THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, RACE, AND PLACE IN WELFARE
PARTICIPATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WELFARE-TO-WORK
PROGRAMS IN OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES

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THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, RACE, AND PLACE IN WELFARE PARTICIPATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS IN OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Welfare participation has been a longstanding issue of public debate for over the past 50 years, however participation remains largely understudied in welfare literature. Various public policies, racial discrimination, the war on poverty, fictitious political depictions of the “welfare queen”, and a call for more stringent eligibility requirements all led up to the passage of welfare reform in the 1990s creating the new Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under the new welfare program, work requirements and time limits narrowed the field of eligibility. The purpose of this research is to examine the factors that influence US welfare participation rates among the eligible poor in 2010. By analyzing demographic data in all 100 counties in North Carolina and 88 counties in Ohio, I examine a number of factors associated with Welfare-to-work participation rates among those financially eligible. I include additional specified examinations focusing on predominantly White counties (OH n=24; NC n=10) in chapter 4, versus the more racially diverse counties (OH n=64; NC n=90) in chapter 3. I find that in each state (Ohio and North Carolina) there are different factors associated with participation rates among the eligible poor. The spatial inequalities between counties within states, and between states, vary in association with welfare-to-work participation. These findings have implications at the federal, state, and county level in regards to welfare policies that would be beneficial to truly providing aid to those in need at the local level.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my sons, Justice and Kamdyn. This process would have never been so difficult or so beautifully simple without your love. I wouldn’t change a thing. Everything I do is for you both. Thank you for being my heart and constant motivation.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF TABLES | ix |
| LIST OF FIGURES | x |

**CHAPTER**

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................1

  Statement of Problem ........................................................................................1

  Literature Review .............................................................................................4

  Welfare Program Overview ..............................................................................5

  Spatial Inequality and Welfare Participation ...............................................6

  Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Class ..............................................9

  Labor Market Discrimination and Welfare Participation ............................11

  Gender and the Labor Market ......................................................................11

  Racism and Labor Market Discrimination ..................................................13

  Welfare Recipients Experience of the Paid Labor Market ..........................14

  Ruralness, Whiteness, and Welfare Participation .........................................15

  Research Design .........................................................................................16

  Measures .....................................................................................................17

  Analytic Strategy .........................................................................................21

II. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION RATES .................................................................23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gendered and Raced Aspects of Welfare-to-Work</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Strategy</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. LABOR MARKET DISCRIMINATION AND WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Inequality Theory</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Inequalities and the Paid Labor Market</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Labor Market Discrimination</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Inequality, Intersectionality, Welfare and Labor Market</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Strategy</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County-level Characteristics and Welfare Participation</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered and Raced Impacts on Welfare-to-Work Participation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION RATES IN THE CONTEXT OF WHITE, RURAL POVERTY ................................................................. 84

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 84

Literature Review .............................................................................................. 85

Ruralness and Spatial Inequality Theory ......................................................... 86

White Othering, Poverty, and Welfare Stigma ............................................... 89

Methods .......................................................................................................... 91

Measures ......................................................................................................... 92

Analytic Strategy .......................................................................................... 100

Results............................................................................................................... 100

Discussion ....................................................................................................... 107

V. CONCLUSION ................................................................................................. 113

Chapter 2: A Comparative Analysis of Ohio and North Carolina Welfare-
to-Work Participation Rates.............................................................................. 114

Chapter 3: Labor Market Discrimination and Welfare-to-Work
Participation ...................................................................................................... 115

Chapter 4: Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates in the Context of White,
Rural Poverty .................................................................................................... 118

Overall Findings and Theoretical Contributions .............................................. 120

Limitations ...................................................................................................... 123

Implications for Welfare Programs, Policy, and Future Research ................... 125

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................ 127
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North Carolina and Ohio County Means for All Variables in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Dissertation .................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics and Sources for All Variables (NC N=100; OH N=88) ..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regression Estimates for North Carolina (N=100) and Ohio (N=88) Counties and Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates .........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics and Sources for All Variables (NC n=90; OH n=64) ........................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regression Estimates for Ohio labor Market Inequalities and Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates (n=64) ........................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Regression Estimates for North Carolina Labor Market Inequalities and Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates (n=90) ..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics and Sources for Variables in All White Counties (NC N=10; OH N=24) .................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ohio County Means for All-White Counties (n=24), Racially Diverse Counties (n=64), and the State Overall (N=88) .......................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>North Carolina County Means for All-White Counties (n=10), Racially Diverse Counties (n=90), and the State Overall (N=100) ................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bivariate ANOVA F-Tests for North Carolina All-White Counties: Dependent Variable per Eligible Rolls (n=10) ..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bivariate ANOVA F-Tests for Ohio All-White Counties: Dependent Variable per Eligible on Rolls (n=24) ..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Multivariate Regression Estimates for Ohio (n=24) and North Carolina (n=10) Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates in All-White Counties ................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Summary of Overall Variables Associated with Higher and Lower Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates in North Carolina and Ohio Counties .......................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map of North Carolina’s three geographic regions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Map of North Carolina’s three geographic regions</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Map of North Carolina’s three geographic regions</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions with focal all-white counties circled</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Map of North Carolina with focal all-white counties circled</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Poverty rates have continued to grow in the United States since the recession of 2008 (Edwards 2014). The number of citizens who have lived in poverty, even just for a few months, between 2009-2011 has grown to over 31% of the United States population (up from 27% just preceding the recession) (Edwards 2014). The cycle of poverty is a difficult one from which to break free. Once an individual or family fall below the poverty line they tend to endure extended stays in or near the poverty thresholds (Edwards 2014). The welfare-to-work program is one form of assistance offered by the federal government to ease the financial hardships of these citizens in poverty. While it is funded by the federal government, those funds are allocated at the state level and programs and policies are enforced at the county level (Albert 2000; Parisi, McLaughlin, Grice, Taquino, and Gill 2003). Therefore it is essential to examine this program through a multi-state, multi-county, comparative analysis. My dissertation will serve as an intra and interstate comparative examination of welfare-to-work participation rates in Ohio and North Carolina counties.
Women and their children are the groups most likely to seek welfare assistance (Parisi et al. 2003; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010). Women, especially women of color, are also likely to suffer the consequences of labor market discrimination. Studies have found that there is a motherhood penalty in the workforce, that make mothers less likely to be hired than men or even non-mothers (Budig and England 2001; Staff and Mortimer 2012). Women of color often find themselves at the losing end of the intersectional binaries of gender, race, and class (Collins 2000).

Theories of intersectionality state that identities are best understood as an intricate interwoven compilation of all identities lived at once (Collins 2000; Collins and Mayer 2010). While I know that the racial diversity of welfare participants is vast, this present research highlights the stark contrast between White and Black welfare-to-work participation. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the largest groups of welfare-to-work participants are White and therefore warrant inclusion. Second, historically the racist policies and rhetoric surrounding the welfare program and welfare reform have been implemented due to a discriminatory reaction to Black participation. Without the proper safeguards, such as adequate government assistance, our nation’s most vulnerable populations would continue to suffer disproportionately from being at the losing end of these intersections.

The focus of this dissertation is welfare participation rates among the eligible population. Since the 1960s the historically consistent negative public opinion highlights the stereotypes that women participating in the welfare program are lazy thieves and liars. These stereotypes have permeated most discussions of welfare programs (Parisi et al. 2003; Harris and Parisi, 2008; Gilens 1995; 1996; Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, and
Seefeldt 2000; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004). Given this history, there is growing support for punitive policies regarding welfare participation and participants (Soss and Schram 2007; Collins and Mayer 2010). These policies include: strict federal and state time limits, work requirements, sanctions, pay for performance, family caps, and mandatory annual drug testing. The underlying incentive driving the social support for these programs is the belief that every person experiencing poverty is attempting to lie, cheat, or steal in order to unfairly get more than their fair-share out of the welfare program (Gilens 1995; Corcoran et al. 2000; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Parisi et al. 2003; Harris and Parisi, 2008; Acker 2006; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009).

The reality, however, is that the majority of impoverished eligible individuals in this country choose not to participate in the welfare program at all (Lansberry, Taylor, and Seale 2015). The fear of stigma, loss of privacy, or actual physical barriers all may contribute to the decision process of individuals weighing whether to or not to participate in the welfare program (Lansberry et al. 2015).

My work makes several contributions to welfare research. First, I focus on the various factors that can impact welfare participation rates at the local level. The welfare-to-work program is a national program that varies greatly from one locale to the next in regards to program funding, requirements, sanctions, and available program resources. Therefore, a comparative study examining the spatial inequalities and program differences between North Carolina and Ohio counties will be an innovative and informative venture. By building on my past research of the welfare-to-work program in North Carolina, I will similarly examine the welfare program and welfare participation in Ohio. Secondly, while researchers often assume labor market inequality affects welfare
participation, it has not been examined empirically. I will comparatively examine the labor market participation and gendered and racial discrimination as a potential cause for welfare participation. Finally, while the program is racialized, little is known about Whites’ welfare participation. In the final chapter, I will examine the impact of Whiteness in counties void of racial diversity on welfare participation rates. I will do so by focusing on the predominantly White counties that are excluded from analysis in chapter three due to lack of a formally employed Black female population.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Welfare-to-work program participation has long been a point of contention in U.S. public debate (Gilens 1995; Corcoran et al. 2000). The program has been scrutinized for its leniency and the mothers who utilize it have been stigmatized for their alleged “blatant” work ethic and moral deficiencies (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Corcoran et al. 2000; Acker 2006). The topic of welfare participation sheds a unique light on the underlying disgust our society expresses towards those on the marginalized side of the gender, class, race binaries (Collins 2000). The primary recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) cash welfare assistance are women, specifically mothers (Acker 2006; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009), and therefore the topic is essential to a more full understanding of women’s subordinate position in society overall (Acker 2006). Negotiating welfare requirements, tolerating surveillance, and experiencing stigma have been a constant part of the process for women utilizing welfare (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001).
Welfare Program Overview

Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) program was created post Great Depression to help White widowers whom were deemed “deserving poor” (Gordon 1994; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). In the 1950s and 60s (post-WWII) eligibility for welfare participation was expanded to assist all impoverished mothers of all needy children, including women of color. The result was a drastic increase in welfare participation (Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007). With this increase, public opinion towards the program became negative and racialized. More Black mothers were receiving aid and the AFDC welfare program came to be seen as a “Black program” (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat 2010; Schram 2005; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Quadagno 1996).

In 1996 President Clinton approved a bill changing the welfare system in the United States. The welfare reform bill was called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) which replaced the AFDC program with the Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) program. The name change indicated a greater focus on work and temporality. The goal of the new program was rooted in the socially constructed ideal that the system needed to correct for an impoverished person’s missing work ethic and family values (Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007; Seccombe, 1999; Parisi et al. 2003; Harris and Parisi, 2008; Soss and Schram, 2007). While these claims are not supported by research, public opinion called for reform to correct these supposed flaws that ostensibly caused individuals to seek welfare assistance in the first place (Parisi et al. 2003; Harris and Parisi, 2008; Soss and Schram, 2007).
The new TANF program carried with it a number of notable changes: funding of the welfare programs was regulated to the states, eligibility requirements became more rigorous, and time limits and work mandates were enacted (Ridzi 2009; Seccombe 1999; Collins and Mayer 2010; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Parisi et al. 2003; Albert 2000; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008). The new welfare program is also known as the welfare-to-work program due to the emphasis placed on work requirements in exchange for assistance. The premise of the reform was to stop intergenerational welfare receipt, assist impoverished individuals in achieving self-sufficiency by requiring them to work, and increase public support for the program (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi et al. 2003). However, studies have found that the reforms of the PRWORA bill have not improved public opinion of those families receiving public assistance (Soss and Schram 2007), and work requirements and time limits have forced welfare participants into low-paying, dead-end jobs where they are often unable to become self-sufficient (Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Ridzi 2009).

Spatial Inequality and Welfare Participation

Spatial inequality theory informs my research because it highlights the importance of place and geographic differences for addressing issues of poverty and (dis)advantage (Weber, Duncan, and Whitener 2001; Lobao 2004; Lobao and Saenz 2002). I will examine the importance of place and how context matters in welfare participation by focusing on region, county racial and familial composition, and differences in rural and urban counties within and across states (i.e. Ohio and North Carolina). County-level differences in program participation reflects regional differences within and across states.
and the unique circumstances of a particular space (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi et al. 2003; Lobao 2004).

Spatial inequality theory predicts that there are inequalities unique to differing geographic spaces (Lobao 2004). One of the broad research questions that concern scholars of spatial inequality entails how markers of stratification (e.g., racial composition, industrial composition) vary across geographic space, and how geographic spaces themselves become stratified due to the presence of markers of stratification (Lobao 2004). Therefore it is essential to highlight the importance of space and to examine topics, such as the welfare-to-work policies and participation, at the state and county levels. The focus for this section is on the welfare-to-work programs in Ohio and North Carolina, and the locality differences in poverty are arguably the result of differences in various regional economic development in these states. In Ohio there are five main regions (Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast, and Central) and they have all developed differently (see Figure 1). Similarly, North Carolina has three regions (Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal) that support different industries and levels of industrial diversity/differentiation (see Figure 2). Regional economic development can greatly affect industrial differentiation and the structure of inequality. This, in turn, could affect welfare-to-work program participation in terms of differing opportunities for work.
Figure 1. Map of Ohio’s five geographic region

Figure 2. Map of North Carolina’s three geographic regions.

Source: The Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education in North Carolina. http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/socialstudies/elementary/studentsampler/20geography
Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Class

Welfare research is an examination of the intersections of gender, class and race. Intersectionality is the critical theoretical stance that multiple identities are lived at once, interact, and are so interwoven that none can be fully understood without consideration for all the others (Collins 2000). Race has been the focus of a great deal of research given its impact on the construction, reform and implementation of welfare policies (Quadagno 1990; Jarrett 1996; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Acker 2006). However, gender and class have clearly shaped welfare policy reform and implementation. Racially driven objections to the welfare program earthed the social image of the “welfare queen” (Seccombe 1999; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Quadagno 1990; Collins 2000; Hancock 2004; Soss and Schram 2007). This “welfare queen” motif has become synonymous with welfare recipients who are simply Black and single, and presumed lazy and sexually promiscuous (Acker 2006; Monnat and Bunyan 2008).

While the existence of the mythical welfare queen is not rooted in material realities, opinions towards the welfare program, welfare policies, and welfare recipients have reflected this racist sentiment (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004). For all these reasons, race is treated as a central component in the study of welfare. But the welfare queen is also a woman and a person who is experiencing poverty, so it is essential in the topic of welfare research to utilize intersectionality to fully examine the way gender, class, and race are intertwined to produce the policies and issue we find today in the program.

Examining the language and discourse used in the welfare program and welfare policies highlights the interactional component of welfare research. Neubeck and
Cazenave (2001) examined the clear welfare racism that exists. Arguments for biological inferiority of people of color, or denial of racism as a major social problem, perpetuate the racist nature of the welfare system. Women of color often received differential treatment by the welfare program which demonstrates an array of racist practices within the welfare system. Class is clearly also important as blatant racist and sexist language concerning “welfare queens” has often been replaced by discourse underscoring the implicit moral or mental deficiencies of the people in poverty (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004).

Research Question #1: How do intersecting social and geographical characteristics of Ohio counties come to impact welfare-to-work participation rates in contrast to North Carolina counties?

The purpose of the first chapter will be to examine the ways in which gender, race, and class intersect to impact welfare-to-work program participation. Building on my past research examining welfare participation in North Carolina, I will expand my investigation to the Ohio welfare program. Examining welfare participation rates at both the intrastate and interstate level is essential to a more in depth understanding of the variations in welfare policy and implementation. North Carolina and Ohio pose as unique examples from which to draw comparison. One finds itself clearly in the Midwest part of the country while the other is located in the southeast. Both states have a number of rural counties, though the racial composition of rural areas in the two states contrasts sharply. For the first chapter of my dissertation, I will examine how gender, race, family composition, community characteristics, and political climate come to impact welfare-to-work participation rates in Ohio and North Carolina.
**Labor Market Discrimination and Welfare Participation**

Feminist scholars’ goal is to shed light on the pervasiveness and influence of patriarchy in all social realms, including welfare. The welfare program serves as an interesting interactional medium in which those in poverty are divided between those we deem deserving poor (e.g. White widows) and those who are undeserving (e.g. single or divorced mothers and women of color) (Gordon, 1994; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007). These distinctions reflect and “enforce a patriarchal ‘family ethic’ that calls for women to be wives and economic dependents of men” (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001:19). In the patriarchal society and culture in which the welfare system is situated, women are viewed as subordinate to men reflecting their devalued position in the labor market (Acker 1990).

**Gender and the Labor Market**

Women’s position in the labor market has improved in the United States (England 1992; Williams 1992; Brines 1994; Hodson and Sullivan 1995; Budig and England 2001). Women have increasingly been joining the paid labor force, with most recent statistics showing that as of 2011 nearly half (47.1%) of all persons aged 16 years and older currently employed are women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Overall, women’s percentage rate of the working population has increased, and stigma regarding their decisions to work outside of the home, even for mothers, has decreased (England 1992; Brines 1994; Budig and England 2001). Greater protections for working women (e.g., regarding hiring and promotion practices, medical benefits or maternity leave, and sexual harassment (Welsh 1999; Williams 1992; Hodson and Sullivan 1995) have
contributed to the improvement of women’s position in the paid labor force, as compared to men. However, despite all these improvements, there are many important inequalities that persist.

Women who are experiencing financial hardship are often stuck in low-wage, low-skill, and low-benefits jobs (Ridzi 2009; Parisi et al. 2003; Collins and Mayer 2010; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). However, one of the improvements women have achieved in the paid labor force is a decrease in the wage gap for men and women. Despite some gains, unequal pay for women persists (Baron and Newman 1990; England 1992; Brines 1994; Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998; Budig and England 2001) and thrives as an implicit social norm today (Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998). At the institutional level, salary inequity has persisted and has continued to be pervasive in our current social setting (Acker 1990; Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998). The personal prejudices of employers and those with authority, most of whom are men (Smith 2002), perpetuate the unequal wage gap between men and women at the individual level (Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998).

Blau and Kohn’s (2007) article examines the gender pay gap and all the gains women earned since the 1970s seem to have stalled since 2000. Inequalities in education, gender expectations and domestic care, and gaps in work experience continue to limit women in their experience of the paid labor market. The authors examine which characteristics seem to contribute to the wage differentiation. They find that labor force experience (explains 10.5% of gendered wage gap) is a significant determinant of this wage differential. But they also found that structural factors explain the largest portion of the wage gap (occupational category-27.4%; industry category-21.9%) (Blau and Kohn...
Overall, the pay scale settings, as well as other economic rewards, are lower for jobs primarily held by women as compared to men (Baron and Newman 1990; Cohen and Huffman 2003).

**Racism and Labor Market Discrimination**

There is undervalued status associated with specific jobs or occupations traditionally held by women of all races as well as people of color of all genders (Baron and Newman 1990; Cohen and Huffman 2003). Another key inequality still persistent in women’s experiences in the labor market lies at the intersection of race and gender (Collins 1998; 2000; hooks 2000; Smith 2002; Browne and Misra 2003). Throughout history women of color have been limited to low-paying service, factory or agricultural positions in the U.S. wage-labor market (Hodson and Sullivan 1995).

The presence of racism and discrimination is still a persistent issue in our society and the labor market (Hodson and Sullivan 1995; Ridzi 2009). Racial discrimination in employment and hiring practices is prevalent in the U.S. today (Quadagno 1996; Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991). Blacks are twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed and underemployed, and both Black and Hispanic wages trail far behind their White counterparts (Pager and Shepherd 2008; Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991). Black men and women also experience less favorable treatment, rewards, and opportunities for advancement in the paid labor force (Pager and Shepherd 2008). Finding gainful employment is especially difficult for black mothers who experience “intersecting oppression” (Collins 1990) and nexus of discrimination due to their race, gender, and parenting responsibilities (Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and

The issue of “racism is fundamentally a feminist issue because it is so interconnected with sexist oppression” (hooks 2000:53), and therefore any examination of women in the paid labor force is incomplete without the consideration of race. The matrix of domination (Collins 2000) illuminates the intersecting oppressions faced by women of color due to occupying the subordinate position in multiple binaries (Collins 1998; 2000). Much like the work done by all women, jobs held by other people of color receive less rewards, as well as are undervalued and underpaid (Baron and Newman 1990; Hodson and Sullivan 1995). People of color have less job authority which is indicative of greater societal race/class dynamics (Smith 2002). Discrimination, at both the institutional and individual level, inhibits women’s abilities to achieve equality in the paid labor force (Williams 1992; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009). The multiple inequalities (Daly 1997) experienced by women of color accumulate with greater inequalities for them in the labor market.

