

UCLA

Community Service Projects/Papers

Title

The NonCustodial Parent: Employment, Earnings, Child Support and Parenting

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9c75660r>

Authors

Becerra, Rosina
Ong, Paul M.

Publication Date

2001-12-02



School of Public Policy
and Social Research

THE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT:

- **EMPLOYMENT**
- **EARNINGS**
- **CHILD SUPPORT**
- **PARENTING**

**Rosina M. Becerra
Paul M. Ong**

With

**Ward Thomas
Jordan Rickles
Shannon McConville
Doug Houston
Ruth Matthias**

December 2001

This project is funded by the California Department of Social Services, Research Branch through contract #H28085.

Principal Investigator: Rosina M. Becerra, Ph.D., Professor of Policy Studies & Social Welfare

The Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies provided additional support for this project.

Disclaimer: Neither the University of California, the School of Public Policy and Social Research nor the Ralph and Goldy Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies either support or disavow the findings in this report. University affiliations are for identification only.

We wish to thank all the parents, custodial and non-custodial, who participated in this survey. We appreciate their time and thoughtfulness in answering our questions and helping us to understand their circumstances. We particularly thank the 35 men who provided us with a glimpse into their lives.

Rosina M. Becerra
Paul M. Ong

UCLA
August 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Figures and Tables.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	v
I. Introduction	1
II. Child Support: Policies and Programs	3
The Nation and the California Situation	7
III. A Description of Noncustodial Fathers and their Relationship with Their Children	16
Background Characteristics of Non-Custodial Fathers.....	16
The Noncustodial Father and the Custodial Mother/Guardian	25
The Noncustodial Father’s Relationship with his Child	27
The Custodial Parent.....	34
The Noncustodial Father and the Custodial Mother: “He Said, She Said”	37
IV. Employment, Earnings and Child Support	47
The Custodial Mothers and Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County.....	47
Extent of Agreement Between the NCP and CP on Child Support	54
V. The Noncustodial Father Speaks for Himself.....	59
The Sample of Noncustodial Fathers.....	59
The Background of the NCP.....	60
The Relationship with the CP	64
The Noncustodial Father and his Child	66
NCP Employment and Earnings	70
Reasons for Non-payment of Child Support.....	73
VI. The Female Noncustodial Parent	80
Background Characteristics of the Noncustodial Mothers	80
Employment and Health of the Female NCP.....	82
General Life Issues	84
Previous Relationship of Female NCP to Father of the Child	86
Female NCP Involvement in Decisions Affecting Child.....	87
Female NCP Relationship with her Child.....	89
Female NCP and Child Support.....	93
VII. Discussion and Conclusions.....	95
Employment and Earnings.....	95
Child Support.....	96
Parenting	97

References.....	99
Appendix A: Methodology.....	101
Appendix B: Survey Instruments/Case Studies Protocol.....	108
Appendix C: UCLA Process Evaluators.....	125

TABLE OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figures

2.1	Single Mother Families with Children, 1960 – 2000	7
2.2	Poverty, Public Assistance, and Child Support Receipt among Single Mother Families in California, 1989-2000.....	8
2.3	Poverty, Public Assistance, and Child Support Receipt among Single Mother Families in the United States, 1989-2000.....	9
2.4	Percentage of Children Living with Single Mothers Who Have Child Support Orders and Receive Full Payments	11
4.1	Official Child Support Payments in Previous Year (2000) by Employment Status and Earnings Level	54
5.1	Racial Distribution of Noncustodial Fathers, Interviewees	59
5.2	Educational Background of Interviewees	60
5.3	Number of Custodial Partners	64
5.4	Number of Children Fathered by NCP	67
5.5	Frequency of Visitation	68

Tables

2.1	Welfare Usage and Poverty Status by Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Financial Contributions, Among Children Living with Single Mothers CA & U.S.	13
2.2	Welfare Usage and Poverty Status by Child Support Orders, Children Living with Single Mothers.....	14
2.3	Demographic Profile of Single Mothers Receiving Public Assistance	16
3.1	Description of Noncustodial Fathers	18
3.2	Noncustodial Fathers, Their Financial Situation	20
3.3	Use of Transportation	22
3.4	Health/Mental Health of Noncustodial Fathers	23
3.5	Social Support Systems of Male NCPs	25
3.6	NCP Relationship with CP	27
3.7	NCP Relationship with Child	29
3.8	Quality of NCP Relationship with Child	31
3.9	NCP Interactions/Activities with Child	32
3.10	NCP Knowledge of Child and Involvement with Decision-making of Child	34
3.11	Description of Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County	35
3.12	Employability and Welfare Usage: Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County	36
3.13	Description of Matched NCPs and CPs	38
3.14	Financial Well-being of Matched NCPs and CPs	40
3.15	Relationship between NCPs and CPs	41
3.16	Contacts and Visits between NCP and Child	42
3.17	Relationship between NCP and Child	44
3.18	Involvement of NCP with Child	46

4.1	Child Support Receipt Reported by Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County	48
4.2	Employability of Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County	49
4.3	Financial Well-being of Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County	50
4.4	Child Support Payments from Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County	52
4.5	Official Child Support Payments by Employment Status	53
4.6	Child Support	56
4.7	Knowledge about Child Support Regulations.....	58
6.1	Description of Female NCPs	81
6.2	NCP Employment and Health	83
6.3	Other NCP Information	85
6.4	Female NCP Relationship with CP	87
6.5	NCP Involvement with CP and Decisions about Child	88
6.6	Female NCP Relationship with Child	90
6.7	Female NCP Visitation Relationship with Child	92
6.8	Female NCP Child Support Payments	94

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of this generation of America's children will spend part of their childhood living apart from one parent. Since 1974, the noncustodial parent has had legal responsibility for sharing in the financial support of his or her children. Many noncustodial parents, however, do not or are not able to meet that responsibility. When both the noncustodial parent (NCP) and the custodial parent (CP) are financially unable to provide for the child, then support is often provided by the state in the form of public assistance or welfare.

This report examines the characteristics and behavior of noncustodial parents (NCP) who are behind on their payments and with a child on welfare. The analysis focuses on unemployed or under-employed NCPs and is based on a close-ended telephone survey of 874 NCP respondents and 424 CP respondents from Los Angeles County, the county with the largest NCP caseload in the state. The study also uses administrative data from the Los Angeles County's Family Support Bureau (now the Los Angeles County Department of Child Support Services) and Department of Public Social Services, and California's Employment Development Department (EDD) and Department of Social Services.

This report addresses the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of noncustodial parents with a child on welfare?
2. Are there differences among the noncustodial parents with respect to age, race/ethnicity, or gender?
3. What is the employment and earning potential of noncustodial parents with a child on welfare?
4. Are there differences in child support payments by age and race/ethnicity?
5. What is the relationship of noncustodial parents to their children? What is the frequency of contact, quantity of time spent, and quality of the relationship?

6. What are the characteristics of the custodial parent, and how do these characteristics compare to the characteristics of noncustodial parents?
7. To what extent is there agreement between the custodial and noncustodial parent about child rearing, visitation, adequacy of child support payments, and other issues affecting the child?

The Findings

a. Employment and Earnings

A majority of the NCP respondents were between the ages of 25 to 40 years old, and were either underemployed or had unstable employment. They also possessed few marketable skills, had some health problems and lacked health insurance. About 10% of the men had been homeless and/or unable to pay rent or utilities, or buy food. Female NCPs had similar problems, but they were less likely to have been homeless. Female NCPs were employed at about the same rate as the men, but when female NCPs worked, they usually earned a lower wage. Despite some differences with respect to age and race/ethnicity, noncustodial men and women were more similar than different. The most common characteristics among all NCPs were a lack of marketable skills and other employment barriers, including a lack of education or technical training, health problems (physical and mental), and conviction records (about one out of three).

Given the multiple barriers, employment was problematic and earnings were low. Employment reported to the state's unemployment insurance (UI) program was used to track earnings of NCPs for enforcement purposes. In 2000, about 30% of the NCPs never had an UI-covered job, and only 40% had UI-covered employment in all four quarters of the year. On average, NCPs with UI-covered earnings (about 70%) averaged \$13,180 for the year. The survey data show that a minority earned some income through means other than UI-covered employment. About 91% indicated that they had worked for pay in 2000, but only 70% showed up on the state's UI data base. Thus, approximately 20% were either self-employed or worked at jobs not covered by UI.

b. Child Support

Based on administrative data, the average monthly child-support order for current support was \$594. The typical NCP would need a full-time job paying about \$15 per hour before taxes and employment-related expenses, or more than \$30,000 annually before taxes and employment-related expenses in order to meet their child support obligation. Few were able to obtain a job at this wage and earnings level; consequently it was a challenge for NCPs to pay full child support. Forty percent of the NCPs had not made any child support payments in 2000. Only one in four had paid some support or full support during each quarter of 2000. Younger NCPs (<40) and NCPs who were African American or Hispanic experienced the greatest difficulties meeting their financial obligations. The inability to make consistent and timely payments for child support had produced for the NCP an enormous arrearage, averaging about \$20,000 at the time of the survey.

Formal child-support payments were not the only form of support. The surveyed NCPs reported that they gave cash and gifts directly to the custodial parent or to the child. Forty percent reported providing this type of direct assistance, with an average of \$200 per month, and 64% reported giving gifts of clothes and other items that averaged about \$600 over the previous six-month period. These self-reported estimates may be inflated. When both the NCP and CP were queried about the child support provided and child support received, their perceptions were quite different. Generally, NCPs perceived themselves as providing much more than perceived by CPs. For example, 42% of the NCPs reported giving cash support in the past month, but only 26% of the CPs reported receiving cash support in the past month.

The data show that NCPs with full-time employment were more likely to keep up with child support payments, a finding consistent with the hypothesis that a key reason for nonpayment is a lack of employment or sufficient earnings. Moreover, the higher the income, the more likely NCPs paid full child support. Those with UI-covered jobs had a greater likelihood of providing child support payments. There are two plausible explanations for this pattern. The first is that non-UI covered jobs (e.g., self-employment) paid less than UI jobs. The second explanation is that Family Support

Bureau used earnings recorded in the state's UI database to help enforce child-support payments.

c. Parenting

About 80% of NCPs reported some contact and/or visitation with their children in the past year. More than 50% of the NCPs reported seeing their children on a relatively regular basis, often several times a month. Half of those regularly visiting their children reported taking their children overnight. The NCPs reported that they liked to take their children to the park, museums, or zoo, depending on the age of the child. The NCPs stated that they often just sat and talked, played, and would “hang out” with their children.

Most NCPs reported that they felt quite close to, had a strong affection for, and got along very well with their children. Many of these NCPs provided childcare for the CP at various times. About half felt that they were able to talk to the CP about the child and had significant involvement with decisions made about the child.

When the CP was queried about the NCP's relationship with the child, she often said that the NCP saw the child less than he reported. She felt that when the NCP did see the child, it was for a much briefer period than the NCP reported. However, in cases where the NCP had taken the child overnight, the CP and NCP gave similar responses.

Generally, CPs were less positive than NCPs about the NCP-child relationships. The NCPs said they wanted to spend more time with their children, while CPs generally did not perceive that the NCPs had such a preference. Relative to the number of NCPs who stated that they “never” wanted to see their children, more CPs felt that their NCP counterparts wanted to totally avoid seeing their children. The typical CP did not agree that the child and the NCP were as close as the NCP perceived the relationship to be. CPs were twice as likely as the NCPs to perceive the relationship as “not at all close,” and “not getting along.” The CP did not view the NCP as affectionate towards the child as the NCP did.

I

INTRODUCTION

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, known as welfare reform legislation, also modified Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. PRWORA called for enhanced child support enforcement to increase the collection of child support payments from the noncustodial parent. In particular, the custodial female parent was required to establish paternity to receive public assistance (Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC], changed to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF]). Since welfare reform also placed a time limit on the receipt of public assistance, child support payments became increasingly important to the support of needy children.

The problem of nonpayment is apparent in Los Angeles County, which was collecting only about one-fifth of the child support that was due to the custodial parent, especially those on welfare. The reported proportion of child support that is collected has increased in recent years, but there has been continuing interest in the noncustodial parent of children on welfare. There is little systematic information on their employment and earnings potential, their ability to pay child support, and especially their relationship with their noncustodial children.

This study provides new insights on the noncustodial parent with a child on welfare in California with a focus on Los Angeles County. The study uses several data sources, including a survey of noncustodial parents and custodial parents. The survey was enhanced with administrative data from the Los Angeles County Family Support Bureau, the Employment Development Department (EDD) Base Wage file, the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS), and administrative records from the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services.

The purpose of the research was to address some of the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of noncustodial parents with a child on welfare?
2. Are there differences among the noncustodial parents with respect to age, race and ethnicity, or gender?

3. What is the employment and earning potential of noncustodial parents with a child on welfare?
4. Are there differences in child support payments by age, race, and ethnicity?
5. What is the relationship of the noncustodial parent to their children? What is the frequency of contact, quantity of time spent, and quality of the relationship?
6. What are the characteristics of the custodial parent? Are there similarities or differences to the noncustodial parent?
7. To what extent is there agreement between the custodial and noncustodial parent about the raising of the child, the degree of visitation, adequacy of child support payments and other issues affecting the child?

II

CHILD SUPPORT: POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

More than half of this generation of America's children will spend part of their childhood living apart from one parent. Legal responsibility for an NCP to provide support for their child began long before the IV-D child support program began in 1974. The system charged with insuring that child support was paid, however, was in a state of disarray (Garfinkel, 1994). This system, currently in a state of transition, has grown from a widely diverse, locally and loosely governed set of programs to increased federal and state involvement, more equity among child support award amounts, and improved enforcement.

In 1974, Congress enacted Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, creating a joint federal-state child support mechanism. Title IV-D provided for a federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) as well as federally funded state IV-D agencies. Every state, with an IV-D program, was required to establish CSE programs to establish paternity and enforce child support obligations. Services were to be available to families who were on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as well as to non-AFDC families who asked for assistance. The federal government agreed to pay 75% (later reduced to 66%) of the administrative costs of running these CSE programs. The decision to enter the field of domestic relations was fiscally motivated because the cost of the AFDC program was escalating.

There was some improvement after 1974; however, there were still many families without child support orders, and non-compliance among families with child support orders was common. Additionally, awards were extremely low and wildly erratic (Dodson & Entmacher, 1994). Judges typically examined the financial statements of both parents, considered the fathers' available resources after expenses, and then set child support based on the children's "needs." This resulted in dramatic variations in award amounts, depending on the judge.

A handful of states, aware of the problems, adopted guidelines for judges to follow in setting awards. Federal policymakers soon concluded that such guidelines were

a key ingredient for successful state child support programs. Enforcement issues were another problem since the remedies were mainly contempt and wage garnishment. Contempt was underutilized because incarceration of the non-paying parent was for obvious reasons not going to result in obtaining payment. The other option, wage garnishment, was cumbersome because record-keeping systems were inadequate, and limited in the self-employment cases. Nine years after Title IV-D became law, Congress passed the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 to strengthen the enforcement portion of the IV-D policy.

The 1984 amendments mandated that states enact a number of specific procedures to improve their child-support enforcement programs. There were two primary goals. The first goal was to make child-support awards uniform among families in similar circumstances, and the second goal was to increase child support award levels. Guidelines were to be established by all states by 1987. They were to be made available to all child support decision-makers in the state, and applied to all child support cases. These guidelines, however, did not have to be binding, nor were there minimum requirements or standards. To improve enforcement, states were required to adopt:

1. Mandatory income withholding,
2. State income tax refund offsets,
3. Liens to enforce support orders,
4. Bonds, securities, or other guarantees to enforce support,
5. Expedited procedures to establish and enforce child support,
6. No limitations on paternity actions until at least the child's 18th birthday,
7. Reporting of support arrearages to consumer credit reporting agencies,
8. Federal income tax offset in non-AFDC cases (Horowitz et al., 1985).

The Act was strengthened in 1988 when Congress specified that the guidelines were to be followed unless there was a finding that such application would be unjust or not appropriate (Williams, 1994). The same act mandated that states update individual support awards at least once every three years for families receiving public assistance payments. Still, there were no federal child support guidelines, nor were there any minimum standards for award levels.

In 1996 the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was passed. While PRWORA effectively eliminated Title IV-A and AFDC¹ as an entitlement program, it also strengthened Title IV-D by enhancing states' ability to track NCPs across state lines. States were required to enact uniform interstate laws. Provisions were made for new hire registries. These registries required states to report all new hires within 20 days to child support enforcement authorities. Moreover, under PRWORA, paternity establishment procedures were strengthened and streamlined and new penalties were initiated including license revocation and asset seizure (U.S. DHSS, 1996). Because over 30% of child support cases involve NCPs residing or working in a different state, the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) enhance states' ability to track parents across state lines. The NDNH is merged regularly with the Federal Case Registry of child support case information, and matches are then reported to the home state for the appropriate action.

Other PRWORA provisions included requiring states to establish a single disbursement unit for the allocation of child support payments, making payment dispersal more efficient. A "Family First" policy was instituted; that is, families no longer eligible for welfare assistance will have priority in the distribution of dollars collected toward child support arrearages.

Before 1984, to compensate the government for the aid provided to the family, child support payments were retained by the government. After 1984, the federal government required that the family receive the first \$50 of each month's payment, and then it was disregarded in determining welfare benefits. The intent was to give the family receiving assistance an incentive to cooperate with the child support enforcement program. Under the new legislation (PRWORA), states are no longer required to pass through the first \$50 of child support to the family. As of 1997, 32 states ceased providing the pass-through to welfare families (Sorensen & Halpern, 1999).

Children in Poverty

According to a recently released federal report, almost three of every ten children in 1996 lived with only one parent, usually the mother (U.S. Department of Commerce,

¹ Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Title IV-A, was replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block granted program to the states based on 1995 AFDC case loads.

1999). The number of children growing up without a father in the past two decades has increased by 56% (Bernard, 1998). This means that 22.8 million children under 21 years of age lived with 13.7 million custodial parents (CPs), many who are poor. About 30%, or 4.2 million single parents, have family incomes below the poverty level, compared with 16% of all parents. In 1994, young children living with unmarried mothers were almost five times as likely to be poor as those living with married parents (Li & Bennett, 1998).

The effects of childhood poverty are far-reaching and calamitous. According to a Children's Defense Fund report, the cost of childhood poverty to America's economy is expected to be \$130 billion due to poorly educated and less productive future workers (Sherman, 1997). A recently released report revealed that several factors contribute to America's high child poverty levels: single parenthood, low educational attainment, part-time or no employment and low wages (Li & Bennett, 1998).

Because of the growing childhood poverty problem, local child support agencies are experiencing increased public scrutiny, particularly with respect to families on welfare. The public assistance side of welfare reform focuses on reducing the length of time on aid, while the child support side works to enhance enforcement of support payments. The most prominent feature of PRWORA is that families have a five-year lifetime limit provided in two-year segments. Many families who were previously receiving TANF funds will at some point cease to be eligible. Because welfare assistance can no longer be taken for granted, there is a new urgency for the NCP to help by picking up where government aid stops.

Before welfare reform, only 15% of AFDC families received any income from child or spousal support. Most of those receiving such support received less than 7% of income from this source (MaCurdy & O'Brien-Strain, 1997). Today, the majority of custodial families do not receive child support. The reforms should address the problem, but according to Sorensen and Lerman (1998):

very few of these reforms will put low-income noncustodial fathers in any better position to pay adequate support for their children. In fact, the new laws, which are mostly punitive toward fathers, may prove counterproductive by driving more poor dads away from the enforcement system and farther from the lives of their offspring.

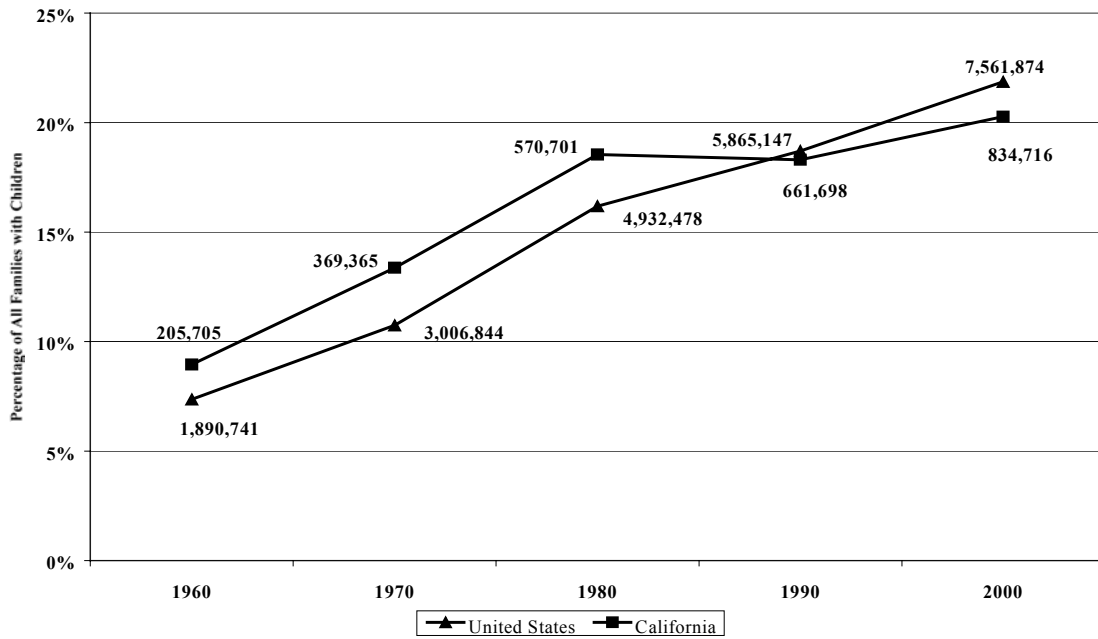
Sorenson (1997), using the 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation and the Urban Institute’s 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households, showed that \$34 billion more in child support could be collected from noncustodial fathers. Moreover, 46-54% of noncustodial fathers pay no child support. Although increased child support payments could impose economic hardship on some noncustodial fathers, generally NCPs had significantly higher family incomes than the custodial mothers did.

THE NATION AND THE CALIFORNIA SITUATION

Single Mother Families

In the past 40 years, the United States and California have witnessed a significant increase in the absolute number and proportion of families headed by single mothers. Figure 2.1 displays the growth in single-parent, female-headed families with children under 18, referred to here as single mother families, as a percentage of all families with children, and reports the total number of these families in the United States and California. In 1960, less than one-in-ten families were single mother families. By the end of the century, that increased to more than one-in-five families.

Figure 2.1: Single Mother Families with Children, 1960 - 2000

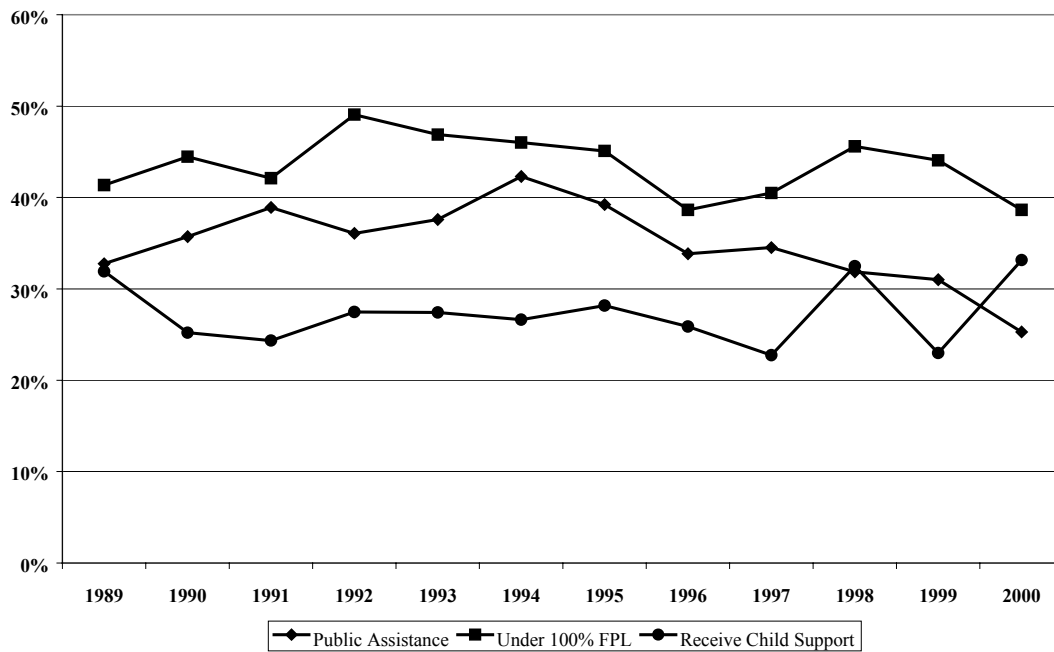


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, the Decennial Census 1960-2000

The pattern in California paralleled the nation, with some differences. Prior to 1990, California had a larger proportion of single parent families than the nation as a whole. The trend reversed in 1990 when single females headed approximately 18% of the nation's and California's families. According to the 2000 Census, the proportion of households with single mothers nationwide has grown to nearly 23% of all families compared to California where just over one-fifth of families are headed by a single female.

Families headed by single mothers are at high risk of living in poverty and have high rates of welfare usage. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 display welfare usage rates, poverty rates, and child support receipt for single, female-headed households with children under the age of 18 for California and the nation, respectively.

Figure 2.2: Poverty, Public Assistance, and Child Support Receipt among Single Mother Families in California, 1989 - 2000



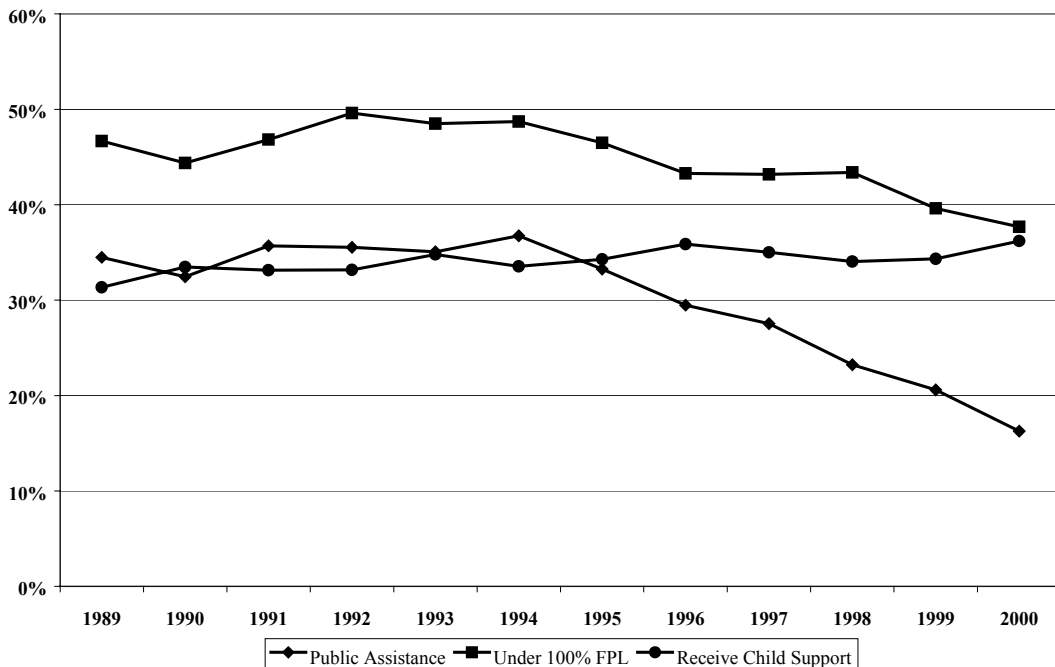
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplement

Figure 2.2 shows that in California, the majority of single mother families are poor. Between 40% and 50% of single mother families with children live below the 2000 federal poverty level (FPL), a total annual household income of \$17,050 for a family of

four. Nearly two-thirds of these families have annual incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level, which is often used to define low-income families.

