States’ broad control over their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs for low-income families prompts two over-arching questions. First, how have states spent TANF funds since the creation of the program under the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)? Have states kept expenditures at similar levels over time or have they taken advantage of the PRWORA’s devolution of authority to reshape welfare spending? And if changes have occurred, are there broad trends among states or do states follow distinctive trajectories? Second, why do states spend TANF funds in particular ways? What factors—political, economic, or demographic—account for any observed variation in states’ TANF expenditure decisions?

This paper aims to address both the descriptive and explanatory questions prompted by the PRWORA and TANF. Using TANF financial data published by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families (ACF), I detail the evolution of states’ TANF spending between FY 1998 and 2013. While similar descriptive analyses have been conducted (cf. Schott et al. 2015), I believe my approach to addressing the flaws in the data introduced by how states reported TANF expenditures to the ACF adds a level of precision unachieved in prior studies. Using my cleaned dataset, I illustrate how TANF spending has evolved and diversified over time as states shifted funds away from basic assistance toward other policy areas, such as marriage and pregnancy programs, other non-assistance expenditures, and refundable tax credit programs.

With the descriptive analysis in hand, I turn to a fixed effects regression model to examine whether state-level factors can account for the most striking change in states’ TANF expenditures: the 31.4% reduction in mean basic assistance expenditures between FY 1998 and 2013. By examining four hypotheses concerning the influence of race and ethnicity, political ideology, economic conditions, and institutions and policy developments, I demonstrate that while a variety of factors significantly correlate with states’ basic assistance spending, state-level variables cannot account for the aggregate reduction in basic assistance expenditures. Thus, while state-level factors are important in understanding differences in TANF spending across states, they are incapable of explaining broad national trends in social welfare spending over time.

**II**

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) reshaped the substance and underlying aims of U.S. social policy. Among several important changes instituted by the legislation, the most notable was the creation of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in place of the primary cash assistance welfare program, Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Established by the 1935 Social Security Act as Aid for Dependent Children, AFDC originally sought to assist states in aiding deprived dependent children. The program’s scope expanded in the following decades as the federal government began to assist states in supporting the caretaker relatives of needy children (1950), unemployed parents and their children (1961), and the spouse of an unemployed or disabled parent (1962) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation 1998). By 1962, the broadened scope of the program required a change in name and Aid for Dependent Children became Aid for Families with Dependent Children.

The states and federal government shared the costs of AFDC’s administration and benefits. The federal government reimbursed states for 50% of administrative costs and between 50% and 83% of benefits, depending on the state’s per-capita income. Under AFDC, federal matching funds were not capped and states had wide flexibility over eligibility and benefit calculations. Thus, the amount of federal funds received by a state was in-part a function of a given state’s policy decisions, varying between states and across time (Falk 2015). As AFDC evolved from a depression-era source of support for poor children to a social safety net program for poor and unemployed families, the number of families receiving benefits increased at an exponential rate, peaking at 5.05 million cases in the average month of fiscal year (FY) 1994 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Family Assistance 2004). Amid the fiscal pressures of an expanding caseload and calls for a new approach to welfare that would emphasize work rather than entitlements, the 1996 PRWORA repealed AFDC and instituted TANF. In contrast to AFDC, TANF provides each state with a block grant and the discretion to create its own welfare program for low-income families. The TANF block grants are not adjusted for inflation or, with a few minor exceptions, changes in need within states.[[1]](#footnote-1) 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; they 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 75% of states’ FY 1994 contributions to AFDC and other low-income public assistance programs and can increase to 80% if a state fails to move enough of its TANF recipients into work activities (ibid).

The PRWORA imposes few restrictions on states’ TANF programs and states are empowered to spend federal and MOE funds in any manner “reasonably calculated” to realize 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 (Falk 2014). TANF’s statutory goals allow states to fund a variety of programs and policy areas with TANF funds. States are not required to use the money to fund basic assistance (i.e., monthly cash payments) to needy families, but can use the funds to fund a wide variety of programs, such as child care assistance that aids low-income caretakers find full-time employment or refundable tax credits that increase incomes for working families.

From FY 1997 to 2014, states reported federal and MOE TANF spending to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) via the ACF-196 form. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA), an office within the ACF, oversees the reporting of states’ TANF expenditures and publishes annual TANF financial reports on their website.[[2]](#footnote-2) 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 available to states 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 Director of the OFA noted in regard to the ACF-196 reporting system, “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” (ibid).

In addition to broadly-defined expenditure categories, accurate analysis of the TANF expenditure data is complicated by how states reported errors in prior year expenditure reports. 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 Director of the OFA, it is “impossible to determine the actual TANF expenditures that occur in a fiscal year” (ibid).

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, I 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 (see the Appendix), 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, I assume that most adjustments were for errors in the previous year’s expenditure report and create three-year moving averages of the data.[[3]](#footnote-3) 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. Even if more years are included in the moving average, it is still possible for the earliest year within the average to include corrections for the next earliest year. Hence, I believe using three-year averages is the best technique available for retaining the valuable insights contained in the longitudinal data while also cleaning, to the extent possible, the flaws introduced by the states’ reporting procedure.