Welfare Recipients Experience of the Paid Labor Market

These inequalities, combined with the stigma attached to participating in the welfare program, affect employers’ willingness to hire these low-income women. Holzer (1998) found that the perception of the lack of social and cultural capital possessed by welfare recipients is an important hiring factor for employers considering hiring welfare participants. Holzer found that employers wanted assurances regarding the potential hire’s attitude toward work and their tendency toward absenteeism and tardiness.
Employers wanted someone they deemed to have a positive attitude, as well as a GED or high school diploma.

Research Question #2: Do labor market discrimination and harsh limitations felt by women and, specifically, women of color have an impact on welfare-to-work participation rates in North Carolina and/or Ohio counties?

Understanding the impact of the labor market on welfare participation is of paramount importance. The labor market serves as an arena that could support women before they are even faced with the difficult decisions regarding welfare participation. However, the patriarchal structure of paid labor reinforces women’s subordinate position in the market overall. The focus of this second chapter of my dissertation will focus on the ways in which discrimination and harsh limitations felt by women and women of color in the paid labor market (measured as income and employment gaps) have an impact on welfare participation rates in North Carolina and Ohio.

**Ruralness, Whiteness, and Welfare Participation**

In the previous analytic chapter I examined the impact of labor market inequalities coupled with the contextual milieu of each county in Ohio and North Carolina on welfare-to-work participation rates. However, through the course of data compilation I found that a number of counties in each state report having a very small overall Black population and no Black men and/or women employed full-time in the labor force (NC n=10; OH n=24). This raised interesting questions about how to analyze these counties in the context of the overall study. Should counties that have no Black population working in the paid labor force be included in an examination of the intersection of race and labor market conditions on welfare-to-work participation rates? I
decided to exclude these counties from the previous chapter and treat them as their own case study in this third analytic chapter. This chapter is an exploratory analysis of these overwhelmingly White counties. Essentially, little quantitative research examines Whites’ welfare participation and no research that I am aware of examines Whites’ participation in counties without Black residents. Given the racialization of welfare programs as “Black programs”, these counties provide an interesting study of welfare in the absence of Black participants.

RESEARCH DESIGN

My dissertation is set up as a state-to-state comparison of welfare-to-work programs at the county level in North Carolina (N=100) and Ohio (N=88). I utilize secondary data to quantitatively examine participation, demographics, region, labor market inequalities, and other county characteristics and welfare-to-work program differences at the county and state level (see Table 1). The data offers a unique opportunity to examine how county agencies are attempting to meet the challenges faced by families living in poverty that are often rejected by the labor market and have limited alternative options. There have been few instances of in depth welfare research comparing states (for exceptions see Pickering, Harvey, Summers, and Mushinski 2006; Duncan 1999). A state-to-state comparison provides an innovative way to more effectively examine the influence of social, political, historical, and economic conditions faced by families experiencing poverty.

For my analyses, I use secondary data that I have compiled from a number of sources including: US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and 2010 US Senate election results from North Carolina and Ohio. Utilizing data from these secondary
sources provides consistent measures at the county and state comparison levels to examine the political, economic and social contexts in all counties for both Ohio and North Carolina. The welfare-to-work program is one that varies from one locale to another and therefore this data will enable me to empirically examine the variations in a consistent way.

Table 1
North Carolina and Ohio County Means for All Variables in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Dissertation

| Table 1. North Carolina and Ohio County Means for All Variables in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Dissertation |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Chapter 2-All Counties | Chapter 3-Racially Diverse | Chapter 4-White Counties |
| NC | OH | NC | OH | NC | OH | NC | OH |
| DV-%Eligible on Rolls | 11.5 | 16.6 | 12 | 17 | 5.4 | 15.6 |
| Unemployment Rate | 11.1 | 10.2 | 11 | 10 | 12.5 | 10.6 |
| HS Expenditures | 22.1 | 39.4 | 22.1 | 39.6 | 22.8 | 38.9 |
| Republican Winner | 0.77 | 0.93 | 0.74 | 0.92 | 1.00 | 0.96 |
| Population Density | 4.78 | 5.05 | 4.87 | 5.35 | 3.95 | 4.25 |
| NC-Mountain Region | 0.24 | - | 0.17 | - | NC-Mountain Region | 1.00 |
| NC-Coastal Region | 0.41 | - | 0.44 | - | NC-Coastal Region | 0 |
| NC-Piedmont Region | 0.35 | - | 0.39 | - | NC-Piedmont Region | 0 |
| OH-Southeast | - | 0.31 | - | 0.234 | OH-Southeast | - 0.50 |
| OH-Northeast | - | 0.14 | - | 0.188 | OH-Northeast | - 0 |
| OH-Northwest | - | 0.21 | - | 0.188 | OH-Northwest | - 0.25 |
| OH-Central | - | 0.18 | - | 0.188 | OH-Central | - 0.167 |
| OH-Southwest | - | 0.17 | - | 0.203 | OH-Southwest | - 0.083 |
| Poor Single Moms | 6.08 | 6.52 | 6.25 | 6.8 | 4.54 | 5.8 |
| NH Black | 20.75 | 4.03 | 22.9 | 5.16 | 1.08 | 0.8 |
| NH Other race | 3.83 | 3.22 | 3.68 | 2.77 | 5.26 | 1.5 |
| Gini Index | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.41 | 0.41 |
| Gendered Wage Gap | 79.5 | 73.09 | 83.3 | 70.7 |
| Race Wage Gap | 62.5 | 73.31 | 28 | 28.78 |
| BlackFemaleEmployed | 31.18 | 34.04 | 28 | 28.78 |
| GenderXrace Wage Gap | 79.89 | 101.96 | |
| Sample Size | N=100 | N=88 | n=90 | n=64 | n=10 | n=24 |

Measures

My dependent variable for the first two analytic chapters of this dissertation is the welfare-to-work participation rate. It is calculated as the percentage of people who become welfare participants out of those financially eligible to receive welfare assistance in each county. Eligibility is determined as a family being below the poverty threshold.
and having children in the household under the age of 18 in 2010 (as reported in the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year estimates: 2006-2010).

**Ohio welfare-to-work participation chapter.** To measure for region I include population density and regions. Population density best measures the detailed variation in urban/ruralness within small geographical units such as counties (Long, Rain, and Ratcliffe 2001). Data for population density come from the 2010 US Census Bureau ACS. Since population density is skewed, I use the log transformation of the variable in my analysis. Region is especially important in the study of welfare due to the great variation between regions and counties within states (Debertin and Infanger 1988; Albert 2000; Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi et al. 2003; Lobao 2004). There are five distinct regions in Ohio: Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast and Central. North Carolina has three regions: Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal. I measure region with dummy variables in which one region is the reference category.

Low-income mothers face a unique set of challenges on the job market and are often burdened with being the sole providers for their children (Parisi et al. 2003; Brown and Lichter 2004; Nelson 2006; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010). Therefore, I include a measure for the proportion of single female-headed households with children under 18 years of age with an income below the poverty level out of the total number of families in Ohio and North Carolina (as reported by 2010 US Census Bureau ACS 5 year estimates: 2006-2010).

Also, as illustrated in the literature review, race plays a very large role in a number of aspects affecting welfare. Race is related to politics (Luebke 1998), public opinions of welfare (Gilens 1996), welfare policy (Schram 2005; Soss and Schram 2007;
Monnat and Bunyan 2008), and even welfare implementation (Schram 2005). Race is measured as the percentage of the total population within a county that is Black and non-White “other” racial categories as determined by the 2010 US Census. Data for these measures is taken from the 2010 US Census Bureau ACS 5 year estimates: 2006-2010.

My two measures for county economic characteristics include the unemployment rate and industry differentiation in the county. High unemployment should be indicative of less employment available, and therefore, less viable alternatives to public assistance. This could affect Work First program participation rates (Nelson 2006; Harris and Parisi 2008). I use the 2010 unemployment rate per county as reported by the United States Department of Agriculture. The industrial make-up in a county, particularly the concentration of employment in service sector jobs within a county, may disproportionately affect women and single mothers, who are often employed in these industries and are also more likely than men to become welfare participants (Parisi et al. 2003; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). For industry differentiation, I calculate the percentage of total employment accounted for by the two largest industries (of the 10 possible industries based on two-digit NAICS industrial sector codes) in the county in 2010.

The political climate in the county can affect welfare reform, policies and implementation (Luebke 1998; Schram 2005; Soss and Schram 2007). I use two measures of political climate: health and human services expenditures and voting behavior in the county. I chose these because they indicate the relative level of conservativeness regarding politics and spending on social programs, i.e. the welfare-to-work program. Health and human services expenditures are measured as a percentage of
the overall expenditures per county that are allocated to human services in 2010. I include expenditures as a political measure since budget allocations are often political matters. These decisions may also affect the quality of services that can be provided by the county’s welfare office and therefore may affect an eligible individuals’ willingness to become a participant. To further measure the intrastate political climates of Ohio and North Carolina, I also add a measure for voting behavior of the county, using the political affiliation of the U.S. Senator who gained the most votes in the 2010 election in each county.

**Labor market discrimination and welfare-to-work participation chapter.**

Women of all races face greater disadvantages and discrimination in the workforce (e.g. Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Harknett 2001). For my second analytic chapter I compare Ohio and North Carolina for the relationship between labor market conditions and participation to welfare-to-work program participation. My dependent variable will remain the same as the previous chapter (welfare-to-work participation rate among the eligible families). However, I will focus on different independent variables. My independent variables will be compiled utilizing U.S. Census data. In addition to measures of county characteristics, gender, race, and region, I will add measures of labor market discrimination. Those will include markers of income inequality including: the Gini index, the gender wage gap, the racial wage gap, and the gender wage gap among women. Additionally, I include measure of employment inequality and opportunity, including the unemployment rate, industrial differentiation and the fulltime employment gap between White and Black women. My focus will be on the intersection of gender and race in the experience of the paid labor market.
Welfare-to-work participation in white-only counties chapter. Stigma associated with welfare participation is often underscored with latent racial stereotypes. How are welfare participation rates impacted in counties where there are few to no Black people in the population and/or work force? My dependent and independent variables remain the same as in the previous chapter. However, during the analytical examination of labor market conditions and welfare-to-work participation in Chapter 2, a number of counties are excluded from analysis (NC n=10; OH n=24) due to lack of Black population in the county and the paid labor force. These excluded counties will serve as the focus of this analysis.

Analytic Strategy

For my first analytic chapter I compare findings in Ohio to my previous research conducted in North Carolina for a greater understanding of welfare participation in different locations. I build upon this by examining the welfare-to-work participation rates at the intrastate and interstate level in the following analytic chapters focused on Ohio and North Carolina counties as well. For all three analytic chapters I will use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression when appropriate due to the relatively small population size (OH N= 88; NC N=100) and the continuous dependent variable.

In the first chapter I analyze welfare program participation with a focus on the following groupings: county economic and political characteristics, region, gender/family and race demographics. I layer in each grouping sequentially for each state. In the second analytic chapter I build on the prior chapter and add variables to measure labor market inequalities (employment measures and income inequality). My third chapter focuses on the counties I lose due to missing data as a result of no reported Black
population working full-time in certain counties (OH n=24; NC n=10). This examination is more exploratory as there is not much literature addressing these issues quantitatively. I include descriptive statistics for all counties and examine the ways in which welfare-to-work participation fluctuates in counties that are all or predominantly White populations.
CHAPTER II

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA

WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION RATES

Introduction

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) drastically changed cash assistance programs and created Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This new welfare-to-work program enacted time limits and work requirements that are meant to ease the negative connotation attached to welfare and subside the overwhelming opposition to welfare programs of the past. The goals of the new program are to address the “missing work ethic” and “missing family values” that are believed to be inherent and rampant among impoverished families (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010).

Local differences in program policies and implementations make regional-level examination of welfare participation essential. Spatial inequality theory highlights the importance of place and geographic differences for addressing issues of poverty and (dis)advantage (Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2005; Lobao 2004; Lobao and Saenz 2002). Given county programs and context variations, the study of welfare at the county level allows for the acute examination of spatial inequalities as impactful measures (Lobao 2004; Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lichter and Jayakody 2002). In this study I examine welfare participation rates in and between two states at the county level through an intra-
state and inter-state comparison of Ohio and North Carolina. Studying phenomena at the county level will allow for the direct examination of region and the unique circumstances surrounding a particular space that may differ from another locale (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Lobao 2004). Welfare-to-work programs and potential welfare participants vary greatly from one location to the next. Therefore, examining the impact of spatial inequalities on poverty, welfare policies, and welfare participation rates is a necessary and important endeavor.

The current welfare-to-work program, just like any other government program, cannot be free from the influence of race, privilege, and racism. Therefore critical race theory also serves as a driving theoretical focus of this paper. Critical race theory is the analysis of the impact of race, racism and power within the broader social context (i.e. economics, history, laws, groups, etc.) (Delgado 1995). By acknowledging and examining race when studying welfare this study adds to an important body of literature. Schram (2005) argues welfare reform is a type of racial policy regime. For instance, Schram finds covert racist language has been masked in welfare policies and that the program operates in a way that “actively recreates racial disadvantage among the poor” (Schram 2005:254). Through the differential treatment of Black welfare participants, the program actively promotes racial disadvantage (Schram 2005). Critical race theory drives this research by underscoring the importance of this persistent phenomenon in understanding the obstacles and unfair (dis)advantages for people of color ranging from the U.S. capitalist labor market to the welfare office itself.

Welfare participation in-of-itself is an under-examined and largely misunderstood aspect of the welfare system (see Parisi, McLaughlin, Grice, Taquino, and Gill 2003 for a
In the research on welfare, participation is often assumed. The assumption centers on the belief that most people who are eligible for welfare assistance (and even some who go above and beyond to lie to meet eligibility requirements) are epidemically lining up at the welfare office to receive aid (Ridzi 2009). However, I find that not to be the case. In both states I examine, North Carolina and Ohio, the participation rate is extremely low (11.5% and 16.6% respectively). I find that in North Carolina participation rates among eligible individuals is greater in counties that are more urban and have a larger Black population. In Ohio welfare participation rates are associated with the differences in region, the percentage of households that are headed by single mothers, and the non-Black racially marginalized population of each county. These findings underscore the importance of race and place for welfare participation in both states, however, highlighting them in different ways.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Under the new TANF program, recipients are required to work a set number of hours per week (which vary from one state and county to the next) and only able to receive welfare cash assistance for a maximum of 60 months in their lifetime (this time limit differs from one location to the next but is never longer than the 60 month federal maximum). In addition to these two radical changes in welfare assistance, the program continually fluctuates and evolves. The creation of new and innovative programs tends only to be extraordinary in their efforts to decrease welfare participation rather than to help those living in poverty (Riccucci 2005).

Welfare program policies and implementations vary by place, but a number of relatively recent programs have gained in popularity. One such program is ‘family caps’
which limit welfare assistance should the household size grow while already receiving aid (Gilens 1996; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). This policy harms low-income women and their children by forcing mothers to stretch the needed aid among more people without any further assistance. The ‘pay for performance’ program is another program which mandates that welfare-to-work participants do not receive any assistance until they have worked 30 days (Simpson 2009). This creates even greater financial strain on those individuals who sought welfare cash assistance in the first place given the obvious immediate need for assistance. Another policy that is gaining in popularity is drug testing welfare recipients. Though this policy seems popular among state lawmakers and the media, it has been found to be ineffective and expensive since very few welfare recipients have tested positive for any drug use in states where it has been implemented (e.g. less than 3% in Florida; Alvarez 2012).

In addition to program changes, funding processes for welfare programs has changed as well. Under AFDC welfare funding was comprised of a matching system where the federal government would match a portion of each dollar that was spent by the states on each welfare recipient (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Albert 2000). After the 1996 welfare reform, there are now block grants given to states to divide among counties (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Albert 2000). This change in funding was intended to allow states and counties greater freedom in developing their programs. While this local-level discretion could theoretically allow for greater innovation and personalization of the county office, it also has the potential to be damaging. According to Albert (2000) this freedom without much oversight can create the potential for a “race to the bottom”. This happens when financial responsibility is passed to the lower levels of government and creates a situation in which
each agency continually cuts benefits faster to make their system more “efficient” than the next. In order to prevent this degradation of accountability Albert (2000) suggests federal standards which hold all agencies accountable to providing reasonable assistance. Without such standards, the new block grant system has the potential to offer financial incentives for reducing program participation and the “race to the bottom” may only increase (Albert 2000).

The Gendered and Raced Aspects of Welfare-to-Work

Women, specifically mothers, are the group most likely to seek welfare cash assistance (Parisi et al. 2003; Acker 2006; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010). Due to this reality, researching various aspects of welfare participation is imperative to an examination of women’s subordinate position in society overall (Acker 2006). The risk of poverty for single mothers in the U.S. is more than 35% (Misra, Moller, Strader, and Wemlinger 2012). The higher rate of poverty for women as compared to men, coupled with their childcare responsibilities, places an inequitable burden on low-income and under- or unemployed mothers (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Parisi, et. al. 2003). Thus by far, mothers in poverty have been the group most affected by the PRWORA reform.

The new time limits and work requirements lessen the level of support given to one of our country’s most marginalized groups: single mothers experiencing poverty (Rana 2000). The reform was based on stereotypical views of people of color and women as lacking a healthy work ethic (Ridzi 2010; Rana 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Negotiating welfare requirements, tolerating surveillance, and experiencing stigma have
been a constant part of the process for women utilizing welfare (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001).

Racial prejudices also impact impoverished mothers, especially women of color, in their experience of welfare cash assistance programs (Quadagno 1996; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004; Schram 2005; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Monnat 2010; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011). After World War II, eligibility for the welfare program expanded to include women of color who were historically excluded. Due to social, political, and employment discrimination, women and children of color were among the most in need of financial assistance at this time (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Consequently, once eligibility expanded to include people of color, welfare rolls dramatically increased (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007).

With this increase in welfare participation, public opinion towards the program became racialized and negative. The increase in Black single mothers receiving aid was presented as the AFDC program becoming a “Black program” (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat 2010; Schram 2005; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Quadagno 1996). The racist stigma and stereotypes regarding the welfare-to-work program and its’ participants have not subsided. The overtly racist rhetoric facilitated the 1996 welfare reform has just been replaced by more covert racially and gendered charged references (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011). Some such references include the inability for women to make decisions regarding their work, home, and family options due to their missing or insufficient “family values” or “work ethic”
Out of racially driven objections to the welfare program arose the social image of the “welfare queen” (Seccombe 1999; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe, James, and Walters 1998; Taylor, Samblanet, and Seale 2011; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007). The “welfare queen” term is credited to a 1976 speech from Ronald Reagan in which he described an inner city woman who became rich defrauding the welfare system (Seccombe 1999; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; npr 2013). The welfare queen stereotype is based upon an underlying social myth that people in poverty are lazy, Black or Hispanic, single mothers, living lawlessly in the ghetto, and with no moral compass (Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Seccombe, James, and Walters 1998; Piven 1998; Quadagno 1996). Despite the truly racially diverse population who experience poverty, this racially charged imagery of the “welfare queen” led to shifts in public opinion, and in the 1990s led to the PRWORA welfare reform (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Seccombe 1999; Soss and Schram 2007; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011).

