

# Insights on Southern Poverty

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University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research

## Evidence about potential role for Affirmative Action in higher education

**Braz Camargo, Ralph Stinebrickner,  
and Todd Stinebrickner**

In two recent cases involving the University of Michigan, the Supreme Court examined whether race should be allowed to play an explicit role in the admission decisions of schools. The primary legal argument by defendants in these court cases and others has been that racial diversity strengthens the quality of education offered to all students. Underlying the argument that diversity leads to educational benefits is the notion that universities educate students in a broad sense. Educational benefits arise if interactions between students of different races improve preparation for life after college by, among other things, fostering mutual understanding and correcting misperceptions. More directly, according to Jonathan Alger who coordinated the University of Michigan's legal efforts in the two Supreme Court cases, the primary educational benefits of diversity do not arise because students experience different points of view, but, rather, because students may "discover just how much they have in common with their peers from other races" (Alger, 1997).

In this paper we provide evidence about whether this primary legal argument is compelling. Specifically, we examine perhaps the most fundamental condition necessary for this to be the case - that the types of students who choose to enter college actually have incorrect beliefs about individuals from different races at the time of college entrance.

To do this, we take advantage of unique longitudinal survey and administrative data that we have collected at

Berea College. Located in central Kentucky, Berea has a focus on providing an education to students from low income families and offers a full tuition subsidy to all students. Of particular relevance for this paper, the college was the first interracial and co-educational college in the South and operates under a mission of "promoting understanding and kinship among all people." For a breakdown of Berea student demographics, see Table 1, page 11.

The particular belief we study is whether a student perceives that, on average, his friendship compatibility is higher with students of his own race than it is with students of other races. This belief relates closely to the legal argument that benefits of educational diversity arise, in large part, because students from different races learn that they have much in common.

We begin by trying to infer beliefs about interracial friendship compatibility from observed friendship choices, an approach that is possible because our data are unique among higher education sources in that they allow us to directly identify each student's friends. The fundamental identification difficulty in this exercise is that friendship choices are influenced not only by beliefs about interracial friendship compatibility, but also by the process which governs how students meet potential friends. For example, a student who believes that, on average, he is equally compatible with students of his own race and other races would still have a disproportionate number of friends of his race if he is involved in clubs, activities, social circles, or classes in which he meets a dispropor-

tionate number of students of his race. We are able to deal with this difficulty by taking advantage of the flexibility of our data collection efforts which allowed us to observe our first friendship choices at a time immediately before classes began in the students' freshman year when institutional details related to the orientation program and housing assignment process suggest that the process by which a person meets potential friends will, to a close approximation, be uncondition-

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# Letter from the director

—By James P. Ziliak—

In this issue of *Insights on Southern Poverty*, we highlight several research projects focused on race issues in Southern states and also examine the impact of welfare reform legislation on rural recipients. A fourth study examines participation rates in the federally funded, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC.

Our lead story looks at the potential impact of Affirmative Action policies in universities. Todd Stinebrickner et al examine racial sorting at Berea College in Kentucky to determine if Affirmative Action policies benefit education. Berea College, which focuses on providing education to low-income students, was the first integrated Southern college. The authors utilized unique administrative and survey data gathered by the College to see if Affirmative Action policies assist in correcting student misperceptions about people of other races. The authors use data about individual student friendship patterns and compare observed racial sorting at the beginning of the freshman year with outcomes at the end of the year. The authors take advantage of Berea's policy of random roommate assignment to see if friendship patterns change. They find that after random roommate assignments, white and black students are compatible as friends and that white students are as likely to be friends with black students as white students, after random roommate assignment. Their conclusion is that the observed behaviors at Berea College offer one piece of evidence about the potential role of Affirmative Action in promoting racial tolerance.

A second research report by Sarah Reber et al examines the rate of school desegregation in the South following the Brown vs. the *Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954. The report's authors sought to determine how much of school desegregation in nine Southern states was brought about

by federal court involvement in the process and how much was brought about by other factors. They seek to describe the rapid rate of desegregation that occurred between 1956, when practically no Southern schools had desegregated, and 1976 when desegregation was nearly complete. The authors find that a large percentage of Southern schools desegregated voluntarily without court intervention. They also find that larger districts were more likely to be under court-ordered desegregation and also carried this desegregation earlier than their smaller counterparts. The authors also find that smaller school districts were more likely moved to desegregate because of financial incentives tied to federal funding for their districts.

In a study that focuses on how rural welfare recipients have coped with welfare reform policies, Ann Tickamyer, Debra Henderson, and Barry Tadlock examined how the poor in four Appalachian Ohio counties adapted to changing welfare program rules in the face of job scarcity and obstacles to obtaining work. The researchers compare the livelihood strategies of program participants in two rural counties with those in two more urbanized counties. They find that residents of the rural counties show higher rates of public assistance, and a significant number use informal sources of income to make ends meet, and this reality is true in all four locations.

In an examination of participation in the WIC program, Alison Jacknowitz and Laura Tiehen examine why many eligible households do not participate in the program or exit early, even though WIC has proven health benefits for participants. Their findings suggest that those who exhibit better economic health across a variety of dimensions are more likely to delay entry into the program or exit after a child turns one year of age. However, some of the leavers still exhibit a need for the services.