The low economic status of single mother families is the product of several factors. The primary factors are the low employment levels and limited marketable skills of many single mothers, coupled with their family obligations. While a small minority receives child support payments from the NCPs, those payments often total very small amounts. Because of their own limited earnings and small or nonexistent child support payments, many single mother families must depend on public assistance. In the late 1980s, about a third were receiving AFDC. The proportion receiving public assistance declined in the late 1990s with the implementation of welfare reform, which changed the welfare system from an entitlement program to a transition-to-work program under the new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Figure 2.3: Poverty, Public Assistance, and Child Support Receipt among Single Mother Families in the United States, 1989 – 2000



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplement

Figure 2.3 shows the data for the nation as a whole. While the trends for California are similar to those for the nation, there are some important differences.

Welfare usage dropped faster and more dramatically in the nation compared to California. California implemented their TANF program, CalWORKs, in 1998, which was later than many states. In addition, while fewer single mothers in California receive child support payments than the nation as a whole, about the same proportion live in poverty.

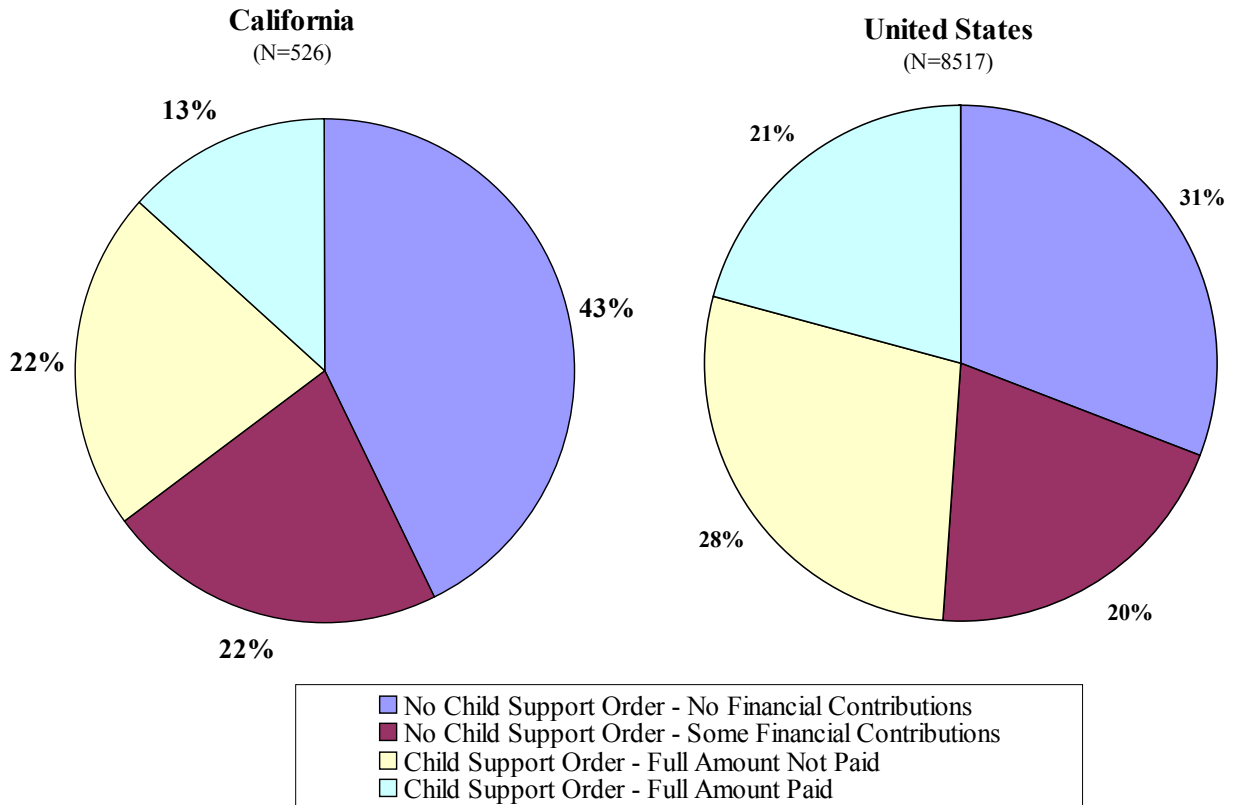
Child Support Reduces Poverty and Welfare Dependence

For many years, California has lagged behind the other states in its child support collection efforts. During the late 1980s, Garfinkel et al. (1998) found that California had child support collection records below the national average and experienced declines in effectiveness. In a 1994 report that evaluated state child support guidelines, California was ranked in the bottom fifth of all states in proportion of child support collected (Dodson & Entmacher, 1994). A recent report released by the California State Auditor stated that the state's performance had improved over the past four years. However, the report stated that, "even when one accounts for California's demographic disadvantage in comparison to many other states, it is still clear that the state's Child Support Enforcement Program is still floundering" (California State Auditor, 1999).

Child support payments from NCPs improve the economic status of single mother families. Unfortunately, many single mothers do not receive any financial support from the fathers of their children and, in many cases, do not have child support court orders established. Even when child support orders are in place, NCPs, who often are poor themselves, do not pay the required amounts.

Figure 2.4 displays the data for California and the nation for the percentage of children who are covered by child support orders and the proportion of the order that is received. Nearly two-thirds of California children living with single mothers are not covered by an official child support order. Only one-eighth of children covered by child support orders receive the full amount annually, while less than a quarter have support orders in place, but only receive partial payments. Nationally, more children are covered by orders and receive the full amount. Just under half of children in the United States who live in single mother families are covered by child support orders and slightly more than one-fifth receive the full amount of support ordered.

Figure 2.4: Percentage of Children Living with Single Mothers Who Have Child Support Orders and Receive Full Payments



SOURCE: The Urban Institute, National Survey of American Families, 1997, Wash.D.C.

The financial support from NCPs and the presence of child support orders are associated with lower poverty rates and welfare usage among children living with single mothers. Table 2.1 and 2.2 present the percentage of children receiving AFDC and living in impoverished families by whether the NCP makes any type of financial contributions (Table 2.1) and by whether a child support order is established and paid in full (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1: Welfare Usage and Poverty Status by Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Financial Contributions, Among Children Living with Single Mothers CA & U.S.

	All Children	NCP Contributes Financially	NCP Does Not Contribute
California			
AFDC	44%	35%	52%
Less than 100%	54%	41%	64%
Less than 200%	78%	83%	72%
	N (522)	(237)	(285)
United States			
AFDC	31%	20%	43%
Less than 100%	49%	39%	59%
Less than 200%	74%	67%	83%
	N (8459)	(4632)	(3827)

SOURCE: Urban Institute, National Survey of American Families, 1997, Wash., D.C.

Among all children living in single mother families, the data from the National Survey of American Families show that 44% in California and 31% in the United States receive welfare payments. Table 2.1 shows that children who receive some form of financial support from their NCP are significantly less likely to receive welfare than children whose NCP does not contribute. In California, 35% of children who receive financial contributions from their NCP are on welfare compared to 52% who receive no financial support. Nationally, only 20% of children whose NCP contributes financially receive welfare, compared to 43% of children who are not financially supported by their NCP. Children whose NCP contributes are also less likely to live in poverty. About half of children in California (54%) and the nation (49%) residing with single mothers live below the federal poverty level (FPL), and about three quarters, 78% and 74% in California and the United States, respectively, live below 200% of the poverty level. Financial support from NCP reduces these proportions by about 20%.

Table 2.2: Welfare Usage and Poverty Status by Child Support Orders, Children Living with Single Mothers

	No Order No Payments	No Order Some Payments	Support Order Not Full Amount	Support Order Pay Full Amount
California				
AFDC	54%	40%	40%	27%
Less than 100%	66%	50%	48%	26%
Less than 200%	85%	80%	75%	54%
N	(215)	(109)	(127)	(68)
United States				
AFDC	41%	21%	42%	12%
Less than 100%	59%	45%	54%	30%
Less than 200%	83%	73%	78%	58%
N	(2458)	(1556)	(2453)	(1943)

SOURCE: National Survey of American Families, 1997

Table 2.2 provides a more detailed picture of NCP financial contributions that exist based on whether a child support order has been established and whether the full amount of the support order is paid annually. Children not covered by a support order in California and nationwide are significantly more likely to receive AFDC/TANF and live in poverty. In California, over half (54%) of the children, who are not covered by a support order and receive no financial contributions from their NCP, receive AFDC/TANF. Four in ten children receive some type of financial support, whether they are covered by a child support order or not. Only 27% of children who receive the full amount of ordered child support are on welfare. Similarly, significantly fewer children who either are covered by support orders or receive financial support live in poverty in California. The trends for the nation are similar, although a smaller proportion of families receive AFDC and live below 100% of the poverty level in the United States compared to California. Interestingly, nationwide only 21% of children who are not covered by a support order but do receive some type of financial assistance are on AFDC. Among children who do not have an order and receive no support and those who are covered by an order but do not receive full payments, about 40% receive AFDC.

Single Mother Families on Welfare

A large proportion of single mother families rely on welfare for financial support, therefore it is informative to develop a basic demographic profile of these women. Table 2.1 provides a demographic profile of single mothers receiving public assistance.

About half of single mothers receiving public assistance in California and nationally are between 25 and 35 years of age. Less than one-fifth of the single mothers in California are under 25 years old, while a third are over 35 years old. Just over one-third of single mothers receiving welfare are white. Women of color are disproportionately represented among single mothers on welfare in both California and the nation. The two data sources vary slightly in the racial breakdowns. Estimates from the Current Population Survey indicate a higher percentage of Hispanics among single mothers on public assistance in California than the National Survey of American Families (40% compared to 28%). The National Survey of American Families suggests a higher percentage of black single mothers in California (29% versus 18%). The racial breakdowns for the nation are more consistent between the two sources.

Educational level reveals a pattern of low attainment among single mothers on welfare. In California, between one-third and one-half of single mothers on welfare have less than a high school degree; another one-third has only a high school degree or equivalent.

Table 2.3: Demographic Profile of Single Mothers Receiving Public Assistance

	California ^a	United States ^a	California ^b	United States ^b
Age				
Under 25	19%	25%	18%	23%
25 – 35	49%	46%	49%	48%
Over 35	33%	29%	33%	29%
Race				
White	34%	42%	36%	36%
Black	29%	37%	18%	43%
Hispanic	29%	18%	40%	18%
Other	7%	3%	6%	3%
Education				
Less than High School	31%	32%	47%	38%
High School Degree/GED	32%	38%	30%	36%
More than High School	37%	30%	23%	25%
Annual Income (Mean/Median)				
Total Family Income	\$14,370/\$10,861	\$12,216/\$8,431	\$11,232/\$8,988	\$9,461/\$7,514
Total AFDC Income	\$6,277/\$6,568	\$3,369/\$2,842	\$5,602/\$5,616	\$3,783/\$3,348
Total Child Support Income	\$194/\$0	\$281/\$0	\$114/\$0	\$255/\$0
Receive child support	19%	25%	14%	20%
Child support order for at least 1 child ¹	34%	49%	NA	NA
N	151	1826	523	4066

^a SOURCE: The Urban Institute, National Survey of American Families, Washington, DC, 1997.

^b SOURCE: Current Population Survey, March Supplement, Pooled sample 1996 to 2000.

¹ This is consistent with published information from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) that finds that among families receiving welfare, 52% do not have child support orders, 20% have support orders, and among the remaining 28%, it is unknown whether a support order is in place. (CDSS, 1994)

Single mother families often have poverty level incomes. Table 2.3 also presents the mean and median for total annual family income, annual income received from AFDC/TANF, and annual income received from child support payments. The mean and median total family income place a family of four well under the federal poverty level. In California, welfare payments provide nearly half of single mother family income for those receiving public assistance. Nationwide, income from AFDC composes about a third of total family income. Child support payments received for this group are very low, averaging between \$100 and \$300 annually. For California and the United States, the median child support payment of \$0 indicates that over half of single mother families on welfare receive no child support from NCPs.

III

A DESCRIPTION OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Among the NCPs surveyed, 830 were fathers and 44 were mothers. In Part III, we focus on the noncustodial fathers. In Part VI we report on the noncustodial mothers and compare them to the fathers.

The survey data focused on one child, the youngest child if there was more than one child to the couple. Often the noncustodial father may be the parent of several children with different CPs; however, these data focus only on the youngest child of one noncustodial and custodial parent dyad.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS

Demographic Description of the Fathers

Table 3.1 shows that the noncustodial fathers averaged 34.3 years in age. The majority of the fathers were between 25 and 40 years old (56.7%). Over half of the 830 fathers were Hispanic (57.5%) and slightly more than one-fourth were African American (26.7%). Table 3.1 shows that the mean age distribution was similar across all fathers regardless of ethnicity or race. Over one-third of the fathers had never been married, primarily younger noncustodial fathers and those of African-American background. One out of five were married; those married were more likely to be of Hispanic origin. Among those who had ever been married (N=392), 73% responded that they had been married an average of 6.3 years, with Hispanics averaging many more married years than African Americans or other groups.

Table 3.1: Description of Noncustodial Fathers

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample (%)	830	156 (18.5)	471 (56.7)	203 (24.5)	222 (26.4)	477 (57.5)	131 (15.8)
Age – mean (sd=standard deviation)	34.3 (9.2)	22.0 (2.4)	33.1 (4.3)	46.5 (5.4)	33.9 (8.8)	34.0 (9.3)	35.8 (9.3)
Race/Ethnicity (%):							
- Am. Indian/Native Am.	1.5	1.3	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.0	9.5
- Asian/Pacific Islander	2.3	3.9	1.3	3.5	0.0	0.0	15.0
- Black/African American	26.9	24.5	29.5	22.7	100.0	0.0	0.0
- Hispanic	57.8	65.8	55.8	56.2	0.0	100.0	0.0
- Non-Hispanic White	9.9	4.5	10.5	12.8	0.0	0.0	64.6
- Other	1.7	0.0	1.7	3.0	0.0	0.0	11.0
Marital Status (%):							
- Married	21.6	16.0	22.3	24.1	12.2	26.4	19.9
- Living Together	11.3	9.6	12.5	10.3	4.5	15.7	6.9
- Divorced/Widowed	16.8	3.2	15.3	30.1	19.8	12.6	26.7
- Separated	14.9	4.5	15.9	20.7	14.0	16.1	12.2
- Never Married	35.4	66.7	34.0	14.8	49.6	29.1	34.6
Years Married – mean, n=392	6.3 (5.6)	3.0 (1.9)	6.1 (4.9)	9.0 (7.3)	4.8 (3.9)	7.0 (6.1)	5.9 (5.0)
Currently living with/dating one person (% yes)	31.1	35.3	34.0	20.9	36.3	24.9	39.0
Relationship w/ current partner (%):							
- Extremely unhappy	3.4	3.7	3.8	2.1	2.9	4.1	1.4
- Unhappy	2.9	2.5	1.9	6.3	1.9	3.4	2.8
- Okay	23.5	19.8	22.2	30.2	25.2	23.9	19.4
- Happy	38.6	34.6	42.9	30.2	32.0	40.3	41.7
- Very happy	31.6	39.5	29.3	31.3	37.9	28.4	34.7
Highest Completed Grade – mean (sd)	10.9 (3.0)	11.5 (1.7)	10.9 (2.7)	10.2 (4.1)	12.2 (1.5)	9.9 (3.3)	12.0 (2.3)
Highest Degree Attained (%):							
- None	43.4	37.2	43.5	48.0	22.5	56.3	32.1
- High School Diploma	29.6	40.4	28.7	23.3	43.7	21.9	33.6
- GED	7.0	9.6	7.2	4.5	6.3	7.1	7.6
- AA/Tech/Trade Certificate	17.4	11.5	18.7	18.8	24.8	13.0	20.6
- Bachelors Degree	2.2	1.3	1.7	4.0	2.7	1.3	4.6
- Graduate Degree	0.5	0.0	0.2	1.5	0.0	0.4	1.5
Religious preference (%):							
- Catholic	46.3	50.6	43.2	50.0	3.6	71.5	26.2
- Protestant	17.9	14.1	19.2	17.8	46.2	6.1	13.1
- Christian	19.0	16.7	20.4	17.3	28.1	11.7	30.0
- Other	5.3	4.5	5.1	6.4	9.1	1.1	14.6
- None	11.6	14.1	12.1	8.4	13.1	9.6	16.2

About one-third (31.1%) of the fathers were either cohabiting in a married-like relationship or committed to one person even if not living with her. Either of these types of relationships were less likely to occur among Hispanic fathers (24.9%) and older fathers (20.9%). However, the men in these relationships viewed them as “very happy” or “happy” (70.2%).

The NCP fathers averaged 10.9 years of schooling, less than a high school education. The older fathers averaged less. Hispanic fathers were the least educated (9.9 years compared to 12.2 years for African-American fathers or 12.0 years for fathers of other groups). About 43% of all fathers had no degree. More than one-half (56.3%) of Hispanic fathers had not completed any degree compared to 22.5% of African-American fathers and 32.1% of fathers of other groups. African-American fathers were the most likely to have a high school diploma or GED (50%). Hispanic fathers were the least likely to have any type of advanced training or degree (14.7%) compared to African-American fathers (27.5%) or fathers of other racial and ethnic groups (26.7%).

Almost one-half (46.3%) of the NCP fathers reported their religious preference as Catholic. Hispanic fathers were the most likely to report Catholicism as their religious preference (71.5%), while almost the same proportion of African-American fathers reported either Protestant or another Christian sect (74.3%). While only a small percentage of the men reported no religious preference (11.6%), they tended to be young men (14.1%) or among “other” racial or ethnic background (16.2%).

Financial Situation

Table 3.2 shows the financial picture of the NCP fathers surveyed. In general, they lived in very low-income households. About one-half of the men were working full-time (47.5%). Those least likely to work full-time were older men (39.9%) or African-American men (36%). Unemployment was highest among African-American men and lowest among Hispanic men.

Table 3.2: Noncustodial Fathers, Their Financial Situation

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Household earnings, (monthly) – mean	\$1,216	\$1,233	\$1,262	\$1,099	\$1,142	\$1,199	\$1,405
Current employment status (%):							
- Working full-time	47.5	49.4	50.2	39.9	36.0	53.8	44.3
- Working part-time	21.4	18.0	18.7	30.1	21.2	21.2	22.1
- Unemployed	24.0	23.7	24.3	23.7	32.0	19.3	27.5
- Student/have never worked	3.6	7.7	3.2	1.5	8.1	1.9	2.3
- Retired/something else	3.5	1.3	3.6	4.9	2.7	3.8	3.8
Have a checking account (% yes)	22.6	17.3	22.2	27.7	19.9	21.3	32.1
Have a savings account (% yes)	15.4	18.6	14.7	14.4	18.6	13.7	16.0
Have a credit card (% yes)	16.0	11.5	16.0	19.3	16.3	14.3	21.5
Used EITC on most recent tax return (%):							
- Yes	18.5	15.1	21.8	13.3	19.9	13.8	33.6
- No	57.5	56.3	55.4	63.0	62.0	60.1	40.9
- Do not know what it is	24.0	28.6	22.8	23.7	18.1	26.1	25.5
In last month, received (% yes):							
- Cash aid	11.1	9.6	11.9	10.3	16.2	9.0	9.9
- Child support	3.5	4.5	3.6	2.5	4.1	2.7	5.3
Current Housing Situation (%):							
- Rent	47.7	30.3	52.0	50.7	40.5	50.7	48.5
- Own	6.6	4.5	5.5	10.8	3.6	7.8	7.7
- Share Rent	34.0	47.8	33.6	24.6	40.1	32.9	27.7
- Do Not Pay Rent	8.7	16.8	6.6	7.4	12.6	6.7	9.2
- Other	3.0	0.7	2.3	6.4	3.2	1.9	6.9
# of People in Household – mean	3.7 (1.9)	4.1 (1.9)	3.8 (1.9)	3.2 (1.8)	3.0 (1.3)	4.1 (2.0)	3.6 (2.1)
In past 12 months:							
- Slept on street (% yes)	13.2	12.2	14.0	11.8	18.9	9.9	15.4
- Get food from relative/friend (% often/sometimes)	38.8	35.3	39.3	40.6	37.4	39.9	27.4
- Get food from church/pantry (% often/sometimes)	15.1	12.2	14.7	18.3	17.2	13.2	18.3
- Skip meals (%often/sometimes)	37.6	28.2	37.8	44.6	36.5	37.0	42.0
- Not able to pay rent (% yes)	58.3	53.2	60.2	57.6	56.3	63.2	43.5
- Not able to pay utilities (% yes)	61.7	51.9	63.3	65.5	58.4	66.6	49.6

The proportion having checking or savings accounts was very low among these men, possibly because of the high rate of unemployment and low household incomes. The proportion having a credit card was equally low.

Many of the men were probably eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). One in four did not know what the EITC was; few men reported using it. Young men (<25) and Hispanic men were the least knowledgeable about EITC.

Table 3.2 shows that few of the surveyed fathers have received welfare assistance or Food Stamps. Whether this has been because of their lack of knowledge about these programs or a reluctance to obtain public assistance is not known.

Three out of four NCP fathers either rented or shared rent with others. Fewer than 10% did not pay rent because they lived with family or friends. Young fathers or African-American fathers were most likely to reside with family or friends. In general, these NCP fathers lived in large households, averaging 3-4 persons. Young fathers and Hispanic fathers were the most likely to live in large households.

These men reported that in the last year they have been homeless (13.2%), unable to pay rent (58.3%), unable to pay utilities (61.7%), and often been without food (37.6%). They often had to rely on others to obtain food (38.8%). African- American men were the most likely to have been homeless and unable to pay rent or utilities.

Transportation

Table 3.3 shows that while 85.7% of the NCPs have had a driver's license at some time, only 65% currently had one. About 31% of NCP fathers did not have access to a car. African-American men were the most likely to not have a driver's license or have access to a car, and they were the most likely to use public transportation on almost a daily basis. Hispanics were the least likely to use public transportation on a regular basis.

Table 3.3: Use of Transportation

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Have driver's license (% yes)	64.6	61.3	64.8	66.5	59.0	65.6	70.2
Ever had a driver's license (% yes)	85.7	75.4	86.6	92.7	82.2	84.2	100.0
Currently have access to a car (%):							
- Yes, own working vehicle	55.0	58.3	52.0	59.4	41.8	60.7	56.5
- Yes, but do not own	14.3	15.4	14.9	11.9	17.7	11.3	19.1
- No	30.7	26.3	33.1	28.7	40.5	27.9	24.4
Use public transportation (%):							
- Never or hardly ever	50.8	51.9	49.2	53.7	34.2	56.5	58.0
- Sometimes	21.0	22.4	21.7	18.2	23.9	21.0	16.0
- Daily or almost daily	28.2	25.6	29.2	28.1	41.9	22.5	26.0

Health and Mental Health

Table 3.4 shows the health and mental health status of the noncustodial fathers. Almost one in five felt that they were in excellent health. The younger the father, the more likely he was to perceive himself as in excellent health. African-American fathers were the most likely to report being in excellent health and Hispanic fathers the least likely. A relatively high proportion of fathers (one in four) felt that they were in “fair or poor” health. While 28.3% of Hispanic fathers viewed their health as “fair or poor,” fathers in the “other” category of race and ethnicity were the most likely to view their health as “fair or poor” (32.8%).

On the average, the fathers spent several days in bed because of illness during the year. In some cases, these illness days may be attributed to the lack of health insurance. Over half of the noncustodial fathers (58.2%) did not have any health insurance. This was particularly true for the Hispanic and African-American noncustodial fathers. Unless the father received health insurance through his employer, the likelihood was that he would not have any health insurance coverage. There was virtually no private health insurance and a small proportion received health care through Medi-Cal.

Table 3.4: Health/Mental Health of Noncustodial Fathers

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Self-rated overall health (%):							
- Excellent	20.2	29.5	19.3	15.3	26.1	17.6	19.9
- Very good	20.0	23.1	21.4	14.3	26.1	17.0	20.6
- Good	32.5	25.6	32.9	37.0	26.1	37.1	26.7
- Fair	19.0	14.7	19.5	21.2	16.7	20.3	18.3
- Poor	8.2	7.1	6.8	12.3	5.0	8.0	14.5
In past year, # of days illness/injury kept you in bed – mean (sd.)	4.7 (11.4)	3.1 (8.0)	4.8 (11.9)	5.7 (12.3)	4.8 (11.6)	3.9 (10.2)	7.4 (14.5)
Source of health care insurance (%):							
- Private	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.5	2.7	1.1	1.6
- Employer	24.7	29.9	25.2	19.6	22.8	24.1	30.2
- Spouse	3.5	2.0	4.1	3.5	3.7	3.0	5.4
- Medi-Cal	7.6	7.8	6.4	10.1	5.0	8.7	7.8
- Other	4.4	3.3	3.2	8.0	7.3	3.0	4.7
- None	58.2	55.2	59.6	57.3	58.5	60.3	50.4
In past week, # of days (mean) felt:							
- Annoyed	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6
- Like not eating	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.0
- Mind wandering	1.9	1.7	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.7
- Everything is an effort	2.9	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.5	2.7	2.7
- Fearful/worried	2.8	2.0	2.8	3.2	2.3	3.0	2.7
- Could not sleep well	2.2	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.0
- Talk less than usual	1.4	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.3
- Lonely	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.4	1.8	2.0	1.8
- Sad	2.0	1.5	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.1
In last month, (% yes) ...							
- Used illegal drugs	5.5	9.0	5.6	2.5	9.1	3.8	5.3
- Drank alcohol to feel high	17.4	21.9	18.9	10.3	19.0	17.2	15.3
- Received drug counseling	9.5	10.9	9.6	8.4	9.0	7.8	16.8
In past year, (% yes) ...							
- Ever arrested	10.2	14.7	10.6	5.9	12.2	9.2	10.7
- Ever convicted	34.6	30.1	39.4	27.1	37.8	30.0	45.8
# of times convicted – mean (sd.)	2.6 (2.5)	2.5 (2.1)	2.6 (2.6)	2.5 (2.6)	2.8 (2.7)	2.7 (2.6)	2.1 (1.8)

The NCPs were asked a series of questions regarding the number of days in the past week that they felt symptoms of depression.² While the majority of the group did

² This set of questions is a subset of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depressed Mood Scales (CES-D). It measures the current level of depressive symptomology. The CES-D has very good internal consistency with alphas of .85 for the general population. It has excellent concurrent validity. A scale

not express depressive symptoms, there were areas of difficulties such as “everything seems such an effort,” “could not sleep well,” or a feeling of “fearfulness or worry.” The feeling of “everything is such an effort” was most true for African-American men, and a feeling of “fearfulness or worry” was most true for Hispanic men. In scoring the scale, 14.5% of the men had a depressed mood most or all of the time. Another 25% indicated that they suffered occasionally or moderately from depressive symptoms. In all, almost 40% of these men expressed depressive symptomology, indicating some need for mental health treatment.

While only a few indicated or admitted they used illegal drugs, a larger proportion said they used alcohol until they felt intoxicated. Both younger NCPs and African-American NCPs were the most likely to indicate the abuse of alcohol. Those who admitted to having had drug counseling tended to be younger NCPs and members of ethnic/racial groups other than African American or Hispanic.

One in three NCPs indicated having a criminal history. Among those who were convicted of an offense, other than nonpayment of child support, they reported, on average, more than two convictions. The greatest proportion of convictions reported was by the “other” category of ethnicity and race (46%).

Social Support Systems

More than one-half said that they had a confidante from whom they could receive advice or help (Table 3.5). In particular, nearly three out of four expressed that either they “often” or “always” had someone who would take care of them when they were ill. About 10-15% of the NCPs reported having no social support network of family or friends upon whom to rely if they needed help or were ill. Older NCPs were less likely to have a reliable social support system.

score is created by summing the item scores and dividing by 9, the number of items. The scores are: less than one day=rarely or none of the time, 1-2 days=some or a little of the time, 3-4 days=occasionally or a moderate amount of time, 5-7 days=most or all of the time. In this case, each item is listed and the mean given for the total NCPs to provide an overview of the distribution of the scale.