**III**

After synthesizing the original reporting categories into aggregate categories and creating three-year moving averages, my 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.[[4]](#footnote-4) Figure 1 presents annual mean expenditures by category.[[5]](#footnote-5) In FY 1998, 85.8% of states’ expenditures occurred in four categories—basic assistance, child care, work-related activities and supports, and administration and systems—with 55.0% of total spending reported as basic assistance. Four other categories, marriage and pregnancy programs, diversion benefits, expenditures under prior law, and refundable tax credits, each comprised less than .1% of total TANF spending. By FY 2013, the composition of aggregate TANF spending had greatly diversified. None of the ten spending categories constituted less than 2% of total TANF expenditures and the four categories that comprised 85.8% of total spending in FY 1998 now constituted 60%, with the vast share of the decrease stemming from the 31.4% reduction in proportional basic assistance expenditures.



As Figure 1 illustrates, the changes in the proportional makeup of total TANF spending stemmed, in large part, from increased spending on policy areas that occupied a small share of total expenditures in the years immediately following the passage of the PRWORA. Between FY 1998 and 2013, the share of total TANF spending constituted by marriage and pregnancy programs, expenditures under prior law, diversion benefits, and refundable tax credits increased from .04% to 19.6%, with marriage and pregnancy program expenditures constituting the largest share of the increase (36.6%). As shown in greater detail in Figure 2, the increase in marriage and pregnancy program expenditures primarily stemmed from a few states’ spending decisions.[[6]](#footnote-6) Between FY 1998 and 2005, median marriage and pregnancy program expenditures did not exceed .8% of total TANF spending, while states such as New Jersey and Louisiana reported sizable increases in proportional expenditures. By FY 2005, New Jersey and Louisiana spent, respectively, 34.0% and 25.3% of their total TANF funds on marriage and pregnancy prevention programs. While median proportional expenditures increased after FY 2005, outlier states continued to increase mean expenditures. From FY 2010 to 2013, as median expenditures experienced annual fluctuations, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Jersey further increased reported expenditures from their already relatively high levels. By FY 2013, each of the three states reported spending over 40% of their total TANF funds on marriage and pregnancy prevention programs, with Arkansas spending 58.8%.

After states gained greater control of their social welfare spending through the PRWORA, aggregate spending on marriage and pregnancy programs increased. However, parsing the expenditure data by state indicates that the key trend is the growing variation in spending, not increasing expenditures. While a few outlier states increased mean spending, half of the states still spent less than 1.5% of total TANF funds on marriage and pregnancy programs in FY 2013. The overall increase in variation, a descriptive trend echoed by the standard deviation increasing from .1% in FY 1998 to 12.6% in FY 2013, is an initial indicator that states took different paths in creating new TANF programs.

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Similar to marriage and pregnancy program spending, the refundable tax credit category underlines both the role of outlier states in shaping aggregate TANF spending and the increasing variation in states’ spending over time. As Figure 3 illustrates, between FY 1998 and 2013, median expenditures on refundable tax credits never exceeded 0%. In addition, besides in FY 2003 when the third quartile equaled 0.2%, 75% of states did not report any refundable tax credit expenditures between FY 1998 and 2005. Over the same period, however, states such as New York, Kansas, and Minnesota consistently increased the portion of their TANF funds allocated toward refundable tax credits. After FY 2005, as more states began to fund refundable tax credit programs with TANF dollars, outlier states continued to increase their expenditures and by FY 2013, New York, Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska each allocated more than 25% of their total TANF spending to refundable tax credit programs.

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Between FY 1998 and FY 2013, refundable tax credit programs began to occupy a sizable portion of a number of states’ total TANF spending – but, much like with marriage and pregnancy program spending, the trend of increasing expenditures is paired with increasing variation. In FY 1998, mean expenditures on refundable tax credit programs equaled 0.0% with a standard deviation of .04%; in FY 2005, mean spending equaled 2.3% with a standard deviation of 5.2%; and by FY 2013, mean expenditures equaled 5.5% with a standard deviation of 9.2%. Thus, as some states took the opportunity offered by the devolution of authority under the PRWORA to use TANF funds for refundable tax credit programs, many others allocated their expenditures toward other policy areas.

In addition to the significant proportional increases in policy areas, such as marriage and pregnancy programs and refundable tax credits, that occupied less than .1% of total TANF spending in FY 1998, policy areas that constituted large portions of total TANF spending in the years immediately following the passage of the PRWORA also changed in important ways. The share of total TANF spending constituted by other non-assistance spending, for instance, increased from 11.0% in FY 1998 to 18.4% in FY 2013. Figure 4 demonstrates that the proportional increase in aggregate other non-assistance expenditures was not solely the result of a few outlier states. As outlier states such as Colorado, Georgia, and South Carolina began to steadily increase the share of their TANF spending dedicated to other non-assistance after FY 2005, median expenditures experienced a similar increase, rising from 7.8% in FY 2005 to 13.4% in FY 2013. Meanwhile, annual standard deviations increased from 12.7% in FY 1998 to 18.9% in FY 2013, indicating that individual states did diverge within the general trend of increasing other non-assistance spending, but not to the same degree as marriage and pregnancy program or refundable tax credit spending.