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# From Brown to Busing Desegregation in Southern schools

Elizabeth Cascio, Nora Gordon,  
Ethan Lewis, and Sarah Reber

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that schools racially segregated by law were unconstitutional. There was very little desegregation immediately after the *Brown* and *Brown II* (1955) rulings, which left lower federal courts to desegregate the South on a district-by-district basis. By the early 1970s, however, schools in the South were more integrated than schools in any other region.

How did the South make such a dra-

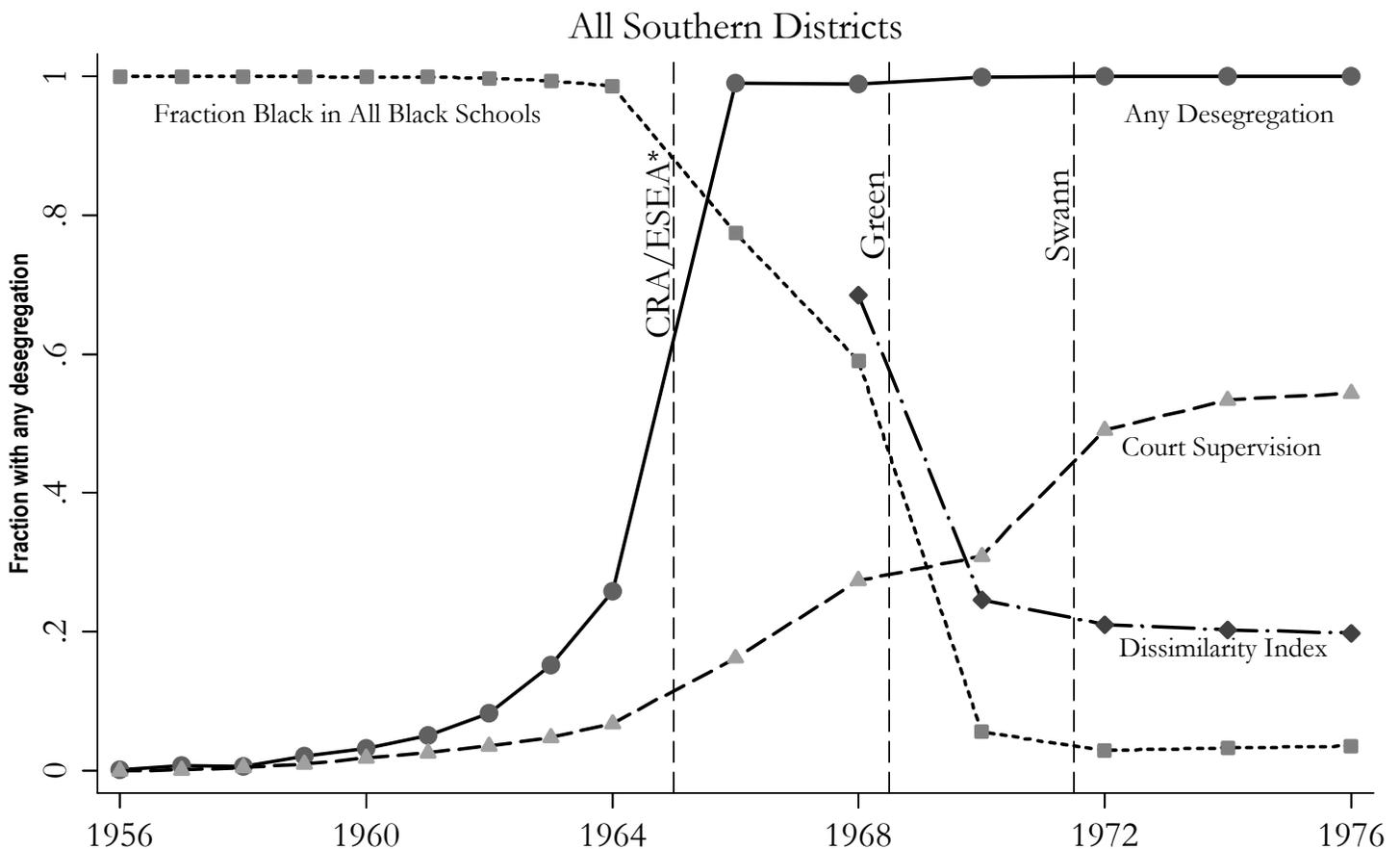
matic transition after years of resistance? In our research we assembled a new data set on district-level trends in desegregation and in court supervision of desegregation efforts in the South in the two decades following *Brown* and investigated how the transition to racial integration varied depending on district characteristics. Viewing school desegregation as a choice—rather than an outcome strictly imposed upon a district by federal courts—it is not surprising that southern districts followed different paths to desegregation. To date, the lack of representative, district-level data has made it

difficult to document the heterogeneity of desegregation experiences.

For the paper, we assembled time series data on the vast majority of school districts in nine southern states. Figure 1 (below) shows trends in several desegregation measures and in the likelihood of court supervision for these districts (unweighted), alongside several legal milestones. In 1956, two years after *Brown*, virtually no blacks attended school with any whites in the average southern district. The share of districts with any desegregation grew slowly through the ear-

(Continued on page 9)

Figure 1. School Desegregation and Court Supervision



Notes: Authors' calculations based on Southern Education Reporting Service, Department of Health Education and Welfare, and Office of Civil Rights data. See Appendix A for details.