Table 3.5: Social Support Systems of Male NCP

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Have someone to give you good advice (%):							
- Never	11.3	8.3	10.4	15.8	8.1	12.6	12.2
- Seldom	5.3	3.2	4.3	9.4	6.8	4.8	4.6
- Sometimes	16.0	17.3	15.7	15.8	17.1	14.9	18.3
- Often	11.1	14.7	10.2	10.3	14.4	9.4	11.5
- Always	56.3	56.4	59.5	48.8	53.6	58.3	53.4
Have someone to take care of you if ill (%):							
- Never	10.6	9.0	9.1	15.3	11.3	10.3	10.7
- Seldom	3.1	2.6	2.6	4.9	4.1	2.5	3.8
- Sometimes	11.3	9.0	11.3	13.3	12.2	10.7	12.2
- Often	8.9	12.8	8.5	6.9	9.5	8.6	9.2
- Always	66.0	66.7	68.6	59.6	63.1	67.9	64.1

THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHER AND THE CUSTODIAL MOTHER/GUARDIAN

Once paternity has been established, the NCP is responsible for paying child support to the custodial parent or guardian of the child through the state child support system. The relationship between the two parents is often fraught with difficulties and child support is often withheld as a result. While there are many other reasons for non-payment of child support, the noncustodial/custodial parent relationship plays a role.

The NCP-CP Relationship

Table 3.6 shows that most of the children reside with their biological mother (84.2%). Some children were with a relative, guardian, or foster parent, and a few children lived with both parents because the NCP had reunited with the CP at the time of the interview (8.9%, n=74). Those who reported reuniting with the child's CP were most likely to be young and Hispanic.

The NCP was asked about their relationship at the time the child was born. About 23% noted that they did not know each other very well or were only dating occasionally. Those fathers who did not know the mother very well were more than twice as likely to be young men rather than older men. In another 30% the noncustodial and custodial parent were living together. Younger men (<25) were the most likely to be living with the custodial mother at the time the child was born, while older men were the least likely to be living with the custodial mother at that time. Hispanic fathers were the most likely to be living with the custodial mother but were still more likely to be married to the custodial mother than African-American men. African-American men were most likely to be in a committed relationship, seeing the custodial mother regularly, or dating sometimes.

Table 3.6: NCP Relationship with CP

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Child currently lives with (%):							
- Natural mom (CP)	84.2	85.7	83.6	84.5	88.1	83.1	81.7
- NCP/Family reunited	8.9	11.0	9.3	6.5	4.1	11.1	9.2
- Relative	4.3	3.3	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.1	4.6
- Someone else	2.6	0.0	2.6	4.5	3.2	1.7	4.6
Relationship when child born (%):							
- Not know each other very well	7.7	11.5	7.9	4.5	7.2	8.0	7.6
- Dating sometimes	15.1	15.4	16.6	11.4	21.2	14.1	8.4
- Seeing each other regularly	5.4	5.1	6.8	2.5	10.4	4.0	2.3
- Committed relationship	13.7	23.1	12.6	8.9	19.4	9.9	17.6
- Living together	30.4	36.5	29.9	26.7	23.0	34.0	29.8
- Married	23.2	5.1	21.3	41.6	16.7	24.3	30.5
- Other	4.5	3.2	4.9	4.5	2.3	5.7	3.8
Number of months in relationship – mean (sd.)	44.0 (47.7)	21.5 (19.0)	43.1 (43.5)	63.7 (62.4)	41.3 (40.4)	44.9 (51.7)	45.2 (44.8)
Current relationship (%):							
- No relationship	30.6	26.3	32.3	29.7	24.1	36.2	19.8
- Very unfriendly	9.4	16.1	6.9	10.3	4.8	10.0	14.9
- Somewhat unfriendly	8.6	5.1	9.6	9.0	10.2	8.1	7.9
- Somewhat friendly	26.9	34.8	25.9	23.2	26.5	25.5	32.7
- Very friendly	24.5	17.8	25.3	27.7	34.3	20.2	24.8
Last spoke with CP (%):							
- More than 6 months ago	25.6	18.6	26.2	29.6	19.4	29.6	21.4
- Between 1 and 6 months ago	10.7	8.3	11.3	11.3	7.7	11.6	13.0
- Within past month	12.8	16.0	12.6	10.8	15.8	12.2	9.9
- Within past week	50.9	57.1	50.0	48.3	57.2	46.6	55.7

The length of these relationships ranged from one date to 7 or 8 years. As would be expected, younger men were in relationships a shorter average length of time, slightly less than 2 years, while older men were in relationships slightly longer than 5 years.

About one-half of the NCPs viewed their current relationship with the custodial mother as “very friendly” or “somewhat friendly.” African-American men were the most likely to view their relationship with the custodial mother as “very friendly.” About 40% of all the men viewed their relationship with the custodial mother as either nonexistent or at best, very unfriendly.

Because African-American men had a friendlier relationship with the custodial parent, there seemed to be more contact between the mother and the father. Of course, it

may be that because of contact they were friendlier towards each other. Hispanic men were less likely to have contact (more than 6 months ago) than men of other groups. Interestingly, younger men were also more likely to have contact with the CP but did not characterize the relationship as “friendly” as often as the other age groups.

THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHER’S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILD

Contacts /Visitations with Child

The focus child’s mean age was 9 years, with most children between four and 14 years. Table 3.7 shows that more than one-half of the fathers indicated that they had seen their child several times during the last month, or more than once a week. In fact, two out of three fathers reported seeing their child at least once a month or more in the past six months. However, a few fathers never see their child. About one in five fathers reported never seeing their child. Usually these fathers were older (>40) or Hispanic.

The children lived some distance from the noncustodial father. Many reported that the child lives almost 40 minutes to one hour away from them.

Among those fathers who did visit their child (about 80%), one-half said that their visits included an overnight stay. Young fathers were the most likely to say that their visits often included overnight stays. Older fathers were least likely to have the child overnight and were the most likely to report spending less than five hours per visit. African-American fathers also indicated overnight stays most often, while Hispanic fathers were more likely to say that their visits did not extend to overnight.

Many fathers did not contact their children by either phone or letter (31%). However, more than half (56%) indicated some contact at least several times a month. African-American fathers were the most likely to say that they were in weekly or more often contact (46%). The majority of fathers would like to see their child more. Older fathers (>40) and Hispanic fathers were the least likely to say they would like to see the child more than once a week. These fathers were more likely to say they wanted to see their child several times a month. Almost one-third said that someone, usually the CP,

opposed visits with the child. Young fathers and Hispanic fathers most often reported opposition.

Table 3.7: NCP Relationship with Child

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
In past 6 months, saw child (%):							
- Never	21.5	16.0	21.5	25.7	18.5	23.1	21.4
- Less than once a month	11.8	8.4	12.8	12.0	10.7	11.8	13.7
- About once a month	8.5	8.4	7.7	10.4	8.8	8.6	7.7
- Several times a month	28.3	30.5	29.6	23.5	29.3	29.0	23.9
- More than once a week	29.9	36.6	28.4	28.4	32.7	27.5	33.3
How far away child lives from NCP							
- Minutes away – mean (sd.)	38.4 (69.7)	39.8 (94.8)	36.9 (57.8)	40.8 (68.6)	51.1 (100.1)	33.7 (58.9)	33.8 (28.7)
- Miles away – mean (sd.)	30.0 (97.2)	13.6 (17.1)	26.4 (89.9)	48.4 (133.8)	34.0 (105.8)	27.1 (90.5)	32.9 (104.0)
Months since NCP last saw child – mean (sd.)	27.7 (29.8)	20.5 (10.1)	28.8 (28.5)	30.5 (40.1)	26.4 (26.0)	29.0 (32.3)	25.4 (27.1)
Length of usual visit (%):							
- Less than 5 hours	29.7	20.9	28.1	40.4	27.4	33.2	21.7
- More than 5 hours but not over night	20.2	20	20.8	19.1	17.3	21.4	21.7
- 1-2 nights or a weekend	34.9	38.2	37.3	26.5	36.3	32.0	42.4
- 3 days to a week	9.4	15.5	8.3	7.4	14.3	8.3	4.4
- More than a week	5.8	5.5	5.5	6.6	4.8	5.1	9.8
In past 6 months, contacted child by phone/card (%):							
- Never	31.0	33.8	28.6	34.2	23.5	36.3	25.2
- Less than once a month	7.4	3.6	8.9	6.8	8.9	6.8	6.7
- About once a month	5.7	5.0	6.8	3.7	5.2	5.7	6.7
- Several times a month	18.3	18.7	17.8	19.0	16.9	18.4	20.2
- More than once a week	37.7	38.9	37.9	36.3	45.5	32.8	41.2
Would like to see child (%):							
- Never	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.1	0.9	4.3	0.0
- Less than once a month	1.1	0.0	0.7	2.6	1.4	0.7	1.7
- About once a month	1.7	0.7	1.9	2.1	1.4	1.9	1.7
- Several times a month	13.1	8.7	12.7	17.4	9.9	15.8	9.3
- More than once a week	81.4	87.7	81.9	75.8	86.4	77.3	87.3
In past 6 months, anyone ever oppose visits with child (% yes):	31.8	43.0	30.5	26.2	26.1	34.2	32.8

Quality of the Relationship

Table 3.8 shows that 59% of the NCPs viewed their relationship to their child as “very close.” About one in four did not view the relationship as close. Although African-American fathers were most likely to spend extended time with their child and remained in close contact, there are no racial/ethnic differences among proportions who felt “very close” to the child. Among the 15.7% of fathers who did not feel close to their child, Hispanic fathers along with older fathers were the most likely to feel that way. About 75% of fathers felt very close or somewhat close to their child and most felt that they generally get along very well or somewhat well with the child (83%). Two out of three fathers felt that the communication with their child is “very good.” The majority of fathers reported a feeling of strong affection for the child (84%). One of ten older fathers and Hispanic fathers reported feeling “not at all affectionate.”

Table 3.8: Quality of NCP Relationship with Child

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Relationship between NCP and child is (%):							
- Very close	58.8	64.7	57.1	58.1	59.5	57.9	61.1
- Somewhat close	16.9	14.7	18.3	15.3	20.7	14.5	19.1
- Not very close	8.6	7.1	9.0	8.9	5.9	9.7	9.2
- Not at all close	15.7	13.5	15.6	17.7	14.0	17.9	10.7
NCP and child get along (%):							
- Very well	70.2	77.1	69.3	67.2	73.8	67.6	73.9
- Somewhat well	12.4	7.8	14.1	11.9	12.2	12.1	13.9
- Not very well	3.5	2.6	3.2	5.0	2.7	3.8	3.9
- Not at all well	13.9	12.4	13.4	15.9	11.3	16.5	8.5
Communication between NCP and child is (%):							
- Very good	64.5	70.5	62.5	64.4	64.4	63.5	67.9
- Somewhat good	14.3	9.6	15.6	14.9	15.3	13.1	16.8
- Not very good	6.4	5.1	7.5	5.0	6.8	6.5	5.3
- Not at all good	14.9	14.7	14.5	15.8	13.5	16.9	9.9
Affection felt toward child (%):							
- Very affectionate	83.8	87.8	83.5	81.4	85.9	81.7	87.7
- Somewhat affectionate	6.0	3.9	6.4	6.5	5.9	5.9	6.2
- Not very affectionate	1.8	1.3	1.9	2.0	0.9	1.9	3.1
- Not at all affectionate	8.4	7.1	8.2	10.1	7.3	10.4	3.1
Very/somewhat satisfied with (%):							
- Where child lives	65.7	70.3	61.9	71.1	64.4	66.7	64.1
- CP's relationship with child	73.4	77.9	68.6	80.4	78.9	71.5	70.5
- CP's contribution to child's support	70.3	71.3	67.8	74.9	76.4	67.8	68.3
In past 6 months, discussed child with CP (%):							
- Never	13.3	15.0	11.9	15.4	5.6	18.0	11.7
- Less than once a month	12.7	11.8	13.3	11.9	10.6	13.5	13.6
- About once a month	15.1	12.6	16.2	14.7	18.4	12.9	16.5
- Several times a month	24.0	18.9	25.4	25.2	31.3	18.9	28.2
- More than once a week	34.9	41.7	33.2	32.9	34.1	36.8	30.1

Interactions/Activities

Table 3.9 shows that many fathers had provided childcare for the CP while she worked or went to school or was involved in another activity. Young fathers, in particular, noted that they cared for the child for the CP. Older fathers and Hispanic fathers were less likely to provide this care which may be because they were more likely to be employed, while young fathers and African-American fathers were the least likely to be employed. Thus, the provision of childcare may also be a function of availability of time to fathers.

Young fathers were most likely to take their child to the park, zoo or museum because of the age of the child and because these outings are less expensive than movies or amusement parks. Older fathers were the most likely to take their child shopping possibly because the child was older and may have a greater interest in clothing and latest styles. The fathers tend to spend less time with their children in religious activities or working with them on homework. The time that the child spent with his or her father was primarily focused on some activity or “hanging out.”

Table 3.9: NCP Interactions/Activities with Child

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
In past 6 months, cared for child so CP could work/school:							
- Yes (%)	27.1	41.8	25.1	19.9	35.7	22.7	26.1
- Number of times – mean (sd.)	16.0 (19.1)	16.1 (16.5)	18.3 (21.7)	8.4 (11.9)	16.5 (19.2)	15.2 (19.8)	17.3 (17.3)
Activities during visits (% yes):							
- Picnic/play sports/beach/hike	26.3	19.2	30.1	23.2	27.9	22.1	38.9
- Religious	4.7	4.5	4.3	5.9	4.5	5.1	3.8
- Shopping	33.6	30.1	33.1	37.4	29.3	35.8	32.8
- School work	4.8	4.5	4.9	4.9	4.5	3.8	9.2
- Park/zoo/museum	39.6	53.2	38.4	32.0	39.2	38.7	43.5
- Movie/concert/amusement park	25.9	20.5	27.5	26.1	32.0	20.4	35.1
- Read/study	16.4	15.4	17.3	15.3	14.0	17.1	18.3
- Hangout/talk/play	63.9	68.6	63.1	62.1	64.4	64.4	61.1
- Visit friends/relatives	21.1	24.4	20.9	19.2	21.6	21.5	19.1
- Other	19.5	19.9	20.3	17.2	18.9	19.6	19.9
- Nothing in particular	8.7	6.4	9.4	8.9	9.0	10.1	3.1

Knowledge of Child and Involvement in Decision-making

Table 3.10 shows fathers' knowledge of the children and involvement in decisions about the children. They felt that their child gets along well with others and is helpful and considerate. About one-half of the noncustodial fathers felt that the child does not pay attention, which may be a reflection of their own personal experience with their child. About one-third of fathers felt that their child loses his or her temper easily.

Fathers generally knew what religion the child is being raised in; however, a small proportion did not know (16%). About 60% of the fathers felt it is very important to provide religious training for the child.

The noncustodial fathers did have discussions with the custodial mother about the child. About 60% said they participate in discussions about the child's upbringing with the mother at least several times per month. Hispanic fathers were the most likely to report that they "never" (18%) discuss the child with the CP, but they were also the most likely to have minimal contact with the child.

From the reported data, it seems that the noncustodial father perceived that there were few disagreements with the CP about the child. The areas of most disagreement seem to be "how the child is raised" and "where the child lives." All groups were similar in their views on these areas of disagreement, except for young fathers who tended to feel that their greatest area of disagreement was on the frequency of their visits with the child.

Overall, about one out of three fathers felt a "great deal" of involvement in decisions made about the child. The greatest perception of involvement was among young fathers and African-American fathers. Older fathers and fathers of other groups (not Hispanic or African American) were the most likely to see themselves as having little or no involvement in decisions made about the child.

While there were disagreements, about half of the men feel that they were able to discuss differences calmly most of the time. Older men were more likely than younger men to report discussions with the CP as calm encounters.

Table 3.10: NCP Knowledge of Child and Involvement with Decision-making of Child

	NCP Total	Age			Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	830	156	471	203	222	477	131
Child (% yes):							
- Gets along well with others	93.2	97.0	92.1	92.8	95.9	91.1	95.7
- Loses temper easily	34.2	35.1	35.6	30.4	32.8	34.4	35.9
- Does not pay attention	52.0	41.8	54.0	55.4	42.8	57.5	48.7
- Hits/punches/hurts others	11.7	8.5	13.3	10.5	13.7	11.1	10.6
- Helpful/considerate of others	93.1	88.5	94.2	94.1	96.4	90.9	94.8
Religion child is being raised (%):							
- Catholic	39.9	46.8	38.2	38.6	5.9	59.3	26.7
- Protestant	13.4	10.9	13.6	14.9	35.8	4.2	9.2
- Christian	15.8	14.1	16.4	15.8	21.7	10.5	25.2
- Other	4.1	3.2	3.0	7.4	5.0	2.3	9.2
- None	5.6	5.1	5.9	5.0	7.2	2.9	12.2
- Do not know	21.2	19.9	22.9	18.3	24.4	20.8	17.6
Importance to you of providing religious training for child (%):							
- Very important	59.1	51.3	59.7	63.7	63.6	61.4	43.1
- Somewhat important	28.9	36.5	28.9	22.9	27.3	27.2	37.7
- Not important	12.0	12.2	11.3	13.4	9.1	11.4	19.2
In past 6 months, discussed child with CP (%):							
- Never	13.3	15.0	11.9	15.4	5.6	18.0	11.7
- Less than once a month	12.7	11.8	13.3	11.9	10.6	13.5	13.6
- About once a month	15.1	12.6	16.2	14.7	18.4	12.9	16.5
- Several times a month	24.0	18.9	25.4	25.2	31.3	18.9	28.2
- More than once a week	34.9	41.7	33.2	32.9	34.1	36.8	30.1
In past 6 months, <i>never</i> disagreed about (%):							
- Where child lives	66.2	70.9	63.6	68.5	71.0	62.9	68.9
- How child raised	60.1	63.0	57.8	62.9	67.0	54.8	65.1
- How CP spends money	73.3	73.2	69.9	81.7	70.4	70.9	86.4
- How support money spent	77.7	75.6	74.7	86.7	79.2	74.6	85.3
- Child support payment amount	73.3	69.1	72.0	80.3	72.6	70.9	82.4
- Frequency of visits with child	69.5	60.6	69.7	76.9	72.1	67.9	70.3
- Other things	81.5	82.7	79.7	84.6	77.1	83.8	81.6
NCP's level of involvement in decisions about child (%):							
- None	27.3	22.8	26.6	32.9	21.8	28.4	33.0
- Little	13.2	10.2	15.3	10.5	12.9	12.9	14.6
- Some	15.3	15.8	15.9	13.3	14.0	16.2	14.6
- Pretty much	12.7	15.8	10.7	14.7	15.1	11.4	12.6
- Great deal	31.7	35.4	31.5	28.7	36.3	31.1	25.2
In disagreements with CP, often or always (%):							
- Discuss calmly	51.1	43.2	51.7	56.3	50.6	52.4	47.6
- Argue heatedly	11.1	12.6	11.9	7.8	11.8	10.8	10.7
- Hit each other or throw things	1.0	1.6	0.6	1.4	1.1	1.2	0.0

THE CUSTODIAL PARENT (CP)

The analysis presented in this section focuses on the female CPs in Los Angeles County who participated in the survey. While most of the data used in this section comes from the survey, it is augmented by administrative data from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office to present a more complete picture of the custodial mothers.

Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County (L.A. County)

Table 3.11 presents a basic demographic profile of custodial mothers in Los Angeles County who responded to the survey, reported by age and race/ethnic categories. They were similar in some ways to custodial mothers receiving public assistance in California and the nation (see Part II). The average age of surveyed mothers was 32 years. Unlike custodial mothers in California and the nation, however, custodial mothers in L.A. County were overwhelmingly of a minority racial/ethnic group. In L.A. County, about 65% of CPs were Hispanic and 20% were Black/African American.

Table 3.11: Description of Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County

	CP Total	CP by Age			CP by Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	379	101	209	69	75	246	58
Age – mean	32.0	20.4	33.2	45.4	31.9	31.8	33.1
Race/Ethnicity (%):							
- Am. Indian/Native Am.	0.8	1.0	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	5.5
- Asian/Pacific Islander	1.6	4.0	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	10.9
- Black/African American	20.0	17.0	23.7	13.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
- Hispanic	65.4	69.0	63.8	65.2	0.0	100.0	0.0
- Non-Hispanic White	9.8	7.0	11.1	10.1	0.0	0.0	67.3
- Other	2.4	2.0	1.5	5.8	0.0	0.0	16.4
Current Marital Status (%):							
- Married	13.7	14.9	15.3	7.3	6.7	16.3	12.1
- Living Together	7.7	12.9	5.7	5.8	0.0	11.0	3.5
- Divorced/Widowed	21.9	5.9	24.0	37.7	21.3	19.9	31.0
- Separated	18.5	5.9	19.6	33.3	18.7	19.9	12.1
- Never Married	38.3	60.4	34.9	15.9	53.3	32.9	41.4
Current Housing Situation (%):							
- Rent	71.5	55.5	77.0	78.3	73.3	72.4	65.5
- Own	8.2	4.0	7.7	15.9	6.7	8.5	8.6
- Share Rent	16.1	32.7	12.4	2.9	13.3	15.9	20.7
- Do Not Pay Rent	4.2	7.9	2.9	2.9	6.7	3.3	5.2
- Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
# of People in Household – mean	4.3	4.7	4.3	3.7	4.0	4.5	3.9

Most female CPs surveyed were not currently married or living with someone. As expected, young CPs (less than or equal to 25 years old) and African-American CPs were more likely to have never been married. Very few CPs own a house, apartment, or condominium, and young CPs and African-American CPs are the least likely to do so.

The majority of custodial mothers suffered from low rates of employment and high public assistance usage (see Table 3.12). One in three CPs currently had full-time jobs, and about 20% worked part-time. Over 30% had not worked for pay in the past year. Older CPs (over 40 years old) and African-American CPs had the lowest employment rates.

Table 3.12: Employability and Welfare Usage: Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County

	CP Total	CP by Age			CP by Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample	379	101	209	69	75	246	58
Current employment status (%):							
- Working full-time	33.0	33.7	34.9	26.1	26.7	35.0	32.8
- Working part-time	19.8	18.8	19.6	21.7	21.3	18.3	24.1
- Unemployed	34.6	30.7	34.5	40.6	36.0	35.8	27.6
- Student/have never worked	10.6	16.8	9.1	5.8	12.0	9.8	12.1
- Retired/something else	2.1	0.0	1.9	5.8	4.0	1.2	3.5
Worked for pay in past year (%):	68.3	73.3	67.9	62.3	62.7	68.7	74.1
Number of jobs held in past year – mean (those with at least one job)	1.4	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.3
Highest Completed Grade – mean	10.8	11.6	10.8	9.4	12.5	9.8	12.4
Educational Attainment (%):							
- Less than High School	46.7	35.6	47.9	59.4	22.7	58.5	27.6
- High School Diploma/GED	33.0	44.5	32.5	17.4	45.4	28.1	38.0
- AA/Tech/Trade Certificate	17.7	17.8	16.3	21.7	24.0	12.2	32.8
- College Degree	2.4	2.0	2.9	1.5	8.0	0.8	1.7
- Other	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Source of health care insurance (%):							
- Employer	16.2	23.2	14.8	10.1	16.0	14.3	24.1
- Medi-Cal	58.4	61.6	55.0	63.8	66.7	55.3	60.3
- Other	7.2	5.0	9.1	4.4	10.6	7.0	3.4
- None	18.3	10.1	21.1	21.7	6.7	23.4	12.1
Eligible for Medi-Cal in 2000 (%): *	86.4	89.5	85.4	84.9	94.6	82.4	91.4
Eligible for food stamps in 2000 (%): *	65.5	64.2	67.2	62.1	74.3	60.8	72.4
Received cash aid (welfare) last month (%):	57.8	58.4	58.9	53.6	64.0	56.5	55.2
Eligible for FG/U CalWorks in 2000 (%):*	62.1	67.4	60.1	60.6	67.6	59.5	65.5

*Note: Information on Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, and CalWorks is derived from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Medical Eligibility Development System (MEDS) files.

Low educational attainment among custodial mothers helps explain their low employment rates. Almost half of surveyed CPs did not graduate from high school. Less than 25% received a degree beyond high school. Older CPs were less likely to have graduated from high school which may contribute to their lower employment rates. However, African-American CPs, who were less likely to be employed, were more likely to have graduated from high school relative to the other racial/ethnic groups. This suggests African-American CPs may face employment barriers beyond educational attainment.

Along with their weak ties to the labor market, a majority of the CPs used public assistance. While about 58% of the CPs currently had health insurance through the Medi-Cal program, about 86% were eligible for Medi-Cal at some point in 2000. A little over 60% were eligible for Food Stamps and CalWORKs in 2000. About 57% received cash assistance from the welfare system in the last month. Young CPs and African-American CPs were more likely, on average, to use public assistance.

THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHER AND THE CUSTODIAL MOTHER: “HE SAID, SHE SAID”

Of the 1,294 interviews completed, 417 were matched pairs (NCP matched with the CP of their child). To determine the extent of overall agreement, their responses to the same questions were compared. The description of their characteristics was previously discussed. In this section, we concentrate on similarities and differences between the two groups.

Table 3.13 shows that the NCPs and the CPs were very similar in race, level of education, and religious affiliation. The CPs were more likely to have never married. The NCPs were more likely to be currently married.

Table 3.13: Description of Matched NCPs and CPs

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Age – mean (sd.)	34.5 (9.6)	32.1 (9.0)
Race/Ethnicity (%):		
- Am. Indian/Native Am.	1.0	1.0
- Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0	1.5
- Black/African American	23.3	21.6
- Hispanic	62.3	60.5
- Non-Hispanic White	10.8	13.3
- Other	1.7	2.2
Current Marital Status (%):		
- Married	23.7	13.4
- Living Together	12.7	7.0
- Divorced/Widowed	17.0	22.1
- Separated	15.4	17.8
- Never Married	31.2	39.8
Years Married – mean (sd.)	6.6 (6.1)	6.6 (6.8)
Currently Living With/Dating One Person (%):	30.2	25.2
Relationship with Current Partner (%):		
- Extremely unhappy	3.0	3.0
- Unhappy	2.2	3.0
- Okay	22.9	16.7
- Happy	41.1	38.7
- Very happy	30.7	38.7
Highest Completed Grade – mean (sd.)	10.6 (3.2)	10.9 (3.0)
Highest Degree Attained (%):		
- None	47.5	43.2
- High School Diploma	29.3	31.4
- GED	6.0	4.1
- AA/Tech/Trade Certificate	14.4	18.9
- Bachelors Degree	2.6	2.2
- Graduate Degree	0.2	0.0
- Other	0.0	0.2
Religious preference (%):		
- Catholic	49.0	48.6
- Protestant	15.1	17.8
- Christian	20.2	20.4
- Other	4.8	4.8
- None	10.8	8.4

Table 3.14 shows that the CP was likely to be renting a house or apartment, while the NCP was likely to be sharing rent with friends or family. There are real differences between the NCP and the CP with respect to employment and access to financial resources. The CP was more likely to have never worked and to be unemployed or underemployed. She was most likely to have not worked in the past year. When she did work, her job turnover was about the same as that of the noncustodial father. About half of the CPs were receiving both cash assistance and child support. The NCP was more likely to have been homeless in the past year. Because the CP was on welfare and had custody of the child, she was more likely to have health coverage through Medi-Cal, while the noncustodial father was likely to have no health coverage. However, when either of the two works, the type of coverage provided on the job was similar.

Table 3.15 shows that the NCP and CP agreed about the status of their relationship when the child was born and the length of time in the relationship. The CP was more likely than the NCP to view their current relationship as “no relationship.” The CP did not perceive the NCP as being in contact with her as often as the NCP did.

Contacts and Visits with Child

Table 3.16 shows the agreement between the CP and the NCP about contacts and visitation of the NCP. They agreed about the distance that the NCP lives from the child and the span of time that has passed since the NCP has seen the child. They both agreed on length of time since the NCP has seen the child. The average time (including those who do not see their children) is two years. Many NCPs, however, see their children more often.

The CP disagreed with the NCP about the frequency of visitation and the duration of the visit. About half of the CPs reported that the NCP visits the child once a month or less, while the NCP was more likely to feel that he visits at least several times a month.

