Following the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), Lawrence Mead (1997) noted that paternalism was a defining feature of welfare reform. The reform efforts of the 1990s transformed means-tested benefits from an unconditional entitlement to a contract between the government and the recipient, with clearly defined rights and responsibilities. Low-income families were expected to abide by certain requirements (such as cooperating with child support enforcement, working or participating in work-related activities, and ensuring children attend school) to be eligible for government assistance.

Paternalistic requirements, Mead (1997, 5) notes, “use the benefits on which people depend as a lever to ensure compliance.” For paternalists, the dependence of low-income families on government assistance is an opportunity to reach needy families and enforce paternalistic requirements. Thus, welfare reform not only aimed to reduce the size of government and the costs of public assistance, but also to advance efforts to control and reform the lives of poor Americans by holding out the carrot of benefits in one hand and the stick of requirements, oversight, and sanctions in the other.

The PRWORA repealed Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replaced it with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. In contrast to AFDC, which, as an entitlement program guaranteed cash assistance to eligible families, TANF is a block grant program that allows states to use federal funds (and federally mandated state spending) in ways “reasonably calculated” to meet one of TANF's four statutory goals: 1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; 2) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; 3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and 4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families (*Public Law 104-193* 1996). Federal requirements for TANF limit the length of time program participants can receive federally funded cash benefits and compels states to enforce federal child support and work requirements. Beyond this, states have the authority to impose even more demanding requirements, time limits, and sanctions for noncompliance (Giannarelli et al. 2017).

The TANF program institutionalized paternalism by linking receipt of TANF cash assistance to behavioral demands. However, TANF’s paternalistic requirements are applied selectively. Only families receiving “assistance”, a form of aid defined as comprising basic assistance (i.e. ongoing monthly cash payments) and child care or transportation benefits for families without an employed adult, are required to comply with the federal time limits and work, child support, and other requirements introduced by the PRWORA (Falk 2017). States are allowed to spend state and federal TANF funds on other forms of aid reasonably calculated to meet TANF’s goals, such as refundable tax credits, pregnancy prevention programs, and child care for working families, but recipients do not have to meet federal requirements.

Since the PRWORA was enacted, the nature and scope of means-tested cash assistance have changed in important ways. For one, fewer people receive TANF cash assistance now than in the 1990s. As Figure 1 shows, the number of families receiving TANF in an average month decreased in the years following the passage of the PRWORA, continuing a trend of decreasing caseloads that began in 1994 (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation 2014). In 2017, only 1.4 million families received TANF assistance in the average month, a decrease of 55.4% from 1998.

Also shown in Figure 1 is the share of the national TANF caseload composed of “child-only” families, which consist of a dependent child and caretaker who either chooses not to be included in the assistance unit or is barred from being included in the assistance unit.[[1]](#footnote-1) If a caretaker is not included in the unit and the state deems the child to still be eligible for TANF assistance, benefits are calculated based on the needs of the child or children. The resulting “child-only” family is not subject to the five year limit on federally funded TANF benefits and many states do not require the excluded caretaker to meet paternalistic activity requirements (Giannarelli et al. 2017; Falk 2017).[[2]](#footnote-2) Over time, the proportion of the caseload composed of these types of families increased, reducing the share of families affected by TANF’s paternalistic activity requirements and time limits. In 1998, 23% of the national TANF caseload consisted of “child-only” families. By 2008, the share had increased to 45.4%; in 2017, 40.5% of the national caseload consisted of “child-only” families.



Following the passage of the PRWORA, states also developed new methods for calculating TANF eligibility and benefits. While many states adopted their own distinct formulas and tests, on average, eligibility and benefit computation became less generous. Between 1996 under AFDC and 2016, the maximum income a family of three could earn and be eligible for TANF decreased by 12%, and the maximum benefit for a family of three without any income decreased by 26%.[[3]](#footnote-3)

As caseloads declined, financial eligibility standards tightened, and benefits were reduced, the number of families eligible for TANF assistance who received aid also decreased. In 1997, 69% of TANF eligible families received TANF assistance; by 2013, only 31% received assistance. A similar trend occurred with child poverty and TANF receipt: Between 1997 and 2013, the number of children in poverty ticked upward while the number of children receiving TANF decreased (Office of Family Assistance 2018).

The caseload and participation trends outlined above suggest an overall decline in cash assistance spending. Figure 2 shows nationwide aggregate spending on “basic assistance,” regular cash benefits provided through a state’s TANF program that are only offered on the condition of recipients meeting certain requirements. Reported basic assistance expenditures declined annually from 1998 to 2002, before increasing annually from 2003 to 2005. After a period of further decreases through 2008, expenditures ticked up during the Great Recession but decreased again in 2011. While basic assistance expenditures increased in certain periods—largely due to economic downturns—there is a clear trend over the period toward less basic assistance spending. Basic assistance expenditures (measured in real dollars) decreased by 56.7% between 1998 and 2014.



The sizable decrease in aggregate cash assistance spending illuminates tension for paternalistic policy. On the one hand, the PRWORA was work-focused welfare reform. It aimed to push low-income families into work and encourage self-sufficiency using requirements, sanctions, job training, and time limits. Basic assistance was the means to this end. It is through receipt of basic assistance that a family is subject to TANF’s paternalistic policies: time limits and activity, child support, and school attendance requirements. However, as Figure 2 shows, a key trend since the creation of TANF is basic assistance retrenchment. States are spending less on cash aid now than in the years immediately following TANF’s creation, effectively severing the link between welfare assistance and the PRWORA's paternalistic requirements for many low-income families.

The decrease in basic assistance spending indicates the emergence of “post-PRWORA” welfare states in which basic assistance spending occupies a marginal share of total TANF spending and the focus of aid is on services, in-kind benefits, and work programs. These states retain the PRWORA’s emphasis on work and self-sufficiency but no longer make extensive use of TANF cash assistance to push low-income families into employment. OK, we need something more here…can we say what the combined number of people now subject to TANF requirements is? We have the caseload decline, we have the shifting in the character of the caseload (child only cases) and we have the decline in basic assistance (is the decline in basic assistance a consequence or a cause?). The question is whether or not we can offer any summary observation here?