\* Civil Rights Act/Elementary and Secondary Education Act

# Does welfare reform work in rural America?

Ann Tickamyer, Debra Henderson,  
and Barry Tadlock

More than a decade after the passage of PRWORA, the impacts of welfare reform on income generating and livelihood practices remain a matter of debate. Virtually all studies show greatly reduced cash assistance rolls, and many demonstrate income gains among those who have moved into the labor force. Yet detailed studies of livelihood practices find that poverty rates remain high for former recipients, and they continue

to struggle with a variety of hardships, lack of resources, and support. This may be especially the case in poor rural areas where work is scarce, additional obstacles to employment such as lack of transportation and childcare are endemic, and where local communities lack the capacity to administer effective programs. However, little research has been conducted in these settings or on variation within rural areas.

This study looks at rural outcomes with research on livelihood practices of welfare recipients in four counties in Appalachian Ohio, a region with high levels of poverty and unemployment that is largely rural, remote, and lacking in investment and capital necessary for economic development. Even within this relatively homogeneous region, there are large differences in social and human capital, employment opportunities, and local capacity to design and implement welfare programs in a state that devolved responsibility to the county. Thus we compare two remote rural counties to two more urbanized counties.

We examine the ways that residents of poor rural areas make ends meet early in the implementation process for welfare reform and at two subsequent times. The data provide a comprehensive picture of livelihood practices, including labor force participation, use of government and private transfers, and informal and self-provisioning activities. We compare working and nonworking human service clients at all three time periods and across communities with different capacity to implement welfare to work policies in order to determine how these factors influence the economic opportunities and outcomes.

The primary data come from surveys administered in the offices of human service agencies in four counties in Appalachian Ohio during the summer of 1999, one and a half years into the beginning of the 36 month eligibility window for Ohio recipients of cash assistance and again during the summers of 2001 and 2005, well after the end of eligibility for those on TANF in the late 1990s. Respondents

are recipients of some form of public assistance that includes cash assistance (TANF), food stamps, medical care, and miscellaneous other programs. This is a trend study; respondents are not the same individuals surveyed at three points in time, but rather represent a cross section of human service clients in the same welfare offices at each time. The results permit a comparison of changes in the social and economic characteristics of welfare users early and late in the welfare reform process, but not of the changing fortunes of individual recipients. However, we also conducted in-depth interviews with a panel of twelve recipients in each county (48 total) across the years to track individual outcomes.

The data demonstrate the problems in making ends meet for all respondents, regardless of employment status and county capacity in all three time periods. In 1999, the first survey year, 27.9% of respondents were employed, increasing to 36.5% in 2001 and then falling back slightly to 33.6% in 2005. The vast majority of respondents had prior labor market experience, increasing from 82.1% in 1999 to 87.5% in 2005. As expected, the more urbanized counties had higher rates of current employment. Both types of counties show increases in work between 1999 and 2005, but it fell in more urban counties and continued to rise in more rural areas in the last survey year. Respondents in the two more remote rural counties had higher rates of public assistance and lower rates of transfer income associated with employment, such as unemployment compensation and the EITC. A substantial percentage of the population uses informal sources of income to make ends meet, but for the most part, county differences are minimal for these activities.

As displayed in the accompanying table, current labor force participants are uniformly better off than nonworkers and increasingly so by the third survey year. Their inflation-adjusted income is substantially higher in all years, with the gap increasing to over \$4,000 in 2005.

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Economic Characteristics of Human Service Users by Year and Current Work Status

	1999		2001		2005	
	Not Working (N=277)	Working (N=107)	Not Working (N=251)	Working (N=144)	Not Working (N=251)	Working (N=127)
<b>Mean Annual Income (\$2005)</b>	9,072	11,465**	9,583	12,404**	9,203	13,340***
<b>Mean Grocery Bill Per Month (\$2005)</b>	321	328	302	355*	331	299+
<b>Income Sources for the Past Year (% of respondents receiving...)</b>						
<b>Welfare:</b>						
<b>Ohio Works First/TANF***</b>	43.8	38.7	32.2	27.9	30.7	18.9**
<b>Food stamps***</b>	83.6	76.4+	72.2	60.9*	87.2	70.9***
<b>WIC</b>	38.1	38.2	35.1	37.7	31.5	36.4
<b>Transfers (% with someone in the household receiving...)</b>						
<b>SS/Pension***</b>	36.2	17.1**	25.8	5.1***	25.1	6.3***
<b>Disability***</b>	30.0	19.7+	20.8	10.3**	15.1	3.9***
<b>EITC</b>	16.4	43.4***	15.4	31.6***	15.9	37.0***
<b>Unemployment*</b>	4.7	7.9	10.9	8.8	10.4	13.4
<b>Child Support</b>	17.4	28.9*	16.3	25.7**	15.9	26.0*
<b>Gift</b>	11.7	3.9*	9.5	10.3	16.3	17.3
<b>Informal Income Sources (% with income from...)</b>						
<b>Flea market</b>	7.5	9.2	7.7	6.6	11.2	17.3+
<b>Odd job +</b>	17.4	19.7	11.8	14.7	15.1	16.5
<b>Selling home grown/homemade goods</b>	3.3	3.9	0.9	2.9	0.4	1.6
<b>Selling firewood/mushrooms</b>	0.5	2.6	0.5	0.7	2.0	1.6
<b>Other</b>	4.7	6.6	6.3	2.2+	2.4	4.7
<b>Trading goods/services**</b>	21.3	26.8	29.4	35.7	37.8	38.4
<b>Food (% who...)</b>						
<b>Self-provision</b>	53.3	50.9	52.8	45.8	51.9	54.5
<b>Get food from public or private sources</b>	59.8	60.7	58.3	63.8	74.3	78.5
<b>Use food pantry/bank</b>	40.9	40.4	46.3	42.6	41.5	30.6*

Note: Asterisks next to row category names indicate significant differences by year when data are pooled.