Table 3.14: Financial Well-being of Matched NCPs and CPs

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Current Housing Situation (%):		
- Rent	47.5	70.7
- Own	8.4	7.4
- Share Rent	32.4	17.0
- Do Not Pay Rent	8.6	4.6
- Other	3.1	0.2
# of People in Household – mean (sd.)	3.8 (1.9)	4.3 (1.7)
Current Employment Status (%):		
- Working full-time	49.4	35.7
- Working part-time	20.1	19.2
- Unemployed	23.3	32.4
- Retired/something else	3.1	2.6
- Student/have never worked	4.1	10.1
Ever Worked for Pay in Past Year (%):	92.1	69.8
Number of Jobs in Past Year – mean (sd.)	1.7 (1.2)	1.5 (0.8)
In Last Month, Received (%):		
- Cash aid (welfare)	9.8	56.1
- Child support	3.1	49.9
In Past 12 Months, Ever Had No Place to Stay the Night (%):	11.3	1.9
Source of Health Care Insurance (%):		
- Private	0.7	2.2
- Employer	25.0	17.6
- Spouse	3.4	3.1
- Medi-Cal	6.3	56.6
- Other	4.4	1.9
- None	60.2	18.6
Current/Last Job Provides (%):		
- Sick days with full pay	28.0	33.2
- Paid vacation	37.0	38.8
- Dental coverage	29.1	25.6
- Dental coverage for child	18.4	16.9
- Health insurance	31.4	28.6
- Health insurance for child	19.7	17.6

Table 3.15: Relationship between NCPs and CPs

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Relationship with CP/NCP When Child was Born (%):		
- Not know each other very well	5.8	2.4
- Dating sometimes	13.9	14.4
- Seeing each other regularly	7.0	3.6
- Committed relationship	13.4	16.1
- Living together	31.2	27.1
- Married	24.7	26.9
- Other	4.1	9.6
Number of Months in Relationship – mean -(sd.)	47.8 (51.2)	46.7 (52.1)
Current Relationship with CP/NCP (%):		
- No relationship	25.0	31.6
- Very unfriendly	8.7	7.7
- Somewhat unfriendly	10.0	6.1
- Somewhat friendly	27.3	24.8
- Very friendly	29.0	29.7
Last Spoke with CP/NCP (%):		
- More than 6 months ago	16.3	19.4
- Between 1 and 6 months ago	11.5	12.7
- Within past month	13.7	14.9
- Within past week	58.5	53.0

There is disagreement about the duration of time spent during the visitations, especially with fathers who spend short periods with their children. The CP was more likely to perceive the father as running in and out and spending less than five hours at a time with the child. Custodial mothers' recollections, however, were more similar to those of the fathers who take their children overnight.

According to NCPs, they contact their children several times a month. This is contrary to what CPs reported. In fact, almost half of the CPs reported that the NCP contacts the child either "never" or "less than once a month." Almost all the NCPs said they would like to see their children often and "more than once a week." Many CPs, however, thought that the NCP would prefer not to ever see their children. About one in four NCPs felt opposition to visits with their children, most frequently from the CP.

Table 3.16: Contacts and Visits between NCP and Child

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
How Far Away Does Child Live From NCP:		
- Minutes away – mean (sd.)	32.0 (53.8)	28.7 (34.9)
- Miles away – mean (sd.)	30.4 (101.1)	30.4 (101.9)
Months Since NCP Last Saw Child – mean (sd.)	23.9 (23.0)	24.3 (24.8)
In Past 6 months, NCP saw Child (%):		
- Never	14.1	18.9
- Less than once a month	9.3	19.4
- About once a month	11.3	9.9
- Several times a month	34.2	26.2
- More than once a week	31.1	25.6
Length of Usual Visit (%):		
- Less than 5 hours	28.0	40.5
- More than 5 hours but not over night	24.0	17.3
- 1-2 nights or a weekend	33.2	33.6
- 3 days to a week	9.2	2.1
- More than a week	5.6	6.6
In Past 6 months, NCP Contacted Child (%):		
- Never	22.4	36.0
- Less than once a month	5.7	12.5
- About once a month	7.4	8.7
- Several times a month	21.0	16.0
- More than once a week	43.4	26.8
Would Like (NCP) to See Child (%):		
- Never	1.4	16.7
- Less than once a month	0.8	2.5
- About once a month	1.7	4.7
- Several times a month	11.8	21.9
- More than once a week	84.3	54.3
In Past 6 months, Anyone Ever Oppose NCP Visits with Child (%):	27.6	16.1
Who Opposed Visit (%):		
- Your spouse/partner	11.3	1.5
- CP/NCP's spouse/partner	5.2	11.9
- Child	0.0	10.5
- CP or a legal guardian at the time	60.9	35.8
- Someone else	22.6	40.3

While there were some CPs who would prefer that the NCP did not visit the children, these were fewer than the NCPs suggest. In fact, the CP was likely to suggest that she is not the one opposing the visitation but rather it is “someone else.” Interestingly, many of the current partners of the NCPs or CPs were perceived as opposing the visits. The NCP perceives the child never opposes visits, but about 10% of the CPs report the child does oppose them.

Quality of NCP Relationship with Child

Table 3.17 describes the NCP’s relationship with the child. There was agreement between the NCP and the CP about the quality of the relationship between the NCP and child. The NCP reported this relationship as very close or close, but not all CPs agreed with that assessment. In fact, one in three CPs felt that there is very little or no relationship between the NCP and the child. Overall, the CP did not perceive the NCP as getting along with the child or being very affectionate with the child. There was great disparity between what the NCP reports as the quality of the relationship with the child and what the CP reports. The NCP viewed himself as having a good relationship that is warm and communicative, while the CP viewed it just the opposite. The only thing they did agree on is that both view their child as helpful and considerate and getting along well with others.

Table 3.17: Relationship between NCP and Child

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Relationship Between NCP and Child is (%):		
- Very close	65.0	41.0
- Somewhat close	15.8	23.1
- Not very close	7.9	11.3
- Not at all close	11.3	24.6
NCP and Child Get Along (%):		
- Very well	75.2	48.9
- Somewhat well	12.0	21.1
- Not very well	3.1	9.7
- Not at all well	9.6	20.3
Communication Between NCP and Child is (%):		
- Very good	70.5	42.6
- Somewhat good	12.7	23.5
- Not very good	6.5	11.1
- Not at all good	10.3	22.8
How Affectionate is NCP Toward Child (%):		
- Very affectionate	88.4	54.1
- Somewhat affectionate	4.4	18.7
- Not very affectionate	1.2	8.6
- Not at all affectionate	6.1	18.7
NCP Sometimes or Often ... (%):		
- Praises child	88.3	59.9
- Spanks/slaps child	4.6	4.5
- Cuddles/hugs child	86.1	66.8
- Yells at child	16.3	16.8
Child (%) ...		
- Gets along well with others	93.0	93.5
- Loses temper easily	33.5	38.0
- Does not pay attention	56.5	58.4
- Hits/punches/hurts others	9.6	14.5
- Helpful/considerate of others	93.0	93.2

Table 3.18 shows NCP involvement with the child. The CP generally agreed that the NCP feels that providing religious training to the child is very important. In general, the NCP was less satisfied with where the child lives than the CP perceived he was. The NCP perceived his relationship to the child as more satisfactory than the CP perceived it to be. The NCP was twice as likely to be satisfied with his contribution to the child's support than the CP. While there are differences on many issues, it appears that the CP was less likely to report disagreement on issues affecting the child. The NCP was

somewhat more likely to report disagreement with the CP on where the child lives, how the child is raised, how the CP spends her money, how the child support dollars are spent, the frequency of visits, and other things. The CP was more likely to somewhat disagree with the NCP on the child support payment amount.

The NCP was more likely than the CP to report that he is a “great deal” or “pretty much” involved in decisions about the child. About half of the CPs reported that they have discussed the child with the NCP in the last six months. Three-quarters of NCPs reported a discussion with the CP about the child in the last six months. Even though the CP and NCP may disagree about some issue, about half of each group reported that they generally are able to discuss disagreements calmly.

When the NCP does visit the child, he reported that he takes the child to the park, zoo, or museum and/or takes the child shopping (not shown in the table). Quite often the NCP just “hangs out,” “talks” or “plays” with the child. The CP was most likely to say that they do “nothing in particular,” and much less of shopping or going to the park, zoo, or museums (not shown in the table). They did agree, however, on the extent to which the NCP provides childcare to the CP when she may need to go to school, out shopping, or has to be out for an extended period.

Table 3.18: Involvement of NCP with Child

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Importance to you of providing religious training for child (%):		
- Very important	59.6	66.9
- Somewhat important	28.9	24.0
- Not important	11.5	9.1
Very/Somewhat Satisfied with (%):		
- Where child lives	71.0	90.9
- CP/NCP relationship with child	77.8	56.3
- CP/NCP contribution to child's support	75.1	39.2
In Past 6 months, <i>Never</i> Disagreed About (%):		
- Where child lives	69.1	78.6
- How child raised	60.5	72.8
- How CP spends money	75.0	80.7
- How support money spent	78.7	83.9
- Child support payment amount	73.0	71.9
- Frequency of visits with child	69.5	71.6
- Other things	79.6	84.8
NCP's Level of Involvement in Decisions About Child (%):		
- None	27.2	48.5
- Little	13.5	10.4
- Some	13.5	10.4
- Pretty much	10.9	8.9
- Great deal	35.0	21.7
In Past 6 months, Discussed Child with CP/NCP (%):		
- Never	12.0	18.2
- Less than once a month	11.8	20.8
- About once a month	16.6	11.0
- Several times a month	21.2	18.8
- More than once a month	38.4	31.3
In Disagreements with CP/NCP Often or Always (%):		
- Discuss calmly	48.6	46.9
- Argue heatedly	11.2	11.6
- Hit each other or throw things	1.4	1.2

IV

EMPLOYMENT, EARNINGS, AND CHILD SUPPORT

In Part II, we showed the link between the poverty status of single mother families and the lack of child support from the noncustodial parents (NCPs). In Part III, we described the characteristics of the NCP and the CP with a child on welfare. In this part, we provide a better understanding of the employability and financial well-being of NCPs and their effect on contributions to child support.

The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on female CPs and male NCPs in Los Angeles County who participated in the survey. While most of the data presented are from the survey, additional data items include administrative data from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Family Support Bureau and the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) Base Wage file. All of these data sources are used to create a picture of custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers.

THE CUSTODIAL MOTHERS AND THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Most custodial mothers did not receive a substantial amount of financial support from noncustodial fathers (see Table 4.1). Only about half of the CPs said they received an official child support payment in the last month. This rate was consistent across age and race/ethnic categories, with CPs in the "other" race/ethnic category less likely to receive child support payments.

Besides support payments through the child support enforcement system (CSE), about 25% of the CPs said they received money directly from the NCP in the last month. The amount of money received averaged \$200. Again, CPs in the "other" race/ethnic category less likely to receive this type of child support and if they did, the amount was lower. CPs also received additional support through in-kind payments or gifts from the

NCP (e.g., clothes, diapers, toys, or money for rent). About half of the CPs (or their child) received such support in the past six months.

Most of the custodial mothers had a weak connection to the labor force and are limited financially. Yet, most did not receive a significant amount of child support. The frequency and amount of child support they received is tied to the noncustodial father's financial status.

Table 4.1: Child Support Receipt Reported by Custodial Mothers in Los Angeles County

	CP Total	CP by Age			CP by Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample (LA Co.)	379	101	209	69	75	246	58
Received child support last month (%):	50.7	48.5	54.6	42.0	53.3	51.6	43.1
In last month, NCP ever directly gave money to CP/child (%):	25.6	25.7	25.4	26.1	24.0	29.3	12.1
Amount of money given directly in last month – mean (those who received something)	\$223	\$463	\$184	\$82	\$130	\$251	\$118
In past 6 months, NCP ever gave in-kind payments/gifts (%):	49.0	48.9	49.8	47.0	59.8	45.4	50.0

Noncustodial fathers had a stronger connection to the labor force than CPs, but they still experienced low levels of employment and earnings (see Table 4.2). While about 90% of NCPs worked for pay at some point in the past year, 24% were currently unemployed and less than half had a full-time job. In 2000, 30% of the NCPs never had Unemployment Insurance (UI) covered employment and only about 40% had UI covered employment in all four quarters of the year. Like the CPs, older NCPs and African-American NCPs had a relatively lower employment rate. On average, NCPs only earned about \$9,500 (from UI covered employment) in 2000. Of those who worked in a UI covered job in 2000, the average level of earnings was \$13,000.³

³ Unemployment Insurance (UI) covered employment and earnings is derived from the Employment Development Department Base Wage data that tracks paid employment reported to the unemployment insurance (UI) program and does not include self-employment or employment in firms not in the Unemployment Insurance Program, employment for some governmental agencies, and out-of-state employment (see Appendix A for more details). The employment rates from the survey most likely include self-employment and unreported employment.

Table 4.2: Employability of Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County

	NCP Total	NCP by Age			NCP by Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample (LA Co.)	709	133	394	182	183	432	94
Current employment status (%):							
- Working full-time	45.9	45.9	48.6	40.1	35.5	52.4	36.2
- Working part-time	22.3	18.1	20.1	30.2	21.3	22.5	23.4
- Unemployed	24.0	25.6	23.7	23.6	31.2	19.0	33.0
- Student/have never worked	4.1	9.0	3.8	1.1	9.8	1.9	3.2
- Retired/something else	3.7	1.5	3.8	5.0	2.2	4.2	4.3
Ever worked for pay in past year (%):	90.8	92.5	91.1	89.0	86.3	92.6	91.5
Number of jobs held in past year – mean (those with at least one job)	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.0
Number of quarters with UI reported employment in 2000 (%): *							
- zero	27.9	19.7	26.8	36.1	31.8	27.2	23.3
- one	9.0	7.1	10.0	8.3	15.6	6.9	5.6
- two	10.5	12.6	8.1	13.9	10.6	9.3	15.6
- three	13.2	13.4	13.7	12.2	12.3	13.4	14.4
- four	39.4	47.2	41.5	29.4	29.6	43.2	41.1
Total UI earnings in 2000 – mean (all NCPs)*	\$9,502	\$8,798	\$10,434	\$8,024	\$7,240	\$10,336	\$10,117
Total UI earnings in 2000 – mean (those with earnings)*	\$13,180	\$10,954	\$14,249	\$12,559	\$10,621	\$14,199	\$13,197
Highest Completed Grade – mean	10.7	11.4	10.8	10.0	12.2	9.8	12.0
Educational Attainment (%):							
- Less than High School	45.4	38.4	45.2	51.1	21.3	58.1	34.0
- High School Diploma/GED	35.0	48.9	35.0	24.7	50.8	27.6	38.3
- AA/Tech/Trade Certificate	17.1	12.8	17.5	19.2	25.7	12.7	20.2
- College Degree	2.6	0.0	2.3	5.0	2.2	1.6	7.4
Have a driver’s license (%):	65.4	61.4	66.6	65.9	60.7	66.7	69.2
Have access to a car (%):	70.2	74.4	67.9	72.0	62.1	72.4	75.5
Ever convicted since age 16 (%):	31.8	28.6	36.1	24.7	36.1	28.1	40.4
Ever arrested in last year (%):	9.0	15.0	8.4	6.0	12.0	7.9	8.5

Note:* Information on UI employment and UI earnings for 2000 is derived from EDD Base Wage files. Information from the Base Wage files only reflects 688 NCPs that were matched with Base Wage (see Appendix A for more details).

A couple of factors help explain the low employment rates among noncustodial fathers. Almost half of all the NCPs did not graduate from high school, and less than 20% received a degree beyond high school. Besides their low levels of educational attainment, many of the NCPs were confronted with two other barriers to employment.

About 30% did not have access to a car (even fewer possess a driver’s license), and about 30% had a criminal record.

Table 4.3: Financial Well-being of Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County

	NCP Total	NCP by Age			NCP by Race/Ethnicity		
		Young	Middle	Old	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample (LA Co.)	709	133	394	182	183	432	94
Household Earnings last month – mean (those with earnings)	\$1,161	\$1,178	\$1,198	\$1,071	\$1,099	\$1,157	\$1,293
Used EITC on most recent tax return (%):	18.1	14.7	21.7	12.7	20.0	13.8	35.1
Source of health care insurance (%):							
- Employer	22.3	26.7	23.0	17.3	21.0	23.1	20.7
- Other	16.9	16.8	14.3	22.9	18.8	15.9	18.4
- None	60.8	56.5	62.7	59.8	60.2	61.0	60.9
Eligible for Medi-Cal in 2000 (%):*	15.2	13.5	15.2	16.5	9.3	17.1	18.1
Eligible for food stamps in 2000 (%):*	21.9	17.3	24.6	19.2	36.6	16.4	18.1
Received cash aid (welfare) last month (%):	11.7	10.5	12.9	9.9	18.6	9.0	10.6
Eligible for FG/U CalWorks in 2000 (%):*	6.8	4.5	7.9	6.0	6.6	6.9	6.4
Received child support last month (%):	3.0	4.5	2.8	2.2	5.0	1.9	4.3

*Information on Medi-Cal, food stamps, and CalWorks is derived from CDSS MEDS files (see Appendix A for more details).

Coupled with low employment rates and barriers to employment, NCPs did not have any other source of income security (see Table 4.3). On average, NCP households with earnings only earned about \$1,000 in the last month, and only 18% used the Earned Income Tax Credit on their most recent tax return. Despite their low earnings, very few NCPs collected, or were eligible for, governmental income support. About 60% of the NCPs did not have health insurance, but only about 15% were eligible for Medi-Cal in 2000. This was in stark contrast to the CPs, where almost 60% currently received their health insurance through Medi-Cal. In addition, about 22% of the NCPs were eligible for food stamps, and about 7% were eligible for CalWorks in 2000. In the last month, about 12% received cash aid (welfare) and 3% received some child support.

Child Support from Noncustodial Fathers

Table 4.4 provides information on the child support patterns of noncustodial fathers surveyed in Los Angeles County. Administrative data for these fathers showed that their monthly child support orders averaged just under \$600 per month; the average total arrears of this group was \$19,955.

Administrative data also revealed that approximately 60% of noncustodial fathers surveyed in Los Angeles made at least one child support payment in the previous year, with about one-quarter making at least one payment in all four quarters of the year. African-American fathers had the lowest rate of making child support payments. Among those who made at least one payment in the previous year, the average annual child support payment was \$2,230. Younger fathers and African-American fathers had an overall lower average annual payment.

Many (38%) fathers surveyed reported giving money directly to the CP of their child or to their child. The average amount of money given directly to the child in this manner was \$200. Over half (64%) of fathers gave in-kind payments and/or gifts to their children; the average estimated amount of these payments/gifts over the last six months was \$627.

Noncustodial Fathers Who Work More, Pay More Child Support

Table 4.5 indicates that surveyed fathers who worked more also paid more child support. Of those who reported working for pay in the last year, about 65% made some official child support payment in the last year. In contrast, only 16% of fathers who did not work for pay in the past year paid child support. As a father's level of employment increased, so did his rate of making child support payments. Approximately 41% of noncustodial fathers who reported that they worked full-time paid some child support in all four quarters of the previous year; about 20% of those who reported working part-time did the same in the previous year.

Table 4.4: Child Support Payments from Noncustodial Fathers in Los Angeles County

	NCP Total	NCP by Age			NCP by Race/Ethnicity		
		<25	25-40	>40	Afr.Am.	Hispanic	Other
Number in Survey Sample (LA Co.)	709	133	394	182	183	432	94
Child support – mean:*							
- Monthly order amount	\$594	\$473	\$627	\$610	\$595	\$594	\$595
- Arrears amount	\$19,955	\$8,622	\$20,035	\$27,822	\$23,819	\$17,982	\$21,420
Number of quarters making a child support payment in 2000 (%):*							
- zero	39.7	43.3	37.8	41.1	53.6	35.8	30.0
- one	14.2	15.8	15.8	10.0	12.3	14.8	15.6
- two	10.6	9.5	11.6	9.4	10.6	9.8	14.4
- three	10.6	10.2	11.3	9.4	6.7	12.7	8.9
- four	24.9	21.3	23.6	30.0	16.8	27.0	31.1
Total amount of official child support payments in 2000 – mean (all NCPs):*	\$1,349	\$1,022	\$1,451	\$1,363	\$851	\$1,482	\$1,723
Total amount of official child support payments in 2000 – mean (those who made a payment):*	\$2,230	\$1,803	\$2,321	\$2,314	\$1,835	\$2,304	\$2,431
Directly gave CP/child money last month (%):	37.8	37.6	37.8	37.9	36.6	39.4	33.0
Amount of money given directly to CP/child last month – mean (those who gave money):	\$200	\$185	\$236	\$141	\$157	\$234	\$120
In past 6 months, gave CP/child in-kind payments/gifts (%):	64.0	69.3	65.5	57.1	68.3	62.3	63.3
Estimated amount of in-kind payments/gifts over last 6 month – mean (those who gave gift):	\$627	\$854	\$625	\$429	\$734	\$620	\$437

Note: * Information on child support derived from the Los Angeles County District Attorney, Family Support Bureau files.

Table 4.5 also tracks the employment of noncustodial fathers using administrative data derived from the Base Wage data. Results using UI reported employment from Base Wage data revealed patterns similar to self-reported employment. As the number of quarters a father worked increased, his probability of paying support increased. Fathers

with four quarters of UI employment were the most likely to have paid four quarters of child support payments in the last year.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the relationship between the employment and earnings of noncustodial fathers and the amount of their child support payments. Employed fathers paid more child support regardless of whether that employment is self-reported or captured by UI employment administrative data. As the earnings level of those with UI employment increases, the amount of fathers' payments increases.

Table 4.5: Official Child Support Payments by Employment Status

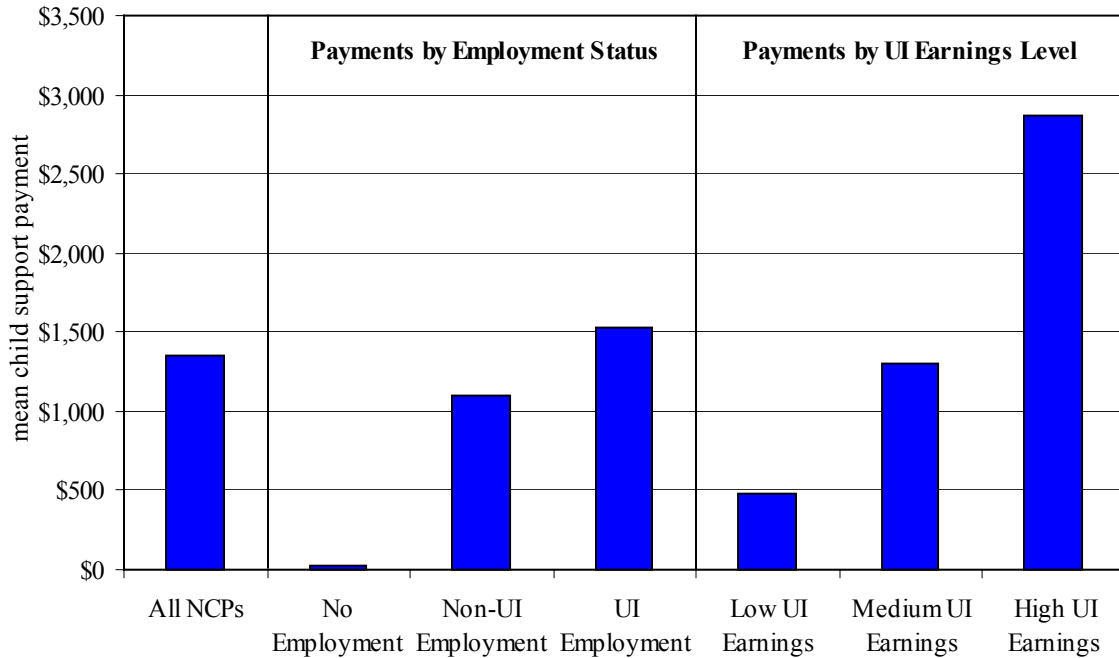
Employment Status	N	Number of Quarters in 2000 with a Child Support Payment (Percent of NCPs) *				
		Zero	One	Two	Three	Four
All NCPs (LA County)	688	39.7	14.2	10.6	10.6	24.9
Current employment status:						
- Working full-time	313	23.0	14.4	10.2	11.5	40.9
- Working part-time	154	42.2	13.6	9.7	14.3	20.1
- Unemployed	25	60.0	8.0	8.0	12.0	12.0
- Student/have never worked	167	62.3	15.6	11.4	6.0	4.8
- Retired/something else	29	58.6	13.8	17.2	6.9	3.5
Worked for pay in the past year:						
- Yes	625	35.2	14.7	11.7	11.2	27.2
- No	63	84.1	9.5	0.0	4.8	1.6
Number of quarters with UI reported employment in 2000:*						
- zero	192	55.7	13.0	9.4	7.8	14.1
- one	62	50.0	27.4	6.5	6.5	9.7
- two	72	44.4	19.4	15.3	13.9	6.9
- three	91	31.8	22.0	11.0	8.8	26.4
- four	271	27.3	8.1	11.1	13.3	40.2

Comparisons between employment and child support payments only include the 688 NCPs matched with Base Wage.

* Information on child support derived from Los Angeles County District Attorney files. Information on UI employment and UI earnings for 2000 is derived from EDD Base Wage files (see Appendix A for more details).

While fathers with a low (\$1 to \$7,499) level of UI earnings paid just under \$500 in annual child support payments, fathers with a high (\$15,000+) level of UI earnings paid over \$2,750 in annual child support payments.

Figure 4.1: Official Child Support Payments in Previous Year (2000) by Employment Status and Earnings Level



Note:

- Comparisons between employment and child support payments only include the 688 NCPs matched with Base Wage.
- Earnings categories are classified as Low = \$1 to \$7,499; Medium = \$7,500 to \$14,999; High = \$15,000+.
- * Information on child support derived from Los Angeles County District Attorney files. Information on UI employment and UI earnings for 2000 is derived from CDSS Base Wage files (see Appendix A for more details). Base Wage records cover approximately 95% of all paid workers in the private sector in California. The data do not include self-employment, employment in firms not in the unemployment insurance program, and some governmental agencies. Preliminary analysis of NCPs without a Base Wage record suggests that about half are working in jobs not captured in the Base Wage files.

EXTENT OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NCP AND CP ON CHILD SUPPORT

The custodial and noncustodial parents often disagreed about child support. The CP perceived the NCP as trying to avoid the support while the NCP felt that he was faced with an unfair financial burden. Table 4.6 shows areas of agreement and disagreement.

The NCP was most likely to feel that he has provided some support, either formal or informal payments, to the CP and child (42%). On the other hand, the CP was much less likely to agree (26%). Interestingly, however, when the NCP did provide financial support, the CP, on average, perceived the amount as more than does the NCP. While many of the CPs agreed that the NCP had contributed to the household in the last six months by buying children’s clothes and shoes, groceries or meals, and toys or school

items, more NCPs than CPs felt they made these contributions in addition to (or often in place of) regular child support payments.

With respect to the payments themselves, the CP was more likely to perceive the payments as not reasonable, that is, probably too low. Most of the NCPs viewed child support payments as keeping them behind financially. The CP, on the other hand, saw child support payments not as keeping the NCP limited financially but maybe occasionally limiting the money available for his own needs.

When an NCP could not make his support payments, his reasons were usually because he has no money and the support order is too high. While some CPs agreed with these reasons, almost equally as many felt that the reason for nonpayment of child support was that the NCP had another family to support and does not feel that he is financially responsible for the child.

Table 4.6: Child Support

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
NCP Directly Gave CP/Child Money Last Month (%):	41.7	25.9
Amount of Money Directly Given to CP/Child Last Month – mean (sd.)	\$171 (321)	\$210 (406)
In Past 6 months, NCP Ever Gave (%):		
- Clothes/shoes/major items	56.8	34.7
- Diapers	7.7	3.6
- Other presents	54.8	32.9
- Groceries or meals	52.2	32.0
- Toys/books/school items	47.8	26.5
- Money for car	4.1	1.3
- Money for medical/dental bills	7.9	4.3
- Money for mortgage/rent	5.9	3.8
- Anything else	6.7	3.1
Child Support Agreement Payments (%):		
- Keeps you behind financially	53.1	28.1
- Keeps you short on money	28.7	43.9
- Keeps you from living comfortably	8.7	4.9
- Does not affect your lifestyle	9.5	23.1
Think Amount of Child Support Agreement is (%):		
- Very reasonable	16.3	8.1
- Somewhat reasonable	27.8	19.0
- Somewhat unreasonable	15.8	15.9
- Very unreasonable	27.3	34.6
- Do not know	13.0	22.4
Ever Been a Reason for NCP Not Paying Child Support (%):		
- Did not have the money	81.9	55.6
- Support order too high	58.0	28.5
- Another family to support	29.9	30.2
- Disagreements about visitation	13.5	8.9
- Disagreements about spending child support money	11.6	5.6
- Child support money goes to state, not child	12.0	13.3
- Not responsible for child	3.4	23.9

Table 4.7 examines what the NCP and CP know about child support regulations. In general, they were most likely to know those regulations that directly affect them. For example, the NCP was more likely to know about appealing the child support agreement than the CP. The CP was much more aware of the five-year limit on TANF than the NCPs, however this policy had a very direct effect on both of them.