Women of color are confronted by the challenges of race and gender-based discrimination and prejudice in nearly all aspect of their lives. From government participation, to educational attainment, to the paid labor market, and overall social interactions, women of color face multiple institutional barriers (Quadagno 1996; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). The impact of this social reality cannot be overstated. For instance, Schram (2005) found that “from time limits to work requirements, sanctions policies, and limitation on benefits, welfare reform is administered in ways that make it less supportive of poor blacks who are concentrated in marginalized neighborhoods and confront race barriers” (254). The women who participate in welfare-to-work programs
find themselves under intense scrutiny and supervision creating a hostile environment more interested in decreasing the rolls and uncovering fraud than actually helping families in times of financial hardship.

Following spatial inequality theory and critical race theory, I examine the effects of place, race, gender, and other county level differences on welfare-to-work participation rates in Ohio and North Carolina. Building upon my past research conducted in North Carolina, I focus on contextual and compositional differences such as: region, population density, politics, gender, race, and family status that may impact participation. The goal of this paper is to add to the literature a comparative analysis of welfare-to-work participation rates at an intra-state and inter-state level. By utilizing the county level as my unit of analysis, I am able to examine the factors that may influence participation rates among eligible persons from one unique welfare office to the next. These findings will highlight important implications in regards to welfare policy, funding, and program implementation in regards to meeting the needs of those in poverty.

METHODS

This paper serves as an interstate comparison building upon my prior research of an examination of county level participation rates in North Carolina. In 2012, I examined the county characteristics, demographics, and welfare program effectiveness for each county in North Carolina as it pertains to welfare participation rates. I found that while a number of variables had an impact on welfare participation rates in North Carolina counties. In North Carolina, welfare participation is overwhelmingly a story of ‘race’ and ‘place’. These unique findings peaked my curiosity to discover if I would find a similar narrative in an interstate comparison. While critical race theory underscores the
universality of racism and race-based power relations in the U.S., spatial inequalities theory posits that inequalities (including the impact of race, class, gender, etc.) vary from one geographical location to the next. This current examination will serve as an opportunity to examine these theories at the interstate level. This research will enable me to further examine the varying impacts on welfare participation rates in different geographic regions.

The focus of this paper was to focus on the components that could effectively impact policy to assist people experiencing poverty to gain meaningful help. Therefore for the purpose of this inter-state replicative study, I focus on county-level characteristics and demographics to examine the differing ways inequality is felt in varying regions (Lobao and Saenz 2002; Lobao 2004; Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2005). Not only does region matter within a particular state (intra-state comparison at the county level) but this concept of spatial inequalities can be even better understood through an inter-state comparison of those differences.

For this research data was primarily collected from 2010 U.S Census data (see Table 2). Focusing on county-level statistics, data from the Census was compiled into a comprehensive dataset to examine the various facets of welfare participation rates. Supplemental data was gathered from The University of Akron Bliss Institute and the State Board of Education of NC, respectively, to determine appropriate regional distinctions within states.

Using primarily U.S. Census data has several advantages. First, it allows me to examine a total population within both states (Ohio N=88, and North Carolina N=100). This allows me to examine the relative effects of my standardized coefficients (Betas) on
eligibility and welfare participation rates rather than needing to make inferences to the population with inherent sampling error. Secondly, with all data having been updated to reflect 2010 measures and all coming from this same database (U.S. Census) I will be better positioned to make intra and inter-state comparisons that are both relevant and valid.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Sources for All Variables (NC N=100; OH N=88)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NORTH CAROLINA</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV-%EligibleonRolls</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>26.99</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
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<td>16.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<td>Industry Diff. HS</td>
<td>61.39</td>
<td>89.32</td>
<td>79.78</td>
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<td>Expenditures</td>
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<td>Republican Winner</td>
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<td>Population Density</td>
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<td>NC-Mountain Region</td>
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<td>OH-Central</td>
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<td>OH-Southwest</td>
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<td>%Other race</td>
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</table>

Measures

In this chapter welfare eligibility and participation rates are examined at the county level. Due to the variation in welfare programs and policies within each state, it is
essential to examine region, gender, race, and other factors that may affect welfare participation from an intrastate level (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Luebke 1998). It is important to examine issues utilizing this intermediate level of analysis (i.e. county level) to begin to uncover some of the unforeseen reasons for the socioeconomic inequalities of a region (Lobao 2004; Parisi, et. al. 2003). However, building upon that notion, the next step to further this research is to compare those in-state variations at an inter-state level. The purpose of this research is to examine if the intra-state spatial inequalities observed in one state are distinct from the intra-state spatial inequalities we examine in other locales.

**Dependent variable.** My dependent variable for this analysis is the percentage of qualifying households in a county that are financially eligible to receive welfare and who did receive welfare cash assistance at any point in 2010 (also referred to as Work First participation). In order to construct this dependent variable, eligibility was determined if 1) a household income for 2010 was below the poverty threshold and 2) only consisting of those households that had children living in the home under the age of 18. This variable (‘%EligibleOnRolls’) is an approximate rate of qualifying households that received Work First benefits in 2010 in both North Carolina and Ohio counties (descriptive statistics for all variables are reported in Table 2).

It is important to note that some counties have different income requirements in order to qualify for welfare assistance (i.e. meets absolute poverty threshold, within 150% poverty threshold, within 200% poverty threshold). By choosing to only focus on households that fall below the absolute poverty threshold, this dependent variable is a conservative measure of eligibility. However, by falling below this absolute threshold, these are the households most in need of assistance and who could benefit most from any
income assistance and services afforded to them. Still, even when examining the most poverty stricken of households, I find a very low rates of welfare-to-work participation in both North Carolina (mean = 11.53%) and Ohio (mean = 16.59%).

**Independent variables.**

**Model 1:** There are a number of county-level characteristics that theoretically and even through the lens of “common sense” need to be included in any discussion of welfare participation. Examining counties’ expenditures on welfare programs, the unemployment rate of the county population, the variation of industries available, and the political climate in each county serve as essential markers of differentiation that could influence welfare participation. Expenditures, for example, may affect the quality of services that can be provided by the county’s welfare office and therefore may affect an eligible individuals’ willingness to become a participant. ‘HS Expenditures’ is measured as the percentage of a county’s total budget that was used for Human Services programs (i.e. welfare programs).

The ‘Unemployment Rate’ is included for a number of reasons. First, there seems to be a “common sense” link popular opinion makes between welfare participation and unemployment and therefore it is important to test (Ridzi 2009). Also, it is included because in counties where unemployment is high there may be less viable alternatives to public assistance. Industrial differentiation (‘IndustryDiff’) measures how much industry variation/concentration in paid employment in each county. This variable is calculated as the percentage of total employment accounted for by the two largest industries (of the 10 possible industries based on two-digit NAICS industrial sector codes) in each county in 2010. The figure is calculated such that the higher the number, the more differentiation in
employment by industry. Possible scores for industrial differentiation range from 50 (no differentiation) to 100 (high differentiation).

Understanding a county’s political climate is essential because of the influence politics can have on welfare reform, policies and implementation (Soss and Schram 2007; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Schram 2005; Luebke 1998). Political climate of each county was calculated using the majority voting behavior of each county for U.S. Senator Elections in 2010. The dummy variable (‘Republican Winner’) indicated the majority of the county voted for a Republican U.S. Senator with counties that voted for a Democratic U.S. Senator as the reference category.

**Model 2:** With a theoretical focus on the impact of spatial inequalities in welfare research, region becomes especially important. This is due to the great variations in welfare programs not only nationally between states but between counties within states (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004; Brown and Lichter 2004; Albert 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Debertin and Infanger 1988). Population density is one of the measures I use to examine region by determining how rural or urban a county is. The population density measure best allocates the detailed variation in urban/ruralness within small geographical units (i.e. counties) (Long, Rain, and Ratcliffe 2001). There are three distinct regions in North Carolina and five in Ohio. In North Carolina the three regions are: the Mountain (western), Piedmont (central), and Coastal (eastern) parts of the state (Luebke 1998; as categorized by the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education in North Carolina, website can be found in the Data Appendix; Figure 3). The five distinct regions of Ohio are: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central (as categorized by The Ohio State
University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Figure 4). For
the region variable in both states, I measured region as a dummy variable. For the sake of
parsimony, in both states I chose the region that had the most rural counties to be my
reference categories (Mountain region in NC; Southeast region in OH).

**Model 3:** In addition to keeping my measures of county characteristics and
region/rurality, in model 3 key county demographic variables are incorporated. County
demographics of gender and race add an essential social component to understanding the
variations in welfare participation rates of eligible peoples at the county level. I measure
gender as the percentage of all households in a county that are in poverty and headed by
single mothers (‘Poor Single Moms’). Women and children in poverty make up the
majority of welfare-to-work participants. Low-income mothers face a unique set of
challenges in the paid-labor market and are often burdened with being the sole providers
for their children (Licter and Jayakody 2002; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010;
Brown and Lichter 2004; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ahn 2012). The ‘Poor Single
Moms’ variable was calculated using the percentage of single female-headed households
with children under 18 years of age, and whose income is below the poverty level as
reported by the 2010 U.S. Census.
Race plays a large role in a number of aspects that affect various components of welfare and possible participation. For example, race is related to politics (Luebke 1998), public opinions of welfare (Gilens 1995; Gilens 1996), welfare policy (Schram 2005; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007), and possibly even welfare implementation (Schram 2005; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011).
For the purpose of this research, race was measured as the percentage of the county population that self-identify as Black (‘% Black’) and the percentage of the county population that self-identify as any non-White and non-Black race (‘% Other Race’) on the 2010 U.S. census. The Black population in North Carolina counties ranges from 0.11% to 61.92% (mean = 20.75%) and ranges from 0.0% to 29.46% in Ohio counties (mean = 5.74%). The percentage of the total population who self-identify as any race other than White or Black in North Carolina counties ranges from 1.1% to 40.6% (mean = 3.83%), and ranges from 1% to 8% in Ohio counties (mean = 3.22%).

Analytic Strategy

My method of analysis was ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. I chose this method due to the relatively small population size (North Carolina N=100; Ohio N=88) and my continuous dependent variable (Noreen 1988). I analyzed eligibility and welfare participation inductively, with a final focus on the following three groupings: county characteristics, region/rurality, and gender and race with each grouping layered in sequentially. There was no missing data in either state.

In all models I included the standardized coefficients and indicators of statistical significance. For the purpose of this research, however, I am examining a population not a sample and statistical significance is not as important (Cortina and Dunlap 1997). The p-value is still included in my tables because it does illuminate the variables with the greatest explanatory magnitude. When examining a population, the standardized coefficients provide more explanatory power of my independent variables relative effect on welfare-to-work participation rates. The focus of my research is not to make predictions; rather it is to understand the relationship between various independent
factors and the welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible persons across counties and states. Since I am utilizing a population instead of a sample, no inferences are needed to ascertain how the population would be affected by my variables. I am able to compare relative effect size without the possibility of error inherent in examining samples (Vacha-Haase and Thompson 1998).

RESULTS

Table 3 shows the standardized (Beta) coefficients of the OLS regression analysis for both North Carolina and Ohio. These models include the county characteristic controls, measures of place, and county demographics. Model 1 includes the county characteristics that should theoretically matter in any discussion of welfare: unemployment rate, industrial differentiation (‘Industry Diff’), the percent of county expenditures used for Human Services programs (‘HS Expend’), and the county’s political leaning (‘Republican Winner’). With only the inclusion county characteristics in model 1 (NC F=6.68, sig.=.000; OH F=2.26, sig.=.069), there is a clear difference between North Carolina and Ohio in regards to what aspects impact welfare-to-work participation.

Overall for model 1, the explanatory power is greater for North Carolina (R-square=.22) than for Ohio (R-square=.098). This first model can explain 22% of the variation in the participation rate of eligible people in North Carolina counties and 9.8% of the variance in Ohio counties. In North Carolina model 1 highlights a story of politics and industry. In counties that had a more conservative political leaning with the majority of voters voted for the republican US Senate candidate, welfare-to-work participation
among the eligible population was lower (Beta = -0.358; b = -3.9, p = .000). Industrial
differentiation also had a significant relationship with welfare participation rates. In areas
Table 3
Regression Estimates for North Carolina (N=100) and Ohio (N=88) Counties and
Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
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<th>N. Carolina</th>
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<th>N. Carolina</th>
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| **County
Characteristics** |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| Unemployment Rate | .099        | .287** | .121        | -.180 | .136        | -.086 |
| Industry Diff    | .261***     | .076  | .224**      | .056  | .210**      | .084  |
| HS Expenditures  | .090        | -.042 | .109        | -.008 | .067        | .175  |
| Republican Winner| -.358***    | .027  | -.297***    | .035  | -.157       | -.021 |
| **Region**       |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| Population Density |            | .083  | .102        | .130* | .065        |      |
| NC- Coastal      | .307***     | .229  | .052        | .093  |             |      |
| NC-Piedmont      |             |      | .159        | .103  |             |      |
| OH-Northeast     |             |      | .216        | .225* |             |      |
| OH-Northwest     |             |      | .088        | .110  |             |      |
| OH-Central       |             |      | .088        | .110  |             |      |
| OH-Southwest     |             |      | .088        | .110  |             |      |
| **Demographics** |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| Poor Single Moms |             |      | .122        | -.280*|             |      |
| % Black          |             |      | .397**      | -.175 |             |      |
| % Other race     |             |      | .001        | .416**|             |      |
| N                | 100         | 88   | 100         | 88   | 100         | 88   |
| R-Squared        | .220        | .098  | .284        | .142  | .324        | .235  |
| Adjusted R-Squared | .187      | .055  | .230        | .043  | .248        | .113  |

Note: Numbers are reported as standardized coefficients (Betas)

***sig.<.01, **sig.<.05, *sig.<.10

with more industrial options for employment there are higher participation rates
(Beta = .261; b = .229, p = .008). In areas that are more urban, industrialized, and
have more options for employment, there are also more resources and access to
assistance. There was no significant relationship between welfare-to-work participation
and unemployment rate (Beta= .099) or Human Services expenditures (Beta= .090) in this first model for North Carolina.

In Ohio politics take a back seat to the lack of jobs in the paid labor market. The variable with the largest effect in Ohio (significant, negative relationship) is between the unemployment rate and welfare-to-work participation among those eligible (Beta= -.287). This significant negative relationship highlights the fact that in Ohio when the percentage of people on unemployment is higher, the welfare program participation rates are lower (b= -.949; p=.012). Here unemployment seems to be a more desirable alternative to Work First. The variable with the second largest impact was industry differentiation (Beta= .076; p=.478), and then expenditures (Beta= -.042; p=.708) and politics (b=.027; p=.798) having little impact at all.

Model 2 introduces measures of place: population density (ln) and geographic regions for both North Carolina (Coast and Piedmont with the Mountain region serving as the reference category) and Ohio (Northeast, Northwest, Central, and Southwest with the Southeast region as the reference category). When examining a topic through a spatial inequality theoretical lens, the inclusion of these variables is essential. The inclusion of additional variables in this model increases the overall fit (NC F=5.22, sig=.000; OH F=1.43, sig=.189) and model 2 can explain over 28% of the variation in North Carolina and over 14% of the variation in participation among eligible people in Ohio. In North Carolina, region variables are coded as ‘Coastal’ and ‘Piedmont’ with the ‘Mountain’ region as the reference groups. The location in the Coastal region has the largest effect of any place measure (Beta=.307; b=2.9; p=.01).
In North Carolina, counties that had a higher population density (more urban, less rural) saw an increase in eligible person’s welfare-to-work participation rate (Beta=.083). The Piedmont region had higher participation rates (Beta=.229) and the Coastal regions had significantly higher participation rates among their eligible persons in reference to the more rural and often geographically isolated Mountain region counties (Beta=.307). In this second model, the county politics in North Carolina and the industrial differentiation remained significant. In counties where the majority of U.S. Senator votes are for a Republican (Beta= -.297; p=.002) and in counties that have less industrial options, there is significantly lower welfare-to-work participation rate among eligible persons in North Carolina (Beta=.224; p=.029). Again, more politically conservative counties that are less industrially diverse have lower percentages of families eligible participating in welfare-to-work programs.

Rurality and regional measures do not have a similar effect in Ohio. In Ohio region variables are coded as ‘Northeast,’ ‘Northwest,’ ‘Central,’ and ‘Southwest’ with the ‘Southeast’ regional counties as the reference group. In Ohio, however, locality does not seem to play as important a role as it did in North Carolina. The inclusion of the population density and region variables causes all variables to be non-significant in explaining welfare program participation rates. Of all variables included in this second model, the largest effect is the positive relationship of central regions on OH participation rates (Beta=.216; b=3.22; p=.114) as compared to the Southeast region. The state capital and areas largest city is located in the Central region of Ohio, which may explain this effect. While all are non-significant, the Northeast (Beta=.052), Northwest (Beta=.159), and Southwest (Beta=.088) all had higher participation rates among their eligible persons.
in reference to the more rural and often geo-socially isolated Southeast Ohio counties.

The next largest effect was the negative association of unemployment rate (Beta = -.180; 
b = -.593; p = .176) and welfare-to-work participation as discussed in the model 1 results.

Model 3 includes the population demographic variables for the counties: the 
percentage of households that are headed by single mothers in poverty (‘Poor Single 
Moms’), the percentage of the population in each county that are African American 
(‘%Black’), and the percent of the county population that are other non-White, non-Black 
racially marginalized (‘% Other Race’) with the percent county population that is White 
serving as the reference category for the race variables (NC F = 4.27, sig = .000; OH 
F = 1.92, sig = .045). The explanatory power of this model increases again for both NC (R- 
squared = .324) and Ohio (R-squared = .235). Of the variance in Work First participation 
rates among a county’s eligible families, in this final model I am able to explain over 
32% in NC and 23% in Ohio. With the inclusion of these variables, coefficients for 
several variables change. First, the effect of county politics diminished drastically in NC 
(Beta = -.157; sig = .22). The percent of the county population that is Black had a large 
significant effect (Beta = .397; sig = .04) on Work First participation rates among eligible 
persons in North Carolina. In Ohio, the variable with the largest effect is also part of the 
racial demographic make-up of the county. The percent of non-White, non-Black other 
racial groups has the largest association with the participation rates among Ohio’s eligible 
people (Beta = .416). The positive associations of both indicates that in counties that have 
higher percentages of Black populations in North Carolina and counties that have higher 
percentages of other racially marginalized groups in Ohio, have higher participation rates 
among their states’ eligible families.
Industrial differentiation remained significant with the inclusion of all variables in North Carolina (Beta=.210). This shows in North Carolina in urban counties that have more industries available for employment, there are higher percentages of eligible persons who participate in the Work First program. In Ohio, gender (more specifically the percentage of families headed by impoverished single mothers) has the second largest effect on the Work First participation rate among eligible individuals (Beta=-.280). This negative relationship indicates that in Ohio counties with higher percentages of low-income single mother-headed households have lower welfare participation rates. The percent of the non-Black racially marginalized population did not have a large effect size in North Carolina (Beta=.001) the way it did in Ohio. When controlling for county demographics, the effects of the Coastal region (Beta=.110) in reference to the Mountain counties decreased dramatically painting a picture that emphasizes industry and race over region in North Carolina. In Ohio, however, the final model shows that region does matter. The Central region had significantly higher participation rates among their eligible persons in reference to the more rural, mountainous Appalachian counties located in the Southeast region of the state of Ohio (Beta=.225). In both states, there is a consistent overall picture that spatial inequalities and county demographics play a large role in the welfare program participation rates. However, the differences between counties within these two states and overall differences between Ohio and North Carolina, highlight the importance of examining welfare participation at the county level.

**DISCUSSION**

The study of welfare-to-work participation remains largely ignored in the welfare literature. I find that the assumption that welfare-to-work program participation is
inherent to poverty to be untrue in both Ohio and North Carolina. There are a number of factors that impact participations rates in both states. In Ohio it is primarily region, race and gender. In North Carolina, welfare-to-work participation rates are mostly affected by politics, industry and race. By utilizing nationally-collected secondary data I am able to make intrastate and interstate comparisons that can be expanded upon in substance and scope. In this discussion, I highlight two findings from these comparisons. First, I find that the geographic differences that shape this county are also observable in the varying spatial inequalities felt by those in poverty. I find that population density (rural versus urban) and region impact welfare participation rates but in different ways depending on the state.