Between FY 1998 and 2013, the percentage of aggregate TANF funds spent on basic assistance decreased from 55.0% to 23.6%. The boxplots in Figure 5 illustrate the extent of the decrease in proportional basic assistance expenditures. In the years immediately following the passage of the PRWORA, median basic assistance spending decreased at an average rate of 6.4% per year before increasing slightly in FY 2002. Over the same period, outlier states such as New Mexico and Hawaii decreased proportional basic assistance expenditures, while Idaho, an outlier below the distribution from FY 1998 to 2001, further decreased proportional basic assistance expenditures. After a levelling off and slight uptick in median proportional expenditures between FY 2002 and 2004, the period from FY 2005 to 2010 saw further decreases in basic assistance spending with median expenditures falling from 34.8% to 23.1%.

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As median basic expenditures experienced a second significant decrease after FY 2005, a few states –Maine, California, Alaska, and South Dakota – acted against the overall trend and increased or retained spending at outlier-levels above the distribution. Although each state’s proportional basic assistance spending was high for the respective year, it paled in comparison to historic expenditure levels. None of the four outlier states between FY 2008 and 2013 spent more than the 75th percentile of proportional basic assistance expenditures in FY 1998 (62.6%) and Maine was the only state to exceed the median level of basic assistance spending in FY 1998 (53.1%).

The significant decrease in states’ basic assistance expenditures did not occur alongside widespread changes in the overall variance of the distribution. Mean and median basic assistance expenditures decreased by similar magnitudes, from 55.0% and 53.1% in FY 1998 to 23.6% and 22.0% in FY 2013, and annual standard deviations did not follow any trend, remaining between 10.1% (in FY 2008) and 13.8% in (FY 1999). The shift from basic assistance expenditures to the categories examined above and other policy areas was not driven by the actions of a few outlier states. All states participated in the dramatic secular trend toward spending less of total TANF funds on basic assistance. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that although the overall variation of the distribution remained largely constant as states decreased basic assistance spending, the relative distribution within the distribution was not static. Table 1 illustrates how many of the ten states that spent the most and least on basic assistance in FY 1998 remained within the top or bottom ten in following fiscal years. Three of the ten highest spending states in FY 1998 were still among the ten highest spending states in FY 2013 and only one of the ten lowest spending states in FY 1998 was among the ten lowest spending states in FY 2013. Thus, while the overall distribution of basic assistance spending remained largely constant over time, the relative distribution was fairly dynamic, indicating that states simultaneously participated in the overall trend toward spending less on basic assistance and forged their own unique paths within the distribution.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1 – Number of Ten Highest and Lowest Spending States in FY 1998 that Remained Among the Ten Highest or Lowest in Following Fiscal Years** | | | | | |
|  | FY 2001 | FY 2004 | FY 2007 | FY 2010 | FY 2013 |
| Ten Highest Spending States in FY 1998 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Ten Lowest Spending States in FY 1998 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

**IV**

The preceding descriptive analysis highlights crucial trends in the allocation of states’ TANF expenditures. Since the passage of the PRWORA, states have largely shifted the distribution of TANF funds away from basic assistance toward other policy areas, including refundable tax credits, child care, marriage and pregnancy programs, and other non-assistance. As the boxplots in Figures 2-5 demonstrate, however, changes in aggregate spending mask wide variations in expenditure patterns between states. Even proportional basic assistance spending, which has followed a general decreasing trend over time, shows wide variation across states. In FY 2013, basic assistance spending ranged from comprising 5.8% of total TANF spending in Arizona to 55.1% in Maine.

The aim of the remaining pages is to leverage the variation in states’ proportional expenditures to better understand the most significant change in TANF spending since the passage of the PRWORA: states’ reductions in proportional basic assistance spending. Using four hypotheses concerning the relationships between states’ basic assistance expenditures and states' racial and ethnic diversity, political ideology and party strength, economic vitality, and public policies and institutions, I operationalize eight state-level factors into independent variables. Using a fixed-effects regression model that controls for unobserved variation between states and across time, I demonstrate significant relationships between states’ basic assistance expenditures and a variety of factors, including the size and racial and ethnic composition of states’ caseloads and state governments’ progressivism. Although the number and variety of significant findings demonstrates a complex web of interrelationships between states’ basic assistance expenditures and political, economic, and social factors, I also demonstrate that state-level variation cannot explain the vast majority of the decrease in states’ basic assistance expenditures between FY 1998 and 2013.

Our analysis is grounded upon four hypotheses concerning states’ allocations of basic assistance expenditures: 1) states with more racially and ethnically diverse basic assistance caseloads will have lower proportional basic assistance expenditures; 2) states with more powerful and progressive democratic parties will spend proportionally more on basic assistance; 3) states with more favorable economic conditions will spend less on basic assistance expenditures; and 4) states’ basic assistance expenditures will be sensitive to TANF-specific factors, such as caseload levels and work participation rates, as well as institutional factors, such as states’ fiscal well-being.