They were mostly in agreement with respect to proposed changes in the child support system except in the area of visitation and turning over child support to the caseworker. In these areas, the NCP preferred to have a state or local social service agency handle these cases.

Generally, the CP had much less information about what can happen to the NCP if he falls behind in his payments. For example, some NCPs were aware that their driver's license can be taken away if they fall behind in payments, while fewer CPs knew that this can be one of the consequences.

What are some possible incentives to pay child support? The three top reasons cited by NCPs were: arrears reduction, elimination of interest penalty, and reduction in their support order. The NCPs also feel that if the payments went directly to the child, then he might be more willing to keep up with the child support payments. About half of the CPs agreed that these reasons would make the NCPs more willing to pay child support. However, these possible incentives to increase child support payments are difficult, if not impossible, to implement under the current child support laws and regulations.

Table 4.7: Knowledge about Child Support Regulations

	NCPs	CPs
Number in Survey Sample	417	417
Know You Can Appeal Child Support Agreement Amount (%):	63.5	52.2
Know About TANF 5-year Time Limit (%):	38.0	68.4
If NCP Fell Behind in Payments ... (%Yes/%Do Not Know):		
- NCP would go to court	72.7/11.5	61.5/27.0
- NCP's drivers license would be taken	80.8/7.0	65.1/25.3
- NCP would be put in jail	66.0/16.8	50.4/35.7
- NCP would lose visitation rights	22.6/16.4	11.3/6.0
- Child would know	24.5/18.7	14.9/4.3
- Nothing would happen	14.9/5.8	12.3/12.8
Proposed Changes in the Child Support System, Strongly, or Somewhat Agree (%):		
- Counseling for separated parents	87.1	83.7
- Job training for CPs	95.0	95.2
- Job training for NCPs	96.9	95.5
- State should help with visitation problems	88.3	76.0
- Case worker should handle child support	45.8	30.0
NCP Would be More Willing to Pay Child Support if ... (%):		
- Back payments (arrear) were reduced	87.5	50.6
- Interest penalty was dropped	89.7	52.5
- Monthly amount was more reasonable	81.8	47.0
- Money went directly to CP and not state	55.1	39.4
- Money went directly to child and not CP	64.4	53.1

V

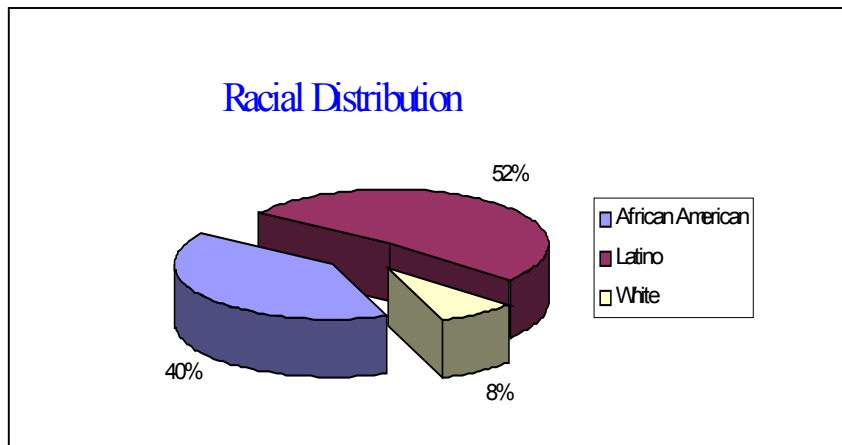
THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHER SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF

This part reports on in-depth interviews with 35 noncustodial fathers whose children were on welfare and who were delinquent in their child support payments. These noncustodial parents (NCPs) talk about their own childhood and background, their relationship with the custodial parent (CP), their relationship with their noncustodial child, their work history, and reasons for their arrearages in child support payments. The fathers were selected from the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Family Support Bureau database and offered \$20 for the completed interview. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a number of different places, including the NCPs’ homes. The interviews were approximately two hours in length.⁴

THE SAMPLE OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS

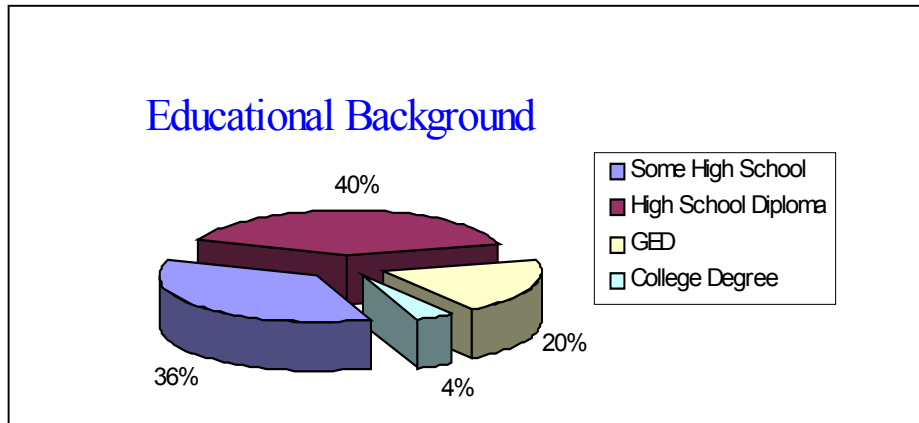
About half of the NCPs (52%) were Latino, 40% were African American, and 8% were non-Hispanic White. Most of the NCPs were between 30 and 40 years of age. In this sample, 64% of these respondents had completed high school or its equivalent. One in three did not have a high school diploma (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Figure 5.1: Racial Distribution of Noncustodial Fathers, Interviewees



⁴ See Appendix C for the interview protocol used in these case studies.

Figure 5.2: Educational Background of Interviewees



THE BACKGROUND OF THE NCP

Living Situation

Many of the NCPs relied on their families for financial support. Almost two-thirds lived with their parents or other relatives because they could not afford to live on their own. Most of the NCPs living in their parents' home saw their situation as temporary and preferred to live independently. One single father said he was living at home with his mother, "until I'm financially stable to get my own place."

For a few NCPs, however, living at home was the last place of refuge from the streets. One NCP described how his family's home was his last safety net:

That's the only place I've got to go. If they die, if they kick me out, I don't want to know what I'm going to be doing because I won't be a bum and I won't be homeless. I'll probably be forced to go into gangs, or I don't know.

About one-third of them had other living arrangements such as renting their own apartment, sharing an apartment with a friend, or living with a new partner. The NCPs, with few exceptions, resided in low socioeconomic neighborhoods where poverty, drugs, and violence were prevalent. One single father who grew up in East Los Angeles described how gang life was always a common feature of his neighborhood:

Coming home from school, I used to see things like people getting jumped. A couple of times we'd see a car all shot up with bullets, like the bodies right there and the cops taping it up. You see a lot of crazy stuff.

Another single father described how gangs and violence were a normal part of every day life:

Where I was growing up there were a whole lot of gangs. I could open up the door and see like two or three fights a day. . . I've witnessed a whole lot of murders, a whole lot of killings. I've actually seen face-to-face people getting shot in the head at point blank range.

Another NCP, reflecting on the violence in his neighborhood, summed it up by saying, "Today I just thank God I'm alive."

Some NCPs spoke of being directly involved in gang life, particularly when they were younger. One NCP, who was raised and still resided in Compton, was drawn to gang life as a young teenager:

I started getting into gangs at an early age because my sister . . . brought all the guys over and they were gang members. I wanted to be like them, they seemed so cool to me. They came up to me and asked me and I said sure, ya. And that's how I got started. I was about 14. I boosted up the ladder quick because I've always been a leader, never a follower, so I shot to the top. By the time I was 16 I was the leader of the gang.

Others avoided the streets. One NCP, for example, had friends and relatives who belonged to gangs but was never involved himself, something he attributes to his participation in high school sports. "Sports," he said, "are kind of the only discipline I ever had." Another NCP, who also avoided gang life, said, "I never got into that stuff. I consider gang banging, smoking, drugs, drinking, I consider that all negative and I try to stay away from that."

The lure of the streets and earning quick money through drug dealing was ever-present. One single father, who admitted to having dealt drugs at one point in his life, stated, "I can make more money on the streets in 6 months than I could ever make in a lifetime. It's that easy . . . I can go down there right now and I can get a piece of crack . . . it's that easy. But I don't want to go through that life anymore." The temptation to sell drugs, another NCP stated, is strong:

Just right here. If you go down the street, anywhere around here. East LA is one of the rock capitals of the world right now. They

sell the biggest rocks of cocaine, rock cocaine. A little thing will cost you ten bucks . . . In one night I know for a fact on a busy street. . . I'd say in one night if you've got enough merchandise for them you can make at least five or six hundred, even maybe a thousand in one night, and that's in about 5 hours.

Some prior studies of NCPs paint a picture of them as weighing in the balance the option of pursuing a legitimate job or obtaining financial resources through drug dealing. The decision to deal drugs is a rational one motivated by the need to survive under poor economic circumstances. Without question, this dynamic is at work. Among these NCPs, the average NCP had used drugs, varying from casual to heavy use, but few actually dealt drugs.

Since most of these single fathers are between thirty and forty years of age and are at a point in their lives where they are trying to make positive changes, one real concern for many is the neighborhood environment in which their children are currently living. As one NCP explained:

If you send your kids to an environment where there's a lot of negative activity going on, like on their way to school, you know, I don't want my kids to see that. I don't want my daughter to have the same kinds of experiences I had.

Another NCP responded to the question, "Would you want your kids to grow up in the kind of neighborhood you grew up in?":

Not really. It's gotten a lot worse now. . . drugs and all that, it's like really bad around there.

(*"What are your concerns?"*) Well, being introduced to the drugs too soon. . . the neighborhood is infested with drug dealers and drug users. The cocaine. . .you can tell they're selling it because they walk up to the cars and hang in. . . right up the street from my house. And I don't like my kids growing up in that environment, but what can you do?

(*"How easy is it to get into that?"*) Very easy, especially with peer pressure. But that's why I talk to my kids and let them know that weed ain't cool, ain't none of it cool.

NCPs' Relationships with Their Own Fathers

When discussing their children and their overall problems with the child support enforcement system, many NCPs attributed their current problems to not having a father

role model in their lives. This response surfaced with consistent regularity. Some NCPs never knew their fathers, some were abused by their fathers, and some knew their fathers but were very detached from them. As a result, they expressed feeling deep voids in their lives.

In the case of one NCP, his parents were divorced when he was five years old and he did not see his father for several years, although he lived in a nearby neighborhood. One day he saw his father at a local car show and they started talking. Ever since then they “hang out together sometimes.” When the NCP was asked about how he felt about his relationship with his father, he responded, “Now it doesn't bother me. But before he would try to get in contact with me and it was like what for, he's never been there for me. But now I talk to him.”

Another NCP saw his father leave the household when he was seven years old and has not heard from him since. He was very angry and resentful as a result. He said:

There are times when I hold my tears when it comes to like Christmas. I mean I want to have a present like the rest of the kids, I want to have my dad, somebody to tell me amigo, don't worry about it. Now that I'm older I know what father's day means, and it's hard for me. . . . I mean he ran like a coward, he never made the effort. I still think of that, why he never comes and tells me, I'm your Dad, I want to see you.

Still other NCPs told stories of their fathers being harsh disciplinarians. One NCP said, “My Dad was abandoned by his father, and he was very bitter. He had this hidden anger and I could see it in his face when he whipped me. And I would always be angry.” Another NCP, who experienced severe physical abuse, described his relationship with his father in the following way:

Not only did he use to abuse me and my mom, the mental scars that I can still remember . . . he would put me on top of the refrigerator and expect me to jump down and if I didn't or I started crying he'd call me all kinds of names, like sissy, faggot. There would be times if my mom was not in the room he'd look me in the eyes and tell me to my face that ‘I'd wish I'd had a girl, I don't even want you.’ I can still remember like it was yesterday. Ya, it still hurts.

Another NCP talked about staying out on the streets to avoid his father:

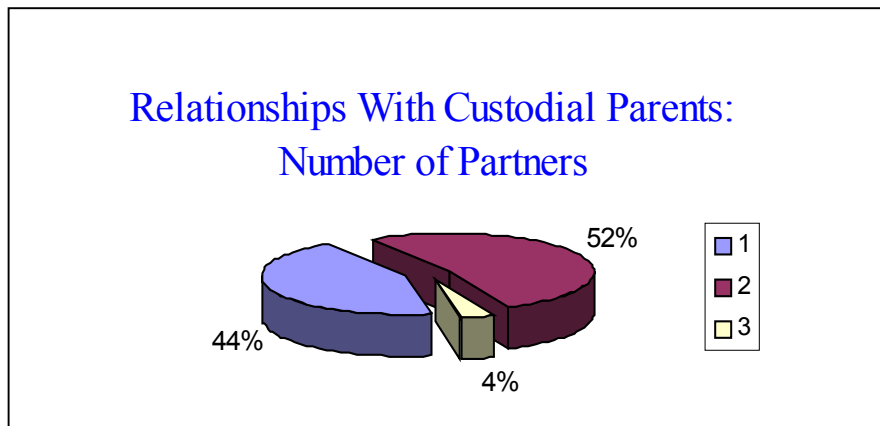
So I would stay out late if I knew my Dad was mad. And then of course that's when you start hanging out with your friends and doing everything from sniffing paint to smoking pot to drinking booze to forget worrying about going home and getting smacked or getting yelled at.

Most of the NCPs expressed a strong desire to be a positive father figure in their child's life, particularly those that lacked a positive relationship with their own fathers. The following NCP, for example, said: "When I was growing up, my dad he was a very abusive person. I figure I don't care if I die owing a million dollars. As long as I don't turn into the man my father was, I'm very happy. As long as I don't put my kids through what my father put me through, I'll be very happy." Another commented, "When I first thought about having kids I always said to myself I will never be like my father, I will always be a better man to my kids." In addition, one more NCP commented, "I always wanted to be a father for my kid. I don't want to be like my dad. My dad was never there for me."

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CP

Figure 5.3 shows that more than half of these NCPs have two or more partners with children who are on welfare and for whom they are responsible for child support.

Figure 5.3: Number of Custodial Partners



The NCP's ability to communicate with the CP played an important role in their relationships with their children. We asked them about their existing relationship with their children and their relationship with the CP and their ability to communicate with her. About half of the NCPs believed that their relationship with the CP was okay. They felt that the only reason they had to go to court is that they failed to pay child support. For these NCPs, their visitation agreements had typically been arranged on an informal basis with the CP. One NCP, for example, has had children with two partners but does not have a formal legal agreement for custody or visitation with either partner. He said, "I don't want to get involved in the courts." Another NCP saw his kids anytime he wanted, and took them every other weekend with no legal visitation agreement. He said, "It's a thing of trust, and so far I haven't broke that trust with them [the CPs] yet. There's nothing in writing, nothing in contracts." This NCP believed that the CPs saw him doing positive things with the children and therefore were supportive of his visits.

The remaining half of the NCPs, however, experienced obstacles in their relationship with the children because of their relationship with the CP. For some, the problems with the CP were so extensive that it was very difficult for them to visit their children. The problems between the NCP and CP varied. Often the NCP directed anger and blame towards the CP.

There were several cases where the NCP did not believe that he was the biological father. For example, one NCP had a brief affair several years ago and now had been charged with nonpayment of child support. He did not believe the child was his, and he continued to ignore child support payments. He was recently arrested. He was asked, "What did you think when they [the Sheriff] showed up to arrest you?"

I didn't know what to think, I don't even know now. I've never been to jail and I was like, I just felt stupid for letting her get the best of me. I felt like she got even and she's laughing at me right now. I felt no responsibility for the kid; I didn't feel nothing for it. I just felt like why is she doing this to me. After sitting in jail for three days, a blood test was performed to determine if the child was mine. The blood test was positive. (*"What were your feelings when you found out it [the child] was yours?"*) It was really confusing. I was like, what do I do now? She's hungry for money, and now I'm going to have to give it to her.

In some instances, the NCPs fell into conflict with a new boyfriend or husband of the CP. Some of these conflicts verged on violence. One NCP, for example, was able to visit his son until the CP began living with a new boyfriend who was very confrontational. During one visit, the new boyfriend pulled a gun on the NCP. Moreover, in this particular case, the NCP believed the new boyfriend had abused his son physically. The NCP stopped visiting his son because of these confrontations. The NCP explained, “Now, to this day, thanks to him, I don't get to see my kid . . . I fear for my life. That's why I don't want to bother.”

One barrier to having a relationship with their children, according to some of the NCPs, is that the CP had become dependent on welfare. Such dependency, they believed, had corrupted her character and was a poor influence on the child. One NCP, for example, believed that the CP was dependent on welfare, and the collection of welfare was her sole motivation for keeping the child. He said:

What does he see in his mom? He sees a lady that gets up probably at 12 in the afternoon; she doesn't go in the shower. . . she probably sleeps all day . . . I want her to go and do something so the kid can see something positive coming out from her. I don't want her to just lay down with a beer and wait for the first of the month for that welfare check.

When asked if the CP would give him custody of the child, another NCP responded, “Never, because it's something that they depend on . . . they depend on the rent, the money. If they have the child, they know for sure they're going to get a check every month.” Another NCP said the following about welfare dependency:

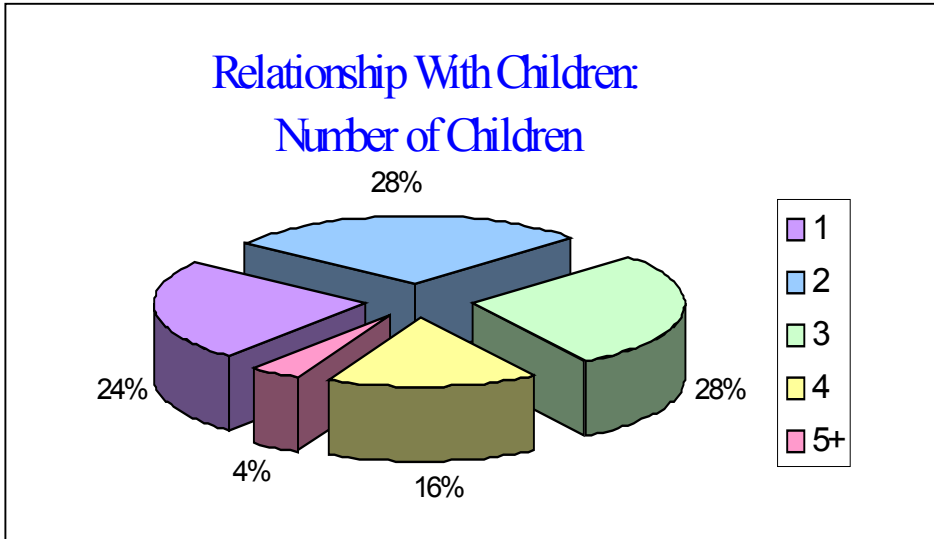
She acts like she don't want to deal with them. Every time she calls me she acts like she don't want to deal with them and I feel like she should give me my kids, but she don't want to do it because of that money that she's getting. If they end up cutting her off the County and all that stuff, she'll end up giving me my kids. But she's just keeping them because she's got that money coming in.

THE NONCUSTODIAL FATHER AND HIS CHILD

The majority of the children were the result of unplanned pregnancies. Some NCPs felt this has led them on a life course with negative, sometimes tragic,

consequences. Figure 5.4 shows that 75% of this sample has two or more children. One out of five has four or more children.

Figure 5.4: Number of Children Fathered by NCP



The following case of one NCP is typical. In this case, his high school girlfriend whom he had been dating for three years got pregnant when they were 16. The NCP felt terrible when he found out his girlfriend was pregnant, and he felt as if “a dark cloud had descended over him.” He said, “When I learned she was pregnant, everything went downhill. I was too young to deal with it. I didn’t know what to do.” When the baby was born, the NCP saw that he would not be able to live a normal youthful life like many of his classmates. He recalled a friend inviting him to a high school football party and wanting to go. “I wanted to enjoy life, but it was too late for me.” He ended up dropping out of school. The young man and his girlfriend had problems from the beginning. First, they did not have any money. Their parents helped a little, but they did not have much money either, and there was conflict between the parents and the NCP. Moreover, neither the NCP nor his girlfriend knew how to care for the baby. He said, “We didn’t know why he used to cry, we didn’t know how to burp him, we didn’t know how to take care of the milk. We were going through a lot of stress. We thought that life was going to be easy for us and it wasn’t. I was too young to get married.”

Another NCP, while a teenager, had an affair with an older woman who became pregnant. It was a very difficult and confusing time for this particular NCP:

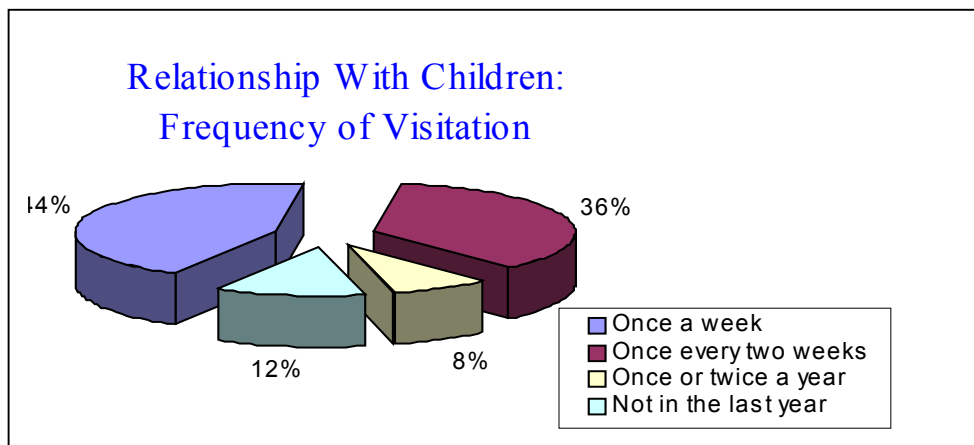
When I first found out she was pregnant, I was totally confused, I was lost. That was the most confusing part of my life that I never want to experience again. When he was first born, I kind of strayed away from him and her at the beginning because I was so afraid and lost I didn't know what direction to go, I didn't know what to do. But I finally owned up to it and took responsibility, and everything seemed to work out alright.

Another NCP had an 11-year-old son and a 6-year-old daughter. He was 29-years-old when his son was born, which was older than many of the NCPs when having their first child. Nonetheless, he felt unprepared. "I wasn't ready for it. I love children, I wanted to have children, but it just happened too fast. Compounding this was the fact that he had only known the CP for three weeks before she became pregnant. His daughter, from another partner, also was not planned.

A few of the NCPs were married for several years, and these relationships were more stable. Nonetheless, the children were typically not planned. One NCP separated from his first wife after being married for 5 years. They had two children who were unplanned, although they had discussed having children. When they had their first child, this NCP was 21 and his wife (girlfriend at the time) was still in high school.

While many children were not planned, most of the NCPs were currently involved in their children's lives. They indicated that they felt close to their children and visited with them almost weekly. Figure 5.5 shows the visitation distribution among these fathers. About one out of five, or roughly 20%, were detached from their children. Eight percent responded that they visited their children only once or twice a year, and 12% said they had not seen their children at all in the last year.

Figure 5.5: Frequency of Visitation



NCPs who were involved in their children's lives expressed deep emotions about them. While the children may not have been planned, NCPs expressed genuine love and concern for their children and a strong desire to be involved in their lives. One NCP who saw his daughter frequently said: "I didn't expect my little girl, but I'm glad she's here. I don't regret her whatsoever. I'm happy with her." Another NCP who was at the hospital when his daughter was born said, "I was really happy . . . she was really beautiful, it was great. I loved it."

One noncustodial father, who had been married to the custodial mother for several years, expressed his love for his children:

Yes, I love my kids. They're going to be a big part of my life in the future, even more than they are now, because I love my kids so much that I'm always going to be there for them and help them in any way I can.

We asked the NCPs about the kinds of activities they shared with their children. There was a wide range of responses, from playing sports to going to movies to just "hanging out." One NCP liked to take his three children to barbecues, shopping, and church; sometimes they watched football and wrestling on television. Another NCP expressed the joy he felt towards his child in the following way:

I really don't know what it is I like most about it. I just like being with her. There's lots of little things that you really can't put your finger on that they do or say . . . she's funny . . . she always hangs on to me. . . .

Another NCP said:

I love going to the beach for picnics, that's my thing, family gatherings. We go to the movies, I like skating, the boys, we roller skate all of the time. There's a lot of things you can do with your kids that don't cost money, like skating and swimming. I think of things to do with my kids so when they come over we have something planned to do.

It is difficult to assess the 20% of the NCPs who appeared to be disconnected from their children. The circumstances under which they have been confronted with paternity may be a factor.

NCP EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

NCPs work in one or a combination of three labor markets. The first is the formal labor market where they work using their real names, pay taxes and have a portion of their wages garnished to pay child support. The second is the informal labor market, which includes doing odd jobs and being paid in cash. Here NCPs avoid paying taxes and having their wages garnished. The third labor market is the underground labor market where the NCP works in the formal labor market but with false identification, including a false social security card, to avoid paying child support.

The typical NCP had work experience in seasonal industries that do not offer many opportunities for upward mobility on a career ladder. Their experiences were often as security guards, construction workers, shipping and receiving, warehousing, fast food restaurants, sales, and clerical work. Many found temporary jobs through agencies. The typical NCP had been in and out of the labor market in these positions for several years.

The work history of the following NCP is typical. He switched jobs frequently, working at a hospital for a year transporting patients, at an auto parts company for a year, and delivered appliances on a cash basis for several months. At one point, he worked for a company for cash full-time and made about \$400 dollars a week. Referring to the job he said, “that’s when I was paying child support myself [i.e., directly to the CPs and the kids]. That was pretty decent money, it enabled me to pay my child support and take care of myself.” In the past year, he had been doing odd jobs to help make ends meet, including refinishing bathtubs on the weekends where he could sometimes make a couple hundred dollars. With this money, he would pay bills, some rent to his mom, and take his kids out.

NCPs faced considerable barriers to employment. Many of these men lacked marketable skills. Most NCPs had relatively low levels of education. This placed many NCPs at a disadvantage in the labor market, particularly for jobs that required computer skills. As one NCP said, “You have to have computer skills. I’ve always shied away from computers. That’s one of the first things they ask you, are you computer literate? I barely know how to turn one on.”

Many of the men had limited work experience. Employers are reluctant to hire a job applicant if there is a gap of six months or more in his recent work history. Many

NCPs have not held a job in the formal labor market for several months, sometimes years.

Many NCPs did not own a car and relied on public transportation. Others had had their driver's licenses suspended by the District Attorney's office for not paying child support. This clearly impeded their ability to travel to jobs and limited the geographic area in which they could search for a job. Because many good paying jobs are located outside of the communities in which NCPs lived, their lack of transportation placed them at an additional disadvantage. Most NCPs believed that there were a lot of factory jobs and other low skilled jobs close to their neighborhood, but the higher paying jobs were in other areas.

Having a felony conviction was a major barrier to employment for many NCPs. Employers often use a felony conviction as a screening device.

Many of the noncustodial fathers felt overwhelmed by their own stress. Many NCPs had built up anger towards the District Attorney's office that interfered with their ability to focus on searching for employment and holding a job. Because of problems with the CP, they had trouble focusing on employment. Obtaining visitation rights was often a major problem for them.