With fewer and fewer needy families within the purview of cash aid, the debate over how to use low-income Americans reliance on aid as a means to control their behavior and future outcomes has shifted to new programs: SNAP, Medicaid, and housing assistance (Thrush 2018a). The emergence of these welfare systems underlines fundamental tensions between the PRWORA’s devolutionary, paternalistic, and work-focused goals and points to a new era of means-tested government assistance. If welfare as we knew it involved using poor people’s connection to cash assistance to regulate their behavior, those who advocate paternalist policies now seek other means to leverage power over poor people.

Since TANF is a program in which states possess a broad mandate, an analysis of the shift away from basic assistance spending toward a “post-PRWORA” model must occur at the state level. Using TANF financial data published by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families (ACF), we provide a descriptive account of how the devolution of policymaking authority reshaped welfare spending. We illustrate how and when the reduction in basic assistance spending occurred as well as the consequent shift toward funding in-kind benefits, work supports, and services for low-income families. On the basis of this analysis, we explore potential explanations for the emergence of the “post-PRWORA” welfare state, regressing states’ proportional basic assistance spending on state-level political, economic, and demographic characteristics. Our findings indicate that the typical post-PRWORA state is more conservative with a higher proportion of African Americans in its TANF caseload and lower unemployment rate.

**State Spending**

TANF provides a capped block grant to each state and broad discretion to create its own cash assistance welfare program for low-income families. TANF block grants are neither adjusted for inflation nor, with a few minor exceptions, changes in need within states.[[4]](#footnote-4) The PRWORA apportioned states’ block grants based on the amount of federal spending received by a state for AFDC and other low-income public assistance programs between FY 1992 and 1995; TANF grants range in size from $21.8 million in Wyoming to $3.7 billion in California (Falk 2015). In addition to the federal block grant, the other main source of TANF funding is Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds, which are provided by the states. MOE expenditures are set at a minimum federal requirement equal to 75% of states’ FY 1994 contributions to AFDC and other low-income public assistance programs, but can increase to 80% if an insufficient number of a state’s TANF recipients are engaged in work-related activities (Falk 2015).

TANF’s broad statutory goals allow states to fund a variety of programs and policies with TANF funds. Our analysis groups TANF expenditures into ten categories.[[5]](#footnote-5) Figure 3 aggregates those ten categories into three types of spending: basic assistance; work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits; and other, and depicts national trends in TANF spending over time. In FY 1998, on average, a state spent 55.0% of total TANF expenditures on basic assistance, 19.7% on work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits, and 26.4% on other spending, such as administrative costs and transfers to other programs.[[6]](#footnote-6) The composition of TANF spending shifted in the years ahead as states decreased the share of TANF funds spent on basic assistance and increased proportional expenditures on work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits. By FY 2013, the average state spent 23.6% of total TANF spending on basic assistance, a 57.1% decrease from FY 1998, and 43.2% of total TANF spending on work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits.



The specific types of spending that comprise work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits in Figure 3 are broken out by category in Figure 4. States shifted funds from basic assistance toward a variety of services and benefits for low-income families. Of the five categories that comprise work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits, funding for child care and work-related activities are the bulk of expenditures. Proportional expenditures for both child care and work-related activities and supports increased dramatically in the late 1990s but slowed in later years and remained below their all-time high levels in FY 2013.

While not comprising as significant a portion of state spending, the remaining categories that comprise work-related, in-kind, and short-term benefits increased at a steady rate between FY 1998 and 2013. In FY 1998, the average state spent no TANF funds on refundable tax credits for low-income families, diversion benefits (which usually provide one-time lump sum payments to families to help them avoid entering the state’s TANF program), and marriage and pregnancy programs aimed at supporting healthy marriages and educating families about family planning. By FY 2013, however, the three categories collectively comprised 14.7% of the average state’s TANF spending, with marriage and pregnancy programs alone comprising 7.2%.



The discussion so far has focused on national trends, average annual proportional expenditures, and aggregated values. With the broad devolution of policymaking power under TANF, however, the degree to which individual state's actions reflected these trends varied.

To more closely examine state-level trends over time, Figure 5 provides annual box plots of basic assistance spending. Over time, the distribution of state spending remained relatively constant even as it shifted downward.[[7]](#footnote-7) The standard deviations of annual proportional basic assistance spending did not follow any clear trend, varying between 10.1% (in FY 2008) and 13.8% in (FY 1999). States with especially high levels of basic assistance spending also took part in the overall downward shift in spending.



Although the variation of the distribution remained largely consistent as states decreased basic assistance spending, the relative rank order of states within the distribution was not static. As states decreased basic assistance spending, the order of state spending on basic assistance was reshuffled, with relatively higher spending states becoming relatively lower spending states and vice versa (Figure 6). For instance, of the ten states that spent the greatest portion of total TANF funds on basic assistance in FY 1998, only three – Alaska, California, and Hawaii – remained among the ten highest spending states in FY 2013. Illinois, another high-spending state in FY 1998, shifted enough spending from basic assistance toward other policy areas to be among the ten lowest spending states in FY 2013. Similarly, states that spent relatively less on basic assistance in FY 1998 shifted their spending relative to their peers. Indiana and Oklahoma were the only states to be among the ten lowest spending states in both FY 1998 and FY 2013. On the other hand, Virginia’s relatively small decrease in proportional basic assistance spending moved it from among the ten lowest spending states in FY 1998 to the ten highest spending states in FY 2013.



**Post-PRWORA States**

The descriptive analysis indicates that states did not decrease basic assistance expenditures in lock-step. Rather, they simultaneously participated in an aggregate decrease in basic assistance expenditures and altered their spending in distinctive ways. To better understand the variation in states’ proportional basic assistance spending, this section examines state-level factors that shaped the degree to which states decreased basic assistance spending. Using a fixed effects regression model that controls for unobserved variation between states and across time, the section demonstrates that states with smaller and more racially diverse TANF caseloads, more conservative state governments, and lower unemployment rates enacted greater reductions in basic assistance spending.

The analysis is grounded upon four hypotheses concerning states’ allocations of basic assistance expenditures: 1) states with more racially and ethnically diverse basic assistance caseloads spend proportionally less on basic assistance; 2) states with more powerful and progressive democratic parties spend a greater share of TANF funds on basic assistance; 3) states with more favorable economic conditions spend proportionally less on basic assistance expenditures; and 4) states’ basic assistance expenditures are sensitive to TANF program-specific factors, such as caseload levels and work participation rates.

