of this document. In addition, the interview transcripts can be provided to the reader as further evidence of consistency.

The researcher and reader must also be satisfied that the answers given by the women are genuine and truthful. Several strategies were used to increase the dependability of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend conducting the interviews in a neutral location selected by the woman, her own home if possible. This particularly project allowed the women to choose the interview setting, and all choose their own or a relative's home. Also, the responses were compared with other sources of data (triangulation) to check for accuracy. Community data on job availability and unemployment rates were analyzed, and the women's responses were compared to findings in published research literature.

The qualitative concept of "saturation" was important to this study. Researchers more comfortable with reliability and validity based upon random samples, large sample sizes, and statistical analyses should be reassured by this concept (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). The accuracy and quality of the data were verified as the researchers heard participants repeatedly describe similar lived experiences. This consistency of reporting across women and locations was established fairly early in the interview process. Consistency also indicated a sufficient level of
truthfulness in the women’s responses, which the researchers translated into a good measure of dependability. Even so, it is important to remember that participant responses represent the perceptions of the women.

Bias

As with any quantitative or qualitative study, biases may exist in the data. An inherent selection bias may be present because these women were originally found participating in training programs, which could mean they were either more ambitious than women who declined training or more frightened of the coming changes. Also, the research team was composed of white women and the majority of women interviewed were African-American. It is entirely possible that these racial differences might have caused a response bias, in that some women may have censored their answers, or painted a more favorable picture of themselves and their circumstances. It is also within the realm of possibility that the questionnaire had certain built-in response biases, that inadvertently questions were framed in a way to suggest particular answers (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Macro-environmental characteristics for the state of Louisiana during the data collection period (1998-1999) were compiled. Indicators from years prior to 1998 were used when secondary data were not available. These indicators were compiled to describe the larger societal and physical environmental contexts of the women’s lives (Appendix C). Micro-level data about selected personal characteristics were collected via a questionnaire. The data were used to provide micro-level descriptive and summary statistics of the Phase II participants (Appendix E).
T-test (for continuous variables) and crosstabs (for nominal level variables) procedures were used to determine if the participants in Phase II were in any significant systematic manner different from the non-participants. The original data from Phase I were used for this comparison. A dichotomous variable was created to indicate Phase II participation. The following characteristics were assessed: woman’s age, race, number of children, marital status, ages of children, education, AFDC receipt, length of time receiving AFDC, food stamp receipt, Medicaid receipt, full-time or part-time employment, and whether or not the woman had ever been employed.

Additional t-test and crosstabs analyses were performed with the Phase II data to reveal any significant systematic differences between the women employed at the time of the interview and the women not employed at that time. Characteristics assessed included: woman’s age, education, number of children, ages of children, live in own household, TANF, Medicaid, SSI for children, food stamps, child support, housing subsidy, owns car, childcare availability and childcare subsidy (Appendix F).

Qualitative

The interviews were transcribed from the tape recordings. Several transcribers were used to achieve verbatim transcriptions. Each tape took a minimum of eight hours to accurately transcribe. The transcriber performed a preliminary check comparing the transcriptions to the tapes. As a final check for errors, a different individual also compared the transcripts to the tapes. The researchers believe that these procedures are good evidence of internal reliability of the “measurements” (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). Transcriptions were stored in individual electronic files on 3.5” diskettes, and a paper copy of each transcript was printed and stored.
All electronic files were copied from the original diskettes and stored on researcher’s computer hard drive. Duplicate copies were stored in a separate location. Each electronic file was labeled by participant name. The paper data management system was less complex. A file folder was established for each project participant from Phase I, numbered 1 – 84. Copies of the transcripts from Phase I were filed in the appropriate folders to provide background information as needed. Copies of the written questionnaires and paper copies of the transcripts from the current phase of the project were filed in the appropriate folders.

Subset Selection and Case Summaries

A subset of cases from the Phase II data was used for this particular analysis. Qualitative research is primarily concerned with achieving a certain depth of understanding about the phenomena under consideration, as opposed to identifying the breadth of the phenomena (Patton, 1990). Therefore, reducing the sample size was not seen as problematic, as Patton (1990) clearly stated "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 184). In addition, Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that when trying to ascertain why different outcomes exist between cases, the ideal approach is to compare a "limited number of cases" (p. 174). Additionally, qualitative researchers agree that purposive sampling to yield information-rich cases is equivalent to the quantitative research emphasis on probability sampling. Both methods are designed to increase the quality of the data.

As this study is focused on women living in rural areas, the subset was selected according to the following criteria:

1. The women for the subset must reside in a nonmetro parish as defined by the USDA Urban Influence Codes. The parish must have an assigned code of four (4) or greater.
2. Women must not live in a city with a population of more than 10,000, defined as a small city by the USDA Urban Influence Codes.

3. This researcher must have been present at the interview.

Twelve cases, representing four parishes in two distinct geographical areas, met the stated criteria. Four cases are from Avoyelles and Concordia parishes in East Central Louisiana and eight cases are from St. Mary and Iberia parishes in South Louisiana. The two parishes in each area share a common border, facilitating contextual descriptions. The East Central parishes will be referred to as the "Central" parishes and the South Louisiana parishes will be referred to as the "Southern" parishes for purposes of this study.

A case summary was written for each of the 12 women in the subset. These summaries are located in Appendix G. Descriptive information was compiled from Phase I case summaries, Phase II interview transcripts, and Phase II field notes (Table 4). Recurring themes and issues were also identified during this initial pass through the data (McDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Seccombe, Walters, & James, 1999). The case summaries were used as the initial starting point for further analyses.

Research Question One

The next section details the analysis strategies used for research question one: Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs (1st order change)? In qualitative research, the first step in any analysis is to provide a thick description of the phenomenon under examination. Only when this has been done sufficiently to allow the reader to be there also, can the analyst proceed to explaining and/or interpreting the results.
The initial procedure in this analysis was simply to identify the employment status (STATUS) of each woman. Initially, the women were categorized as "employed" or "not employed." These labels did not seem to fully capture the range of activities that the "not employed" women were engaged in, however, especially since several of the "not employed" women were engaged in "work-related activities" as defined by the state of Louisiana. Additionally, the "not employed" designation did not seem particularly fair to the women who were on state-approved "medical leave" as they had been employed briefly prior to their medical problems. Ultimately, the following categories were used as needed:

1. Employed (EMPL): woman working for pay only, not to maintain benefits
2. Not employed: woman not working for pay

---

Table 4: Summary Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Information</th>
<th>Phase I Summary</th>
<th>Phase II Transcripts</th>
<th>Phase II Field Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and ages of children</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in parish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Conditions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support System</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's father(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job availability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes and dislikes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRWORA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes or effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Volunteer (VOL): woman working to maintain benefits (work-related activity)
b. Student (STUD): woman engaged in vocational education, maintained benefits (work-related activity)
c. Pregnant (PREG): woman granted medical leave due to pregnancy and childbirth; maintained benefits (work-related activity)
d. None of the above (NONE): woman not engaged in work related activities or on medical leave

The next stage in the analysis was to identify variables that may have served as predictors of the woman's previously identified employment status (see Table 5). The researcher then was required to select the most appropriate display format for the data. A data display is a tool used by qualitative researchers to visually present large quantities of data in a significantly reduced format, arranged so that the appropriate variables can be easily identified. The alternative approach is handling pages and pages of transcribed interviews for each case. A well-conceived summary display also has the potential to increases the analyst's capacity to reach valid conclusions, as comparing and contrasting the data and identifying patterns and trends is substantially easier.

The data display format chosen for this analysis was a predictor-outcome matrix. This type of display is simply a table consisting of the variables under consideration, arrayed according to the predictor (independent) variables and the predictor (dependent) variables. This format is particularly useful when the researcher is interested in explaining the different outcomes of a program or policy. Therefore, the data for each woman was entered into an individual predictor-outcome matrix, providing the analyst with summary information in an easy to understand visual display (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The first several columns
of each table consisted of the items identified as barriers or facilitators to employment. The final column in the table recorded the dependent variable for research question one, employment status (see Table 6). This data provided the foundation for the thick descriptions required in qualitative research. In addition, once the data had been entered into the individual matrices, the display could be used to facilitate the second phase of the analysis – explanation and interpretation of the findings.

Table 5: Predictors of Work Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Coding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>Woman's age</td>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td>Number of woman's children at home</td>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>Y = completed, N = not completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKILL</td>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>CNA = certified nurse’s assistant, CCARE = child care, WOOD = woodworking, IP = in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREP</td>
<td>Job readiness training</td>
<td>Self-report</td>
<td>Y = completed, N = not completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG</td>
<td>Region of residence</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>C = East central La., S = South central La.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOBS</td>
<td>Job availability</td>
<td>Woman's perception</td>
<td>Y = barrier, N = not barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAN</td>
<td>Transportation availability</td>
<td>Woman's perception</td>
<td>Y = barrier, N = not barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCARE</td>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>Woman's perception</td>
<td>Y = barrier, N = not barrier</td>
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Table 6: Sample Case Predictor-Outcome Matrix

<table>
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<th>Predictors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE 31</td>
<td>CHILD 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interpretation of qualitative data goes beyond providing mere descriptions of the phenomena under investigation. Interpretation seeks to explain, or answer why the subjects in a
study behave the way they do. In this case, the analyst hoped to discover the why behind participants’ employment status, so the next step in the analysis was to search the data for the interwoven threads of relationships, patterns, and themes that could explain the women's work status. The method of analysis selected at this point was cross-case analysis, but first a master display was needed to organize data summarized from all cases in the subset. A case-ordered matrix was determined to be the most useful organizational tool. This particular type of display allows the data to maintain the integrity of the individual cases, while facilitating the task of analyzing the data for trends and patterns across cases. So at this point the individual cases were compiled into a master case-ordered predictor-outcome matrix (see Table 7). The same variables were included as in the individual case matrices, with the addition of each woman's case number (ID). The resulting display allowed the analyst to fairly easily compare and contrast, note relationships, and identify extreme or disconfirming cases. Also, the data could be repeatedly rearranged to permit the additional analyses of variables while still maintaining individual case integrity (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 7: Master Predictor-Outcome Matrix

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<th>ID</th>
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<th>REG</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>PREP</th>
<th>JOBS</th>
<th>TRAN</th>
<th>CCARE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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</table>
The next step in the analysis required the researcher to ponder the relationship between the predictor variables and the possible outcomes for each case and for the subset as a whole. At this juncture the researcher felt that the predictor-outcome matrix was missing some as yet unidentified factors that could help clarify or explain the dependent variable, women’s employment status. The prime difficulty lay in cases that did not fit the expected patterns -- the disconfirming cases. It was difficult to predict which women would be engaged in which specific work-related activity, or not. Therefore, it was requisite to once again focus the analysis upon the original transcripts and the individual case summaries. This subsequent pass through the data revealed an additional dimension, women’s motivation to work, that could possibly help to more fully explain the case outcomes. Five particular motivators, or intervening variables, were identified from the transcripts and case summaries (see Table 8). The new data were added to each woman’s original predictor-outcome matrix (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Potential Motivating Variables</th>
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Table 9: Sample Revised Case Predictor-Outcome Matrix

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<th>Predictors</th>
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<th>REG</th>
<th>HS</th>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>PREP</th>
<th>JOB</th>
<th>TRAN</th>
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The new individual matrices were recompiled into the master case-ordered predictor-outcome matrix, providing a more-descriptive, detailed summary of the individual and collective circumstances of the women (see Table 10). Once more, the researcher studied the relationships between the predictor variables and the possible outcomes for each case and for the subset as a whole. The cases were ordered, or sorted by each predictor, motivator, or outcome variable. Again, using the matrix approach allowed case integrity to be maintained, but the resulting display allowed for easier identification of patterns between and among variables and cases. Table 11 illustrates the matrix generated by sorting cases on the dependent variable, work status. These tables, supplemented by the case summaries and transcripts, provided the raw materials needed to explain the different outcomes to research question one: Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs (1st order change)?

Research Question Two

The next section details the analysis strategies used for research question two: What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and reach self-sufficiency (2nd order change)? Only two women were employed for pay at the time of the interviews, therefore the analysis procedures were not particularly cumbersome. The first step was to provide a detailed description of each woman.
**Table 10: Master Predictor-Outcome Matrix**

<table>
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<tr>
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**Table 11: Master Predictor-Outcome Matrix: Sorted by Outcome**

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</tbody>
</table>

*Woman had only been on welfare a short time, so did not know if PRWORA had affected her decisions.*
The individual case summary and predictor-outcome matrix was used to outline a portrait of each woman and her work efforts since PRWORA implementation. Then, the women’s own words were used to complete the pictures. These detailed descriptions were then carefully analyzed to predict whether the women would be able to sustain their work efforts. Factors particularly important in this analysis included: community capacity to provide jobs, transportation, childcare, or any other services needed; the dependability of family support, particularly regarding transportation and childcare; and the strength of motivation exhibited by the women.

The second part of the question, whether the women would be able to reach self-sufficiency with the jobs they were holding, required a careful examination of the women’s jobs, including wages, hours, benefits, etc., and how much the women depended upon family and or government support services.

Whether the women would be able to sustain a second order behavioral change hinged upon the findings generated for the first and second parts of research question two. The following steps were undertaken to make this determination:

1. Identify whether an external motivation or stimulus was present that prompted the women to find and sustain employment.
2. Identify whether a shift in the women's personal values and beliefs had occurred.
3. Identify the women's rational choice between the competing alternatives.
4. Identify whether the women's environmental conditions had been sufficiently altered so as to make the old behavior, welfare dependence, less rewarding while enhancing the consequences of the new behavior, wage reliance.

The results generated for research questions one and two are presented in the Findings, and the explanations or interpretations of the results are presented in the Discussion.
Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to describe and contrast the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by PRWORA. This project focused particularly upon the journey from welfare reliance to wage work for a subset of 12 women from the larger project. Multiple instruments and methods were used to collect the detailed data needed to capture the complicated dynamics at work in the lives of former welfare recipients as they adapt to new welfare mandates. These data provided the raw materials, or threads needed to outline and detail the final composite tapestry depicting the women's shared, post-PRWORA experiences.

State and Parish Characteristics

The human ecological perspective directed the researcher to describe the context of the lives of families under consideration. Macro-environmental characteristics for the state of Louisiana, as well as for the individual parishes in the subset were collected primarily from secondary sources in order to describe the larger societal and physical environmental contexts of the women’s lives (Gruenewald et al., 1993).

Louisiana Profile

It is almost impossible to characterize the state of Louisiana with only one or two words, unless one of those words is diversity. Louisiana’s rich and colorful history is tightly woven into the daily affairs of the state. For example, Louisiana is divided into 64 parishes, rather than counties, a lingering reminder of her roots deep within the Catholic beliefs of the original French and Spanish owners. The legal code practiced in Louisiana is the Napoleonic code, a throwback to the time when the state was a territory of France.
Geographically, Louisiana exhibits amazing variety, from the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, to the swamps of the Atchafalaya River, to the mouth of the great Mississippi River, to the rich alluvial plains of Central Louisiana, to the gentle hills of North Louisiana and its vast forests. The result is a magnificent collage of flora and fauna.

The northern areas of the state have a temperate climate, while the southern part of the state is sub-tropical. The average annual temperature of about 66 degrees, with winter averaging 53 and summer averaging 83, does not adequately express the full range of temperatures experienced in Louisiana. The entire state enjoys a very long summer season, with high temperatures consistently in the mid-90s. High summer temperatures combined with Louisiana's high humidity can render even a trip to the mailbox a shirt-drenching experience. Occasionally, southern Louisiana residents are fortunate enough to experience distinctive spring and fall seasons, characterized by mild daytime temperatures and cool, pleasant evenings. Winter, with sustained lows below freezing and highs below 60 degrees, spans less than two months in northern Louisiana and less than one month in the southern part of the state. Surprisingly, visitors and residents originally from more northern states complain about "cold" days, because the ubiquitous humidity seems to facilitate the ability of the cold to seep into the bones.

Louisiana's average annual rainfall is 56 inches due to the state's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico. Thunderstorms, particularly in the spring and summer months, appear and disappear with surprising suddenness, leaving a humid, sticky atmosphere in their wake. A common phrase often repeated by the local population is, "If you don't like the weather in Louisiana, just wait 15 minutes and it will change."

Louisiana's long growing season, abundant rainfall and rich Mississippi delta soil make it possible to harvest almost any crop grown in the Western Hemisphere. The state's major
agricultural products include sugar cane (2nd in U.S. production), cotton (5th), soybeans, indigo, tobacco, sweet potatoes (2nd), pecans (5th), and rice (3rd). The largest agricultural industry in the state is forestry, generating more income from papermaking and wood products than all other crops combined. Louisiana ranks first in the nation with shrimp and oyster harvests. The state's commercial fishing industry nets approximately 25% of all seafood caught in the nation. Catfish, crawfish (crayfish), alligator, beef, and dairy farms are abundant. Louisiana is the country’s largest fur producer. The state also has a thriving equine industry.

Louisiana is rich in natural resources, not the least of which are oil and natural gas (both ranked 2nd in overall U. S. production). Louisiana is America’s 3rd largest producer of petroleum and the state also ranks 3rd in petroleum refining. This represents 25% of the nation's petrochemicals. Louisiana has the largest concentration of refineries and chemical plants anywhere in the Western Hemisphere. The state produces just over one-quarter of all U. S. natural gas supplies. The largest U. S. salt mine is located in southern Louisiana.

More than 25% of the nation’s waterborne exports are shipped through the state’s five major ports. Two of those ports are among the nation's top five deep-water ports. Louisiana boasts the farthest inland deepwater port in the United States and the only port in America capable of handling the super oil tankers from the Middle East.

Industry. The oil and gas industries have already been mentioned. Louisiana also boasts a diverse manufacturing base that includes, but is not limited to companies producing: business telephone systems, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, glass products, playground equipment, mobile homes, apparel, weapons, furniture, paper and wood products, warehousing, food processing, and various forms of water transportation. Approximately 200 foreign-based
companies have invested almost $16 billion dollars in Louisiana. The state is the leader in foreign investment in the southeast and ninth in the nation.

The people. The population of Louisiana is composed of diverse peoples and cultures. Many Louisiana residents, particularly those known as Cajuns, trace their ancestry to the Acadians. These early French-speaking settlers were exiled from Canada, and over a 20-year period they made their way to Louisiana, eventually settling in the southern part of the state. These people brought their unique foods to Louisiana. Favorite Cajun dishes include: jambalaya, gumbo turtle sauce piquante, andouille sausage, boudin, cochon du lait, and seafood in every imaginable form.

In spite of the richness and diversity of resources enjoyed by the state, Louisiana's socio-economic indicators consistently place the state at the top of national "worst of" lists and the bottom of the "best of" lists. In 1998, The Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked Louisiana:

- 50th (worst) percent of families with children headed by a single parent
- 49th (worst) percent low birth weight babies
- 49th (worst) percent children in poverty (see Figure 4)
- 48th (worst) percent children living with parents who do not have full-time, year-round employment (see Figure 5)
- 44th (worst) Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)
- 44th (worst) Child death rate (per 100,000 children ages 1-14)

![Figure 4. Percent of Louisiana children living in poverty.](image)
• 46th (worst) Percent of teens not attending school and not working (ages 16-19)
• 42nd (worst) Teen birth rate (per 1,000 females ages 15-17)
• 39th (worst) Teen death rate by accident, homicide, suicide (per 100,000 teens 15-19)
• 36th (worst) Percent of teens who are high school dropouts (ages 16-19).

The national composite rank computed by the Annie E. Casey foundation for Louisiana in 1998 was 49th (worst), the same rank reported in the 1990 rankings. Clearly, even as Louisiana leads the nation in resources and production, the abundance does not \textit{trickle} down to the state's residents.

Parish Profiles

The subset participants resided in four Louisiana parishes: Avoyelles and Concordia from East Central Louisiana, and Iberia, and St. Mary from South Central Louisiana (see Figure 6). None of the major industries or resources identified in the state profiles were dominant in the research parishes (see Tables 12-17).
### Table 12: Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area Sq. Miles</th>
<th>Includes Metro Area</th>
<th>% Living in Urban Area</th>
<th>% Living in Rural Area</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Iberia</td>
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<td>575</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.7</td>
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<td>St. Mary</td>
<td>56,950</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
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### Table 13: Major Employers by Number Employed*

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<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Forestry</th>
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<th>Other Natural Resources</th>
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<tr>
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<th>Medical</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Gaming</th>
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<td>580</td>
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<td>950</td>
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*Louisiana Department of Economic Development

### Table 14: Employment and Income

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<td>1,997,286</td>
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<td>18.7</td>
<td>19,792</td>
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*Estimates ,model 1997 income reported in the 3/98 CPS
### Table 15: Race, Ethnicity, and Education

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<tr>
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<td>29.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>66.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Mary</td>
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<td>33.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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### Table 16: Poverty Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Total Population in Poverty</th>
<th>% &lt;18 (all children)</th>
<th>% &lt;18 (white)</th>
<th>% &lt;18 (black)</th>
<th>% &lt; 5 (white)</th>
<th>% &lt; 5 (black)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoyelles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>56</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
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*Estimates model 1997 income reported in the 3/98 CPS

### Table 17: Single Mother Households in Poverty (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Children &lt;5 (Black)</th>
<th>Children &lt; 5 (White)</th>
<th>Children &lt; 18 (Black)</th>
<th>Children &lt; 18 (White)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoyelles</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iberia</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>63</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoyelles Parish. Avoyelles Parish (see Figure 7) is rich in French/Acadian and Indian culture. Three state wildlife management areas and two national wildlife refuges are located in Avoyelles Parish. The area holds over 20,000 acres of lakes, bayous, and rivers, providing abundant fish and game for area sports enthusiasts.

Roughly two-thirds (66.4%) of the parish is rural. Avoyelles parish is not located on any major transportation routes in the state. One interstate highway, one U.S. highway, and one railroad pass within parish borders. Local bus service and major carrier air transportation is unavailable in the area. The yellow pages areas revealed two commercial day care centers were operating within the interview area. The major industries located in Avoyelles Parish employing more than 500 people included medical (897), casinos (1,100), and state and local government (1,321). In 1977, the unemployment rate was 8.0%, greater than the Louisiana rate of 5.9%. The unemployment rate for women was 11.5%, and for minority individuals it was 16.5% (see Figure 8).

The racial distribution in Avoyelles Parish was 70 percent white and 29.5 percent black, representing a slightly higher proportion of whites than the Louisiana rate of 66.3% (see Figure 9). The 1990 educational attainment rates indicated that 50.5% of the
parish residents had completed high school compared to 68.3% of all Louisiana residents, and 7.4% of residents had a four-year degree compared to 16.1% in the state (see Figure 10). These rates were the lowest in the research parishes. In 1999, Avoyelles had a per capita personal income of $17,036, 49th out of 64 Louisiana parishes. This figure was 75% of the State average per capita of $22,839, and 60% of the national average of $28,546. The 1997 household median income was $21,449, lower than the state median of 30,466 (see Figure 11).

Poverty estimates from the 1997 Current Population Survey indicated that poverty was a problem for one-fourth of Avoyelles Parish residents, compared to 18% of the total Louisiana population. The parish had the highest child poverty rates of the research parishes (see Figure 12). Thirty-three percent of all children and a whopping 74% of black children under the
age of 18 were in poverty (see Figure 13). In addition, 81% of all single mother households and 87% of black single mother households lived in poverty circumstances (see Figure 14).

Concordia Parish. Concordia Parish (see Figure 15) is located on the Mississippi River, across from Natchez, Mississippi. This rural area (56.5%) contains cotton gins, and pecan, catfish, miniature horse and ostrich farms. Two wildlife management areas and a national wildlife refuge are located in the parish. Concordia parish was not located on any major transportation routes in the state. No interstate highways, two U.S. highways, and no railroads passed
within parish borders. Local bus service and major carrier air transportation were unavailable in the area. The yellow pages areas revealed three commercial day care centers in the interview area. The local school district was the major employer (735). In 1977, the unemployment rate for Concordia was 14.9%, greater than the Louisiana rate of 5.9%. The unemployment rate for women was 12.8%, and for minority individuals 25.6%.

The racial distribution in Concordia Parish was 61% white and 38.5% black. The 1990 educational attainment rates indicated that 56.9% of the parish residents had completed high school compared to 68.3% of all Louisiana residents, and 9.1% of residents had a four-year degree compared to 16.1% in the state. These rates were the second lowest in the research parishes. In 1999, Concordia had a per capita personal income of $17,162, 47th out of 64 Louisiana parishes. This figure was 75% of the State average per capita of $22,839, and 60% of the national average of $28,546. The 1997 household median income was $23,271, lower than the state median of $30,466.

Poverty estimates from the 1997 Current Population Survey indicated that poverty was a problem for one-fourth of Concordia Parish residents, compared to 18% of the total Louisiana population. Thirty-five percent of all children and 67% of black children under the age of 18 were in poverty. In addition, 71% of all single mother households and 82% of black single mother households lived in poverty circumstances.

South Central Louisiana

Iberia Parish. Iberia Parish is situated on the Gulf of Mexico in south Louisiana (see Figure 16). A large portion of the parish is marshland, home to a diverse population of wildlife, including nutria and alligators. The area is 44.3% rural.
The parish is not located on any major transportation routes in the state. No interstate highways, one U.S. highway, and two railroads pass within parish borders. Local bus service and major carrier air transportation were unavailable in the area. The yellow pages areas revealed five commercial day care centers in the interview area. In 1998 the major employers were in manufacturing (2,925), medical services (700), and government (2,298). In 1977, the unemployment rate for Iberia was 5.9%, equal to the Louisiana rate. The unemployment rate for women was 7.6%, and for minority individuals it was 13.2%.

The racial distribution in Iberia Parish was 66.6% white and 31.6% black. One-third of the area residents identified themselves as Cajun. The 1990 educational attainment rates indicated that 59.3% of the parish residents had completed high school compared to 68.3% of all Louisiana residents, and 9.0% of residents had a four-year degree compared to 16.1% in the state. In 1999, Iberia had a per capita personal income of $20,470, 23rd out of 64 Louisiana parishes. This figure was 90% of the State average per capita of $22,839, and 72% of the national average of $28,546. The 1997 household median income was $29,951, lower than the state median of $30,466.

Poverty estimates from the 1997 Current Population Survey indicated that poverty was a problem for one-fifth of Iberia Parish residents, compared to 18% of the total Louisiana population. Twenty-five percent of all children and 59% of black children under the age of 18 were in poverty. In addition, 60% of all single mother households and 71% of black single mother households lived in poverty circumstances. These rates were the lowest in the research parishes.
St. Mary Parish. St. Mary Parish is also adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico (see Figure 17).

The area is home to plantation homes as well as swamp tours. The area is 35.3% rural. St. Mary Parish is not located on any major transportation routes in the state. No interstate highways, one U.S. highway, and two railroads pass within parish borders. Local bus service and major carrier air transportation were unavailable in the interview areas. The yellow pages areas revealed several commercial day care centers in the Franklin area, and none in Baldwin. In 1998 the major employers were in manufacturing (4,450), particularly in the shipbuilding industries located in and around Morgan City. Medical services (580), and government (1,416) were also important employers. In 1997, the unemployment rate for St. Mary Parish was 5.5%, lower than the Louisiana rate. The unemployment rate for women was 9.3%, and for minority individuals it was 18.7%.

The racial distribution in St. Mary Parish was 62.9% white and 33.6% black. The 1990 educational attainment rates indicated that 58.1% of the parish residents had completed high school compared to 68.3% of all Louisiana residents, and 8.3% of residents had a four-year degree compared to 16.1% in the state. In 1999, St. Mary had a per capita personal income of $19,221, 32nd out of 64 Louisiana parishes. This figure was 84% of the State average per capita of $22,839, and 67% of the national average of $28,546. The 1997 household median income was $29,528, lower than the state median of $30,466.

Poverty estimates from the 1997 Current Population Survey indicated that poverty was a problem for one-fifth of St. Mary Parish residents, compared to 18% of the total Louisiana population. Twenty-seven percent of all children and 56% of black children under the age of 18
were in poverty. In addition, 63% of all single mother households and 72% of black single mother households lived in poverty circumstances.

Participant Characteristics

Phase II

T-test (for continuous variables) and crosstabs (for nominal level variables) procedures were used to determine whether the participants in Phase II were in any significant systematic manner different from non-participants from Phase I. The original data from Phase I were used for this comparison. A dichotomous variable was created to indicate Phase II participation. The characteristics assessed included: woman’s age, race, number of children, marital status, ages of children, education, AFDC receipt, length of time receiving AFDC, food stamp receipt, Medicaid receipt, full-time or part-time employment, and whether or not the woman had ever been employed. The tests revealed no significant (alpha = .05) differences between the Phase II participants and the Phase I participants.

Micro-level data about selected personal characteristics were collected via a questionnaire. Of particular interest were demographic characteristics of the participants, including but not limited to age, race, number children, employment and wages, types of government assistance, housing, transportation and childcare. Qualitative interviews were used to provide the rich and varied details of the women’s lives that simply could not be captured in a questionnaire.

Participant Summaries

Many of women interviewed possessed an abundance of friendliness, good humor, and a fun-loving spirit, tempered with common sense, resourcefulness and caring, under-girded with determination, faith and hope. This optimism often surprised the researcher, especially
considering the women's very humble circumstances. Meager surroundings belied time and again the richness and complexity of each individual woman's personality and character.

Another trait the women exhibited was love and dedication to their families. Virtually every home the research team visited had walls, shelves, and counters covered with photographs of the women's children. But nowhere was family devotion more apparent than when the women expressed their fierce desire to "do whatever it takes" to provide for their children.

East Central Louisiana Participants

Four women included in the subset lived in the East Central Louisiana area (see Figure 18). Detailed case reports for the women are included in Appendix G.

E.G. was a 21-year old single mother with two children, ages two and five. She had a High School diploma, but she had not completed any other training or education programs. E.G. lived alone with her two children in public housing. She and her children received Medicaid, and $308 per month in food stamps. E.G.'s mom provided childcare for the children and received a childcare subsidy of $100 per month for her services. E.G. depended upon a girlfriend and sometimes her brother or mother for transportation, therefore she did not always have transportation she could count on. She said she did not receive child support, or financial help from her family. E.G. was volunteering as a teacher's aide. She reported that job availability and transportation were barriers to employment.

T.H. was a 19 year-old single mother with two children, a three-year old boy and a six-week old infant. She completed 8th grade and had a CNA certificate. T.H. lived in her grandparents' home with her mother. She received $190 per month TANF, Medicaid for herself
and the children, $215 monthly in food stamps, and vouchers for the WIC program. T.H.'s grandparents and mother provided childcare for work or school, and the grandfather provided dependable transportation. In addition, T.H. reported that her family helped provide for the children. She also said the baby's father helped support the baby. T.H. worked at Bayou Vista Nursing Home for three weeks, but due to problems with her pregnancy, was on medical leave.

C.J. was a very attractive, 22-year old single mother with three children ages five, three, and one. She was seven months pregnant. C.J. completed 9th grade, but did not have the GED or any other skills training. She lived alone with her three children in a three-bedroom duplex in a public housing complex, about 30 feet away from her grandmother. C.J. received $234 monthly in TANF, $419 in food stamps, and she and her children had Medicaid. She reported that she relied upon relatives for transportation, and that this arrangement was reliable. C.J.'s children's father had been ordered to pay child support the month before the interview, so she had not received any yet. C.J. said she did not receive financial help from her family. She explained that she was not working due to problems with her pregnancy, but she had worked full time at Ferriday Lower Elementary School four months before her difficulties. C.J. did not know if she would get her job back after the delivery, and she explained that jobs were not readily available in her community.

P.W. was interviewed in her parents' home. She was an engaging 28-year old single mother with a 7-year old son. She had a high school diploma, and she obtained a CNA certificate through Project Independence. P.W. had wanted to study nursing, but she did not score high enough on the qualifying test. P.W. reported that she lived with her son two houses down from a nightclub. They spent weekends at her parents' home due to the noise from the club. P.W. did not receive TANF because she was employed, but she did receive $57 per month in food stamps.
Neither P.W. nor her child had Medicaid, but she claimed that she had no problems accessing medical care. P.W. had a car that she saved to purchase. Her mom provided childcare for the seven-year old, subsidized (transitional) at $198 per month. P.W. said she did not receive child support from her son's father. She was employed full time at Camelot Nursing Home. P.W. explained to the researchers that there was no shortage of jobs in her community for women with a CNA certificate, because night work was always available. P.W. was considering applying for a job at the new correctional center because she wanted benefits. She did not have any barriers to employment.

South Central Louisiana Participants

Eight women included in this study lived in the South Central Louisiana area (see Figure 19). Detailed case reports for these women are included in Appendix G.

P.H. was a divorced, 43-year old woman with six (6) children. Three children lived with her, a daughter 19, and two sons, 14 and 12. The daughter's one-year old son also resided with P.H., and she provided unpaid childcare for him while the daughter attended PRWORA mandated childcare training classes. P.H. had a seventh grade education and she had attended classes through Project Independence. The family lived in manufactured housing on family land. She received $330 in food stamps per month and $500 SSI per month for her 14-year old son. Only the 12-year old son had Medicaid. P.H. said she received no financial support from family or her children's fathers. Her oldest son provided transportation when he was available. P.H. claimed she did not work due to lack of jobs in her
community, low educational attainment, and unreliable transportation. P.H. appeared to be very worn down and depressed.

L.B. was an engaging 19 year-old single mother with a three-year old son. She and her son lived with her mother. L.B. completed 11 years of formal education before her son's birth. She has earned the GED and was working on her CNA through vocational education. L.B. received $138 from TANF and she and her child had Medicaid. L.B.'s food stamp benefit was included in her mother's allotment due to L.B.'s age. L.B.'s mother provided free childcare when L.B. attended school, and her mother or siblings provided transportation. L.B. said she did not receive child support, but her then current boyfriend helped with expenses. She did not feel she would have any problems finding or keeping a job when she earned the CNA certificate.

T.L. was interviewed in her aunt's front yard. T.L. was a married, 32-year old mother of two children, ages seven and four. She said she and her husband had been separated for about three years. T.L. was a High School graduate and she has had additional training through Find Work and Project Independence. She said she had an expired CNA certificate. T.L. told the researcher team she lived with her brother and a male friend, near the casino. T.L.'s children were on Medicaid and her food stamp allowance was $158 per month. She was able to get transportation from relatives or a state sponsored van as needed. According to T.L., family members can and will provide childcare whenever needed. She claimed that she did not receive child support from her children's father. T.L. volunteered at Small World Day Care Center in order to keep her benefits. She expressed that job availability was a problem in her community.

C.M. was interviewed in her parents' home. She was a 34-year old single mother with a 12-year old son she described as a very good child. C.M. had a 10th grade education, but she said she could not complete the GED because she worked nights. C.M. said she did not receive
TANF because she worked part time at Wal-Mart, and neither she nor her son received Medicaid. She received $179 a month in Food Stamps. C.M. lived with her son in a public housing unit for $69 per month. Friends and relatives provided her with dependable transportation for not more than $5.00 per trip. C.M. said she did not receive child support, but that her family and a male friend helped her out financially if needed.

J.P. was a 40-year old single mother of four children, ages 10, 15, 19, and 20. She lived with her children and two grandchildren in her parent's home. J.P. earned the GED and she participated in the Find Work program. She and her children were on Medicaid, and she received $569 monthly in food stamps. J.P. depended upon friends and family for transportation and sometimes she paid $5.00 per trip. She indicated that she could not count on having transportation, however, so this was a barrier to employment. Family members provided childcare. J.P. reported that she did not receive child support, but that her parents helped out if needed. She did not indicate any concerns with job availability in her community.