+Difference statistically significant at  $p \leq .1$

\* Difference statistically significant at  $p \leq .05$

\*\* Difference statistically significant at  $p \leq .01$

\*\*\*Difference statistically significant at  $p \leq .001$

(Continued from page 4)

Even so, household income is low for both groups. Employed respondents in 2005 average \$13,340 yearly household income compared to \$9,203 for those not employed, well under the poverty line for these households that average four persons. Workers have lower levels of cash assistance and food stamp use but these remain substantial. Differences in informal activity are small and generally not significant, but more currently employed respondents also report income from odd jobs and from trade and barter. Food pantry use, although high across the board, declines for working respondents in 2005; however, publicly provided food assistance increased substantially in the early 2000s.

These results indicate that respondents and their families struggle to make ends meet and are likely to experience significant hardship. Indicators of hardship in these data include running out of money for food or food stamps during the past year, lacking food for either oneself or one's children, lacking medical insurance for self, spouse, or children, failing to see a doctor when necessary, and experiencing an episode of

homelessness. Reports of hardship are high for all groups with over 80% of respondents indicating having experienced at least one in the last year for each of the survey years. Seventy-eight percent of respondents report running out of money for food in 1999, rising to almost 80% in 2001 and dropping back to 74% in 2005. Other hardships are less common with the lowest rates for children lacking insurance, decreasing from 15% in the first year to 8% in the final year. There has been a notable change across the years, with large decreases from 1999 to 2005 after initial increases in 2001 for all but the health insurance variables, where hardship has steadily declined. Figure 1 (below) illustrates these results. There are few significant differences in hardship reports by employment or county capacity.

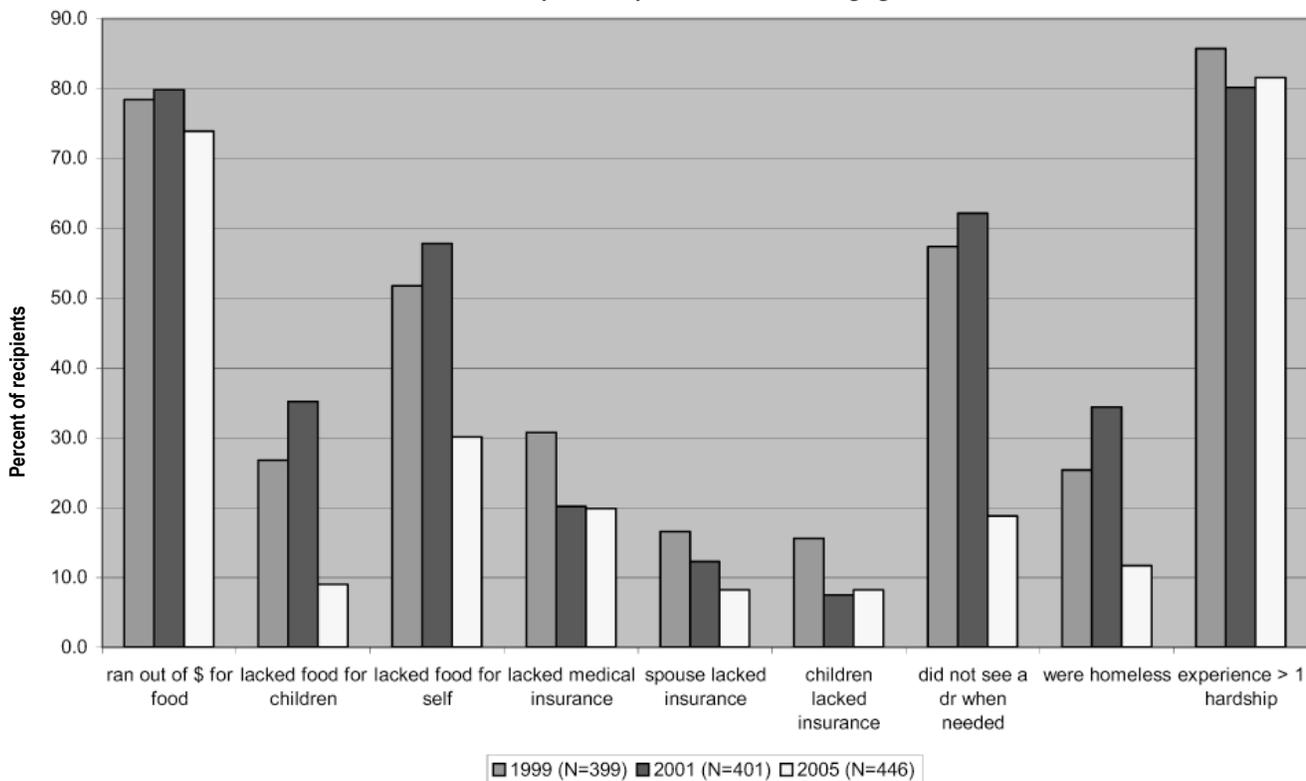
Variation by year suggests that income sources and hardships vary with changes in the economy and welfare policies. These low income respondents piece together livelihoods from numerous sources that include different mixes of work and welfare, public and private assistance. Regardless of source, the data indicate very low incomes for almost all