*Race and Ethnicity*

Two reinforcing strands in the social policy literature are significant when considering potential relationships between race, ethnicity, and states’ basic assistance expenditures. The first concerns the role of racial prejudice toward African Americans in shaping public attitudes of welfare recipients. Drawing on national survey data and a survey experiment, Gilens (1996) finds that white Americans that have significantly more negative attitudes toward African American are more likely to oppose welfare programs. Such attitudes translate to opinions of welfare policy, with “racial considerations” serving as “the single most important factor shaping whites’ views of welfare” (601). The other strand of the literature concerns the importance of race in shaping welfare policy outcomes. Several studies have examined the correlations between race and the restrictiveness of states’ TANF policies. For example, Soss et al. (2001) note significant positive relationships between the proportion of African Americans receiving TANF benefits in a state and the probability that the state adopts strong sanctions, stricter time limits on benefit receipt, and a limit on the number of children that can be included in the benefit group (i.e. a “family cap”). They also find significant positive relationships between the proportion of Latinos receiving TANF benefits and the probability that a state adopts stricter time limits on TANF benefits and a family cap on benefits. Fellowes and Rowe (2004) find that, on average, an increase from one standard deviation below the mean percentage of African Americans receiving TANF benefits to one standard deviation above results in significantly stricter TANF benefit eligibility criteria, stricter work requirements, and lower basic assistance benefits. They also find that the percentage of Latinos receiving TANF benefits is consequential, with an increase from one standard deviation below the mean percentage of Latinos in a state receiving TANF benefits to one standard deviation above resulting in significantly less flexible work requirements but less strict TANF eligibility criteria.

The literature on race and social policy suggests that race and ethnicity play a role in shaping both negative attitudes toward means-tested assistance and the restrictiveness of specific programs. Consequently, we hypothesize that states with proportionally more African Americans or Hispanics in their TANF caseload spend a lower share of their TANF grants on basic assistance. We test this hypothesis including as independent variables the percentage of adults in a state’s TANF caseload who identify as African American or non-white and Hispanic, respectively.

*Partisan Control of State Government*

Partisan identification and political ideology are often considered crucial factors that structure the scope and generosity of states’ TANF policies, with conservatives generally more critical and liberals more supportive of welfare assistance (Rom 1999). The findings of Soss et al. (2001) support the intuitive relationship between TANF policy and ideology. On average, the authors find that a state is more likely to adopt strong sanctions for non-compliant TANF recipients if the state government is more conservative. Similarly, a state is more likely to adopt strong sanctions, tougher work requirements, narrower time limits, and a family cap if the state government is more conservative.

We use scores of government ideology to evaluate the relationship between political ideology and basic assistance spending. Originally developed by Berry et al. (1998), and refined by Berry et al. (2010), the variablecaptures the liberal ideology of a state government in a calendar year from 0 (most conservative) to 100 (most liberal), weighted by the powers of the democratic and republican parties in the upper and lower branches of the state legislature and ideology of the governor. Quantifying partisan control of state government via a measure of state government ideology controls for changes in party strength and ideology across states and time. Unlike other measures of partisanship, such as party control of state legislatures and governorships, state government ideology does not mask ideological differences between political parties in different states or shifts in political ideology over time. Instead, it incorporates these political differences and evolutions alongside swings in electoral power, creating a nuanced and flexible measure of partisanship.

We hypothesize that states with higher ideology scores (i.e. more liberal governments) will spend proportionally more on basic assistance. Progressive shifts in party ideology and electoral victories by progressive parties ought to be commensurate with increased basic assistance spending, reflecting support for social welfare spending in liberal parties.

*Economic Conditions*

State-level economic conditions may also influence basic assistance expenditures. The PRWORA was enacted in an era of low unemployment, tight labor markets, and rising wages for lower-skilled workers (Blank 2002). In an extensive literature review of TANF and AFDC research in the years following the passage of the PRWORA, Blank (2002) finds five econometric studies that argue for an elasticity of state unemployment rates to caseloads of between 5 and 7 percent. Since caseload sizes are in part a function of basic assistance spending, the studies conducted in the years following the PRWORA’s enactment imply that state economic conditions should influence state spending on basic assistance. Qualitative evidence from the economic recession one decade later also supports the need to control for state-level economic conditions. Thirty states saw increases in the number of basic assistance recipients following the beginning of the economic downturn in December 2007 (Zedlewski and Golden 2010). As economic conditions deteriorated, more low-income families became eligible and sought cash assistance, with likely consequences for basic assistance expenditures.

We include two economic independent variables in our model: annual state unemployment rates, which we expect to be positively associated with basic assistance spending, and a measure of annual state per capita personal income in thousands of 2013 dollars adjusted for regional differences in purchasing power. We expect per capita incometo be inversely related to states’ basic assistance spending. Unemployment rates and incomes are likely to be strongly and inversely correlated, but for the population who receives TANF, they may not move in tandem. Moving from welfare to work increases earnings but may decrease assistance benefits. As such, controlling for states’ unemployment rates alone may not adequately control for states’ economic conditions, especially as they pertain to the low-income families most likely to receive basic assistance.

Economic conditions may also affect TANF spending by exerting fiscal pressures on states. In their study of TANF programs in California, Washington, Michigan, Florida, and Texas, Hahn et. al (2012) noted how budget deficits following the Great Recession forced many states to reshape TANF spending. TANF’s broad discretion allows states to shift TANF funds away from basic assistance toward other policy areas previously funded by non-TANF dollars. California, for example, reduced basic assistance benefits by 8% in 2011 alongside other reductions in job training and child care funding, freeing $800 million in MOE expenditures for higher education programs. Hahn et. al (2012) find evidence of similar shifts in Michigan and Washington. In all cases, the authors found that states were using TANF’s broadly-defined goals to fund programs obliquely related to TANF with TANF dollars in response to fiscal pressures. As an advocate for low-income families put it when discussing the policy areas being funded by TANF, “no one is pretending that it is for a TANF purpose” (35).