*Race and Ethnicity*

Two reinforcing strands in the literature on race and social policy are especially significant when considering the potential relationships between race, ethnicity and states’ basic assistance expenditures. The first concerns the role of racial prejudices toward African Americans in shaping public attitudes of welfare recipients. Studies such as Gilens (1996) note the significant effects of white stereotypes of African American mothers on welfare on white Americans’ support for welfare assistance. Drawing on national survey data and a randomized experiment, Gilens finds that white Americans have significantly more negative attitudes toward African American women on welfare than white women on welfare. Such attitudes translate to opinions of welfare policy, with “racial considerations” serving as “the single most important factor shaping whites’ views of welfare” (p. 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. Soss et al. (2001) note significant positive relationships between the proportion of African Americans receiving TANF benefits in a state and the probability of a state adopting 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 in a state and the probability of a state adopting stricter time limits on TANF benefits and a family cap on benefits.

In another study, Fellowes and Rowe (2004) largely echo the conclusions of Soss et al. (2001). They 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 the mean percentage 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 the mean percentage resulting in significantly less flexible work requirements but less strict TANF benefit eligibility criteria.

Previous’ studies’ findings concerning the important role of race in shaping welfare policy opinions and outcomes necessitates accounting for race and ethnicity in my analysis of states’ basic assistance spending. I expect that states with higher percentages of African Americans and Hispanics in their TANF caseload will, on average, spend less on basic assistance. I operationalize these hypotheses via the variables *african\_americans* and *hispanics.* The former measures the percentage of individuals receiving basic assistance benefits in a state who identify as African American or Black, while the latter measures the percentage of individuals receiving basic assistance benefits in a state who identify as non-white and Hispanic.

*Partisan Control of State Government*

Although the PRWORA was signed into law by a Democratic president, partisanship and ideology are often considered crucial factors in structuring the scope and generosity states’ TANF policies, with conservatives generally critical of cash welfare benefits and liberals more supportive of welfare assistance (Rom 1999). Soss et al. (2001) study of TANF policies supports this intuitive relationship between TANF policy and ideology. On average, the authors find that a state is 31% more likely to adopt strong sanctions for non-compliant TANF recipients if the state government is one standard deviation more conservative than the mean state rather than one standard deviation more liberal. Similarly, a state is 9% more likely to adopt strong sanctions, tougher work requirements, narrower time limits, and a family cap if the state government is one standard deviation more conservative than the mean state rather than one standard deviation more liberal.

Following the general trend in the literature on partisanship and social policy, I expect that more liberal state governments will, on average, spend more on proportional basic assistance expenditures than conservative state governments—a hypothesis operationalized by the variable *liberalism.* Originally developed by Berry et al. (1998), *liberalism* captures 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. The authors originally measured the ideologies of the political parties and governor using interest group ratings, but in Berry et al. (2010) the authors present a slightly different measure of ideology that uses Poole’s (1998) common space coordinates of Congressional roll call votes. Although they correlate strongly, Berry et al. (2010) conclude that the updated measure of ideology is more precise than the original, and it is therefore employed for *liberalism*.

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.

*Economic Conditions*

In addition to race, ethnicity, and partisan affiliation, it is important to consider the effects of state-level economic factors on basic assistance expenditures. In general, I expect that states with stronger economies will, on average, spend less on basic assistance expenditures. A strong economy leads to less unemployment and higher wages, reducing residents’ need for basic assistance benefits. However, economic factors may affect states’ expenditures in different ways, and I therefore include two estimators of a state’s economic vitality: *unemployment*, which measures a state’s annual unemployment rate among the civilian non-institutional population and *pcpi\_regional*, which captures a state’s real per capita personal income in thousands of 2013 dollars controlling for regional price differences.

*TANF and Institutional Factors*

Finally, I also hypothesize that certain TANF-specific and institutional factors will correlate with states’ basic assistance expenditures. Regarding TANF policy, I hypothesize a negative relationship between the number of people receiving basic assistance in a state and the state’s basic assistance expenditures. Since the passage of the PRWORA in 1996, as Figure 6 illustrates, the number of individuals receiving TANF has declined dramatically, with only a small increase following the 2008 financial crisis and recession. The trend is reminiscent of the change in median basic assistance expenditures outlined in Figure 5. Therefore, I include *caseload*, which measures the average monthly recipients of TANF or SSP-MOE benefits in a state in thousands,as a potential explanatory variable in my model.