Some perceived racism as a barrier to obtaining employment. The African-American NCPs said that racism in the labor market was a barrier, although they did not perceive it as pervasive. Some African-American NCPs reported that they had been denied employment on at least one occasion due to racial discrimination. Moreover, they usually felt a degree of stress due to the possibility that an employer might be evaluating them unfairly because of their race. However, they also believed that most employers looked past race and that, by and large, they had a fair chance at being hired for employment. The Latino NCPs were much less likely to note that racism was a significant barrier to employment.

Among the African-American NCPs, a more significant barrier to employment than racism by employers was racism by policemen. Several NCPs talked about the difficulty of driving to search for a job, or commuting daily to a job, without being harassed by the police, particularly when driving through predominantly white communities.

Many NCPs quit previous jobs because their wages were garnished, and they specifically were not taking a new job out of fear that their wages would be garnished. Employer attitudes about wage garnishment were possible barriers. One NCP said, “Employers don’t like wage garnishments one bit. My boss will tell you. They don’t like to do the paperwork. When I worked for one place, in the handbook they said if you have child support taken out, you are not employable. They don’t care if it’s illegal [to say that].”

Some NCPs have substance abuse problems that represented a barrier to employment. Problems with alcohol and marijuana were the most common, with cocaine, crack, and methamphetamine use (and other harder drugs) being less common.

Some NCPs had additional financial burdens that wore on them and served to dissuade them from accepting low-wage employment. For example, some had a new family to support and additional children not on aid or with no child support order.

Sometimes physical appearance was a problem. Some NCPs had poor dental health, and this worked against their chances of finding a job. Tattoos were also unacceptable to some employers.

Many NCPs said they refused to accept low-wage jobs. Most believed they would need to earn roughly \$10.00 per hour to pay child support and care for themselves. One NCP said: “I can get a job right now, I can walk down the street and get a job anywhere that only pays \$6 or \$7 an hour, I can get that kind of job anywhere.”

In addition to suspending their driver’s license, the District Attorney had suspended the professional licenses of some NCPs that they needed for employment. These licenses included special licenses to operate motor vehicles, contracting licenses, cosmetologist licenses, and so on.

The lack of English-speaking ability was a barrier for some jobs. Some NCPs, particularly immigrants, found speaking English difficult and this limited the types of jobs available.

A number of NCPs had health problems or disabilities that limited the type of work or amount of work the NCP could do. Some NCPs had unaddressed mental health issues that impeded their potential to hold a job.

REASONS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT

The link between NCPs paying child support and having a quality relationship with their children is an important one. The NCPs we interviewed, without exception, maintained that, in principle, they were willing to pay child support. One NCP adamantly stated:

I'm nowhere in the description of deadbeat dad. Broken dad, broke ass dad, I'll deal with that, but I do not consider myself a deadbeat dad because my kids know me...if they want me to come to pick them up, call me, page me, "Daddy I need somebody to talk to." I'm there.

The following is a summary of the main reasons that noncustodial fathers have given for non-payment of child support.

Child support orders are unreasonably high

When the NCPs were asked why they had not paid child support, the most common response was that the child support orders were unreasonably high. They could not afford to make such payments and still have enough money to pay for other living expenses. One NCP stated, "It just made me laugh because there's no way I could pay that kind of money. At the time I was working at a security job and there's no way, paying bills and having to pay that."

Of particular concern to most NCPs is having enough money left to spend on their children. One NCP said:

If I'm making \$8 an hour and I get \$600 back every two weeks and they're taking half, how am I going to live? How am I going to pay rent, how am I going to take care of the kids when I get them?

Finding a good paying job

Most of the NCPs stated that they would be willing to pay child support if they held a good paying job which would allow them to make the payments and have enough left over for their other financial obligations. "I would give them as much money as they wanted if I had the proper job to do it," stated one NCP. What then, is a "good" paying job? When asked what wage they would need to make in order to make their child

support payments, most responded with a wage of around \$10.00 per hour. Clearly, a gap exists between the wage they believe they need to earn and what they can actually earn given their existing skills.

Spending money on children that is not counted

Most NCPs spent money directly on their children, and they have become accustomed to doing so. For example, they typically bought them food, toys, clothes, and diapers. This money, however, is not counted towards their child support payment but is considered a gift. Many NCPs were aware that the money was considered a gift but still wanted to be able to spend money directly on their children, even though their arrearages were accruing. For most of these men, spending money on their children played an important psychological role in establishing an emotional connection with their children. One NCP, who knew that his arrearages were mounting, continued to spend money on his children:

I'd rather spend the money directly on my children than to give it to someone else. I thought about it, but I wasn't scared. For me, I was doing something for them and I don't think you should be penalized for that. I knew the bill was building up, but it really didn't faze me.

Spending money on their children was sometimes a measure of self worth, of feeling like a provider and a role model, of "being a man." One NCP stated, "I thought I was doing what I needed to do as a father, to be there for my daughter. My daughter has never been without diapers or juice or clothes, she has all of that. I've been there for her financially."

Attitude towards the CP on public assistance (welfare)

Some NCPs were reluctant to pay child support because they believed the CP was collecting welfare fraudulently. One NCP believed that he owed arrearages for a time when he had full custody of the children and the CP was illegally collecting welfare. He was very bitter and cynical as a result. Another NCP claimed that the CP was collecting welfare for three years while they were living together, but she did not inform him. He learned that the CP had been collecting welfare two years after they separated when he

received notification in the mail from the District Attorney's office. He said, "I feel that if the mother can go out and get on welfare without the father knowing, I think the mother should at least be obligated to pay some of it back." Others believed the CP was taking advantage of the welfare system by understating her true financial circumstances. For example, one NCP stated:

Just because she says she pays \$200 or \$300 for rent doesn't mean that that's actually what she pays. There's mothers out there saying they pay \$700 when they only pay \$200 or \$300. My daughter don't eat \$100 worth of phone, my daughter don't eat \$100 worth of water, and they're giving them this money for them to what . . . and then we get screwed as a father paying it back with interest because supposedly you weren't responsible enough.

Finally, some NCPs believed that the CP did not spend the welfare money wisely on the child. One NCP responded:

She'd probably go get her nails done or her hair done. I know the way she is . . . right now it's just her and her grandma and her brothers and they have a big old house. She don't got to pay rent, she don't have nothing. She'll probably use the money to go clothes shopping. She won't use it for his education or nothing like that.

The child support enforcement system lacks credibility

NCPs were overwhelmingly cynical about the Family Support Bureau and the child support enforcement system. Many believed that their cases had been mismanaged and that they were being asked to pay money that they did not owe. Most claimed that they were never properly served with legal notice. One NCP claimed that the system did not keep track or did not account for the period when he was paying child support and he was being asked to pay twice. He said:

I have the paychecks to prove that money was being taken out, but it was still registering to the court that I hadn't paid a dime. To this day, I believe that they haven't got it right. Because with him I'm \$4,000 in debt, and I know that I'm in debt from July up until now but no way that adds up to \$4,000, especially when I'm only ordered to pay at the time \$150 per month.

One problem is that many NCPs were not aware that they were supposed to modify their child support payments upon leaving or changing a job. For example, many NCPs left a particular job and continued to accrue arrearages based on their former earnings even though they were unemployed. In addition to not trusting the system, some NCPs showed a great deal of confusion when it came to discussing the child support enforcement system. When asked if he thought his current child support amounts were fair, for example, one NCP responded, “I don’t even like to think about it. Does she even get that money? Does it go to welfare? I don’t know.”

Another major point of contention, from the viewpoint of the NCPs, was that channels of communication between the NCP and the District Attorney’s office were insufficient. Consequently, most NCPs had little confidence that they could resolve their legal predicaments. One NCP stated, “I figure that if you can take a person’s paycheck, you should be able to meet with them face to face and make sure they’re getting it right. Yes, we’re taking child support from you, but we’re not infringing on your bills, your cost of living.” They complained that there were few, if any, channels of communication open to them to obtain information on their cases, ask questions, or resolve problems. A pervasive feeling among the NCPs was that the DA was not interested in their personal problems, but was solely interested in collecting child support money. One NCP said:

They don’t give you no opportunity to change things. They want it their way and that’s it. You pay this much, that’s it. That’s probably why a lot of people don’t want to pay . . . they don’t want to hear your part of it, they don’t want to hear about your problems. They just want their money and that’s it.

Welfare and legal system favors the CP

The NCPs believed that the legal system was stacked against them. They believed that judges and legal representatives from the District Attorney’s office had a negative view of them. One NCP believed that the legal system made him out to “look like a bad guy, like a thug. They keep hammering away at you.” Another NCP stated:

The first thing they see is domestic violence and right away, it feels like you’re already convicted, you’re already judged. This guy is bad, this guy has a problem. Through past experience going through the court system, it’s like fathers just don’t have any rights, they just don’t get the breaks for nothing.

To obtain fair and effective legal representation, NCPs generally believed that one needed sufficient financial resources to hire a private attorney (although few NCPs had the financial resources to do so). They expressed little faith in public defenders, feeling that the stereotype of the deadbeat dad was still too pervasive.

Visitation

Some NCPs believed that the CP was partly responsible for them being unable to see their children or see them as much as they would like. Consequently, they didn't believe they should be required to pay child support or the full child support amount. The following statement made by one NCP provides a representative example:

My argument is I didn't see my kids. I went through a lot of bullshit. Why should I pay when I'm getting screwed? No way. Let's go back to my arrears and let's be fair about it. Where I did not see my kids . . . let's sit down and talk about that because I don't think I should be responsible for that.

Arrearages

One barrier to paying child support is the amount of the arrearages. NCPs complained about the high arrearages they were being charged, that ranged from a few hundred dollars to over \$100,000. There were several reasons why the NCPs viewed the arrearages as unfair. The most common complaint was that the arrearages accumulated were based on wages that they were not earning. Moreover, they did not understand the process for making a support order modification. A couple of NCPs complained that they were being charged arrearages for time spent in prison. According to one, ". . . they sent me all of that paper work to go to court when I was in prison, but how was I going to go to court when I was in prison." He went on to say, "That's the whole thing that bothers me, it's like I'm paying twice for it" Also, the 10% interest on the arrears was seen as very unfair. With respect to the interest rate another NCP stated, "And then they add all of this interest. My interest is probably more than my payment. My payment is like \$200 and my interest is like \$250. Where is the logic in that? How do they ever expect someone to pay it off?"

Custodial parent does not spend the money wisely

Some states have experimented with the idea of increasing the pass-through amount that goes to the CP as an incentive for the NCP to pay child support. The idea is that the NCP will have a more tangible view of where the money is going and will feel that the money actually is being spent on the children. Consequently, we asked the NCPs in our interviews if they would be more willing to pay child support if the money went directly to the CP rather than to the child support enforcement system.

Many NCPs were adamantly opposed to this idea because they believed that the CP did not spend the welfare money wisely on their children. One NCP stated: “You see the kids . . . and you start noticing how they’re dressed and what they’re doing and then you start saying, what do you do with the money? . . . I suggested letting me get them and I’ll go buy them clothes.” Another NCP stated:

No . . . I’ll spend the \$250 buying them clothes, buying them shoes because I know, physically, my money is going to them. So, it’s like, who knows if I’m going to give 250 bucks to her and she ends up dropping the kids off at her Dad’s house and going out all weekend? It happens.

Some NCPs claimed that they would be more willing to pay child support if they felt that the money was going to benefit their children, although not by giving it directly to the CP. As an alternative, one NCP suggested that a portion of child support payments be set-aside in a trust fund, that the child could claim by age 18. This would be beneficial to the child and, at the same time, the NCP would feel a greater connection to the child. The NCP stated:

There should be a separate account set up for that child. Half should go to the county and half should go to that child where the parents can’t touch it, it has a lock on it. So that child can grow up knowing, hey, my dad can’t give me no Christmas gifts or no birthday present because he’s paying child support, but once I get older and I need the help to go to school I’ll know that my dad contributed to this. If something like that happened you would find a lot of fathers who would volunteer to pay child support because most of them, including me, most of us are satisfied that their moms can’t get their hands on it . . . we would be a part of knowing where our money goes.

New families

Some NCPs had new families and now had additional financial obligations. This made paying child support particularly difficult. There was the sense that the child support enforcement system did not fairly account for these circumstances.

One NCP underscored the difficulty of moving on with his life financially when he started a new family: “. . .but most of the time it just doesn’t happen that way, especially when a guy meets somebody else or gets married again or has a girlfriend with another kid. He now has a double obligation, he’s paying for child support and plus he’s supposed to provide a house for his new girlfriend and his new kid. You know how hard that is? . . . they don’t see that . . .”

VI

THE FEMALE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT

Generally, the NCP is the father of the child. However, there are a few cases where the mother lost custody and is the noncustodial parent. The NCP survey provides some insights into the characteristics and problems facing this population. In this survey, 44 respondents were female NCPs. While they were similar in characteristics to the male NCP, there were some gender differences.

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NONCUSTODIAL MOTHERS

The demographic characteristics of the noncustodial were very similar to those of the fathers. Table 6.1 shows that female NCPs tended to be slightly younger, with a mean age of 32 versus 34 for the men. The table also shows the characteristics of custodial parents, most of whom were the partners of the male NCPs, and the statistics show that the custodial parents in the survey were similar in most respects to the male and female NCPs.

Nearly two-thirds of the female NCPs were Hispanic with the rest being African-American or white non-Hispanic. Over one-third were currently married or cohabiting. The female NCPs were slightly more likely to have been married than the male NCPs or CPs. The female and male NCPs as well as the CPs were all similar in educational background with the same mean years of schooling. The female NCP compared to the male NCP were slightly more likely not to have a high school diploma or other degree but among those who completed high school, the female NCP was more likely to have gotten a GED.

The female NCPs were more likely to rent their own apartments and less likely to share rent. The number of people residing in the household, however, was the same as the NCP fathers and much lower than that of CPs.

Table 6.1: Description of Female NCPs

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
Age – mean (sd.)	32.5 (8.6)	34.3 (9.2)	32.1 (9.0)
Race/Ethnicity (%):			
- Am. Indian/Native Am.	0.0	1.5	1.0
- Asian/Pacific Islander	6.8	2.3	1.5
- Black/African American	13.6	26.9	21.6
- Hispanic	63.6	57.8	60.5
- Non-Hispanic White	13.6	9.9	13.3
- Other	2.3	1.7	2.2
Marital Status (%):			
- Married	29.6	21.6	13.4
- Living Together	9.1	11.3	7.0
- Divorced/Widowed	18.2	16.8	22.1
- Separated	15.9	14.9	17.8
- Never Married	27.3	35.4	39.8
Years Married – mean	5.4 (4.6)	6.3 (5.6)	6.6 (6.8)
Highest Completed Grade – mean	10.7 (2.7)	10.9 (3.0)	10.9 (3.0)
Highest Degree Attained (%):			
- None	47.8	43.4	43.2
- High School Diploma	25.0	29.6	31.4
- GED	13.6	7.0	4.1
- AA/Tech/Trade Certificate	13.6	17.4	18.9
- Bachelors Degree	0.0	2.2	2.2
- Graduate Degree	0.0	0.5	0.0
Current Housing Situation (%):			
- Rent	56.8	47.7	70.7
- Own	4.6	6.6	7.4
- Share Rent	29.6	34.0	17.0
- Do Not Pay Rent	4.6	8.7	4.6
- Other	4.6	3.0	0.2
# of People in Household – mean	3.8 (2.5)	3.7 (1.9)	4.3 (1.7)

EMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH OF THE FEMALE NCP

A similar proportion of women as men were working. The mean household earnings of female NCPs, however, were substantially lower than male NCPs (Table 6.2). This may reflect gender wage differentials even at in the low-skill labor market. While women may have worked in the same proportion as men they were earning less. On the other hand, women were more likely to have never worked than men, but that is generally true of the female population because of cultural norm that continues to support women remaining at home and raising a family. This norm is particularly strong within the Hispanic culture. Female NCPs were much more likely to have received cash aid such as general relief or food stamps than male NCPs. The custodial parent, of course, received both cash aid and child support because the CP was the primary caretaker of the children.

Table 6.2 also shows that men were more likely than women to have been homeless in the past year. This is a factor of gender since poor men have a greater likelihood of being homeless than women who may find it somewhat easier to find family or friends who may be more sympathetic to women than to men. Additionally, for female NCPs who faced financial hardship, their problems were not as severe as the males, who were more likely not to be able to pay rent, utilities, or obtain food.

With respect to health status, Table 6.2 shows that female NCPs were more likely to view themselves as having poorer health than the males. More male NCPs perceived their health to be “excellent” or “very good” (40.2%) compared to the female NCPs (27.2%). Females were more likely to have spent more days, on average, in bed because of illness or injury than the male NCPs. Whether the reporting of good or excellent health status is a factor of differences in gender reporting (men not wanting to appear sickly) is not known.

Even though one third of female NCPs did not have any health care insurance, male NCPs were still almost twice as likely as female NCPs to have no health care coverage. Many of the married women were covered by their spouse’s health insurance. Others had some children in the home and received coverage through Medi-Cal. These types of benefits did not accrue to male NCPs.

Table 6.2: NCP Employment and Health

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males
Household earnings – mean (sd.)	981 (673)	1216 (1089)
Current employment status (%):		
- Working full-time	47.7	47.5
- Working part-time	20.5	21.4
- Unemployed	18.2	24.0
- Student/have never worked	9.1	3.6
- Retired/something else	4.6	3.5
In last month, received (% yes):		
- Cash aid	34.1	11.1
- Child support	9.1	3.5
In past 12 months:		
- Slept on street (% yes)	4.6	13.2
- Get food from relative/friend (% often/sometimes)	34.1	38.8
- Get food from church/pantry (% often/sometimes)	18.2	15.1
- Skip meals (%often/sometimes)	27.3	37.6
- Not able to pay rent (% yes)	41.9	58.3
- Not able to pay utilities (% yes)	46.5	61.7
Self-rated overall health (%):		
- Excellent	13.6	20.2
- Very good	13.6	20.0
- Good	43.2	32.5
- Fair	22.7	19.0
- Poor	6.8	8.2
In past year, # of days illness/injury kept you in bed – mean (sd.)	6.2 (15.2)	4.7 (11.4)
Source of health care insurance (%):		
- Private	2.3	1.6
- Employer	25.0	24.7
- Spouse	11.4	3.5
- Medi-Cal	29.6	7.6
- Other	0.0	4.4
- None	31.8	58.2
In past week, # of days (mean) felt:		
- Annoyed	1.8	1.6
- Like not eating	1.1	1.2
- Mind wandering	1.9	1.9
- Everything is an effort	2.4	2.9
- Fearful/worried	2.8	2.8
- Could not sleep well	2.2	2.2
- Talk less than usual	1.1	1.4
- Lonely	1.8	1.9
- Sad	2.0	2.0

Female NCPs had similar mental health stressors as the men and exhibited similar mental health symptoms. This suggests that the female NCPs could benefit from mental health counseling.

GENERAL LIFE ISSUES

Table 6.3 shows that while male NCPs in general were more likely to have a history of convictions, the females were somewhat similar. About one-third of each group had at least one conviction since the age of 16, but males had a higher average number of convictions.

While the women did not report having someone to give them good advice as frequently as men did, they were more likely to feel that there is someone to care for them when they are ill. The differences may reflect gender because family and friends may be more willing to provide for an ill female than for an ill male.

Interestingly, female NCPs were more likely to have checking accounts, savings accounts, and credit cards. Why this may be true is not clear since men tended to earn more than women do. Perhaps having these types of accounts may suggest greater stability. Women are generally trying to get back custody of their children and may need to show that they can provide a stable environment for the child.

Table 6.3 also shows that female NCPs were only half as likely as the males to have “ever” had a driver’s license (46% vs 86% respectively). Among those who had a driver’s license, the same proportion of both the males and females had current licenses and had about the same access to cars.

Many of the female NCPs lost custody of their children because of drug and/or alcohol abuse. Table 6.3 shows that the female NCP was just as likely to be receiving drug counseling as the male NCP, but less likely to report having used illegal drugs in the past month.

Table 6.3 Other NCP Information

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males
Number in Survey Sample	44	830
Have someone to give you good advice (%):		
- Never	15.9	11.3
- Seldom	6.8	5.3
- Sometimes	13.6	16.0
- Often	13.6	11.1
- Always	50.0	56.3
Have someone to take care of you if ill (%):		
- Never	9.3	10.6
- Seldom	0.0	3.1
- Sometimes	7.0	11.3
- Often	11.6	8.9
- Always	72.1	66.0
Have a checking account (% yes)	34.1	22.6
Have a savings account (% yes)	18.2	15.4
Have a credit card (% yes)	20.5	16.0
Have driver's license (% yes)	68.2	64.6
Ever had a driver's license (% yes)	46.2	85.7
Currently have access to a car (%):		
- Yes, own working vehicle	52.3	55.0
- Yes, but do not own	18.2	14.3
- No	29.6	30.7
In last month, (% yes):		
- Used illegal drugs	2.3	5.5
- Drank alcohol to feel high	11.4	17.4
- Received drug counseling	9.1	9.5
In past year, (% yes) :		
- Ever arrested	6.8	10.2
- Ever convicted (since age 16)	31.8	34.6
# of times convicted – mean (sd.)	1.7 (1.1)	2.6 (2.5)

PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP OF FEMALE NCP TO FATHER OF THE CHILD

Table 6.4 shows that the female NCP in contrast to the male NCP and his CP was most likely to have childbirth out-of-wedlock. However, it is not clear what the large number of responses in “other” means. It may mean that the female NCP had no relationship with the father of the child or did not know the father’s identity.

About half of the women reported that they had no relationship with the current custodial parent or guardian. In 40% of these cases, the CP was the father of the child. Only one out of three even felt that they had a “somewhat” or “very” friendly relationship with the custodial parent who might be a relative or foster parent as well

On the other hand, one out of two male NCPs were much more likely to maintain a positive relationship with the female CP. Many of the women had previous substance abuse problems and lost custody of the children because of that. The circumstances under which many of the women lost custody or never had custody of the child probably contributed to the real differences between the female and male NCPs with respect to maintenance of a relationship with the CP.

The female NCPs, perhaps because they are the biological mothers, were much less satisfied with the child’s living arrangements and with the CPs’ relationship to the child. The CP was not satisfied with the NCP’s contributions to child support.

Perhaps because of the relationship of the female NCP to the CP, she was less likely than her male counterpart to maintain close communication with the CP. The data show that male NCPs communicated with the CP much more frequently than the female NCP did. In fact, less than one-half of the female NCPs indicated speaking to the CP in the past week compared to more than one-half of the male NCPs who said they had spoken to the CP in the past week.

Table 6.4: Female NCP Relationship with CP

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
Relationship when child born (%):			
- Not know each other very well	4.6	7.7	2.4
- Dating sometimes	2.3	15.1	14.4
- Seeing each other regularly	6.8	5.4	3.6
- Committed relationship	9.1	13.7	16.1
- Living together	29.6	30.4	27.1
- Married	13.6	23.2	26.9
- Other	34.1	4.5	9.6
Number of months in relationship – mean (sd.)	46.0 (62.9)	44.0 (47.7)	46.7 (52.1)
Current relationship (%):			
- No relationship	50.0	30.6	31.6
- Very unfriendly	18.8	9.4	7.7
- Somewhat unfriendly	0.0	8.6	6.1
- Somewhat friendly	15.6	26.9	24.8
- Very friendly	15.6	24.5	29.7
Very/somewhat satisfied with (%):			
- Where child lives	63.6	65.7	90.9
- CP's relationship with child	48.8	73.4	56.3
- CP's contribution to child's support	48.7	70.3	39.2
Last spoke with CP (%):			
- More than 6 months ago	34.1	25.6	19.4
- Between 1 and 6 months ago	6.8	10.7	12.7
- Within past month	18.2	12.8	14.9
- Within past week	40.9	50.9	53.0

FEMALE NCP INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONS AFFECTING CHILD

Table 6.5 shows that many female NCPs discussed the child with the CP (whether father or guardian), and one in three felt that she was involved in decisions made about the child. On most issues, a large majority of female NCPs did not disagree with their CPs over the six months prior to the survey. The one exception was regarding how the child was being raised. It is in this realm that female NCPs differed greatly from male

NCPs. (Whether the differences lie in who is taking care of the child [natural parent, relative, or foster parent] is not clear).

Both male and female NCPs perceived themselves as dealing with disagreements with the CP in a calm, rational manner. On the other hand, CPs were less likely to agree with this perception.

Table 6.5: NCP Involvement with CP and Decisions about Child

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
In past 6 months, discussed child with CP (%):			
- Never	10.3	13.3	18.2
- Less than once a month	6.9	12.7	20.8
- About once a month	13.8	15.1	11.0
- Several times a month	27.6	24.0	18.8
- More than once a week	41.4	34.9	31.3
NCP's level of involvement in decisions about child (%):			
- None	34.5	27.3	
- Little	10.3	13.2	
- Some	13.8	15.3	
- Pretty much	6.9	12.7	
- Great deal	34.5	31.7	
In past 6 months, <i>never</i> disagreed about (%):			
- Where child lives	65.5	66.2	78.6
- How child raised	48.3	60.1	72.8
- How CP spends money	72.4	73.3	80.7
- How support money spent	82.8	77.7	83.9
- Child support payment amount	79.3	73.3	71.9
- Frequency of visits with child	79.3	69.5	71.6
- Other things	79.3	81.5	84.8
In disagreements with CP, often or always (%):			
- Discuss calmly	62.1	51.1	46.9
- Argue heatedly	10.3	11.1	11.6
- Hit each other or throw things	0.0	1.0	1.2

FEMALE NCP RELATIONSHIP WITH HER CHILD

Feelings and Affection for Child

Table 6.6 shows that an equal number of the female NCPs' children lived with their father as the CP as live with a relative or someone else. In contrast, the male NCPs' children tended to be in the custody of their biological mother.

Female NCPs perceived their relationship with the child as being "very close" in about the same proportion as male NCPs. Of course, the CP tended to not see the child/NCP relationship as close as NCPs did. Similarly, the NCPs tended to see themselves as getting along very well with their child. Women perceived a slightly stronger relationship with the child than the men but not significantly so. The communication between the NCP and child was also viewed as strong.

Virtually all the male and female NCPs indicated very strong feelings of affection towards the child. Generally, the CPs did not concur with their view.

Nearly all the parents, NCPs and CPs, viewed the child as getting along well with others; however, one in three of all NCPs and CPs felt that the child "loses (his or her) temper easily" and "does not pay attention." Most of the NCPs and CPs also viewed their children as helpful and considerate of others.

Table 6.6: Female NCP Relationship with Child

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
Child currently lives with (%):			
- Natural mom/dad (CP)	38.6	84.2	83.7
- NCP/Family reunited	22.7	8.9	11.5
- Relative	20.5	4.3	2.6
- Someone else	18.2	2.6	2.2
Relationship between NCP and child is (%):			
- Very close	61.4	58.8	41.0
- Somewhat close	15.9	16.9	23.1
- Not very close	9.1	8.6	11.3
- Not at all close	13.6	15.7	24.6
NCP and child get along (%):			
- Very well	72.7	70.2	48.9
- Somewhat well	11.4	12.4	21.1
- Not very well	4.6	3.5	9.7
- Not at all well	11.4	13.9	20.3
Communication between NCP and child is (%):			
- Very good	63.6	64.5	42.6
- Somewhat good	15.9	14.3	23.5
- Not very good	6.8	6.4	11.1
- Not at all good	13.6	14.9	22.8
Affection felt toward child (%):			
- Very affectionate	86.4	83.8	54.1
- Somewhat affectionate	4.6	6.0	18.7
- Not very affectionate	2.3	1.8	8.6
- Not at all affectionate	6.8	8.4	18.7
Child (% yes):			
- Gets along well with others	92.1	93.2	93.5
- Loses temper easily	33.3	34.2	38.0
- Does not pay attention	51.3	52.0	58.4
- Hits/punches/hurts others	5.4	11.7	14.5
- Helpful/considerate of others	87.2	93.1	93.2

Visitation

Female NCPs generally lived closer to the child's residence than male NCPs. Many of the male and female NCPs had not seen their child for a long period. Some had not seen their child for about two years. A large majority stated that they would like to see the child frequently if it were possible. While the majority wanted to see the child more than once a week, in fact, only about a third saw their child that frequently. Female NCPs were more likely to see the child more than once a week than male NCPs. Generally, a greater proportion of the female NCPs saw the child at least several times a month compared with the male NCPs. The visits, however, tended to be shorter among the female NCPs. Whether this length of visiting time is because drug abuse was often the cause of losing custody among the women and therefore visits are designated as less than five hours or it is of their own accord is not clear. However, there is a great difference between the men and women in the quantity of time they spend with the child during a visitation (Table 6.7).