Second, I find that race plays a key role in understanding welfare-to-work participation rates. These findings highlight interesting and unforeseen consequences to understanding welfare-to-work programs and the factors that impact welfare participation rates. It is essential to the greater understanding of participation rates that researchers examine the contextual milieu unique to each location. Findings in both states highlight the importance of race and place differently and therefore underscore the essentiality of examining welfare-to-work programs at the local level. This level of research allows for the examination of differential spatial inequalities (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi et al. 2003; Lobao 2004) which come to affect geographically distinct hardships faced by families experiencing poverty and their welfare-to-work participation rates.

Spatial inequality theory posits that poverty is experienced and felt differently depending on one’s geographical location (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004; Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Brown and Lichter 2004). My analysis supports the spatial inequality
theoretical prediction that place and geographical distinct markers of stratification differentially impact the experience of poverty (Lobao 2004). I add to this research showing this spatial inequality subsequently affects welfare-to-work participation rates. In Ohio the variations in place are encompassed more in the regional differences while in North Carolina it is more about the rural/urban divide. The urbanization of poverty has been largely studied (Massey, Gross, and Shibuya 1994; Wilson 1996; Carter 2005; Wilson 2009) but the impact of rural poverty on welfare-to-work participation rates is an area in need of further examination. In North Carolina, the effect of population density was significant in the full model showing that welfare participation among those eligible is lower in rural areas.

For people concerned with lessening poverty, my findings illustrate an important issue in rural North Carolina. Families experiencing poverty in rural areas in North Carolina are not participating in welfare-to-work programs. This effect may be due to a myriad of reasons. Potential program participants, mainly single mothers, in rural regions may face a unique set of circumstances that may impede their ability to become welfare participants at all (Brown and Lichter 2004; Parisi, et. al. 2003). Some such challenges may include limited transportation options, increased stigma in these areas, and less familiarity with welfare eligibility requirements (Brown and Lichter 2004). Welfare participants need to not only get to and from the welfare office, but also may need transportation assistance to get to and from job sites in order to fulfill work requirements.

By utilizing spatial inequality theory there is the potential to highlight the differential experience of poverty and better determine areas in which more funding and services would be best allocated (i.e. greater funding for transportation in rural regions).
Every region and county is faced with unique barriers that may need to be addressed differently (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Brown and Lichter 2004; Lobao 2004). In Ohio, I find that region has a greater effect than population density on welfare-to-work participation. My findings on region add the essential, but largely missing, component of spatial inequalities to the discussion of welfare (Lobao 2004). Lichter and Jayakody (2002) called for a focus on welfare programs in rural regions, which I examine by looking at population density and the geographically distinct regions in both states (NC: Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal; OH: Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southwest, and Southeast). The differences between regions are significant in Ohio for the central region in reference to the southeast region in the complete model. The central region is comprised of more urban areas in contrast to the highly rural Appalachian counties of the southeast region of Ohio. I find that there are significantly higher rates of welfare-to-work participation in the more urbanized central region than the more rural and geographically isolated southeast region counties. Like in rural North Carolina, families experiencing poverty in these areas are less likely to participate in welfare-to-work programs despite their need. However, it is noteworthy that, in Ohio, region is significant even when controlling for population density. Further research is needed to examine the distinct and/or related impact of region and rurality/urbanity on welfare-to-work participation rates.

In addition to place, race matters. In both states, Ohio and North Carolina, race had the largest impact on welfare-to-work participation rates among the eligible population. While the percentage of a county’s population that is Black was important in North Carolina, the percentage of a county’s population that is non-Black racially marginalized in Ohio had the largest effects on welfare-to-work participation. These
findings could be due to a number of reasons including the continual disenfranchisement of racially marginalized people in the US (Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Khosrovani and Ward 2011; Miller 2013).

Women of color, particularly single mothers, are more likely to experience poverty, in addition to having less access to higher education and healthcare than their White counterparts (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Quadagno 1996). In combination with the sizeable effect found for population density in North Carolina and the central region in Ohio, people of color in urban areas often live in more undesirable neighborhoods that lack adequate education and affordable housing (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe 1999). With greater relative need, and greater obstacles to attaining stable gainful employment, it is logical that a county’s eligible racially marginalized population would have higher rates of welfare participation.

While both states highlight the importance of race in examining welfare-to-work participation rates, there is a concentrated emphasis on Blackness present in North Carolina not found in Ohio. North Carolina has a long history of racial deprivation and denial of liberties that may continue to plague the Black population in that state to this day (Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscignio 1997; Luebke 1998). For example, all North Carolina schools did not become integrated until well into the 1970s. This resistance to integration was purposeful as the state provided financial assistance for White children to attend private schools while leaving Black children segregated in public schools (Luebke 1998). Also, gerrymandering of voting districts diminished the voting power of Blacks
and legislative steps were taken to inhibit Black candidates from taking state political office in North Carolina (Luebke 1998). Blacks in North Carolina have had historically very “little voting strength and even less political power, especially in the state’s small towns and rural counties” (Luebke 1998:130).

The differential influence of race on welfare-to-work participation rates in North Carolina and Ohio highlights the need for a spatial analysis of the importance of race. Race has an impact on all social interactions but can affect situations differently from location to another (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). These findings highlight the need to understand the different ways in which race influences various facets of our society. Specifically, future research is needed to focus on the institutional racism in relation to the welfare program and policy, poverty, and the paid labor market.

The study of welfare program participation is an area worthy of further examination. This comparative analysis adds to the literature by incorporating the theoretical focus on the importance of place in an intra and inter-state comparison of welfare-to-work participation rates. However, there are many program and policy nuances still in need of examination in regards to participation. Further examination would be beneficial in regards to the influence of labor market discrimination that may impede the viable alternatives to welfare-to-work program participation. Certain populations (women and people of color) continue to be discriminated against in regards to participation in the US paid labor market (Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Khosrovani and Ward 2011), therefore, further examination of this
phenomena may help to explain the differential participation in welfare-to-work programs by those who are eligible. In the next chapter, I undertake this task.
CHAPTER III
LABOR MARKET DISCRIMINATION AND
WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION

Introduction

In 1935 the welfare program Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) was established in the wake of the Great Depression (Gordon 1994). The original program was created to help women who were deemed “deserving” poor” mothers; White widowers (Gordon 1994; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). In the 1950s and 60s (post-WWII) eligibility was expanded to assist all impoverished mothers of all needy children, and the welfare rolls drastically increased in the reformed ADC, later called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). With this increase in welfare participation, public opinion towards the program became negative and with the increase in Black single mothers receiving aid, the AFDC welfare program came to be seen as a “Black program” (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat 2010; Schram 2005; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Quadagno 1996).

In 1996 President Bill Clinton approved a bill changing the welfare system in the United States. The welfare reform bill was called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) which replaced the AFDC program with Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) program. The goal of the new program was to correct for an impoverished person’s missing work ethic and family values (Handler and Hasenfeld
While these claims were not supported by research, public opinion called for reform to correct these perceived flaws that ostensibly caused individuals to seek welfare assistance in the first place (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Harris and Parisi 2008; Soss and Schram 2007).

There are a myriad of factors that can influence eligible persons participation in the work first program, however, participation is continually an assumed phenomenon. The assumption is that people in poverty will and do participate in any welfare program for which they qualify. In past research, participation itself is not called into question and examined empirically as an essential component of welfare choices and policy. My contribution is a quantitative analytical examination of a topic often ignored in the welfare literature: program participation among eligible families. Utilizing spatial inequalities theory, feminist theory, and critical race theory, in this paper I will examine a number of factors that may affect welfare participation rates at the county level. Building on my prior chapter, I focus here on wage and employment in addition to race/ethnicity, gender, and region. In this chapter, I will examine the impact of spatial inequalities in the paid labor market on welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible individuals in Ohio and North Carolina counties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The PRWORA reform of 1996 made a number of notable changes: funding of the welfare programs was devolved to the states, eligibility requirements became more rigorous, and time limits and work mandates were enacted (Seccombe 1999; Albert 2000; Parisi, et. al. 2003; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and
New welfare-to-work programs emphasize work requirements in exchange for assistance. The goal of the reform, in part, was to increase public support for the program. To do this, policymakers sought to stop intergenerational welfare receipt through assisting impoverished individuals in achieving self-sufficiency by requiring them to work (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi, et. al. 2003). However, studies have found that the reforms of the PRWORA bill have not improved public opinion about public assistance for families experiencing poverty (Soss and Schram 2007), and work requirements and time limits have forced welfare participants into low-paying, dead-end jobs (Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Ridzi 2009).

**Spatial Inequality Theory**

Studying phenomena at the county level allows researchers to directly examine region and the unique circumstance surrounding a particular space that may not be the same in another locale (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004). Spatial inequality theory predicts that there are inequalities unique to differing geographic spaces (Lobao 2004). One of the research questions of concern for spatial inequality scholars is how markers of stratification (e.g., racial composition, industrial composition) vary across geographic space, and how geographic spaces themselves become stratified due to the presence of markers of stratification (Lobao and Saenz 2002; Lobao 2004). Therefore it is essential to highlight the importance of space and to examine topics, such as the welfare-to-work policies and participation, at the sub-national and regional levels.
Labor market conditions and inequalities also vary greatly from one location to the next. Some communities may have a number of industries to choose from while other communities, in particular rural communities, may have been built around one factory or one industry. The varying amount of industrial differences in a particular space can greatly affect the labor market options (Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno, 1996; Lansberry, Taylor and Seale 2015). For example, if you live in a metropolitan area that has many different industrial options for employment, the closure of one manufacturing plant (and consequential laying off of a large number of people) does not have the same disastrous affect as it would on a community had the closing happened in a more geographically secluded area with one factory. The alternative viable options for employment buffer already at risk individuals (and communities) from sustained poverty and long-term unemployment. In sum, income inequality, wages, and the cost of living all vary from one geographic location to another. Not all inequality is created equal and it is therefore essential to examine the importance of spatial labor market inequalities on poverty and welfare-to-work participation.

**Gender Inequalities and the Paid Labor Market**

The rate of poverty is higher for women than it is for men (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Parisi, et. al. 2003). The alarming risk of poverty for single mothers in the United States is more than 35% (Misra, Moller, Strader, and Wemlinger 2012). By far, mothers in poverty have been the group most affected by the PRWORA reform (Ridzi 2009). Welfare reform has focused extensively on moving clients from welfare-to-work under the premise that people of color and women lacking a healthy work ethic and/or moral family values (Ridzi 2009; Rana 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). However, these
views ignore the varying labor market experiences of women and people of color, including the prevalence in discrimination. To make matters potentially worse, the new welfare requirements limit the (already limited) options available to mothers seeking employment, and require them to forfeit their right to choose an occupation (Collins and Mayer 2010). In this way, it can be argued that the TANF program violates the human rights of single mothers experiencing poverty because it restricts their ability to make free employment choices as workers, mothers, and citizens (Rana 2000).

Again, this struggle is heightened due to the fact that women continually face a unique set of labor market challenges (Blau and Kahn 2000; Grodsky and Pager 2001; Cohen and Huffman 2003). Women in poverty are often stuck in low-wage, low-skill, low benefits positions (Ridzi 2009; Parisi et al. 2003; Collins and Mayer 2010; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Feminist approaches to understanding stratification posit that women are in positions of disadvantage due to patriarchal systems that impede their ability to achieve financial success and other resources at the same pace as men. Unequal treatment in the paid labor market, in regards to hiring, wages, type of employment, etc., limits women’s access to power both in the paid labor force and in unpaid labor at home (Blau and Kahn 2000; Grodsky and Pager 2001; Riccucci 2005; Cohen and Huffman 2007; Budig and Hodges 2010).

Women, especially mothers, earn less than men in the paid labor force for numerous reasons. Childcare obligations, perceived lack of commitment to career, gaps in employment for other caregiving obligations and other variations in human capital investments (Blau and Kahn 2000; Budig and England 2001; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Budig and Hodges 2010) constrain women’s chances to succeed in the paid labor
market. The differential accumulation of human capital between men and women serves as barrier to women’s full and equal participation in the paid labor market (Blau and Kahn 2000; Riccucci 2005). Working part-time employment, breaks in employment for all aspects associated with having children, taking jobs that are more flexible to work around child care obligations all impede women’s ability to accumulate equitable human capital as compared to men (Blau and Kahn 2000; Grodsky and Pager 2001; Staff and Mortimer 2012).

Despite these obstacles, the rate of women in the paid labor market has increased. In North Carolina and Ohio, like much of the country, changes in the industrial climates away from manufacturing and agriculture toward the service sector have resulted in more women working though they more often work in low-skill, low-wage positions that do not offer adequate benefits (i.e. insurance) (Ridzi, 2009; Parisi, et. al., 2003; Collins and Mayer, 2010; Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007). Further, the stigma surrounding women’s decisions to work outside the home have decreased (England 1992; Brines 1994; Budig and England 2001). There have also been gains in legal protections for working women regarding hiring and promotion practices, medical benefits, maternity leave, and sexual harassment.

Regardless of these improvements, many inequalities still persist for women, especially mothers, in the paid labor market. While the wage gap has diminished, since the turn of century, there have been little-to-no gains in further closing the gendered wage gap (Blau and Kahn 2007). Despite gains for women, the remaining combination of human capital differences and labor market discrimination result in the continuing gendered wage gap (Blau and Kahn 2000; Grodsky and Pager 2001; Cohen and Huffman
2007). At the institutional level, salary inequity has persisted and has continued to be pervasive in our current social setting (Acker 1990; Bonilla-Silva 1997; Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998). Overall, pay scale settings and other economic rewards are lower for jobs primarily held by women as compared to men (Baron and Newman 1990; Cohen and Huffman 2003). And at the individual level, the personal prejudices of employers and those with authority, most of whom are men (Smith 2002), perpetuate the unequal wage gap between men and women (Marx Ferree and McQuillen 1998; Cohen and Huffman 2007).

**Race and Labor Market Discrimination**

The overlapping systems of oppression faced by women of color negatively affect their experience in the paid labor market (Collins 2000). Throughout the history of the U.S. people of color have experienced racial discrimination with compounding effects which impede full and equal access economically (Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschman 1991; Quadagno 1996; Luebke 1998; Seccombe 1999; Collins 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Khosrovani and Ward 2011). Dating back before the beginning of the Civil War, racist discourse has underlined debates regarding the role of the government in poverty relief (O’Connell 2009; Miller 2013). Rhetoric devaluing and diminishing the capacity of Black people (specifically potentially freed slaves) painted a picture of an incompetent, lazy individual who would not have the intelligence or willingness to work without the potential punishments from slave owners (Kern 1998; O’Connell 2009; Miller 2013). Any discussion of government aid to people in poverty was smeared by a racist campaign.
posed on the inability of the Black population to contribute in the paid labor market (O’Connell 2009; Miller 2013).

Critical race theory holds that every social structure, every interaction, is laced with the complexities of race, racism, and power. Present and past social situations are underscored by inequalities linked to racial divides and hierarchies (Delgado and Stefanic 2001). These concerning relationships are not analyzed passively but rather Critical Race Theory encourages change through activism. The barriers in place to inhibit equal access to and participation in the paid labor market for Black people and other people of color are not new to the social reality (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Delgado and Stefanic 2001). Racism and race-based power relations are as alive now as they were in pre-Civil war and the post-bellum south. We may have changed the discourse and the rhetoric, but critical race theorists would argue that the very foundation of our social order are laced with racism and racial hierarchies that can only be undone from a complete overhaul of the system (Delgado and Stefancic 2001).

This institutional and structural racism (Bonilla-Silva 1997) is evident in the fact that racial discrimination in employment and hiring practices persists in the U.S. paid labor market (Feagin 1991; Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Quadagno 1996; Pager and Shepherd 2008). For example, in the paid labor market, not all names are created equal. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) conducted field experiments in which they examined the differential response to fictitious job applicants with “White-sounding names” (Emily and Greg) versus “African-American-sounding names” (Lakisha and Jamal). Identical fictitious resumes were sent in to real employers in response to real job postings (they responded to over 1300 help-
wanted ads in Chicago and Boston) and the only thing different about the resumes was the name of the job applicant. The researchers found that White-sounding names were favored significantly in every aspect of the selection process over African-American-sounding names (callbacks and interviews for sales, clerical, retail, customer service, and managerial positions). Race based prejudices and discrimination persist as a mechanism of hate and control demeaning the economic chances for people of color.

**Spatial Inequality, Intersectionality, Welfare and Labor Market Discrimination**

It is essential in the topic of labor market participation and welfare research to utilize intersectionality to fully examine the way gender, class, and race are intertwined to produce the policies and issues we find today. Welfare research is an examination of where gender, class and race meet. Intersectionality is the theoretical feminist stance that multiple identities are lived at once, interact, and are so interwoven that none can be fully understood without consideration for all the others (Collins 2000). It states that identities are best understood as an intricate compilation of all identities lived at once (Collins and Mayer 2010). Women of color often find themselves at the losing end of the intersectional binaries of gender, race, and class (Collins 2000). From the paid labor market to the welfare office, without proper safeguards women of color and their children will continue to suffer disproportionally from being at the losing end of these intersections.

The welfare office is not free from the wider social stereotypes and prejudicial perceptions of: women, people of color, people in poverty, criminals, “good workers” and our overall ideal of what an upstanding citizen looks like. Welfare policy and implementation does not exist in a non-gendered, non-racialized, egalitarian bubble
Welfare policy makers and those implementing the welfare-to-work program could improve programs by recognizing this fact. The differential treatment of women and people of color in the paid labor market has come to affect and create the current situation of poverty in the U.S. (Fox-Piven 1998; Ridzi 2009), and thereby could very well shape welfare-to-work participation rates.

I examine the effects of contextual and compositional differences, and differential labor market conditions on welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible people in North Carolina and Ohio counties. I utilize a number of theoretical lenses (spatial, feminist, critical race, intersectional) to increase our understanding gender, race, and class in relation to labor market conditions and welfare participation. By focusing on participation rates in North Carolina and Ohio welfare programs, I hope to uncover the underlined inequalities that impact eligible persons’ decisions to participate in welfare-to-work programs. Therefore, I will contribute an examination of welfare-to-work participation, not as assumed phenomena or a “given” but, as a program that is differentially used by some in poverty to deal with labor market inequalities.

METHODS

This paper serves as an in depth examination of the relationship between paid labor market participation and welfare-to-work participation. This builds upon my previous work examining the differences between states and between counties within states for North Carolina and Ohio. The current study adds a more specified examination of work and the paid labor market in relation to welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible individuals. This is in addition to models focused on county characteristics, region, and demographics of my past research.
By utilizing 2010 census data, this quantitative examination highlights the intricate relationship between welfare-to-work participation and the paid labor force. In both Ohio and North Carolina, I was able to collect data for all counties (less a number of counties that did not report numbers for, or had no, African American people working in their counties in 2010) in regards to income inequality, wage gaps, and gendered participation in paid employment. The focus of this paper is to focus on the components that could effectively impact policy to assist impoverished people gain meaningful help. Therefore for the purpose of this inter and intra-state examination, I will be focusing on the county level characteristics, demographics, and income/employment variables to examine the differing ways inequality is felt in varying regions. Not only does region matter within a particular state (intrastate comparison at the county level) but this concept of spatial inequalities can be even better understood through an inter-state comparison of those differences.

For this research data was primarily collected from 2010 U.S Census data. Focusing on county level statistics, data from the census was compiled into a comprehensive dataset to examine the various facets of welfare participation rates. Supplemental data was gathered from The Ohio State University and the State Board of Education of NC, respectively, to determine appropriate regional distinctions within states. In order to better illustrate the spatial inequalities theoretical drive of this research all data was collected at the county level for both states using 2010 U.S. Census data measurements.