In addition to accounting for changing caseloads, it is important account for whether a state met its work participation requirement. The PRWORA mandates 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 its 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, as evident in Figure 6, caseloads declined dramatically in the years immediately following the passage of the PRWORA, states easily met this requirement.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 made it more difficult for states to reduce their work participation rates by changing the fiscal year for calculating reductions in caseloads from FY 1995 to FY 2005. However, since 1999 states have also been able reduce the percentage of their caseload that must meet work requirements by spending more on MOE than mandated by federal statute.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In terms of my analysis, I expect that if a state does not meet its work participation rate in the previous fiscal year, it will be more likely to reduce basic assistance expenditures in the following fiscal year, because, in addition to caseload reduction credits and excess MOE spending, states can reduce their work participation rates by tightening eligibility criteria. If a state makes it more difficult to receive basic assistance benefits by, for instance, imposing stricter work requirements, the state reduces the number of unemployed or difficult to employ recipients in the caseload. The resulting caseload ought not only be more likely to meet the work participation requirement, but also be smaller and have higher average incomes, resulting in lower basic assistance expenditures. Thus, I have included in my model *wpr*, a dummy variable that takes the value of one if a state did not meet its work participation rate and zero if it did.

In addition to TANF-specific factors, I also hypothesize that institutional state characteristics will be important in explaining states’ basic assistance expenditures. One institutional aspect that has been noted in case studies as an important factor in shaping states’ expenditures is the fiscal stability of a state (Hahn et al. 2008). If a state under fiscal pressure reduces its spending on basic assistance, it can shift the funds to other policy areas, effectively freeing up state funds. I therefore hypothesize that states will respond to budgetary shortfalls by reducing basic assistance expenditures. As such, I include *fiscal\_stability* in my model, which measures a state’s ending annual fiscal balance and budget stabilization fund (i.e., “rainy day fund”) as a percentage of its annual expenditures.

**V**

Table 1 presents four regression models of states’ basic assistance expenditures as a percentage of total TANF expenditures.[[9]](#footnote-9) Each model includes state fixed effects that control for unobserved, state-specific effects that are constant across time. Model 4, the final model, introduces time fixed effects, which account for unobserved, year-specific effects that are constant across states. Model 1 includes all independent variables except *caseload, unemployment,* and *pcpi\_regional.* The model’s racial and ethnic coefficients are highly significant and negative: A state that experiences a 1% increase in the portion of African Americans in its TANF caseload spends, on average, .007% less on basic assistance in the following fiscal year. Likewise, a state with a 1% increase in the portion of Hispanics in its TANF caseload spends .005% less on basic assistance in the following fiscal year. Model 1 also illustrates a significant relationship between whether a state met its work participation rate requirement in the prior year and its basic assistance spending. On average, states that did not meet their work participation rate requirement spent .034% less on basic assistance in the following fiscal year.

Model 1 displays a number of significant results, but the low adjusted R2 value (.026) indicates that the model accounts for very little of the variation in states’ basic assistance expenditures. Models 2 and 3 improve upon Model 1 by adding *caseload, unemployment,* and *pcpi\_regional*. Model 2 accounts for the size of states’ TANF caseloads and demonstrates that states’ basic assistance spending is positively associated with the number of TANF recipients in the caseload. The addition of 1,000 basic assistance recipients to a state’s TANF caseload leads, on average, to a .001% increase in basic assistance expenditures in the following fiscal year. Including *caseload* also improves upon the explanatory power of the analysis as measured by the adjusted R2, which increases from .026 in Model 1 to .206 in Model 2.

Model 3 builds upon Model 2 with the addition of the economic variables *unemployment* and *pcpi­\_regional.* Both variables are significant and negative in the model, indicating – somewhat counterintuitively – that higher unemployment and higher incomes are associated with lower proportional basic assistance expenditures. Controlling for economic factors also has ramifications for the significance of other variables in the model: *fiscal\_stability* and *liberalism* both become significant and positive and *hispanics* is no longer significant. In addition, the inclusion of *caseload, unemployment,* and *pcpi\_regional* greatly improves the portion of variation in states’ basic assistance expenditures accounted for by the analysis. Compared to Model 1, the adjusted R2 of Model 3 (.466) indicates that caseloads and economic factors account for a sizable share of the variation in states’ spending.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1 - Regression Output** | | | | |
|  | | | | |
|  | *Dependent variable:* | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  | Basic Assistance Expenditures as a Percentage of Total TANF Expenditures | | | |
|  | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|  | | | | |
| african\_americans | -.727\*\*\* | -.427\*\*\* | -.293\*\*\* | -.252\*\*\* |
|  | (.102) | (.095) | (.078) | (.070) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| hispanics | -.539\*\*\* | -.409\*\*\* | .064 | .159\* |
|  | (.138) | (.125) | (.105) | (.094) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| fiscal\_stability | -.043 | -.043 | .043\* | .006 |
|  | (.032) | (.029) | (.025) | (.023) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| caseload (thousands) |  | .064\*\*\* | .038\*\*\* | .020\*\*\* |
|  |  | (.005) | (.004) | (.004) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| liberalism | .017 | .021 | .034\*\* | .045\*\*\* |
|  | (.021) | (.019) | (.016) | (.014) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| wpr | -3.419\*\* | -1.776 | 1.663 | 5.261\*\*\* |
|  | (1.506) | (1.365) | (1.144) | (1.081) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| unemployment |  |  | -1.170\*\*\* | .664\* |
|  |  |  | (.151) | (.340) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| pcpi regional (thousands) |  |  | -1.716\*\*\* | .102 |
|  |  |  | (.111) | (.178) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | | | | |
| Time Fixed Effects | No | No | No | Yes |
|  | | | | |
| Observations | 777 | 777 | 777 | 777 |
| R2 | .094 | .263 | .505 | .622 |
| Adjusted R2 | .026 | .206 | .466 | .583 |
| F Statistic | 14.924\*\*\* (df = 5; 722) | 42.795\*\*\* (df = 6; 721) | 91.639\*\*\* (df = 8; 719) | 50.386\*\*\* (df = 23; 704) |
|  | | | | |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01 | | | |