The difference between the females and the male NCPs with respect to frequency of childcare for the CP is quite striking as noted Table 6.7. Many of the children of female NCPs were not cared for by the father but by relatives or foster parents and therefore opportunities for providing childcare were not the same as in the circumstances of the male NCPs being able to provide childcare for the CPs.

Female NCPs, however, were more likely to have contact with the child on a weekly basis than male NCPs. Again, this could be because the female NCP as the mother has a different expectation, in that she is probably hoping to regain custody.

Table 6.7: Female NCP Visitation Relationship with Child

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
How far away child lives from NCP			
- Minutes away – mean (sd.)	44.3 (74.2)	38.4 (69.7)	28.7 (34.9)
- Miles away – mean (sd.)	12.9 (25.8)	30.0 (97.2)	30.4 (101.9)
Months since NCP last saw child – mean (sd.)	25.0 (11.6)	27.7 (29.8)	24.3 (24.8)
Would like to see child (%):			
- Never	5.9	2.7	16.7
- Less than once a month	0.0	1.1	2.5
- About once a month	0.0	1.7	4.7
- Several times a month	11.8	13.1	21.9
- More than once a week	82.4	81.4	54.3
In past 6 months, saw child (%):			
- Never	26.5	21.5	18.9
- Less than once a month	0.0	11.8	19.4
- About once a month	5.9	8.5	9.9
- Several times a month	29.4	28.3	26.2
- More than once a week	38.2	29.9	25.6
Length of usual visit (%):			
- Less than 5 hours	40.0	29.7	40.5
- More than 5 hours but not over night	16.0	20.2	17.3
- 1-2 nights or a weekend	28.0	34.9	33.6
- 3 days to a week	4.0	9.4	2.1
- More than a week	12.0	5.8	6.6
In past 6 months, cared for child so CP could work/school:			
- Yes (%)	12.0	7.1	17.3
- Number of times – mean (sd.)	3.0 (1.4)	16.0 (19.1)	13.4 (15.2)
In past 6 months, contacted child (%):			
- Never	17.7	31.0	36.0
- Less than once a month	8.8	7.4	12.5
- About once a month	0.0	5.7	8.7
- Several times a month	14.7	18.3	16.0
- More than once a week	58.8	37.7	26.8
In past 6 months, anyone ever oppose visits with child (% yes)	18.2	31.8	16.1

THE FEMALE NCP AND CHILD SUPPORT

Table 6.8 shows that female NCPs were financially less able than male NCPs to meet their child support payments. They provided less money directly to the child than their male counterparts. In part, they earned less than their male counterparts did. For these reasons, it appears they were less likely than the male NCP to buy clothes or other items for the child.

Three-out-of-four-female NCPs felt that their child support orders were more than they could afford. While many of the male NCPs felt this way as well, they were more likely to say that it kept them short on money or affected the quality of their daily living. Female NCPs were twice as likely to say that the child support order is “very unreasonable.” Both male and female NCPs, however, indicated in the same proportions that they failed to pay child support because they did not have the money.

Table 6.8: Female NCP Child Support Payments

	NCP Total Females	NCP Total Males	CP Total
Number in Survey Sample	44	830	417
Directly gave CP/child money last month (% yes):	29.6	41.7	25.9
Amount of money given directly to CP/child last month – mean (sd.)	\$124 (104)	\$171 (321)	\$210 (406)
In past 6 months, ever gave (% yes):			
- Clothes/shoes/major items	50.0	56.8	34.7
- Diapers	2.8	7.7	3.6
- Other presents	47.2	54.8	32.9
- Groceries or meals	44.4	52.2	32.0
- Toys/books/school items	36.1	47.8	26.5
- Money for car	0.0	4.1	1.3
- Money for medical/dental bills	8.3	7.9	4.3
- Money for mortgage/rent	2.8	5.9	3.8
- Anything else	0.0	6.7	3.1
Child support agreement payments (%):			
- More than you can afford	73.7	53.1	28.1
- Keeps you short on money	15.8	28.7	43.9
- Keeps you from living comfortably	2.6	8.7	4.9
- Does not affect your lifestyle	7.9	9.5	23.1
Think amount of child support agreement is (%):			
- Very reasonable	15.8	16.3	8.1
- Somewhat reasonable	13.2	27.8	19.0
- Somewhat unreasonable	13.2	15.8	15.9
- Very unreasonable	44.7	27.3	34.6
- Do not know	13.2	13.0	22.4
Ever been a reason for not paying child support (% yes):			
- Did not have the money	81.8	81.9	55.6
- Support order too high	62.8	58.0	28.5
- Another family to support	22.7	29.9	30.2
- Disagreements about visitation	11.4	13.5	8.9
- Disagreements about spending child support money	13.6	11.6	5.6
- Child support money goes to state, not child	11.4	12.0	13.3
- Not responsible for child	4.6	3.4	23.9

VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The data and analysis presented in this report reflect the conditions, experiences and behavior of NCPs in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County is an important research site because it is the largest county in California and contains a large proportion of the noncustodial population who are in arrears of their child support payment. The sample is reflective of the demographic composition of NCPs, including the large Hispanic population in the county.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Most of the NCPs were about 30 years old, had unstable employment or were underemployed, had few marketable skills, had some health problems and lacked health insurance. About 10% of the men had been homeless and/or had bouts of inability to meet rent, pay utilities, or buy food for themselves. While the female NCPs had similar problems, they were less likely to ever have been homeless. The female NCPs were employed at about the same rate as the men, but when they worked, they usually earned a lower wage. In short, while there were some differences with respect to age, race and ethnicity, and gender, noncustodial men and women were more similar than different. The most common characteristic among all NCPs was their lack of marketable skills and other barriers that prevented them from obtaining a job that would allow them to meet their child support payments as well as support themselves.

In 2000, about 30% of the NCPs never had unemployment insurance (UI) covered employment, and only 40% had UI covered jobs in all four quarters of the year. On average, NCPs with earnings in 2000 (about 70%) averaged \$13,180 for the year. However, about 91% indicated that they had worked for pay in 2000, but only 70% showed up on the state Base Wage Files that tracks all unemployment insurance covered jobs. This implies that approximately 20% are either self-employed or working at jobs that are not covered by UI.

A lack of education or technical training, health problems (physical and mental), and a conviction record (about-one-in-three) are among the barriers that these NCPs face

in their quest to find appropriate employment to maintain themselves and meet their child support responsibilities.

CHILD SUPPORT

The average arrears amount was about \$20,000. The average monthly order was \$594. Forty percent of the NCPs had not made any child support payments in 2000. One-in-four had paid some support or full support during each quarter of 2000. Young men and African-American men were the most likely not to have made any child support payments during the year. Older NCPs (>40) and NCPs who were members of other racial and ethnic groups (other than African American or Hispanic) were the most likely to have paid some child support in each quarter of the year.

Assuming that the NCP must pay almost \$600 per month on average for child support and this is about one-third of a net income, the NCP would need a job paying about \$15 per hour to both provide child support and pay for his or her own upkeep and perhaps that of a new family. As noted in the discussion of employment and earnings, obtaining a job with this wage is a challenge for these NCPs.

The NCPs reported that they provided cash directly to the CP or to the child. The 40% who reported providing this type of direct assistance averaged \$200 per month. NCPs provided other assistance, two-thirds (64%) estimated giving gifts of clothes and other items for the child that averaged about \$600 over the previous six-month period.

The data showed that when the NCP worked full-time, he was more likely to keep up with his child support payments, thus suggesting that the key reason for nonpayment is lack of employment or sufficient earnings. The higher the income, the more likely the NCP paid full child support. Interestingly, if the employment had UI coverage, the likelihood of providing child support payments was greater. Whether this is a function of lower wages in non-UI covered jobs (e.g., self-employment) or that UI jobs are tracked through the Base Wage file and supplied to Family Support Bureaus is not clear.

When both the NCPs and CPs were queried about the child support provided and child support received, the perceptions of the same event were quite different. Generally, the NCP perceived himself as providing much more than the CP perceived he did. For example, 42% of the NCPs reported giving cash support to the CP in the past month, but

only 26% of the CPs reported having received cash support in the past month. Since there are no other sources of data for support of one view or the other, one can only assume that the truth lies somewhere in between the perception of the two parents.

PARENTING

About 80% of NCPs reported some contact and visitation with their child in the past year. More than 50% of the NCPs reported seeing their child on a relatively regular basis, often several times a month. Among those having regular visitations with their children, 50% reported taking their children overnight. They took their children to the park, museums, or zoo depending on the age of the child. Often they just sat around and talked, played, and “hung out.”

Most of the NCPs reported feeling quite close to their child and getting along very well with them. They felt a strong affection for the child. Many of these NCPs provided childcare for the CP at various times. About 50% of the NCPs felt that they were able to talk to the CP about the child and had significant involvement with the decisions made about him or her.

When the female CP was queried about the NCP’s relationship with the child, she tended to say that the NCP saw the child less than he reported. She clearly felt that when the NCP did see the child, it was for a much briefer period than the NCPs reported. However, with respect to the proportion that spent the night with the NCP, the CP’s report was similar to that of the NCP.

The NCP indicated wanting to spend more time with the child, while the CP did not perceive that he did. She also felt much more often that the NCP would rather “never” see the child. The CP did not agree that the child and the NCP were as close as the NCP perceived. She was twice as likely as the NCP to perceive the relationship as “not at all close,” “not getting along,” and communicating “not at all good.” The CP did not view the NCP as affectionate towards the child as the NCP does, nor did they think that he praises or hugs his child as much as the NCP perceived he did. Generally, the CP did not view the relationship of the NCP and the child as positively as the NCP did. Again, each had his or her reasons for perceiving the situation as they did.

In all, the data show that low-income NCPs with a child on welfare are very similar to their CP counterpart. The NCP is likely to be unemployed, underemployed, or lacking stability in full-time employment. They face the types of labor force participation barriers that those who have low education, few marketable skills, health problems, substance abuse and a criminal history have. Because of this, they have difficulty in meeting child support payments and this results in large arrears. They do seem to have a sense of caring and concern for their child and want to be part of the child's life. They have difficulties and issues with the custodial parent that often affect their relationship with the child and sense of responsibility for paying child support. While each case has unique circumstances, the group as a whole shares many commonalities.

REFERENCES

- Bernard, S. (1998). *Responsible Fatherhood and Welfare: How States Can Use the New Welfare Law to Help Children*. Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief series #4. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- California State Auditor. (1999). *Child Support Enforcement Program: Without Stronger Leadership, California's Child Support Program Will Continue to Struggle*. Sacramento, California: Bureau of State Audits.
- Dodson, D., and J. Entmacher. (1994). *Report Card on State Child Support Guidelines*. Washington, D.C.: Women's Legal Defense Fund.
- Garfinkel, I, C. Miller, S.S. McLanahan, T. L. Hanson. (1998). "Deadbeat Dads or Inept States? A Comparison of Child Support Enforcement Systems." *Evaluation Review*, 22: 717-50.
- Garfinkel, I, S.S. McLanahan, and P.K. Robins, (eds). (1994). *Child Support and Child Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- Horowitz, R., D. Dodson, and M. C. Haynes. (1985). *Remedies under the Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement.
- Kissman, K., and J. Allen. (1993). *Single-Parent Families*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Li, J., and N. Bennett. (1998). *Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update*. March 1998 Edition. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- Lund, M. (1987). "The Noncustodial Father: Common Challenges in Parenting after Divorce," in Lewis, C. and M. O'Brien, (eds). *Reassessing Fatherhood: New Observations on Fathers and the Modern Family*, London: Sage Publications.
- MaCurdy, T. and M. O'Brien-Strain. (1997). *Who will be Affected by Welfare Reform in California?* San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- McLanahan, S., J. Seltzer, T. Hanson, and E. Thomson. (1994). "Child Support Enforcement and Child Well-being: Greater Security or Greater Conflict?" in Garfinkel, I.; S. McLanahan, and P.K. Robins, (eds). *Child Support and Child Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- Seltzer, J.A., S. McLanahan, and T. Hanson. (1998). "Will Child Support Enforcement Increase Father-Child Contact and Parental Conflict After Separation," in Garfinkel, I., S.

McLanahan, and P.K. Robins, (eds). *Child Support and Child Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

McLanahan, S.; D. Meyer, and J. Seltzer, (eds). (1998). *Fathers Under Fire: The Revolution in Child Support Enforcement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 157-90.

Sherman, A. (1997). *Poverty Matters: The Cost of Child Poverty in America*. Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund.

Sorenson, E. (1997). "A National Profile of Nonresident Fathers and Their Ability to Pay Child Support." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59 (November): 785-97.

Sorensen, E., and A. Halpern. (1999). *Child Support Enforcement Is Working Better Than We Think. New Federalism: Issues and Options for States*, Series A, No. A-31. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. (1999). "Child Support for Custodial Mothers and Fathers: 1995," *Current Population Reports*.

Williams, R.G. (1994). "Implementation of the Child Support Provisions of the Family Support Act: Child Support Guidelines, Updating of Awards and Routine Income Withholding." in Garfinkel, I, S. McLanahan, and P.K. Robins (eds). *Child Support and Child Well-Being*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a survey of non-custodial parents who were at least three months in arrears in their child support payments for a child who was receiving CalWORKs. Additionally, the custodial parent partner of about one-half of these non-custodial parents was also interviewed. Additional sources of data included the administrative files of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Family Support Bureaus, the State of California Employment Development Department Base Wage File, and the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System files. Finally, a series of case studies were conducted with a sample of the non-custodial fathers. The following discussion outlines the methods used for obtaining the data that informs this report.

The Survey

The Survey Design

The survey is a closed-ended, paper-pencil telephone, cross-sectional survey of non-custodial and custodial parents drawn from several counties but primarily from Los Angeles County.

The Survey Instrument

The purpose of the survey is to obtain information not available in databases or to expand more fully on some content areas. The questionnaires for the NCP and CP are in Appendix B.

How survey instrument was developed

The survey questionnaire design combined four basic methods: 1) use of standardized measures, 2) items addressing the same topics that have been used in other similar questionnaires; these are helpful in comparing responses to items across different samples, 3) the discussion obtained from interviews with NCPs and knowledgeable service providers about this area of research, and 4) information derived from literature searches.

In the development of this questionnaire all of these were drawn upon. Another instrument from which we drew items was the instrument created and fielded by Abt Associates for Parents Fair Share. Additionally, we used standard items on health status,

social support and social networks, household information, and the like that appear in numerous questionnaires.

Pretesting the questionnaire

Once the questionnaire was drafted, we pretested the questionnaire on 30 respondents that were obtained from the eligible pool of respondents, 15 NCPs and their CP partners. The purpose of the pretesting was to insure that the questions were clear, understandable, and easy for the interviewer to administer and insuring the skip patterns were correct and had internal logic.

In this survey, we got the 15 NCPs but completed only 9 of the CPs because they were difficult to access. The pretesting gave us some indication of the tracking procedure that we would have to implement. Additionally, the pretesting required eliminating many of the questions since we needed to maintain a 45-minute telephone interview due to costs. The questions that were eliminated were those we could obtain information for from the data files we had. The survey was to primarily focus on the NCP and parenting (involvement with his/her children).

When all of this information was gathered, the researcher (and the staff of the Survey Research Center) reviewed the questionnaire and made the necessary changes. The researcher also analyzed the data to determine what questions had little variance, that is, which ones everyone answered similarly, and which should be maintained or worded differently. The team decided that the questionnaire did not need to be pretested again.

The Sample **Obtaining the Sample**

The sample was drawn from Los Angeles County because it has the largest non-custodial parent caseload in the state. It has approximately 250,000 NCPs with children who are on CalWORKs. Of this group a large proportion (possibly more than 50%) are in arrears in their child support payments. The District Attorney's Family Support Bureau of Los Angeles County was asked to draw a sample of about 10,000 NCPs over time and to send a letter notifying them that a confidential survey was being conducted that would ask primarily about their relationship with their child so that we would be able

to better understand their service needs in this area. The information on the NCPs who were sent letters was provided so that UCLA could follow-up with an interview.

After receiving a human subjects informed consent clearance, the data necessary for contacting the NCPs was provided to facilitate tracking. At the completion of the survey, 1,324 interviews were completed, 874 were non-custodial parents and 450 were custodial parents. All custodial parents are matched with a non-custodial parent. In cases in which there was more than one custodial parent on welfare, the custodial parent with the youngest child was select. Additionally, the interview referred only to the one youngest child to avoid confusion. Of the total of 874 non-custodial parents, 830 were men and 44 were women. There were also 424 nonmatched NCPs (having no CP counterpart in the survey).

Procedures for contacting sample respondents

The counties supplied the researchers with the SSN, date of birth (DOB), name, address, and phone number of the eligible pool. The following were the general procedures used for contacting the respondents:

- < Phone numbers lists were generated. The NCPs or CPs were telephoned and interviewed. Several call backs and various calling times (traditional survey methods) were used. Those who could not or did not wish (at least at that time) to engage in a 45-minute telephone interview were called back and soft refusal conversion techniques were used (project explained again so they would fully understand how important their responses would be when reported as part of the aggregate data
- < The NCPs were asked for information on the CPs (address, telephone numbers etc.) and vice-versa to supplement the information received from Child Support Enforcement. All respondents who could be reached by phone were contacted before tracking was employed.

- < Tracking methods included additional letters to last addresses and request for change of addresses from the post office if the individual had moved, reverse telephone directory (possibly new phone numbers or no phone numbers), DMV checks, and checking available data bases including those for incarcerations. About 5% were picked up with these methods.

This population was very hard to obtain. There were few refusals. Once the NCPs were located, they were anxious to participate so they could “tell their side of the story.” Locating them was difficult because telephone numbers did not exist, they moved quite often, there was no telephone number provided by the Family Support Bureau, or the individual who answered the telephone was reluctant to say whether the person even lived there. The custodial parents were even more difficult for similar reasons, but they were less willing to participate in interviews and were much more likely to refuse the interview. Determining the response rate is difficult because of the difficulty of locating these respondents. The response rate once the NCP was located was about 88%, while for the CP it was much less.

Administering the Survey

The survey employed a telephone interview using a paper-pencil approach to the questionnaire (not computer assisted) because of the interviewing hours that needed to be used to locate these respondents. The interviewers could call evenings and weekends more easily than staffing the CATI room for the survey.

Qualifications/Training of the Interviewers

The Survey Research Center (SRC) interviewers employed for this study were drawn from an existing pool of professionally trained, experienced interviewers. Most have worked with SRC for several years, and some have worked with the Center for 20 years. SRC has professional experienced interviewers who are bi-lingual in English and Spanish.

The interviewers received four days of training on the specific questionnaire before beginning interviewing. These interviewers already had received general interviewer training, and most were seasoned interviewers already.

After the first few interviews, each interviewer met with the supervisor and the researcher to talk about the interviews in general and specific problems and issues. The supervisor monitors each interviewer's completion rate to see how successful he or she is at completing the interviews. The researcher met with the survey study supervisor on a regular schedule to review the quality of the interviews.

Other Data Sources

Besides the data from the survey, other data sources were used. Some of these other sources included the Urban Institute's National Survey of American Families, the Consumer Price Survey, and the U.S. Bureau of the Census data. These data were used particularly in Parts II and IV.

State Data

The following datasets are from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Employment Development Department (EDD):

- ***Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS)***: Individual welfare participation information and Medi-Cal and food stamp eligibility information were based on the MEDS (Medi-Cal Eligibility Determination System) database obtained from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).
- ***Base Wage Database***: employment records were obtained through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) Base Wage database, which contains quarterly wage records of all workers in the unemployment insurance (UI) program. The UI program covers approximately 95% of all paid workers in the private sector. The data do not include self-employment, employment in firms not in the Unemployment Insurance Program, employment for some governmental agencies, and out-of-state employment.

The MEDS used in the analysis are provided on a monthly basis, while the Base Wage data are provided on a quarterly basis. Matching monthly data with quarterly data forces us to perform much of our analysis on a quarterly basis. In this light, a person is

classified as being on welfare for a quarter if he or she is on welfare for at least one month during the quarter.

A primary benefit of using administrative data to monitor and analyze welfare participation and work history is that these data are systematically collected and updated. Use of this existing data source eliminates the costs that would otherwise be necessary to collect such detailed information about individual NCPs or CPs. However, the use of administrative data sets also introduces some data limitations and time constraints. Administrative data sets often do not offer complete coverage. For instance, EDD Base Wage data covers about 95% of all paid workers in the private sector (as described above). In addition, matching various administrative data sets can introduce a certain amount of error. For instance, CDSS's MEDS data is compiled from welfare usage data obtained from each of California's Counties. While County agencies report welfare usage data on a monthly basis, our preliminary analysis suggests that there may be a two to three month lag before CDSS's data is fully updated. For these reasons, a considerable amount of time is often needed to analyze the consistency and reliability of integrating numerous administrative databases. In addition, obtaining and transferring data from agencies and maintaining a confidential secure data site takes a large investment of time and resources.

County Data

Data on child support arrearages, child support orders and child support payments were obtained from the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. These administrative data are maintained by the District Attorney's Office for child support enforcement purposes.

The Case Studies

Thirty-five case studies were conducted with the male non-custodial parents, and those results are reported in Part V. The respondents were selected from non-custodial fathers who were participating in a work program. The interviewer asked for volunteers for a two-hour interview that would be taped. They were given an informed consent and

told about the study and how it would be used. The researcher told them that they would receive \$20 for the completed interview.

The open-ended interviews were reflective of many of the areas that were asked in the survey. They were used to provide an opportunity for the NCP to speak for himself and to illuminate some of the data obtained from the survey and other sources. The protocol used is attached in Appendix C.

**CUSTODIAL PARENT VERSION
MASTER CODEBOOK**

CASE ID: _____

DEMONSTRATION

LOG: _____

DATE: _____

SURVEY

EDIT: _____

INT. ID: _____

QUESTIONNAIRE

CODE: _____

TIME BEGIN: _____ (MILITARY TIME)

ENTRY: _____

CASE TYPE: CP.....2

REFUSED= 7,97,997 DON'T KNOW=8,98,998 MISSING=9,99,999

I would like to begin by asking you some general questions about yourself.

1. What is your current marital status? Are you:

- Married,**SKIP TO Q3**.....1
- Living with someone as married,....**SKIP TO Q3**.....2
- Widowed,**SKIP TO Q5**.....2
- Divorced,.....3
- Separated, or4
- Never married?5

2. Are you currently living with, dating or going with one particular person?

- YES**CONTINUE**.....1
- NO**SKIP TO Q5**.....2

3. How long (have you been/were you) (married/living together as married)?

RECORD # : _0-30__YEARS/OR_0-11__MONTHS

TOP RANGE=30

4. How would you describe your relationship with your current partner? Would you say it is:

- Extremely unhappy,1
- Unhappy,2
- Okay,3
- Happy, or4
- Very happy?.....5

5. Which of the following best describes your current housing situation? Do you: **(CIRCLE ONE ONLY)**

- Rent your home or apartment,.....1
- Own the house, apartment, or condo where you live?2
- Live with family or friends and pay part of the rent,.....3
- Live with family or friends and not pay rent,4
- Live with family or friends and pay them money or work for your room and board,5
- Live in a group shelter, or6
- Something else? (SPECIFY) _____7

6. Including yourself, how many persons are currently living in this household? By household, I mean you and the friends or relatives who you generally live with or who live with you. Please include any children living in this household.

ONE PERSON (RESPONDENT LIVES ALONE).....01

NUMBER OF PERSONS INCLUDING RESPONDENT: 1-15

7. In the last 12 months, has there been a time when you slept on the street, in a car, in a public place like a train or bus station, or a shelter because you didn't have any place else to go?

- YES 1
- NO 2

Now I'd like to ask some questions about **(NAME OF CUSTODIAL CHILD)**.

8. How old is **(CHILD)**?

CHILD'S AGE: 1-30 YEARS/OR 1-11 MONTHS

9. Who does **(CHILD)** live with now?

- WITH ME/MOTHER/FATHER (**CUSTODIAL PARENT**) 1
- WITH A MATERNAL GRANDPARENT 2
- WITH OTHER MATERNAL RELATIVE 3
- WITH PATERNAL RELATIVE 4
- IN A FOSTER HOME 5
- SOMEONE ELSE (**SPECIFY**) _____ 6
- LIVING W/NCP/FAMILY REUNITEDSKIP TO Q18.....0**

10. About how many miles away from (CHILD) does (NCP) live?(PROBE FOR ESTIMATE)

ONLY KNOWS TRAVEL TIMEHRS: 1-9 MINS: 1-59

LESS THAN 1 MILE000

1 MILE OR MORE, RECORD # MILES: _____

>9 HOURS= CALCULATE 50 MILES X TOTAL HOURS- 996-996 MILES & UP

11. In what month and year did (NCP) last see (CHILD) in person?

RECORD: MONTH 1-12 / YEAR 1980-2000

NEVER SEES CHILD.....SKIP TO Q160000

12. In the past six months, about how often did (NCP) see (CHILD) in person? Would you say:

Never,SKIP TO Q16.....0

Less than once a month,1

About once a month,2

Several times a month, or3

More than once a week?4

13. In the past six months, how long did (NCP'S) usual visit with (CHILD) last? Was it:

Less than 5 hours,1

More than 5 hours, but not overnight,2

One or two nights, or a weekend,3

Three days up to a week, or.....4

More than one week?.....5

14. In the past six months, has (NCP) ever taken care of (CHILD) so that you could go to work, look for work, or go to school?

YES1

NOSKIP TO Q16.....2

15. Altogether, how many times would you say (NCP) has provided this type of child care in the last six months?

RECORD # TIMES IN 6 MONTHS: 1-100

16. In the last six months, about how often did **(NCP)** send a card or letter to **(CHILD)**, or talk on the telephone with **(CHILD)**?

- Never,0
- Less than once a month,1
- About once a month,2
- Several times a month, or3
- More than once a week?4

17. If it were up to you, how often would you like **(NCP)** to see **(CHILD)**?

- Never,0
- Less than once a month,1
- About once a month,2
- Several times a month, or3
- More than once a week?4

18. Now I have some general questions about **(NCP'S)** relationship with **(CHILD)** now. Taking everything into consideration, **(READ ITEM)?** Would you say it is:

ITEM	<u>SOME NOT NOT AT</u>			
	<u>VERY</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>VERY</u>	<u>ALL</u>
How close is the relationship between (NCP) and (CHILD) ?	1	2	3	4
How well does (NCP) and (CHILD) get along?.....	1	2	3	4
How good is communication between (NCP) and (CHILD) ?.....	1	2	3	4
How affectionate does (NCP) feel toward (CHILD) ?	1	2	3	4

19. In the past six months, did anyone ever oppose visits between **(NCP)** and **(CHILD)**?

- YES.....1
- NO**SKIP TO Q21**.....2

20. Who opposed the visit? Was it: **(IF MULTIPLE MENTIONS, CODE AS "OTHER" &**

ENTER ALL RESPONSES AS TEXT.)

- Your spouse or partner at the time?..... 1
- A spouse or partner the (NCP) may have/had?..... 2
- (CHILD)?..... 3
- You or a legal guardian at the time?..... 4
- Someone else? (SPECIFY)_____ 5

21. What kinds of things do (NCP) and (CHILD) usually do together during visits? (DO NOT READ LIST. CIRCLE ALL MENTIONS)

ACTIVITY

MENTIONED

IF RESPONSE="D/K WHAT WE DO" - 0's ENTERED THROUGH LIST TO "NOTHING", AND 0 ENTERED FOR THAT ITEM.

IF RESPONSE ="DO NOTHING", ENTER AS "OTHER" AND SPECIFY.