B.P. was interviewed in her father's home. B.P. was a 40-year old single mother with a 13-year old son. She completed 12 years of school but did not graduate and did not have a GED. B.P. said she was diabetic. She lived behind her father's house in a shed-like structure with her son and her twin sister. She received a $170 per month housing subsidy. B.P. also received TANF and Medicaid for herself and her son. Her monthly food stamp benefit was $234 and she participated in the commodity distribution program. B.P. depended upon a community van and friends and relatives for transportation. Her disabled father provided dependable before and after school supervision for her son. B.P. said her family helped her financially, and her son's father paid $60 every 2 weeks for child support. According to B.P., the child's father also provided anything else asked of him. B.P. worked for her benefits as a child care assistant at the Bambi
Head Start Center. She said she was searching for a paying job, but was having some difficulty due to job availability and transportation problems.

S.S. was interviewed at the vocational-education facility where she was a student. S.S. was very open during the interview, and she had a very upbeat and determined personality. She was a 36-year old, never married mother of four children ages 19, 13, 10, and 9. Her oldest son was a freshman in college in Lafayette, so he lived with her only during the summer. S.S. had a GED and was working on a Carpentry Certificate through vocational education. Her eligibility for TANF was due to expire, but she said she had been granted an extension because she was in the training program. S.S. and her children lived in a well-worn manufactured housing unit (the research team did see the unit) with her sister and her sister's two young children. S.S. said that her father paid the rent for the unit and she shared the cost of utilities with her sister. She received $234 from TANF per month, $477 per month in food stamps, and Medicaid for herself and her children. She was also paid a transportation allowance of $2.40 per day. S.S. had her own car, but she indicated it was not particularly dependable. Her father paid the car insurance. S.S. told the researchers she did not receive any of the court-ordered child support she had been awarded. She said she was trying to find a part time job, as her benefits were scheduled to end, even with the extension, before she expected to be finished with the carpentry program. S.S. did not report any barriers to employment.

C.W. was a quiet, 20-year old single mother of two boys, ages five and two. She completed the GED, but had not participated in any other training or education programs. C.W. lived with her grandparents and the father of her youngest child. She said that her grandparents and her boyfriend helped to provide for the children. C.W. received $310 monthly in Food Stamps and her children had Medicaid. C.W. reported that she did not have a driver's license or
car, therefore she paid a friend or her cousin for transportation, neither of which was dependable. C.W. said that she had held a "nice job" for two months at the Popeye's Restaurant in Franklin, but she no longer worked there. According to C.W., her uncle had provided her with transportation, but when he became ill she could no longer rely upon him. C.W. told the researchers that transportation and job availability were major barriers to employment.

Summary

Twelve women from Phase II were included in this study. The average age of the participants was about 30 years old, with a range in age from 19 years old to 43 years old. All of the women were Black, and all but one of the women was single at the time of the interviews. The number of children living with their mothers ranged from one to four, with a mean of two children per woman.

The women received various types of support from many different sources. Not surprisingly, government benefits were crucial to almost every woman, and all were receiving some form of government assistance at the time of the interviews. Four women (25%) were still participating in the welfare program through the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP) – Louisiana’s TANF program. No woman received SSI benefits for herself, but one woman (8%) had a child that received SSI.

Poverty scholars published early warnings that eliminating the automatic link between welfare benefits and Medicaid eligibility could result in lack of medical coverage for many individuals (Geltman, Meyers, Greenberg, & Zuckerman, 1996; Jencks & Swingle, 2000). Just over half the women (59%, n = 7) reported receiving Medicaid benefits for themselves while nine women (75%) reported at least one of their children received Medicaid benefits. P.H., who was not participating in any work-related activities, and C.M. and P.W., who were working, did
not have Medicaid for one or more of their children. These women without Medicaid benefits for their children were not sure exactly what the new requirements were, or why coverage had been terminated. Research indicates that often Medicaid recipients either were not told about policy changes, or did not understand them (Acs et al., 1998; Pear, 1999). The result was that these women often had trouble accessing needed medical care for themselves or their children:

Interviewer: What about Medicaid for you or for your children?
P.H.: Jonathan get it through SSI. But, when I didn't go back to work full time, they kicked the Medicare off for my little boy who is 14. He don't get no kind of help, and I don't get no welfare. And he's still in school, he's 14.
Interviewer: Okay. And you don't have anything for yourself either?
P.H.: Ugh-ugh.
Interviewer: No Medicaid?
P.H.: The one 14 he needs to go to the doctor now, he's in the bed, but he can't cause he don't have a Medicare card.
Interviewer: And that was because they said when you quit for the Town of Baldwin, they took the Medicaid from him also?
P.H.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: And that's what they told you?
P.H.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: How long ago was that?
P.H.: April. Cause I've been taking him to the free clinic. And he needs to go to the doctor right now, cause he's got a bad stomach. And I can't take him back cause I owe them on my bill already, for $35. And I can't take him back until I pay that.

C.M.: Uh, welfare, they like kicked me off that that next week.
Interviewer: After you started work?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: So, it's been over a year since you had a welfare check.
C.M.: Yes ma'am. And a card.
Interviewer: A medical card?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: You don't have a medical card?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer II: Your son does?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer II: Okay, your son should have a card.
Interviewer II: You can get a card for him, all you have to do is go reapply. And he will be covered at least until he's 18. You need to go get that.
C.M.: A lot of folks been telling me, see I don't understand why Trevone don't get a medical card.
Interviewer II: Yes. Just reapply, that's all.
Interviewer: Okay. What about medical care? Are you able to get care for yourself and your child?
Interviewer: No. And why not?
C.M.: Well I tried and they said that the income I was bringing in, they say it was too much.
Interviewer: Do you go to like the free clinic?
C.M.: Well I go there, but I have the fee.
Interviewer: You pay for the fee.
C.M.: It's $15.
Interviewer: $15 co-pay?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: They told you that you're making too much?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: So you can only go there when you've got the money for it?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: But if like your child was really sick, or you were really sick, you could probably get the money from like your sister or your mom if you needed to go?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: You're not getting any welfare checks right now? What about Medicaid for your child?
Interviewer: Your child's not on Medicaid now either? Okay. Are you getting any kind of housing subsidy? Are you in government housing right now?
Interviewer: No? Okay. So all you're receiving at this point now is the $57 in food stamps?
Interviewer II: You know your child should be on Medicaid.
P.W.: I was going to sign up for that CHIPS program. I was going to sign up for that.

Later in the interview P.W. indicated that she had to borrow the money to access medical care for her son:

Interviewer: Do you have times when you get to the end of the month and you don't have enough money left over, or you don't have any food stamps left? Like your child needs something, or you're out of food or something?
P.W.: Oh, Yea!
Interviewer: What do you do when that happens?
P.W.: I try to borrow, like I try to borrow or something. Like right now he has a toothache. He had a toothache, but when I took him to the dentist, he had a gum ball [assumed to be some kind of infection]. That was $45 I paid for him to go to
the dentist, and I didn't know that he had a gum ball so he had to get some medicine, some antibiotics and pain pills, then come back. That's $45 more dollars I'm going to have to get his teeth pulled.

Interviewer: Oh.

Eleven of the twelve women (92%) received food stamps. One young woman did not receive food stamps directly, but was covered under her mother's allotment. The average monthly food stamp benefit reported by the 11 women was $297, slightly less than the national average of about $315. The benefit amount ranged from $57 to $569 depending upon how many children lived with the participant. The women did not use church or community food banks or pantries to supplement their food supply as those services were not available in their communities. All the women indicated their children’s schools served breakfast and lunch and that their children did in fact eat these meals at school. The children received these meals at no cost to their families.

Research Question One: Employment Status

Data were collected to explore whether the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translated into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs; a first order change. Published research indicates that rural areas provide fewer employment opportunities for women, due in large part to infrastructures that cannot support sustained economic growth (Brown & Hirschl 1995; Duncan 1990; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Kodras, 1997; Lichter & McLaughlin 1995; Tickamyer & Duncan 1990; Triest, 1997). Despite a booming national economy, fifty percent of the women (n = 6) in this study were either working to keep their benefits or not engaged in any work-related activities (see Figure 20). C.M. and P.W. (17% of subset) were working in paid jobs at the time of the interviews. P.W. worked forty hours per week, but C.M. averaged only 15 hours per week. These women will be described in more detail a little later in this manuscript. C.J. and T.H. (17%) were employed briefly, but were on medical leave from
work due to pregnancy and childbirth. Medical leave allowed the women to keep their benefits, but did not guarantee that their jobs would be available when they were able to return to work. T.H. had given birth six weeks before the interview, and believed she would be returning to her former position:

Interviewer: No? Do you plan on going back to work now that you've had the baby?
T.H.: Yeah.
Interviewer: Have you put out any applications?
T.H.: No.
Interviewer: Not yet? Is there any potential that you could go back there to work?
Interviewer: They're holding your job open for you when you get ready to go back?
Interviewer: When do you plan to go back?
T.H.: I have to wait to get my doctor's excuse. They supposed to be sending it, mailing it out today. My six weeks are up today.
Interviewer: Right. So there's a possibility you could start next week or very soon anyway.
T.H.: Yeah.

C.J. was seven months pregnant. She was on medical leave due to premature labor at six months:

Interviewer: Are you working right now?
C.J.: No, I got laid off, I mean I got, no, my work ended cause I went into premature labor.
Interviewer: Oh you did? You have a baby now, or did you miscarry?
C.J.: I'm 7 months pregnant.
Interviewer: You're pregnant now?
C.J.: Umm. Hmm. Laughter.
Interviewer: My goodness, you look good girl.
Interviewer: Congratulations. Is everything okay now?
C.J.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: They were able to stop..
C.J.: The labor. I got 2 months until June.
Interviewer: And then you're gonna be okay [unintelligible] the little baby, and everything's fine.
C.J.: I'll be 9 months in June.
Interviewer: In June?
C.J.: I'm 7 months now.
Interviewer: You're 7 months? When did you go into premature labor?
C.J.: Last month.
Interviewer: Last month?
C.J.: When I was 6 months.
Interviewer: When you were 6 months? So you had to quit working there? Where were you working?
C.J.: At Ferriday Upper Elementary.

She maintained her benefits because of medical leave:

Interviewer: Ok. But then, you were there for 2 months when you had premature labor? I just wanna make sure I understand.
C.J.: I think, mighta been two months, yea. [pause] Oh, I had been, about 4 months, I'm thinking about 4 months because I went at the end of the year, December, early part of January, was December, early part of January, maybe about 4 months.
Interviewer: So when, did the doctor, did a doctor like have you tell them something that you couldn't go anymore?
C.J.: He wrote a statement to the school, to the job I was working on, that, that he would take me off the work until I can [return].
Interviewer: Ok. What about your welfare benefits? Are you still getting those?
C.J.: Ok, they couldn't cut the welfare benefits but, so I can keep the Medicare card.

C.J. was not sure if she would be able to return to her job after childbirth:

Interviewer: When you deliver the baby, and you may not know this, so I'm just asking, when you deliver your baby and the doctor says it's okay for you to go back to work, will you be able to go back to the Star CVC Program?
C.J.: As soon, as soon as I deliver, and they'll probably basically put me on another job.
Interviewer: Oh, ok.
C.J.: You know, because see this job came from when you work for your welfare free, you know, you do the program and you just work for your welfare.
Interviewer: Right.
C.J.: And they just find you a job to do, to get paid every two weeks. So when I have my baby, I'll go back over to [Star CVC].
Interviewer: Ok. So you may or may not get to go back to Ferriday Lower Elementary?
C.J.: I may or may not get to.
Three women (25%) were engaged in "volunteer" work to keep their benefits. T.L. and B.P. were working at day care centers:

Interviewer: Are you still working somewhere right now?
T.L.: I'm still over at the day care center, I been there since April.
Interviewer: Ok, is that volunteer work, or paid work?
T.L.: Volunteer.
Interviewer: Ok. Are you at, are you at, Bambi or Small World?
T.L.: I'm at Small World.

Interviewer: How long have you been working at Bambi?
B.P. I just started uh yesterday.
Interviewer: You started yesterday?
B.P. Just started Tuesday. Cause I was workin' at Small World.
Interviewer: Oh, and is that a, is Small World another childcare center?
B.P.: Umm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: Okay and how long had you been working at Small World?
B.P. Um...six months?
Interviewer: Okay. And were you working about the same amount of time or fewer hours?
B.P. I worked five hours a day.
Interviewer: Five hours a day? Five days a week? Okay. And before you were working at Small World were you working anywhere else?
B.P. Uh-uh [no].
Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Um how much are you paid per hour at Bambi?
B.P. I don't get paid nothing. I work to um to keep my benefits.
Interviewer: I see. Well I'm glad I asked you that. So you're working primarily to keep your benefits.

E.G. was a teacher's aide. She had to report to "work" Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday regardless of whether she was needed as a substitute. That is how she kept her benefits, but if she actually substituted she would be paid for her time:

Interviewer: You say that you are working?
E.G.: Umm. Hmm. It’s at C-WEP.
Interviewer: C-web? Is that to keep your TANF benefits?
E.G.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: So, are they paying you anything?
E.G.: If I sub.
Interviewer: If you sub you get paid? And how much do they pay you if you sub?
E.G.: Umm, pay $5.15 minimum wage.
Interviewer: Do they let you know ahead of time what kind of days or hours you’re going to work? Or do they just call you in the morning and say that they need you?
E.G.: No.
Interviewer: Is that what they do?
E.G.: We, you know, I go Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. And if a teacher don’t come and she don’t wanna work then they pay me.
Interviewer: Okay. So you have to go Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesdays anyway?
E.G.: Umm-hmm.

S.S. and L.B. (17%) were in vocational education programs. S.S., a mother of four, was in the process of earning a carpentry certificate. She had been interested in woodworking since she was a child:

Interviewer: I know you have your GED. And you're working in the carpentry program right now.
S.S.: Right.
Interviewer: Is that going to give you some kind of certificate or associate's degree or something?
S.S.: A certificate, I think.
Interviewer: A certificate?
S.S.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: And it's gonna give you a job too, when you get through right?
S.S.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: How many hours a week do you come here?
Interviewer: Thirty hours a week. So, you're here all the time.
S.S.: Yeah.
Interviewer: How much longer do you have to complete?
S.S.: Ummm. I'm not quite sure because we had a, uh, an extension. I was supposed to get out in June. But since uh, like the storm where its flooded. They gave us an extension so I'm, I'm not quite sure exactly when.
Interviewer: Ok. So it was originally in June. Ok. Tell me a little bit about the program that you're in here.
S.S.: Well, coming to work I was also in spirit with wood work itself. I think I've learned a lot from it, you know, since I was in school in New Iberia. I've progressed a lot over here.
Interviewer: Really?
S.S.: Yea.
Interviewer: How long have you been at this school?
S.S.: About a year and three months.
Interviewer: Ok. When you were in New Iberia were you also doing some carpentry classes?
S.S.: Yea. I stayed there only 3 or 4 months.
Interviewer: Oh, ok. So you really learned a whole lot of what you needed here?
you know. Since I was younger I used to watch this man, uh, do carpentry work.
Interviewer: Oh, really?
S.S.: And I was always interested in it so maybe with something else I'd probably
have to say, "what, say that again?" You know. Something like that. As far as
that's concerned, I enjoy doing it.
Interviewer: So that's how you ended up in carpentry was that you had some
background.
S.S.: Right.

L.B. and her child lived with her mother and sisters. She was working on CNA
certification:

Interviewer: You're not working right now?
L.B.: No.
Interviewer: You're in school? So you're not doing any volunteer work either?
Interviewer II: What are you doing in school?
L.B.: CNA.
Interviewer: CNE?
Interviewer II: CNA. Certified Nursing Assistant.
Interviewer: CNA? Where are you going for that?
L.B.: [unintelligible] Memorial. Louisiana Technical College
Interviewer: Okay.

The remaining three women (25%) were not engaged in any work related activities. P.H.
had three children living at home, and one grandchild. She had worked as a janitor for a short
while since the last interview, but had lost her job due to illness:

Interviewer: Why are you not getting any welfare payments?
P.H.: Because when I was working at Nolan Memorial. The chemicals, the plant
[unintelligible] was putting my blood pressure on up and down. And I went to the
doctor and I stayed off three day sick. [The supervisor] he checked on me. He
wanted me to go back to work sick and I couldn't. So, they cut me off.
Interviewer: How long ago was that?
P.H.: Mmm, maybe a year and a half ago. I'm not sure. They cut me off cause I
couldn't go to work and not be hassled. I couldn't prove that I was sick; the
medicine, the pressure pills and all. And I missed 6 days. Cause I missed 6 days
they cut me off. And then, when I came back, he wanted to put me back on the
time of [unintelligible]. And I refused.
Interviewer: And why was that?
P.H.: Because someone [unintelligible]. And I couldn't walk all day like that.
Interviewer: What were you doing?
P.H.: [Unintelligible] trash, and they cut me off. And there was nothing I could do.

J.P., with four children and two grandchildren, had quit her volunteer job the previous week:

Interviewer: So you're not now currently working?
J.P.: No.
Interviewer: Are you doing any current volunteer work?
J.P.: I just finished my volunteer work last week.
Interviewer: You just finished it last week?
J.P.: As a matter of fact I quit it.
Interviewer: Oh, you quit. Why did you quit?
J.P.: Uh, it was going up to 109 hours and 20 job search and I had missed out on it so I didn’t do it, I mean I didn’t get to do it so I, just -- And I know if we didn’t have that, I was gonna be taken off. Well this month is the last month for me anyway. So it doesn’t matter right now.

The final woman, C.W., had two children and lived with her grandparents and her boyfriend. She had worked briefly at s Popeye's Restaurant since the first interview, but had quit due to transportation problems:

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit more about, about your job at, Popeye’s did you say? [You] indicated that your problem was -- your uncle got sick.
C.W.: Yeah, he wasn’t able to take me every day. And also I was seasoning chicken at the time and my...
Interviewer: Wait, wait, you were...
C.W.: I was a seasoner at Popeye’s...
Interviewer: You were a seasoner.
C.W.: Popeye's has seasoners. I applied for a cashier. I was a cashier. I did cashier, I did (unintelligible) bagging. I did the battering. I made biscuits. Then I went to seasoning.
Interviewer: Ok.
C.W.: At first I told, the you know, my employer I didn’t mind doin’ it, but I had a problem, my back started hurtin’ and I told her about my back. Then I went to work the next day I still did it. I didn’t mind doin’ it. But my uncle took sick and the transportation I explained to her the transportation I just wouldn’t be able to come like I was coming every day because of my uncle.
Barriers and Facilitators to Employment

Low or few skills, low educational attainment, lack of jobs, and problems with transportation and childcare are often cited as barriers to finding and sustaining employment. Age can also be a factor influencing labor force participation. Younger women may have limited work experience, and older women may have limited education.

Age. The women were divided into two age categories, women over 30 ($n = 6$) and women under 30 years of age ($n = 6$) (see Figure 21). The women in the over 30 group averaged two and one-half children per woman, and the women under 30 averaged 1.8 children per woman. Four of the six women in the over 30 group were engaged in work related activities: C.M. was employed part time, T.L. and B.P. were volunteers, and S.S. was in vocational education. P.H. and J.P. were not engaged in work-related activities. Three of the six women under 30 participated in work activities: P.W. was employed full time, E.G. volunteered, and L.B. was in vocational education. Two women under 30 were on medical leave due to pregnancy and childbirth, T.H. and C.J., and C.W. was not engaged in any work activities. Three women over 30 (B.P., C.M., and P.H.) and two women under 30 (T.H. and C.J.) did not have a GED or a high school diploma. Both women who were CNAs were under 30 (T.H. and P.W.), as was L.B., who was in vocational education working towards a CNA certificate. Three women from each group, T.L., B.P., and P.H. (over 30) and E.G., C.J., and C.W. (under 30) indicated their communities lacked job opportunities.
Education. Women with lower educational attainment levels find fewer opportunities available for quality employment. State PRWORA mandates provided women who had not completed high school with the opportunity to return to school to earn a GED or to participate in job readiness and training classes. The educational attainment level of the subset participants ranged from less than high school completion to a high school degree with additional vocational training (see Figure 22). Three of the twelve women (25%) had earned a high school diploma and four of the twelve women (33%) had earned the GED. Out of these seven women, C.W. and J.P. were not engaged in any work-related activities. P.W. had completed CNA training and was employed full time. E.G. and T.L. were volunteering, and L.B. and S.S. were in vocational education programs (see Figure 23). S.S. would like to have completed her education sooner, but she had to think about her children:

S.S.: That's the only thing I regret. I waited so long. But. It's not the idea of me waiting so long. You know, the way I look at things, when I had children I didn't have nobody to stay home with my children. I wasn't going to leave them with anybody else.

Interviewer: Right.

S.S.: So when they had gotten a certain age then I decided to go to school and whatever, you know. That's my only downfall. Other than that I probably could have been completed with school.

Interviewer: What if you had, what if there had been a real good, good daycare program in the area? And uh, and uh, Mr. Young said there aren't too many good daycare programs around. If there had been a good daycare program for you, would you have been able to go and continue with your school?
S.S.: Right. If it was somebody I could trust, but uh, I don't trust everybody with my children.

P.W. indicated that obtaining additional vocational education was sometimes difficult:

P.W.: In a way it [vocational education] helps. It do give you some opportunity to get some job training if you want to. But, when you -- the only job training around here is like CNA. You gotta make a certain amount of score before you can even get in the class. So, that's it. We need more opportunity for job training. What if I'm not cut out for CNA?
Interviewer: They need other opportunities, not just CNA.
Interviewer: You have to have a certain score to get in the CNA class?
P.W.: Yea.
Interviewer: So what happens to those certain people that don't get in that CNA class?
P.W.: They go ahead and sit right in on that class until you can pick your score. You see, I was trying to get into the LPN class. But, you have to make all 12 nines before you can even get on the waiting list to get in the class. And I got tired of waiting to make the score, so I just said I'll go ahead into the CNA.
Pamela's Mom: And I know one lady went three years trying to make that 12 nines. She never did make it. So, she just gave up.
P.W.: And you just get on the waiting list if you make that score.
Interviewer: What happens to people that never get the score? What happens to them?
P.W.: Then they don't get in.
Interviewer: Aren't there training programs for something else around here?
P.W.: No.
Interviewer: What can they do?
P.W.'s Mom: That's it. That's it. Sometimes they'll put you as a janitor or in the kitchen or something.

Yet, sometimes the opportunity to get additional training was by-passed. T.L. had the opportunity to get additional training beyond CNA and childcare assistant:

T.L.: I went and took a test to JTPA. You know what JTPA is?
Interviewer: Mhmm.
T.L.: I down, went to take my test went to welding.
Interviewer: Welding?
T.L.: Welding. I'm serious, I was going to welding!
How did it go?
T.L.: I passed my test, they had called for me. But I had never went back. So what had ticked me off. Ok, what had ticked me off my cousin um, they kept (unintelligible). Telling me, which it was true, they had a on the job program to MacDermott for welding. But only thing, I tried and I tried. I said man, this
welding school is 18 months, 18 months. And he said girl, he said I could getcha on if I could try to getcha a ride, we could ride together, go on the job training at McDermott. Wow, we now, we now, and I just got so disgusted that's what I'm talkin' about you ain't gon hang, you ain't gon hang with dem men, so I tell you what --

Interviewer: Who told you that?
T.L.: My cousin I'd rather be surrounded by a whole bunch of men than a whole bunch of womens. Ask [name] do I hang with any women, she knows. I ain't hang with nutin' but men.

Interviewer: So you wouldn't have a problem workin' on a job with men?
T.L.: No. I'm serious. None.

But later in the interview she revealed she may have regretted the decision:

Interviewer: Is there anything you don't have that you wish you had that you don't have?
T.L.: I wish I had me a car right now, but first I wish I had me a job that paid top dollars, and then I could have the car.

Interviewer: What does top dollar mean?
T.L.: You know I mean, Ok, say a welder like you know them people make some good money. If I, if I could get a job on trade you know, if I would want it, I coulda made some good money. Because I know, I have a friend, I mean she's a top welder and she makes good money. She makes good money. She make what 17, 17 somethin' dollar an hour. She's a top welder. She over all the mens [the boss].

Interviewer: Oh, my goodness.

Five women did not have the GED or a high school diploma, but T.H. had CNA training and B.P. had childcare training. Of the five, C.J. and T.H. were on medical leave, C.M. was employed part time, B.P. was volunteering, and P.H. was not engaged in any work-related activity. P.H. and C.M. did not think they would have the opportunity to complete the GED in the near future. P.H. knew her lack of educational attainment was a barrier to employment:

P.H.: I ain't going to get no education so I ain't going to get no job. I don't know what I'm going to do.

Interviewer: What kind of work is available around here?
P.H.: Field work. And that's all of it. Babysitting, ain't nobody. And babysitting jobs [unreadable]. That's all.

Interviewer: When you say fieldwork what do you mean?
P.H.: Like planting and [mumble].
Interviewer: Do they hire a lot of people?
P.H.: But [they] don't hire women.

C.M.’s work schedule interfered with scheduled GED classes in her area:

Interviewer: Do you have your GED or high school diploma?
C.M.: No I didn't. No I didn't.
Interviewer: So, you don't have your GED. Do you have any plans to finish it?
C.M.: I say "nights" but I work at nights so --
Interviewer: It's hard to schedule it.
C.M.: Umm-hmm. Yea, I work in the mornings, so I just don't know.
Interviewer: What if you asked your manager to schedule you just during the day or just during the night so that you could work on your GED. Would she be able to do that?
C.M.: No, I've tried that. No I've tried that.
Interviewer: So, you're not going to any kind of classes right now.
C.M.: No.

Only two of these six women had any vocational training, compared to four of the six women who did not indicate job availability problems. It stands to reason that woman who did not perceive potential job opportunities in their communities were reluctant to spend their time and energy engaged in additional job training or education. They did not see any benefit would be returned for the time and effort required. This may be a very rational decision within this particular context.

Number of children. The women included in this subset had from one to four children living at home (see Figure 24). Eight women had one or two children. C.M. and P.W. (25% of the eight) were working, B.P., T.L., and E.G. (36%) were working to keep their benefits, L.B. (12.5%) was in vocational education and C.W. and T.H. (25%) were not working (C.W. on medical leave).

Four women (P.H., J.P., C.J., and S.S.) had three
or more children living at home. None of these women were employed or working for their benefits, but S.S. was in a vocational education program. C.J. was on medical leave due to premature labor.

Five of the eight women (63%) with one or two children (all but C.M., C.W., E.G.) and one of the four women (S.S.) with three or more children had completed or were engaged in a vocational education program. Living conditions were less than ideal for three of the four women (all but C.J.) with three children or more, while only three of the eight women (C.M., P.W., E.G.) with one or two children indicated any dissatisfaction with their housing situation. Five of the eight women with fewer children did not receive child support from the fathers, and none of the women with three or more children received child support.

Location. The women in this subset came from two adjacent parishes in East Central Louisiana (n = 4) and two adjacent parishes in South Central Louisiana (n =8). In central Louisiana, P.W. (25% of the four) was employed full time, E.G. volunteered (25%), and T.H. and C.J. (50%) were on medical leave due to pregnancy and childbirth (see Figure 25). The two women in the subset with CNA certificates, T.H. and P.W. resided in the central parishes. Only

![Figure 25. Women's employment status by region (N=12).](image)
E.G. had indicated she had transportation problems.

In south Louisiana, C.M. worked part time (12.5%) and T.L. and B.P. (25%) were volunteers. S.S. and L.B. (25%) were in vocational education programs and J.P., P.H., and C.W. (37.5%) were not engaged in any work-related activities (see Figure 25). B.P., C.W., J.P. and P.H., 50% of the participants from south Louisiana, indicated that transportation was not always available;

Childcare. Obtaining childcare is one of the most pervasive and difficult-to-overcome impediments to work force participation, especially in non-metropolitan areas (Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, & Seefeldt, 2000; Edin & Lein, 1997; Ehrenreich et al., 1986; Fishman et al., 1999; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Kaus, 1986; Rangarajan, 1998; Sherman et al., 1998). Perhaps the most unexpected finding in this study was that the participants did not identify childcare as an impediment to employment (see Figure 26). Yet, the communities the women lived in lacked many childcare facilities, so most of the women depended upon what could be tenuous care arrangements with relatives. The women reported no out-of-pocket childcare expenses due to free care by relatives or a childcare assistance subsidy. Childcare was provided by mothers, fathers, brothers, uncles, and sometimes even older children. Free, non-subsidized childcare was a boon to many women, but this arrangement represented a non-binding agreement that could conceivably be terminated at any time, and for many reasons.

Figure 26. Percent of women reporting childcare as a barrier to employment (N=12).
Interviewer: All right. Your parents watch your child for you. Do you pay your parents to watch your child?
P.W.: I'm on a program.
Interviewer: Do you have a childcare subsidy?
P.W.'s mom: Transitional childcare.
Interviewer: Transitional childcare? How much is that?
P.W.'s mom: 198 [dollars].
Interviewer: That's per month they give you 198 [dollars]?
P.W.'s mom: Umm-hmmm.

Interviewer: Who provides childcare for them [her two children] when you need it?
C.W.: My grandmother.
Interviewer: Your grandmother does? Ok, do you have to pay your grandmother, to pay her to watch the child?
C.W.: I give her whatever she ax me for, If I have it, I give it to her.
Interviewer: What about for your five-year old?
C.W.: The same too [grandmother].
Interviewer: Okay. Um, is there anyone else that has ever helped out other than your grandmother, with childcare?
C.W.: She’s bout the main one.
Interviewer: Okay. Is she always available whenever you have to go to work or when you’re at adult education classes?
C.W.: Yeah. She’s always here. She doesn’t go anywhere.
Interviewer: Ok. kinda the homebody, huh? Okay, about how much per week would you say you ever have to pay for child are? When you help out your grandmother with stuff is there like an amount that you can tell me about how much you help out a week?
C.W.: I can’t tell, I can’t say an amount because I give her I keep, I give her every time she ask if I have any, I just don’t it don’t, it doesn’t even bother.

L.B.: My mama, she don’t work and she stay here with him, she get paid to babysit all her grandchildren cause they have other grandchildren, ones that she babysits here. And she get paid to do that.
Interviewer: Ok, so that’s like her job then, is taking care of the kids. Does she get anything for taking care of your little boy when you're not here?
L.B.: Uh, no, cause he’s in school.

Interviewer: You have two children? If you go back to work, who will provide childcare?
T.H.: I will [go back to work]. My grandmother or my mama will babysit.
Interviewer: Your grandmother or your mom. Will they charge you anything?
T.H.: No. But I'll give them something.

Interviewer: So you were working days when you were working over at...
C.J.: At the school? I was working five days a week, every day of school.
Interviewer: Ok. Where were your children? Where were the children when you were working?
C.J.: My grandmother was keeping my kids.
Interviewer: Your grandmother? Did you have..
C.J.: But she moved out and then my uncle provided childcare for me, my uncle.
Interviewer: Your grandmother then your uncle.
C.J.: See, my grandmother got sick that was when she keeping em earlier, when I was working for welfare
Interviewer: Uh huh.
C.J.: When I started working for pay, my uncle provided childcare for me.
Interviewer: Did you have to pay your uncle for childcare?
C.J.: No. He's getting [childcare subsidy].

Interviewer: So, if you were at the casino, you really wouldn't have any transportation problems at all.
T.L.: No.
Interviewer: What would you do for childcare if you were workin' there?
T.L.: My brother.
Interviewer: Where does he live?
T.L.: He stay, like from the end of this road to the end of that street.
Interviewer: Mhmm. And he would be able to help you with childcare?
T.L.: Mhmm-hmm.
Interviewer: Well, does he help you with childcare now?
T.L.: Oh, yes. My brother and them help me a lot, especially her mom too. Yes, they help out a lot.

Interviewer: Okay. Now let me ask you a couple of questions about childcare um your son is 13. Do you use any form of childcare for him?
B.P.: Yea when I was helping out at Small World I was receiving childcare checks. And at the time my daddy was like I mean like I go to childcare every day to the daycare. My daddy take care of my son for me. So that's how I get the childcare check.
Interviewer: Now you say your daddy took care of your son uh...
B.P.: long as I'm doing childcare.
Interviewer: Was that after school or was this during the summer?
B.P.: That was during school time when I was in school. When he had to go to school.
Interviewer: Right.
B.P.: When I'm, when I'm leaving here he'd already be home with my daddy.
Interviewer: Okay.
B.P.: He'd already be home so after I leave from here he go to school after I leave. So when I leave I leave right by seven. He doesn’t leave here till 7:35.
Interviewer: I see. So your daddy would watch him in the morning before school, in the afternoon, and then what about in the summer?
B.P.: In the summer right now in the summer I don't be gettin' no childcare check.
Interviewer: No I mean this past summer.
B.P.: Oh, uh... Yea for the summer my Daddy was takin' care cause I was in school at the daycare... at Small World.
Interviewer: Okay. And was your Daddy always available to take care of your son.
B.P.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: That was something you could rely on?
B.P.: Yea, I could.
Interviewer: So you weren't paying anything for childcare.
B.P.: Uhh-uhh [no.] They was paying me, you know for that.
Interviewer: Right. The check that was coming from the state [childcare subsidy].
B.P.: Yea.

Transportation. Transportation difficulties are often cited as potential barriers to employment. Nevertheless, it was somewhat of a surprise to note that 75% (n = 8) of these women did not have a state driver’s license and 83% (n = 10) did not own an automobile. Five of the twelve women mentioned during their interviews that transportation was their major obstacle to getting or keeping a job (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Women indicating transportation was a barrier to finding and/or keeping jobs (N = 12).
Three of the five women were not participating in work-related activities (see Figure 28):

![Bar chart](chart.png)

Figure 28. Employment status of women with transportation problems ($n = 5$).

Interviewer: What do you use most often to get around, what form? Like who do you depend on most to take you around?
P.H.: My son.
Interviewer: Your son? Can you count on being able to get someplace when you need to with your son?
P.H.: Um, when he's not working.
Interviewer: When he is working, what do you do then?
P.H.: I don't go.

And later in the same interview:

Interviewer: What do you think that you need to help you find a job?
P.H.: Some transportation to help me get around.
Interviewer: Uh. Huh.
P.H.: That's probably the main thing. No transportation.
Interviewer: No transportation. So, if you had transportation you think that would be real helpful for you.
P.H.: Uh. Huh.
Interviewer: Anything else besides transportation that would help you in getting a job?
[Long silence.]
Interviewer: That's the big one?
P.H.: The hardest part in getting a job is the transportation. And then when you get the job you don't have no transportation.
Interviewer: Well what would help you right now to successfully find a job?
J.P.: To successfully? Transportation.
Interviewer: Transportation?
J.P.: Hmm-hmm. Successfully to find a job that’s what it would take.
Interviewer: Do you um you don’t have a car?
J.P.: No, I don’t drive?
Interviewer: Then you don’t drive?
J.P.: Uhh-uhh [no].
Interviewer: Ok. Is there bus service here in town?
J.P.: No.
Interviewer: There’s no bus system?
J.P.: Uhh-uhh [no].
Interviewer: Um, what about um community transportation, church transportation?
J.P.: Well they have community transportation. It’s good to see that’s why you on that uh assistance if you on that they have to help you. You see since I done got off I don’t think they would help else. I haven’t tried asking them anyway.
Interviewer: Right.
J.P.: So if I asked I’m sure they can help. In some kind of way they would they could help. Other than that? No. Transportation that’s all I could (unintelligible) to successfully get a job.
Interviewer: Right. So right now when you want to go somewhere you either have to call, I see in your survey you call a friend or a relative?
J.P.: Relative. [Yes.]
Interviewer: And sometimes, sometimes you get it free and sometimes you have to pay somebody?
J.P.: Yea. And if it’s close up I just walk I don’t want nobody.
Interviewer: Right. And you say that it’s not always something you can depend on?
J.P.: No it’s not. Not at all.
Interviewer: When you do have to pay somebody how much do you have to pay them?
J.P.: Well I give ’em 5. That’s all it would take comin’ in here.
Interviewer: Ok, do they ask you or do you offer?
J.P.: I offer ’em.