We control for fiscal pressures with a variable that measures states’ ending annual fiscal balances and budget stabilization funds (i.e., “rainy day fund”) as a percentage of annual expenditures.[[8]](#footnote-8) The hypothesized effect of the variable on basic assistance spending is the opposite of the other economic variables included in the model. As economic conditions worsened, states experienced contradictory pressures. On the one hand, fewer jobs and lower incomes might have led states to increase basic assistance spending in order to support their residents. At the same time, worsening economic conditions reduced state revenues and strained budgets, perhaps resulting in less basic assistance spending as TANF funds were reallocated.

*Programmatic Factors*

TANF program-specific factors are expected to correlate with states’ basic assistance expenditures. Since the passage of the PRWORA in 1996, as already discussed above, the number of individuals receiving TANF has declined dramatically, with only a comparatively small increase following the 2008 financial crisis and economic recession.

While caseload changes are in part a function of economic conditions, they cannot be fully accounted for by economic explanations (Blank 2002). States are not passive actors when it comes to basic assistance eligibility and benefit levels; they control income thresholds, time limits, family cap policies, and work participation requirements – all factors which may impact caseload sizes. It is difficult to untangle the specific impact of these policies on caseload sizes and even harder to discern their relationship to basic assistance expenditures given the circularity of program policies and spending. Nevertheless, given the significant decrease in caseloads between 1998 and 2013, and parallel reduction in basic assistance spending, it is important to control for changing caseloads. Hence we include in our model the annual percentage change in a state’s TANF caseload, including recipients in separate state programs, in an average month.

In addition, it is important examine whether work participation requirements influence basic assistance spending. The PRWORA mandated that 50% of all families and 90% of two-parent families receiving TANF assistance in a state be “engaged in work” in a fiscal year in order to avoid a reduction in the state’s block grant. Before FY 2007, a state could reduce its required work participation rate by the percentage decrease in its TANF caseload from FY 1995 levels. Since caseloads declined dramatically in the years immediately following the passage of the PRWORA, states easily met this requirement.[[9]](#footnote-9) However, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 made it more demanding for states to reduce their work participation rates by changing the fiscal year for calculating reductions in caseloads from FY 1995 to FY 2005.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Since 1999 states have also been able to reduce the percentage of their caseload that must meet work requirements by spending more on MOE than is required. But, in addition to caseload reduction credits and excess MOE spending, states can satisfy their work participation rate requirement by altering the composition of their TANF caseloads. For example, a state can reduce the number of unemployed or difficult to employ recipients in the caseload by imposing stricter work requirements or eligibility criteria. The resulting caseload is more likely to meet the work participation requirement, but also is likely to be smaller and have greater earnings, resulting in lower basic assistance expenditures.

A state can also satisfy the work participation requirement by increasing the number of employed TANF recipients in the caseload. Some states have taken this approach and offer transitional benefits to TANF recipients who are ineligible due to increased earnings. For example, until October 2015, Michigan granted $10 to former TANF recipients for 6 months after becoming ineligible due to increased earnings if they continued to meet their work requirements. Likewise, in 2016 Missouri gave one-parent families working 30 hours per week after leaving TANF $50 for six months and New Jersey granted former recipients $200 for 24 months if they continued to work 20 hours per week (The Urban Institute n.d.; Giannarelli et al. 2017). The benefits allowed states to claim more employed TANF recipients in order to satisfy the work participation requirement, with the tangential effect of increasing basic assistance spending.

Since changes in the composition of the caseload in response to the work participation requirement have theoretically ambiguous effects on basic assistance spending, the influence of the work participation requirement on basic spending is an empirical question. We evaluate the role of the work participation requirement in the model witha binary variable that takes the value of one if a state did not meet its work participation rate.

**Models of State Basic Assistance Spending**

Table 1 presents two models of states’ basic assistance expenditures as a percentage of total TANF expenditures. Both models include state fixed effects that control for unobserved, state-specific effects that remain constant across time. Independent variables are also lagged one year to correspond to the period when states allocated their TANF block grants.Model 1 includes each independent variables described in the prior section but does not control for national-level trends with time fixed effects. The model suggests a variety of significant relationships between state-level factors and basic assistance spending.[[11]](#footnote-11) As hypothesized, the percentage of a state’s TANF caseload composed of African Americans is negatively correlated with proportional basic assistance spending. On average, a state that experienced a one percentage point increase in the share of African Americans in its caseload from one year to the next, decreased basic assistance spending by .416% in the following year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1: Regression Output** | | |
|  | | |
|  | *Dependent variable:* | |
|  |  | |
|  | Basic Assistance Expenditures as a Percentage of Total TANF Expenditures | |
|  | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|  | | |
| Percent of caseload that is African American | -.416\* | -.249\* |
|  | (.080) | (.068) |
|  |  |  |
| Percent of caseload that is Hispanic | .033 | .134 |
|  | (.110) | (.093) |
|  |  |  |
| Government liberalism | .022 | .029\* |
|  | (.017) | (.014) |
|  |  |  |
| Unemployment rate | -1.531\* | .643 |
|  | (.169) | (.334) |
|  |  |  |
| Per capita income (in thousands) | -2.062\* | .153 |
|  | (.112) | (.175) |
|  |  |  |
| Fiscal balance as a percent of spending | .065\* | .001 |
|  | (.026) | (.023) |
|  |  |  |
| Percent change in caseload | .081\* | .150\* |
|  | (.022) | (.022) |
|  |  |  |
| Work participation rate | 1.448 | 5.102\* |
|  | (1.191) | (1.064) |
|  |  |  |
|  | | |
| Time Fixed Effects | No | Yes |
|  | | |
| Observations | 777 | 777 |
| R2 | .463 | .634 |
| Adjusted R2 | .420 | .597 |
| F Statistic | 77.416\* (df = 8; 719) | 53.011\* (df = 23; 704) |
|  | | |
| *Note:* | \*p < 0.05 | |

Model 1 also suggests that economic and programmatic factors play a role in states’ basic assistance spending. The coefficient measuring the correlation between states’ remaining budgetary balances and basic assistance spending is in the expected direction, as is the coefficient quantifying the relationship between per capita income and proportional basic assistance allocations. On average, a state that saw its average income rise by $1,000 over the course of a year, spent 2.062% less on basic assistance in the following year. However, the model also suggests that unemployment rates are negatively associated with basic assistance spending – a finding inconsistent with not only our hypothesis but also the posited relationship between incomes and basic assistance spending. Finally, Model 1 indicates that changes in caseload sizes correlate with basic assistance spending, with a one percentage point decline in a state’s caseload from the prior year correlating with an average decrease in proportional basic assistance spending of .081%.