Using primarily U.S. Census data has several advantages. First, with all data coming from the same database (U.S. Census) and the same year I will be better
positioned to make intrastate and interstate comparisons that are both relevant and valid. Secondly, the U.S. census represents it is a total population with all counties within both states (Ohio N=88, and North Carolina N=100) represented. This allows me to examine the relative effects of my standardized coefficients (betas) on eligibility and welfare participation rates rather than needing to make inferences to the population that are inherently flawed. However, with the inclusion of a number of employment and wage variables there is a number of missing data reported for some counties (missing data: OH n=24; NC n=10). The data was missing due to lack of a Black population and/or employed Black people in those counties. For the purpose of this missing data I have chosen to do a listwise deletion in which the counties that are missing any variable are deleted from examination in all the models. This is for consistency of findings across models and a more detailed examination of the missing counties will be in the following chapter.

Measures

In this chapter welfare program participation rates are examined at the county level. Due to the variation in welfare programs and policies within each state, it is essential to examine region, gender, race, wages, employment, and other factors that may affect welfare participation at the intrastate level (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Luebke 1998). It is important to examine issues utilizing this intermediate level of analysis (i.e. county level) to begin to uncover some of the unforeseen reasons for the socioeconomic inequalities of a region (Lobao 2004; Parisi, et. al. 2003). However, building upon that notion, the next step to further this research is to compare those in-state variations at an inter-state level. This allows me to examine if the intra-state spatial inequalities observed in one state are
distinct from the intra-state spatial inequalities we examine in other locales. The purpose of this study is to expand on past research to include the impact of the paid labor market inequalities in relation to welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible people between counties within states and between states.

**Dependent variable.** My dependent variable for this analysis is the percentage of qualifying households in a county that are financially eligible in 2010 to receive welfare and who did receive welfare cash assistance that year. In order to construct this dependent variable, eligibility was determined if a household income for 2010 was below the poverty threshold and only consisting of those households that had children living in the home under the age of 18. This variable (‘%EligibleOnRolls’) is an approximate rate of qualifying households that received Work First benefits in 2010 in both North Carolina and Ohio counties (see Table 4 for descriptive statistics).

It is important to note that some counties have different income requirements in order to qualify for welfare assistance (i.e. meets absolute poverty threshold, within 150% poverty threshold, within 200% poverty threshold). By choosing to only focus on households that fall below the absolute poverty threshold, this dependent variable is a conservative measure of eligibility. However, by falling below this absolute threshold, these are the households most in need of assistance and who could benefit most from any income assistance afforded to them. Still, even when examining the most poverty stricken of households, we see a very relatively low rate of welfare-to-work participation rates in both North Carolina (mean= 11.53%) and Ohio (mean= 16.59%).
Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Sources for All Variables (NC n=90; OH n=64)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NORTH CAROLINA</th>
<th></th>
<th>OHIO</th>
<th></th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV-% Eligible on Rolls</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>26.99</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>43.18</td>
</tr>
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<td>Unemployment Rate Industry</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>61.39</td>
<td>89.32</td>
<td>79.69</td>
<td>71.48</td>
<td>83.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures Republican Winner</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Density NC-Coastal Region</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Density NC-Piedmont Region</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH-Southeast</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH-Northeast</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH-Northwest</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH-Central</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH-Southwest Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>17.27</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Black (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>61.88</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>29.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>40.74</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>8.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Wage Gap</td>
<td>48.67</td>
<td>104.38</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>63.63</td>
<td>82.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Wage Gap</td>
<td>30.01</td>
<td>182.1</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>153.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Female Employ-FT</td>
<td>12.88</td>
<td>44.39</td>
<td>31.18</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>76.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenderXrace Wage Gap</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>166.32</td>
<td>79.89</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanatory variables.

Model 1: County characteristics. There are a number of county level characteristics that theoretically should be included in any discussion of welfare
participation. Examining the political climate in each county and counties’ expenditures on welfare programs serve as essential markers of differentiation that could impact welfare participation. Expenditures, for example, may affect the quality of services that can be provided by the county’s welfare office and therefore may affect an eligible individuals’ willingness to become a participant. ‘Expenditures’ was measured as the percentage of a county’s total budget that was used for Human Services programs (i.e. welfare programs and other public welfare programs to support the poor).

Understanding a county’s political climate is essential because of the influence politics can have on welfare reform, policies and implementation (Soss and Schram 2007; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Schram 2005; Luebke 1998). Political climate of each county was calculated using the majority voting behavior of each county for U.S. Senator Election in 2010. The political affiliation of the U.S. senator as voted for by each county not only speaks to the intrastate political climate, but also can be replicated in an interstate analysis. The dummy variable (‘Republican Winner’) indicated the majority of the county voted for a Republican U.S. Senator with counties that voted for a Democratic U.S. Senator as the reference category.

**Model 2: Region.** With a theoretical focus on the impact of spatial inequalities in welfare research, region becomes especially important. This is due to the great variations in welfare programs not only nationally between states but between counties within states (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi et. al., 2003; Lobao 2004; Brown and Lichter 2004; Albert 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Debertin and Infanger 1988). Population density is one of the measures I used to examine region by determining how rural or urban a county is. The population density measure best allocates the detailed variation in
urban/ruralness within small geographical units (i.e. counties) (Long, Rain, and Ratcliffe 2001). In my preliminary analysis of North Carolina and Ohio, population density was the most consistent measure of place; for these reasons, I included (‘Population Density’) in the analysis of this replication paper.

There are three distinct regions in North Carolina and five in Ohio. In North Carolina the three regions are: the Mountain (western), Piedmont (central), and Coastal (eastern) parts of the state (Luebke, 1998; as categorized by the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education in North Carolina (see Figure 5). The five distinct regions of Ohio are: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central (as categorized by The University of Akron Bliss Institute; see Figure 6). For the region variable in both states, I measured region as a dummy variable. For the sake of parsimony, in both states I chose the region that had the most rural counties to be my reference categories (Mountain region in NC; Southeast region in OH).

![Figure 5. Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions.](image)
Model 3: Labor market factors. In counties where unemployment is high there may be less viable alternatives to public assistance. The ‘Unemployment Rate’ is measured as the percentage of the working population who are receiving unemployment benefits as reported by the 2010 US Department of Agriculture. These individuals are actively looking for work and they receive time limited aid. Industrial differentiation (‘IndustryDiff’) examines how much variation or concentration there is for paid employment in each county. This variable is calculated as the percentage of total employment accounted for by the two largest industries (of the 10 possible industries based on two-digit NAICS industrial sector codes) in each county in 2010. The figure is calculated such that the higher the number, the more differentiation in employment by industry. Possible scores for industrial differentiation range from 50 (no differentiation) to 100 (high differentiation). This score highlights the variation in potential options for
employment. In counties with more differentiation there may be the possibility for employment where counties with very little differentiation may be more at risk to mass layoffs and lack of alternative employment options. Income inequality is another factor that can impact poverty and be impacted by labor market inequalities. I measure income inequality using the Gini coefficient (‘Gini Index’) because it is a widely used indicator of income inequality and has been found to be a reliable measure across differing populations (Deininger and Squire 1996).

**Model 4: Gender and employment inequality.** In model 4 I add measures of gender because in addition to race, gender inequalities in county demographics and the paid labor force may impact welfare-to-work participation rates. County demographics of gender add an essential social component to understanding the variations in those most likely to be welfare participants, impoverished women and their subsequent children. I measure gender as the percentage of all households in a county that are in poverty and headed by single mothers (‘Poor Single Moms’). Women and children in poverty make up the majority of welfare-to-work participants (Collins and Mayer 2010). Low-income mothers face a unique set of challenges in the paid-labor market and are often burdened with being the sole providers for their children (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010; Brown and Lichter 2004; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ahn 2012). The ‘Poor Single Moms’ variable was calculated as the proportion of single female-headed households with children under 18 years of age with an income below the poverty level out of the total number of families with children under 18 years of age in Ohio (as reported by 2010 US Census Bureau ACS 5 year estimates: 2006-2010). To measure gender inequalities in the paid labor force I included the gender wage gap in
each county. This was calculated by taking the cumulative average income for women working full-time divided by the cumulative average income for men working full-time as reported in the 2010 US Census.

**Model 5: Race and ethnicity.** Race plays a large role in a number of aspects that affect various components of welfare and welfare-to-work participation. For example, race is related to politics, public opinions of welfare, welfare policy, and possibly even welfare implementation (Gilens 1995; Gilens 1996; Luebke 1998; Schram 2005; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011). In model 4 I include a number of indicators for race and ethnicity. Ethnicity was measured as the percentage of the county population that self-identify as Hispanic (‘% Hispanic) in the 2010 U.S. Census. I did not include the specification of race in this ethnicity variable but rather left it as the percent Hispanic, with the percent self-identifying as non-Hispanic as the reference category.

Race was measured as the percentage of the county population that self-identify as non-Hispanic Black (‘% Black’) and the percentage of the county population that self-identify as any non-Hispanic “other” race (‘% Other Race’) (other than White or Black) on the 2010 U.S. census. The non-Hispanic Black population in North Carolina counties ranges from 0.11% to 61.88% (mean = 20.6%) and ranges from 0.0% to 29.18% in Ohio counties (mean = 3.97%). The percentage of the total population who self-identify as any race other than non-Hispanic White or Black in North Carolina counties ranges from 0.05% to 40.74% (mean = 3.91%), and ranges from 0.77% to 6.5% in Ohio counties (mean = 2.44%). To measure race inequalities in the paid labor force I included the Black/White race wage gap in each county. This is calculated by taking the cumulative
average income for African-Americans working full-time divided by the cumulative average income for White people working full-time as reported in the 2010 US census.

**Model 6: Intersection of gender and race.** To examine the intersection of gender and race in labor market inequalities I created measures for full-time employment rates for Black women (‘BlackFemaleEmploy-FT), and the average Black women’s income as a proportion of White women’s income (‘GenderXraceWageGap’). Black female full-time employment is measured as the percentage of Black women who are employed full-time divided by all working age (ages 16-65) Black women. The genderXrace wage gap was calculated as the cumulative average income for Black women working full-time divided by the cumulative average income for White women working full-time as reported in the 2010 US Census. There are a number of counties in both states (OH=24; NC=10) that report missing data for these variables due to a lack of racial diversity or diversified employment. The counties with missing data are listwise deleted from all models in this chapter and these racially homogenous missing counties will be the focus of the following chapter.

**Analytic Strategy**

My method of analysis was ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. I chose this method due to the relatively small population size (North Carolina N=100; Ohio N=88) and my continuous dependent variable (Noreen, 1988). I analyzed eligibility and welfare participation inductively, with a final focus on the following three groupings: county characteristics, region/rurality, and gender and race with each grouping layered in sequentially.
Table 5

Regression Estimates for Ohio labor Market Inequalities and Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates (n=64)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.292*</td>
<td>.339**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>-.115</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.140</td>
<td>-.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Density (ln)</td>
<td>.286*</td>
<td>.292*</td>
<td>.394*</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.249</td>
<td>-.215</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>-.109</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>-.235</td>
<td>-.163</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.156</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff.</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>-.296*</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.156</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>-.353**</td>
<td>-.269</td>
<td>-.259</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Wage Gap</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>-.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>-.093</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>.596***</td>
<td>.617***</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Race Wage Gap</td>
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<td>.205</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R-Square</td>
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<td>.226</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>.464</td>
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<td>.019</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers are reported as standardized coefficients (Betas)

***sig.<.01, **sig.<.05, *sig.<.10

In all models I included the standardized coefficients and indicators of statistical significance. For the purpose of this research, however, I am examining a population not a sample and statistical significance is not as important (Cortina and Dunlap, 1997). The p-value is still included in my tables because it does illuminate the variables with the greatest explanatory magnitude. When examining a population, the standardized coefficients provide more explanatory power of my independent variables relative effect.
on welfare-to-work participation rates. The focus of my research is to understand the relationship between various independent factors and the welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible persons across counties and states. Since I am utilizing a population instead of a sample, no inferences are needed to ascertain how the population would be affected by my variables. I am able to compare relative effect size without the possibility of error inherent in examining samples (Vacha-Haase and Thompson, 1998).

Table 6


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<td>-.382***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.146</td>
<td>-.114</td>
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<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
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Note: Numbers are reported as standardized coefficients (Betas)

***sig.<.01, **sig.<.05, *sig.<.10
The primary focus of this examination is on how county characteristics, demographics, and labor market inequalities affect welfare-to-work participation rates. Tables 5 and 6 display the results from OLS regression analyses for both Ohio and North Carolina respectively. The full models help explain over 46% of the variance in Ohio (R-square= .464) and 32% of the variance in North Carolina (R-square= .321) in welfare-to-work participation rates.

In model 1, I introduce political indicators—the percent of county expenditures allocated toward human and social services in 2010, and whether the county voted for a Republican US Senator in 2010—to examine their effects on welfare-to-work participation rates. These variables ability to explain variation in participation rates is greater in North Carolina (R-square= .142) than Ohio (R-square= .010). In North Carolina voting Republican has a significant negative association with participation rates (B= -.313; b= -3.107; error=1.016; p=.003). This indicates that welfare-to-work participation rates among those eligible are lower in North Carolina counties that are more politically conservative.

In model 2, I add measures of population density (In) and region within each state (OH: Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, Central with Southeast as the reference category; NC: Central and Piedmont with Mountain region as the reference group). In Ohio this second model adds to the explanatory power for participation rates (f-change=1.52, sig=.199) and explains 12.8% of the variance (R-square= .128). In Ohio, population density has a significant positive relationship with welfare-to-work participation rates (B=.286; b=1.654; error=.921; p=.078). This finding supports the idea that in Ohio
counties that are more urban there are higher welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible individuals. In North Carolina the explanatory power improves slightly (R-square=.174; Sig. F Change=.367) and more conservative political leaning (Republican winner) remains significantly negatively associated with participation rates (B= -.286; p=.007).

The third model adds various indicators of labor market inequalities such as unemployment rates, industrial differentiation and the Gini index for each county. When I add these variables, the model improves the explanatory power in both Ohio (F-Change=2.23; Sig. F-Change=.096) and North Carolina (F-Change=5.71; Sig. F-Change=.001). In Ohio, the explanatory power of this third model is over 22% and both population density (B=.292; b=1.69; error= 1.18; p=.097) and the Gini index (B= -.296; b= -57.7; error=34.4; p=.09) have significant associations with welfare-to-work participation rates. These results indicate that in Ohio counties that are more urban and have less income inequality there is greater welfare-to-work participation among those eligible. In North Carolina industry differentiation (B=.409; b=.324; error=.087; p=.000) and unemployment (B=.341; b=.732; error=.250; p=.004) both have significant positive associations with welfare-to-work participation. In areas that are more diverse in regards to employment options but that also have higher unemployment, there are higher welfare participation rates. In this model, Republican winner remains significant (B= -.363; b= -3.6; error=1.07; p=.001) and counties that vote more conservatively are associated with lower welfare-to-work participation.

In model 4, the inclusion of gender variables (percentage of families headed by single mothers and the gendered wage gap) helps to explain 28.2% of variation in
participation rates in Ohio and 32% in North Carolina. The percent of the population who are single mothers in poverty is negatively related to participation rates in both states but has a significant negative association in Ohio (B= -.353; b= -143.8; error=71.7; p=.05).

Seemingly contradictory, the greater the percentages of families headed by single mothers, the lower welfare participation rates are among eligible families. In both states, the gendered wage gap is negatively associated, although not significantly, with welfare-to-work participation rates. This means the higher the wage gap between men and women employed full time, the lower the participation rate.

The fifth model adds race and ethnicity variables. Included are: percent Hispanic, percent non-Hispanic Black population, percent non-Hispanic other racial group population, and the race wage gap. This addition significantly improves the fit in Ohio (OH: F-change=3.5; Sig. F-change=.014; NC: F-change=.796; Sig. F-change=.531). The percent of non-Hispanic “other” races population has the largest significant effect in Ohio with a beta of .596 (b=2.9; error=.88; p=.002) and is positively associated with welfare-to-work participation. In this fourth model population density falls out of significance and human services expenditures is significantly and positively associated with participation rates (B=.292; b=.219; error=.12; p=.073). In Ohio counties that spend a higher percentage of the county’s budget on human services programs and have higher percentages of other non-Black non-Hispanic racially marginalized populations have greater welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible persons.

In North Carolina the percent of other non-Black non-Hispanic residents has virtually no effect. The percent of African Americans in the population, however, has a positive effect with a beta of .315 (p=.68). This effect remains significant in the
subsequent model, suggesting that counties with more African American residents have higher rates of welfare-to-work participation in North Carolina counties. In addition to this significant association, the unemployment rate (B=.348; b=.747; error=.283; p=.10) and industrial differentiation (B=.343; b=.272; error=.099; p=.008) also have a significant positive relationship with welfare-to-work participation rates in North Carolina. With the inclusion of race and ethnicity variables, the impact of politics diminishes (B= -.276; p=.058) but remains significant.

The final model examines the intersection of the previous two models with variables encompassing both gender and race: the Black women’s employment rate (the percent of Black women who are employed full-time divided by the percent employable aged Black women (16-65)) and the wage gap for Black women as compared to White women. I find that the complete model explains over 46% of the variance in Ohio (F-change=.729; Sig. F-change=.488) and over 38% of the variance in North Carolina (F-change=2.19; Sig. F-change=.119) of welfare-to-work participation rates. In Ohio the inclusion of these two variables does not drastically change the meaningful variables that affect participation rates, it remains a story of “other” races and spending (% Other non-Hispanic and human services expenditures remaining significant). In North Carolina Black women’s employment rate has a significant positive effect on welfare-to-work participation (B=.235; b=.155; error=.084; p=.069). In addition to this, percent non-Hispanic Black (B=.292; b=.079; error=.055; p=.1), unemployment rates (B=.389;  

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1 I also examined the gap in employment between Black women and White women. This was calculated as the proportion of employed Black women out of all employable aged Black women divided by the proportion of employed White women out of all employable aged White women. This was also found to be significantly related to welfare-to-work participation rates in NC. By including both I was over-controlling and had to pick one to include in this examination. With an employment gap mean of .99 in NC and .94 in Ohio, it was apparent that Black women’s employment rate was quite close to white women’s. Therefore, I include the Black Female employment rate as a measure of genderXrace inequality.
and industrial differentiation (B=.341; b=.27; error=.098; p=.007) remain significantly associated with welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible individuals.

**DISCUSSION**

The study of program participation remains largely ignored in the welfare literature. In this quantitative study I examine the impact of paid labor market inequalities, county political and economic characteristics and demographics on welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible families. In North Carolina I find a more consistent story highlighting the importance of politics, unemployment and race. In Ohio the narrative is more varied, highlighting population density, income inequality, gender and race as having a fluctuating impact on welfare-to-work participation rates. These intrastate and interstate comparative findings carry important implications for welfare-to-work policies and program implementation in order to more acutely assist families struggling with poverty.

In both Ohio and North Carolina welfare-to-work program participation among the eligible families is extremely low (OH=16.6%; NC=11.5%). Popular opinion demonizes low-income single mothers as deliberate thieves taking advantage of welfare assistance whenever possible (Seccombe 1998; Hancock 2004; Soss and Schram 2007). My findings paint a different story, as the vast majority of eligible families do not receive welfare-to-work cash assistance. However, if welfare is supposed to serve as a safety net for at risk families it cannot be affective if such a large proportion of families in need are not receiving assistance. Changes in program policy and implementation have been driven by the objective of reducing the rolls (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009;
Collins and Mayer 2010), which seems to have worked pretty effectively given these findings. However, if the goal is to help at-risk low-income women and children, the low participation rates are startling. The US poverty rate continues to linger around 14.5% (US Census 2015) and unemployment around 5.5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015), yet there remains such a larger proportion of at-risk families going without aid. The current welfare-to-work program would benefit from reexamining current policies to account for spatial inequalities associated with the paid labor market and county-level contextual factors that impact impoverished families.

**County-level Characteristics and Welfare Participation**

Poverty is experienced and felt differently depending on one’s geographical location (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004; Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Brown and Lichter 2004). In Ohio, areas that are more rural and have a lower population density have lower welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible people. The effect of population density on program participation among eligible individuals may be due to a myriad of reasons. Primarily, single mothers in rural regions may face a unique set of circumstances that may inhibit their ability to become welfare participants (Brown and Lichter 2004; Parisi, et. al. 2003). Some such challenges include lack of transportation, increased stigma, and less knowledge of welfare eligibility (Brown and Lichter 2004).