Interviewer: Do you have a car?
C.W.: No.
Interviewer: When you need to go somewhere whether it would be to, um, to training or to a job or interview or anywhere, how do you get around, what kind of transportation do you use? C.W.: A friend and I have to pay my friend or my cousin, a relative.
Interviewer: A friend or relative and you have to pay them.
C.W.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: Ok. Um, in the community do you have any kind of bus service here? Like in this area there’s nothing, no public transportation?
C.W.: No ma’am.
Interviewer: How about any church transportation any church vans or anything that can help?
C.W.: No.
Interviewer: No? Ok, so if you wanna go somewhere, you have to call your cousin, you have to call a friend?
Interviewer: You tell them ahead of time, make an appointment.
C.W.: [Laughs.] It’s like that.
Interviewer: Um, can you count on them, either your cousin or your friend when you need them, if you need to go somewhere, can you usually count on them?
C.W.: Yeah, sometimes, not all the time. No cause sometimes they, sometimes, they say they forget um, they have to go somewhere else. I can’t say all the time.
Interviewer: So what happens, what do you do when, when they not available to you?
C.W.: If it’s like for an appointment I have to the doctor. I’ll call call them. I’ll walk across the street and use the telephone to my aunt and I’ll call the doctor. I’ll tell them I couldn’t make it, cause my ride didn’t show up, I’ll hafta make another appointment, like that. For the grocery store, I’ll wait another day and maybe that day they be able to show up they’ll come and pick me up there, I can go. But other than that, that’s about it.
Interviewer: Ok, do you have an idea about how much you spend on transportation what, that you have to pay your friend or your cousin, like every week about how much do you have to pay?
C.W.: I can’t say the exact amount because it different. Some of ’em I give more than others like my cousin. I might give ’em more than my friend if she needs it. Like if I’m ridin’ with her, I’ll give her money for gas, if she needs something for like food to eat to stop at the store I give her money for food.
Interviewer: So they don’t have a set amount that they charge you for going somewhere?
C.W.: No. My friend, well yeah, my friend does, he has a set amount he charges. Sometimes its $7 to take me to the store, and if he want cigarette or something, just for that I’ll have to pay for cigarettes or whatever
Interviewer: Ok. Back to the transportation, have you ever had to miss work or going to your classes or anything because you didn’t have a ride?
C.W.: No when I was workin’ I had a lift every day >cause I had a ride, I was with my relative, which was my uncle and he was taken me back and forth to work and I was payin’ him for takin’ me to work. And pickin’ me up from work. So, I didn’t have any problems.
Interviewer: So you generally had enough money to pay him?
C.W.: Yes.
Interviewer: Whenever you had to go to class, or to work.
To work, yeah, when I got paid I gave him whatever the amount that, you know, he should get for takin’ me to work and pickin’ me up from work.
Interviewer: Mhmm.
Interviewer: Ok. Um, can you tell me what kind of problems you may have with finding a job?
C.W.: I don’t have any main problem but just the fact that I was workin’, and I was workin’ at Popeye’s on Franklin. I was, I had a nice job, and I was goin’ with my uncle he was, like I said, he was takin’ me every day and pickin’ me up. But now my uncle has been sick and uh, I that’s the only main one I can count on because if I called him and I ax him, he’ll be there to take me. And I won’t have a way, I might not be able to come to work every day like with like somebody else like with my cousin or my rel, relative, another relative, like I did with him because I know that he was able to take me every day. But now he’s not, so I probably can’t count on anyone else, cause I would miss some days, and make me lose my job by missing days, like that, because of the transportation.
Interviewer: Because of the transportation? Is there any other problem you have?
C.W.: No, with what?
Interviewer: With work or holding a job or keeping a job or just finding a job?
C.W.: No.
Interviewer: Transportation is your major problem.
C.W.: Mmm-hmm [yes].

B.P. was volunteering at a day care center. Apparently transportation was provided by a community action van for this job, but she did not have transportation to look for work.

Interviewer: Why don't you tell me a little bit more about that. Miss Bessie, you don't have a driver's license?
B.P.: Uh-uh [no]. Not right now.
Interviewer: And do you own a car? How do you get around then?
B.P.: How do I get around...
Interviewer: Yes ma'am. How do you get, what transportation do you use? How do you get to work?
B.P.: Right now when I was going to Bambi I was using Community Action transportation.
Interviewer: Okay.
B.P.: When I was going to Small World I was using Community Action transportation
Interviewer: Okay.
B.P.: And now, right now I'm using Bambi...it's still Community Action for this, this, uh kind of van.
Interviewer: We passed that van as we were driving around looking for Edward Lane. What other forms of transportation do you use? Is there a bus?
B.P.: Uh-uh [no].
Interviewer: Public bus. Um any church vans or church transportation? What about friends or relatives?
B.P.: Sometimes my sister bring me where I have to go. If I have to go to town or anything like that my sister-in-law take me. If I have a doctor, a doctor appointment, I call transportation.
Interviewer: Okay. Um and do you have to pay your sister to bring you places?
B.P.: Uh-uh [no].
Interviewer: Are there taxi cabs in this area?
B.P.: Uh-uh (No). Not in this area.
Interviewer: Okay. All right. Is there any other kind of transportation?
B.P.: Uh-uh [no].
Interviewer: So for you transportation to work . . .
B.P.: And back home.
Interviewer: And back home that's been a problem, or that's something you're concerned about.
B.P.: No not concerned about it. But, I do. My transportation to go to Bambi and back and forth and stuff and to Small World no problem. I don't have a problem with transportation.
Interviewer: Okay. What if you were just to go out and find a job somewhere else?
B.P.: Well my work I had to told 'em but now if I get a job and if I need transportation they'll pick me up to, to my job and bring me back from my job.
Interviewer: Oh, really?
B.P.: It would be a twenty-four hour thing.
Interviewer: Oh, good.
B.P.: So if I decide to get a job I got to call them for transportation.
Interviewer: Okay. So are you concerned about transportation to and from work?
B.P.: Uh-uh [no].

But later she revealed:

Interviewer: What problems do you think you're having finding a job?
B.P.: One problem, I don't have transportation. And it's hard to get around, to go get, you know. It's hard to get around and go get a job, to get a application. Cause if you go get a application and ask somebody to bring you, you have to have gas money in order to, to you know put gas in the car, you know, and half of the time I don't have that, so.
Interviewer: Mm hmm. Let me be sure that I understand this. You're saying that right now you don't have transportation problems to get to work. But you would have a problem when it comes to going around looking for a job? So that's the nature of the transportation problem?
B.P.: Mmm-hmm [yes].

E.G. was also engaged in volunteer work, and she was walking distance from her job.

Interviewer: Okay. And you don’t have any difficulty getting to work?  
E.G. Ugh-ugh.  
Interviewer: Do you have a vehicle or do you have transportation that they give you?  
E.G. They give transportation, but I just walk, it's right up there.
Interviewer: So, it’s close.
E.G. Yea, I walk.

A distance of as little as five miles was insurmountable to women lacking some form of permanent, reliable transportation, especially as bus services were unavailable in these communities:

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit more about, about your job at um, Popeye’s did you say?
C.W.: Yeah. I was um . . .
Interviewer: Indicated that your problem was, your uncle got sick.
C.W.: Yeah, he wasn’t able to take me every day. And also I was seasoning chicken at the time and my . . .
Interviewer: Wait, wait, you were?
C.W.: I was a seasoner at Popeye’s . . .
Interviewer: You were a seasoner?
C.W.: Popeye's has seasoners. I applied for a cashier. I was a cashier. I did cashier, I did bagging. I did the battering. I made biscuits. Then I went to seasoning. At first I told the you know, my employer I didn’t mind doin’ it, but I had a problem, my back started hurtin’ and I told her about my back. Then I went to work the next day I still did it. I didn’t mind doin’ it. But my uncle took sick and the transportation I explained to her the transportation I just wouldn’t be able to come like I was coming every day because of my uncle.
C.W.: And there was no other way because my aunt was workin’ at the time and I couldn’t, she was workin’ at a different time that I was workin’ and when I would go to work, she wouldn’t be home, she has left to go to work. So I didn’t have any other way.
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. And this was in Franklin?
C.W.: Yeah.
Interviewer: How far is Franklin from here?
C.W.: Five miles from here.

Seven women indicated that transportation was not a problem for finding or keeping a job (see Figure 29).

C.M. and P.W. were employed, C.J. and T.H. were on medical leave, L.B. and S.S.

Figure 29. Employment status of women reporting reliable transportation (n = 7).
were in vocational education and T.L. was working to keep her benefits. Only S.S. and P.W. had automobiles:

Interviewer: Do they have, like community vans or church vans that they use if they need to bring people somewhere?
P.W.: [Shakes head.]
Interviewer: Not that you're aware of?
P.W.: Not that I know of. The only way that they bring you, is like if you're on welfare or something and you are in a work program, then they'll bring you around to work then. But if you ain't on welfare, Ugh-ugh. You on your own!
Interviewer: Once you're off of welfare then you have to have your own transportation?
P.W.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: So did you get a car right away then?
Interviewer: Or did you have to save up money?
P.W.: I had to save up.

Interviewer: Ok. So that's not a problem. You do have a car right?
S.S.: Yes.
Interviewer: Transportation. Car and a driver's license. We heard that you, sometimes you play taxi and you pick up other people that need rides to come in. That's great. Is your car pretty dependable?
S.S.: Lately it hadn't been.
Interviewer: Oh-oh.
S.S.: It's an old car, but you have to work with it. You know.
Interviewer: Right. Who helps you keep it up?
S.S.: Well, I've been trying, like I said my best to do what I can for myself. You know. The only thing is like the insurance my father pay the insurance on it, cause I can't afford to pay the insurance.
Interviewer: Um. Have you had to miss any classes because your transportation wasn't doing what it should?
S.S.: Uh-uh [no].
Interviewer: No? So you've been able to get here, your car's been holding up okay for you? And if it didn't, could you get a ride?
S.S.: Yea, that's what I been doing, my car, I just finally got my car straight.
Interviewer: Oh, so you've had to get rides.
S.S.: Yea.
Interviewer: Who mostly brings you?
S.S.: I was catching a ride with my sister. If I don't get a ride with her, my same old friend, she'll send her husband to come pick me up in the morning, and pick me up for lunch, and I'll wait till her daughter get ready to go to work in the afternoon.
Interviewer: So you don't have a problem with getting transportation?
S.S.: Uh-uh [no]. Like I said, you have to have [unintelligible]. If you wanna do something you do it.
Interviewer: Well, it sounds like you also have to have a good support network. You have to have some people around you.
S.S.: [I'd] stand on the side of the road and flag Miss Judy down. I know somebody, Connie.
Interviewer: You hadn't flagged down with a stranger?
Interviewer: Someone you knew. Just checking.
S.S.: Look, I don't wanna be here that bad!

Five of the women who indicated they had dependable transportation actually relied upon family and friends or transitional transportation (see Figure 30). This is potentially a very thin thread in the women's safety nets:

T.L.: Yes, we have to find 20 jobs. And the good thing about, really, the program I really like, now they tryin', well they tryin' to get transport for 24 hours. If you find a job, they obligated to take you for 6 months, to your um work site. They obligated to take you.
Interviewer: They're obligated to provide you transportation for 6 months.
T.L.: Yep, for 6 months just like, um, where I'm at now. If I go to work, no matter what time it is, they gon have to take me and pick me back up and bring me back home.

Interviewer: Ok. How do you get around, like if you want to go to the grocery store?
C.J.: My uncle take me.
Interviewer: Your uncle takes you?
C.J.: My uncle or my auntie.
Interviewer: Do you have to, do you have to pay them, or do they just take you?
C.J.: They just take me.
Interviewer: Do your parents live in Ferriday?
C.J.: Yes ma'am, my mother do.

Figure 30. Women reporting dependable transportation who own vehicles (n = 7).
Interviewer: Your mother does? Can you count on your, your aunt or your uncle to take you anytime you need to go somewhere? Have you ever missed work or classes because you didn't have transportation?
C.J.: I walked to work every morning.

Interviewer: What are you doing in school?
L.B.: CNA.
Interviewer: CNA. Certified Nursing Assistant. Where are you going for that?
L.B.: [unintelligible] at the high school.
Interviewer: Do they provide transportation for you?
L.B.: Uh uh [no]. I have a, a ride with my sister cause she goes, too.
Interviewer: Your sister goes, too?
L.B.: Uh huh [yes].

Interviewer: Where's Bayou Vista? Is it close?
T.H.: Across the highway over there, right by the school.
Interviewer: How do you get back and forth?
T.H.: My grandfather.
Interviewer: Your grandfather? He has his own car?
T.H.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: Do you own a car?
T.H.: No
Interviewer: So when you want to get around your grandfather can take you? Do you have to pay him anything?
T.H.: No.
Interviewer: Is there a bus service here in Bunkie? Um, Taxi cabs? Other friends that you call?
T.H.: They have taxi cabs, but I don't use 'em.
Interviewer: Do you have any other friends that you call?
T.H.: No.
Interviewer: Okay. So it's mostly your grandfather. Can you count on him for the most part whenever you need him that he'll be available to drive you somewhere?
T.H.: Yeah.
Interviewer: Have you ever missed work or classes or school because you didn't have transportation?
T.H.: No.

C.M.: It was my transportation, it was hard for me to get to the Bayou Vista.
Interviewer: How far is that from here?
C.M.: Oh, it's a good long way from here. Do you know where Morgan City?
Interviewer: Yes.
C.M.: It's in Morgan City, out there. Before you get to Morgan City.
Interviewer: What's that 30 min 45 minutes maybe.
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: How were you getting there?
C.M.: Catching rides?
Interviewer: Oh. You don't have your own transportation? No?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer: No? How are you getting to work now?
C.M.: My brother, my cousin or somebody else.
Interviewer: Family that'll bring you. Do you have to pay them?
C.M.: Sometimes.
Interviewer: Sometimes? How much do you have to pay?
C.M.: Well, 3, 4, $5. Well, no more than $5.

Vocational education programs had been completed or were in progress for four of the seven women with transportation, but for only one of the five women without transportation. All of the women (n = 7) with transportation had some pre-PRWORA work experience, but only two of the five women without dependable transportation had any prior work experience.

Job availability. Welfare reform mandates required that women work, attend job training or education programs, and/or engage in job search activities to continue receiving their benefits. These requirements were based upon assumptions that jobs would be available and accessible for women exiting welfare. This was not always true in the rural areas visited. The women in the subset were evenly divided about whether jobs were available in their communities (see Figure 31). Of the six women who did not mention access to jobs as a problem: C.M. and P.W. were working, J.P. was not working, S.S. and L.B. were in vocational education, and T.H. was on medical leave. The six women who did see job availability as problematic included: C.W. and P.H., who were not employed; C.J., on medical leave; and the three women working for their benefits (B.P., T.L., E.G.).
Five of the six women (83%) who were not employed or who were working to maintain their benefits indicated that jobs simply were not available in the area (see Figure 32):

B.P.: But, um, in order for me to keep my benefit I'm doing job searching and stuff.
Interviewer: Okay.
B.P.: And twenty hours, twenty hours and twenty jobs.
Interviewer: Twenty hours?
B.P.: Twenty jobs.
Interviewer: Twenty jobs.
B.P.: Yea in order for me to keep my benefits
Interviewer: Um-hmm. You have to do that in addition to your work at Bambi?
B.P.: No that's just for my work my benefits.
Interviewer: Okay. Okay.
B.P.: I try my best to do that so I can get twenty job searches and stuff. And most of the time you call they not hiring. You gotta go get an application and all that stuff.
Interviewer: Mmm-huh.
B.P.: Right now. I'm tryin' to look for a job now. Cause I need one.
Interviewer: What's the job situation like around here? Do you think you'll be able to find work?
B.P.: I could find work but it's hard for me, it's hard for me to get to work. Cause I don't have no transportation and I don't know how to drive.
Interviewer: Okay.
B.P.: No work right now.

Interviewer: Do you see that any of that would change in the next year? Any reason to see that you would get the card [Medicaid]?
P.H.: Ugh-ugh. I don't know if I get a card or not get a card. I ain't going to get no education so I ain't going to get no job. I don't know what I'm going to do [Unintelligible.]
Interviewer: What kind of work is available around here?
P.H.: Field work. And that's all of it. Babysitting, ain't nobody. And babysitting jobs [unintelligible]. That's all.
Interviewer: When you say fieldwork what do you mean?
P.H.: Like [unintelligible] planting and [mumble].
Interviewer: What season does that [sugar cane] run?

Figure 32. Women's perception of job availability and women's employment status (N = 12).
P.H.: November to January. That finished last month. This month they finish. Interviewer: Do they hire a lot of people?
P.H.: Umm-hmm. But they don't hire women.

T.L. mentioned the job availability problem before any interview questions were asked:

T.L.: I'm just saying, people um from the casino got application from over there. But you can't force whatcha want me to do, go hold a gun on the people tell the people to hire me. I have two kids to take care of, understand what I'm sayin'? And I realize, my children is four and seven years old. I realize I have to take care of my kids.

But T.L., who lives in the same area as P.H., worked in the fields on a seasonal basis:

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm, so you were doing the daycare center and plantin' sugar cane for awhile?
T.L.: Oh yes, oh yes. And on the Saturdays, that was the whole day, Sunday, was the whole day.
Interviewer: Planting?

C.J. expressed frustration that getting a job, even in the low-paying services sector, was often more a matter of knowing the right people than having the right skills or education:

Interviewer: Before you started at the Star CVC Program, had you applied for any other jobs anywhere?
C.J.: Applications, yea like the grocery stores and different places, but they never called me back.
Interviewer: Why don't they call, I'm, not just you, but they don't call anybody back?
C.J.: Not that I know of. I mean, when you call em back, they not hiring, then when you go there have a different person [working there].
Interviewer: Oh really. So what do you think is happening?
C.J.: I think they just hiring who they want to hire, give the job to who they want to have it.

Interviewer: Right. So are you looking for something right now.
E.G.: Yea.
Interviewer: What kind?
E.G.: Any kind of work.
Interviewer: Like what?
E.G.: Just any kind. I want to work!
Interviewer: What kind of work’s available in this area?
E.G.: None.
Interviewer: None?
E.G.: Not now. None.

The two working women, C.M. and P.W., said that job availability was not a problem.

P.W. was a CNA, and CNAs seemed to have more success in the job market.

Interviewer: What about the other people that went through the CNA class? Were they successful at finding jobs?
P.W.: Like when you first get out of the class, they be needing a lot of people to work at night.

The two women pursuing additional vocational education, L.B. and S.S., also felt that jobs would be available when they finished their programs. Perhaps that is why they were willing to invest the time in additional skill training.

L.B.: Because by the time I do, I don’t know how long it gone be for me before I get a job when I finish school.
Interviewer: What are you taking, how long do you think it’s gonna be before you get a job?
L.B.: I have [CNA] and she was telling me to come back after I get my license and they have a internet and she said I could, just punch up anything any route, anywhere I wanna go, anywhere in the United States, they got it. And she told me theys a lot of jobs that I could go, I thought I was main, I was moving to Houston after I finish, but if I could get me a job in Lafayette here in Lafayette, Louisiana?
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm.
L.B.: I wouldn’t mind working there, and finding me an apartment down there, you know step by step?
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: What's gonna happen then in July, that's gonna be real close to the time when you're gonna be, like maybe getting close to finishing here, but maybe not quite finished.
S.S.: Hopefully I'll have a part-time job.
Interviewer: Ok, so you're trying to get a part-time job?
S.S.: Right. Still more schooling I want to get all that I can.
Interviewer: Right. Right. Since you're not quite finished with this program yet.
S.S.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: Do you have any ideas about where you would be able to get a part-time job?
S.S.: We have a man. Uh, he have a cabinet shop in Centerville. Mister Soprano. And he's keeping me in mind for when I complete the course.
Interviewer: Ok. Ok.
S.S.: He have his own cabinet shop.
Interviewer: Good. So he might be able to take you on part-time before you complete the course, so that you can complete the course.

C.J. and T.H. had worked but were on medical leave. T.H. was also a CNA, and she did not have trouble finding a job, but she indicated that job availability *was* a problem in her central Louisiana community:

Interviewer: Did you have any problems finding your job at Bayou Vista Nursing Home?
T.H.: No.
Interviewer: Were they looking for people?
T.H.: Uh-huh [yes].
Interviewer: Is it relatively easy or is it hard to find jobs in the Bunkie area?
T.H.: It's hard. 'Cause we have no jobs in Bunkie.

C.J. also said jobs were hard to find in the central area:

Interviewer: Have you in the last year, before you started at the Star CVC Program, had you applied for any other jobs anywhere?
C.J.: Applications, yea like the grocery stores, and different places, but they never called me back.
Interviewer: Why don't, why don't they call, I'm, not just you, but they don't call anybody back?
C.J.: Not that I know of. I mean, when you call em back, they not hiring, then when you go there have a different person.
Interviewer: Oh really. So what do you think's happening?
C.J.: I think they just hiring who they want to hire.
Interviewer: Oh.
C.J.: Give the job to who they want to have it.

Job availability was identified as a problem by two of the seven women with reliable transportation, but four of the five women with transportation problems indicated that job availability was also a problem. Of the three women who were not engaged in work-related activities, two claimed that job availability was a problem, but one woman did not. All three resided in the southern parishes. Only two of these six women who felt that limited job opportunities existed had any vocational training, compared to four of the six women who did not indicate job availability problems. It stands to reason that woman who did not perceive
potential job opportunities in their communities were reluctant to spend their time and energy engaged in additional job training or education. They did not see any benefit would be returned for the time and effort required. This was a very rational decision given the rural context.

Summary of barriers and facilitators. The previous findings reported on women's barriers or facilitators to employment. One finding is particularly notable because it was universal to all 12 women. Not one woman reported childcare as a barrier to finding and/or keeping a paid job (see Figure 33). All 12 women felt they could depend upon family to provide childcare. In addition, all but two women depended upon family members for transportation. Thus relatives near-by was a facilitating condition for these 12 women.

On the other hand, 50% of the women \( (n = 6) \) perceived that jobs were not readily available in their communities. Transportation was identified as a barrier to finding and sustaining employment for five women (42%); three were not working

![Figure 33. Women's barriers to employment (N = 12).](image)

![Figure 34. Women with multiple barriers to employment (N = 12).](image)
and two were volunteers. Three women (25%) did not have a high school diploma or GED and had not completed additional vocational education or job readiness programs. The age of the women did not seem particularly relevant, except that the women with CNA licenses \( n = 2 \) and the woman \( n = 1 \) working on obtaining a CNA license were all under 30-years old. Women with only one or two children were more likely to be engaged in work-related activities than were women with three or more children. It is difficult to say if the women's region of residence affected their employment status because of the small sample size. The only clear differences between women from the East Central parishes \( n = 4 \) and women from the Southern parishes \( n = 8 \) was that the women on medical leave \( n = 2 \) resided exclusively in the Central area. The women not engaged in work-related activities \( n = 3 \) and the women in vocational education \( n = 3 \) lived in Southern Louisiana.

Multiple barriers to employment are often reported for this population (see Figure 34). In this study, four women (33%) did not appear to have significant barriers to work. Two of those women were employed, one woman was in vocational-education, and one woman was on medical leave. One barrier was identified for two women (17%), a volunteer and a woman in vocational-education. But 50% of the participants \( n = 6 \) experienced two or more barriers to finding or sustaining paid employment. In this group, two women were volunteers, one woman was on medical leave, and three women were not engaged in any work-related activities.

Motivation for Work

A new set of factors that may have prompted the women to engage in work-related activities or not became evident as a result of repeated passes through the data. Much has been written about the various barriers to employment: but an important part of the "why are some women not employed" question may be "what drives some women to work when other women
in similar circumstance do not." Work status for formerly welfare-reliant women may be based upon the complex interplay between barriers, facilitators, and some as yet undefined set of motivators.

The wisdom behind the PRWORA was that limiting welfare benefits would motivate women to support themselves and their families through labor force participation. But that idea was based upon the assumption that women were supporting themselves with the welfare check. However, a woman in Louisiana with one child only received $123 per month cash benefits from TANF. How plausible is it that anyone can live on $123 per month, even with subsidized housing, Medicaid, and food stamps? Therefore it stands to reason that women not only depended upon government assistance, but on something or someone else for support.

The data in this study revealed other possible sources of support the women may or may not have been able to access. Especially important for these women was assistance with living expenses. Relatives often shared their homes with these women and their children, thus relieving the women of onerous housing expenses. Relatives, friends, and occasionally the fathers of the children could often be counted on for help with other expenses. However, the inability to call upon extended family support could serve as a motivator to labor force participation.

Four potential motivators were identified from the data. First of course was the legislation itself. Second, the women's living conditions may have served as prompts to work, especially if they were not living with family. Third, the amount of financial support available from relatives and the fathers of the children may have affected women's decisions to work. Finally, the strength of the woman's need for independence seemed an important factor.

PRWORA. PRWORA was designed to discourage long-term welfare-reliance and encourage wage-based self-sufficiency. It was expected that welfare-reliant women’s lives would
have been altered in some fundamental fashion as a result of this legislation, therefore this may
have been a prime motivator for the women to engage in work-related activities. The women in
this study were asked to describe how changes in welfare legislation affected their way of life,
and whether their lives were better or worse since PRWORA implementation. T.L. refrained
from quitting a volunteer position because she was afraid of losing Medicaid:

Interviewer: And when you say that there are things there that you don't like that
are gettin' on your nerves, what kind of things are they?
T.L.: No, I'm sayin', she gettin' on my nerves, like I...
Interviewer: She who?
T.L.: My, the lady who I work for, Miss. OJ. I call her OJ. Her name Olivia C.J..
Interviewer: How is she gettin' on your nerves?
T.L.: Like I said, when she told me I...
Interviewer: Oh, because of the ...
T.L.: I wasn't plannin' on quittin' the crawfish dock, you understand what I'm
sayin', I wasn't plannin' on quittin'. But since when Miss Rita found out why
(unintelligible—side conversation). After she found out you know I had left, was
workin'. Like I said, I was doin' good peelin' crawfish. And (unintelligible) she
gonna tell the woman she gonna hire me, and then have me come back over there
to the daycare center, and then I still didn't see no paycheck on the 16th. How you
think that made me feel? I was mad. But you know what, I started to quit again.
But the only thing that held me back was thinkin' about, I didn't have a job at the
time, I didn't wanna take my children, especially my children medical card. You
know what I'm sayin'? I didn't wanna take they medical card, and I didn't really
wanna take my children, um food stamps from 'em. They coulda cut me off of my
welfare, but they couldn't cut my children off. That's what matters there. They
couldn't do that. That's the only three things I thought about, that's what made me
went back. Now you hear, see? I'm on give her 'til this Monday and see if she'll
hire me', I'm quittin' again I'm, I will quit!

S.S. was motivated to continue her education, but she was a little aggravated with the
"hassles" that accompanied welfare reform:

Interviewer: How else has that [welfare reform] changed your life? What are you
having to do different now? What do you see that your life would have been
different if they hadn't made the changes?
S.S.: The changes that were made? It just made me, like, I know I have to get out
there for sure and do what I have to do for my children, you know. Like once
upon a time when I was younger, you just sit down there and get the money, free
money. Don't worry about doing the work yourself, you know?
Interviewer: Right.
S.S.: But now it's not like that. But now you have to do what you have to do.
Interviewer: Umm. Hmm. So that kind of motivated you then?
S.S.: I was already doing something with my self in the first place. But, to a point it make me angry because it look like the more I try, it's a new change. They come here with something. When people still sitting at home not doing anything, they don't have any problems. But the more I try to do something they always try to give me a lot of hassle.
Interviewer: Right.
S.S.: And they get you out of courage sometimes. You know.
Interviewer: Right. Right.
Interviewer: Right. Ok.
S.S.: Cause I figure that's what you gonna do anyway. Get out of courage and then, keep them [government] from eliminating you from the program, and just get off yourself. And that's one less worry they [government] have.

T.H. did not feel that welfare reform has affected her life, but she felt she was better off working than on welfare because she had more money to buy clothes and do things:

Interviewer: What do you feel that you need the most right now that you don't have?
T.H.: I need to go to work, that 's what I'm not doing [unintelligible].
Interviewer: But you're looking to do that anytime? Let me ask you this question and think back to when you were working. Did you feel you were better off working than when you were even just on welfare?
T.H.: Yeah.
Interviewer: You did? Do you want to tell me a little bit about that? Why you felt that?
T.H.: 'Cause I had more money and there was more during the month.
Interviewer: Were there things you could do working, with the extra money that you couldn't do before?
Interviewer: Yeah. We could go buy clothes and do things like that

C.J. did not like the PRWORA legislation, but she was anxious to deliver her baby and get back to work:

Interviewer: How have these changes [welfare reform] affected your life?
C.J.: I don't, I just don't like it.
Interviewer: You don't? Has it made things more difficult for you?
C.J.: No, basically you gotta do so much stuff just to get welfare, you know, I wished I coulda kept my job, but, I just don't like it. I'll be glad when I have this baby so I can get my job back. I don't like it.
Interviewer: So you're hoping then that when get your job back, that's the point when you'll get off welfare.
C.J.: Mm hm [yes]. For good.
Interviewer: And how will you feel about that?
C.J.: I wanna work. I'll be glad to work.

J.P. felt the volunteer and job search requirements were too difficult, but she really wanted to get a job:

Interviewer: Are you doing any current volunteer work?
J.P.: I just finished my volunteer work last week.
Interviewer: You just finished it last week?
J.P.: As a matter of fact I quit it.
Interviewer: Oh, you quit? Why did you quit?
J.P.: Uh, it was going up to 109 hours and 20 job search and I had missed out on it so I didn’t do it, I mean I didn’t get to do it so I, just. And I know if we didn’t have that, I was gonna be taken off well this month is the last month for me anyway. So it doesn’t matter right now.
Interviewer: [Laughs]. Ok. Well, where were you working, where were you working when you were doing volunteer work?
J.P.: Child Protective Service on second street.
Interviewer: Child protection service?
J.P.: Mhmm [Yes.]
Interviewer: Okay. And you say that the hours of what they were requiring was going up.
J.P.: Yes.
Interviewer: What was it before?
J.P.: 87.
Interviewer: 87 hours?
J.P.: Mhmm (yes). And it went up to 109.
Interviewer: And what about job search? Did that go up?
J.P.: Job search, yea.
Interviewer: What did it used to be?
J.P.: Well, well, just looking it wasn’t nothing at all. So they added.
Interviewer: Oh, so they added that to it.
J.P.: Yea. Added to the 20 job search. And I guess the pressure just got to me and I couldn’t take it anymore.
Interviewer: The pressure got to you.
J.P.: Yea. It was like I was under their pressure. I couldn’t do what I wanted to do. And I guess it just got to me I ain’t never had that kind of pressure on me like that. I definitely want a paying job, yea. I'm sure I could take the pressure but not like that.
But J.P. later indicated that she liked the new regulations. The PRWORA had pushed her to get the GED:

Interviewer: I want to ask you a couple of questions about welfare reform in general. The changes that have been coming about, and you just mentioned a minute ago that they were increasing your volunteer hours and your job search and stuff.
J.P.: They sure best be getting off that quick too. [Laughs.] They wouldn’t have no problem with everybody stayin' on it.
Interviewer: Well tell me about that.
J.P.: It’s ok, but it just wasn’t for me to deal with like that. Since I've been off I can do it on my own. I wouldn’t have the pressure about getting out there trying to do 20 job search and then that 109 hours service. It’s, it’s good to have them [laughs]. It'll help them. The ones that we have now like the younger ones gettin' on and the children that it’s just not for who sit around the house and do nothing. They should get out. It’s just a hand me out. Hand me down. Hand me out whatever you call.
Interviewer: Right. A handout?
J.P.: Yea a handout. Just helping you to push you on a way to show to let you get out there on your own. It don’t look like I'm ever gonna get out there [laughs]. So, but it’s not a bad thing that you get on. For what they doing it’s not bad at all. I, I kind of like what they did. So for me to get off.
Interviewer: Right.
J.P.: Cause I've been on it a long time.
Interviewer: About how long?
J.P.: I was, my children grew up on it. Put it to ya that way. And I got to get off cause of them [laughs].
Interviewer: Ok, well what other kind of changes have happened in your life because of this welfare reform stuff? Just how has your life changed with these with their changes that they have put in? I know you've quit your volunteer work.
J.P.: Oh! My life is still my life! It really haven’t changed. It’s still like I know still have to get out there and look for work.
Interviewer: That’s a change?
J.P.: That’s a change. Well, when I was going to school. Last time they came I was going to school. I was going for my GED, which I got.
Interviewer: Good.
J.P.: Yes. I got that.
Interviewer: Congratulations.
J.P.: Thank you. You see that helped me in a way that I know I can get a job.
Interviewer: Right.
J.P.: Cause [if asked if] I got a GED or whatever, I can say yes!

On the other hand, S.S. had no sympathy for women who had difficulty fulfilling job search and work requirements:
Interviewer: Okay. You have some opportunities there. Um, what about these women that they could do this job search 20 searches a month? And they tell us that it's too hard to do. And so they lose their benefits.
S.S.: I don't think it's too hard to do. It's just they don't want to do it if that's the case. I don't know. Some people, some people, like I said just don't want to do anything.
Interviewer: And you don't understand those people.
S.S.: No. I don't understand them.
Interviewer: Ok. Cause we've talked to several that have mentioned about the job search and that it's too much trouble. And you're one of the first ones that have said that you're doing it.
S.S.: Yea, I have to, now, to me I'm gonna do just what I have to do, you know, to try to make it. You know, but I figure that's an excuse. When you're always looking for excuses that's what the problems gonna always be.

Many of the women were pleased with the changes PRWORA had pushed them to make in their lives. Increased self-esteem was perhaps an unexpected bonus to holding a job or completing an education program. The women felt good about themselves, and were especially happy their children saw them working and achieving some measure of success.

Interviewer: I’m going to change gears just a little bit. You probably remember that we asked you some questions last time, specifically about this welfare reform and the changes that were coming. In the year since we talked to you last, how has all this welfare reform stuff affected your life?
C.W.: It hasn’t affected me. I’m happy to be off of welfare. Like I said I wanted to at the time I wasn’t off a welfare when ya’ll had talked to me, but glad I’m off of it.
Interviewer: Why?
C.W.: Because I have help by my grandparents, like I said, my grandmother or my smallest child’s father helps me when I need it. So, I’m glad and I’m lookin’ for a job, lookin’ for another job.