Model 2 retains the variables used in Model 1 but adds time fixed effects, thereby controlling for unobserved trends that are constant across states in any given fiscal year. Two trends in basic assistance spending are evident between FY 1998 and 2013: The aggregate decrease in basic assistance spending which every state participated in and the within-distribution divergence that resulted from states’ following distinctive paths within the national trend. With time fixed effects in place, Model 2 controls for the national-level forces that shaped basic assistance expenditures and allows for a nuanced analysis of state-level factors that caused state-level basic assistance spending to diverge within the national trend.

In Model 2, the percentage of a state’s caseload composed of African Americans remains significant and, as expected, negatively correlated with states’ basic assistance spending. On average, a state with a TANF caseload composed of one percentage point more African Americans, spent .249% less on basic assistance. However, the model also suggests that the relationships between race, ethnicity, and basic assistance expenditures are not clear-cut, as the coefficient measuring the relationship between the percentage of Hispanics in a state’s TANF caseload and basic assistance spending is positive and insignificant.

Our mixed conclusions on the correlations between race, ethnicity, and basic assistance allocations are not unprecedented. On the one hand, the important

Such a finding corresponds to the conclusions of Gilens (1996), Fellowes and Rowe (2004), and Soss et al. (2001) and underlines the important role that race continues to play in shaping social policy outcomes.

Regardless of the exact reason for its insignificance in the final model, *hispanics’* positive and insignificant coefficient is not unprecedented. As mentioned above, Fellowes and Rowe (2004) find significant inverse relationships between the percentage of Latinos receiving TANF benefits in a state and both the flexibility of work requirements and the strictness of TANF eligibility criteria. The analysis indicates that the effect of growing numbers of Hispanic welfare recipients on TANF policy outcomes is not straightforward. Unlike in the case of African Americans, where there is clear evidence that negative perceptions significantly affect TANF and other social welfare policy outcomes, the increasing number of Hispanics across the United States seems to bear a more nuanced, undetermined influence on TANF spending.

Turning to economic factors, Model 4 does not provide evidence in support of the hypothesis that states with higher budget shortfalls will reduce basic assistance spending in the forthcoming year to cover costs. Likewise, the final model does not support the hypothesis that state per capita personal income is negatively associated with basic assistance spending and only weakly implies that states’ unemployment rates are positively correlated with basic assistance expenditures. The dramatic shifts in the magnitude and significance of *pcpi\_regional* and *unemployment* relative to Model 3 are likely to reflect national-level changes in economic conditions. What appears in Model 3 as significant relationships between state-level economic variation and basic assistance spending variation are the spurious result of simultaneous aggregate movements in economic conditions and TANF spending, not potentially causal relationships at the state-by-state level.

Model 4 indicates that a state that experienced a 1% decline in its TANF caseload from the prior year spent, on average, .15% less on basic assistance in the following year. The increase in magnitude relative to Model 3 suggests that isolating the relationship between caseload change and basic assistance expenditures from the aggregate decreases in states’ TANF caseloads increases the direct correlation between decreasing caseloads and reduced basic assistance spending. In other words, even when aggregate trends in caseload are accounted for, states that experienced greater decreases in caseload spent a lower proportion of their TANF block grants on basic assistance – a finding that both corresponds to expectations and sheds light on the observed variation within the overall trend of lower basic assistance spending.

As discussed above, the influence of the work participation requirement on basic assistance spending is theoretically ambiguous. States can reduce the requirement’s burden by either increasing the number of employed recipients through greater basic assistance spending or decreasing the number of unemployed recipients, with the tangential effect of lower basic assistance expenditures. However, as illustrated in Model 4, the empirical relationship between the work participation requirement and basic assistance spending is not ambiguous: States that did not meet their work participation rate spent, on average, 5.102% more on basic assistance in the following year. The highly significant coefficient suggests that states may have responded to not meeting the work participation rate requirement by bringing more employed TANF recipients into the caseload through expanded eligibility or transitional benefits.

Similar to *caseload* and *wpr,* the introduction of time fixed effects in Model 4 increases the magnitude of *liberalism*, suggesting that national changes in political ideology and aggregate changes in other state-level variables served as negative confounders in earlier models. As hypothesized, *liberalism* is positive and significant in Model 4, implying that more progressive state governments allocate a larger proportion of TANF funds to basic assistance. This finding corresponds to the hypothesis concerning the expected relationship between progressivism and basic assistance spending and the well-established relationship between political ideology and social welfare spending more broadly.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

In 1993, President Clinton pledged the “end of welfare as we know it.” Advocates of this policy shift contended that in order to reduce dependency, cut costs, and improve the lives of low-income Americans, the U.S. cash welfare system should be re-oriented to emphasize duties, contracts, and responsibilities. Cash assistance would only be granted on the condition of recipients performing certain actions deemed beneficial for their families and society. With the passage of the PRWORA, TANF became the key link in the paternalist movement; through sanctions, time limits, and work requirements, it would shepherd low-income families along the path toward self-sufficiency.

As we have argued above, it is no longer clear that TANF is a viable foundation for paternalist policymaking. Across the country, states have significantly reduced basic assistance spending, preventing them from using TANF as a basis to force compliance with correctional, paternalistic polices. In place of basic assistance, states are spending a larger portion of TANF funds on other forms of aid: in-kind benefits such as child care, services such as job training and family planning, and work supports such as refundable tax credits. On the one hand, increased expenditures on these programs seems to affirm the PRWORA’s explicit goals for TANF. States are spending more on programs that help people find work or aid already working families. Yet, these programs are largely operating outside the parameters of the work requirements and time limits linked to receipt of TANF cash assistance.

The shift away from basic assistance spending marks the emergence of a new post-PROWRA welfare system. While it is difficult to draw a clear line between states with welfare programs still founded upon cash assistance and those that have moved beyond cash assistance, we show above that it is possible to provide a general outline of a post-PRWORA state. In general, a post-PRWORA state has a smaller TANF caseload composed of a higher proportion of African Americans, more conservative state government, and lower unemployment rate relative to other states. It also likely did not meet its work participation rate in the preceding year. States that fit these criteria may spend their TANF dollars in a variety of different ways, but there is a strong likelihood that their basic assistance spending is low. With little expenditures on basic assistance, these states lack the capacity to reach low-income families through cash assistance, requiring them to use other means to try to control their behavior.