Model 4, the final model in the analysis, introduces time fixed effects, thereby controlling for unobserved effects that are constant across states in each year. Adding year constants to the model increases the adjusted R2 to .583 and changes the sign and significance of a number of coefficients. The percentage of African Americans and Hispanics, respectively, in a state’s TANF caseload are both significantly associated with basic assistance expenditures, albeit in different directions. On average, states that experienced a 1% increase in the portion of their TANF caseload composed of African Americans spent .003% less on basic assistance in the following fiscal year while a state that saw a 1% increase in the portion of Hispanics in its TANF caseload spent .002% more on basic assistance in the next fiscal year.

The introduction of time fixed effects in Model 4 does not impact the significance or size of *caseload*, although the magnitude of the relationship between a state’s caseload size and basic assistance expenditures is reduced from .0004 in Model 3 to .0002. Likewise, *liberalism* is positive and significant in Model 4, indicating that, on average, states with more liberal governments spent more on basic assistance in the next fiscal year. The work participation rate dummy variable, *wpr*, is also positive and significant in Model 4. In contrast to Model 1, Model 4 demonstrates that after controlling for time fixed effects, caseload size, and economic factors, *wpr* is positively associated with basic assistance expenditures*.* On average, states that did not meet their work participation rate allocated .053% more to basic assistance in the following fiscal year. Including time fixed effects in Model 4 also reshapes the relationships between economic factors and basic assistance expenditures posited in Model 3. In contrast to the inverse relationship posited in Model 3, *unemployment* is positively associated with basic assistance expenditures in Model 4. With year constants in place, a state that faces a 1% increase in its unemployment rate will, on average, spend .007% more on basic assistance in the next fiscal year. Likewise, introducing time fixed effects in Model 4 impacts the relationship between per capita income, as measured by *pcpi\_regional,* and basic assistance expenditures, rendering the coefficient insignificant and imperceptible.

Finally, although masked in Table 1 for readability, the coefficients on the time fixed effects in Model 4 are included below in Table 2. The coefficients are all highly significant and of a large magnitude. Holding constant the eight state-level independent variables specified in Model 4, states spent, on average, 29.6% less on proportional basic assistance in fiscal year 2013 than 1998. Therefore, while Model 4 demonstrates a number of significant relationships between the operationalized variables and states’ basic assistance expenditures, it also highlights that unspecified aggregate trends played a substantial role in shaping states’ TANF spending decisions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table 2 – Coefficients of Time Fixed Effects from Model 4** | |
| Fiscal year | Coefficients |
| 1999 | -6.690\*\*\* |
|  | (1.432) |
| 2000 | -11.896\*\*\* |
|  | (1.465) |
| 2001 | -14.738\*\*\* |
|  | (1.544) |
| 2002 | -15.283\*\*\* |
|  | (1.603) |
| 2003 | -15.357\*\*\* |
|  | (1.683) |
| 2004 | -15.277\*\*\* |
|  | (1.746) |
| 2005 | -15.844\*\*\* |
|  | (1.768) |
| 2006 | -18.507\*\*\* |
|  | (1.783) |
| 2007 | -21.963\*\*\* |
|  | (1.857) |
| 2008 | -25.745\*\*\* |
|  | (1.993) |
| 2009 | -26.359\*\*\* |
|  | (2.117) |
| 2010 | -27.898\*\*\* |
|  | (2.577) |
| 2011 | -28.187\*\*\* |
|  | (2.670) |
| 2012 | -28.137\*\*\* |
|  | (2.635) |
| 2013 | -29.605\*\*\* |
|  | (2.596) |
|  | \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01 |

**VI**

The results of the four models in Table 1 present a number of significant findings, especially when viewed in the context of my four guiding hypotheses. First, as Model 4 demonstrates, race and ethnicity significantly correlate with states’ basic assistance expenditures. As hypothesized, the proportion of African Americans in a state’s caseload is inversely related to a state’s basic assistance spending, a finding consistent with the conclusions of Gilens (1996), Fellowes and Rowe (2004), and Soss et al. (2001). While the proportion of Hispanics in a state’s TANF caseload is also significant in Model 4, it is not in the hypothesized direction. The four models in Table 1 illustrate an interesting evolution of the *hispanics* coefficient – an evolution that does not occur with *african\_americans.* In Models 1 and 2, before the introduction of economic variables or time fixed effects, *hispanics* is significant and, as hypothesized, inversely related to basic assistance expenditures. The introduction of economic variables in Model 3 makes *hispanics* insignificant, indicating that much of the variation captured by the coefficient in Models 1 and 2 is the result of omitted variable bias, but as with the economic variables themselves, this finding is deemed a spurious result of aggregate trends once time fixed effects are introduced in Model 4. Ultimately, while the direction of *hispanics* does not fit with my hypothesis, it is not unprecedented. For instance, as mentioned above, Fellowes and Rowe (2004) find an inverse relationship between the percentage of Latinos receiving TANF benefits in a state and the flexibility of work requirements, but also a significant, inverse relationship between the percentage of Latinos receiving TANF benefits in a state and the strictness of TANF eligibility criteria.