C.W. liked working more than welfare:

Interviewer: Ok, when you were working at Popeye’s in June, July --
C.W.: June
Interviewer: August, when you were working there. Did you feel that you were better off working than you were on welfare, or did you feel that welfare was better than working?
C.W.: No, I felt that I was better off working.
Interviewer: Ok, did you have more money or less money at that time?
C.W.: When I was working?
Interviewer: When you were working.
C.W.: More. I would say more --
Grandmother: That [TANF] don't pay much, huh?
C.W.: Umm. I think it's $174.
Interviewer: What did you like about having more money?
C.W.: I was able to buy more things, say like that, I can't get this. I was able to get it.

B.P., a volunteer, predicted she would be better off working:

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think you'll be better off when you're working than while you've been on welfare?
B.P.: Yea, I be better off working.
Interviewer: Why is that?
B.P.: I can get more things, you know, what I want for my kid. But right now I can't afford when he want this and he want that and I can't afford it right now. But when I get a job, he gone get everything that he needs.
Interviewer: What kinds of things does he need that you're not able to get?
B.P.: Well, I'm not able to get a like Nintendo he want, he want a Game Boy, and he want a VCR and I can't afford that right now because I'm on um, welfare.

And C.M. demonstrated an obvious sense of pride in her employment:

Interviewer: So you feel your life is improved?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: How do you feel about yourself?
C.M.: Oh, good. I feel good about myself. Like I say, I was going to get out there and do something for myself, and show my child I can make it, you know, out there.

J.P. enjoyed getting out of the house:

Interviewer: How does he [male friend] feel about you going to work, getting a job.
J.P.: Oh, he all for it.
Interviewer: He’s for it?
J.P.: Oh, yea.
Interviewer: Why is he for it?
J.P.: Because he knew, he see that I don’t wanna just sit around the house, he said if you wanna work, well then go ahead and work. You know, and I don’t care to sit around the house, since I been over there at om, om, child protection, it feels good to get out, even though I wasn’t getting paid, but it was feeling good to get out and go to work. Yea, he’s..
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. He’s supportive of you?
J.P.: Mmm-hmm. He is, very supportive.

S.S. was no longer down about herself or her problems:
S.S.: At one time, you see I like to clown. You know, I just [unintelligible]. But at one time, everybody says, 'why do you always look mad?' I always had a problem on my face. But, now I got, I know, I'm trying to better myself. And you know, like I say, I have more motivations about myself. And my children are more of ease, you know I can go out and do things that I want. At one time I always be worried and worried and worried about how am I gonna do this and how am I gonna do that? I learned how to sit down and, like I say, take it one day at a time. Interviewer: Well it sounds like what you're saying is, that you're feeling good about yourself.

S.S.: Yeah! You know, I've changed. I tell a lot of people I've changed.

Interviewer: Have you?

S.S.: Yeah!

Interviewer: So what were you before? We know we're seeing what Sherrita is now. What was Sherrita before?

S.S.: Always down.

P.W., the only woman employed full-time, especially liked having more money:

Interviewer: You're working full-time and you're getting the food stamps. Um, how has this welfare reform, how has that changed your life? If you can imagine all of these changes and new laws that they did, if they hadn't done that where would you be compared to where you are right now?

P.W.: Umm. I know I'd be somewhere working. Welfare is not enough.

Interviewer: It's not enough. How much were you getting?

P.W.: $123.

Interviewer: $123? When was your last welfare check?

P.W.: I think that when I got out of that class, I had signed out of the program, I graduated on November 6th, I think that was on a Tuesday. And I started working like that Thursday. So, when I started working, they cut it off.

Interviewer: Cut it all off? Okay. Do you think that your life is any better now than it was when you were on welfare?

P.W.: Yea, 'cause of working. You can get, you can get more.

Interviewer: You can get more. Like what?

P.W.: Like for things that you need and want. On welfare, you really can't get very much and you really can't pay no bills.

Interviewer: Right. Right. Like what kinds of things can you do now that you couldn't do when you were on welfare?

P.W.: I can buy stuff like a recliner, and a new car. [Laughter.] And furniture.

Interviewer: All that! So, would you say that your life is better or worse?

P.W.: Better!

L.B. would have quite possibly left welfare without PRWORA implementation. Initially, she felt sorry for herself when she "came home with" a baby at the age of 16. Latina did not want welfare but her mom convinced her to apply for benefits:
L.B.: When I first, when I came home with my baby, I was, I was, I was feeling sorry for myself cause till I was like crying [unintelligible] I was a 16 year old with a child and I was like now I have to learn to depend on my mom and I really wasn’t [unintelligible] but it was my mistake. And, and I was like telling her, I didn’t wanna get on welfare, but she was like, to help you and your baby go ahead and just do it. Cause I was shamed I didn’t want to go, I was shamed.

Interviewer: You were shamed?

L.B.: Yea, I didn’t want to go, and she would be like because you're not the only one, mom that’s gone be on welfare. She said, if you need help, that’s what they, that’s what they there for, to help you and your child. And she was like, go on ahead, go ahead while it’s there, don’t be shamed. I guess it’s the people who talk about it, and I wouldn’t, I don’t like to hear people bitching like that, cause I don’t want em to talk about me cause I been around people that in a discussion, talking about people who are supposed to be poor, well I'm not like that, cause I don’t want them to talk about my business.

All the women (n = 6) over 30, but only two of the women under 30 (33%) felt that the act had prompted changes in their behavior (see Figure 35). Four of the five women without a GED or a high school diploma, and the two women in vocational education indicated that PRWORA had motivated them in some way. In addition, all of the women (n=4) with three or more children felt the pressure to do something different.

Living conditions. A majority of the women's homes were neat and clean, and there was evidence the proprietor attempted to keep up with general maintenance needs. Many women lived in public housing projects. A few of these complexes were very well maintained, but a couple of units were very desolate. Several women lived in manufactured housing, commonly referred to as "trailers" in Louisiana. One woman lived in a trailer that had large holes in the floor. The ground could be seen through the holes.

Figure 35. Women's perception of PRWORA as a change agent and women's ages (N = 12).
Interviews were conducted on couches that barely had enough fabric to cover the springs, and a few homes had big screen television sets. One woman said that she lived in the house behind the house where we conducted the interview. The researchers thought the "house" was a storage shed.

Five of the women (42%) lived independently with only their children. Three of the five women resided in public housing, and they were satisfied with their living arrangements, although C.M. did mention that drugs were a problem in her neighborhood:

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with where you're living right now? Are you satisfied with the house?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: And that your children are safe?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: Do you have any problems with crime or drugs in your neighborhood?
C.M.: Crime and drugs. Got a lot of drugs back here.
Interviewer: Really.
C.M.: But they don't bother me, as long as they don't bother me I don't bother them?
Interviewer: Okay. What about your little boy?
C.M.: He the same as me, he don't bother them they don't bother him. He be with us more than he go out to see other people.
Interviewer: Do you have any fears about him getting involved with any of that?
C.M.: To my knowledge, not really.
Interviewer: And the people who fool with drugs, they'll leave him alone, over there? No gang problems?
C.M.: No.

P.H. lived in manufactured housing that was in very poor condition, yet she was satisfied because it was hers and kin live nearby.

Interviewer: Do you actually own the trailer?
P.H.: Uh-huh [yes].
Interviewer: Do you own the land that it's sitting on?
P.H.: Homestead.
Interviewer: How does that work?
P.H.: What you mean?
Interviewer: Homestead on the land?
P.H.: Just one big family owns it.
Interviewer: Oh, okay. It's the family homestead?
P.H.: Yea.
Interviewer: So every one around here is related to you?
P.H.: Uh-huh. Brother, my mamma is next door and my cousins.

P.W. lived in a rental house and she is satisfied except on weekends because her home was located near a nightclub:

Interviewer: You're single, living alone. You're not living with any relatives where you are?
P.W.: [Shakes head.]
Interviewer: No? Okay. Any other adults live in your house with you?
P.W.: [Shakes head.]
Interviewer: No? So, it's just you and your little boy? Little boy right? Okay. Are you satisfied with where you live?
P.W.: Umm! Well, [laughter].
Interviewer: I'm not sure how to mark that down, 'Umm!' [Laughter.]
P.W.: Okay put it like this, I stay like two houses down from a club. It's okay through the week but on the weekends, Oooh, noisy!
Interviewer: So, weekends..
P.W.: On Saturday's really, and sometime on Fridays it's very noisy and I really hate it.
Interviewer: Are you fearful there? Or is it just noisy?
P.W.: It's too much noise.
Interviewer: Are there people around?
P.W.: Umm! Lot of people, lot of people. And that's the only thing I don't like, on Friday and on Saturday. That's the only thing I don't like.
Interviewer: You feel safe there?
P.W.: [Silence.]
Interviewer: Let me divide that question. Do you feel safe in your house? And then, do you feel safe in the neighborhood? For you and your child?
P.W.: I think about burglaries sometime. But, I guess it's okay, it's just hanging out on the weekend.
Interviewer: It's the weekend then.
P.W.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Do you come over here [parents' house] on the weekend, just so you don't have to be over there?
P.W.: Yea.

Seven women (58%) lived with parents, grandparents, or siblings. L.B. and J.P. resided in their parents' home. Both women were satisfied with their living arrangements, but indicated they would like a place of their own, to be independent.
L.B.: There’s not nothing like your own money. You know. And I look at a lot of people today, they work hard, I want me a car, but I really wanna move and get on my own. That what I really wanna do. And my boyfriend, he works, and he have his savings open, he work, he give me, and he put some in the bank and he'll keep em in his pocket, you know what I'm saying? But I'm looking forward to getting on my own later [unintelligible] That’s why I told him, I'm not having any more children until I'm married. One mistake will be the only mistake I made, the next one, I'll be on the right track with it. I wanna be in my own house.

J.P. felt that at the age of 40, and with two grandchildren, she had depended upon her parents long enough:

Interviewer: Ok, so, let me see if I have the right picture. Here in your home, it’s your parents' home, your parents are living here, and you're living here and your children are living here, and you've got grandchildren living here?
J.P.: Yea.
Interviewer: Just want to see who all is . . .
J.P.: Yea, that’s it.
Interviewer: Ok, you say you're satisfied with where you live?
J.P.: Yea, for now, until I can find me something better.
Interviewer: What would you consider?
J.P.: Nothing better, I mean uh, just get out so uh, I know I've been on em too long. It’s been too long for me cause I have grandchildren, know I been on em too long. I mean, just to get out so they can have they room. And so my children can have they own room. I mean, I don’t know, I mean, you know, space, where they won’t have to be in their way, or they in their way or whatever. That’s it.
Interviewer: Right. Have you always lived with your parents?
J.P.: Mmm-hmm [yes]. Bad decision, huh?
Interviewer: Oh, I don’t know. What do you think?
J.P.: Bad decision [laughs]
Interviewer: Ok. You feel that your neighborhood is safe?
J.P.: Uh, yea, kind of.
Interviewer: You kind of hesitate a little bit.
J.P.: Yea, well sometimes if it get messy, but it’s safe.
Interviewer: Get messy?
J.P.: I mean, you know, not with us, no.
Interviewer: What do you mean?
J.P.: It’s sometimes, you know they have a little disputes here and there, but it’s nothing physical or nothing like that.
Interviewer: They have some disputes.
J.P.: Yea, that’s it. But it’s not nothing with us, but it is a safe place. I like it right here.
T.H. and C.W. lived with their grandparents. Again, both women were quite satisfied. The women did not pay rent and could depend upon their grandparents to help them financially or with transportation and childcare:

Interviewer: You're living here with your mom still?
Interviewer: Do any other adults live here besides yourself and your mom?
T.H.: My grandmother and grandfather.
Interviewer: this your grandparents' house?

Interviewer: You live with?
C.W.: My grandparents.
Interviewer: Your grandparents? Ok, are you satisfied with where you live?
C.W.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: Do you feel that you and your children are safe?
C.W.: Uh-huh [yes].
Interviewer: Here in your home? How about your neighborhood? Do you feel like you're safe in your neighborhood?
C.W.: Yeah.

Finally, three of the seven women lived with siblings, and they too seemed satisfied with their arrangements. T.L. lived with her brother and a male friend. She explained why she liked her home's isolated location:

Interviewer: You said your house is back by the casino.
T.L.: Yea, that the only house back there. Then the woman goes, why you wanna stay in a place like this?
Interviewer: Who asked you that?
T.L.: My person wor... my welfare worker.
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm.
T.L.: I said it's peace and quiet.
Interviewer: Well if you . . .
T.L.: Who wanna stay in a isolated place? Well, my God, you wanna be surrounded by everybody whoopin and hollering, playin' music all loud, here, you hear people fussin' all the road and stuff, next-door neighbo? I'm glad I don't have no next door neighbors! The only thing that I ever have half the time is the dog right there. And that's it.
B.P. lived with her twin sister and was satisfied with this arrangement:

Interviewer: Now, who lives here in the house with you?
B.P.: I stay in the back, this my daddy house.
Interviewer: Ok. So it's your daddy..
B.P.: My daddy, my daddy stay wi one of his friends and stuff.
Interviewer: Ok, your daddy, you..
B.P.: No honey, I stay in the back, the house in the back.
Interviewer: Oh, so you don't stay..
B.P.: I don't live here.
Interviewer: Oh, ok. When you're saying the back, I thought you meant like there was a spot in the back..
B.P.: No. There's another house in the back.
Interviewer: There's a little house in the back!
B.P.: Yea, me and my sister, me and my twin sister and my son stay together.
Interviewer: Ok, so you and your sister and your son stay together back there.
B.P.: This my daddy house, this here.
Interviewer: Does your um, sister have any children?
B.P.: My twin; she doesn't have any kids.
Interviewer: And are you satisfied with where you live?
B.P.: Yes.
Interviewer: Why are you satisfied there, what's, what makes you satisfied about that?
B.P.: Cause I'm around all my people.
Interviewer: That's a good answer, you're around your people. Do you feel that you and your son are safe in your home?
B.P.: Yes.
Interviewer: And in your neighborhood, this area?
B.P.: Yes.

S.S. also lived with her sister in well-worn manufactured housing unit:

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with your living arrangements right now?
S.S.: Yea.
Interviewer: It's okay?
S.S.: I'm satisfied. It's ok. It's better than outside. I'm not complaining.
Interviewer: Do you feel that you're safe in your home and in your neighborhood?
S.S.: Yes! Yes.
Interviewer: [Are] there any real problems with crime in the area that you would not feel safe?
S.S.: Nooo, not in my area. A little further down the, down the street. They're not gonna come. They're not going to come around my house.
Interviewer: Why not?
S.S.: Because, I mean, I get along with everybody, but they know when I'm [unintelligible] don't come up here. Cause like my son, before he went to school,
like certain people, I said, 'no, I don't want them in my house.' That's what I mean, if I catch you in my yard, you gotta get out of my yard.

Interviewer: Right. So you kept control.
S.S.: I kept control. You have to, especially, like me having three daughters. I have to keep control, cause you never know when a person might click. That might be his friends, but he's only one person, and you don't know.

Child support. Increased child support payments can provide the little bit of extra support a welfare-dependent family needs to successfully leave government assistance and become wage reliant. PRWORA provisions, as stated in objective two, were expected to increase the amount of child support collected (Ellwood, 1997; Fishman et al., 1999; McLanahan, 2000; Meyer & Hu, 1999). Unfortunately, this was one resource that seemed sorely deficient in the women's lives, creating another possible motivation for employment (see Figure 36). Nine of the twelve women (75%) did not receive any child support payments. T.H. had moved to Houston shortly after the birth of her first child, and she did not get back together with the baby's father when she returned. C.J. was supposed to start receiving court ordered support within the month.

Interviewer: Ok, so are you getting, are they going to be paying child support?
C.J.: You can't get child support when you're on welfare.
Interviewer: Ok. So they're gonna pay it to the state. Is it the father of the two, or the father of the one?
C.J.: All three of 'em combined in.
Interviewer: Ok. Do the children's fathers help pay for any expenses for them, if they need clothes or shoes or anything like that?
C.J.: [No]
Interviewer: No money? Do they ever buy anything that they might need [unintelligible children screaming]?
C.J.: I never asked em.
Interviewer: You don't ask them. Do they ever come over to see the children?
C.J.: He's been by one time, but I never ask him.
Interviewer: You don't ask them for anything. I hear you. Okay. Does anyone else ever pay for anything for the kids?
C.J.: I haven't had to ask nobody yet. So far, so good.

Interviewer: About your baby's father, does the state have his name?
P.W.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Okay, is he paying child support, court ordered child support?
P.W.: [No.]
Interviewer: He's not? Have not been able to find him?
P.W.: They ain't said.
Interviewer: They haven't said?
P.W.: You just go down there and fill out all the paperwork.
Interviewer: Oh. But, you're not getting anything.
P.W.: No, as long as you not getting welfare they're not going to worry about it.
Interviewer: They're not going to worry about it. They don't try to get it?
P.W.: No, only if you're on welfare.
Interviewer: Oh. That's interesting.
Pamela's Mom: And when you get welfare, and they pay child support, you don't get it. It goes to the state.
Interviewer: It goes to the state.
Pamela's Mom: Yep.
Interviewer: They'll help get it when you're on welfare and it goes to them. But if you're not on welfare, they won't help you get it. Okay. Do you ever have contact with your child's father? No? Does he ever help you pay for things for the child? Does he ever send you any money for him?
P.W.: We don't communicate.
Interviewer: You don't communicate? What about his family? Does his family ever do anything to help out with the child?
P.W.: You see, I don't know his family.
Interviewer: Oh.
P.W.: Because I used to stay in the city. And once I moved back, you lose contact.
Interviewer: Right. Okay.

T.L.'s estranged husband quit his offshore job the week before his child support order went into effect:

T.L.: I even talked to the um, went to the courthouse, to the child support office tryin' to get my husband to take care of his kids, and he's off shore. I can't make no people do what they don't wanna do. I might as well just go on and shoot my husband if that's the case, huh? I'm serious.
Interviewer: So you're still... your still married?
T.L.: Mmhmm [yes].
Interviewer: And is he the father of both your children?
T.L.: Mhm. But we not together, been separated. No, I don't him no more.
Interviewer: So, is he paying anything at all to help you, to help support the children?
Interviewer: And since you're not divorced, they can't put child support on him?
Interviewer: They can put child support on him?
T.L.: Oh yes, oh yes. We had been went to court, oh, maybe 3 years ago. And he, he was workin' at McDermott in Morgan City. A week before he find he had to go to um court for child support, he quit. And he was paying like 69 dollars for both childs. And so, the, my worker, who I mentioned, Mrs. Rita, she told me no, because I was gettin' a hundred and something, I can't remember, 174 for both of them. I wouldn't amount up for both of my kids, so I had to go back on welfare. I was about to get off, but he quit his job. I was about to get off of it. So she put me back on the system. I was about to go off it, so she put me back on the system.

C.M. did not know if her son's father was "living or dead." S.S.'s had court-ordered payments due, but neither father was paying anything:

Interviewer: Ok. The father of your children, it's two fathers, I think? Are you getting any child support, are they paying child support?
S.S.: No.
Interviewer: Om, have they been ordered by the court to pay child support?
S.S.: Right.
Interviewer: How much are they supposed to pay?
S.S.: Oh, it's been so long ago, I don't know. Is it 165? I don't remember. I don't know.
Interviewer: Ok. So no, but they've been ordered to.
S.S.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Does the state know where they are?
S.S.: I mean, if they wanted to they could find him, cause Barry's father, he never left, he's right around the area, he working and everything.
Interviewer: So they have his name but they haven't made him pay anything.
S.S.: Umm. Hmm! He was paying child support at one time, and he stopped, I guess he stopped working, and I stopped receiving. I didn't never push the issue. You know. Cause if he have back time, it's still gonna go over to the state anyway until he get caught up.
Interviewer II: That's true.
Interviewer: Something to think about, though, when your welfare benefits get cut off, when they stop doing it in the next couple months, is to get child support.
S.S.: Yeah. But they're the ones getting it.
Interviewer II: Well, he won't get anymore.
Interviewer: Oh, that was for the oldest son?
S.S.: And the other one, you know. I don't know.
Interviewer II: She never got it anyway.
Interviewer: Ok, I see. So you're not left with much help. Are you able to contact the fathers if your children need something, can you ask them for help?
S.S.: No. No.
Interviewer: Okay. So they're pretty much out of the picture?
S.S.: Right.

Interviewer: Do they [children's fathers] pay, they don’t pay any government [child] support?
J.P.: They don’t pay no nothing.
Interviewer: Do they see the children at all?
J.P.: Yea.
Interviewer: Have you seen them at any time, have you had contact with them at all?
J.P.: Really, I don’t care if I do. They might come around every other year or so or whatever. One of them probably just go across the street, and you think he worry about coming here? Na. And I don’t bother. I really don’t bother his business, don’t tell him nothing at all. That’s his. I shouldn’t have to go behind him to tell him that he got a child, cause he already know. So, I don’t bother with him, that’s what I'm saying. If they don’t, well. For the other one, they father been gone for what, a month. No, he ain’t been around. And the other one he might come in every year or so, three, five years, whatever it takes him. But the other one, he don’t come. Neither one of them. It don’t bother me, not at all. That’s it.

Three women were getting child support. B.P. reported receiving $60 every two weeks, and the child's father would also provide anything else she requested for their 13-year old son.

Interviewer: All right. Now, have you named the father of your child? Does the state have his name for child support purposes?
B.P.: Yes, it do.
Interviewer: Do you know if he's paying child support?
B.P.: Well, he pay child support but I don't get it. The state get it, I think, since I'm on welfare the state get it.
Interviewer: Right.
B.P.: He been paying his child support every, every two weeks, when he get his check.
Interviewer: Do you know how much he pays?
B.P.: Sixty, sixty dollars.
Interviewer: Sixty dollars?
B.P.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: Every two weeks?
B.P.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: And does he ever help you out with any other expenses for your son?
B.P.: Well if I get in contact with him if I need anything, I just call him and tell him that his son needs [something] and he'll provide it for him.
Interviewer: Good.
B.P.: So I'd have no problem with that.

C.W. was receiving $210 monthly from the father of her two-year old son. At the time of the interview he was no longer paying a set amount, but had moved in with the woman and her grandparents and was sharing in all the expenses for both children.

Interviewer: Ok. Does the father of your children pay any court ordered child support?
Interviewer: Okay. The youngest child’s 2 and the oldest is 5. Do you know how much the father of the youngest is payin’ every month is he payin’ the state, or is he payin’ to you?
C.W.: He payin, they send me a check, I guess it goes to the state first.
Interviewer: Who sends you the check?
C.W.: It, I guess the state send me the check.
Interviewer: The state sends you a check? Okay.
C.W.: Cause I have received a check.
Interviewer: Do you know how much he’s payin’ the state?
C.W.: I don’t know the exact amount. At the time he was paying, it was 210 a month? I’m not sure, I think that’s how much it was.
Interviewer: Ok. (Pause) Now, the oldest, the father of the oldest child isn’t sending you anything?
C.W.: No.
Interviewer: The state has his name?
C.W.: C.W.: Yes.
Interviewer: Ok. Ok. Um, do either of the children’s father ever help you with any expenses that you might have for the children?
C.W.: Yes the baby father help me with both them, both of the children.
Interviewer: The baby’s helps you with both?
C.W.: The baby’s father? He helps me with both the oldest and his.
Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that.
C.W.: If I need anything and he has it he’ll give it. If it’s like money wise, he’ll buy it for them if I don’t have it. So, he helps me support them.
Interviewer: And the father of the oldest child?
C.W.: He doesn’t. I don’t even, I haven’t seen him in God knows how long, he doesn’t help.

T.H. was still in a relationship with her infant's father, and he helped support the child as needed.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you getting court-ordered child support for either baby?
T.H.: No.
Interviewer: No? Does the state have the name of the fathers of both children?
T.H.: Uh huh [yes].
Interviewer: For both children – do the fathers ever help out with expenses with giving you money?
T.H.: Yeah. For this one [pointing to infant in her lap].
Interviewer: The baby? And you're still seeing him right now?
T.H.: Uh huh [yes].

L.B.'s current boyfriend helped support her and her three-year old son by another man. He lived with his mother, but visited her daily on his way home from work.

Interviewer: Does the father of your baby pay any child support?
L.B.: I haven’t seen him for 2 years.
Interviewer: Does the government have his name? Did you name the father?
L.B.: Yea.
Interviewer: But they haven’t been able to get . . .
L.B.: No. We been going back and forth to court, though.
Interviewer: Oh really?
L.B.: Last time I heard, they had caught up with him. They had told me to go back to court, and I went, and they were saying he was in jail in Atlanta And uh, he’s supposed to had, uh, I wasn’t the only one he was having, I was having sex with so, you know and I was like okay.
Interviewer: Ok. So you're not able to get him to help with any kind of expenses personally or anything.
L.B.: NO, see, he told his mother, cause his mother told this to another girl, her name [name deleted], she have a daughter from him, me and her talk. He told her the only way he'd take care of all the children is if he find out they are really from him.
Interviewer: Oh.
L.B.: You know, I don’t really bothered by it, it’s just I have to do what I gotta do. You know cause I didn’t make my baby by myself, cause he was here with me for 5 months, I was 5 months pregnant and he go. And once he go [unintelligible], he was very young, he was 18 and I was 16 and he was married. And uh, he had gotten back with his wife and the next thing I heard [unintelligible- talking too fast] Fine, I'm not gonna bother ya'll, I didn’t bother them again. My mama, she was like, do you need anything, and mama was like, no, ya'll don’t bother or do nothing. I ain’t, I ain’t called em, I ain’t asked em for nothin, and not one time they could tell you I called em, there’s not one time they could tell you he send support for my baby. I ain’t bother em, I ain’t bother em. Long as I have my mama and my daddy, my sister, and my family back here, I'm not gone worry about it.

C.M. also had a boyfriend who helped out occasionally:

Interviewer: Do you have a boyfriend?
C.M.: Yes.
Interviewer: You do, does he live with you?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer: No. But you do have a boyfriend. Does he ever help you out with stuff you might need?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Is he as dependable as your parents or your sister would be if you needed something.
C.M.: At first I thought he was, but no, it's not the same. Uh. Huh.
Interviewer: But every now and then he can help you out.
C.M.: Yes.

Family support. Research literature indicates a relationship may exist between a woman’s personal support network and her ability to endure the challenges faced in the workplace. Women with fragile or nonexistent support networks may find it much more difficult to cope with the stress of raising children and performing adequately in a job. Additionally, without a functioning support network, women often do not have anyone to help with sick children (Fishman et al., 1999; Rangarajan, 1996). Without any doubt, the majority of these women depended upon family and friends for financial support, as well as for food, shelter, transportation and childcare. As previously discussed, seven women (58%) lived with parents, grandparents, or siblings. All 12 women relied upon family for childcare, and ten women depended upon a family member for transportation. Relatives often pitched in to help out financially:

J.P.: My mother, she helps me. She don’t let them do without.
Interviewer: Is there anyone else that helps with the kids, with getting stuff for them?
J.P.: Nah, just me.

Interviewer: Does anyone else help you to buy things for your children or yourself?
T.H.: They'll buy. I don't ask them for anything though.
Interviewer: Who would that be that helps you out?
T.H.: My grandparents and my mom.
Interviewer: So, your family?
T.H.: Uh huh [yes].
Interviewer: So if they see you need something you don't even have to ask, they'll just take care of it.
T.H.: Yeah.

T.L.: That's my sister, she help out a lot. She help out a lot.
Interviewer: Uh. Huh. So it sounds like you've got several people [family] who help you out.
T.L.: Oh yes. They helps me out a lot. See they help a lot. Well, without 'em I don't know what I would do.

Interviewer: So, what do you do if you're out of money, like out of your cash? You don't have your money and like your son needs something. Your parents can help you? Is your dad working right now or your mom?
C.M.: No. They be on social security.
Interviewer: So They're both on social security?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: So, they're both retired?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm. They're no use, but my sister . . .
Interviewer: So, your sister will help you?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Is your sister working?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: Is your sister working full time?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm. She be working at a casino.

Interviewer: Have you had any difficulty with getting to the end of the month and you are out of money or you are out of food stamps?
J.P.: Oh yea food stamps.
Interviewer: And you still need things? Have you had problems with that?
J.P.: It’s a problem, but I still, it’s, I can, I can still solve that problem, but you see, I live with my parents, I still live here, which I know they trying to get rid of me. But with that little help and what I do, we get by, we do.
Interviewer: Right. Both of your parents are still alive?
J.P.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: Ok, ok. So, so if you need something, then you can ask your parents for help?
J.P.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: Anybody else that you . . .
J.P.: I would borrow from my brother sometimes. I would borrow from him . . .
That’s when I really, really do need it. But it don’t be much, it like 20 dollars I would borrow, and give it right back to him. Other than that, I don’t, it, to me it doesn’t phase me, it, put it to me, if I have it, I have it, if I don’t, I can do without until I can get it. It won’t be a problem, cause I know my children won’t be left out on anything. They will have.
Interviewer: How do you know that?
J.P.: They will have?
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm
J.P.: Cause I, she helps me.
Interviewer: She?
J.P.: My mother, she helps me. She don’t let them do without.
Interviewer: Is there anyone else that helps with the kids, with getting stuff for
em?
J.P.: Nah, just me.

Interviewer: If I ask you, Miss Bessie, how do you make ends meet at the end of
the month or before your check comes?
B.P.: Oh, ok, ok. Like on the end of the month, on the end of the month, like if I
had my food bill lowered or anything, I ask my daddy to lend me the [money], but
you know. Sometime it be hard on the end of the month so I go borrow from my
dad to go get the books that I need to have.
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. What if your child needed something at the end of the
month, and you were running low on money?
B.P.: I ask my sister to borrow money from, from her until I get my check and
she'll do it for me. All of them [she had 10 siblings], all of them help me, even my
daddy.

Interviewer: You said that your dad pays your car insurance. Is he ever able to help you
with expenses too?
S.S.: Yes. But I don't like to ask, I don't, I don't like to ask him for anything like that.
Interviewer: You don't? Not for much?
S.S.: No. No. Not too often. I have to really, really -- The type of person I am, I have to
really need it to ask you for it, anybody, to ask you for it.
Interviewer: Right.

Interviewer: Mmmm. Ok. Is there anyone else that helps you to be able to get
things for your children if they need it?
C.W.: My grandmother. She helps, yeah she helps me.
Interviewer: Anyone else?
C.W.: She helps with the oldest one.
Interviewer: Oh she does? That’s your aunt, or your husband’s aunt, or I mean, or
your cousin?
C.W.: That’s my –
Interviewer: The oldest baby’s father’s aunt, I think that’s what I’m tryin’ to say.
His family doesn’t help you any, though.
C.W.: No, Uh-uh.
Interviewer: So this aunt is your auntY..
C.W.: Mmm-hmm [yes].
Interviewer: That helps out? Okay. Your daughter?
C.W.: Mmm-hmm [yes].

Interviewer: What do you do at the end of the month when, or, if the money that
you have, your amount on your food card, runs out, and you don’t have any cash
either. What do you do for food at the end of the month? How do you, how do you get it, how do you provide for that?
C.W.: I ask my grandmother [laughs]. If I never have something, yeah, she always has it. I have to get it from her.

Interviewer: Well what would you do if you got to the end of the month, and you were . . . out of money and you needed something, for maybe for your kids, or maybe your oldest child needed something for school? What would you do if it got to the end of the month, and you didn’t have anything? How, would you get it?
C.W.: Well, my boyfriend. Yeah, my boyfriend and my aunt is working.
Interviewer: Ok.
C.W.: So if I don’t have it, he, he help if he get paid at the time, I would have it from him, or if my aunt happens to get paid at that time. I could have it from her. Or if he saves up his money and I would just, you know, he would gives me whatever I need for the kids. Whatever he has paid from how much I need, he would give it to me.

Only two women (17%), P.H. and C.J., did not receive any financial help from their families.
Neither of these women worked, nor had they completed the GED or any vocational training:

Interviewer: Do any of the fathers help with, pay any of the expenses with the children?
P.H.: No.
Interviewer: No? Is there anyone else that's able to help you?
P.H.: We're living off the SSI. It's only my little boy, he get SSI.
Interviewer: He gets SSI? How much does he get?
P.H.: $500.
Interviewer: If there was something that you really needed, is there some way that you could get it?
P.H.: You do without.

Interviewer: You don't ask them [fathers] for anything. I hear you. Okay. Does anyone else ever pay for anything for the kids?
C.J.: I haven't had to ask nobody yet [unintelligible children yelling] so far, so good.

Family support can be a facilitator for maintaining employment, through transportation and childcare. But too much family support can result in little motivation for work. Lack of family supports can also be a motivation for work if a woman does not have family to rely upon when times are tough.
Independence. Personal autonomy and independence could be a motivator for women to work, seek employment, or continue their education. Ninety-two percent ($n = 11$) of the participants indicated that working would provide the means to be less reliant upon government assistance and family support. Only T.H. failed to mention this desire. L.B. seemed anxious to work and motivated by her need for independence from her family. She believed that "... if you don’t have your own money you’re lost" and there is “nothing like your own money.” Ms. L.B. indicated that she really wanted to be in her own house, and she hoped that within a year she would reach that goal:

Interviewer: What do you see your life like a year from now?
L.B.: Ooh, I see myself really in my own house [unintelligible] too much, too much good. But uh, in my own house, pay my own bills, take care of my own responsibility. [I'll] get me a house. I'm, I'm making my money. You know, that'll be for the bills. Second week, that'll be the [unintelligible] until the rest of the bills [unintelligible]. Third week, cause before we start on what, the third week? Course I'm in the bank, continue to do what I gotta do. The last check, I will, I figure it'll be, a check, a blank check, just for me to spend on me and my son, my husband [she hopes to marry the boyfriend]. I ain’t looking at it being too big but by a year, I'm planning to be by my, in my own house, cause I'm gonna find me a job, I'm gonna go, I ain’t gone stop 'til I get me one. I'm not gone stop, I really wanna work, I do! I really do!

T.L.: Look see the people [government] tryin' to get people off welfare and everything else. But I know nine out of ten they couldn't, they couldn't automatic[ally] get everybody off anyway. That's why they tryin' to make everybody try to find a job. Fine with me. But if it take me to go to Burger King, Mcdonaldds, these lil fast food restaurants, wipe dishes, clean the floors, tryin' to take care of my children because if you realize, what I get for two children plus myself $190. I could be makin' more than that but this the point, if you do find you one, you don't get your hours that you need the 109. You also get your children benefit too. You understand what I'm sayin'? And that the good point is about it, I wanna get off the system completely, just completely, you understand what I'm sayin'? But don't take my children medical card, cuz I show can't afford no medicine.

Interviewer: When you actually, when you get a job are you gonna be, are you gonna continue to receive these benefits. Your Medicaid and your food stamps.
J.P.: Nah [no], it all depends on what the job is.
Interviewer: Oh.
J.P.: And if it's pay less I'm sure I will be able to get my food stamps but I don’t know about Medicaid. But hopefully I wish I won't have to receive any of it. Just get a job where I can get good benefits and all that. And I won’t have to be too depend on all this other stuff. I like to do that on my own.
Interviewer: Is that important to you?
J.P.: Mmm-hmm. It is, to do it my own to see that I can do something for myself on my own.
Interviewer: Right.
J.P.: That’s how I feel.

