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To cite this article: Brandon R. Davis (26 Feb 2024): Racialized feedback and social welfare receipt: disentangling duration and dollar amount mechanisms on policy feedback effects, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, DOI: [10.1080/21565503.2024.2320200](https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2024.2320200)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2024.2320200>



Published online: 26 Feb 2024.



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Racialized feedback and social welfare receipt: disentangling duration and dollar amount mechanisms on policy feedback effects

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the resources associated with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Unemployment Insurance program affect political participation. The research on policy feedback on mass publics has produced greater results relative to research on feedback and political participation. However, prior research has not disaggregated resource feedback effects thoroughly enough to decipher whether the monetary resources provided by a social welfare program are independent of the effects of the duration of receipt nor have they disaggregated the effects by race to estimate the racialized feedback effects. This is crucial because the primary questions surrounding the development of social welfare programs are: who should get it, how much they should get, and how long they should get it for. Research has also found that social welfare programs can produce disparate resource feedback effects, both encouraging and discouraging participatory behavior. To answer these questions, I utilize the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. I incorporate three comprehensive measures of social welfare receipt which allow the estimation of the effects over time. I find that the amount of aid received, and the duration of receipt are both significant factors in shaping participatory behavior but depending on the program I find heterogeneous effects. The disparate effects persist across social welfare programs and race.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 7 February 2023
Accepted 16 January 2024

KEYWORDS

Social policy; policy feedback effects; racialized feedback effects; race and ethnic politics; political participation

Perhaps the most fundamental reason that participation is important is that it is directly linked to representation and policy outcomes. This paper examines how the resources associated with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program affect political participation. The research on policy design and feedback effects on the mass publics has produced greater results relative to research on feedback and political participation. However, prior research has not disaggregated resource feedback effects thoroughly enough to decipher whether the monetary resources provided by a social welfare program are independent of the effects of the duration of receipt nor have

they disaggregated the effects by race to estimate the racialized feedback effects. This is crucial because the primary questions surrounding the development of social welfare programs are: who should get it, how much they should get, and how long they should get it for.

Research has found that social welfare programs can produce disparate resource feedback effects, both encouraging and discouraging participatory behavior. Campbell (2020) argues that we need to better understand what types of social welfare benefits can produce feedback effects. Participatory behavior might be influenced by the amount of aid received because it positively affects the recipient's capacity for participation. Or it might be influenced by the duration of receipt because it may have attitudinal effects (Campbell 2012, 333–351). In addition, both feedback effects could reinforce or counteract one another. This is important because the purpose of social policy and the administration of public goods and services is to solve problems and meet goals. If the design and administration of a social welfare program are working at cross-purposes, it has serious implications for social equity, the study of government failure, and the pursuit of a just political economy.

To answer these questions, I utilize the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. I incorporate three comprehensive measures of social welfare receipt which allow the estimation of the effects over time. Social welfare receipt is measured across three programs and in two distinct ways to assess both possible mechanisms of influence: (1) the total dollar amount received per year and (2) the proportion of the year (in months) assistance was received. This approach improves on past research which used dichotomous variables to measure social welfare receipt (Bruch, Ferree, and Soss 2010, 205–226; Mettler 2007, 643–650; Swartz et al. 2009, 633–665). I estimate the effect of both the amount and duration of receipt across three measures of participatory behavior—an approach that speaks to the domain-specificity of aid effects, disaggregating each model by race to estimate the effects between racial groups.

I find that the amount of aid received, and the duration of receipt are both significant factors in shaping participatory behavior but depending on the program I find heterogeneous effects. The disparate effects persist across social welfare programs and race. Whereas the effect of UI receipt on participation is negative for White and Hispanic recipients, Black household UI receipt has a positive effect on participation. SNAP receipt has a positive effect on Hispanic participation but has no effect on White participatory behavior. However, Black household receipt of SNAP benefits both encourages *and* discourages African American participatory behavior. My results have important implications for the study of policy feedback effects, social equity, race and public policy, and political participation.

Policy feedback effects and social welfare programs

Suzanne Mettler (2007) argues that a key concern of public policy “is whether it promotes or discourages citizen involvement in the day-to-day activities of American democracy” (351). Research has found that public policies influence mass political behavior (Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019, 395–422; Mettler and Soss 1999, 55–73). The design of a policy has implication for citizens' perception of their role, place, and worth within the polis (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 334–347). Mettler (2007) finds that public policies function

as intuitions and this assertion includes social policies. Social policies can reshape administrative authority structures, redistribute organizational resources, and reframe organizational priorities, culture, and identity (Moynihan and Soss 2014, 320–332). Social policies, which reflect the relationship of a government to its citizenry, play a direct role in social learning. As a result, social policies have large and wide-ranging effects on the polis (Mettler and Soss 1999, 55–73). I argue that social welfare policies play a critical role in shaping what a society believes and wants, the ways people view themselves and others, and how individuals come to understand their rights and privileges.