Turning to my second hypothesis, the positive coefficient of *liberalism* in Model 4 indicates that more progressive state governments are more willing to allocates funds to basic assistance. Such a finding corresponds to my hypothesis and the established literature on political ideology and social welfare spending. However, the small size of the coefficient (.0004) indicates that the relationship between ideology and basic assistance spending is not very strong. The mean standard deviation in states’ progressive ideology between FY 1998 and 2013 is 14.9. Thus, a one standard deviation change in political ideology results in only a .006% increase in the following fiscal year’s basic assistance spending.

Third, I hypothesized that improving economic conditions, as measured by states’ unemployment rates and per capita personal incomes, would correlate with lower basic assistance spending. Model 3 provides mixed evidence in support of this hypothesis with higher incomes and higher unemployment correlating with lower basic assistance expenditures. However, the introduction of time fixed effects in Model 4 demonstrates that these relationships are spurious and likely stem from average increases in unemployment and incomes and decreases in basic assistance expenditures, not causal effects. After time fixed effects are introduced, *pcpi\_regional* is insignificant, but *unemployment* is positive and significant, a result consistent with my hypothesis.

Fourth and finally, I hypothesized that TANF-specific and institutional factors are important for understanding states’ basic assistance expenditures. As expected, *caseload* is a key explanatory variable in the analysis. The size of states’ caseloads is significantly and directly associated with states’ basic assistance expenditures in Models 2-4 and adds a sizable degree of explanatory power to the analysis, as measured by the adjusted R2. Nevertheless, once all variables and time fixed effects are included, *caseload* does not bear an outsized impact on states’ basic assistance expenditures relative to other factors. Although the coefficients’ magnitudes cannot be easily compared, the fact that *caseload* is but one of six significant relationships posited in Model 4 demonstrates that the simultaneous, symbiotic decreases in caseloads and basic assistance expenditures between FY 1998 and 2013 are not explanatorily exhaustive. Caseload decreases, while important, cannot fully describe the variation in states’ basic assistance expenditures.

In addition to the size of states’ TANF caseloads, I also hypothesized that states that did not meet their work participation rate requirement would spend less on basic assistance in the following fiscal year. Model 4 demonstrates that *wpr* significantly correlates with states’ expenditures but in the positive direction. States that fell short of their work participation requirement responded by increasing basic assistance expenditures by .053% in the following fiscal year. Such a finding runs contrary to my argument that states would tighten eligibility criteria to increase the probability of meeting the work participation requirement and consequently end up spending less on basic assistance. Instead of tightening eligibility criteria, states may have responded to not meeting the work participation requirement by granting small sums of money to TANF recipients who found employment and have, for all intents and purposes, exited the program. The payments would allow the state to increase the portion of its caseload employed in work-related activities and, while nominal, increase the portion of the state’s TANF funds allocated to basic assistance. Another possible explanation of the positive coefficient on *wpr* is that states viewed basic assistance spending as a means to increase employment opportunities. The additional financial assistance provided by increased basic assistance spending could provide recipients with the necessary funds to capitalize a business, purchase needed work equipment, or pay for child care, increasing the probability of finding employment.

Lastly, Model 4 illustrates that the institutional variable *fiscal\_stability* is insignificant, providing no evidence in support of my hypothesis that states with budget shortfalls shifted funds from basic assistance to other policy areas in order to free up non-TANF funds for other purposes. The coefficient is positive and significant in Model 3, indicating, as hypothesized, that states with larger budget surpluses spend more on basic assistance in the following year, but the relationship disappears with the introduction of time fixed effects. Therefore, the correlation between the variables in Model 3 appears to be a product of aggregate decreases in both basic assistance spending and budget surpluses, not a potentially causal effect.

Ultimately, the regression analysis supports a number of my guiding hypotheses as well as the general argument that political, economic, social, and institutional factors can explain some of the variation in states’ basic assistance expenditures. However, although my model does provide a number of significant findings, it is important to view it within the context of the fixed effects’ coefficients in Table 2. On average, holding constant the eight operationalized state-level variables, states spent 29.6% less on basic assistance in FY 2013 than 1998. The magnitude of the fixed effect coefficients indicates that the vast share of the decrease in basic assistance expenditures since the passage of the PRWORA stemmed from cross-state, underlying trends that are not captured by state-level factors. The coefficients on the state-level factors are simply too small and, besides caseload size, lack the dramatic changes necessary to account for the decrease in mean expenditures.