Interviewer: Ok, what kind of advice would you give to other women who are like yourself, or in the same situation you are in?
B.P.: Well, I'll say, no money better than your own.
Interviewer: There's no money better than your own money? What does that mean?
B.P.: Because, I'm sayin that I have a friend and [unintelligible] his money cause [unintelligible] I wanna have my own money than have his money cause he ask you what you do with his money. That's why I wanna have my own money.
Interviewer: So what advice would you give to other women about that?
B.P.: Well, about that. I'd tell, just get your own job, support your own self don't be relyin on other [family] members. That's the way I feel, I don't know how other women feel, but that's the way I feel.
Interviewer: Where do you see you in a year, a year from now, what do you think your life, or what do you hope your life will be like for you and your children?
S.S.: I hope I'll be situated in my own home, me and my children, we'll be doing fairly well, cause I'm not a materialistic person at all, you know. As long as we can live comfortable, that's all I'm looking for. You don't get what you want, you get what you need. I always stress that to em you know. It's a, it's a lot of people, I think that's where they go wrong, the parents go wrong, when they give a child everything they want, you know? They don't know the value of anything.

Interviewer: Well you mentioned that they need to get, they need to be independent. What does being independent mean to you?
C.W.: Doing things for myself, like not depending on my grandparents. If my mother was living, not depending on her, going out, findin’ me a job, doin’ what I can do for myself to support myself and my kids. I’m not married, I’m single. My boyfriend is helpin’ me, my grandparents are helpin’ me. I wanna be independent and work for my own self. That’s why I applied for a job at the casino. Therefore, I could have benefits that come in that would help my children and my grandparents. That’s what I want, cause I pride myself as being independent. Also I’ll probably, I know I won’t be here forever. I would find me a place to stay and bein’ on my own. Keepin’ my two kids in my house and my boyfriend and he’ll be, I’ll be independent. I’ll come see her, cause she know that. But that’s what I, that’s what I would like for, you know, that’s what I want.
Summary of motivation. All 12 women appeared to have some motivation to engage in work or work-related activities (see Figure 37). The most prominent motivator was a desire for independence from family and/or government support. Eleven women (92%) expressed this need. Seventy-five percent of the women \((n = 8)\) did not receive any child support, thus limiting their available financial resources. Five women (42%) lived in housing independent of other family members, and 67% felt that implementation of PRWORA had been instrumental in changing their previous work-related behaviors. Only 17% \((n = 2)\) of the women did not receive any financial help from extended family.

Summary: Research Question One

Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs \((1^{st} \text{ order change})\)? Two women were employed for
pay, one worked full-time and one worked 15 hours per week (see Figure 38). Three women were volunteers. They worked 109 hours per month and engaged in job search activities to maintain their government benefits. Two women were students in local vocational education programs, which also allowed them to keep their government assistance. Two women were on medical leave due to childbirth and pregnancy. This status provided them with continued benefits.

Finally, three women were not engaged in any work-related activities, and as such were no longer receiving TANF. The primary barriers to employment were reported to be transportation and job availability (see Figure 39). Surprisingly, access to childcare was not reported as problematic for this subset of women, as they all relied upon family care. The primary motivators that may have been pressuring the women to maintain employment or engage in work-related activities were the expressed need for independence and self-sufficiency, and the lack of child support payments from the father's of their children (see Figure 39).
Research Question Two: Sustained Employment and Self-sufficiency

The second research question asked whether the women employed at the time of this study would be able to sustain their work efforts and effect a second order change. Only two women of the twelve women in the subset (17%) were employed for wages at the time of the interviews, P.W. and C.M.

P.W. was an engaging 28-year old single mother with a 7-year old son. Pamela had a high school diploma, and she obtained a CNA certificate through Project Independence. The CNA vocational education curriculum is very popular, so there is a several months long waiting list. P.W. indicated that the CNA training is the only worthwhile program available in the area. Young women who failed to score high enough for acceptance into the CNA program could only choose between housekeeping and food services education.
Interviewer: a good thing for people to do then [CNA vocational education].
P.W.’s Mom: But the problem is that you have to go to that class. And they've got a long waiting list for that class.
Interviewer: Oh, really. There's a waiting list?
P.W.’s Mom: Umm. Hmm. Yea!
P.W.: Yea, you have to get in the class.
Interviewer: Oh. About how long do you think that waiting list is? Like, if I wanted to go and sign up for it, how long would it be before they would be able to let me in?
P.W.’s Mom: By next year!
Interviewer: Oh, really.
P.W.’s Mom: Umm. Hmm. 'Cause it took you a long time. The only reason she [P.W.] got in was because she [Pamela] kept calling and kept calling, and the lady told her if somebody didn't show up, then she would let her go ahead on in –
Interviewer: Oh! She was persistent! [Laughter].
P.W.’s Mom: Yea, that's how she got in. Yea. she said keep going, keep going. [Laughter].
P.W.: I say, I'm not going to keep bugging that lady, she told me she was going to get that woman. But she [mom] said 'call in anyway. Just let her know you interested.'
Interviewer: That was good advice.
P.W.’s Mom: Yea. Yep she got in. She [vocational education coordinator] always say, 'I'll let you know.' But if somebody drop out they have to fill that spot right then and there. So, she [Pamela] available.
Interviewer II: So, if somebody is standing right there to get in, they'll get in unless you keep calling.
P.W.: She [mom] say, 'keep calling, keep calling.'

Quite a bit of P.W.’s pragmatic character was revealed in this response to the question about drug and/or alcohol use:

I never had the problem, but I've thought about it. When you get to drinking, then you get sober, the problem's still there. What's the point, if you ain't got no money, where'd you get the money to get the alcohol? Ain't got no money, spending it on alcohol ain't going to make me have none. It's going to take it up quickly!

P.W. saved her money to buy a car, and she had never missed work or classes due to transportation problems. Her dad drove her before she had her own vehicle. P.W.'s mother provided childcare for the seven-year old, which was subsidized (transitional) at $198 per month.

P.W.’s mother was a certified childcare provider, so childcare was always available.
P.W. did not get any support from her child's father. Pamela felt that no child support would be forthcoming because the family support office only helped women on welfare. P.W.'s parents helped her out with expenses. P.W. cannot do without any of the resources she depends upon, losing "all of them would cause me a hard time. Everything." The resource she needs most: "a better paying job would make my life easier."

P.W.'s pre-PRWORA work history included five years working in a cafeteria, fast food jobs, and work as a cashier at a gas station. She originally found a job at the local hospital after becoming a CNA, but she did not like working 12-hour shifts.

Interviewer: Okay. How long did it take you to get that job?
P.W.: Not long.
Interviewer: No?
P.W.: Well, I really filled out the application before the class was over with. And I had already got hired at the hospital. But up there it was 12-hour shifts. And I ain't like the 12-hours shifts so I went to the nursing home. I tried it for 3 months. And I ain't like the 12-hour shifts so I went to the nursing home.
Interviewer: So, you didn't have a problem finding a job?
P.W.: No.
Interviewer: Are jobs for nursing assistants, are they pretty plentiful around here?
P.W.: Umm-hmm [yes].

P.W. moved to her current employer, Camelot Nursing Home, after three months with the hospital.

Interviewer: You're working right now?
P.W.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: How many hours a week are you working?
P.W.: 40.
Interviewer: Good. And where are you working?
P.W.: Camelot
Interviewer: And what is that?
P.W.: It's a nursing home.
Interviewer: It's a nursing home. How much do you get paid per hour?
P.W.: $5.15 an hour.
Interviewer: $5.15. And you're working as a nurse's aide?
P.W.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: What kind of shifts do you work?
P.W.: I work two to ten, swing shift.
Interviewer: Two to ten, how do you like that?
P.W.: Mmm? It's okay, but you don't really get to do nothing, cause it's like my little boy get home at two and at three I'm gone. And by ten, he's sleeping.
Interviewer: Well who watches him?
P.W.: My mother do.
Interviewer: Oh. So, he comes here after school?
P.W.: Mmm-hmm.
Interviewer: Then do you come back and pick him up at night and bring him back home, or does he just stay here?
P.W.: He stay here because he catch the bus over here.
Interviewer: Oh, okay.
P.W.: If he be woke, sometimes since the time change he be woke sometimes.
Interviewer: Yea. Yea. Okay that must be a little difficult for you then?
P.W.: Umm-hmm. That's the only thing I don't like.

When P.W. first started work at the nursing home, she had trouble getting to work for her 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift. She had to wake her child up every night and drop him off at her parents' home, where he would spend the night. At the time of the interview, P.W. was working the 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. shift, so she no longer had difficulties.

Interviewer: Do you have any problems with transportation?
P.W.: Well, not really. [Laughter].
Interviewer: Not really? Okay. Do you ever have trouble getting to work on time?
P.W.: Well, since I work two to ten, not really.
Interviewer: Not really?
P.W.: [Laughter]. Not working two to ten. Now I used to work ten to six, and then that was kind of hard sometime, especially in the wintertime. I'd have to get my little boy up, he was real hard to wake up.
Interviewer: Oh, no. And then you'd bring him over here.
P.W.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: And would you pick him up in the morning?
P.W.: Well, you see, by the time I get off again, I'd still be here until about 6:30, then he'll be getting up and getting ready for school.
Interviewer: How old is he now?
P.W.: He's seven.

P.W. would have liked to work the day shift, but she did not think there was much chance because more senior staff members were also waiting for the opportunity to work days.

P.W.: When I first started, they was hiring. They needed somebody on the night shift.
Interviewer: Okay. How long did you have to work on the night shift before you got to move to the evening shift?
P.W.: About five months.
Interviewer: Five months?
P.W.: But, first I was like part-time, I did that for like four or five months, they just call you when they need you.
Interviewer: Right.
P.W.: And then, I worked from two to ten, worked there for like three or four months. And then they put me on graveyard. And I worked that for about four or five months. Now I'm back to two to ten.
Interviewer: Is there any chance that you'll get to move to regular day shifts?
P.W.: If they have that, there are people who have been on two to ten before me and they be trying to get on days.
Interviewer: Everybody wants that?
P.W.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: But you're doing okay with the two to ten?
P.W.: Umm-hmm.

P.W. was not particularly excited about this job, but “It pays.” What bothered her most was that benefits were not provided for employees, not even paid sick time. "I would love to have a raise and benefits."

Interviewer: So, is there anything else you don't like? I mean, that's it, that's the only thing you don't like? Laughter. That's great. No other problems at work?
P.W.: No, nothing.
Interviewer: What do you like about work?
Interviewer: Explain 'okay.'
P: Explain okay, let me see. I mean it's not that bad [laughter]. It pays. It's a way to make a living. Let me see what I don't like. You don't have no benefits, no insurance. I don't like that.
Interviewer: Okay, no benefits. They give you any kind of vacation time, sick time?
P.W.: We don't get no sick time. We get a week of vacation.
Interviewer: Okay.
P.W.: They say no matter how long you been there it don't go past a week.
Interviewer: You're kidding!
P.W.: Now, I don't like that. They say you don't. Cause I was talking to a person who been there like two years. She say, all you get is a week. That's it.
Interviewer: Oh.
P.W.: No matter how long you been there. You don't have no insurance, you get sick, like one time I got sick, I was sick for like about 3 weeks. So when I'm sick, you just off! And you sick! And I have to go to the doctor and keep bringing doctor's excuse back. And I have to pay to go to the doctor!
Interviewer: Right.
P.W.: But, being I'm off sick, and no insurance or nothing. So that wouldn't do. I don't like that.
Interviewer: Right.

She was also very unhappy that the nursing home did not pay time-and-a-half for overtime work, just straight time.

P.W.: Oh, something else I don't like about that job is that if you work overtime, they don't want to pay you overtime. You just get regular pay. You don't get paid no overtime. When I first started there, you used to, if you make over, anything over 40 hours in one week, you know you get paid the time and a half. Now, they just don't want to pay it. They just want to pay the straight, minimum wage. You can work 13 days and you ain't getting nothing but the straight minimum wage. I don't like that either. If you put in overtime you want the extra money for the overtime.
Interviewer: But they do pay you at least the hours? They pay you like 45 hours they don't just pay you for 40 if you work 45?
P.W.: They'll pay your 45 hours, but not over time.
Interviewer: But, not overtime.

P.W. indicated that she received free meals at work, and that after a year she would be eligible for one week paid vacation per year. She was seriously considering applying for a job at the new correctional center because she wanted a job with benefits.

Interviewer: Do you think this job's going to last, that you have right now?
P.W.: Umm-hmm. [Long silence.]
Interviewer: So, you don't see that any point you would leave? Or that they would let you go?
P.W.: Well, if I find something else, something with benefits, I'm going to leave. Interviewer: Are you looking for anything else right now?
P.W.: We're supposed to be getting a correctional center at [name] and I'm going to try to get on up there. When they finish I'm going to fill me out an application. Interviewer: The correctional center? What kind of work would you be doing there? As a nurse's assistant, or nurse's aide, or something else?
P.W.: I'm going to see what they have available. Yea, when they build it I'm going to go and check that out.

P.W. felt strongly that she would have been somewhere working even without PRWORA implementation:
Interviewer: You're working full-time and you're getting the food stamps. How has this welfare reform, how has that changed your life? If you can imagine all of these changes and new laws that they did, if they hadn't done that where would you be compared to where you are right now?
P.W.: I know I'd be somewhere working. Welfare is not enough.
Interviewer: It's not enough? How much were you getting?
P.W.: $123.
Interviewer: $123? When was your last welfare check?
P.W.: I think that when I got out of that class... I had signed out of the program, I graduated on November 6th, I think that was on a Tuesday. And I started working like that Thursday. So, when I started working, they cut it off.
Interviewer: Cut it all off. Okay. Do you think that your life is any better now than it was when you were on welfare?
P.W.: Yea, 'cause of working. You can get more.
Interviewer: You can get more? Like what?
P.W.: Like for things that you need and want. On welfare, you really can't get very much and you really can't pay no bills.
Interviewer: Right. Right. Like what kinds of things can you do now that you couldn't do when you were on welfare?
P.W.: I can buy stuff like a recliner, and a new car. [Laughter].
Interviewer: Oh, okay.
P.W.: And furniture.
Interviewer: All that! So, would you say that your life is better or worse?
P.W.: Better.

In sum, P.W. was a single mother with one child. She was worked 40 hours per week for minimum wage at a local nursing home. P.W. did not seem to have any significant barriers to work, and she owned an automobile. She seemed very motivated to work, especially since she lived alone with her son and she did not receive child support. When all was said and done, P.W. seemed to be happy with the changes in her life since the PRWORA was implemented.

C.M. was also working at the time of the interviews. C.M. was a very attractive and delightful 34-year old single mother. She had a 12-year old son that she described as a very good child. C.M. had a 10th grade education, but she could not complete the GED because she often worked nights and the classes were only offered during the day.

Interviewer: Do you have your GED or high school diploma?
C.M.: No I didn't. No I didn't.
Interviewer: So, you don't have your GED. Do you have any plans to finish it.
C.M.: I say "nights" but I work at nights.
Interviewer: It's hard to schedule it.
C.M.: Umm-hmm. Yea, I work in the mornings, so I just don't know.
Interviewer: What if you asked your manager to schedule you just during the day or just during the night so that you could work on your GED.
Would she be able to do that?
C.M.: No, I've tried that. No I've tried that.

C.M. and her son lived in public housing. Her rent was $69 per month, but she had to pay a late fee of $5.00 plus $1.00 each day that her rent is late. Her check from Wal-Mart was issued after the rent payment was due, so she usually paid $80 per month including penalties.

Interviewer: Yea. Yea. Okay. Of the things that you do have, what would hurt you the most if you lost it? What can you like not do without?
C.M.: Well, monies, food and clothes. Clothin for me and him.
C.M.: And keep all those bills gone [unintelligible].
Interviewer: Let me ask you that: How much do you have to pay every month for your rent?
C.M.: It's $69, but you know I don't get paid till, you know it's like due on the 6th of the month, so it be late like $5. They charge us like $5 and a dollar each day we be late.
Interviewer: And you're always late.
C.M.: Yea.
Interviewer: And it's a dollar each day?
C.M.: Yea.
Interviewer: So it runs about what?
C.M.: $80.
Interviewer: Your paycheck doesn't come at the right time?
C.M.: No ma'am.
Interviewer: Okay. Now, is this a government apartment?
C.M.: Yes, ma'am.
Interviewer: It is?
C.M.: Like from HUD.
Interviewer: I didn't realize that they charged late fees like that.
C.M.: Oh, Lord!!!
Interviewer: Are you current with your rent right now?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.

C.M. was no longer receiving TANF. She was dropped after working at Wal-Mart for one week. She was receiving $179 a month in Food Stamps, but neither she nor her son had Medicaid.
Interviewer: So, it's been over a year since you had a welfare check.
C.M.: Yes ma'am. And a card.
Interviewer: A medical card?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: You don't have a medical card?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer: Your son does?
C.M.: No.
Interviewer: Okay, your son should have a card.
C.M.: A lot of folks been telling me, see I don't understand why Trevone [her son] don't get a medical card.

She was required to pay $15 to visit the medical clinic because she was making too much money at her part time job to get free care. As a result, she often she did not get the medical care she needed.

Interviewer: Okay. What about medical care? Are you able to get care for yourself and your child?
Interviewer: No? And why not?
C.M.: Well I tried and they said that the income I was bringing in, they say it was too much.
Interviewer: Do you go to like the free clinic?
C.M.: Well I go there, but I have the fee.
Interviewer: You pay for the fee.
C.M.: It's $15.
Interviewer: $15 co-pay?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: They told you that you're making too much?
C.M.: Umm. Hmm.
Interviewer: So you can only go there when you've got the money for it?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.

C.M. did not have a driver's license or a car. Friends and relatives provided her with transportation, often at no cost. If C.M. did have to pay for a ride, the fee was not more than $5.00 per trip. C.M. felt she could depend upon having transportation when needed, and she had never missed work or classes due to transportation problems.

The father of C.M.’s son did not provide any child support:

Interviewer: The father of your son, do you have any contact with him at all?
C.M.: Like I told you, I don't know if he living or dead.
Interviewer: No. So, he doesn't do anything to help out with your son at all.

C.M.’s pre-PRWORA work history included house cleaning, and jobs at Burger King, and Church’s Fried Chicken. C.M. was employed by the Bayou Vista Wal-Mart in Morgan City shortly after the first interview. No one helped her find the job, except that a friend drove her to put in her application. It was the only job she for which she applied:

Interviewer: When you first found the job at Wal-Mart?
C.M.: In Bayou Vista
Interviewer: Did someone help you find it or did you turn in an application?
C.M.: No, we had, we went down there one morning, it was before 7:00 and we fill out our applications and they called me like that day I got home. They had already called here. And I called them back. And they asked me if I could come in that Thursday. And I told them, "yea." And I went there Thursday. And they sent me, you know they interviewed me. And they sent me to do my blood-screening test. We did all that, and after that came back, I had to wait for that to come back. And after that came back, they hired me.
Interviewer: So when you, 'they' took you, who took you down there?
C.M.: One of my friends, she did.
Interviewer: Okay.
C.M.: She did. One of my friends did.
Interviewer: This wasn't a part of your schooling or anything, they didn't take y'all down there.
C.M.: No.
Interviewer: That's what I was wondering if they had. Were you excited when you heard they'd called?
C.M.: Ooh. Yes! Too excited! I was so awfully excited, when they called, and they told me they called. I said, 'Lord, let me go call these people and see what they want with me Oh, yea! I was excited!
Interviewer: Did you think that it would be that easy?
C.M.: No. No. No. No. I thought it was going to take, like a couple of months, but it didn't.

Interviewer: Was that the first place that you'd applied? Or did you apply at other places?
C.M.: Just here. Just down there.

Previous research indicates that many women feel intimidated by the workplace especially regarding performance demands and appropriate behaviors (NGA, 1998; Rangarajan,
1998). Often the first few days or weeks at a new job can be trying or overwhelming. C.M. said the other employees tried to help her feel at ease her first day at work:

When I started at Bayou Vista, they made me, the first day I started it was like I was at home. It was so nice and sweet. Everybody. Everybody in the department, the whole store, managers and all! And when I got there they greeted me really, you know, really well. It was nice. It was like a big birthday party when I started. I thought at first, you know, I thought I couldn't do it. I sort of put my mind to it. I'm being nervous, I'm just going to go ahead on and do what I have to do. And ever since from that . . . [C.M. finished her statement with a jaunty snap of her fingers.]

C.M. said she would have “stuck with it” (the job) even if she had not been treated so well, because she was learning. She had transportation problems though, as Morgan City is 30 to 45 minutes away from her home in Franklin. C.M. could not get a transfer to the Franklin Wal-Mart when it opened because she had been employed less than a year. She actually had to quit the Bayou Vista store and then apply to the Franklin store: “You see what happened. I was down there for 6 months. Then after there was an opening here, I quit from down there to come here. They couldn't transfer me because I wasn't there long enough.”

C.M. had been working at Wal-Mart in Franklin for a year in the shoe department. She was scheduled to work about 15 hours per week, but she did get a raise to $5.45 an hour.

Interviewer: Are you working full-time or part-time?
C.M.: Part
Interviewer: Part-time? How many hours?
C.M.: Fifteen
Interviewer: Fifteen?
C.M.: A week.
Interviewer: Did you want to work part-time? Or is that what they have available?
C.M.: That's what they have available.
Interviewer: That's what they have?
C.M.: Yes ma'am.
Interviewer: Okay. How much do you make an hour?
C.M.: Oh, about $5.20, about $5.45
Interviewer: $5.45? Have you gotten a raise since you've been there?
C.M.: Mmmm. Ya,
C.M. would be eligible for benefits after another year of work, even if she is still a part time employee. She did receive an employee discount on purchases, but she did not take advantage of this benefit. C.M. really liked her job:

Interviewer: Do you like your job at Wal-Mart?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: Tell me about it.
C.M.: It's nice, you know, we get along, everybody that work in the shoe department. I like it. And then, you know, cleaning up and stuff, like we have to zone-up the stuff before we leave out of there. I like that. It's not hard work or nothing. It's just walking around all day taking care of my customers. Doing what I have to do. I like it!
Interviewer: Do you like dealing with the people what come in, the customers?
C.M.: Umm. Hmmm. Some of them come in there, and they, you know, they're real smart. You know, we try to look over them [overlook them]. But we try to satisfy.

C.M. reported that the other employees she worked with were very nice, and her supervisor was very good to her. C.M. described a reciprocal relationship. She helped out if the department was short-staffed, and the manager tried to accommodate C.M. in any way:

Interviewer: So, you like your job.
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: The customers are okay. It sounds like you can handle them.
C.M.: Oh yea.
Interviewer: Laughter. And the people that you work with, your co-workers..
C.M.: Oh, very nice.
Interviewer: What about your boss.
C.M.: She's nice, oh very nice. She's younger than all of us.
Interviewer: She's what?
C.M.: She's younger than us!
Interviewer: She's younger. Oh. Okay.
C.M.: Umm-hmm. She real nice.
Interviewer: She treats you well?
Interviewer: What about if you need to have time off, like to do something for your son, or, maybe you need to go to the doctor?
C.M.: Ya, she give it to us.
Interviewer: You don't have any problem with that?
C.M.: She know. I do her favors like if she need me like on my off days and call me, I'll go in.
C.M. was not required to wear a uniform, so she did not have any special clothing expenses. She could wear jeans on Fridays but to do so she had “. . . to feed away a dollar;” a donation to a charitable fund. C.M.'s only complaint about her job was the part time hours. She was thinking about quitting because her manager could not give her any more hours.

Interviewer: What would you say is the hardest part about keeping your job?
C.M.: Well it supposed, well, you know it was just part-time. I was like just 15 hours a week is hard on me with my bills.
Interviewer: Right.
C.M.: It still is but, you know, a lot of people like are telling me, 'stick with it, you don't know, you know, what'll come up sooner or later.' They say just stick with it, so, and I was thinking about quitting! But he was telling me just stick with it. And I, you know, I done stuck with it for a whole year! And it's still the same thing.
Interviewer: Have you talked to your manager, that you'd like to work more hours?
C.M.: Yea. Yea. Yea. She said that she couldn't give me, she couldn't give me no more hours. Yea. But she have, there's like four of us there. And with herself that make five. And she split that up with each one of us, so. And this Wal-Mart here don't stay open but, you know, eight in the morning till nine.
Interviewer: The other women that are in your department, are they women who have been on welfare or government assistance too?
C.M.: Umm-hmm. Just one of them.
Interviewer: Just one of them has been?
C.M.: Umm-hmm. The rest of them work and the girls, one of the girls goes to school, she graduates this year, this month.
Interviewer: Is she going to be leaving and going somewhere else?
C.M.: I think so. Well, she haven't said anything to the manager, but she said she was taking up nursing in a week or so.
Interviewer: Well, if she goes somewhere else, are they going to hire someone else?
C.M.: Ummm --
Interviewer: Or are they going to split her hours with all you guys?
C.M.: Umm-hmm [yes].

C.M. had some trouble making ends meet with her Wal-Mart salary, and she could not always pay her utility bills on time, which often resulted in disconnected services:

Interviewer: I want to ask you a couple of questions about how you make ends meet. You know, we all have trouble sometimes getting from one paycheck to the next, or whatever, and making our money stretch.
C.M.: [Unintelligible].
C.M. was considering transferring to a Wal-Mart in Houston, Texas where she had cousins, in the hopes of getting more hours:

Interviewer: I want to ask you a couple of questions about how you make ends meet. You know, we all have trouble sometimes getting from one paycheck to the next, or whatever, and making our money stretch.
C.M.: [Unintelligible.]
Interviewer: You do or you don't?
C.M.: I don't.
Interviewer: You don't have trouble?
C.M.: I mean, yea, I do have trouble.
Interviewer: Oh, you do have trouble.
C.M.: I mean, like, I have bills. And like I said, I work 15 hours and I ain't bringing home more than a hundred and some dollars every two weeks. And I have bills to pay. Like such and such thing get cut off, and be off for awhile. See I can't live like that! So, I was going to quit, you know, and I'm saying I'm going to Houston. I'm not saying I'm going to do no better down there, but at least I'll try, you know.
Interviewer: Right. Right.

C.M. was thinking about trying this over the summer, but indicated she would take her son with her to Houston only if he wants to go. Otherwise he could stay with her mother. Her sisters had tried to talk her into applying for a position at the local casino:

Interviewer: Is your sister working full time?
C.M.: Umm-hmm. She be working at a casino.
Interviewer: At a casino? She's getting tips and stuff too?
C.M.: Umm-hmm.
Interviewer: They do well over there?
C.M.: Yea, both of them. They're trying to get me on over there, but uh I don't think I could deal with the graveyard shift.
Interviewer: Oh, it would be in the middle of the night?
C.M.: Yea, in the middle of the night. Like, you know, I can't see, I won't be able to see him.
Interviewer: Ever?
C.M.: You know. It's hard, like I told them. I don't like that shift. I said, it's like in the middle of the night, like me working from, say like from three to twelve or three to, you know, one or two in the morning.. Oh no, Lord, that's all night!
Interviewer II: You'd never see him.
C.M.: No, no. I wouldn't get a chance to see him!
Interviewer II: When he'd come home you'd be gone.
C.M.: Yea, I'd be gone.
Interviewer II: And he'd be all gone when you got up in the morning.
C.M.: And that's like 4:00 a.m. or something like that.
Interviewer: So, it was more important for you to perhaps make a little less money and still see your son, sometimes, then.
C.M.: Umm-hmm.

C.M. would have liked to work in the bakery or as a cashier at Wal-Mart, but those positions had cut hours, too. Even so, cashiers still tended to get more hours than C.M., but she was really pretty happy in the shoe department. C.M. would also be willing to work in a traditionally male job, "it don’t hurt to try nothin."

One of the unexpected consequences of working for C.M. was receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit. This bit of information was revealed when she answered what seemed like a completely unrelated question:

Interviewer: So, is he [her son] happy with you working?
C.M.: Oh, yeah.
Interviewer: What kind of shoes does he want, does he like to wear?
C.M.: The Nikes.
C.M.: I got him a pair for school. I just got him a pair of Reeboks. We had income tax, so we bought him some Reeboks. And yea, and then, my first year of getting income tax. That was pleasing too.
Interviewer: Did someone tell you how to do that, or did you know how to do that?
C.M.: I went to this place up here [the name was not clear on the tape], they was telling me how to do it. My manager was telling us about it.
Interviewer: So someone told you how it worked. That helped a lot didn't it?
C.M.: Yea.
Interviewer: Would you mind sharing with me how much you got with the earned income?
C.M.: Twenty five hundred.
Interviewer: Two thousand five hundred? Was that a nice thing to get?
C.M.: Oh Yea! It was the most I ever got in my life . . . I thought it wasn't going to be no more than, like, you know about maybe three or four hundred dollars. And then I get back $2500. I said, 'Oh Lord,' I said, 'that's a good deal!' -- It's true, and you know like I said, something like that I had never received in my life. And I felt good. Oh, that made me, I fixed up my home and I bought [snapped fingers]. I did for my child. Caught up with bills and stuff. It took us a long way.

C.M. felt her life had improved significantly as a result of the PRWORA:

Interviewer: Do you think you have changed any in the last year because of working?
C.M.: Oh. Umm-hmm. Yep, a whole lot.
Interviewer: In what ways?
C.M.: Well, I'm, so far, the things like I like used to do, like going out and stuff like that. I don't worry about that no more. Cause I like getting up and going to work in the morning and you know, I want to be on time. I don't know about that other stuff. And I say I want to do something to show my child, that I can make him happy too.

She felt good about herself too.

Interviewer: How do you feel about yourself?
C.M.: Oh, good. I feel good about myself. Like I say, I was going to get out there and do something for myself, and show my child I can make it, you know, out there.

In sum, C.M. was a single mother with one child. She was employed part-time at Wal-Mart, and seemed very happy with her job. Her only complaint was the lack of full-time hours. C.M. did not have much education, but that obviously was not a barrier to employment. She did not appear to have any other significant barriers, but her transportation arrangements did seem a bit tenuous. C.M. seemed very motivated to continue employment, and she discussed strategies to try to secure more hours. She lived
alone with her son, and she expressed the need for independence. The PRWORA had indeed motivated her to change her lifestyle.

Summary: Research Question Two

What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and reach self-sufficiency (2\textsuperscript{nd} order change)? Two women (16\%) were employed at the time of this study. One woman worked full-time, but the other only managed to work 15 hours per week. Neither woman had significant barriers to employment, but even so, the woman who worked part-time had less education and less reliable transportation than the other woman. Both women seemed very motivated to continue employment, due to personal and environmental pressures. The two women expressed the desire for independence, neither one received child support, and both lived independent of extended family. Finally, both women seemed genuinely pleased with the changes that had occurred in their lives since the PRWORA implementation.

Eventually reaching some measure of self-sufficiency seems more likely for the woman with full-time employment. She still received government assistance in the form of food stamps and a child care subsidy, however, and her parents still helped her financially. The woman working part-time seemed a long way from realizing independence from family and government support, as she relied on the former for childcare, financial assistance, and transportation and the latter for food stamps and subsidized housing.
Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to describe and compare the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA; P.L. 104-193). This legislation was based upon the theoretical perspective that poverty is due to micro-level individual characteristics rather than macro-level failures within the societal, political or economic systems. The PRWORA includes four major objectives:

1. Reduce welfare caseloads through employment.
2. Increase child support collections and paternity identification.
4. Encourage formation of two-parent families.

Both the larger research project and the current study were focused particularly upon PRWORA objective number one and the women's journey from welfare reliance to wage work. This study looked at a subset of women from Wave II of the larger project and explored two questions:

1. Whether the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translated into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs (first order change)?
2. What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of this study will be able to sustain their work efforts and realize self-sufficiency (second order change)?

The answers to these questions will interweave the threads gathered from the participants to produce a vital, colorful tapestry of their experiences with welfare reform.
Research Question One: Employment Status

Did the decline in Louisiana welfare caseloads translate into women in nonmetro parishes finding and keeping jobs? There are only two possible outcomes to this question: women were either employed at the time of the interviews, or they were not employed. Therefore, the simple answer to whether the twelve women in this study were employed was “no,” as only two (17%) of the twelve were employed for pay.

The women not employed, however, represented three distinct sets: volunteers, students, and women not engaged in any work-related activities. Three women were working to maintain their benefits ostensibly because they could not find jobs in their communities. Two women were attending vocational education programs, and three women were not engaged in any work-related activities. Additionally, two women were on medical leave from work due to pregnancy and childbirth. To be fair, the two women on medical leave could have been counted as employed, but it was not clear if they would be able to return to their jobs, or even if they wanted to. Furthermore, their tenure in the workplace was relatively short. One woman only worked for three weeks, the other for four months, so it was difficult to justify including them as “employed.”

Context of Women's Lives

The human ecological perspective emphasized the importance of understanding the context of the lives of families under consideration. So it is important to this discussion to begin with a description of the areas where the women resided. The State of Louisiana is blessed with an incredible abundance of natural resources, and a climate that is conducive to many forms of agriculture. The state is a national leader in crop and animal production, forestry, and commercial fishing. Louisiana is also a leader in the oil and natural gas industries, and produces
25% of the nation's petrochemicals and natural gas. The state's vast system of waterways has produced five major ports, two of which are among the nation's top five deep-water ports. Louisiana is also home to the "Superport," the only port in United States that can handle the super tankers from the Middle East. In spite of these positive economic factors, the State of Louisiana continues to occupy the lowest rungs in the nation on socio-economic indicators. The people in this state are among the poorest in the nation, Louisiana has the highest percentage of families with children headed by a single parent. Educational attainment figures in Louisiana are well below national averages, and the state boasts the second highest rate of children living with parents who do not work full-time.

The four research parishes generally had poorer socio-economic indicators than the state averages. All parishes had unemployment rates higher than Louisiana averages, and the rates reported for the East Central parishes of Concordia was roughly double the Louisiana rates. Educational attainment rates for these parishes were also much lower than the state averages. Annual income rates for the East Central parishes were quite a bit lower than Louisiana averages, but the rates in the Southern parish of Iberia were quite close. St. Mary parish, also in South Louisiana, reported lower than average per capita income, but the household median income was similar to the state rate. Employment opportunities in the four parishes did not reflect the tremendous amount of agricultural, industrial, and manufacturing output produced in the state. The medical industry was a major employer in all four parishes, but the services sector produced fewer jobs by comparison. Transportation methods and routes were limited in these areas, with no ports, minimal or no major highway systems, no commercial airlines, and limited rail access. A suitable transportation infrastructure is vital for encouraging economic development in rural areas. Local bus service was not available in the communities visited.
Women Engaged in Work-Related Activities

Employed women. Two women were employed at the time of the study. The woman with the CNA designation was employed full time, which would almost be expected. It may be surprising though that the woman without even a GED was employed, even if only part time, because poorly educated women often experience difficulties finding and keeping jobs. The women did not perceive any barriers to finding and keeping a job, but they did have facilitating conditions. For example, both women had only one child, and reliable childcare. Both women also had pre-PRWORA work experience, so they had some sense of what to expect in the business world. Neither woman indicated that jobs were hard to come by in their communities, or that they had experienced personally any difficulties finding employment. Indeed, both women had started employment at one job, and then within a few months had procured employment at another facility. It is entirely plausible that the women did not perceive the same job availability problems in their communities that other women in the subset complained about simply because they had jobs: therefore jobs must be available. Even the woman with the part time hours had a sense that jobs were available locally at the casino, albeit working the night shift.

Transportation was not perceived as a problem for either woman, but only one actually owned an automobile. The other woman was dependent upon family and friends to get rides to and from work. This arrangement had apparently worked well for over a year, but it would not take much disruption to leave this woman on foot and without a job.