One limitation of this current examination is the presence of missing data particularly in regards to counties that are rural, geographically isolated, and predominately White. So when making these comparisons I am losing the counties that are most reflective of geographic and racial isolation (of Whites). However, in the conservative measures accounting for only the counties that remain, I still find that
counties that are more rural and White have lower welfare-to-work participation rates. Future research is needed to examine the unique impact of race, place, and other county characteristics on welfare-to-work participation in the missing counties.

In both states, Ohio and North Carolina, I find that issues in employment and wages impact welfare participation rates. In Ohio income inequality significantly negatively impacts welfare-to-work participation rates. In counties that have greater income inequality (as reported using the Gini index) there is lower welfare-to-work participation among eligible poor families. One explanation of this finding is stronger stigmas associated to welfare receipt in areas with high income inequality (Deininger and Squire 1996). Further research is needed to understand this relationship as it is, unfortunately, beyond my data. However, in order for welfare policy makers to help those in poverty to become self-sufficient, policies should deviate away from punitive measures to reducing rolls and instead focus on limiting income inequality.

I find that the unemployment rate has opposite effects in North Carolina (positive) and Ohio (negative). The unemployment rate is the number of people receiving unemployment benefits. While beyond my data, there are some possible reasons for these differing effects. In North Carolina the positive relationship may speak to the overall economic crisis happening NC counties. If there are fewer opportunities for employment, then unemployment and welfare-to-work participation might be the only options for families to survive. However, it is noteworthy that both of these forms of welfare are temporary and have strict federal time limits. In Ohio the negative relationship may be indicative of the persistent poverty that lasts beyond the unemployment time limits. In these Ohio counties, families may only reach out for cash assistance once all the
unemployment aid is gone. Given unemployment is often less stigmatized than cash assistance, this may be the case. Clearly further research is needed to better understand these contrasting effects of unemployment in these two states.

In North Carolina, I find lower welfare-to-work participation rates in counties with a larger White population and more Republican voters. Conservative ideals toward welfare programs include limiting access, restricting eligibility, reducing the rolls, and stigmatizing participations (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011) can negatively impact welfare-to-work participation rates. It is likely that those in power at the county level affect the culture and capacity of welfare participation more so than attitudes among populations experiencing poverty. Even with the missing counties (that are particularly rural, mountainous, and White) I find that conservative political ideals retain a negative association with participation rates highlighting the pervasiveness of a conservative culture (Lansberry, Taylor and Seale 2015) on assisting families in poverty.

**Gendered and Raced Impacts on Welfare-to-Work Participation**

In North Carolina the percentage of a county’s Black population had, overall, the largest effect on welfare-to-work participation rates. The poverty rate of Black people (10.2%) is more than double that of their White counterparts (4.7%) (US Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2015) and the poverty rate of Black single mothers is highest (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Black single mothers experience greater labor force discrimination, and less access to higher education and healthcare than their White counterparts (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Quadagno 1996). In combination with the positive association with population density and county politics in North Carolina, Black people can often live in
more liberal urbanized areas, but also areas or neighborhoods deemed undesirable due to inadequate education and lack of available affordable housing (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe 1999). With greater relative need and greater obstacles to attaining stable gainful employment, it is logical that a county’s eligible poor Black population would have higher rates of welfare-to-work participation.

Race has a significant impact on welfare-to-work participation rates in Ohio as well, but in a different way. Instead of the race binary of “Black” and “White” as it is in North Carolina, in Ohio the percent of the county population that is any other race besides White or Black (and non-Hispanic) has a significant positive effect on welfare-to-work participation rates. Present racial discrimination in employment and hiring practices inhibits equitable quality of participation in the paid labor force for all people of color (Quadagno 1996; Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991). Much like the work done by women, jobs held by people of color receive less rewards, are undervalued and underpaid (Baron and Newman 1990; Hodson and Sullivan 1995). Racially marginalized groups also have less job authority as compared to Whites (Smith 2002). Discrimination, at both the institutional and individual level, inhibits the opportunities for people of color to achieve equality in the paid labor force (Williams 1992; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009).

Understanding the impact of the labor market on welfare participation is of paramount importance. The labor market serves as an arena that could support women such that they are never faced with the difficult decisions regarding welfare participation. However, the patriarchal and racial structure of paid labor reinforces women’s and people
of color’s marginalized position in the market overall. Throughout history women, particularly women of color, have been limited to low-paying service, factory or agricultural positions in the U.S. labor market (Hodson and Sullivan 1995). When looking for alternatives to welfare participation, women find themselves faced with a unique set of labor market challenges. Hiring and promotion opportunities for women are limited by perceived familial obligations (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Budig and England 2001; Staff and Mortimer 2012). I find that in Ohio counties with a higher percentage of all households that are female-headed households under the poverty threshold, there are lower welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible families. This refutes the existing notion that low-income women will just flock to the welfare office instead of seeking employment.

Also contesting existing views regarding welfare participants, I find that even when a higher percent of Black women are employed full-time there are higher participation rates in those North Carolina counties. It has been found that Black women are more likely to be employed, work more hours, are more likely to work full-time than their White counterparts (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Hodson and Sullivan 1995; Quadagno 1996; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Ridzi 2009). I find that supported in my North Carolina data, refuting the notion that the welfare program is a “Black program”. Despite larger proportions of Black women employed full-time, the jobs available in these counties may be inadequate in meeting families’ basic needs. Consequently, even when higher percentages of Black women are working full-time there remain higher numbers of Black women still eligible for and in need of welfare-to-work assistance.
My findings raise important questions regarding how welfare policies and program implementation should differ across locations to best address the needs of families in poverty. In each state, region, and county, low-income families are faced with unique barriers that may need to be addressed differently (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004; Brown and Lichter 2004). With the current block grant funding provided under the PRWORA reform, greater attention can be paid by county-level policy implementers to address local-level specific issues (Parisi, et. al. 2003; Albert 2000). Counties with higher rural or urban populations face very different obstacles to self-sufficiency. These findings in Ohio and North Carolina also highlight the differing impacts of race and gender on welfare participation. Similarly, something as seemingly clear as unemployment can have differing effects on welfare-to-work participation rates from one location to the next, as it does in North Carolina and Ohio. The autonomy afforded to the state and county levels due to block grant funding needs to be utilized in a way to maximize, not minimize, the amount of assistance provided to those in poverty.
CHAPTER IV
WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPATION RATES IN THE
CONTEXT OF WHITE, RURAL POVERTY

Introduction

In 1996 welfare cash assistance programs underwent drastic changes with the enactment of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) welfare reform. The reform created the new and present Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program. This new welfare-to-work program enacted time limits and work requirements the purpose of which was two-fold: to ease the negative connotation attached to welfare and to subside the overwhelming opposition to welfare programs of the past. Explicit goals of the new welfare-to-work program included correcting perceived “missing work ethic” and “missing family values” that have historically been believed inherent and rampant among impoverished families (Newitz and Wray 1997; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010).

Negative public opinion was a driving force for an overhaul of the welfare system (Quadagno 1996; Schram 2005; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Schram 2009). The belief that welfare cash assistance had become a “Black program” was wrought with racial tension and animosity. The social imagery of the “welfare queen” living lawlessly and prosperously in the ghetto thanks to welfare fraud, theft, and
deceit, created a racial underpinning resulting in reforms (Quadagno 1996; Seccombe, James, and Walters 1998; Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008). In the recent welfare reform, overt racist sentiments were replaced by covert racist language regarding participant’s laziness, lack of motivation, missing work ethic, sub-par education, and poor family planning (Gilens 1996; Nuebeck and Cazenave 2001; Hancock 2004). The largely race-based objections to welfare cash assistance have not dissipated with the new more punitive welfare-to-work policies. For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the locations in which these racist sentiments towards Blacks cannot be used as scapegoat for understanding welfare participation. I will examine welfare-to-work participation rates in counties that are predominately White (lack a sizeable population of people of color) in Ohio and North Carolina.

This chapter contributes to our knowledge of welfare and racially homogenous places, which is under-explored and under-theorized. What we know about White poverty is based largely on place specific rich ethnographic work (see Sherman 2009 for exemplar). There is no literature, that I am aware of, that examines White-only poverty quantitatively or across place. Through intrastate county and interstate comparisons, this chapter is a step in the direction toward a more well-rounded understanding of rural poverty, Whiteness, and welfare-to-work participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Welfare participation in-of-itself is an under-examined and largely misunderstood aspect of the welfare system (for a notable exception see Parisi, McLaughlin, Grice, Taquino, and Gill, 2003). In the welfare research literature, participation is often
assumed. The assumption centers on the belief that most people who are eligible for welfare assistance (and even some who go above and beyond to lie to meet eligibility requirements) are epidemically lining up at the welfare office to receive aid (Ridzi 2009). However, I find that not to be the case. In both states I examine, North Carolina and Ohio, the participation rate is extremely low (11.5% and 16.6% respectively). I find that in the counties included in this examination have even lower participation rates (NC=5.4%; OH=15.6%). Stigma associated with government assistance, differing degrees of perceived need, and greater physical barriers due to geographic isolation all impact welfare-to-work participation rates in rural, White, and/or Appalachian areas (Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2001; Hartigan 2003; Sherman 2009; Lichter and Graefe 2011; Henderson and Tickamyer 2015).

**Ruralness and Spatial Inequality Theory**

Local differences in program policies and implementations make regional-level examination of welfare participation essential. Spatial inequality theory highlights the importance of place and geographic differences for addressing issues of poverty and (dis)advantage (Lobao and Saenz 2002; Lobao 2004; Weber, Duncan and Whitener, 2005). Given county programs and context variations, the study of welfare at the county level allows for the acute examination of spatial inequalities as impactful measures (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi, et. al. 2003; Lobao 2004). In this study I examine welfare participation rates in predominately White counties through an intrastate and interstate comparison of Ohio and North Carolina. Studying phenomena at the county level will allow for the direct examination of region and the unique circumstances surrounding a particular space that may differ from another locale (Lichter and Jayakody
Welfare-to-work programs and potential welfare participants vary greatly from one location to the next. Therefore, examining the impact of spatial inequalities on poverty, welfare policies, and welfare participation rates is a necessary and important endeavor.

Rural places and the people who live in them can be incredibly diverse (Thorne, Tickamyer and Thorne 2004; Lichter and Graefe 2011). The assumption that all rural communities are relatively homogenous and/or experience similar inequalities is false. Spatial inequality theory is imperative to any examination focused on the variations from urban to rural places and, especially, from one rural location to the next (Lobao, Hooks and Tickamyer 2007). While the focal counties are not racially diverse, spatial inequalities still creates differences in these predominantly White, rural areas. For instance, the differential impact of rural poverty can create a diverse population within and between rural areas with varying degrees of need and subsequent welfare-to-work participation.

Weber, Duncan, and Whitener (2001) examined the variant impact of welfare reform in rural areas. The authors found that unique challenges faced by poor families in rural areas (i.e. lower average earnings, higher seasonal employment, lower educational attainment, less work support services, etc.) did impact differential usage of welfare assistance as compared to urban and suburban areas. They found that rural workers were more likely to reenter welfare programs; potentially due to greater seasonal work. Single mothers, in particular, had lower levels of education and were less likely to gain employment than their urban counterparts. Spatial inequalities influence experience in the paid labor force and subsequent need for welfare as a safety net (Smith and Tickamyer
Findings in this literature highlight the need for more placed-based strategies of addressing welfare policy, funding, and program implementations to address the unique challenges of poverty and welfare in rural areas (Weber, Duncan, and Whitener 2001).

The paid labor market varies drastically within and between rural places. Rural communities are often geographically isolated and dependent on few industrial options for employment (Lichter and Graefe 2011). Therefore, residents of these areas are more vulnerable to economic changes than their urban or suburban counterparts (Smith and Tickamyer 2011; Lichter and Graefe 2011). Rural employment is often now concentrated in minimum-wage and part-time jobs, where there is greater seasonal work, lower average earnings, and is often coupled with less formal education and fewer work support programs (Weber, Duncan, and Whitener 2001; Lichter and Graefe 2011; Smith and Tickamyer 2011). In today’s economy, very few people residing in rural areas work on farms (14%) (Lichter and Graefe 2011), and increasingly more rural people are employed in low-wage service positions (Smith and Tickamyer 2011). The decline of well-paying manufacturing or extracting occupations has crippled many economies in rural regions (Lichter and Graefe 2011). Even with numerous economic barriers to full participation in the paid labor force, many citizens in rural areas resist welfare-to-work participation at all costs (Sherman 2009). In areas where the importance of subsistence, such as historically farming communities, a strong work ethic exists in complete contrast to public opinion/perceptions of welfare recipients as lazy (Sherman 2009), the economic consequences of poverty seem miniscule compared to the social consequences of welfare participation (Rank and Hirschl 1993).
White Othering, Poverty, and Welfare Stigma

Race, privilege, and racism are interwoven into the current welfare-to-work program, just like any other government program. Even when examining the program in counties that have very few to no people of color, the impact and pervasiveness of race and racism cannot be eradicated. Therefore critical race theory remains a driving theoretical focus of this current examination. Critical race theory underscores the importance of acknowledging race, racism and power within the broader context of all social interactions (i.e. economics, history, laws, groups, etc.) (Delgado 1995; Henderson and Tickamyer 2015). Racism is something that can only be critically utilized by the dominant group (i.e. Whites in US society) (Wray 2013). However, poor rural Whites who have been disenfranchised and made separate through a process of othering, feel the impact of race and power in a very different way (Newitz and Wray 1997; Wray 2013). The implementation of White othering calls into question the belief of Whiteness as a homogenous group of dominance and power.

Stigmatization of welfare participants is especially high in rural areas (Rank and Hirschl 1993; Lichter and Graefe 2011). Sherman (2009) found that families residing in rural areas express pride in their ability to be self-sufficient in the absence of high-prestige and high-income employment. While often faced with insurmountable economic barriers, the reliance on strong “moral capital” becomes increasingly important for impoverished families living in rural areas. Receiving welfare cash assistance exists in opposition of the accumulation of said moral capital by undermining the emphasis on having a strong work ethic (Sherman 2009).
Stigmatization is not just about colorblind work ethic though, but is instead racialized work ethic. For instance, Wray (2006) discusses the use of specific derogatory labels such as “White trash” as a stigmatype to effectively stereotype and negatively characterize low-income white people (LaVigne 2008). Terms like “White trash,” “hillbilly,” and “redneck” serve as a distinct other existing in opposition to and in subordination of traditional Whiteness (Newitz and Wray 1997; Hartigan 2003; Thorne et. al. 2004; Smith 2004; Wray 2006; Wray 2013). The act of othering in the context of Whiteness is to create a distinction between those who are deserving of privilege versus undeserving (Newitz and Wray 1997; Hartigan 2003). The usage of race- and class-based derogatory terms (i.e. “white trash”) serves as a tool by the dominant group to further subordinate poor White women receiving welfare assistance while marginalizing Black women through “welfare queen” rhetoric (Henderson and Tickamyer 2015).

Overall, the particularly high stigmatization attached to welfare receipt in rural areas results in lower welfare-to-work participation in these rural locations (Sherman 2009; Lansberry, Taylor and Seale 2015).

This current research gives me the opportunity to focus on rural poverty and welfare participation through a quantitative comparative analysis. By examining the counties in Ohio (n=24) and North Carolina (n=10) that are predominantly White and rural, this study will serve as an exploratory examination of varying spatial inequalities within and across these focal locations. These findings will begin to shed light on the unique relative disadvantages faced within and between rural areas and congruent implications for welfare policy, funding, and program implementation.
METHODS

This paper is as an exploratory examination of welfare-to-work participation in Ohio and North Carolina’s predominantly White counties (n=24; n=10 respectively). This current research builds upon my previous work examining labor market inequalities and welfare participation in Ohio and North Carolina. The current study adds an exploratory examination of the counties that were excluded from the previous chapter/research due to missing data. The counties were excluded, specifically, due to a lack of any Black women employed full-time. Analyses in this chapter will focus on the county-level characteristics, demographics, and appropriate labor market factors that could potentially impact welfare-to-work participation rates in the absence of sizeable populations of people of color.

This quantitative examination highlights the intricate relationship between welfare-to-work participation, the paid labor force, and locational differences in geographically and racially isolated areas. In both Ohio and North Carolina, I was able to collect data for all counties that report having no Black women working full-time in 2010 (OH n=24; NC=10). The welfare program has long been stigmatized as a “Black program” in which inner-city women of color are demonized as the sole beneficiaries of welfare assistance. The purpose of this interstate and intrastate examination is to explore facets of welfare participation rates in the absence of sizeable Black populations. For this research data was primarily collected from 2010 U.S Census data. Focusing on county-level statistics, data from the census was compiled into a comprehensive dataset to examine the various facets of welfare participation rates. Supplemental data was gathered from The Ohio State University and the State Board of Education of NC,
respectively, to determine appropriate regional distinctions within states. In order to
to better illustrate the spatial inequalities theoretical drive of this research all data was
collected at the county level for both states using 2010 U.S. Census data measurements.

Using primarily U.S. Census data has several advantages. First, with all data
coming from the same database (U.S. Census) and the same year I will be better
positioned to make intrastate and interstate comparisons that are both relevant and valid.
Secondly, the U.S. census represents it is a total population with all counties within both
states (Ohio N=88, and North Carolina N=100) represented. While in this examination I
focus on only a small case study of counties, the inclusiveness of the census data allows
me to make valid and reliable comparisons across locations. In previous examination on
welfare eligibility and welfare participation rates a number of counties in each state
reported having no working Black women (OH n=24; NC n=10). These counties will
serve as the focus of this present examination.

Measures

In this chapter welfare program participation rates are examined at the county
level. Due to the variation in welfare programs and policies within each state, it is
essential to examine region, gender, race, wages, employment, and other factors that may
affect welfare participation at the intrastate level (Parisi, et. al., 2003; Luebke 1998). It is
important to examine issues utilizing this intermediate level of analysis (i.e. county level)
to begin to uncover some of the unforeseen reasons for the socioeconomic inequalities of
a region (Lobao 2004; Parisi, et. al., 2003). However, building upon that notion, the next
step to further this research is to compare those in-state variations at an interstate level.
This allows me to examine the intrastate spatial inequalities observed in one state to the intrastate spatial inequalities in other locations.

**Dependent variable.** My dependent variable for this analysis is the percentage of qualifying households in a county that were financially eligible in 2010 to receive welfare and who did receive welfare cash assistance at any point (also referred to as Work First participation). In order to construct this dependent variable, eligibility was determined if a household income for 2010 was below the poverty threshold and only consisting of those households that had children living in the home under the age of 18. This variable (‘%EligibleOnRolls’) is an approximate rate of qualifying households that received Work First benefits in 2010 in both North Carolina and Ohio counties (see Table 1; descriptive statistics for all variables are reported in Table 1).

It is important to note that some counties have different income requirements in order to qualify for welfare assistance (i.e. meets absolute poverty threshold, within 150% poverty threshold, within 200% poverty threshold). By choosing to only focus on households that fall below the absolute poverty threshold, this dependent variable is a conservative measure of eligibility. However, by falling below this absolute threshold, these are the households most in need of assistance and who could benefit most from any income assistance afforded to them. Still, even when examining the most poverty stricken of households, we see a very relatively low rate of welfare-to-work participation rates in both North Carolina (mean= 11.53%) and Ohio (mean= 16.59%) and even lower in the counties of focus in this examination (NC mean=5.4%; OH mean=15.6%).
### Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Sources for Variables in All White Counties (NC N=10; OH N=24)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NORTH CAROLINA</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV-%EligibleonRolls</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>34.15</td>
<td>23.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PopDensity</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
<td>74.81</td>
<td>86.20</td>
<td>80.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Female Employ-</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td>30.97</td>
<td>27.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>White Wage Gap</td>
<td>71.59</td>
<td>103.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanatory variables.**

**County characteristics.** There are a number of county level characteristics that theoretically should be included in any discussion of welfare participation. Examining the political climate in each county and counties’ expenditures on welfare programs serve as essential markers of differentiation that could impact welfare participation. Expenditures, for example, may affect the quality of services that can be provided by the county’s welfare office and therefore may affect an eligible individuals’ willingness to become a participant. ‘Expenditures’ was measured as the percentage of a county’s total budget that was used for Human Services programs (i.e. welfare programs and other public welfare programs to support the poor).
Understanding a county’s political climate is essential because of the influence politics can have on welfare reform, policies and implementation (Soss and Schram 2007; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Schram 2005; Luebke 1998). Political climate of each county was calculated using the majority voting behavior of each county for U.S. Senator Election in 2010. The political affiliation of the U.S. senator as voted for by each county not only speaks to the intrastate political climate, but also can be replicated in an interstate analysis. The dummy variable (‘Republican Winner’) indicated the majority of the county voted for a Republican U.S. Senator with counties that voted for a Democratic U.S. Senator as the reference category.