The discussion above points to tensions in the foundation of the paternalist agenda, PRWORA legislation, and TANF program. On the one hand, the PRWORA was squarely aimed at increasing work among needy families. It removed the legal entitlement to cash benefits recipients enjoyed under the AFDC program and mandated that states enforce time limits and work requirements. In part as a way to further this end, it also devolved significant policymaking authority to the states, allowing them to even more closely focus their TANF programs on requiring and supporting work among recipients. Yet, devolution under the PRWORA also enhanced the ability of states to undermine its own paternalistic goals for TANF. For the PRWORA’s goal was not just to provide work programs to low-income families but to require recipients to participate. Mandating work, however, requires a TANF assistance program that reaches a wide swath of a state’s eligible families.

What does the rise of post-PRWORA states say about paternalism today? While less prevalent in cash assistance policy, recent policy developments at the federal and state levels suggests the idea still holds sway. At the federal level, legislation in the House of Representatives proposes to shorten the window of time some participants in the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) can receive benefits, while regulations proposed by Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson would impose work requirements on some recipients of housing assistance (Acs, Wheaton, and Waxman 2018; Thrush 2018b). Meanwhile, a handful of states have begun rolling out work requirements for their Medicaid recipients and re-implementing SNAP time limits waived after the economic recession before federally required (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2018). If the decrease in basic assistance spending entails a reduction in the reach of paternalism, current events suggest that states and the federal government seem to be shifting their focus to other means-tested programs, such as SNAP, housing assistance, and Medicaid in order to impose the types of requirements, sanctions, and limitations institutionalized by the PRWORA.

**I remain of the opinion that we need something to punch up the post-PRWORA observation.**

* **Can we name the post-PRWORA states?**
* **Can we identify patterns in their policymaking (aside from the reduction in cash assistance)?**
* **Are these states advancing (or adopting) the post-PRWORA agenda of extending paternalism to other means-tested programs?Appendix on Data**

From FY 1997 to 2014, states reported federal TANF block grant and MOE spending to the Department of Health and Human Services via the ACF-196 form. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA), an office within the ACF, oversees TANF expenditure reporting and publishes annual TANF financial reports on its website.[[12]](#footnote-12) The published data from the ACF-196 includes federal and state expenditure levels for each state and the District of Columbia across nineteen spending categories. The reporting categories on the ACF-196 did not change between FY 1997 and 2014, providing consistency in the published expenditure data.

The use of the same reporting form and categories caters to researchers interested in TANF expenditure data, but two problems with the structure of the ACF-196 complicate accurate analysis. First, the form contained broad reporting categories that were too inflexible to accurately trace changes in states’ spending over time or compare similar types of spending in different states. Without precise reporting categories, many states struggled to pair new uses for TANF dollars with available reporting categories and consequently reported spending increases in the broadly-defined other non-assistance and assistance under prior law categories (Johnson 2013; Derr et al. 2009). In other cases, the ACF-196 form’s reporting categories lacked clear boundaries, leading states to report similar expenditures in different categories. As the former Director of the OFA noted in regard to the ACF-196, “a state may report TANF spending for pre-school under ‘Prevention of Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies’ or ‘Other’ and possibly even ‘Child Care,’ although the instructions specifically exclude such expenditures under child care” (Johnson 2013).

In addition to broadly-defined expenditure categories, accurate analysis of the TANF expenditure data is complicated by how states reported errors. If a state discovered an error in a prior year’s report, the margin of error was subtracted or added to the respective reporting category on the current year’s ACF-196, indistinguishably blurring actual and corrected spending. The negative expenditure values in the published expenditure data are obvious evidence of this accounting method, but such cases are only the ostensible corrections where the margin of error exceeded the actual expenditures in the current year. Any value in the expenditure data can include an upward or downward correction for an error in a prior year’s report. Thus, in the words of the former Director of the OFA, it is “impossible to determine the actual TANF expenditures that occur in a fiscal year” (Johnson 2013).

The flaws in the TANF expenditure data are not completely surmountable. It is impossible to know exactly where and when states misreported expenditures or corrected a prior year’s expenditure report in a later year’s report. Nevertheless, the problems can be mitigated. In order to alleviate the effects of non-mutually exclusive categories, we aggregate the nineteen distinct expenditure categories in the published data into ten using, with a few minor exceptions, the categories already developed by Schott et al. (2015). As can be seen in Table A.1, the aggregate categories are composed of similar ACF-196 reporting categories, reducing the probability that similar types of spending are treated as distinct in the analysis.

In order to mitigate the effects of corrections for errors in prior year expenditure reports, we create three-year moving averages of the data.[[13]](#footnote-13) The three-year moving averages reduce the short-term variation in spending and prevalence of proportional expenditure values above one or below zero—the ostensible instances of states’ correcting prior years’ expenditures in the current fiscal year—from seventy-nine to fifty-six. Thus, while an improvement upon the original data, three-year moving averages do not clean all the cases of prior year corrections. Nevertheless, there is a balance to strike between clean and interesting data. Including more years in the average would capture more cases of prior year corrections, but it would also obscure actual changes in spending and inhibit longitudinal analysis.

After synthesizing the original reporting categories into aggregate categories and creating three-year moving averages, our dataset includes TANF expenditures across ten categories for every state and the District of Columbia from FY 1998 to 2013 expressed as percentages of total TANF expenditures, where total TANF expenditures equal federal and MOE assistance and non-assistance expenditures plus TANF funds transferred to the Social Services Block Grant and Child Care Development Fund.