respondents to this survey, well below the poverty line on average. Workers have higher incomes, but the amounts they are able to earn or piece together still make them among the poorest members of society, experiencing severe and significant hardship. The limited work opportunities in these rural communities, characterized by instability, low pay, and no benefits, are not likely to lift them out of poverty, making the very real issues of rural poverty an ongoing problem that has not been adequately addressed by welfare reform.

Does welfare reform work in rural America? It depends on the assessment criteria. If overall reduction in cash assistance rolls is the measure, then the answer is yes. If finding employment and gaining income is the measure, then reform works only for a limited number of recipients, as results are precarious because both public and private assistance are needed by recipients. If escape from poverty and hardship is the criterion, then there has been little positive impact.

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**Hardships experienced by year**



# Children leaving WIC: A cause for concern?

Alison Jacknowitz and Laura Tiehen

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, and referrals to health and other social services to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and their infants and children up to age five. WIC has grown from serving 88,000 participants in fiscal year 1974 to approximately 8.1 million in fiscal year 2006 [US Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2007]. Despite this growth, not all of those who are eligible participate in the program. While over 80 percent of eligible infants receive WIC, less than half of eligible children ages one through five receive program benefits (USDA, 2006). Research suggests that WIC participation increases children's intake of important vitamins and minerals; therefore, it

is important to understand the reasons for their relatively low levels of participation. We analyze the factors that explain exits from WIC when a child reaches age one as part of our study of WIC participation dynamics, and we focus on the results from that analysis in this summary. The full research report is available at: <http://www.ukcpr.org/Publications/DP2007-02.pdf>

## Data and Methods

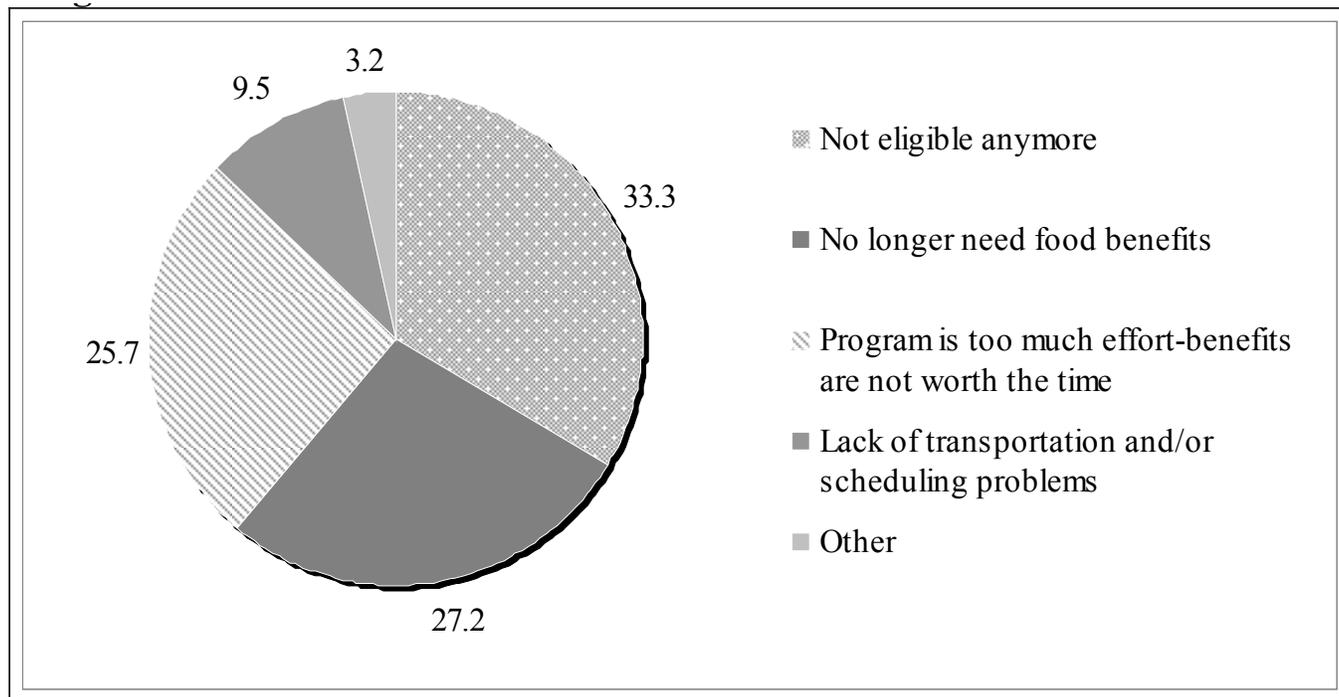
This study uses the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), a nationally representative longitudinal data set of children born in 2001. We use information from the first two waves of survey data collected when the child was 9 months and 2 years of age. Using probit regression analysis, we estimate an equation explaining a WIC household's exit from the program when a child reaches age one. We also exam-

ine households' reports on their reasons for exiting the program.