A look at the factors that may have prompted these women to find employment and sustain their work efforts reveals that the two women had very similar motivating conditions. Both women had to pay rent for their living quarters. As a matter of fact, only one other woman
of the twelve in the subset had to pay anything for housing. So it would appear that a woman’s housing status might effect whether a woman feels compelled to work. Neither of the two employed women received child support from the fathers of their children, so that source of additional resources was also unavailable to them. The desire to be independent was expressed by both women. They wanted to be able to address the needs and wants of their families without depending on either government assistance or their kin.

The women expressed differing opinions about whether PRWORA had prompted changes in their lives. The CNA pointedly told us that she would have been working anyway without the extra “push.” But the other woman believed that the legislation had been the catalyst she needed to get into the workforce. Both women felt their lives and circumstance were indeed better than before PRWORA implementation. These women will be discussed in more detail under research question two.

Volunteers. Three women were working to maintain their benefits. These women felt the biggest hurdle to overcome for employment was simply a lack of available jobs. It stands to reason that of the different sets of possible outcomes, the volunteers probably had the most accurate picture of the job market in their communities. Indeed, why would any rational woman choose to work 25+ hours per week just to maintain their benefits if paying jobs were available? A woman working the same number of hours at minimum wage would bring home over $400 per month, and should be eligible for transitional benefits such as Medicaid, food stamps and transportation for the next six months to a year. These women “volunteered” and continued their job search activities to maintain a $123 welfare check (for one child) and Medicaid because they could not find other options.
The three women working for benefits had similar barriers, facilitators, and motivators. The women had only one or two children. Two of the women had a GED or high school education; and the other woman had received childcare training. Two of the women also had transportation difficulties. One woman relied upon the community action van to get her to her volunteer job, but she did not have reliable transportation to keep a paying job. The unasked question? How was she managing to complete the job search requirements? This point was not cleared up during the interview. The other woman without transportation depended upon a girlfriend and sometimes a relative, but this transportation was not particularly reliable.

A look at the possible motivators for these three women revealed a slightly different set of factors than for the women who were employed for pay. Two women did not receive child support, but for one woman the child’s father was paying biweekly court-ordered support. All three women received help from their families. Two women felt motivated by PRWORA to make changes and seek employment. The third woman did not know how the PRWORA changed her life because she had not received TANF long before the act was implemented. But the most crucial difference between the employed women and the volunteers may be that none of the three volunteers had pressing housing needs. Two of the women lived with family and did not pay rent. The other woman lived with her children in public housing. She not only did not pay rent, she actually received $24.00 per month from HUD to help with housing-related expenses. These women were not in any danger of losing the roof over their children’s heads if they did not have paid employment.

Even though it appears that the volunteers may have felt less pressure to work than the employed women, the fact remains that these three women demonstrated the dedication needed to sustain their work efforts so as to maintain their benefits. In that respect, these women may be
much like the employed women. Therefore, the available evidence begins to point back to the problem the women identified: paid jobs simply were not available in the women’s communities.

Students in vocational education. Two women were participating in vocational training programs at the time of the interviews. The younger woman had one child, and the older woman had three children living at home. Both women had completed the GED or high school. The younger woman was working toward the CNA designation, and the other woman was working towards completion of a carpentry program. These two women had more in common with the employed women than with the volunteer women or the women not working. Neither woman perceived any barriers to employment. Both women lived in the southern parishes, and they did not identify job availability as a problem in their area. Perhaps their perception was colored by the fact that they were spending time and energy acquiring additional skills. These women had to believe jobs would be available, at least for people with their particular training. Otherwise, they would have to admit that their decision to pursue vocational education had not been particularly rational.

These two women said they had fairly dependable sources of transportation. One woman actually owned an automobile, but of late it had been less than reliable. She did have alternate strategies to get where she needed to go, even if it meant flagging a friend down as she passed on the highway! This woman seemed determined that transportation problems were not going to keep her from work or classes. The other woman depended upon her mom and siblings to provide transportation, so as long as they were available, she was confident that transportation would not be a barrier to employment or completing her education.

The women engaged in vocational education had motivators similar to the employed women. Neither one received child support from the fathers of their children, but both women
received help from their families. The PRWORA had served to motivate both women to get additional education, particularly for the woman with three children. It is quite likely, however, that the young woman pursuing the CNA certification was motivated as much by the shame she felt receiving TANF than implementation of the act. The women may not have indicated that job availability would be a barrier to employment, but their belief that they would be able to procure jobs upon completion of their programs could have been an additional motivator for them to complete their education.

The two women may have been motivated by their housing situation, but it was not as clear to ascertain from their conversations as for the working women or the women in volunteer programs. Both of the women lived with family members. They were not paying rent, but they may have been less comfortable with their living conditions than the volunteers. The younger woman with one child lived with her mom and sisters, but she made it clear that this was not to be a long-term arrangement. She valued autonomy, and did not want to depend upon her family or government assistance. The woman with four children lived with her sister and her sister’s two children in a very worn manufactured housing unit. The older woman did not complain about her living conditions because she felt the other option was no roof over her head. Nevertheless, she had such an independent spirit and a can-do attitude that it is hard to picture her in this situation for any longer than necessary. She was very clear that she wanted to rely upon herself.

Women Not Engaged in Work-Related Activities

The five women in this category were either not engaged in any work-related activities \((n = 3)\), or were on medical leave \((n = 2)\). The three women not working averaged more children than the employed women, the volunteer women, or the women pursuing additional education.
Two of the three women had earned the GED or a high school diploma, but none of the women had acquired additional training beyond that level.

Two of the three women indicated that jobs were not available in their communities. This brings the discussion to an interesting point. All three women not engaged in work-related activities lived in the southern Louisiana parishes, as did two of the women working to maintain their benefits. The two women engaged in vocational education, who would probably not have done so if they had felt jobs were unavailable, also resided in this area. The woman who worked part-time was from this region, and she had not indicated any problems gaining employment.

So, do we have a question about whether jobs were available in this area, or are the apparently disparate perceptions a combination of factors that serve to make jobs appear unavailable? One clue to this puzzle may be that the three women not working and one of the two volunteers in this area had transportation difficulties. They all relied upon transportation provided by family or friends to get anywhere, but unlike the woman who was employed or the women in education programs, these three women could not depend on their sources of transportation. Therefore, when the women indicated that jobs were unavailable in their community, what they may have been saying was that jobs were not available in close proximity to their respective homes, in other words, walking distance. So maybe the problem for these women was not job availability per se, but job accessibility. This discussion does not even begin to address the issue of job quality, as perhaps some kinds of jobs may have been available close to the women, but they were not, for whatever reason, deemed suitable. In the final analysis however, the higher unemployment rates in these parishes for women and for minorities does seem to indicate that job availability is a problem for some women.
Generally speaking, the women not engaged in work-related activities seemed to have fewer motivators than the other groups. These women did not pay for their housing. One woman lived in a manufactured housing unit that she owned. The other two women lived with their parents or grandparents: so not only did they not have a rent obligation, but they were also receiving significant assistance from relatives along other dimensions. None of the women received court-ordered child support. However, the woman living with her grandparents revealed late in the interview that the father of her youngest child also lived with them, and he helped to provide for their needs. This woman, the youngest of the three, also did not seem particularly motivated by the PRWORA. It is hard to determine if this apparent lack of urgency to find work was because she had material and financial support from her grandparents and boyfriend, or because all the urgency she could muster would not have overcome her transportation problems.

The other two women were the oldest women in this subset, had the most children at home, and unlike any other woman in the subset, had grandchildren living in their homes. Both women indicated that PRWORA was instrumental in changing their lives: one had completed the GED, and one had lost her TANF benefits and Medicaid for herself and two of her three children. The first woman did not identify lack of jobs as a barrier to employment, but did indicate that transportation was problematic. She did not seem to be under tremendous pressure to obtain employment. This woman had lived with her parents and depended upon them financially her entire life. She simply felt it was about time to get a place of her own, perhaps because she now had grandchildren. But after 40 years, it does not seem likely that grandchildren would be a prime motivation for her to move from her parents’ home and work to support herself. The larger difficulty with this woman and the younger woman may be that they are
dependent upon family, so death or long term illness would leave either woman particularly vulnerable if they have not successfully transitioned to wage reliance.

The third woman in this set represented perhaps the most extreme case, in terms of barriers and motivators. This woman had only a 7th grade education, no vocational education, no reliable transportation, and she was convinced that jobs were not available in her community. But unlike the first two women described, this woman was also under extreme pressure to provide for her three children and a grandchild living in her home. Her manufactured housing unit may have been paid for, but it was in a terrible state of disrepair. The holes in the floor were large enough to see the ground underneath, and this researcher wondered how people managed to avoid falling into them in the dark. This woman had lost her TANF funds and Medicaid for herself and two children. She did not receive child support, and her extended family was not able to provide financial assistance. She did get $500 per month SSI for one of the children (who did not have Medicaid – but it was unclear why not), and the family had survived upon that and the welfare check before she lost the benefits. She voiced a desire to work so that she could provide more for her children. This woman had multiple motivators, but she also had every barrier and no facilitators. It is very difficult to imagine how this woman will be able to sustain her family without either drastic intervention or catastrophic difficulties.

The final set of women includes the two women not working due to pregnancy and childbirth. Both women lived in the central parishes. It was very difficult to ascertain if these two women were more like the employed women or the women not engaged in work-related activities because they had worked for such relatively short periods. One woman, seven months pregnant and with three very young children, worked four months before she experienced premature labor. The other woman, with one child, worked three weeks before she was put on
bed rest for an undisclosed problem with her pregnancy. Her infant was six weeks old at the time of the interview. Neither woman had a GED or high school diploma, but the woman with only two children had earned the CNA designation. The other woman only completed a work readiness class. Both women felt they had reliable transportation, even though they were both dependent upon family members. The CNA did not perceive job availability problems for CNA’s. She did say, however, that jobs were not available in her community, a sentiment echoed by the woman without training or a high school education. So, the only barrier between them seemed to be job availability for the young woman without much education or training. Therefore, in regards to perceived barriers to work these women were more similar to the employed women and the women in vocational education than to the women who were not working at all.

As far as motivation to work, the two women were very different. The woman with the new baby (CNA) did not seem to have much pressing her to return to the workforce. She indicated that the PRWORA had not changed her life much, but she also liked having more money for the whole three weeks she worked. She lived rent-free with her mother and her grandparents in the grandparents’ home. Her family provided her with dependable transportation and financial support. The baby’s father was providing support. She felt that her job at the nursing home was on hold for her, and she said she intended to go back as soon as she received a letter from her doctor releasing her to work. She was not particularly adamant about her plans to return to work, and she was the only one in the subset that did not talk about a need to be independent. But to be fair, this nineteen-year old woman with a new baby and a toddler was only six weeks post partum, and she may have been feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Most
women at that stage would not be thinking rationally if they valued independence above family help with the children.

The other young woman appeared to have more pressure to return to work. She lived with her children in public housing, and she paid $50 per month rent. She was not receiving child support from her children’s fathers. She indicated that she did not receive any financial help from family, and she was less than thrilled with all the rules and regulations surrounding the PRWORA legislation. Her desire to return to work as soon as possible after deliver seemed genuine, especially since she liked working because the money provided her with more opportunities to get things she wanted. The only question regarding this woman and work is whether she will have a job to return to after delivery.

Research Question Two: Sustained Employment and Self-sufficiency

What is the likelihood that the women who were employed at the time of the interviews will be able to sustain their work efforts and become self-sufficient? For the two working women in this study, adaptation, or sustained second order behavioral change will be a four-stage process occurring over time. Sustained second order behavioral change for any individual requires: (a) a motivation or stimulus (usually external); (b) a shift in personal values and beliefs; (c) the individual to make a rational choice between competing alternatives; and (d) an alteration of the individual’s environmental conditions, so as to make the old behavior less rewarding while enhancing the consequences of the new behavior. If all these conditions are not successfully achieved, adaptation fails and the individual, family, or even system cannot survive, much less be expected to thrive.
The Change Process

Stage one. The first stage in the change process requires that a motivation or stimulus put pressure on the woman's personal system, making her current way of life uncomfortable. In this case the stimulus was provided by a change in the country's political system, in the form of welfare reform legislation. Did PRWORA provide a push to the two employed women to seek employment? One woman felt that PRWORA had been instrumental in getting her back into the workforce. The other woman said she would have worked anyway, which is quite possible given her short history of government assistance. Perhaps she would have been working anyway eventually, but PRWORA nudged her along a little faster.

Stage two. The second stage needed for adaptation is a shift in personal values and beliefs. The available evidence indicates that these two women have indeed made this shift. The women seemed to value independence and they recognized the need to provide for their children in the wake of the PRWORA implementation. There is evidence that the women had given up any belief that the government would continue to provide a safety net to support their families.

Stage three. The third stage required the women to make a rational choice between competing alternatives. Basically, the women had two choices: adapt to legislative changes and (hopefully) survive, or do not adapt to these changes and do not survive. Regardless of their decision, welfare benefits, as well as other forms of government assistance would at some point cease to provide many supports the women relied upon formerly. Therefore, adaptation for these women could take one of several forms: replace government assistance with work and workplace benefits, increase reliance upon the social support network, possibly use marriage as a survival strategy, or hammer together some combination of the three. The two employed women in this
subset not only chose employment as their preferred method of adaptation, but had sustained their work efforts for at least a year prior to the interviews.

Stage four. The last stage mandates that for behavioral change to be permanent, an alteration of the woman's environmental conditions must occur that makes the old behavior less rewarding while enhancing the consequences of the new behavior. Now this is perhaps the stickiest stage for the two women under consideration. Behaviorists argue that the need for change is culturally and socially determined, therefore the societal macro-environment is critical for encouraging, facilitating and sustaining second order behavioral change (Douglas, 1997; Eddy, Dishion, & Stoolmiller, 1998; Gibb, 1962; Mattaini & Thyer, 1996; Sigman-Grant, 1996; Thyer, 1996).

Society indeed made the old behavior, receiving government assistance without working (not taking personal responsibility for self and family) much less rewarding. As indicated earlier, this was the stimulus for the change process. But the problem these women encountered, and will continue to face, is the lack of facilitating conditions and truly enhanced reinforcements for their new behavior, labor force participation. Changing the environmental systems the individual is embedded in may be a more effective change agent than targeting the individual. Indeed, for second order change to be sustained, the systems in which the individual acts must also be changed. A suitable structure of contingencies must be initiated to support the women’s behavioral change over the long term. So the question here is whether the communities will be able to support a second order change for these women.

Such contingencies or rewards have not been fully realized for the two employed women. The woman with full time employment as a CNA may have more income working than when she relied solely upon welfare, but she did not have benefits at work to replace lost Medicaid. For
many women, the need for medical care is why they applied for welfare in the first place. The other concern is that the economic system does not value highly the contributions made by women in this field, hence there is not much chance that she will ever escape poverty wages for all her work efforts. Even so, the available data seem to support the conclusion that this woman is likely to sustain second order change and remain in the workforce in spite of the lack of social supports available for poor working women. This woman had a full time job, a high school education and additional training as a CNA, her own automobile, and her mom for childcare and any other assistance as needed. She is happy to be working, and happy with the independence work provides her with. This woman would consider herself well off if she is able to land a full time job with employee benefits.

The second woman was not working full time, so she had very limited income, approximately $150 more per month working than she received from TANF. While she was receiving TANF she and her son were on Medicaid, but for reasons unknown they were both dropped when her TANF check stopped. Food stamps were very helpful, as was the inexpensive public housing unit where she resided. But it is fairly easy to see that for many women the additional $150 per month, weighed against the loss of Medicaid and the work effort required, would not be worth the mental exercise of finding a reason to go to work every day.

But this woman was so obviously determined to stick with this job. And I do mean this job. This woman, for all the motivation and lack of barriers, would not look for a job that could provide her with more hours and thus more security. This problem was especially evident in the seemingly contradictory manner in which she talked about leaving her son, or not. Her reason for not applying for a job at the casino was because working the night shift would leave her with limited opportunities to see her son. Yet, she said that she was considering moving to Houston
for the summer, and she would leave her son with her mother if he did not want to go with her. Now, it seems that even working nights at the casino she would still see her son more than if she lived in Houston and he remained in Franklin.

There are two possible reasons for this contradiction. The first reason is that she really does not want to work at night, period. Her son provides a convenient excuse. The second possibility is that she is fearful about leaving her position at Wal-Mart. To way that this woman really liked her job and her co-workers is an understatement. So it was easy for this woman to say that she would go to Houston in the summer, because summer was still several months away. When push comes to shove, it will take a lot to move this woman from her 15 hours per week at Wal-Mart, not because she does not want more hours, but because she is quite comfortable with the job.

Will this woman be able to sustain a second order change? She did not have a GED or any additional training, but she also did not have any immediate barriers to work. She was highly motivated because she had to pay rent, she received no child support, and she really wanted to be able to provide for herself and her son. She also really enjoyed being out in the workforce, and she felt good about herself. But, how long can she survive working only 15 hours per week? The evidence may indicate that if she is under enough pressure, she will eventually have to find other employment. But still, she would rather choose to remain in the workforce than return to complete dependence upon others. The political system could reward this woman for her work effort by insuring that at the very least she and her son were able to access needed medical care, and by guaranteeing her full time employment.

The final part of the research question under consideration here is whether the women will be able to reach self-sufficiency with these jobs. The minimal definition of self-sufficiency
is 'meeting the family's basic needs without government assistance traditionally associated with poverty.' When these interviews were conducted, the employed women in this study were still reliant upon some form of government assistance and their social support networks for survival. Even the woman who was employed full time relied upon food stamps and, more importantly, continued assistance from her family. Full-time employment at minimum wage will not give these women any real sense of, nor ability to, achieve self-sufficiency. Overall, this research provided ample evidence that these women would most probably not attain self-sufficiency without either altering the definition of self-sufficiency, or fundamentally restructuring the supports, including Medicaid and minimum wage, available in the socio-cultural environment.

Project Summary

The purpose of this research was to describe and compare the outcomes of welfare reform legislation on rural families in Louisiana as they tried to comply with and adapt to work mandates established by the PRWORA. The two primary research questions were interested in whether the rural women in the subset had found and sustained employment, and whether these jobs would lead to self-sufficiency. To date, the research literature on poverty and welfare reform has clearly documented several expectations regarding the potential success of women as they tried to transition from welfare dependence to wage reliance, including:

1. Jobs would not be available to all women in all areas, due to personal barriers and/or socio-cultural or structural environmental conditions (Brayfield & Hofferth, 1995; Corcoran, Daniziger, Kalil, & Seefeldt, 2000; Edin & Lein, 1997; Fishman et al., 1999; Jencks, 1992; Jencks & Swingle, 2000; Kaus, 1986; NGA, 1998; Parrot, 1998; Rose 2000; Sherman et al., 1998)
2. Available jobs would be in the lower paying service sectors, and these jobs would most probably not provide women with full-time employment or benefits needed for these women to achieve self-sufficient or escape poverty (Boisjoly, Harris, & Duncan, 1998; Caron, 2000; Edin & Lein, 1997; Parrott, 1998; Sherman et al., 1998).

3. Women in rural areas would experience greater difficulties finding and keeping jobs that could lead to self-sufficiency, even with increased educational attainment (Hanson, 1982; Haynie & Gorman, 1999; Horton & Allen, 1998; Lichter, 1989; Lichter, Johnson, & McLaughlin, 1994; McLaughlin & Perman, 1991; Tickamyer & Duncan, 1990; Tigges & Tootle, 1990). As a result, rural women would experience great difficulty sustaining second order behavioral changes (Douglas, 1997; Eddy, Dishion, & Stoolmiller, 1998; Gibb, 1962; Mattaini & Thyer, 1996; Sigman-Grant, 1996; Thyer, 1996).

The results of this analysis seem to confirm the expectations of the larger research community.

First, only two women in this subset were employed for pay. Another two women were on medical leave and two women were students in vocational education programs designed to increase their skills. The remaining six women, 50% of the sample, were not able to find or maintain employment. Their barriers to employment included the range of barriers consistent with the research literature, at the levels suggested by human ecology theory. Personal or micro-level barriers included human capital deficits based on low educational attainment and low skill levels. Mental health problems, in the form of depression, were easily detectable in at least one woman. (This researcher does not claim the skills or training needed to diagnose mental health disorders, but based upon the researcher's personal experiences, the woman referred to appeared severely depressed.)
The socio-cultural barriers to employment exhibited at the community level included lack of job opportunities, lack of jobs with benefits, and lack of local bus services. Contrary to expectations in the literature, childcare availability was not a problem for the women at the time of the interviews. Even so, childcare is still a tenuous link for the women because they universally depended upon the kindness, willingness, and availability of family members for this service. Sickness, death, or even a family squabble could easily fray this thread beyond repair. The manmade or natural environmental barriers to employment for women in these communities were related to the opportunities for economic development in these areas, hence the possibility of increasing available jobs. Unfortunately, the research parishes did not have agricultural, manufacturing, or refining facilities to the same degree as other parishes in the state, and they did not have a suitable transportation system that would appeal to businesses or industries wishing to relocate. So it is unlikely that additional employers will be enticed to these parishes, resulting in additional job opportunities.

Second, the nature of the jobs held by the employed women and the women who were volunteering to maintain their benefits supported previously published research. The jobs available to these women were in the low-wage services sector, predominantly nurse's aide, childcare, and retail positions. These positions paid minimum wage, and had few to no benefits. Of the twelve women in the subset, only one woman was employed full-time, not surprising given the preponderance of evidence provided by previous research.

The Final Threads

Discussion of the third expectation will provide the final threads that must be woven into the tapestry to complete the picture of PRWORA and employment in rural Louisiana. The title of this project posed the question: "Does achieving social policy goals insure positive family
outcomes?" An answer cannot be proposed until we determine whether the stated PRWORA policy objectives were achieved. The present study and discussion focused upon objective number one, decreasing welfare caseloads. Reports released by the Louisiana Department of Social Services (1999) confirmed a significant reduction in caseloads since PRWORA implementation. So for argument's sake let us put aside concerns that these declines were more the product of a strong national economy than the dynamics of welfare reform. Then, let us temporarily forget that caseloads began declining before the new legislation was signed into law (see Figure 40). For the moment, then, we can say PRWORA objective number one was accomplished in the state of Louisiana.

The PRWORA hoped to achieve the social policy goals of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency for welfare dependent women. We can then infer that a primary measure of positive family outcomes can be, indeed should be, self-sufficiency. So now we return to the opening discussion: dependence upon government assistance is the antithesis of self-sufficiency (Dill, 2000; Rogers & Weil, 2000). Can we expect the formerly welfare-reliant women, with their entry-level minimum wage jobs, to achieve long-term self-sufficiency for their families? If the term self-sufficient is defined as 'meeting the family's basic needs without government assistance traditionally associated with

![Figure 40. Documented decline in AFDC cases in the research parishes before PRWORA implementation.](image-url)
poverty,' then based upon the evidence we are forced to admit that minimum wage work, even if full-time, cannot render any family truly self-sufficient.

What are the implications for the women in this subset and their families? What does this mean for their dreams and hopes for future independence, a car, a home of their own? Perhaps most importantly, what does this ultimately predict for their children's outcomes? Is the cycle of poverty again guaranteed to repeat itself with another generation? Does the evidence indicate that achieving social policy goals -- in this instance reduced welfare caseloads, insures positive family outcomes -- in this case self-sufficiency?

No.

In the final analysis, this last discussion does not provide the remaining raw materials required for perfecting the tapestry of rural Louisiana women's journey from welfare reliance to self-sufficiency, but instead raises concerns about the quality of the work in progress. The dangling threads and the occasional frayed edges exposed under careful scrutiny provide some evidence of impending structural failure. The tapestry we hoped to view at the end of this project is perhaps not woven as tightly as needed to support even one formerly welfare-reliant woman and her children as they struggle towards the elusive "positive outcome" hinted at in this document's title.
Implications

Future Research

This research underscored the need for additional longitudinal studies, both qualitative and quantitative. Following particular subsets of formerly welfare-reliant women will shed some light on several processes including decision-making and change and adaptation. Additional areas that should be considered are: the effects of the economy on women's ability to find and keep jobs, the effects of personal qualities such as determination and optimism on self-sufficiency, tenure and advancement in the workplace, and child wellbeing. A longitudinal study tracking child outcomes into adulthood could provide vital information about whether the current legislation had an effect upon cyclical poverty. Longitudinal research directed towards documenting child outcomes also could test Mayer's (1997) thesis that the source of family income has greater long-term effects upon children's outcomes than how much income a family generates.

Future Policy and Programming

There are a several recommendations that could be discussed at this point, but the more critical areas for rural Louisiana women seem to be work, transportation, and training programs. For welfare-reliant women to successfully adapt to the welfare reform legislation, the systems in which they act must also change. Jobs need to be available and accessible to these women. Four of the six women that felt jobs were unavailable also had problems obtaining reliable transportation, but only one of the women that thought jobs were available reported transportation problems. This begs the question: are jobs simply not available in the women's communities, or is it that jobs are not available within close proximity to the women in the subset? The answer has major programming implications. If jobs are not available in the
community, then the only two solutions to this problem are to undertake a community-wide economic revitalization effort, or move the women from their homes to locations proximal to available employment opportunities. If jobs are available in the community, however, but not within walking distance, then providing women with some kind of long-term transportation would make more sense, and be more easily achievable.

Removal of the barriers to work would increase women’s ability to find and sustain employment, but then employment needs to lead to some measure of self-sufficiency so that women will not have to return to welfare dependence. Jobs need to provide families with a living wage, rather than minimum wage. Employer subsidized benefits are critical to replace the government safety net. Women working in low paying jobs need more than just transitional benefits. Their most crucial need is for medical coverage of some kind.

This study provides evidence that training programs must be responsive to community needs. Programs offered should include training in more traditionally male fields such as welding or computer repairs. As the oil and gas industries prepare for increased production, now is the right time in Louisiana to train women to fill the positions that are sure to be in demand. The jobs available to women as a result of participation in these types of vocational education programs are more likely to result in self-sufficiency than food service, childcare, or nurse's aide programs. In addition, GED classes should be offered in some manner that would allow women who work various shifts the opportunity to attain this vital resource. In short, designers of educational programs for women attempting to achieve wage-reliance would be well-served to take notes from the human ecological model. Job-training programs should be developed that provide qualified employees to fill area industry needs, and women must be ensured of access to
programs that will ultimately teach them the skills they need to sustain employment in job capable of providing wages and benefits to achieve self-sufficiency.
References


Appendix A

Wave I Data Collection Summary

Data Collection

This project was supported by the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station and carried out with cooperation from the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES). The research protocol, an open-end qualitative interview, was piloted among women who met the same criteria as the potential participants; these interviews are not included in the analysis. Both researchers were White, middle-class professional women, about 10 years older than the average participant. We presented ourselves to participants in a low-key way, dressing and speaking in a comfortable, relaxed manner.

The seven sites for the interviews were chosen based on their representative rural and remote rural locations around the state. LCES parish agents and DSS regional program specialists assisted researchers in locating groups of women who would be eligible for participation in this study, introducing us to directors at training sites where welfare-reliant women were meeting their mandated participation in programs (e.g., training centers for General Equivalency Diplomas [GED] or job-training sites) designed to assist their exit from welfare. Each of the directors contacted agreed to open their classrooms to us.

At each interview site, the researchers introduced themselves to the potential participants in a large group setting; clarified for the women who we were and who we were not (i.e., we were not case workers or state agents); explained the research project; and guaranteed confidentiality of their comments. The women were paid $10 for their participation and were told that this compensation had been cleared with DSS as income that did not have to be reported. The voluntary aspect of the project was emphasized, although it is acknowledged here that the offer of monetary compensation to poor women is compelling.

After these introductory remarks, the researchers went pre-established private meeting rooms and volunteers came one at a time for individual interviews. The site directors indicated that all or almost all of the eligible women at each site participated in the interviews. The interviews averaged about 25 minutes in length. The first author transcribed the audio-taped interviews with assistance from the other researcher (Monroe & Tiller, 2001).

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Appendix B
Participant Contact Letter

September 15, 1998

Field
Field
Field

Dear Field:

Last fall, we talked about the coming changes in welfare and the things that might be worrying you about these changes. I want to again tell you how grateful I am for your help with this project. I was able to talk with more than 80 women like you in rural areas around the state.

As I promised you, I have shared your thoughts, feelings, and concerns over welfare changes with the general public and government officials. Much of the information these women discussed with me came out in various newspaper articles, newsletters, and other magazines. I have attached a copy of one of these articles for you to see.

Of course, our work is not yet finished. Some of the women I talked to last fall no longer are getting their welfare checks. For other women, welfare benefits will soon be cut off. You may now be in one of these situations yourself. I want to talk with you again so that I will have up-to-date information on how things are working out for you. I am especially interested in hearing about what kinds of successes you have had, and what types of problems you are now facing.

It is important that we speak again sometime in the near future. Someone from my office will call you soon to set up an appointment so we can meet at your convenience. You will again be paid a small amount for your time and effort. Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed postage-paid card with your current contact information – name, address, and a phone number where you can be reached or receive a message. Also let me know if there is a “best” time to call.

Again, a sincere thanks for your participation in this project.

With regards,

Pamela A. Monroe
## Appendix C

### Secondary Data Sources

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Appendix D

Questionnaire with Interview Probes

Name: ___________________________  Social security #: 

Home phone #: ____________________  Work phone #: 

Education level. (Check all that apply.)
___ GED  ___ High school diploma  ___ Find Work
___ Some college  ___ Trade or Technical school  ___ Project Independence
___ Other training program

Are you going to any training programs or GED classes? Yes _____ No _____ What?
How many hours per week?

What is your marital status?
___ Married  ___ Divorced, living alone  ___ Widowed, living alone
___ Single, living alone  ___ Single, living with a man  ___ Widowed, living with a man
___ Divorced, living with a man

Do any other adults live with you in your household? (Check all that apply.)
___ Mother  ___ Other relative  ___ Female friend  ___ Male friend

Are you satisfied with where you live?  Yes _____ No

Why or why not?

Do you feel that you and your children are safe in your home? Yes _____ No
Your neighborhood? Yes _____ No

Why or why not?

*Can you tell me about how much you pay per month for rent? Does that include utilities?*

*Are you able to pay your rent each month? Are you current on your rent payments? If not, how far behind are you? How do you plan to catch up?*

Do you have a valid driver’s license? Yes _____ No _____ Do you own a car? Yes _____ No

What forms of transportation can you find in your community? (Check all that apply.)
___ bus  ___ taxi cab
___ church provides  ___ community van
___ friend or relative (free)  ___ friend or relative (pay)
___ own car  other:

Which forms of transportation do you use most often?
Is this transportation something you can count on when you need it? Yes _____ No

How much money do you spend on transportation every week?
Have you missed work or classes because transportation was not available or you did not have the money to pay for transportation? How often does this happen?

How many children do you have? ______ How many of these children live with you?

How old are your children? (Check all that apply.)

____ 0 - 4 ______ 5 - 11 ______ 12 and older

Who provides childcare for your young children (ages 4 years and younger)?

____ friend/neighbor ______ relative
____ family care provider ______ preschool
____ father of child ______ daycare center
____ older child (sister or brother); age of older child
____ I don’t have any children this age

Who provides childcare for your older children (ages 5 to 11 years?)

____ friend/neighbor ______ relative
____ family care provider ______ school-based care (before and after)
____ father of child ______ daycare center
____ older child (sister or brother); age of older child
____ I don’t have any children this age

Is childcare always available when you need it for work or to go to school? Yes _____ No

About how much do you pay per week for childcare (total for all children)? $

Have you ever missed work or classes because you did not have child care?

Do you receive any kind of government child care subsidies or support? About how much?

Does/do the father(s) of your children pay court-ordered child support? Yes _____ No

How much $

Does/do the father(s) of your children help you out with any other expenses? Yes _____ No

Have you named the father of your children? (If no) Can you tell me why not? Do you feel that you would be threatened in any way is you named the father?

Does any one else help you pay for things for your children?

What government benefits do you currently receive? Check all that apply.

____ TANF ______ commodity distribution
____ medicaid for yourself ______ medicaid for your children
____ food stamps; per month $________ ______ housing or housing subsidy; per month $
____ SSI for yourself; per month $________ ______ not receiving any benefits
____ SSI for your child/children; per month $

Do you know when will this benefit run out?

Does your children’s school serve breakfast? Yes _____ No

Do your children eat breakfast provided at school? Yes _____ No
Does your children’s school serve lunch? Yes ___ No

Do your children eat lunch provided at school? Yes ___ No

Do any of your children receive ___ free or ___ reduced meals at school? ____ No

How much money do you spend for food each month that food stamps do not cover? $

Do you use church or community food pantries/banks? Yes ___ No ____ How often? __________

*These next questions are about the food eaten in your household in the last 30 days and whether you were able to afford the food you need.*

1. “The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?
   (1) Often true
   (2) Sometimes true
   (3) Never true

2. “We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?
   (1) Often true
   (2) Sometimes true
   (3) Never true

3. In the last 30 days did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
   (1) Yes
   (2) No

In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?
   (1) Yes
   (2) No

5. In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
   (1) Yes
   (2) No

In the last 30 days, have you not eaten in order to have enough food for your children?
   (1) Yes
   (2) No

Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 30 days? (Check only ONE.)
   (1) We always have enough to eat and the kinds of food we want.
   (2) We have enough to eat but NOT always the KINDS of food we want.
   (3) SOMETIMES we don’t have ENOUGH to eat.
   (4) OFTEN we don’t have ENOUGH to eat.
What do you do to get food for your family if you don’t have enough money or food stamps at the end of the month?

Do you any techniques that you use to stretch your food dollars and/or food stamps?

Are you and your children able to receive the medical care that you need? Why not? Do you expect this to change within the next year?

What is your parents’ marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Widow/Widower
- Parents never married

Does your mother have a job? Yes ___ No ___ Is it ___ full-time or ___ part-time work?

Mother is deceased ___ or ___ disabled.

Does your father have a job? Yes ___ No ___ Is it ___ full-time or ___ part-time work?

Father is deceased ___ or ___ disabled.

Do you have any health limitations or disability that would affect your ability to get and/or keep a job? Yes ___ No ___ Describe the problem(s)

Have you ever been treated for any mental health problems, for example, depression? Yes ___ No Does this problem affect your ability to get and/or keep a job? Yes ___ No

How long has it been since you last had this problem?

Have alcohol and/or drug use ever made it more difficult for you to get and/or keep a job? Yes ___ No

How long has it been since you last had this problem?

Does your spouse or partner ever hit you or physically abuse you in any way? Yes ___ No Does this problem affect your ability to get and/or keep a job? Yes ___ No

Does your partner objected to your participating in education and/or training programs?

Does your partner object to you getting a job?

Has your partner physically kept you from working are going to training/education programs?

Questions if woman not working

Have you turned a job down in the past year? Why?

What are the problems that you are having with finding a job?

If you were interviewing for a job, what would you say are your job-related skills?

Currently working at a job.

Are you currently working? Yes ___ No ___ How many hours per week?
How much do you make per hour?

Do you work for the state? Yes _____ No

What kind of work are you doing?
_____ farm or field laborer  _____ factory or plant worker
_____ nurses’ or teachers’ aide  _____ cashier or sales clerk
_____ office worker  _____ fast food or restaurant
_____ cleaning service  _____ other (please describe):

What shift do you work?
_____ day  _____ evening
_____ night  _____ different shifts

Do you have flexible work hours? Can you choose the hours and days that you work?

What benefits do you receive at work?
_____ employer paid health insurance  _____ employee paid health insurance
_____ paid vacation  _____ life insurance
_____ free or reduced cost meals  _____ employee discount
_____ on-site child care  _____ no benefits at work

Do you like your job? Yes _____ No

What has it been like for you at work (or looking for work)? Describe initial experiences. What has been the biggest problem or adjustment? Biggest success or pleasant surprise?