Region. With a theoretical focus on the impact of spatial inequalities in welfare research, region becomes especially important. This is due to the great variations in welfare programs not only nationally between states but between counties within states (Lichter and Jayakody 2002; Parisi, et. al., 2003; Lobao 2004; Brown and Lichter 2004; Albert 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Debertin and Infanger 1988). Population density is one of the measures I used to examine region by determining how rural or urban a county is (‘Population Density’). The population density measure best allocates the detailed variation in urban/ruralness within small geographical units (i.e. counties) (Long, Rain, and Ratcliffe 2001). The natural log of population density was calculated and used in North Carolina to correct for skewness.

There are three distinct regions in North Carolina and five in Ohio. In North Carolina the three regions are: the Mountain (western), Piedmont (central), and Coastal (eastern) parts of the state (Luebke 1998; as categorized by the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education in North Carolina, website can be found in
The five distinct regions of Ohio are: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central (as categorized by The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Figure 2). For the purpose of this examination all the focal counties are within the ‘Mountain’ region in North Carolina and therefore this variable is excluded. The counties of focus were located in 4 of the 5 Ohio regions and therefore are examined briefly.

Figure 7. Map of Ohio’s five geographic regions with focal all-white counties circled. Note: All circled counties are the focal all-White counties. Red circles indicate Appalachian counties; Blue circles indicate non-Appalachian counties (according to the Appalachian Regional Commission website www.arc.gov)
Labor market factors. In counties where unemployment high there may be less viable alternatives to public assistance. The ‘Unemployment Rate’ is measured as the percentage of the working population who are receiving unemployment benefits as reported by the 2010 US Department of Agriculture. These individuals are actively looking for work and they receive time-limited aid. Industrial differentiation (‘IndustryDiff’) examines how much variation or concentration there is for paid employment in each county. This variable is calculated as the percentage of total employment accounted for by the two largest industries (of the 10 possible industries based on two-digit NAICS industrial sector codes) in each county in 2010. The figure is calculated such that the higher the number, the more differentiation in employment by industry. Possible scores for industrial differentiation range from 50 (no differentiation) to 100 (high differentiation). This score highlights the variation in potential options for employment. In counties with more differentiation there may be the possibility for employment where counties with very little differentiation may be more at risk to mass
layoffs and lack of alternative employment options. Income inequality is another factor that can impact poverty and be impacted by labor market inequalities. I measure income inequality using the Gini coefficient (‘Gini Index’) because it is a widely used indicator of income inequality and has been found to be a reliable measure across differing populations (Deininger and Squire 1996).

**Gender and employment inequality.** I also include measures of gender because gender inequalities in county demographics and the paid labor force may impact welfare-to-work participation rates. County demographics of gender add an essential social component to understanding the variations in those most likely to be welfare participants (i.e. impoverished women and their subsequent children) (Collins and Mayer 2010). I measure gender as the percentage of all households in a county that are in poverty and headed by single mothers (‘Poor Single Moms’). The ‘Poor Single Moms’ variable was calculated as the proportion of single female-headed households with children under 18 years of age with an income below the poverty level out of the total number of families with children under 18 years of age in Ohio (as reported by 2010 US Census Bureau ACS 5 year estimates: 2006-2010). To measure gender inequalities in the paid labor force I included full-time employment rates for White women (‘WhiteFemaleEmploy-FT), and the gender wage gap among White men and women in each county (‘WhiteWageGap’). White female full-time employment is measured as the percentage of White women who are employed full-time divided by all working age (ages 16-65) White women. The White wage gap was calculated by taking the cumulative average income for White women working full-time divided by the cumulative average income for White men
working full-time as reported in the 2010 US Census. To examine the intersection of
gender and race in labor market inequalities I created measures for

**Race and ethnicity.** Even in predominantly White counties, race plays a large
role in a number of aspects that affect various components of welfare and welfare-to-
work participation. In particular, race is related to public opinions of welfare, welfare
policy, and even welfare implementation (Gilens 1995; Gilens 1996; Luebke 1998;
Schram 2005; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan
2008; Taylor, Samblanet and Seale 2011). Therefore, I still include a few measures of
race and ethnicity. Ethnicity was measured as the percentage of the county population
that self-identify as Hispanic (‘% Hispanic) in the 2010 U.S. Census. The Hispanic
population in North Carolina predominantly all-White counties ranges from 1.3% to
9.2% (mean = 3.95%) and ranges from 0.2% to 7.34% in Ohio counties (mean = 1.8%).
Race was measured as the percentage of the county population that self-identify as non-
Hispanic Black (‘% Black’) and the percentage of the county population that self-identify
as any non-Hispanic “other” race (‘% Other Race’) (other than White or Black) on the
2010 U.S. census. The non-Hispanic Black population in North Carolina predominantly
all-White counties ranges from 0.11% to 3.25% (mean = 1.1%) and ranges from 0.0% to
7.44% in Ohio counties (mean = 0.8%). The percentage of the total population who self-
identify as any race other than non-Hispanic White or Black in North Carolina counties
ranges from 0.05% to 29.5%2 (mean = 5.26%), and ranges from 0.77% to 2.13% in Ohio
counties (mean = 1.5%).

---

2 The relatively high maximum was due to a large Native American population in one county.
Analytic Strategy

In order to examine this largely unexplored area of research I conduct a number of univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. First I will examine the frequencies and means of all the variables to compare the relative occurrence and size within and between Ohio and North Carolina. My bivariate analyses will include examining correlation coefficients and associations utilizing one-way ANOVAs. My method of multivariate analysis is a linear regression due to my continuous variable and very small sample size (OH n=24; NC n=10) in this chapter (Noreen, 1988). I analyzed eligibility and welfare participation by including the variables in one model for each state. In Ohio I included all the variables but in North Carolina, due to my very small sample size, was only able to include a few of the variables that I found to be most significant in my bivariate analyses.

RESULTS

Through a series of various univariate and bivariate analyses in addition to multivariate regressions, I find there are different factors that affect welfare-to-work participation rates in predominantly White counties within and between Ohio and North Carolina. I begin with more descriptive data about the focal counties in both states. First, there are considerably more of predominantly White counties in Ohio (24, which is more than a quarter of the state’s counties) as compared with North Carolina (10, ten percent of NC’s counties). All of the focal counties in both states are more rural. Regionally, the states differed (see Figures 7 and 8). In the North Carolina, White counties are clustered in the Mountain region. This contrasted with Ohio where predominantly White counties are more wide spread across the state in four of five state regions (Northeast Ohio is the only region that did not have a predominantly White county). Further, while all North
Carolina counties are Appalachian, half of Ohio’s predominantly White counties classify as Appalachian counties, while the other half are not.

Tables 8 and 9 show the means for the focal White counties in this chapter compared to the more racially diverse counties from the previous chapter and each state overall. I also include means for each state overall. It is not a surprise that there are significantly smaller percentages of black and other marginalized racial populations in the focal counties in both Ohio (%Black $\bar{x} = 0.8\%$; %Hispanic $\bar{x} = 1.8\%$) and North Carolina (%Black $\bar{x} = 1.08\%$; %Hispanic $\bar{x} = 3.9\%$). What is note-worthy, however, is the markedly more diverse population of North Carolina (%Black $\bar{x} = 20.7\%$; %Hispanic $\bar{x} = 6\%$) as compared to Ohio (%Black $\bar{x} = 5.2\%$; %Hispanic $\bar{x} = 2.3\%$) overall (see Table 2 for additional descriptive statistics).

Table 8
Ohio County Means for All-White Counties (n=24), Racially Diverse Counties (n=64), and the State Overall (N=88)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Counties</th>
<th>Racially Diverse</th>
<th>State Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PerEligibleonRolls (DV)</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PopDensity</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhiteFemaleEmploy-FT</td>
<td>28.78%</td>
<td>31.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wage Gap</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>72.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9
North Carolina County Means for All-White Counties (n=10), Racially Diverse Counties (n=90), and the State Overall (N=100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Counties</th>
<th>Racially Diverse</th>
<th>State Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PerEligibleonRolls (DV)</td>
<td>5.40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>22.80%</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
<td>22.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PopDensity</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
<td>80.47</td>
<td>79.69</td>
<td>79.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>6.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhiteFemaleEmploy-FT</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wage Gap</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>3.95%</td>
<td>6.23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>3.68%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ohio and North Carolina White counties share a number of other similarities, including paid labor market inequalities and welfare participation. For example, I find that in both states the welfare-to-work participation rates are lowest in White counties, but exorbitantly so in North Carolina (NC $\bar{x} = 5.4\%$; OH $\bar{x} = 15.6\%$). Also, in both states the White counties had less industrial differentiation, fewer percentages of White women employed full-time in the work force, and higher unemployment rates than the comparative more racially diverse counties and the state overall for both North Carolina and Ohio. The White counties in both states were more likely to have more conservative political leaning, and in North Carolina all 10 (100%) white counties had a majority vote for republican US senators in the recent election.
Despite the similarities among the White counties between states, there are some differences, namely, in regards to the gendered wage gap. The gender wage gap for Whites (when examining white women to white men) is larger for White counties (\(\bar{x} = 70.7\)) in Ohio as compared to both the more racially diverse counties (\(\bar{x} = 72.8\)) and the state overall (\(\bar{x} = 72.3\)). In contrast, the gap is considerably smaller in North Carolina White counties (\(\bar{x} = 83.3\)). The gap in NC White counties is also smaller than the gender gap more racially diverse counties (\(\bar{x} = 78.2\)) and the North Carolina overall average (\(\bar{x} = 78.7\)). These findings highlight the spatially differing effects of gender, in the absence of racial disparities, on the paid labor experience.

**Bivariate analyses.** In order to examine which variables serve as the best predictors of welfare-to-work participation in the White counties, I conduct a number of bivariate analyses using ANOVA. In North Carolina, population density, human services expenditures and the White wage gap are most associated with welfare participation in the White counties (see Table 10). In Ohio, White counties are located in 4 of the 5 geographically distinct Ohio regions, while in North Carolina all the focal counties are in the Mountains region. Even in the absence of regional variation the effect of population density has the highest predictive power on welfare-to-work participation rates in North Carolina rural white counties (\(F=5.35; \text{sig.} = .049\)). While non-significant, human services expenditures (\(F=2.82; \text{sig.} = .132\)) and the White wage gap (\(F=2.38; \text{sig.} = .162\)) have the next highest predictive power on welfare-to-work participation rates in rural white North Carolina counties.

In Ohio there are a number of factors that significantly predict welfare-to-work participation rates in the state’s rural White counties (see Table 11). The variables with
the greatest predictive power all relate to differing degrees paid labor market inequalities. They include the Gini index (F=14.66; sig.= .001), industrial differentiation (F=11.32; sig.= .003), and the percentage of White women who are employed full-time (F=8.71; sig.= .007). In addition to these, percent Hispanic (F=6.48; sig.= .018) also significantly predicts welfare-to-work participation rates in these predominantly White counties.

Table 10

Bivariate ANOVA F-Tests for North Carolina All-White Counties: Dependent Variable per Eligible Rolls (n=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>(sig)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>(.132)</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>-.</td>
<td>-.</td>
<td>-.</td>
<td>-.</td>
<td>-.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PopDensity</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>(.049)</td>
<td>-.633</td>
<td>23.43</td>
<td>-4.57</td>
<td>.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>(.539)</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>.388</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>(.277)</td>
<td>-.381</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>-2.48</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>(.335)</td>
<td>-.341</td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>-25.07</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>(.379)</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhiteFemaleEmploy-FT</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>(.298)</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>-4.85</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wage Gap</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>(.162)</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>-6.21</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>(.528)</td>
<td>-.227</td>
<td>6.425</td>
<td>-.255</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>(.443)</td>
<td>-.274</td>
<td>6.135</td>
<td>-.704</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>(.476)</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>5.032</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All variables are examined in a bivariate regression with EligibleonRolls as the DV. Republican Winner was not included because 100% of the counties voted Republican and therefore was no variation. The extremely small sample size in NC may impact the lack of significance.
Table 11
Bivariate ANOVA F-Tests for Ohio All-White Counties: Dependent Variable per Eligible on Rolls (n=24)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>(sig)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>R-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures Republican Winner</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>(.453)</td>
<td>-.161</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>(.237)</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PopDensity</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>(.728)</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>14.39</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>(.282)</td>
<td>-.229</td>
<td>23.44</td>
<td>-.741</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>-.583</td>
<td>145.93</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>-.632</td>
<td>77.43</td>
<td>-150.66</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Single Moms</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>(.957)</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>15.89</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhiteFemaleEmploy-FT</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>-7.93</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wage Gap</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>(.779)</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>(.018)</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black nonHispanic</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>(.155)</td>
<td>-.300</td>
<td>16.60</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>(.336)</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All variables are examined in a bivariate regression with EligibleonRolls as the DV.

Multivariate Analyses. I conclude my analyses with a linear regression examining the effects of the previously discussed variables on welfare-to-work participation rates in the focal counties (see table 12). While I do have a relatively small sample size, I do find some significant associations between some variables and welfare-to-work participation rates among White counties in both states. North Carolina has too few predominantly White counties to run full models using multivariate regression. However, I am able to include a few variables that seem the most predictive in my bivariate examinations. Given the small sample size in both analyses, results should be read with caution. I find that the combination of population density, human services
expenditures and the White wage gap have strong predictive power (F=2.57; sig.=.150) and are able to explain over 56% (R-square=.563) of the variation in welfare-to-work participation rates in these 10 NC counties. However, given the small sample size readers should interpret the results cautiously. While it could signify that indeed the effect is very significant, it could also be a math anomaly due to the small sample size.

In Ohio, I have a larger yet still relatively small sample size. I am able to include all of the focal variables and find that when combined they are able to explain over 78% (R-square=.787; F=3.39; F-sig.=.026) of Ohio’s variation in welfare-to-work participation rates among eligible people in white counties. In Ohio, with all variables considered, income inequality (Gini index Beta= -.909; sig.= .024) and the White gender wage gap (Beta= -.53; sig.=.030) are significantly negatively associated with welfare-to-work participation rates in White counties. This means, in predominantly White counties in Ohio, lower income inequality and smaller gender wage gaps (among whites) are related to greater welfare-to-work participation. Therefore higher income inequality and higher gender wage gaps are associated with lower participation among eligible families.
DISCUSSION

This chapter adds an important quantitative examination of White poverty and welfare-to-work participation that is lacking in the larger literature. In this study I find that predominantly White counties have differing degrees of inequalities and labor market conditions that come to shape their communities in terms of welfare-to-work participation. In counties where there is an absence of racial diversity, there are a number of other commonalities that appear at the intrastate and interstate level. For instance, in both Ohio and North Carolina the all-white counties have lower welfare-to-work participation rates among the eligible population, drastically so in North Carolina. Also, in both states, the all-White counties exist in more rural, less densely populated areas as compared to the racially diverse counties. In addition to these similarities, the all-White
counties tend to vote more conservatively, have less women employed, and have higher unemployment rates as compared to the more racially diverse counties in each state.

The welfare-to-work program is one that has become thought of as a “Black program” with covert racist rhetoric riddled throughout the policies and program implementations. However in these focal counties, there are few-to-no Black, Hispanic, or other people of color living in these communities. That does not, however, mean that these counties exist outside the impact of race and racism (Henderson and Tickamyer 2015). The covert racism that contributed to shaping the current welfare-to-work programs, elicit a very specific image of what a welfare participant looks like (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001). They are “welfare-queens,” Black unwed women with too many children living in the inner city, refusing to work, and fraudulently getting as many benefits as possible (Quadagno 1996; Seccombe, James, and Walters 1998; Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008). While the majority of welfare-to-work participants are White, the racist connotations are effective in undermining welfare usage particularly in all-White communities that feel dejected from full Whiteness (Sherman 2009; Wray 2006).

Whiteness is often considered a homogenous racial group that is premised on occupying a position of privilege and power in our society (Newitz and Wray 1997). However, what it means to be White and the “the significance of White racial identity [is] developed through class- and gender-based intraracial contests over belonging and difference” (Hartigan 2003:96). Low-income White populations, like the ones included in this examination, often have their Whiteness questioned and demeaned through a process of othering that makes them distinct from and less than White (Newitz and Wray 1997;
Hatrigan 2003; Smith 2004; Wray 2006; Sherman 2009). For instance, Newitz and Wray (1997) discuss the usage of the term “White trash” to demean low-income, often rural, White populations. They explain that “in addition to being racially labeled, [they are] simultaneously marked as trash, as something that must be discarded, expelled, and disposed of in order for Whiteness to achieve and maintain… dominance” (Newitz and Wray 1997:169-170). Terms of White othering, such as White trash, redneck, and hillbilly, have been used to differentiate whites deserving of the privilege and power associated with Whiteness from those who have failed in their Whiteness and therefore are only worthy of being discarded (Newitz and Wray 1997; Hartigan 2003; Smith 2004; Wray 2006).

Rejection from the power and privilege of Whiteness, coupled with the racially charged ideals of welfare participation, may cause for low-income women in predominantly White communities to resist welfare participation at all costs (Sherman 2009). While beyond the scope of my data, prior research suggests the stigmatization of welfare receipt may impact participation in racially diverse rural counties. This is due to the relatively more negative attitude towards welfare participation found in US rural counties in general (Tickamyer, White, Tadlock and Henderson 2007; Sherman 2009). Popular opinion demonizes low-income single mothers as deliberate thieves taking advantage of welfare assistance whenever possible (Seccombe 1998; Hancock 2004; Soss and Schram 2007). However, some researchers argue the psychological costs of welfare stigma, including lower self-image and negative treatment by others, can prevent welfare participation (Manchester and Mumford 2009; Sherman 2009). In a system where the benefits are purposely kept low (Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007) and the costs are high
(Manchester and Mumford, 2009), welfare participation cannot be examined by assuming eligibility automatically leads to participation. More research is needed to explore the role stigma plays in the decisions to use welfare-to-work services particularly in poor, rural communities.

Despite the similarities in North Carolina and Ohio, the focal counties in both states remain diverse in a number of ways (Thorne, et. al. 2004). While all of the focal counties in both states were located in more rural places, the North Carolina counties were condensed in the Appalachian Mountains while the Ohio counties were more widespread across the state (50% classified as Appalachian counties, with the other half are not). Despite state and federal interventions, Appalachian communities continue to be riddled with severe persistent poverty, especially among single female-headed households and their children (Thorne, et. al 2004). The unique geographic isolation of Appalachian counties, coupled with limited job options or accessibility to other resources, inhibits families in poverty from utilizing welfare-to-work cash assistance as the safety net it is intended to be (Thorne, et. al. 2004). The TANF program has increased the emphasis on work in order to receive benefits and that has particularly disenfranchised low-income women living in Appalachian areas who had come to rely on those benefits. With so much focus on urban poverty, the people in the direst of financial crisis in rural Appalachian areas are left behind in terms of welfare reform, policy, and program implementation (Thorne, et. al. 2004).