## Results

We find that almost one-fourth (22.6 percent) of households that participate when the survey child is less than age one leave the program when the child reaches age one. The regression results indicate that more advantaged households are more likely to exit WIC. Households in which mothers are more educated and who work after the child's birth are more likely to leave the program. Those with household income below the poverty line and participation in other assistance programs are less likely to exit. There are a number of possible explanations for the program exits among more advantaged households, which include a reduced need for benefits and higher transactions costs of participation among mothers who return to work. Two program

## Explanations for early exits from the WIC Program after the child turns one year of age



Notes: Percentages are weighted and do not sum to 100% because of rounding. Other includes other (2.6%); eligible, but denied benefits due to lack of program funds (0.5%); and temporary administrative issues prevent participation, but plan to participate again (0.1%).

Figure 1

changes that occur when a child reaches age one--more frequent recertification of eligibility and a reduction in the value of the food package (particularly for those who were receiving infant formula)--may also have a relatively strong influence on more advantaged mothers' participation decisions. Further, some of these more advantaged mothers may also be no longer eligible for the program.

Mothers who do not breastfeed are more likely to exit WIC when the child reaches age one, which suggests that the loss of the infant formula at that time plays a role in the decision to exit WIC. In addition, mothers in states where local WIC agencies can reduce the sucrose content of WIC food packages are more likely to exit, which may indicate a dissatisfaction with reduced-sucrose breakfast cereal offered in these states.

Figure 1 illustrates the reasons given by households for why they stopped receiving WIC benefits. Households could select one of seven possible reasons. Approximately 33 percent report that they believe they are no longer eligible. Over

one-fourth (27.2 percent) of mothers report that they no longer need food benefits. For households that report no longer being eligible or no longer needing food benefits, the program appears to be operating as intended. However, other explanations cited by mothers, including that the program is too much effort or that they have scheduling and transportation problems, suggest that the costs of participation may be a barrier to some children's continued participation in WIC. Very few households (less than 1 percent) report that they are eligible for the program, but were denied benefits due to the lack of program funds. Thus, although WIC is not an entitlement program, the prevalence of waiting lists is quite low.

To further understand households' explanations for leaving WIC, we compare the characteristics of the exiting households who cite each of the three most frequent reasons for exit with those of non-leaver households in Table 1. Leavers who state that they are no longer eligible and those who state that they no

longer need the food benefits are generally more advantaged than non-leavers. Children in leaver households who state they no longer need food benefits are more likely to have never been breastfed. This result corroborates the evidence from the regression analysis that some non-breastfeeding mothers who stop receiving infant formula when their child turns one do not perceive a need for the lower-value WIC benefits available in the child package.

Leavers who state the program is too much effort and the benefits are not worth the time are more likely to live in the South than non-leavers. This suggests that there may be program characteristics that make it more difficult for households to remain on the WIC program when a child reaches age one in the South than in other regions, although we do not find evidence of this among the state WIC policies we can observe. This group of leavers is also more likely to work after having their child, which would be expected to increase the time

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**Table 1. Comparison of non-leavers with leavers by reason across selected variables**