Do you feel this job will last, that they will be on this job in 6 months, a year?

Is there someone at work that has made going to work easier for you? Yes _____ No

Do you have a job coach or mentor? Who has helped them get started? On the job? Outside the job? Job contacts process? Support persons at work and home (E&L)?

Do you have difficulty getting to work on time? Yes _____ No

Are there rules at work that you don’t like or have trouble following? Yes _____ No

Explain the most difficult part of keeping your job.

In addition to child care and transportation, what kind of job related expenses do you have? (Parking, clothing, uniforms, union dues, etc.)

What do you need to successfully find and/or keep a job (E&L)?

Is there other paid work that you would prefer? Yes _____ No _____ Doing what?

Would you work in a job that is usually held only by men? Why or why not?

What, if any, problems are you dealing with now that you have a job?
If you were interviewing for a job, what would you say are your job-related skills?

Welfare Reform

How has welfare reform affected (changed) your life?

Are there things you are required to do now that you did not have to do before welfare reform began in Jan. of 1997?

What? (attend classes, community volunteer work, apply for jobs monthly, etc. accept all responses)

Do you believe that once you find a job you will be cut off of all government benefits? What do you believe will happen?

Would you give different advice now to women not participating in a FIND Work program or other training programs or what advice would you give to women who have not participated in FIND Work?

Are you aware of changes in the policy that non-working men living with you may also participate in the FIND work and be eligible for benefits? (I need to check on this question with my contact person to get the wording correct if we want to include it in the interview.)

Adequacy of material resources/ “making ends meet”

For many people, it’s hard to make ends meet--or have enough money to pay everything that needs to be paid. What do people that you know do to make ends meet? What do you do to make ends meet? What do you do when the end of the month is near and you have no money left for food, or something that the children need for school, or an unexpected expense? List resources.

Which of these resources/supports that you use now could you not do without (E&L)? What additional resources do you need the most?

Do you think you are better off working than on welfare? Probe: Do you have more money or less money now that you’re working? What do you like about having more money? What can you do now that you couldn’t afford to do before (E&L)?

Current and future plans

Review the plans they told us about, ask whether these have worked out, how, why or why not?

What do you picture your life to be like one year from now?

Wrap-up

Is there anything more that you would like to say or add, or even take back?
Appendix E

Phase II Participant Descriptive and Summary Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

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**Difference Between Phase II Employed and Non-employed Women**

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Appendix G

Participant Case Summaries

P.H. 31

P.H. is a divorced, 43-year old woman with six (6) children. Three children live with her, a daughter 19, and two sons, 14 and 12. The daughter's one-year old son also resides with P.H. and she provides childcare for him while the daughter attends mandated childcare training classes. P.H. has lived in St. Mary Parish all of her life. She has completed her education through the 7th grade education and she attended classes through Project Independence.

P.H. and her family live in badly worn manufactured housing on family land. Honestly, the unit was in such poor shape we thought it must be abandoned, and we assumed another unit on the property was the one we were looking for. P.H. owns the unit she resides in, and she pays $15.00 per year in property taxes. P.H. is satisfied with her home because it belongs to her and she is surrounded by kin: her brother, mom (dad deceased), and several cousins live nearby. She likes the location because "everyone stays to themselves" and she feels that her family is safe here. Even though her address is Baldwin, she lives outside of the city proper in a very sparsely populated area. Inside the unit, the furniture was sparse and very worn. There were holes in the floor large enough to see the ground beneath the unit. We had to step over and around these holes, and we were concerned about a toddler living in these conditions. There was nothing in evidence to indicate that P.H.'s life was anything but meager.

P.H. receives $330 per month in food stamps and $500 per month in supplemental security income for her 14-year old. Medicaid is available for her 12-year old, but not for herself or her 14-year old. She cannot always get the medical care she needs for herself or the 14-year old because she does not have enough money. She was very worried about her lack of resources in this area, and claimed that the PRWORA's biggest impact on her life was loss of Medicaid. P.H. had not heard of LaCHIP. She also did not seem to know how to track down answers to questions about her benefits or available resources.

She does not get child support or any other kind of help from the father of the children currently residing with her. She does not get any financial or material assistance from anyone else. P.H.'s older son does provide transportation for her if and when he is available, since she does not have a driver's license or a car.

P.H. is not working now, and she had not ever held a paying job prior to the PRWORA. She did find a job as a janitor at Young Memorial School after the first round of interviews. She lost this job because the chemicals at a nearby plant made her sick, and she missed six days of work. Her TANF benefits were also cut at this point, including Medicaid for the 14-year old. P.H. said that the only work available in the area is "field work" planting sugarcane in the spring, but "they don’t hire women." (T.L. did planting work). [Italics in text represent analyst’s thoughts or field notes transcribed from tapes.] The woman was very quiet and subdued during the interview. It was hard to picture her finding and holding a full time job.
P.H.'s primary barrier to finding another job is transportation, but she also has problems with numbness in her hands and feet. She can’t get to a doctor to have this checked out because she doesn't have Medicaid or the funds to cover the visit. She believes that she doesn’t have enough education for jobs available in the area, and she doesn't think she has any skills to offer prospective employers. Despite these challenges, she wants to better herself because she is going on 44 and she wants a job so she can help her children.

(P.H. may not be able to make a 2nd order change. She had most barriers of all women. She also had most motivations. She was completely lacking in any sense of self-confidence, especially as she had only a 7th grade education and no additional skill training. Biggest problems are with transportation and job availability. She did say that the only jobs were in the fields, but that "they" don't hire women. Even so, T. L. was able to get field work, so I don't know if that was an excuse or a defeated attitude. Probably the least likely of all to sustain 2nd order change, much less self-sufficiency.)

L. B. 13

L.B. is a 19 years old single mother with a three-year old son. She and her son live with her mother. She has resided in St. Mary Parish her entire life. L.B. completed 11 years of formal education before her son's birth, and she has earned the GED. She is currently working on her CNA. She was a very open and frank young woman once she warmed up which was when the conversation turned to government assistance, particularly Medicaid.

Generally speaking, L.B. is quite satisfied with living in her mom's home, the home she grew up in. Her childhood friends still live in the area. She would like a house of her own, not because of poor conditions or safety factors, but rather to assert her independence.

L.B. is receiving $138 from TANF and Medicaid for herself and her child, and she has received government assistance for about 2 years now. She felt sorry for herself when she came home with a baby at the age 16. She didn’t want welfare but her mom convinced her to apply for benefits:

when I first, when I came home with my baby, I was, I was, I was feeling sorry for myself cause till I was like crying [unintelligible] I was a 16 year old with a child and I was like now I have to learn to depend on my mom and I really wasn't [unintelligible] but it was my mistake. And, and I was like telling her, I didn’t wanna get on welfare, but she was like, to help you and your baby [unintelligible] go ahead and just do it. Cause I was shamed I didn’t want to go, I was shamed. L: You were shamed? LB: Yea, I didn’t want to go, and she would be like because you're not the only one, mom that’s gone be on welfare. She said, if you need help, that’s what they, that’s what they there for, to help you and your child. And she was like, go on ahead, go ahead while it’s there, don’t be shamed. I guess it’s the people who talk about it, and I wouldn’t, I don’t like to hear people bitching like that, cause I don’t want em to talk about me cause I been around people that in a discussion, talking about people who are supposed to be poor, well I'm not like that, cause I don’t want them to talk about my business.
She does not receive a childcare subsidy because her mother watches the child before and after school. Since they live with the mother/grandmother, L.B. is not eligible for a childcare subsidy or food stamps. L.B.'s mom and sisters pool their resources, including food stamps in order to make ends meet. L.B. has needs and wants that she feels are not met, but she doesn’t want to “bother my mama about it.”

L.B. does not have a driver's license or a car. Her mom and siblings provide transportation for her and she has never missed work or classes due to transportation problems. Even though her mother provides childcare, L.B. stated that childcare is not always available to her. It seems that L.B. 's mother will care for the child for "legitimate" reasons such as work or education. L.B. has never missed work due to childcare problems.

The child's father does not pay child support. "He told [a girlfriend] the only way he'd take care of all the children [he has supposedly fathered] is if he find out they are really from him." The putative father is in jail in Atlanta, and he is married, which she knew at the time of the relationship. According to L.B., she has family so she doesn’t need his help and certainly won’t ask for it. Her mother and siblings help her financially as needed, and L.B. has a boyfriend now who helps support her and her son. He lives with his mother, but they see each other daily.

L.B. is in school working for her CNA certification. Her prior work history consists of working at Sonic, a fast food restaurant. Her parents are married and both work. Her mom works part-time and her dad is employed fulltime. L.B. originally thought she'd have to go to Houston (a cousin lives there) to find employment after her certification, but now she hopes to find a job in Lafayette. She wants to work in hospital or clinic, but not in a nursing home "cause not much patience." She has thought about continuing her training through LPN, but she doesn’t want to "stick" other people. L.B. is not looking for new job now, but she doesn’t think she will have problems finding work.

When I asked L.B. how she would describe her skills to a prospective employer, she exclaimed:

L.B.: Well, I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t have to tell them because I have a resume.
L.: Oh.
L.B.: I give em my resume, and all, everything’s on there.
L.: Well, what does your resume tell?
L.B.: It tells that, that I, first that it has my name, you know. And my skills are, I went from Franklin High, I attended 3 schools: Franklin High, [unintelligible], and Louisiana Technical College. And then, I had 2 jobs within two, two, yea two years I had 2 jobs, I didn’t stay good jobs. And I was looking my goal was, were to continue, continue my CNA class, to finish my CNA class for looking forward to being a LPN. It’s a real short resume. Cause that was all that they had, they said that you had needed only resume. But I had typed up two, I had to do one at uh, [unintelligible] and I done one for the school.

L.B. does not have any problems getting to her classes because her sister, who is also in the program, provides transportation. L.B.'s mother cares for the child before and after "school," he's in Kindercare. He rides a bus to school and seems to love it, he's ready to go everyday to see his
friends. The child wakes her up for school! She leaves in the morning for class before his bus arrives so her mom makes sure he gets on okay.

L.B. seems anxious to work and seems motivated by her need for independence from her family. She stated that "... if you don't have your own money you're lost!" She likes a whole lot of stuff that she can't get now, but she believes things will be better when she gets a job. She restated that there's “nothing like your own money” and indicated that she really wants to be in her own house. L.B. expects what within she'll be in her own house and have her own money.

L: What do you see your life like a year from now?
LB: Ooh, I see myself really in my own house [unintelligible] too much, too much good. But uh, in my own house, pay my own bills, take care of my own responsibility. [I'll] get me a house. I'm, I'm making my money. You know, that'll be for the bills. Second week, that'll be the [unintelligible] until the rest of the bills [unintelligible]. Third week, cause before we start on what the third week? Course I'm in the bank, continue to do what I gotta do. The last check, I will, I figure it'll be, a check, a blank check, just for me to spend on me and my son, my husband [she hopes to marry the boyfriend). I ain't looking at it being too big but by a year, I'm planning to be by my, in my own house, cause I'm gonna find me a job, I'm gonna go, I ain't gone stop 'til I get me one. I'm not gone stop, I really wanna work, I do. I really do.

PRWORA has impacted L.B.'s life, and she had quite a bit to say about the subject when I asker her if there was anything else about welfare reform that she'd like to tell us:

Welfare, it, it, first it was hell, cause I was like, ooh why I be having to get this so much, and my mama done told me, it was like, you're a teenager, the government not gone let you stay home for nothing. You know? The government not gone send you this money if you not putting any effort in it, and it was like she said, one time it was like that, for women to sit at home and accept welfare money, social security or whatever. But now they can’t do that because people are complaining now. Just like they say they was trying to cut welfare out, they was trying to do that, but I said, it, it's really gonna hurt, it’s not gonna affect women, it’s gonna hurt the children. Cause that’s where most children get some of, some of they things from, some of they food, some of they clothing, some of they, you know, some of they you know, personal things they be gone need. It’s not really gonna affect the mama, it will really affect the kids. Especially when the mama is [unintelligible] So that’s why I said if they cut it out, it’s not gonna affect the mothers, it gone affect the children, the babies, the child. But I'm not, I think they had one time where they was just giving you money for the child for welfare, just for the child and not [unintelligible] But they could do that, give you money for child and not you. I think that some women just don’t know how to think, you know, to do with it, you don’t spend it on your children and that’s not right, so that’s what I found, make me an effort to go ahead and make money the hard way, can’t stay on welfare all your life, cause the government not gone take care of you
all your life, cause you didn’t [unintelligible]. He put you here to help you, cause people help people, he didn’t put you here to take care of you all your life.

(L.B. was finishing her CNA. She has a GED. L.B. had no barriers and receives no child support. She wants to be independent. Feel that L.B. has excellent change for 2nd order change, especially since the CNA diploma is a meal ticket.)

E.G. 25

E.G. is a 21-year old single mother with two children, ages two and five. She is a life-long resident of Concordia parish. E. G. has a High School diploma, but she has not completed any other training or education programs. Her conversation was guarded, she was very quiet, and the interview was punctuated with long silences.

E.G. lives alone with her two children. She is satisfied with her housing and feels the area is safe for her children. She lives in public housing.

E.G. receives Medicaid for herself and the children and Food Stamps ($308). Her food stamp benefit is cut if she works for pay during the month. E.G. gets $24.00 per month for her public housing unit. Her mom cares for her children and receives a childcare subsidy of $100 per month. E.G.'s dad is disabled. E.G. has a driver's license but not a car. She depends upon a girlfriend and sometimes her brother or mother for transportation, therefore she does not always have transportation she can count on. It's interesting that on the Survey she marked the "yes" reply and wrote in "sometimes." This is a positive view - she could have just as easily marked "no" and written in "not always." She did say in the interview that it is hard for her to get around without transportation. E.G. said it would be hard for her to do without money or transportation if she "lost" either. Her children's father provides no support or other assistance at this time, but in the first interview she was still seeing the father and he was helping support them.

E.G. had no prior work history, but in the first interview she indicated she was looking for a paying job. Currently, she is "volunteering" as a teacher's aide through C-Web to keep her benefits. If she actually substitutes for a class she will get paid $5.15 per hour. E.G. goes into work Monday, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays regardless of whether she'll be able to substitute in a classroom. At this time she only substitutes for one or two days per month, but she does get free meals in the school cafeteria. She likes the work, enjoys helping the kids learn. E.G. had no problems adjusting to the volunteer work, and the location is walking distance form her home, so she does not have transportation problems. She does, however, want a “paying” job — one where she works everyday for wages. E. G. is looking for another job now, and she will do any kind of work. She stated that no jobs were available. E.G. indicated that she can cook, clean, and she gets along with others. She is willing to learn to use a cash register, and is comfortable “doing any kind of work just as long as I make money.” No one is helping E.G. find work now, and she is about to give up on C-Web, as a potential job source. She doesn’t think her benefits will be cut if she severs ties with the program.
E. did not know how the PRWORA changed her life because she hadn’t been on long before the act was implemented. Next year E.G. hopes to be working and to be in a position to provide her children with more of the things they want.

(E. G. has transportation, job availability, and previous work history barriers. She seems to be highly motivated: living condition, no child support, and wants to be independent. Also, she has a hs/ged. She is volunteering right now and is looking for a job. But as long as transportation and job availability are problems it is difficult to predict whether she will 2nd order change.)

T.H. 29

The house was brick with two men and then three men sitting out front just enjoying the beautiful weather. There are some kids chasing someone else here on the side and I don't know why these people aren't in school. That's a man chasing that kid, too. There's a bunch of people sitting out on the porches here – interesting. While we were sitting in there several people came inside, including a very nice looking, clean-cut, sheriff's deputy. It was unclear if he was a relative or a family friend. There were people in and out, but they were polite and very friendly. And these women came and sat in her house and asked her all kinds of weird questions!

T.H. is a 19 year-old single mother with two children, a three-year old boy and an infant. She has lived in Avoyelles parish for 10 years. T.H. completed 8th grade and plans to get the GED. She was in the GED program, but didn’t finish because she was called for CNA classes. She has participated in Find Work and Project Independence. This young woman was not very talkative. I don't know if she was suffering from allergies or ready to cry while we were talking to her. Her eyes were rather teary. I don't know, she just. There just wasn't a lot there. There was no personality there. She might be depressed. She just had a baby and her hormones are probably rampant.

T.H. lives in her grandparents' home. The solid, brick house is located in a neighborhood in Bunkie, close to the elementary school. It is not large, perhaps about 1200 -1400 square feet. The neighborhood consists of older homes and many of them are in need of repair, but the actual area is clean, the lawns are mowed and kept up. This is not an affluent area. The research team wondered why there were so many children not in school, and why so many adults were home in the middle of the day. The most obvious reason for the adults is that for one reason or another, they do not have jobs.

Four generations live in the home, the grandparents, T.H., her children, and her mother. The family room was furnished with inexpensive but nice green velvet furniture. What we could see of the house was not particularly clean, but that may have been because people were tracking in and out a lot. It was not filthy, but it did look lived in. T.H. is satisfied with the current housing situation. She does not pay rent.

T.H. receives $190 per month TANF, Medicaid for herself and the children, and $215 monthly in food stamps. She also receives food through the WIC program. Her grandparents and mother provide childcare for work or school, and the grandfather is also available to help as he is retired. He also provides transportation, and T.H. can rely upon him. She has never missed work or
classes because of transportation or childcare problems. The grandmother and the mom receive disability payments. T.H.’s mom and the grandparents help to provide for the children. T.H. is still in a relationship with the baby's father, and he helps support the baby. The father of the three-year old does not provide support. She moved to Houston for a short while and didn’t get back together with him when she came back. When asked what her most important resources were, she said she wouldn’t want to lose her job, that working most important thing. She also said the resource she needs that she does not have is a job.

T.H. had no prior work history at the time of the first interview, and she is not working now. She worked at Bayou Vista Nursing Home for three weeks, but due to an undisclosed problem with her pregnancy, the doctor put her on bed rest until she delivered. She is now six weeks post partum and her doctor is supposed to be sending her work “excuse” today. *It is hard to tell what her attitude about going back to work.* She said she plans to get a job after completing the GED, but she wasn't taking any classes. Then she said she plans to go to work now that she’s had the baby. But she has not applied anywhere yet. She did finally reveal that she plans to go back to Bayou Vista, her former employer is supposed to be holding her job for her. She claimed that even though it's hard to find jobs in Bunkie, the nursing home job was easy to find because she is a CNA. She had no trouble with work, no one mentored her.

Her skill is that she has a CNA. She will work wherever she can get money, so she's not committed to Bayou Vista. She might would rather be a cashier somewhere because “getting up early is hard” (for the nursing home). She would not move to Baton Rouge or Shreveport for a job because she wants to be near her family.

T: Uh uh (no) Not that far.
L: Why not?
T: I just don't want to go that far. I want to be where I can be with my family day and night.
L: Why's that?
T: I don't want to leave my children like that.
L: Well, if your children could go with you.
T: I don't want to go. I wouldn't go that far.

*I think she wants to get a job and wants to work, and she's counting that they're going to take her back at Bayou Vista.*

T.H. does not feel that welfare reform has affected her life. She felt she was better off working than on welfare because she had more money to buy clothes and do things.

L: Did you feel you were better off working than when you were even just on welfare?
T: Yeah.
L: You did? Do you want to tell me a little bit about that? Why you felt that?
T: 'Cause I had more money and there was more during the month.
L: Yeah. Were there things you could do working, with the extra money that you couldn't do before?
T: Yeah. We could go buy clothes and do things like that.
(T.H. had no barriers, but no motivation either. She lives with mother and grandparents who help her as needed. Her baby's father is also providing support, and she is still seeing him. T.H. does not have a HS/GED, but she does have a CNA. She wasn’t working at the time of interview because she’d just given birth, and she’d been on medical leave of absence. As long as no increased motivation don't thing she'll make 2nd order change.)

C.J. 38

Okay we just interviewed C.J. and she lives in this, in a subsidized neighborhood. She is getting subsidized housing. She said she wasn't. I think she doesn't realize what that is or something. There are a couple things I think she was a little vague and unclear about with the system. She is young, which might explain some of it (leafing through papers). Yeah, she's all of 22 or 23. With one on the way. And she just moved in the last month from the home she was sharing with her grandmother and her sister. And so uh I think she's a little unsure about life here on her own. Even though it is about 30 feet away from her grandmother's house. But, that's okay. Very attractive woman. The house was very clean at C.J.'s. The children were well behaved for the most part. And they were cute. Um, in general, I think we got a little more than we thought we were going to get at first from her. She warmed up to us.

C.J. is a very attractive, 22-year old single mother with three children ages five, three, and one. She is seven months pregnant. She is a lifelong resident of Concordia Parish. C.J. was educated through the 9th grade, and she received a certificate of completion for a job preparation class. She does not have the GED or any other skills training. C.J. was well groomed and sported the latest hair and nail fashions. C.J. 's children were well behaved. C.J. had to warm up to us during the course of the interview.

C.J. lives alone in a three-bedroom duplex in a public housing complex. She moved her recently, and she pays $50 per month for rent. She lived previously with her grandmother, sister, and her sister's two children. She now lives about 30 feet away. The neighborhood was very neat and very clean, with wide streets and ample spacing between units. C.J. is satisfied with her home and feels that she is in a safe place, especially since law enforcement patrols the area. The interior of the house was very clean and orderly.

C.J. receives $234 monthly in TANF funds and $419 in food stamps. She and her children have Medicaid, and she has no trouble getting the medical care they need. She would not want to lose the medical card. Childcare is provided by her grandmother or her uncle, and is always available so she has never missed work or classes due to childcare difficulties. She does get a childcare subsidy but did not report how much. C.J. does not have a driver's license or a car so she depends upon her relative for transportation. She has not ever missed work or classes because of transportation troubles. Her children's father was just ordered to pay child support last month, so she hasn't received any yet. C.J. told us that she receives no financial help from her family. Her mother does not work.

C.J. had no prior work history at the time of the first interview. She had her first child at 16, so perhaps she's had little opportunity. She is not working now due to problems with her pregnancy. She went into premature labor at 6 months. But C.J. did work full time for $5.15/hour four
months prior at Ferriday Lower Elementary School in the library. The school is within walking
distance from her home so she doesn't need transportation. She said the work itself was okay, but
there were a lot of kids. The librarian helped her out when she first started work. She was very
nice and taught C.J. everything she needed to know.

The Star CVC community action program helped her locate this job. The Star CVC program
allowed her to get paid and receive TANF for 6 months. She plans to go back to Star CVC
program after the birth. The only other work she'd want to do is cashier. C.J.'s work skills include
"everything," janitorial, library, and answering phones.

C.J. applied at the grocery store and other places when she was looking for work, but she didn't
get any call backs, (powerless) "they" said not hiring, but she says they are -- "they" just give the
job to who they want.

C.J. doesn't like PRWORA because of all the requirements. She wants to get off welfare and is
happy working.

L: Well, tell me how, om, you know they put in all these changes for welfare, that
you have to work and you have to do this and all, how has these changes affected
your life?
C: I don't, I just don't like it.
L: You don't? Has it made things more difficult for you?
C: No, [unintelligible] basically you gotta do so much stuff just to get welfare,
you know, I wished I coulda kept my job, but..I just don't like it. I'll be glad when
I have this baby so I can get my job back.
L: Yea.
C: I don't like it.
L: So you're hoping then that when get your job back, that's the point when you'll
get off welfare.
C: Mm hm (yes) For good.
L: Yea. And how will you feel about that?
C: I wanna work. I'll be glad to work.

When she was working she was able to do a little more shopping, primarily for clothes. C.J.
hopes to have a job and house in the future, "something of my own." "If I was to get a job, I'll
bank my money and buy a place of my own."

(Seems highly motivated and only barrier mentioned was job availability. She was on medical
leave for premature labor. She did not have GED/HS or skills. Had most motivation - she is
living on her own and gets no financial help from anyone. Do believe she could sustain 2nd
order change if job availability were okay.)

T.L. 43

Tammy met us at the address that she'd given us, um. And then we walked around to her sister's
trailer, on the main road. Neither of those place were where T.L. lived. But that was the mailing
address that she had given us. The surroundings were actually quite similar to S.W.—she was just around from S.W.’s. We could have seen S.W.’s house. So, um, a fairly run-down area. We went inside to do the interview and ended up coming back outside and sitting in the yard to do the interview. There were a lot of people in side. A lot of people coming and going. The TV was on. People were watching it. We were sure we wouldn’t be able to turn it off. It was warm inside. So, we sat outside in the yard and it was actually um probably a little quieter out in the yard. The yard was um, not just covered with litter but there was probably several dozen um crushed cans, beer cans and soda cans, just right by the door of the trailer. There was a um satellite dish, but it didn’t appear to be working, in the yard. There was a dog lot right next door that had a pretty strong smell. There was an open ditch full of water. Um. But, inside the trailer was a humungous big screen television.

T.L. is an extremely outgoing, married, 32-year old mother of two children, ages seven and four. She has been separated from her husband for about three years. T.L. has a High School diploma and she has had additional training through Find Work and Project Independence. T.L. has lived in St. Mary parish most of her life. The interview was lively, and T.L. was very emphatically opinionated about a lot of topics. Unfortunately, a lot of the information seems to be pre-PRWORA, so a bit difficult to tease out what happened when.

The interview was conducted at T.L.'s aunt's home, so a description of her housing situation cannot be provided. She did say that she lives walking distance from the Casino with her brother and a male friend. The home is supposed to be at the end of a dead end road, completely isolated from other housing and very private. T.L. is very satisfied with her housing because it is very quiet and she feels her children are safe there.

T.L. has been on TANF for about 2 years, and she and her children are on Medicaid. Her food stamp allowance is $158 per month. T.L. was sanctioned briefly because she couldn't complete her job search and volunteer requirements when she had jury duty in November. Also, it was Thanksgiving, which made it difficult (reasons for noncompliance). She does not have a driver's license or a car, but she is able to get transportation from relatives or a state sponsored van as needed. T.L.'s brothers or other family members can and will provide childcare whenever needed, so that is not a barrier to employment. She receives no support from her children's father, and feels a sense of powerlessness about the situation:

I even talked to the um, went to the courthouse, to the child support office tryin' to get my husband to take care of his kids, and he's off shore. I can't make no people do what they don't wanna do. I might as well just go on and shoot my husband if that's the case, huh? I'm serious.

T.L. stated that her husband quit the offshore job a week before he was required to pay. If she needs anything for the children her siblings will help her out. Both parents are deceased. She did wish she had her own vehicle and job paying “top dollar.”

T.L. does have a rather diverse work history. She has worked in childcare, as a nurse’s aide, and a security guard. She also does seasonal work peeling crawfish and planting sugar cane. She
indicated that she has worked mornings at the daycare and in the afternoons she would plant sugar cane.

I went, I even went plant sugar cane. I was making 5.35 an hour, I would go to the daycare center. I work and all the woman told me she said well if, ok, she's a good lady., she said if that what you want to do, make some money, you could get off at 12:30. I used to come from work from Franklin from 12:30 and get here and this time get uh um start takin’ back work at 12:45 then get off at 5:30. And on the Saturdays, that was the whole day, Sunday, was the whole day. Yea, and they (all way) Monday why you don't know what she told me, you don’t need to work that. Well, you gon tell me, find me a job just doing little odd number make 5 hours a day, 25 hour a week, well why you gon tell me don't go uh, plant sugar cane? At least that was honest money. I'm not stealin' nobody. I'm not sellin' drugs, you understand what I'm sayin'?

At one point T.L. worked as a Nurse's aide, but she left this job because she was working 16 hours a day, and when her father fell ill she needed to help care for him, driving him to appointments and such (but she had lots of family).

T.L. quit a job she held at a daycare center in Shreveport because her mom was ill:

That when I found out my mom was sick. She was dyin' from cancer. I said oh, lord, lord, lord, lord, lord, lord, lord, I'm sorry, that's the only mom I have and they didn't have nobody to come home and take care of her. I came home. But what made me mad that was, (unintelligible) Miss Boss through that phone, I woulda, I would pop that woman neck. That woman told me, that, when my mama was on her dyin' sickbed, that was no reason for me to come home. I don't think so. I don't think so, oh no (power, authority).

T.L. indicated later that her mom died five years ago, so this incident happened pre-PRWORA.

T.L. enjoyed working as a nurse's aide the most, and she eventually helped do some training at the nursing home. She really liked being boss (power), but even so said she'd rather stick with childcare. T.L. passed up the opportunity to become a certified welder. She passed the pre-training welding test, but then got “ticked off” and never went back. Her cousin said she couldn’t handle the men.

T: I passed my test, they had called for me. But I had never went back. So what had ticked me off. Ok, what had ticked me off my cousin um, they kept (unintelligible). Telling me, which it was true, they had a on the job program to MacDermott for welding. But only thing, I tried and I tried. I said man, this welding school is 18 months, 18 months. And he said girl, he said I could getcha on if I could try to getcha a ride, we could ride together, go on the job training at McDermott. And I just got so disgusted that's what I'm talkin' about you ain't gon hang, you ain't gon hang with dem men, so I tell you what...

Interviewer: Who told you that?
T: My cousin I'd rather be surrounded by a whole bunch of men than a whole bunch of women. Ask (unintelligible) do I hang wid any women, she knows. I (unintelligible) I ain't hang with nutin' but men.

Currently T.L. is "volunteering" at Small World Day Care Center in order to keep her benefits. There seems to be some confusion at Small World about whether she will be hired or remain a volunteer. She loves her job but the owner gets on her nerves because hasn't hired her yet. T.L. started to quit but didn't because if she doesn't do the volunteer work, she'll lose the medical card and food stamps (decision). But she will quit if not hired soon - but she'd still need the card and food stamps!

And she gonna tell the woman she gonna hire me, and then have me come back over there to the daycare center, and then I still didn't see no paycheck on the 16th. How you think that made me feel?...I was mad. But you know what, I started to quit again. But the only thing that held me back was thinkin' about, I didn't have a job at the time, I didn't wanna take my children, especially my children medical card. You know what I'm sayin'? I didn't wanna take they medical card, and I didn't really wanna take my children food stamps from 'em. They coulda cut me off of my welfare, but they couldn't cut my children off. That's what matters there. They couldn't do that. That's the only three things I thought about, that's what made me went back. Now you hear, see? I'm gonna give her 'til this Monday and see if she'll hire me. I will quit.

T.L. is confident that she can perform any work required of her. She likes to work with her hands, cook, take care of people, painting, and she just plain likes people. She is having difficulty finding a paying job at this time because no one's hiring. She's thinking about applying at a new store but she depends on her sister for transportation: "I can't get everywhere when I don't have transportation, I don't time, my sister have problem of her own she tryin' to take care of her own business." (contradictory to other statement that she has transportation.) Her current plan is to get a jot at the casino. She wouldn't have any transportation problems because she lives within walking distance. But, she can't force anyone to hire her:

I'm just saying, people um from the casino got application from over there. But you can't force whatchu want me to do, go hold a gun on the people tell the people to hire me. But like I said I'm goin'... I'm, will find me a job whatever the good Lord, if it gone take me to bug these people to the casino... and then you know what? The casi...like my house, right here where my sister trailer at... to the end of this road to maybe to the end, like to the end of that road (unintelligible) that's how far I just have to walk.

As indicated earlier, T.L. had a bit of trouble with the PRWORA requirements in November. For her though, the good thing about welfare reform program is that transitional transportation to and from work must be provided if she needs it for six months.

And the good thing about, really, the program I really like, now they tryin', well they tryin' to get transport for 24 hours. If you find a job, they obligated to take
you for 6 months, to your um work site. They obligated to take you. So...If I go to work, no matter what time it is, they gonna have to take me and pick me back up and bring me back home.

T.L. indicated that PRWORA was a good thing because she wants to get off the system completely, she just doesn't want to lose the medical card.

(T.L. has HS diploma, skills training, and job prep. She was volunteering to keep benefits and trying to find a job. Her barrier is job availability. Her only motivation is that her estranged husband does not pay child support. Still, not sure if she can really make a 2nd order change. Seems to have authority problems, doesn't stick to things. On the other hand she had worked in childcare and fields at the same time. Very difficult to predict future outcomes.)

C.M. 48

The interview with C.M. was conducted in her mother’s home. The house was about as big as a smaller single-wide manufactured housing unit. It was somewhat unkempt, but a lot of the uncleanliness could be because her parents have both had strokes, and with the mom, with all of the kids she’s been taking care of just can’t get in there and clean out the corners and whatever else. It’s probably cleaner than my house.

C.M. was more talkative than I think Vicky expected her to be. She warmed up very quickly to us after talking about shoes. In the interview where she turned the tape off, there’s not anything vital to the information we’re doing. But, I was pretty surprised when I asked her the question and she said turn the tape off!

C.M. is a very attractive and delightful 34-year old single mother. She has a 12-year old son that she describes as a very good child. She has lived her whole life in St. Mary Parish. C.M. has a 10th grade education, and she cannot at this time complete the GED because she often works nights and the manager can’t schedule her for just days, when the classes are offered. She did participate in the Find Work program.

C.M. and her son live in public housing. We did not get to see the unit because the interview was conducted in her parents' home. C.M. is pretty satisfied with her neighborhood, but she does worry about the crime and drugs. She indicated that she and her son stay out of it.

C.M. does not receive TANF. She was dropped after working at Wal-Mart for one week. She receives $179 a month in Food Stamps, and has to pay about an additional $20 out-of-pocket. Neither C.M. nor her son has Medicaid, so she has to pay $15 to visit the medical clinic. She makes too much money at her job to get free care. Often she does not get the medical care she needs, and she had not heard of LaCHIP. C.M. lives in a public housing unit. Her rent is $69, but she has to pay a late fee of $5.00 plus $1.00 each day that her rent is late. Her check from Wal-Mart comes after the rent payment is due. C.M. does not have a driver's license or a car. Friends and relatives provide her with transportation, often at no cost. If she does have to pay, it is not more than $5.00 per trip. C.M. can count on having transportation when needs it, and her
monthly expense is about $20 per month. She has never missed work or classes because of transportation.

Her child's father does not provide any support, and she doesn’t know if he is “living or dead.” She has some trouble making ends meet and she can't always pay her utility bills on time, resulting in disconnects. Her family and her boyfriend help her if she needs it. Her parents are married, and both have had strokes so they're on SSI. Her dad worked full time before his stroke.

C.M.'s work history includes housecleaning, and jobs at Burger King, and Church’s Fried Chicken. C.M. is currently working at Wal-Mart in the shoe department. She was quite excited to report she’d been there a year, if only part time. She can only get about 15 hours a week, but she did recently get a raise to $5.45 an hour. After another year she will be eligible for benefits even if she's not full time yet. She is eligible now for an employee discount on purchases, but she doesn’t use it. She likes her job:

L: Do you like your job at Wal-Mart?
C: Umm. Hmm.
L: Tell me about it.
C: It's nice, you know, we get along, everybody that work in the shoe department. I like it. And then, you know, cleaning up and stuff, like we have to zone-up the stuff before we leave out of there. I like that. It's not hard work or nothing. It's just walking around all day taking care of my customers. Doing what I have to do. I like it.
L: Do you like dealing with the people what come in, the customers?
C: Umm. Hmmmm. Some of them come in there, and they, you know, they're real smart. You know, we try to look over them [overlook them]. But we try to satisfy.

C.M. was originally employed by the Bayou Vista Wal-Mart in Morgan City, in the shoe department. No one helped her find the job, except that a friend drove her to put in her application. It was the only job she applied for.