Even though the representation of any people of color is very small in these focal counties, North Carolina still averaged higher percentages of Hispanic (NC $\bar{x} = 4\%$; OH $\bar{x} = 1.8\%$), nonHispanic Black (NC $\bar{x} = 1.1\%$; OH $\bar{x} = 0.8\%$), and other nonHispanic
racially marginalized populations (NC $\bar{x}=5.3\%$; OH $\bar{x}=1.5\%$) as compared to Ohio’s predominately White counties. Also, Ohio had a much larger percentage of the state’s counties that qualified as an all-White county for the purpose of this examination (OH=27%; NC=10%). The racial differences in the demographics within and between these two states, also taking into consideration the relative influence of race in the previous chapter, highlights the importance of spatial inequality theory and examining the topic of welfare at the local level. In addition to race, I find differences in regards to gender and the paid labor force. I find that in North Carolina White counties, White women earn on average 83 cents to every dollar a man makes, and this is better than the more racially diverse counties and state overall. In Ohio, I find just the opposite. White women earn considerably less than White men (70.7 cents to every 1 dollar) and that gap is worse than the more racially diverse counties and the state overall.

In conclusion, this exploratory analysis contributes to our knowledge of welfare and racially homogenous places, which is previously under-studied quantitatively and largely under-theorized. I find that race, and the lack of racial diversity, impacts welfare participation in surprising ways and differs across space. In addition to the rich ethnographic work on White poverty existing in the literature, this quantitative examination enables us to begin to understand the impact of space and spatial inequalities on what was presumed to be racially and geographically homogeneous groups (white rural communities). What it means to live in a predominantly-White area varies and therefore there are varying effects on poverty and welfare-to-work participation rates.

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3 This relatively high percentage is due to the large Native American population ($\bar{x}=30\%$) in one of the focal counties.
Overall, I find that participation in predominantly White counties is lower in areas
where inequality, in regards to income inequality and the wage gap, is higher. In these
White communities that are smaller and more rural, the widely emphasized essentiality of
a strong work ethic is exaggerated (Sherman 2009). The racist and classist undertone
present in welfare rhetoric, particularly in reference to participants “missing work ethic”
and inability to be self-sufficient, creates a hostile environment ripe with stigmatization
(Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Henderson and Tickamyer 2015). Coupled with the race-
and class-based othering that undermines the whiteness of low-income Whites, the
welfare office becomes less about assistance and more about shame which diverts those
most in need of aid (Newitz and Wray 1997; Wray 2006; Sherman 2009). Welfare policy
makers and those implementing welfare programs at the local level would benefit from
reducing the shame associated with welfare participation. This is especially true in
predominantly White counties in order to counteract the low participation rates which
undermine the program’s ability to serve as a safety net for families struggling with
poverty.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

This dissertation is an in-depth quantitative investigation into families in poverty, labor market inequalities and welfare-to-work participation. Examining the topic of welfare participation itself is largely ignored in the literature, and participation among those struggling with poverty is often assumed as a given. However, I find that welfare-to-work participation among those eligible is very low in both focal states of this study, Ohio (16.6%) and North Carolina (11.5%). This finding that the vast majority of eligible members of the impoverished population are not being served is important in-of-itself because it points to the ability (or lack thereof) of the welfare program to assist families struggling with poverty.

While in the realm of public opinion my assertion that welfare participation is too low would not be the most popular, it is the purpose of welfare to serve as a safety net for people struggling with poverty. If welfare assistance is designed to reduce the strain on families in poverty, it cannot assist those who do not participate. Over 90% of families in North Carolina and over 84% of families in Ohio that are struggling with poverty so extreme they qualify for welfare assistance at the most conservative of standards are not participating. Instead they are struggling alone. The purpose of this research is to build on prior research and look at the county level and examine the factors that impact welfare-to-work participation among eligible families. The findings also have broader
implications for welfare policy and program implementation. This chapter provides an overview of each of the analytic papers (chapters) that make up this dissertation, followed by conclusions and implications for future welfare policy.

Chapter 2: A Comparative Analysis of Ohio and North Carolina Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates

In this first analytic chapter, I add to previous research by conducting a comparative quantitative analysis of welfare-to-work participation rates at an intra-state and inter-state level. Adding to my previous research conducted in North Carolina, I compare the impact of county characteristics and demographics on welfare-to-work participation in Ohio counties. With a theoretical focus on spatial inequalities (Lobao and Saenz 2002; Lobao 2004; Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2005) and critical race theory (Delgado and Stefancic. 2001), I use feminist perspectives to examine the relationship between gender, race, and place (in addition to a number of county control variables) and welfare-to-work participation rates among the eligible population in Ohio and North Carolina counties. I find that there are a number of factors that impact participation rates in both states. Ohio county welfare-to-work participation rates are mostly affected by region, race and gender, and North Carolina county welfare-to-work participation rates are mostly affected by politics, industry and race.

In North Carolina, counties that are more urban, have more industrial options for employment and higher percentages of Black residents have higher welfare-to-work participation rates among the eligible families struggling with poverty. These findings point to the uniqueness of urban poverty and accessibility to welfare services. In these counties, residents may be made more aware of services, those services may be more
accessible, and therefore are more likely to be used (Tickamyer, White, Tadlock and Henderson 2007; Sherman 2009). Also stigma associated with welfare usage is less in urban areas than in rural predominantly White regions (Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2001; Hartigan 2003; Sherman 2009; Lichter and Graefe 2011; Henderson and Tickamyer 2015).

Similarly, in Ohio I find that there are significantly higher rates of welfare-to-work participation in the more urbanized central region than the more rural and geographically isolated southeast region counties. Spatial inequalities come to differentially impact poverty, (dis)advantage, and welfare participation in both states (Lobao 2004). I also find that race has a significant effect in Ohio, but in contrast to North Carolina, the percent of the county’s racially marginalized population that is non-Black (and non-Hispanic) has the largest relationship with welfare-to-work participation rates. This finding, in combination with the significant association between gender and welfare participation highlight the overlapping systems of oppression faced by women, particularly women of color (Collins 2000). Women of color, particularly single mothers, are more likely to experience poverty, in addition to having less access to higher education and healthcare than their White counterparts (Quadagno 1996; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Overall, in this chapter I find empirical support for the theoretical influence of spatial inequalities and critical race theory in regards to welfare-to-work participation.

**Chapter 3: Labor Market Discrimination and Welfare-to-Work Participation**

In this third chapter I focus on the impact of various labor market inequalities in relation to welfare participation by including additional measures of income inequality,
wage disparities, and gendered employment. The welfare-to-work program is intended to prepare low-income people who are presumed lacking a “strong work ethic” (Rana 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010) for employment in the paid labor force. However, many families struggling with poverty are also struggling with an unconducive paid labor market that differs drastically across space and institutionally discriminates based on gender and race (Feagin 1991; Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno 1996; Quadagno 1996; Pager and Shepherd 2008).

I find that various labor market variables are significantly related to welfare-to-work participation rates in both Ohio and North Carolina. With the inclusion of these labor market variables, in Ohio there is still a positive association with race (percent non-Hispanic other racially marginalized populations) and negative association with gender (percent of households that are single female headed and in poverty). I also find that in Ohio counties that spend a larger percent of their expenditures on human services, such as welfare-to-work, has higher welfare participation rates.

In North Carolina, unemployment rates and industrial differentiation have the largest positive association with welfare-to-work participation rates. Areas that have higher unemployment even though industrially diverse, have higher welfare participation among eligible people. Participation in North Carolina counties is also positively and significantly associated with the percent non-Hispanic Black population and the percent of Black women who are employed full-time. I also find that counties that are less politically conservative political have higher welfare-to-work participation rates.
One unexpected finding in this chapter concerned racial county demographics and paid labor force participation. I find that 10% of North Carolina and 27% of Ohio counties have zero Black women working full-time in the paid labor market. These counties have overwhelmingly small populations of any people of color. While the predominantly White counties in North Carolina are situated in a relatively condensed portion of the state (western; mountain region), counties all over Ohio (in four out of the five geographic regions) have no Black women employed full-time. It is not that Black women were not present in the population (while the Black population in each of these counties was extremely low (OH mean=0.8%; NC mean=1%) but that there were not employed in formal full-time employment. Studies have found that Black women are more likely to work and work more hours than their White counterparts and that this is true regardless of welfare participation status (Harknett 2001). The lack of Black female full-time employment in these counties may not be about Black women not working but rather the lack of access to formal or full-time employment for these women. Further research is needed to consider the impact of part-time employment and informal employment (such as, working informally in caretaking positions) in regards to Black women labor market choices and welfare-to-work participation. These counties are excluded from examination in this chapter and are treated as a unique case study in the next chapter in order to explore the unique impact of race and lack of racial diversity on these counties’ welfare-to-work participation rates.
Chapter 4: Welfare-to-Work Participation Rates in the Context of White, Rural Poverty

In this final analytic chapter I focus on the counties I omitted from the previous chapter due to the absence of any full-time employed Black women. These focal counties are overwhelming lacking in racial diversity and are predominantly White communities. This exploratory research adds a quantitative examination of White poverty and welfare usage that is largely un-researched.

I find that in both Ohio and North Carolina the predominantly White counties have lower welfare-to-work participation rates among the eligible population, drastically so in North Carolina. Also, in both states, the all-White counties exist in more rural, less densely populated areas. In North Carolina, the counties are condensed to the western Appalachian Mountain region of the state, but in Ohio the all-White counties are widely spread across the state. I also find that in both states the predominantly White counties tend to vote more conservatively, have fewer women employed full-time, and have higher unemployment rates when compared to the more racially diverse counties in each state. There are a number of dynamics that may be at play in these White counties that are beyond the scope of my data. For instance, rejection from the power and privilege of whiteness, coupled with the racially charged ideals of welfare participation, may influence low-income women in predominantly White communities to resist welfare participation at all costs (Newitz and Wray 1997; Wray 2006; Sherman 2009). More research is needed to understand the underlying elements of othering and racial identity management that may be at play in these distinct counties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Participation</th>
<th>NORTH CAROLINA</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ch2-All Counties</td>
<td>Ch3-RaciallyDiverse</td>
<td>Ch4-All-White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Diff***</td>
<td>Industry Diff***</td>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop. Density*</td>
<td>Unemployment***</td>
<td>WhiteWageGap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC-Coastal***</td>
<td>% Black nonHispanic*</td>
<td>%Other nonHispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black**</td>
<td>%BlackFemEmployFT*</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Pop. Density</td>
<td>OH-Central*</td>
</tr>
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<td>NC-Coastal</td>
<td>Industry Diff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC-Piedmont</td>
<td>%Hispanic</td>
<td>HSExpenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Other race</td>
<td>%Other nonHispanic</td>
<td>%Other nonHispanic</td>
</tr>
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<td>WhiteFemEmployFT</td>
<td>OH-Central***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HSExpenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OH-Northeast</td>
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<th>Ch4-All-White</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Republican Winner***</td>
<td>Republican Winner***</td>
<td>Republican Winner*</td>
<td>PoorSingleMoms*</td>
</tr>
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<td>PoorSingleMoms</td>
<td>PoorSingleMoms</td>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
<td>PoorSingleMoms**</td>
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<tr>
<td>GenderWageGap</td>
<td>Gini Index</td>
<td>HIgher NonHispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Expenditures</td>
<td>%Hispanic</td>
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<td><strong>Industry Diff</strong>*</td>
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<td>GenderWageGap</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%Other nonHispanic</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PoorSingleMoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Republican Winner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=100 n=90 n=10 N=88 n=64 n=24

Note: Asterisks indicate the variable’s highest level of significance observed in any model in each chapter. ***Sig.<.01, **Sig.<.05, *Sig.<.10

Variables that switched direction in models within a chapter were included in the group they showed greatest association.

Chapter 3 variables were placed in the grouping they showed the greatest significance in bivariate or the multivariate analyses.

"Republican Winner was 100% in these all-white counties; participation in these NC counties was drastically lower than previous chapters."
Overall Findings and Theoretical Contributions

Overall, I find a number of common themes across the three analytical chapters in regards to welfare-to-work participation. There are a number of variables that are significantly related to both lower and higher welfare participation in Ohio and North Carolina counties (see Table 13). In North Carolina, more industrial differentiation and higher unemployment rates are significantly associated with higher welfare participation rates. In addition to these labor market factors, higher population density, larger populations of Black (non-Hispanic) residents, and higher rates of Black women employed full-time are also significantly related to higher welfare-to-work participation. In counties that are more conservative with a majority voting for republican US Senate candidates, there are lower welfare-to-work participation rates. These findings suggest an overall story that in conservative, rural areas (especially in the counties void of racial diversity as examined in chapter 4) there is lower welfare-to-work participation among those eligible.

In Ohio the variables with a significant association with welfare participation is slightly more varied. In chapter 2, I find that higher unemployment rates and larger populations of non-Hispanic other (non-Black) racially marginalized people are significantly related to higher welfare-to-work participation rates. I also find that the Central region has significantly higher participation rates than the more rural Southeast region of the state. The percent of families headed by single mothers in poverty has a significant negative association with participation that remains in the third chapter as well. This finding refutes the existing notion that low-income women will flock to the welfare office instead of seeking employment. In the third chapter, the influence of
greater percent non-Black “other” racially marginalized population remains significantly related to higher welfare-to-work participation. I also find that higher percentages of expenditures spent on human services programs and higher population density are significantly associated with higher welfare participation among eligible families experiencing poverty.

These findings support spatial inequality theory in that the inequalities over space, both within and between Ohio and North Carolina, have differing associations with welfare-to-work participation rates. I find that variations in county characteristics, demographics, and labor market inequalities differently impact low-income populations and their subsequent welfare-to-work participation in both states. My findings support the theoretical notion that the experience of poverty in one location is not the same as another (Lobao and Saenz 2002; Lobao 2004; Weber, Duncan and Whitener 2005). This intrastate and interstate comparative examination adds to the literature a quantitative example of spatial inequality theory in reference to welfare participation.

Across both states I also find that higher representations of racially marginalized groups are associated with higher welfare-to-work participation. Critical race theory posits that race, racism, and power within the broader social context (i.e. economics, history, space, laws, etc.) affect all aspects of social life (Delgado and Stefancic. 2001). In accordance with critical race theory, these significant positive relationships could be due to a number of reasons including the continual disenfranchisement of racially marginalized people in the United States (Kirshenman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Quadagno 1996; Seccombe 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Khosrovani and Ward 2011; Miller 2013). With greater relative need, and more obstacles
to attaining stable gainful employment due to institutional racism and discrimination, it is logical that a county’s eligible racially marginalized population would have higher rates of welfare participation (Neckerman and Kirschenman, 1991; Quadagno, 1996; Seccombe, 1999; Handler and Hasenfeld, 2007).

Even in counties that are predominantly White (as examined in Chapter 4), residents are affected by the impact of race and racism (Henderson and Tickamyer 2015). The welfare-to-work program is one that has become thought of as a “Black program” with covert racist rhetoric riddled throughout the policies and program implementations. The covert racism that contributed to shaping the current welfare-to-work programs, elicit a very specific image of the stereotypical welfare participant (Neubeck and Cazenave 2001). Low-income White mothers, particularly in rural areas, internalize these racist stereotypes and reject the attributes they perceive to be associated with “welfare-queens” which includes welfare participation in its entirety (Wray 2006; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Soss and Schram 2007; Monnat and Bunyan 2008; Sherman 2009). While the majority of welfare-to-work participants are White, the racist connotations are effective in undermining welfare usage particularly in all-White communities that feel outside of full Whiteness due to social class (Newitz and Wray 1997; Wray 2006; Sherman 2009). Therefore, this examination of welfare participation in all-White counties adds to critical race theory the pervasive impact of Whiteness, race and racism even in areas void of racial diversity.

To test the contribution of these theories, I compiled secondary data from various sources, including 2010 US Census data. I utilized census data to construct a number of new variables (e.g. HS Expenditures, Industrial Differentiation, Poor Single Moms, Full-
time Employment measures for Black and White women, and various Wage gap variables). The benefits of using census data are that it provides consistent data that allows highly reliable and valid measures across various locations. By utilizing the county-level as my unit of analysis, I am able to more acutely examine the impact of spatial inequality theory and the way inequalities differ across space.

Limitations

While this research provides a unique and important quantitative investigation of welfare-to-work participation at the county level, there are a few of limitations to this research. First, my dependent variable is a measure of participation out of those eligible, however, my criteria for eligibility focuses on financial and family status eligibility and cannot account for those ineligible due to exceeding time requirements. Each state has different time limit requirements (OH=36 months; NC=24 months) however, in both states you are able to petition to get the full federal limit of 60 months. Often these families are encouraged to stop assistance regularly in order to “bank” their benefits (not use up all their allotted months of assistance at one time) and therefore at any given point there may be a number of families who start and stop assistance due to pressure, reaching initial time limits, awaiting extensions, etc. Due to these inconsistencies, it would be very difficult to include this in my dependent variable of eligibility. While my measure of eligibility focuses on financial eligibility and family status, it is still conservative as it requires families to fall below the absolute poverty line. Many counties only require participants to be within 150% to 200% the poverty line to be eligible.
Another limitation of this study is my inability to include a measure for stigma. Stigma is widely discussed as associated with welfare participation at the individual level but is most commonly examined through in-depth qualitative research (Jarrett 1996, Seccombe et. al 1998; Seccombe 1999). Nyblade and MacQuarrie (2006) of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) argue that stigma can be conceptualized quantitatively and future research should examine the concept of stigma and welfare-to-work participation quantitatively. An additional limitation is the presence of alternative viable options for multilevel modeling which I was unable to utilize. I used OLS regression to examine the association between welfare-to-work participation and the independent variables because of my continuous and normally distributed dependent variable. However, it was my small sample size that prevented me from utilizing a more advanced multilevel modeling such as hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). Assuming I could use region as one level, after my first analytic chapter I no longer used the entire population of counties in my analyses for chapters 3 or 4. Therefore in chapter three I only used a portion of the counties in each state and a portion of the regions in each state. In chapter four I only used a singular region in North Carolina and primarily only two regions in Ohio (Southeast and Northwest), therefore I did not have enough level 2 units to warrant using multilevel modeling which is a large sample procedure. Overall my level 3 unit was also not large enough as I was only focusing on two states. In future research that intends to examine more states, or the nation as a whole, would benefit greatly from a multilevel analysis, particularly hierarchical linear modeling.

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4 My first analytic chapter was intended to compare what I had found in my thesis to another location and therefore I wanted to use the same analytic strategy for consistency.
Implications for Welfare Programs, Policy, and Future Research

Welfare policy and policy makers are under constant scrutiny. The welfare program is failing in public opinion (Gilens 1995; Gilens 1996; Hancock 2004; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Welfare reform, policies, and innovative programs have been unsuccessful in changing this negative perception of welfare assistance (Gilens 1996; Hancock 2004; Soss and Schram 2007). This negative perception has not escaped those struggling with poverty and in general welfare-to-work participation among those eligible is extremely low. If the goal of the welfare program is to reduce the rolls, they are doing extraordinarily well. However, if the goal of the program is to serve as a safety net for women and children battling poverty and provide assistance to those in need, they are failing. The welfare program itself is in need of assistance.

With funding devolved to the states, there is the unique opportunity to create more specific local programs to combat poverty (Albert 2000; Parisi, McLaughlin, Grice, Taquino and Gill 2003). However, this opportunity has been squandered in an effort to cut costs and decrease participation rates to meet arbitrary state goals (Albert 2000; Handler and Hasenfeld 2007). Policy makers would benefit from the consideration of how spatial inequalities come to differently affect local experiences of poverty. For instance, I find that population density (rural versus urban) and region impact welfare participation but in different ways depending on the state. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the unique inequalities impacting rural versus urban families in poverty. I also find that race plays a key role in understanding welfare-to-work participation rates. It is essential to have open and honest conversations about race and the impact of racism on program policy, implementation, and subsequent participation at the county level.
There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ welfare program. Therefore, welfare policy makers and those in charge of program implementation would benefit from a greater consideration of the ways in which county characteristics, demographics, labor market inequalities and various other spatial inequalities come to differently impact welfare-to-work participation rates. Welfare program implementation has become increasingly centered on reducing participation rather than reducing the burden on already struggling families in poverty (Handler and Hasenfeld 2007; Ridzi 2009; Collins and Mayer 2010). The goal of the welfare program needs to be centered on trying to increase welfare participation since the government cannot help those they do not see. Ignoring poverty, or casting families in poverty aside, does not lessen the reality of poverty but instead it only exacerbates an already dire situation.
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