**Appendix Tables**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A.1: TANF Spending Categories** | | |
| **Spending Types (used in Figure 3)** | **Aggregate Categories** | **ACF-196 Reporting Categories** |
| Basic assistance | Basic assistance | Basic assistance |
| Work-related, in-kind, and  short-term benefits | Child care | Child care (assistance) |
| Child care (non-assistance) |
| Transfers to the Child Care Development Fund |
| Work-related activities and supports | Transportation and supportive  services (assistance) |
| Transportation (non-assistance) |
| Work-related activities and expenses |
| Individual development accounts |
| Refundable tax credits | Refundable earned income tax credits |
| Individual development accounts |
| Diversion benefits | Non-recurrent short-term benefits |
| Marriage and pregnancy | Prevention of out of wedlock  pregnancies |
| Two-parent family formation and maintenance |
| Other | Expenditures under prior law | Assistance under prior law |
| Non-assistance under prior law |
| Other non-assistance | Other |
| Administration and systems | Administration |
| Systems |
| Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) | Transfers to the Social Services Block Grant |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A.2 - Annual Mean Expenditures by Expenditure Category** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal year | Administration and Systems | Basic Assistance | Child Care | Other Non-Assistance | Marriage and Pregnancy | Prior Expenditures | Diversion Benefits | Transferred to SSBG | Refundable Tax Credits | Work-Related Activities and Supports |
| 1998 | 11.1 | 55.0 | 12.0 | 11.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.2 | 0.0 | 7.7 |
| 1999 | 10.9 | 45.2 | 16.8 | 10.6 | 0.6 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 5.4 | 0.3 | 10.0 |
| 2000 | 10.2 | 38.6 | 19.1 | 9.8 | 1.4 | 2.9 | 0.5 | 5.1 | 0.8 | 11.9 |
| 2001 | 10.0 | 35.5 | 18.7 | 9.9 | 2.6 | 4.3 | 0.8 | 4.1 | 1.2 | 13.8 |
| 2002 | 9.4 | 34.9 | 18.4 | 10.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 | 0.9 | 3.8 | 1.7 | 13.7 |
| 2003 | 8.8 | 35.2 | 18.4 | 10.7 | 3.5 | 4.3 | 0.9 | 3.7 | 1.9 | 12.9 |
| 2004 | 8.8 | 35.6 | 18.2 | 11.3 | 3.2 | 4.2 | 0.8 | 3.6 | 2.2 | 12.3 |
| 2005 | 8.8 | 34.6 | 18.5 | 12.0 | 3.2 | 4.3 | 0.9 | 3.7 | 2.3 | 12.2 |
| 2006 | 8.8 | 31.7 | 19.3 | 12.2 | 3.7 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 3.8 | 2.6 | 12.4 |
| 2007 | 8.8 | 28.0 | 19.7 | 13.0 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 1.3 | 3.9 | 3.2 | 12.5 |
| 2008 | 8.5 | 25.5 | 19.4 | 14.1 | 6.1 | 5.1 | 1.6 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 12.3 |
| 2009 | 8.0 | 25.0 | 17.9 | 14.7 | 6.6 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 3.4 | 4.5 | 12.7 |
| 2010 | 7.4 | 25.5 | 16.8 | 15.5 | 6.6 | 5.1 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 4.9 | 12.6 |
| 2011 | 7.3 | 25.6 | 16.4 | 16.6 | 6.6 | 5.0 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 5.3 | 12.5 |
| 2012 | 7.5 | 24.7 | 16.6 | 17.6 | 6.9 | 5.1 | 2.2 | 3.3 | 5.3 | 11.8 |
| 2013 | 7.9 | 23.6 | 17.0 | 18.4 | 7.2 | 4.8 | 2.1 | 3.4 | 5.5 | 11.5 |
| **Table A.3 - Annual Median Expenditures by Expenditure Category** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal year | Administration and Systems | Basic Assistance | Child Care | Other Non-Assistance | Marriage and Pregnancy | Prior Expenditures | Diversion Benefits | Transferred to SSBG | Refundable Tax Credits | Work-Related Activities and Supports |
| 1998 | 10.9 | 53.1 | 11.2 | 7.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.0 | 0.0 | 5.6 |
| 1999 | 10.3 | 45.1 | 16.0 | 7.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 9.3 |
| 2000 | 9.6 | 38.5 | 17.7 | 8.5 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.6 | 0.0 | 11.0 |
| 2001 | 9.4 | 33.8 | 18.5 | 5.9 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.6 | 0.0 | 12.5 |
| 2002 | 9.0 | 35.2 | 17.8 | 7.2 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 3.9 | 0.0 | 12.3 |
| 2003 | 8.6 | 35.1 | 17.9 | 7.3 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 12.0 |
| 2004 | 8.5 | 36.1 | 17.3 | 7.5 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 11.7 |
| 2005 | 8.5 | 34.8 | 16.3 | 7.8 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 11.7 |
| 2006 | 8.6 | 30.0 | 19.1 | 7.7 | 1.7 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 11.9 |
| 2007 | 8.3 | 28.2 | 18.4 | 9.0 | 2.2 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 0.0 | 11.5 |
| 2008 | 8.0 | 25.1 | 18.5 | 9.9 | 3.1 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 11.3 |
| 2009 | 7.6 | 24.4 | 15.3 | 9.3 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 11.0 |
| 2010 | 7.2 | 23.1 | 14.6 | 11.0 | 2.1 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 3.3 | 0.0 | 11.3 |
| 2011 | 7.0 | 22.6 | 13.7 | 12.3 | 1.7 | 1.1 | 1.5 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 10.8 |
| 2012 | 7.1 | 23.2 | 14.4 | 12.8 | 2.2 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 9.8 |
| 2013 | 7.5 | 22.0 | 12.8 | 13.4 | 1.5 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 3.8 | 0.0 | 9.0 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A.4: Comparing Regression Output Across Three Data Cleaning Methods** | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | *Dependent variable:* | | |
|  |  | | |
|  | Basic Assistance Expenditures as a Percentage of Total Expenditures | | |
|  | Raw Percentages | Moving Averages of Percentages | Percentages of Moving Averages |
|  | | | |
| Percent of caseload that is African American | -.263\* | -.249\* | -.253\* |
| (.083) | (.068) | (.081) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Percent of caseload that is Hispanic | .141 | .134 | .180 |
|  | (.113) | (.093) | (.110) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Government liberalism | -.009 | .001 | -.003 |
|  | (.028) | (.023) | (.028) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Unemployment rate | .160\* | .150\* | .119\* |
|  | (.027) | (.022) | (.026) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Per capita income (in thousands) | .020 | .029\* | .023 |
| (.018) | (.014) | (.017) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Fiscal balance as a percent of spending | 4.397\* | 5.102\* | 4.929\* |
| (1.303) | (1.064) | (1.268) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Percent change in caseload | .737 | .643 | .667 |
|  | (.408) | (.334) | (.397) |
|  |  |  |  |
| Work participation rate | .011 | .153 | .094 |
|  | (.215) | (.175) | (.208) |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | | | |
| Time Fixed Effects | Yes | Yes | Yes |
|  | | | |
| Observations | 777 | 777 | 778 |
| R2 | .526 | .634 | .556 |
| Adjusted R2 | .477 | .597 | .510 |
| F Statistic | 33.923\* (df = 23; 704) | 53.011\* (df = 23; 704) | 38.328\* (df = 23; 705) |
|  | | | |
| *Note:* | \*p < 0.05 | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A.5 - Descriptions of Independent Variables** | | |  | |  | |
| Variable Name | Description | Year | | Citation | | Notes |
| *african\_americans* | The percent of a state's adult TANF caseload who identity as  African American. | fiscal | | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration of Children and Families. "Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients." https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource-library/search. | | N.A. |
| *caseload* | Percentage change in a state's annual average monthly TANF and SSP-MOE assistance recipients. | calendar | | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration of Children and Families. "TANF Caseload Data." https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource-library/search. | | N.A. |
| *hispanics* | The percent of a state's adult TANF caseloads who identity as Hispanic, regardless of race. | fiscal | | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration of Children and Families. "Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients." https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource-library/search. | | N.A. |
| *fiscal\_stability* | A state's total remaining budgetary balance -- ending balance plus "rainy day" funds -- as a percent of total expenditures. | fiscal | | National Association of State Budget Officers. *The Fiscal Survey of the States.* https://www.nasbo.org/mainsite/reports-data/fiscal-survey-of-states/fiscal-survey-archives. | | Budgetary data is collected from the appendices to the fall editions of *The* *Fiscal Survey of States*. |
| *liberalism* | GOVTIDEOs, t = (.25)[(POW:DEM:LOWs,t)(ID:DEM:LOWs,t) + (POW:REP:LOWs,t)(ID:REP:LOWs,t)] + (.25)[(POW:DEM:UPPs,t)(ID:DEM:UPPs,t) + (POW:REP:UPPs,t)(ID:REP:UPPs,t)] + (.50)[ID:GOVs,t]. Where *GOVTIDEO* is the government ideology of state *s* in year *t*; *POW:DEM:LOW*, *POW:REP:LOW, POW:DEM:UPP*, and *POW:REP:UPP* capture, respectively, the proportional control of the democratic and republican parties in the upper and lower legislative chambers in state *s* in year *t*; *ID:DEM:LOW, ID:REP:LOW, ID:DEM:UPP,* and *ID:REP:UPP* measure, respectively, the political ideologies of the democratic and republican parties in the upper and lower legislative chambers in state *s* in year *t*; and *ID:GOV* is the ideology of the governor in state *s* in year *t*. | calendar | | Berry, W. D., Fording, R. C., Ringquist, E. J., Hanson, R. L., and Klarner, C. E. 2010. Measuring Citizen and Government Ideology in the U.S. States: A Re-appraisal. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly.* 10(2), pp. 117-135. | | See the *inst6014\_nom* variable in the Correlates of State Policy Project Codebook (https://www.ippsr.msu.edu/public-policy/correlates-state-policy). |
| *pcpi\_regional* | A state's per capita personal income in thousands of 2013 dollars, controlling for price differences between the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast regions. | calendar | | U.S. Department of Commerce - Bureau of Economic Analysis. "SA1 - Personal Income Summary: Personal Income, Population, Per Capita Personal Income." https://www.bea.gov/itable/. | | Incomes are rescaled to 2013 price levels using the regional Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?cu). |
| *unemployment* | A state's unemployment rate among its civilian noninstitutional population. | calendar | | U.S. Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Statewide Data - Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, annual averages." https://www.bls.gov/lau/rdscnp16.htm#data | | N.A. |
| *wpr* | A dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if a state did not meet its all-family TANF and SSP-MOE adjusted work participation rate. | fiscal | | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration of Children and Families. "Work Participation Rates". https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource-library/search. | | N.A. |