L: Were you excited when you heard they [Wal-Mart] had called?
C: Ooh. Yes! Too excited! I was so awfully excited, when they called, and they told me they called. I said, 'Lord, let me go call these people and see what they want with me Oh, yea! I was excited!
L: Did you think that it would be that easy?
C: No. No. No. No. I thought it was going to take, like a couple of months, but it didn't.
L: Was that the first place that you'd applied? Or did you apply at other places?
C: Just here. Just down there.

C.M. said the other employees tried to help her feel at ease her first day at work.

When I started at Bayou vista, they made me, the first day I started it was like I was at home. It was so nice and sweet. Everybody. Everybody in the department, the whole store, managers and all! And when I got there they greeted me really,
you know, really well. It was nice. It was like a big birthday party when I started. I thought at first, you know, I thought I couldn't do it. I sort of put my mind to it. I'm being nervous, I'm just going to go ahead on and do what I have to do. And ever since from that... [C.M. finished her statement with a jaunty snap of her fingers.]

C.M. said she would have “stuck with it” (the job) even if she hadn’t been treated so well, because she was learning.

She had transportation problems though, as Morgan City is 30 to 45 minutes away. She could not get a transfer to the Franklin Wal-Mart when it opened because she’d been employed less than a year. She actually had to quit the Bayou Vista store and then apply to the Franklin store.

You see what happened. I was down there for 6 months. Then after there was an opening here, I quit from down there to come here. They couldn't transfer me because I wasn't there long enough.

The people she works with are very nice, and her supervisor is very good to her. It sounded like a reciprocal relationship, C.M. helps out if the department is short-staffed, and the manager tries to accommodate C.M. in any way.

At present, C.M. has no desire to move into any level of management. Her only complaint about her job (other than "I see shoes in my sleep day and night") is she does not get enough work hours. She may try to transfer to a Wal-Mart in Houston:

I mean, like, I have bills. And like I said, I work 15 hours and I ain't bringing home more than a hundred and some dollars every two weeks. And I have bills to pay. Like such and such thing get cut off, and be off for awhile [utilities]. See I can't live like that. So I was going to quit, you know, and I'm saying I'm going to Houston.

One of the unexpected consequences of working for C.M. was the Earned Income Tax Credit. This bit of info was revealed when she answered what seemed like a completely unrelated question:

L: So, is he [her son] happy with you working?
C: Oh, yeah.
L: What kind of shoes does he want, does he like to wear?
C: The Nikes.
C: I got him a pair for school. I just got him a pair of Reeboks. We had income tax, so we bought him some Reeboks. And yea, and then, my first year of getting income tax. That was pleasing too.
L: Did someone tell you how to do that, or did you know how to do that?
C: I went to this place up here [the name was not clear on the tape], they was telling me how to do it. My manager was telling us about it.
L: So someone told you how it worked. That helped a lot didn't it?
C: Yea.
L: Could, would you mind sharing with me how much you got with the earned income?
C: Twenty five hundred.
L: Two thousand five hundred? Was that a nice thing to get?
C: Oh Yea! It was the most I ever got in my life... I thought it wasn't going to be no more than, like, you know about maybe three or four hundred dollars. And then I get back $2500. I said, 'Oh Lord,' I said, 'that's a good deal!'... It's true, and you know like I said, something like that I had never received in my life. And I felt good. Oh, that made me, I fixed up my home and I bought [snapped fingers]. I did for my child. Caught up with bills and stuff. It took us a long way.

She doesn't have to wear a uniform, she can wear regular clothes. She can wear jeans on Fridays but to do so she has “... to feed away a dollar,” a donation to a charitable fund. The hardest part about keeping her job is that it is part time, but she's been advised to stick with it. She was thinking about quitting because her manager can’t give her any more hours. There are five women in the shoe department and the hours are split between them. Someone is leaving soon, so she hopes they won't be hiring anyone else. Then she may get more hours.

C.M.’s work skills include sales and dependability. She’d like to work in the bakery or as a cashier at Wal-Mart, but these positions have cut hours, too. These employees do get more hours than she does, but she's really pretty happy in shoes. Her sisters are trying to get her to work at the casino, but she “don’t think I can deal with the graveyard shift” because she wouldn’t see her son. But if she moves to Houston and he stays with her mother, she’ll never see him then either! C.M. would also be willing to work in a traditionally male job, "it don’t hurt to try nothin."

Um, she’s obviously been determined to stick with this job. She’s obviously only getting a little more than she was getting when she was on welfare. Well, actually, one hundred and fifty more dollars a month. But, I can see where for a lot of people that wouldn’t be worth the effort of having to find a reason everyday to go into work. Um, I’m glad that she’s been determined because at some point that should be rewarded because she was paying in there for so long. I didn’t get to do the math on her bills, but I don’t think she’s got an awful lot leftover after her bills are paid. Especially after $93.00 monthly to rent furniture.

Anyway, she’s willing to move to Houston possibly this summer because she wants to transfer with Wal-Mart if maybe she can get more hours, and see how that works. But she does have cousins living in Houston. I asked her after we were through, after we shut off the tape recorder... actually Vicky asked her if she would move to Houston if she didn’t know anybody there. And she said, “No,” that if she didn’t know anybody there she would not be going because she has all of her family right here in Franklin. And her family all lives maybe with ten minutes ride of where she is.

C.M. feels her life has improved as a result of the PRWORA.

L: Do you think you have changed any in the last year because of working?
C: Oh. Umm. Hmm. Yep. A whole lot.
L: In what ways?
C: Well, I'm uh, so far, the things like I like used to do, like going out and stuff like that. I don't worry about that no more. Cause I like getting up and going to work in the morning and you know, I want to be on time. I don't know about that other stuff. And I say I want to do something to show my child, that I can make him happy too.

She feels good about herself too.

L: How do you feel about yourself?
C: Oh, good. I feel good about myself. Like I say, I was going to get out there and do something for myself, and show my child I can make it, you know, out there.

C.M. would like to be in Houston next year. She has relatives there and could transfer to another Wal-Mart since she's worked with the company for a year now. She's thinking about it for the summer, but will take her son only if he wants to go. Otherwise he'll stay with her mother.

(J.C.M. had no hs/ged and no additional training, just job prep because she was too old. She is working now and enjoys her job. No barriers except she is dependent on others for transportation. Highly motivated b/c of living conditions, no child support, and wants to be independent. Very motivated. In-depth report will be required for this participant. Believe that she can sustain 2nd order change.)

J.P. 55

J.P. is a 40-year old single mother of four children, ages 10, 15, 19, and 20. She lives with her children and two grandchildren in her parent's home. J.P. has resided in St. Mary parish her entire life. She has earned the GED and she participated in the Find Work program. She describes herself as "... a happy person."

J.P. lives in a very solid brick house. The house is larger than most other homes we have visited. The fenced yard is very neat and clean, and Christmas decorations are up. The house is located on a nice, wide fairly busy street. The interior of the house was very clean and orderly, no mean feat with so many people under one roof. J.P. is satisfied with her living arrangements, at least "until something else comes along," and she feels that her children are safe in this area.

J.P. has been on government assistance for “too long, I’d rather not say. A long time.” She and her children are on Medicaid, and she receives $569 monthly in food stamps. Losing either of the benefits would be a major blow. J.P. does not have a driver's license or a car. She depends upon friends and family for transportation and sometimes offers to pay $5.00 per trip. She cannot count on having transportation when she needs it, so this is a barrier to finding a job. Family and/or friends will provides childcare if she needs it. The three oldest children have a different father from the youngest child. She broke off the first relationship after 15 years. He was into drugs and, not responsible. She ended the second relationship after two years because of "Too many women." She does not receive support from either father, but her parents will help out if needed. Her parents are married, and her father works fulltime The resource she needs most is
(attitude independent) a job with benefits so she won’t need any government assistance. J.P. wants to be able to make it on her own.

J.P.’s work history includes bartending, babysitting, fieldwork, nurse’s aide. She quit her last volunteer job at Child Protection Services the week before we interviewed her because she did not meet the requirements for work hours and job search. She also didn't like increase in volunteer hours from 87 to 109, and her job search requirements increased as well. It was her “last month” to be eligible anyway.

And I guess the pressure just got to me and I couldn’t take it anymore. It was like I was under their pressure. I couldn’t do what I wanted to do. And I guess it just got to me I ain’t never had that kind of pressure on me like that. I definitely want paying job. I'm sure I could take the pressure but not like that.

J.P. is looking for a job now, and when asked how the job search is going, she answered with a laugh, “Jobless.” She's looking for “any paying job,” but she really wants to be a secretary. She thinks she's missed where she was "working." J.P. enjoyed the work. When she started, she was surprised to be placed there. But by the second day, she’d caught on, and it wasn’t hard at all. She answered phones and had general office duties. She likes that she acquired some good work experience from the job.

L: What was your biggest surprise about going to work there? Was there anything that surprised you?
J: Yea I didn’t know what I was doing when I got there (laughs). That was a surprise. I didn’t think they would put me in a place like that. When I was down there I said, what they doing all this? This is hard. But it was easier. I caught on the second day. The second day I caught on, it wasn’t hard at all.
L: So overall it was a good experience for you.
C: Umm hmm. A very good experience. It did prepare me for if I ever could get a job like that I know how to deal with it. Cause you know you get some people get on the phone they want to be rude (laughs). But I handle it.

J.P. said the people were nice there and everyone helped her. She wished she could’ve stayed and gotten paid for her work, rather than just maintaining her benefits.

J.P. has clerical job skills. She is skilled in “multi-phones” and phone lines, giving answers, typing, faxing, some computer, and she is friendly. J.P. needs transportation to find a job. She does not have a driver's license or a car, and must depend upon relatives to help her, or she walks.

J.P. said that her life has not changed much since PRWORA implementation, “my life is still my life.” But she has gotten her GED, and she said that the new work requirements had helped her. "You see, that helped me in a way that I know I can get a job." J.P. was not happy about the increased work activities, and that led into her own thoughts about welfare and welfare reform:
They sure best be getting off that a quick too [the increased requirements]. They wouldn’t have no problem with everybody stayin’ on it. It’s ok, but it just wasn’t for me to deal with like that. I uh since I’ve been off I can do it on my own. I wouldn’t have the pressure about getting out there trying to do 20 job search and then that 109 hours service. It’s, it’s good to have them (laughs). It’ll help them. The ones that we have now like the younger ones gettin' on and the children that it’s just not for who sit around the house and do nothing. They should get out. It’s just a hand me out. Hand me down. Hand me out whatever you call. Yea a handout. Just helping you to push you on a way to show to let you get out there on your own. It don’t look like I’m ever gonna get out there (laughs). So, but it’s not a bad thing that you get on. For what they doing it’s not bad at all. I, I kind of like what they did. So for me to get off. Cause I've been on it a long time. I was, my children grew up on it. Put it to ya that way. And I got to get off cause of them.

In the future, J.P. wants to get away from her parents’ home

I mean uh, just get out so uh, I know I've been on em too long. It’s been too long for me cause I have grandchildren, know I been on em too long. I mean, just to get out so they can have they room. And so my children can have they own room. I mean, I don’t know, I mean, you know, space, where they won’t have to be in their way, or they in their way or whatever. That’s it.

She sees herself working in a year and is trying to be positive about it. She rated the interview experience: “It was, it was not bad; it was excellent.”

(J.P. has a GED and participated in the FIND WORK program. Her greatest barrier is transportation, and just maybe a bit of inertia is at work here too. She really doesn't seem to have a lot of motivation to be on her own, except to say she been on her parents long enough. But she also said she is looking for a job. I'm really not convinced she'd make 2nd order change at this point, not with her parents still helping out.)

B.P. 56

The interview with B.P. was conducted in her dad's house. She said that she lived in the house behind the house we were in. All I see is kind of a green, very, very, very run down home. The um surroundings.. it's kind of off of a gravel road, a lot of trailers back in here. The house itself that we interviewed in was very small. Kind of off the beaten path. They are kind of isolated back in here. This little group. It is quiet back up in here.

B.P. is a 40-year old single mother with a 13-year old son. She has lived in St. Mary parish all of her life. B.P. "finished high school, but I didn't graduate" she did not earn a GED, but she has participated in job training. B.P. may be a bit "slow," but that's not meant as a criticism or diagnosis. It was in the way she spoke more than anything.

B.P. lives behind her father in a shack with her son and her twin sister. She's satisfied with her housing "... Cause I'm around all my people." The family group was literally smack dab in the
middle of a sugar cane field. We had a terrible time locating it. The gravel drive ended with what looked like one house and several sheds. We were taken aback to learn one of the shed's was B.P.'s home.

At the time of the first interview, B.P. had received AFDC for 12 years. She currently receives TANF and Medicaid for herself and her son. She is diabetic. Her monthly food stamp benefit is $234, she participates in the commodity distribution program, and she spends an additional $50 on food per month. She receives a $170 housing subsidy, but I'm not sure where that's going. B.P.'s benefits were sanctioned once-but it was not clear why.

B.P. does not have a driver's license or a car, and she depends upon the community van and friends and relatives for transportation. B.P.'s father, who is disabled, watches her son before and after school and B.P. indicated this childcare is always available. Her parents were married, but her mother is deceased. B.P.'s family will help her financially if she needs it as well. She indicated that losing the welfare check or food stamps would hurt her the most, and that what she needs most now is Medicaid -- to keep it. And a paying job. "Cause I have a son to take care of, and I need a paying job, cause I would rather work in volunteer, but I need a paying job." Her son's father pays $60 every 2 weeks for child support and he does provide for anything else if B.P. asks him. She split up with him because "he wasn't helping me. Me and me child, we gonna survive."

B.P. worked briefly before the birth of her child., in the crab processing industry and at Jeanerette Mills, where she did sewing. At the time of the first interview, she had not worked since childbirth. Currently B. P. is a "volunteer" "helper" at the Bambi Head Start Center. She works six hours daily, but misses often because her dad is in hospital now. She also "volunteered" at Small World, but was moved to Bambi because she'd reached the six-month time limit. She loves the work, being around kids, but she didn't like being moved from Small World to Bambi-she "had just gotten used to that." The hardest part about the work is that sometimes several babies need to be changed at once, but her coworkers help out when this occurs. She misses Bambi because she had "a lot of friends over there," but she said there are friendly people at Small World, too. Her biggest concern about moving to Small World is that she doesn't have the right uniform (belonging).

I: Now, do you have any job-related expenses? Do you have to pay dues or buy a uniform or clothing?
B: She said it's up to me if I want to go look at Sam's clothes I could wear to, to day care. So Ms. Supervisor's gonna get me some clothes like that, cause I feel like I'm off from other people.
I: What are they wearing?
B: They wearing blue and white uniforms with the white shirt, blue pants. So I feel like, you know, I feel like I'm not dressed proper as the other ones, so I decided on my own that I'm gonna go get me some uniforms.
I: Where will you get the uniforms?
B: Well, regular pants is at Wal-Mart, and even regular white shirt, cause that what they be wearing, cause they have they, name on they shirt, but I don't have to get my name on it. A regular white shirt with the blue pants is, or either jeans.
I: Will somebody help you pay for those clothes for work?
B: No, cause I, I, I want it. I wanted to be like, you know, dressed like, like them, instead of being off, so it's no problem cause I want it that way (commitment).

B.P. is looking for a paying job now, but she is having some difficulty. She applied at Delchamp's grocery store and she has placed several calls, but without much success.

B: I try my best to do that so I can get twenty job searches and stuff. And most of the time you call they not hiring. You gotta go get an application and all that stuff. Right now, I'm tryin’ to look for a job now. Cause I need one.
I: What's the job situation like around here? Do you think you'll be able to find work?
B: I could find work but it's hard for me, it's hard for me to get to work. Cause I don't have no transportation and I don't know how to drive. No work right now.

And,

I: What problems do you think you're having finding a job?
B: One problem, I don't have transportation. And it's hard to get around, to go get you know, it's hard to get around and go get a job to get a application, cause uh, if you go get a application and ask somebody to bring you, you have to have gas money in order to, to you know put gas in the car, you know, and half of the time I don't have that, so.

B.P.'s relatives can help her with transportation, and she can call Community Action. She said she had "no trouble with transportation" when she worked at Bambi or now that she's at Small World. B.P.'s work skills include cooking, bartending, housekeeping, and she likes to do all kinds of stuff. B. P. wanted to get more training, but she scored too low, so she was sent her a job readiness program instead. She would like to be a cook in a restaurant or a housekeeper in a hospital. She does have asthma, so she can't work around smoke. To B.P., work means independence

Ok, what kind of advice would you give to other women who are like yourself, or in the same situation you are in?
Well, I'll say (unintelligible), no money better than your own.
There's no money better than your own money? (laughter) What does that mean? Because om, I'm sayin that I have a friend and (unintelligible) his money cause (unintelligible) I wanna have my own money than have his money cause he ask you what you do wi his money (unintelligible). That's why I wanna have my own money.
I: So what advice would you give to other women about that?
B: Well, about that. I'd tell, just get your own job, support your own self don't be relyin' on other members. That's the way I feel, I don't know how other women feel, but that's the way I feel, my own money, just, it's hard but just depend on your own money, that's all I'm sayin. It's hard but, it's hard.
B.P. has had to get used to the new welfare system: "Uh, at first when I, when it first came out, it was hard for me to do it, cause I get, but now I get the hang of it.

I: Ok. Do you think you'll be better off when you're working than while you've been on welfare?
B: Yea, I be better off working.
I: Why is that?
B: I can get more things, you know, what I want for my kid. But right now I can't afford when he want this and he want that and I can't afford it right now. But when I get a job, he gone get everything that he needs.
I: What kinds of things does he need that you're not able to get?
B: Well, I'm not able to get a like Nintendo he want, he want a Game Boy, and he want a VCR and I can't afford that right now because I'm on um, welfare.

B.P.'s future goals:

I: And would you, what, what are your goals for yourself?
B: My goals for myself to finally finish high school. I wanted to go to college to be an LPN, a nursing assistant, that's what I wanted to do. I could still do it.

(Not sure about B. P., but only because of transportation and job availability. She does not have a high school degree, but she did got through child care programs and she has demonstrated her willingness to work by doing the volunteer thing. On paper, she seems to have few motivations, she lives with her sister, she gets child support, she gets support from family. But even so, I think that her desire for independence and the fact that she is working to keep her benefits indicates that is transportation and job availability were not problems, she would be able to make 2nd order change.)

S.S. 70

I wanted to record what Mr. John Doe, the Director of this program at the Vo-Tech, and Ms. Office Manger, apparently the, the real head of the department up here (she's the office person) said about S.S.. They talked with us a little bit before S.S. came in. Absolutely, ebullient maybe? in their praises for S.S. and her dedication and her willingness to work hard, her leadership skills and abilities, um. They could not say enough good about her. We mentioned that we were here to see S.S. and they started talking about S.S.. Um, she was a couple of hours late getting here. She had some problems because of the storm last night. But, we felt after talking with um the secretary and the director that it would be well worth our while to sit and wait and talk with her. And I'm sure that you can hear from the interview that um, she was worth the wait. And she is one of the women that we're going to want to continue to follow as long as we can. Um, I think it would be very interesting to follow her children. If we could do a real longitudinal study uh because she does have one boy in college and is apparently teaching her children um basically in the way that they should go. We did meet here at the Vo-Tech Center. Um, where we were, we were in the student lounge, and we were just interrupted the one time when Mr. Doe came through, so. It was a nice place for us to visit. And S.S. was very open and forth coming with us.
S.S. is a very spirited and determined 36-year old, never married mother of four children ages 19, 13, 10, and 9. The oldest son is a freshman in college in Lafayette, so he only lives with her during the summer. According to S.S., he's trying to better himself because "they see how hard their mother trying to get out there and do the best she can for them." She has resided in St. Mary Parish for 31 years. She has earned the GED and is currently working on earning a Carpentry Certificate. Her eligibility for TANF was due to expire in June, but she was able to get an extension because she is in the training program. S.S. regrets waiting so long to finish her education: "So when they [her children] had gotten a certain age then I decided to go to school and whatever, you know. That's my only downfall. Other than that I probably could have been completed with school." S.S. got her can-do attitude from struggling for years to make it, trying to take care of her children. She said you have to have a strong constitution, and she has to remember that other people have had it worse.

S.S. and her children live on highway XX in a well-worn manufactured housing unit with her sister and her sister's two young children. She did not want to meet at her home when we went there yesterday. It is her dad's home, and she shares it with her sister and various and assorted children. And so she just may not have been comfortable having us there. There probably wouldn't have been a lot of privacy. S.S. is satisfied with where she lives because it's "better than outside." She feel the area safe. Her father pays the rent for the unit and she shares the cost of utilities with her sister.

S.S. had received government assistance for approximately 18 years at the time of the first interview. She currently receives TANF in the amount of $234 per month, $477 per month in food stamps, and Medicaid for herself and her children. She is also paid a transportation allowance of $2.40 per day.

She has a driver's license and a car, but the car is not particularly dependable. She can catch rides with her sister or her girlfriend can have her husband bring S.S. to work and her daughter will pick her up in the evening. She'll also "stand on the side of the road and flag..." people down. She has not missed work or classes because of transportation problems. Her father pays insurance on the car for her. He raised her, which is rather unusual. He is retired, and her mother does not work. S.S. doesn't need childcare now that her children are older and can look out for each other. She didn't want to leave her children for school or work until they were older: "I don't trust everybody with my children." Even so, she indicated that she has never missed work or school due to childcare problems.

The children's fathers do not pay child support, even though the court has ordered payment. She ended the relationship with the father of her three oldest children because "He was unfaithful." The father of her youngest child had a drug problem, and "I didn't want my children in that kind of relationship." If she gets in a bind, her father or her girlfriend can help her with money if she needs it. S.S. was very pragmatic about her resource needs and wants. She said she is not wanting for anything.

S.S. has worked in security, and at various clerical jobs. Currently, she is receiving training in carpentry. She was supposed to be finished with training this training in June, but she was granted an extension. Her total class time will be about a year and a half. She really enjoys what
she's doing "I was also in spirit with woodwork itself." When she was young she used to watch a neighbor doing carpentry, and she was fascinated by it. S.S. was in woodworking school in New Iberia before she came to this program. She did not like the New Iberia program. Her learning style is hands-on, and she didn't like that the program emphasized book-learning over practice. "It was just like...the book. I was always in the book, always in the book. Taking tests." She likes this carpentry program because the instructor will work with the students one-on-one. "He helps a lot." She feel she would have done better in the New Iberia if she'd had this instructor over there (women know what they need to be successful). The instructor for her current program demonstrates the personal touch. S.S. feels that that more students would complete high school if they had someone like him to talk to. Showing concern is an important trait in an instructor, but she would have stayed with this program even if this instructor were not as competent and caring as he seems to be.

S.S. really enjoys woodworking, and said it's not hard work, "there's any easy way of doing-just have to think it out first!" Even so, she said that a lot of women are in the carpentry program, but she doesn't think they'll make it through. She blames any failure on the participants: "Women that don't learn, they don't want to learn." You have to have "strong confidence" and set your mind to the task. If you don't, "it's not going to work for you." S.S. did not seem to have much compassion for people that drop out "because life is what you make of it." S.S. is very proud of earning two scholarships for her training, including a $125 scholarship from the Franklin Rotary Club. She is the first person from a Vocational-Technical school to receive this scholarship.

S.S. is trying to find a part time job. Her benefits run out in July with the extension, but she won't be finished quite yet with the carpentry program. S.S. has a contact with the owner of a cabinet shop who will hire her when she completes the program.

Likes and dislikes -when she worked she did like having a bit extra-she "could buy some milk"

S.S. does not feel it is difficult to do the required 20 job searches every month. She said that the people complaining just don't want to. She's going to do what she has to do to take care of her children. "I know I have to get out there for sure and do what I have to do for my children." She has changed as a result of PRWORA, she has "more motivation about myself. She used to be a big worrier, and when she was younger she could just sit and get "free money." Even so, she gets angry because she was trying to do something with herself, and she feel that the more she tries to do something, the more the hassle [from the system]. She gets "out of courage" and that's what administration wants because then they can eliminate people from the TANF program "and that's one less worry they have."

(What an interesting woman. S.S. should be able to sustain 2nd order change. She has no barriers, as long as her car keeps going, and high motivation. She has HS/GED and she's getting her Carpentry Certificate. Shown determination and dedication to complete task and do what she needs to do. Does not think job availability will be a problem either.)
That was the mother's voice that was along side of P.W., myself and Vicky. The mother looked like she could be rather intimidating. But, she was just as friendly as she could be. We really enjoyed the visit and I guess you could tell that we were not in any big hurry to leave. No screens on the windows. There were people who came in and dropped off groceries. Um, it was hard to ask about the marital status of the parents when the mother was sitting right there. She doesn't have a wedding ring on but she has some extra weight that she's carrying. That maybe she just can't wear a wedding ring. So, I'm not totally sure that the mother and the father are married. She called the man her dad. And the other girl that came in called him her dad. He could be her dad, but that doesn't mean that they're married. My guess is that they probably are. But, we are just sort of guessing. He didn't have anything to do with us. He looked pretty intimidating too when he came to the door. I had the keys ready to take and run. I would never leave Vicky, I would snatch her first and then run.

It's interesting, that with the whole benefit situation, with the whole job search, I'm wondering if some of these women aren't being taken advantage of in their situation and they've just been left open without any protections. Maybe some of them who are more needy, and so if the worker spends more time with the more needy person, she's not going to have time to spend with the person who, you know, who doesn't squeak. And there's a good chance that this girl doesn't squeak. Her mother said she had to nag her to do this, this and this. Wait, there were some other train of thought. The thought that I'm thinking is that I wish we could get in and talk to some of these street level administrators as Ms. Researcher (right name??) would call them. And get another side of the story of how these caseworkers are handling these cases, and whose interests are they looking at. The house, the location, the house: The house was not in great shape. But, it looked like it was clean. It was at least being cleaned up. But the furniture was somewhat . . . No, not somewhat, the couch we were sitting on, the leather or vinyl or whatever it was, had very little leather or vinyl on it, it was mostly the stuffing showing through. And they had cabinets that were in the same situation. The house needing painting.

P.W. was interviewed in her parents' home. P.W. is an engaging 28-year old single mother with a 7-year old son. She has lived in Concordia parish for three years. P.W. has a high school diploma, and she obtained a CNA through Project Independence. P.W. and her mother indicated that the only worthwhile training program available in the area is for the CNA, if young women don't score well enough to be accepted, then they can choose between housekeeping and food service (tenacity). There is a long wait for the CNA program. According to P.W.'s mom, "the only reason she got in because she kept calling and kept calling, and the lady told her if somebody didn't show up, then she would let her go ahead on in." "She always say I'll let you know. But if somebody drop out, they have to fill that spot right then and there. So, she available." (Several in study that said they'd keep hammering-and they tended to get "things.").

P.W. had a very interesting response to the question about drug and/or alcohol use:

I never had the problem, but I've thought about it. When you get to drinking, when you get sober, the problem's still there. What's the point, if you ain't got no money, where'd you get the money to get the alcohol? Ain't got no money,
spending it on alcohol ain't going to make me have none. It's going to take it up quickly!

P.W. lives with her son two houses down from a nightclub. She is satisfied with her home during the week, but it is very noisy on weekends, and she's a bit concerned about safety on weekends. She and her son spend weekends at her parents' home. P.W. pays $100 per month for rent, but we do not know if she's in a subsidized unit. P.W. was interviewed in her parents' home.

P.W. had a very short history of government assistance. She had just started receiving AFDC and Medicaid at the time of the first interview, and had food stamps for only a year or so. Currently, P.W. does not get TANF because she works, but she receives $57 per month in food stamps. Neither P.W. nor her child has Medicaid, but she can get the medical care she needs, exclusive of dental care. P.W. has a driver's license and a car that she saved to buy. She spends about $20 per week on gasoline. She has never missed work or classes due to transportation problems. Her dad drove her before she had her own vehicle. P.W.'s mom provides childcare for the seven-year old, which is subsidized (transitional) at $198 per month. Her mother is actually certified to care for up to six children. Childcare is always available to P.W., so she stated she has never missed work or classes because of childcare problems. In the first interview she indicated that when she lived in Las Vegas, childcare was a problem because available sitters provided very poor quality care.

P.W. does not get any support from her child's father, he may still be in Las Vegas. P.W. feels that the child support enforcement office will not help her collect child support because she is no longer on welfare. The relationship ended during pregnancy because the father thought having a child was a "big responsibility." P.W. said he was also on drugs. P.W.'s parents help her out with expenses as needed. Her mom is a home-based childcare provider and her dad is retired. Her parents live together, but it was unclear if they were legally married. P.W. indicated that many of her friends also "depend on their mamas." P.W. has a male friend, but he does not help her financially. He lives with his mother. (How many of the male partners live with their moms? We've come across a few.) P.W. cannot do without any of the resources she depends upon, losing "all of them would cause me a hard time. Everything." The resource she most needs is "a better paying job would make my life easier."

P.W.'s pre-PRWORA work history included five years working in a cafeteria, fast food jobs, and work as a cashier at a gas station. P.W. has her CNA now. She wanted to be a nurse, but she didn't score high enough on the qualifying test. P.W. originally found a job at the local hospital, but she didn't like working 12-hour shifts. After three months she went to Camelot Nursing Home. This job is okay, it's a paycheck. P.W. said benefits are not provided for employees, not even sick time. She became very irate when talking about the lack of benefits. P.W. would leave her current job if she could find something with benefits. She was also unhappy that the nursing home does not pay time-and-a-half for overtime work, just straight time. "I would love to have a raise and benefits." P.W. indicated that she does get free meals at work, and after a year she will be eligible for one week paid vacation per year. Now that P.W. is working the 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. shift she has no problems getting to work, but she did have difficulty with the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift. P.W. had to wake her child and drop him off at parents' home, where he would spend the night. Every week P.W. has a different work schedule; four days on and two days off. There is
not much chance she'll be moved to the day shift any time soon because senior staff members also are waiting for the opportunity.

P.W. identified her job skills as "eager to learn and catch on and easy to get along with." She likes working with people, even though "sometimes they do get on your nerves". P.W. indicated that there is no shortage of jobs available for women with CNA training, because night work is always available. But according to P.W. "…people don't want to work at night." She is seriously considering applying for a job at the new correctional center as soon as it's finished.

P.W. indicated that she would have been somewhere working even without PRWORA implementation because "welfare not enough." Working does give her some freedom, "I can buy stuff like a recliner and a new car . . . and furniture." When all is said and done, her life is better as a result of welfare reform.

(P.W. has no barriers and is highly motivated. She has GED/HS and CNA, and she is currently working. She's looking for a job with more benefits. Believe she will sustain 2nd order change. In depth analysis required.)

C.W. 79

The home was in a clean neighborhood but it was obviously impoverished circumstances. The house itself was I guess ramshackle, very small, um, not in the best state of repair. Inside the house it was very neat and very clean but the living room was teen-eensy, was very, very small. The furniture smelled [very badly]. Hmm. They were within walking distance of the elementary school where I'm assuming the oldest child is going. The woman did work at Popeye's and that was 8 or 9 miles away. But, there's no evidence in this particular area of there being opportunities for employment other than in the cane mills.

C.W. is a quiet, 20-year old single mother of two boys, ages five and two. She has lived in St. Mary Parish her whole life. C.W. completed the GED, but has not participated in any other training or education programs.

C.W. lives with grandparents and her youngest child's father in a very small home. The home was in a clean, obviously impoverished, neighborhood within walking distance of the elementary school. The house itself was very ramshackle; very small and not in the best state of repair. Inside, the house it was very neat and very clean, but the sofa did not smell particularly fresh. The living room was very, very small. C.W. does not have a telephone. She has to walk across the street to use her aunt's phone, but other than that inconvenience she is satisfied with and feels safe in her home.

C.W. currently receives $310 monthly in Food Stamps, and she spends an additional $20 to $30 on food per month. Her children have Medicaid, and she can get free medical transportation for her children with three days notice. C. W. does not have a driver's license or a car, so she usually pays a friend or her cousin for transportation. She cannot always depend on having a ride when she needs, though, because sometimes they forget or have somewhere else to go. When that happens, she must reschedule and appointments, or wait and go another day to the grocery store.
When C.W. was working, her uncle drove and she had no problems, but he got sick. C.W.'s grandmother is available to provide childcare whenever needed. C.W. does not have to pay a regular fee, but will give her grandmother money if she is asked.

C.W. receives no child support for her oldest child. The father of the youngest child was paying $210 per month in child support. Now that he's living with her, he helps with expenses for both children. C.W.'s aunt and grandma also help out financially if needed. Her mother is deceased, but she worked full time until her death. C.W. feels that "we make our ends meet good." The most precious resource she has is her grandparents, especially her grandmother. When asked what she needed the most, she replied that she has everything, but she may need more clothes (no job!).

C.W. had no work history prior to PRWORA implementation other than occasional babysitting. She was born with back problems so she can't do jobs requiring heavy lifting. C.W. did get a "nice job" at the Popeye's in Franklin after the first interview, but she no longer works there. She held the job for about two months. C.W.'s uncle provided her with transportation, but then he got sick and she could no longer rely upon him. C.W.'s aunt couldn't help with transportation because their work schedules differed. C.W. has applied for work at the casino. She would like a position as a change person. She is hard working, and she can cook, clean, type, and sew; really anything except lift heavy objects. C.W. said it is hard to find jobs in her community.

C.W. performed several tasks at Popeye's, including cashier, bagging, battering, and seasoning the chicken. She preferred the cashier position. She worked 30 hours a week to start, but this decreased when new employees were hired. C.W. liked her job and her coworkers. Her only complaint was that some managers were better than others because some worked the employees hard. C.W. learned her tasks either on her own or from other employees.

C.W. indicated that PRWORA has not affected her much. C.W. felt she was better off working than on welfare because she was able to buy more things. She seems to be getting along fine without benefits, and she is happy to be off of the system. Her grandparents are available to help her as needed, but she wants to be independent, do be able to do things for herself and not depend on them. She hopes that in a year she'll be working and in her own house.

Independence *big quote section*

(C.W. lives with her grandparents and boyfriend, both of whom help her financially if needed. Low motivation for 2nd order change except desire for independence. In addition, has problem barriers, transportation and job availability. Do not expect 2nd order change unless motivations increase. She does have ged/hs and is looking for work.)
Vita

Lydia Blanche Bentin Blalock was born May 8, 1959, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is the daughter of Blanca Lola Pizzati and Edward Bentin, Jr. She is married to William Kenneth Blalock, Jr., and has four children: Lindsey Marie Long, Aaron Edward Long, Kelsey Renee Long, and William Kenneth Blalock, III.

In 1993, Lydia graduated from Louisiana State University, after earning a Bachelor of General Studies degree. She earned a Master of Science degree in human ecology from Louisiana State University in 1997. She will graduate from Louisiana State University in August 2002, with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in human ecology.

Lydia is a member of the honor societies Gamma Sigma Delta and Phi Upsilon Omicron. She is also a member of the National Council on Family Relations. Lydia serves on the board of directors for Steps to Success, Inc., the steering committee for the Baton Rouge Human Services Consortium, and the advisory board for Hidden Treasures Prison Fellowship. In 2002 she was appointed by Governor Mike Foster to serve on the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family.

Lydia was a full time instructor for the School of Human Ecology, Division of Family, Child and Consumer Sciences from Fall 1999 until Spring 2002. She taught classes in family policy, program development and evaluation, family dynamics, housing, and family resource management. Lydia plans to continue her career in academia.