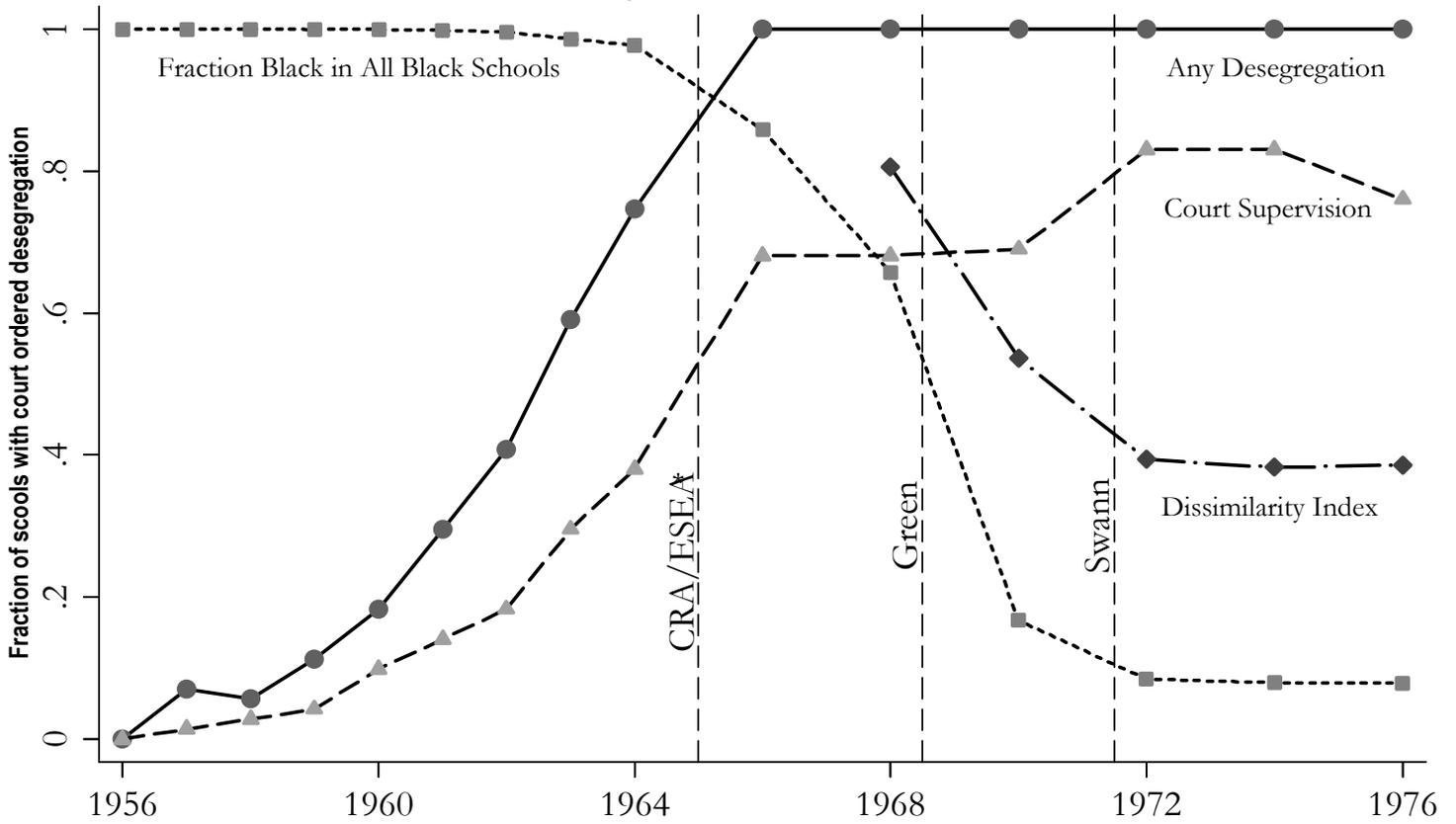
	Non-leavers	Leavers by reason		
		No longer eligible	No longer need food benefits	Program is too much effort-benefits are not worth the time
Household characteristics				
South	0.394	0.492*	0.433	0.564**
Participated in other programs since birth of child	0.771	0.593**	0.706	0.778
Household income increased	0.448	0.610**	0.496	0.500
Mother does not work anytime after birth	0.344	0.303	0.225**	0.256+
Child never breastfed	0.406	0.383	0.503+	0.479
Observations	2,950	200	150	150

Notes: All means are weighted. Sample sizes are rounded to the nearest 50 per NCES regulations.

Superscripts \*\*, \*, or + indicate that the value is significantly different from that of non-leavers at the 1%, 5%, or 10% level respectively, using a two-tailed test.

Figure 2. Desegregation and Court Supervision

Large Southern Districts



Notes: Authors’ calculations based on Southern Education Reporting Service, Department of Health Education and Welfare, and Office of Civil Rights data. Sample includes 71 districts averaging enrollment more than 15,000 students in 1960-1963.

\* Civil Rights Act/Elementary and Secondary Education Act

## FROM BROWN TO BUSING

(Continued from page 3)

ly 1960s then jumped from 26% in 1964 to 99% in 1966. While desegregation efforts by 1966 were largely token, the all-black school all but disappeared in a matter of four years. The dissimilarity index, or the share of students in a district who would need to change schools so that each school in the district has the same racial composition, shows large reductions in segregation between 1968 and 1970: in 1968, 69% of black students in the average southern district needed to be reassigned to replicate the racial composition of the district in each school; by 1970, that figure had fallen to 25%. Reductions in school segregation through 1976 were small by comparison.

To some, it might be surprising just how much desegregation took place before landmark Supreme Court rulings, such as *Green v. New Kent County* (1968), which required southern districts to be proactive in eliminating the all-black school, and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg* (1971), which authorized the use of busing to this end. It might also be surprising that such a high fraction of districts desegregated “voluntarily,” or without court supervision. One special aspect of our data set is that it includes small school districts, which have largely been neglected by previous scholars despite being home to a large share of southern African-Americans. Figure 2 (above) makes clear that large Southern

school districts – here defined as districts enrolling more than 15,000 students – desegregated earlier, were more likely to be under court supervision, both early and ever, and were relatively resistant to later integration efforts. Focusing only on such districts overstates the role of direct court supervision in desegregating southern school districts.

Why do large and small southern districts have such different desegregation histories? Size may have mattered directly. Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, only private citizens had authority to sue southern school districts. Assisting in these lawsuits, the NAACP may

(Continued on next page)

# CHILDREN LEAVING WIC

(Continued from page 8)

costs of participation and decrease the relative value of the benefits.

## Conclusion

The results of our regression analysis indicate that more advantaged households are more likely to exit WIC after a child turns one year of age. For many households, a loss of eligibility and reduced need for benefits precipitate their exit from WIC, which indicates that the program is operating as intended for them. However, descriptive statistics indicate that some leavers still exhibit need, suggesting that outreach or

program reform is necessary to increase the duration of these participants' exposure to WIC services. In addition, mothers in participant households who do not breast feed or breast feed for less than 6 months are more likely to exit, and therefore, warrant special attention by WIC agencies since research suggests that WIC provides a number of health benefits to children who participate.