- PICNIC, FISH, PLAY SPORTS, BEACH, CAMP, HIKE1
- RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES.....2
- GO SHOPPING/TO MALL.....3
- ATTEND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.....4
- GO TO PARKS, ZOOS, MUSEUMS.....5
- GO TO MOVIES, SPORTS EVENTS, CONCERTS,
SHOWS, AMUSEMENT PARKS.....6
- READ/STUDY/WORK ON PROJECTS.....1
- "HANG OUT" TOGETHER/TALK, PLAY.....2
- VISIT FRIENDS OR RELATIVES TOGETHER.....3
- OTHER (SPECIFY)_____4
- NOTHING PARTICULAR5
- DON'T KNOW8

22. I'm going to read you a list of personal characteristics. As I read each one, please tell me how well you think it describes **(CHILD)**. **(READ EACH ITEM)** Would you say that describes him/her, very well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?

ITEM	VERY	SOME	NOT	NOT	DK
	<u>WELL</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WELL</u>	<u>AT</u>	<u>NA</u>
Gets along well with others?	1	2	3	4	8
Loses his/her temper easily?.....	1	2	3	4	8
Doesn't pay attention?.....	1	2	3	4	8
Hits, pushes, or hurts others?.....	1	2	3	4	8
Is helpful and considerate of others?.....	1	2	3	4	8

Now, I have some questions about you.

23. What is your religious preference? **(DO NOT READ LIST)**

- CATHOLIC01
- PROTESTANT02
- PENTECOSTAL/EVANGELICAL03
- BAPTIST04
- JEHOVAH'S WITNESS05
- MUSLIM/ISLAM06
- CHRISTIAN (SPECIFY) TEXT07
- JEWISH08
- NONE/ATHEIST/AGNOSTIC09
- OTHER (SPECIFY) TEXT10

24. How often, if ever, do you attend religious services or activities? **(DO NOT READ LIST)**

- ABOUT ONCE A WEEK4
- AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH3
- SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR2
- ONLY ON SPECIAL HOLIDAYS/HARDLY EVER1
- NEVER0

25. In what religion is **(CHILD)** being raised?

CATHOLIC .....	.01
PROTESTANT .....	.02
PENTECOSTAL/EVANGELICAL.....	.03
BAPTIST .....	.04
JEHOVAH'S WITNESS .....	.05
MUSLIM/ISLAM .....	.06
CHRISTIAN (SPECIFY)____ <i>TEXT</i>_____ .....	.07
JEWISH .....	.08
NONE/ATHEIST/AGNOSTIC .....	.09
OTHER (SPECIFY)_____ <i>TEXT</i>_____ .....	.10
DON'T KNOW .....	.98

26. How important is it to you to provide spiritual or religious training for **(CHILD)**, aside from attending religious services? Would you say it is:

Very important,	1
Somewhat important,	2
Not too important, or	3
Not at all important?	4

Now, I'd like to ask a few questions about your relationship with (NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT/NCP).

27. What was your relationship with (NCP) when (CHILD) was born?

- We did not know each other well,1
- We were dating sometimes,2
- Seeing each other regularly, but seeing others too,.....3
- In a committed relationship, with each other,4
- Living together, or5
- Married?6
- OTHER (SPECIFY)_____7

28. How long had you been (ANSWER TO Q 27)?

RECORD # MONTHS 0-11 OR YEARS 0-20

29. Overall, would you describe your current relationship with (NCP) as:

- Very friendly,5
- Somewhat friendly,.....4
- Neutral,3
- Somewhat unfriendly, or2
- Very unfriendly?.....1
- NO RELATIONSHIP W/NCP0

Now we would like to ask some questions about your interactions with **(NCP)**.

30. Overall, how satisfied are you with the current situation in each of the following areas? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

	<u>VERY</u> <u>SATISFIED</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u> <u>SATISFIED</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u> <u>DISSATISFIE</u> <u>D</u>	<u>VERY</u> <u>DISSATISFIED</u>
Where (CHILD) lives	1	2	3	4
(NCP'S) relationship with (CHILD)	1	2	3	4
(NCP'S) contribution to (CHILD'S) support.....	1	2	3	4

31. I am going to read a list of ways that parents sometimes act with their children. Please indicate how often **(NCP)** acts in these ways with **(CHILD)**. For example, how often does (he/she): Would you say you **(ACTION)** never, seldom, sometimes, or often?

ACTION	<u>NEVER</u>	<u>SELDOM</u>	<u>SOME</u> <u>TIMES</u>	<u>OFTEN</u>
Praises child?.....	1	2	3	4
Spanks or slaps child?.....	1	2	3	4
Cuddles or hugs child?.....	1	2	3	4
Yells at child?.....	1	2	3	4

33. How long ago did you last speak to or communicate with **(NCP)**? Was it:

- Within the past week,6
- Within the past month,5
- Within the past three months,4
- Between 3 and 6 months ago,3
- More than 6 months ago, or**SKIP TO Q39**.....2
- More than 12 months ago?**SKIP TO Q39**.....1

ENTRY INSTRUMENT SKIPS TO Q38 (AS FOR NCP). ENTER 0's FOR CP's Q34-Q37.

34. How often, if ever, did you and (NCP) discuss (CHILD) during the last 6 months? Was it:

- Never,0
- Less than once a month,1
- About once a month,2
- Several times a month, or3
- More than once a week?.....4

35. During the last six months, how much have you and (NCP) disagreed over the following issues? (READ ITEM) Have you disagreed about that not at all, a little, some, pretty much, or a great deal?

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>NONE</u>	<u>A</u>			
		<u>LITTLE</u>	<u>SOME</u>	<u>PRETTY MUCH</u>	<u>GREAT DEAL</u>
Where (CHILD) lives?	0	1	2	3	4
How (CHILD) is raised?	0	1	2	3	4
How you spend money on (CHILD)?	0	1	2	3	4
How your support payments are spent?.....	0	1	2	3	4
Amount of your child support payments?....	0	1	2	3	4
How often (NCP) visits with (CHILD)?.....	0	1	2	3	4
What (NCP & CHILD) do when visiting?..	0	1	2	3	4
Other issues related to (CHILD)? (SPECIFY).....	0	1	2	3	4

36. How much involvement does (NCP) currently have in making major decisions about such things as (CHILD's) education, religious upbringing, and health care? Would you say:

- None,0
- A little,1
- Some,2
- Pretty much, or3
- A great deal?4

37. There are various ways that people deal with serious disagreements. When you have a serious disagreement with (NCP) how often do you (READ ITEM): Would you say never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always?

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>NEVER</u>	<u>SOME</u>			<u>ALWAYS</u>	<u>NA</u>
		<u>SELDOM</u>	<u>TIMES</u>	<u>OFTEN</u>		
Discuss your disagreements calmly?.....	0	1	2	3	4	9
Argue heatedly or shout at each other?.....	0	1	2	3	4	9
Hit or throw things at each other?.....	0	1	2	3	4	9

The next section is about your work history. I'd like to remind you again that anything you tell me is strictly confidential.

39. Are you currently:
- Working full-time,.....**SKIP TO INTRO Q41**.....1
 - Working part-time,.....**SKIP TO INTRO Q41**.....2
 - Retired,3
 - Unemployed,4
 - Have you never worked,.....**SKIP TO Q50**.....5
 - A student, or6
 - Something else? (**SPECIFY**)_____7

40. In the past year, have you worked for pay at all? Think of any paid jobs you have had in the past year, including paid day labor such as cleaning or cooking, gardening, or any other jobs. A lot of people have irregular jobs or do other things on the side to make ends meet. Have you done any jobs like that for pay in the past year? Do not count unpaid work.
- YES1
 - NO**SKIP TO Q50**.....2

ENTRY INSTRUMENT BRANCHES TO Q47 (AS FOR NCP's). ENTER "2"- "NO" FOR CP's ON Q47.

I'd like to ask you about the jobs you had in the past year. Please count each employer as a separate job. Include any jobs held at the same time. Self-employment counts as one job, and working at a temp agency counts as one job.

41. How many jobs have you had in the past year?
- ONE JOB ONLY**1
 - # JOBS HELD: # 1-6 6 = 6 OR MORE**

(IF WORKING ASK ABOUT CURRENT JOB. IF UNEMPLOYED, ASK ABOUT LAST JOB. IF WORK/WORDED MORE THAN 1 JOB AT SAME TIME ASK ABOUT JOB WORKED MOST HOURS.)

43. (Does/Did) this job provide you with:
- | | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> | <u>DK</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Sick days with full pay? | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Paid vacation? | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Dental benefits?..... | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| (IF YES): Does/Did this benefit cover (CHILD) ?..1 | 2 | 8 | |
| A health plan or medical insurance?..... | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| (IF YES): Does/Did this benefit cover (CHILD) ?... 1 | 2 | 8 | |

Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about child support issues.

50. Last month, did you or **(CHILD)**, or anyone else get any money from **(NCP)** to help support **(CHILD)**, not counting any money you may have received from the child support enforcement system, and not counting any time the child was living with **(NCP)**?

- YES1
 NO**SKIP TO Q52**2

51. About how much in total did you or **(CHILD)** or anyone else get directly from **(NCP)** last month? Do not include any money you may have received through the child support enforcement agency.

RECORD AMT. GIVEN LAST MONTH: \$ 1-5,000

52. In addition to this money, during the last six months, (when **(CHILD)** was not living with **(NCP)**) has **(NCP)** given **(CHILD)**, or anyone else in **(CHILD'S)** household help by:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DNA</u>
Buying clothes, shoes, furniture, bikes, or other major items?.....	1	2	7
Buying diapers?.....	1	2	7
Buying or giving other presents to the child?.....	1	2	7
Buying food--either groceries or meals out?.....	1	2	7
Buying toys, books, or items for school?.....	1	2	7
Making car payments, paying for repairs, purchasing a car, or loaning money for a car?.....	1	2	7
Paying medical or dental bill, or paying for medicine?.....	1	2	7
Making mortgage or rent payments?.....	1	2	7
Anything else? (SPECIFY)_____	1	2	7

54. Considering your financial resources and your financial obligations, how do your child support payments impact your life? Would you say:

- You are always behind financially,1
 You are short on money, but you get by,2
 You are unable to live comfortably, or3
 Do they not really affect your lifestyle?.....4
NO LONGER RECEIVES CHILD SUPPORT...SKIP TO Q56..5

55. In your opinion, considering **(NCP’S)** income and expenses, and **(CHILD’S)** needs, do you think the amount of your agreement for child support payments is:

- Very reasonable,1
- Somewhat reasonable,2
- Somewhat unreasonable, or3
- Very unreasonable?4
- KNOW NOTHING OF NCP’S RESOURCES/EXPENSES5

56. Did you know that you can file an appeal to get your child support agreement reconsidered?

- YES1
- NO2

57. Did you know that there was a law passed in 1997 that sets a lifetime limit of 5 years for the amount of time a parent can receive public welfare payments or financial public assistance?

- YES1
- NO2

58. There are many different reasons why someone may not pay child support. I'm going to read a list of some of these. After I read each reason, please tell me whether you think it applies to **(NCP)**. First....

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DNA</u>
(He/she) didn't have the money. Might this be a reason (NCP) did not pay the agreed amount of child support last time?	1	2	7
The child support order is set too high?	1	2	7
(NCP) has another family to support?	1	2	7
There are some disagreements about visitation?	1	2	7
There are some disagreements about how the child support money is spent?	1	2	7
The child support money goes to the welfare department or state, not to the child?.....	1	2	7
(NCP) thinks you don't need the money?	1	2	7
(NCP) has a new partner?	1	2	7
(NCP) feels (CHILD) is not his/her responsibility?	1	2	

61. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about proposed suggestions for change in the child support system?(**READ ITEM, THEN READ SCALE**) First:

ITEM	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree some	Strongly disagree
Parents who live separately from one another should be offered counseling and training to help them be better parents.....	1	2	3	4	5
Custodial parents should be offered job training to help them support their children.....	1	2	3	4	5
Non-custodial parents should be offered job training to help them support their children.....	1	2	3	4	5
The state should help parents who are having visitation problems.....	1	2	3	4	5
Child support should be handled by case workers rather than by judges..	1	2	3	4	5
(NCP) would be more willing to pay child support if back payments that are owed were reduced.....	1	2	3	4	5
(NCP) would be more willing to pay child support if the interest penalty were dropped.....	1	2	3	4	5
(NCP) would be more willing to pay child support if the monthly amount was more reasonable.....	1	2	3	4	5
(NCP) would be more willing to pay child support if the money went directly to (CP) rather than to the state.....	1	2	3	4	5
(NCP) would be more willing to pay child support if the money went directly for the child’s well-being, such as rent payments, rather than to (CP)	1	2	3	4	5

62. If (NCP) fell behind in child support payments, would: (READ ITEM)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DK</u>
(He/She) have to go to court?	1	2	8
(His/Her) driver's license would be taken away?..	1	2	8
(He/She) be put in jail?	1	2	8
You not let (NCP) visit with the child?	1	2	8
Your child know (NCP) hadn't paid?.....	1	2	8
Nothing happen--there are no real consequences for (NCP)?	1	2	8

74. Now I have some questions about your household's income during the previous month. Last month, that is (NAME MONTH) did you, or anyone you lived with, receive (READ SOURCE)?

SOURCE	YES	NO
Cash aid from welfare (CalWORKS/GR/GA)?.....	1	2
Child support, including any financial help that your or your child(ren) receive either directly through the parent or through welfare or child support agency?.....	1	2
Anything else, not including money from jobs? (SPECIFY) _____.....	1	2

Now, I have some questions about your health.

78. Do you have any health care or medical coverage through any of the following?

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Insurance through your employer or union?.....	1	2
Insurance through spouse's employer or union?.....	1	2
Insurance purchased directly from an insurance company?.....	1	2
Medi-Cal?.....	12	
CHAMPUS, or Veteran's Benefits?	1	2
Some other health care coverage? (SPECIFY) _____.....	1	2
NO HEALTH CARE/COVERAGE.....	1	

AT Q84, ENTRY INSTRUMENT SKIPS TO Q86 (AS FOR NCP). FOR CP's Q86-96 = ENTER MISSING.

84. To your knowledge, has (NCP) ever been put in jail or kept in jail for child support reasons?
- YES1
- NO2

Finally, I have just a few questions about you for descriptive purposes only.

96. INTERVIEWER NOTE: ASK GENDER IF CAN'T DETERMINE.

- MALE1
- FEMALE2

97. With which one of the following ethnic groups do you identify most closely? Would you say:

- White, not Hispanic,.....1
- Hispanic,2
- Black/African American,3
- American Indian/Native American,4
- Asian or Pacific Islander, or5
- Something else? (SPECIFY)_____6

98. What is the highest grade in school you have completed and received credit for? (CIRCLE ONE)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17+

99. What degrees or diplomas, if any, do you have?

- NONE.....0
- HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.....1
- GED.....2
- AA/TECHNICAL/TRADE CERTIFICATION3
- BACHELORS4
- MASTERS.....5
- DOCTORATE6
- OTHER (SPECIFY:_____)7

This is the end of the interview. Thank you for your cooperation and the time you have given us today. Let me remind you again that all the answers you gave will be kept confidential.

INTERVIEWER: ANSWER OBSERVATION QUESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE.

TIME END:_____ (MILITARY TIME)

INTERVIEWER OBSERVATIONS:

100. HOW WELL DID RESPONDENT UNDERSTAND QUESTIONS?
- UNDERSTOOD ALL OR MOST OF THEM1
 - UNDERSTOOD ABOUT HALF THE QUESTIONS2
 - UNDERSTOOD ONLY THE SIMPLEST QUESTIONS3
101. HOW OFTEN DID YOU HAVE TO REPEAT QUESTIONS?
- MOST OF THE TIME1
 - SOME OF THE TIME2
 - LITTLE OR NONE OF THE TIME3
102. HOW HONEST DID YOU FEEL THE RESPONDENT ANSWERS WERE?
- COMPLETELY HONEST1
 - MOSTLY HONEST2
 - NOT HONEST MUCH OR ALL OF THE TIME3
103. HOW INTERESTED IN THE INTERVIEW DID RESPONDENT SEEM?
- VERY1
 - SOMEWHAT2
 - NOT VERY.....3
 - NOT AT ALL4
104. DID RESPONDENT MENTION LEARNING NEW INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS/WELFARE/ETC. FROM THIS INTERVIEW?
- YES1
 - NO2
105. HOW WOULD YOU RATE RESPONDENT’S STATE OF MIND?
- COMPLETELY TOGETHER/IN GOOD SHAPE1
 - OCCASIONALLY CONFUSED.....2
 - TOTALLY CONFUSED3
 - SEEMED TO BE HIGH ON DRUGS/ALCOHOL4
 - SEEMED TO HAVE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS5

**UCLA PROCESS EVALUATORS
NCPD
CONFIDENTIAL
3-18-00 (most recent draft)**

NCP SURVEY OF BACKGROUND, RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTITUDES

Note: 1) Questions in bold small caps are the open-ended questions which the interviewers will ask the NCPs. The wording of the questions may be phrased in a manner in which the interviewer feels is most effective in communicating to the NCR These questions are not listed in sequential order. 2) The questions in large caps are intended as follow-up or probing questions. Each question does not necessarily need to be asked or covered.

Tell me about your current situation with your child(ren) and the child(ren)'s mother?

HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE? WHAT ARE THEIR AGES?

HOW MANY WOMEN HAVE YOU HAD CHILDREN WITH?

FOR WHICH CHILD(REN) DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A CHILD SUPPORT ORDER?

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU SEPARATED FROM THE CHILD'S MOTHER?

Please tell me about your circumstances when you and the child's mother had your child(ren)?

APPROXIMATELY HOW OLD WERE YOU AND THE CHILD'S MOTHER WHEN THE CHILD(REN) WAS BORN?

HOW LONG WERE YOU TOGETHER WITH THE CHILD'S MOTHER BEFORE YOU HAD THE CHILD(REN)?

WHEN THE CHILD WAS BORN, WHERE WERE YOU LIVING?

WAS THE PREGNANCY PLANNED?

DID YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD'S MOTHER CHANGE WHEN YOU LEARNED OF THE PREGNANCY?

WERE YOU PRESENT AT YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH?

IF YOU WERE NOT MARRIED, DID YOU AND THE CHILD'S MOTHER EVER CONSIDER MARRIAGE?

WHEN DID YOU ESTABLISH PATERNITY? WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES (WERE THEY VOLUNTARY OR COURT ESTABLISHED)?

How did having your child(ren) effect your life?

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU WERE PREPARED TO BE A FATHER AT THE TIME YOUR CHILD(REN) WAS BORN?

DID YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD'S MOTHER CHANGE WHEN YOUR CHILD(REN) WAS BORN?

HOW INVOLVED WERE YOU WITH YOUR CHILD(REN) DURING THE FIRST COUPLE OF YEARS AFTER HE OR SHE WAS BORN?

HAS YOUR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR CHILD(REN) CHANGED SINCE THE CHILD(REN) WAS BORN?

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU'VE CHANGED SINCE THE CHILD WAS BORN? IN WHAT WAYS?

What are your views on fatherhood?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST AND MOST ABOUT BEING A FATHER?

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE A ROLE MODEL FOR YOUR CHILDREN? IF SO, IN WHAT WAYS?

IS THIS THE SAME KIND OF ROLE MODEL YOU HAD WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

PLEASE EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT VERSUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

WHAT OTHER EMOTIONS DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOUR WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

How closely involved are you in your child(ren)'s life(ves) today?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE YOUR CHILD(REN) (PER WEEK? PER MONTH?)

WHERE DO YOU VISIT YOUR CHILD(REN)?

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOU DO WITH YOUR CHILD(REN)?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR CHILD(REN) MORE OFTEN?

What are the visiting and custody arrangements you currently have with the child's mother?

WHAT IS YOUR VISITATION AGREEMENT I.E., IS IT INFORMAL OR FORMAL

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR VISITATION AGREEMENT? IF NOT, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?

WHAT IS YOUR CUSTODY AGREEMENT I.E., IS IT INFORMAL OR FORMAL

WHERE DOES YOUR CHILD(REN) PERMANENTLY RESIDE?

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR CUSTODY AGREEMENT? IF NOT, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?

Please tell me how your relationship with your child(ren) is effected by your relationship with the child's mother.

HOW WELL DO YOU CURRENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH THE CHILD'S MOTHER?

IN WHAT WAYS IS SEEING YOUR CHILD(REN) CONDITIONAL UPON THE CHILD'S MOTHER?

DO YOU THINK THE CHILD'S MOTHER WOULD LIKE YOU TO BE MORE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILD?

IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, COULD YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD(REN) BE IMPROVED BY IMPROVING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD'S MOTHER?

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATION

Please tell me about the mother's relationship with the child(ren).

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD(REN)? (IF NO) WHAT ARE THE THINGS IN THE MOTHER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILDREN THAT YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH?

DOES THE CHILD'S MOTHER WORK? IF SO, WHAT PERCENTAGE TIME AND WHAT KIND OF WORK?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE MOTHER SPENDS THE MONEY SHE GETS FROM WELFARE OR FROM HER WORK WISELY ON THE CHILDREN?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE MOTHER SPENDS THE \$50 DOLLAR PASS THROUGH

WISELY ON THE CHILD(REN)?

Please tell me about your child support situation with the District Attorney's Office and the reasons why you are not paying.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT MONTHLY CHILD SUPPORT ORDER WITH THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)?

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS AMOUNT IS FAIR?

WHEN DID THE CHILD'S MOTHER FIRST SEEK WELFARE?

HOW MANY YEARS/MONTHS HAVE YOU MADE FORMAL CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS AND WERE YOU PAYING THE FULL AMOUNT?

IF YOU WERE ABLE TO PAY IN THE PAST, WHY ARE YOU NOT PAYING NOW?

WHAT CHANGES IN YOUR SITUATION WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE SO YOU COULD MAKE YOUR CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS EACH MONTH?

HAS ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE EVER MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT?

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH A CRIME OR PAROLE VIOLATION? IF SO, HAS IT EFFECTED YOUR ABILITY TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT?

Please tell me about the current arrearages you owe, if any, to the District Attorney's Office.

ROUGHLY, HOW MUCH DO YOU CURRENTLY OWE IN ARREARAGES?

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS AMOUNT IS FAIR? WHY?

FOR HOW MANY MONTHS/YEARS DO YOU OWE ARREARAGES?

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PAY BACK THE ARREARAGES? IF SO, HOW?

WHAT CHANGES IN YOUR SITUATION WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE SO YOU COULD MAKE PAYMENTS ON YOUR ARREARAGES?

In what ways do you spend your money aside from formal child support payments (including informal support to your child(ren))?

DO YOU SPEND MONEY ON THE CHILD(REN) AND HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOU SPEND?

IF YOU SPEND MONEY ON THE CHILD(REN), WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU BUY THEM?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY SUPPORTING OR HELPING TO SUPPORT ANOTHER FAMILY? HOW MUCH DO YOU PROVIDE AND HOW?

HAVE YOU EVER GIVEN MONEY TO THE CHILD(REN)'S MOTHER DIRECTLY INSTEAD OF PAYING THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE? IF SO, HOW MUCH AND HOW OFTEN?

DOES THE CHILD'S MOTHER OR ANY OTHER RELATIVE ASK YOU TO PURCHASE THINGS FOR THE CHILD(REN)? IF YES, WHAT THINGS AND HOW OFTEN?

WHAT OTHER FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS DO YOU HAVE, SUCH AS RENT?

How would you characterize your experiences with the District Attorney's Office in dealing with child support issues?

WHAT ARE THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH AND COMMUNICATED WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE. (E.G., BY PHONE, BY LETTER, IN PERSON? HOW MUCH CONTACT HAS THERE BEEN?)

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE TREATED FAIRLY BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE? (IF NO) IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU TREATED UNFAIRLY?

HAVE YOU HAD ANY LICENSES SUSPENDED OR REVOKED BECAUSE OF YOUR INABILITY TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT? (IF YES) HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOU?

HAVE YOU EVER SPENT TIME IN JAIL FOR CHILD SUPPORT REASONS?

What changes, if any, do you think should be made in the child support system?

IF YOU COULD BE THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY FOR A DAY, WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE?

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF OUR CHILD SUPPORT MONEY WENT DIRECTLY TO YOUR CHILD(REN) RATHER THAN TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY (AS REIMBURSEMENT TO THE STATE)?

DO YOU THINK THAT STRICT ENFORCEMENT LAWS ARE EFFECTIVE?

DO YOU FEEL THAT A CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY WOULD BE MORE APPROACHABLE IF IT WERE NOT PART OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE?

Please tell me about your work history for the last few years.

DURING THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS, WHAT KIND OF “LEGITIMATE” JOBS (I.E., NOT UNDER THE TABLE) HAVE YOU HAD?

ABOUT HOW MANY MONTHS OUT OF THE LAST THREE YEARS HAVE YOU WORKED FULL-TIME?

WHAT KINDS OF ODD JOBS (I.E., UNDER THE TABLE) HAVE YOU HAD?

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT HAVE KEPT YOU FROM HOLDING A FULL-TIME, PERMANENT JOB?

HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION OR OTHER KINDS OF DISCRIMINATION IN TRYING TO FIND OR KEEP A JOB?

HAS ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE PREVENTED YOU FROM HOLDING A JOB?

DO YOU HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD WHICH PREVENTS YOU FROM GETTING A JOB?

How do you search for a job?

DO YOU SEARCH THROUGH THE NEWSPAPER, WORD OF MOUTH ETC.

WHERE DO YOU LOOK FOR A JOB (EG., IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY, MILE RADIUS ETC.)?

HOW FAR ARE YOU WILLING TO TRAVEL FOR A JOB?

HOW DO YOU TRAVEL TO YOUR JOB (BY CAR, BUS, ETC.)

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE GOOD JOBS FOR YOU IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY? IF YES, WHAT KIND OF JOBS?

WHAT KIND OF WAGES WOULD YOU LIKE?

WHAT WAGE DO YOU THINK YOU NEED TO MAKE IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUR CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS AND PAY FOR YOUR OWN NECESSITIES AND OBLIGATIONS E.G., RENT, BILLS, ETC.?

Please tell me about your family relationships, that is, your mother, father, brothers, sisters and other relatives.

DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER?

WERE YOUR PARENTS MARRIED? IF SO, DID THEY EVER GET DIVORCED?

DESCRIBE THE WORK YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER DID

WERE YOUR PARENTS EVER ON WELFARE?

HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS DO YOU HAVE? HOW IMPORTANT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM?

WHAT OTHER RELATIVES WERE IMPORTANT TO YOU IN YOUR FAMILY LIFE?

WHO DID YOU ADMIRE MOST WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP? WHY AND IN WHAT WAYS?

DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE FAMILY MEMBERS IN YOUR LIFE TODAY?

Describe the role of your parents and other relatives, as well as the child's mother's parents and relatives in the life of your child(ren).

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOUR PARENTS AND POTHER FAMILY MEMBERS DO WITH YOUR CHILD(REN)? HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS TO YOU? HAVE THEY INTERFERED IN ANY WAY?

HOW MUCH FINANCIAL SUPPORT DO YOUR PARENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS PROVIDE FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)? HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO THE MOTHER'S PARENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS DO WITH YOUR CHILD(REN)? HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS TO YOU? HAVE THEY INTERFERED IN ANY WAY?

HOW MUCH FINANCIAL SUPPORT DO THE MOTHER'S PARENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS PROVIDE FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)? HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?

Please describe the neighborhood and community in which you live. For example, bow would you describe the quality of life in your neighborhood and what kinds of things do you do for fun?

WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY RESIDE?

WHO DO YOU CURRENTLY LIVE WITH?

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU MOVE INTO THIS NEIGHBORHOOD

DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE?

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE SOCIAL AMENITIES WHICH YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD HAS TO OFFER, FOR EXAMPLE, THINGS LIKE BANKS, GROCERY STORES, PARKS AND THEATERS?

WOULD YOU PREFER TO LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE? (IF YES) WHY?

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE ARE GOOD JOBS LOCATED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?
FOR EXAMPLE, DO YOU ATTEND CHURCH OR BELONG TO ANY CLUBS OR
ASSOCIATIONS?

BRIEFLY TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL LIFE. WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOU
DO FOR FUN. (ANY HOBBIES? RECREATION/EXERCISE?)

(POSTIVE ENDING)

Can we contact you again for a follow-up interview?