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1. Some states allow all or some nonparent caretakers to decide whether they would like to be included in the unit. In other states, nonparent caretakers are never included in the unit. SSI recipients, undocumented immigrants, and certain other types of recently arrived immigrants are not included in the assistance unit in any state. See Giannarelli et al. (2017) for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Table III.B.4 in Giannarelli et al. (2017) for more information on activity requirements for caretakers excluded from the unit. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Both percentage changes use national mean amounts expressed in real dollars using the unadjusted CPI. See tables L3 and L5 in Giannarelli et al. (2017) for the nominal eligibility and benefit amounts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The PRWORA apportioned $2 billion for a contingency fund to support states facing difficult economic conditions and, in order to further aid states during the 2009 recession, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allocated $5 billion for basic assistance, emergency assistance, and employment subsidies in FY 2009 and 2010. However, the federal block grant constitutes the vast majority of federal TANF funding and does not alter funding based on changes in need (Falk 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See the appendix for the full list and description of categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more information on “other” spending, see Table A.1 in the appendix, Derr et al. (2009), and Office of Community Services (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The boxplots in Figure 4 display annual median expenditures (marked by the thick black line) and the first and third quartiles (the upper and lower ends of the “box”). The lines protruding from the boxes equal the distance between the first or third quartile and the value furthest from the respective quartile that does not exceed 1.5 times the difference between the first and third quartiles. Expenditure values either greater or less than 1.5 times the difference between the first and third quartiles are marked as outliers. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Data­are from the fall versions of the National Association of State Budget Officers’ *Fiscal Survey of the States*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. There were only four instances of a state not meeting its work participation rate requirement before FY 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 suspended work participation standard requirements for FY 2009-2011. For more details on what constitutes being “engaged in work” and the changes to work requirement calculations see (Falk 2017, 16–18). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In this paper, we equate “statistically significant” with having a p-value of less than .05 in a two-tailed test. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/data-reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The moving averages equal the three-year moving average of the quotient of basic assistance spending and total TANF expenditures. See Table A.2 for regression output using raw percentages (basic assistance spending divided by total TANF expenditures, expressed as a percentage) and the percentages of the moving averages (the three-year moving averages of basic assistance spending divided by the three-year moving average of total TANF expenditures, expressed as a percentage). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)