*Alison Jacknowitz is an assistant professor of public administration and policy at American University. Laura Tiehen is an economist in the Food Economics Division, Economic Research Service, USDA.*

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# FROM BROWN TO BUSING

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have sought plaintiffs in districts where a victory would have affected more people. These lawsuits (and the threat thereof) may have been responsible for the relatively high share of large districts desegregated by 1964. Large districts, with many schools, may have also faced more logistical problems in eliminating the all-black school later in the period.

District enrollment may also have been correlated with other determinants of the desegregation decision. Between 1964 and 1966, for example, the vast majority of smaller districts in the South desegregated without court involvement, but this likely had nothing to do with size per se. By requiring non-discrimination to receive federal funds, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CRA) provided a financial incentive to desegregate, particularly after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) created a large federal program for education that greatly benefited the poorest districts in the country. Small southern districts were relatively poor and therefore stood to gain more from voluntary desegregation under this program. Further, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) enfranchised blacks where literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and other tactics had long denied them the right to

vote. After VRA, school boards in districts with higher black shares – districts that were relatively small, on average – may have experienced greater changes in the preferences of their constituents, as such districts tended to have lower black voter registration rates ex ante.

These correlations motivate us to use multiple regression analysis to identify the effects of size and other district characteristics on desegregation and court supervision separately, holding constant other district characteristics. For years spanning key legislation and court decisions (1961, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970, and 1976), we predict desegregation outcomes on the basis of four pre-existing district characteristics – enrollment, black share in enrollment, child poverty, and Thurmond vote share in 1948 (a measure of segregationist preferences at the county level) – and the state in which the district is located.

Our finding that “size matters” persists in the presence of controls. The coefficients on the other characteristics are also quite revealing. Districts with higher child poverty rates were particularly likely to desegregate between 1964 and 1966, suggesting that financial incentives under CRA-ESEA were important to desegregation decisions for at least part of the period. Districts with high black enrollment shares did not initial-

ly lag behind, but were slower to eliminate all-black schools and ultimately had a higher rate of court supervision. This suggests that, though not more opposed to desegregation in principle, whites in high black share districts had a relatively strong distaste for high levels of black exposure. By contrast, states of the “Deep South,” and within state, districts with higher Thurmond vote shares, both desegregated less in the early years and were more likely to come under court order eventually, pointing to the importance of long-standing, segregationist preferences to the pace and nature of desegregation.

These findings suggest that, while the federal government set some important parameters for desegregation decisions, it did not force all southern districts to desegregate at the same time or in the same fashion. Obtaining credible and direct estimates of how programs like CRA-ESEA and VRA affected this choice is a critical next step in filling out the empirical history of school desegregation in the South, and the attendant effects on the economic development of the region in recent decades.

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# Berea College student population by ethnicity

July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007

	Degree-seeking First-time, First-year	Degree-seeking Undergraduates (include first-time, first-year)	Total Undergraduates (both degree- and non-degree- seeking)
Non-resident aliens	22	106	111
Black, non-Hispanic	75	273	274
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	12	12
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	24	26
Hispanic	12	29	31
White, non-Hispanic	300	1,051	1,095
Race/ethnicity unknown	6	33	33
Total	421	1,528	1,582

Source: Berea College Common Data Set, page 3.  
Available: <http://www.berea.edu/ira/documents/CDS2007.pdf>

Table 1

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

(Continued from page 1)

ally random. We find that very substantial racial sorting exists in friendships at the start of classes. In order to provide guidance for thinking about the possible underlying reasons for this finding, we appeal to a simple but flexible model of friendship making under uncertainty. Under seemingly reasonable specifications, the model suggests that racial sorting occurs because some students believe they are, on average, more compatible with students of their own race than with students of different races.

In order to determine whether such a perception is incorrect, it is necessary to characterize actual interracial friendship compatibility. To do this, we take advantage of a unique natural experiment that arises because students at Berea are randomly (and unconditionally) assigned roommates in their freshman year. In essence, this experiment forces some students to learn about their friendship compatibility with an individual of a different race. Consistent with the claim that students of different races do have a lot in common, we find that white students and black students are very compatible as friends, with white students being as likely to eventually become close

friends with randomly assigned black roommates as they are to eventually become close friends with randomly assigned white roommates. Thus, if the racial sorting at the start of classes is indeed generated by beliefs that average friendship compatibility varies with the race of one's friends, then incorrect beliefs about individuals from other races do exist at the time of college entrance.

We explore some alternatives to the explanation that the observed sorting arises because some students enter college with a belief that they are, on average, more compatible with students of the same race than students of other races. Given that it would never be possible to rule out with certainty all conceivable alternative explanations for the observed sorting, it is desirable to provide direct evidence. To do this, we develop a unique survey approach which addresses the concern that systematic response errors would likely be prevalent if students were asked directly about interracial friendship compatibility beliefs. Consistent with our primary results, we find evidence of a misperception about interracial friendship compatibility.

Thus, a plausible interpretation of

our analysis is that, while students from different races are very compatible as friends, this may not be fully realized at the time of college entrance. Because the mission of Berea College includes fostering diversity, and presumably the students who enroll in the College are aware of and amenable to such diversity efforts, and yet if information problems exist between different races at Berea at the time of college entrance, then such problems might also exist elsewhere at the time of college entrance. Nonetheless, because it is always necessary to be cautious when thinking about how results at any one school might generalize to other schools, our results should be viewed as one piece of evidence about the possible role of affirmative action in college admissions.

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