The overall aim of this paper was to display overall trends and changes in the proportional makeup of TANF spending since the passage of the PRWORA in as precise a manner as possible given the flaws in the published expenditure data. The initial descriptive analysis demonstrated that states’ TANF spending has shifted away from basic assistance since FY 1998 toward a variety of other policy areas. The dramatic decrease in basic assistance spending, as illustrated by the fixed effects regression analysis, cannot be properly described by state-level factors even though some amount of the variation in states’ expenditures can be ascribed to political, social, economic, and institutional factors. Such findings underscore the complex web of state and national-level forces that shape welfare spending in the United States. TANF’s creation paved the way for a new approach to assisting low-income families, but also provided states with the authority to make spending decisions that have yet to be fully understood.

**Appendix Tables**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table A.1 - ACF-196 Expenditure Categories and Corresponding Aggregate Categories** | |
| ACF-196 Reporting Categories | Aggregate Categories |
| Basic Assistance | Basic Assistance |
| Child Care (assistance)  Child Care (non-assistance)  Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) | Child Care |
| Transportation and Supportive Services (assistance)  Work Related Activities and Expenses (non-assistance)  Transportation (non-assistance)  Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) | Work-Related Activities and Supports |
| Assistance Under Prior Law  Non-Assistance Under Prior Law | Expenditures Under Prior Law |
| Refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (non-assistance)  Other Refundable Tax Credits (non-assistance) | Refundable Tax Credits |
| Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits | Diversion Benefits |
| Prevention of Out of Wedlock Pregnancies (non-assistance)  Two-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance | Marriage and Pregnancy |
| Other (non-assistance) | Other Non-Assistance |
| Administration (non-assistance)  Systems (non-assistance) | Administration and Systems |
| Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) | Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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% |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A.4 - Regression Output of Three Data Cleaning Methods** | | | |
|  | | | |
|  | *Dependent variable:* | | |
|  |  | | |
|  | Basic Assistance Expenditures as a Percentage of Total Expenditures | | |
|  | Raw Proportions | Moving Averages of Proportions | Proportions of Moving Averages |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|  | | | |
| african\_americans | -.268\*\*\* | -.252\*\*\* | -.281\*\*\* |
|  | (.085) | (.070) | (.068) |
|  |  |  |  |
| hispanics | .172 | .159\* | .144 |
|  | (.115) | (.094) | (.093) |
|  |  |  |  |
| fiscal\_stability | -.004 | .006 | .007 |
|  | (.029) | (.023) | (.023) |
|  |  |  |  |
| caseload (thousands) | .020\*\*\* | .020\*\*\* | .020\*\*\* |
|  | (.005) | (.004) | (.004) |
|  |  |  |  |
| liberalism | .037\*\* | .045\*\*\* | .045\*\*\* |
|  | (.018) | (.014) | (.014) |
|  |  |  |  |
| wpr | 4.597\*\*\* | 5.261\*\*\* | 5.037\*\*\* |
|  | (1.320) | (1.081) | (1.068) |
|  |  |  |  |
| unemployment | .762\* | .664\* | .657\*\* |
|  | (.413) | (.340) | (.334) |
|  |  |  |  |
| pcpi regional (thousands) | -.040 | .102 | .056 |
|  | (.218) | (.178) | (.175) |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | | | |
| Time Fixed Effects | Yes | Yes | Yes |
|  | | | |
| Observations | 777 | 777 | 781 |
| R2 | .513 | .622 | .617 |
| Adjusted R2 | .463 | .583 | .578 |
| F Statistic | 32.179\*\*\* (df = 23; 704) | 50.386\*\*\* (df = 23; 704) | 49.595\*\*\* (df = 23; 708) |
|  | | | |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01 | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 Black or 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* | A state's annual average monthly TANF or SSP-MOE assistance recipients in thousands. | 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. 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-1)
2. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/data-reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Three year-moving averages are calculated as the three-year averages of the proportional expenditures. See Table A.3 in the Appendix for regression output using the other moving average calculation, the proportions of the three-year averages. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Total TANF expenditures equal federal and state assistance expenditures plus federal and state non-assistance expenditures plus TANF funds transferred to the Social Services Block Grant and Child Care Development Fund. Expenditure values are not differentiated by the source of funding (i.e., federal or MOE) or classification of the spending (i.e., assistance or non-assistance). Understanding why some states fund certain programs with MOE funds while others fund a similar program with federal TANF funds is not the objective of this analysis. Assistance and non-assistance spending are aggregated in order to focus more closely on spending patterns. Separate assistance and non-assistance categories would create nearly redundant categories, inhibiting analysis of substantive changes in TANF spending. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The percentages in Figure 1 may not add up to 100% in a given fiscal year due to the removal of outlier values (i.e., proportional expenditure values that remained above 100% or below 0% after calculating moving averages). See Table A.2 in the Appendix for a complete list of annual mean expenditures by year and category. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The boxplots in Figures 2-5 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-6)
7. There were only four instances of a state not meeting its work participation rate requirement before FY 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 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 2016, p. 12-16). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The TANF expenditure data is lagged back one year to correspond to the fiscal year in which the allocation decision was made. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)