A policy feedback approach views policies as independent variables with effects on political outcomes (Skocpol 1995; Pierson 1993, 595–628). Policy feedback refers to the process through which once enacted, public policies restructure subsequent political process (Skocpol 1995). Pierson (1993) argues that there are two types of policy feedback effects. Interpretive effects convey the meaning and information to citizens. It is the process through which policies convey embedded messages about citizens role, place, and worth with the polis (Schneider and Ingram 2019, 206–236). Resource effects focus on how the resources and benefits that policies provide shape patterns of behavior. In this sense, U.S. social welfare benefits are unique. Recent research has found that even associated policies or events (e.g., COVID stimulus checks) can have feedback effects on related social welfare programs (e.g., TANF, SNAP) (Crabtree and Wehde 2023, 156–179). Nevertheless, other scholars have found that even during a crisis support for social welfare programs is highly dependent on how the beneficiary groups is socially constructed (López-Santana, Núñez, and Béland 2023, 1–22). Moreover, social welfare policies provide resources but at a cost. To receive social welfare benefits claimants must present themselves to street-level bureaucrats and substantiate (possibly on a continuous basis) their inability to effectively care for themselves and/or their dependents. In addition, social welfare recipients must agree to the terms and conditions associated with receipt.

Campbell (2012) argues that the mechanisms through which resource feedback effects are theorized to influence behavior are (1) their positive impact on recipients' capacity for participation and (2) their affirmative impact on recipients' attitudinal outcomes insofar as the resources positively affect recipients' life circumstances. As such, I posit that two of the most important distinctions in understanding the resource feedback effects associated with social welfare receipt are between the amount of aid a person receives (the impact on capacity) and the duration of time they receive it (the affirmative impact). Large monetary benefits incentivize recipients to engage politically and take interest in politics because their personal welfare is inextricably connected to governmental action. However, if benefits are too low, they will fail to produce feedback effects. Moreover, the duration of receipt associated with long-term programs such as Medicare and Social Security is correlated with greater policy feedback effects compared to short duration or episodic programs (i.e., means-tested programs) (Campbell 2012, 333–351). The literature suggests that when institutional benefits are sufficient and visible and institutional contact is affirmative, they encourage participatory behavior; however, social welfare benefits are often economically insufficient and social welfare administration has become increasingly punitive (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011).

Social welfare programs provide resources to recipients for a set duration of time and/or term of conditionality. For example, recipients may have to check in monthly to renew

their eligibility and/or eligibility may be linked to a condition such as unemployment, injury, or pregnancy. After the type of resource is defined, the amount of assistance and duration of receipt become the core attributes of a social welfare program, but they are not one and the same. How social welfare recipients are socially constructed has a significant impact on the program design and the allocation of benefits and burdens (Gilens 2009; Schneider, Ingram, and deLeon 2014). Michener's (2018) contextualized feedback model of political participation supports the argument that pithy and/or capricious social welfare provision adversely affects the political capacity of recipients which influences participatory actions.

Research has found that how a social welfare policy is designed and administered has a significant effect on recipients' participatory behavior (Bruch, Ferree, and Soss 2010, 205–226). Policy design not only defines the resources that are provided, it effects levels of political participation, governmental trust, and political efficacy of beneficiaries (Boushey 2016, 198–214; Campbell 2011; Jacobs and Mettler 2018, 345–363; Mettler 2011; Soss 1999, 363–380). Moreover, new research has found that linked fate, intersectionality, and partisanship are key predictors of policy preferences and how political elites predict which policy designs will be most supported by the mass public (Bell and Lui 2023, 2–27).

Social welfare programs designed with paternalistic structures have a negative effect on participatory behavior compared to those with more democratic structures (Bruch, Ferree, and Soss 2010, 205–226). Paternalistic policies with work-based conditionality requirements are associated with decreased participation, and the effects are greater for recipients of means-tested benefits compared to non-means tested (or universal) benefits (Watson 2015, 645–686). In addition, the more means-tested programs a person uses, the less likely they are to vote compared to the usage of multiple universal programs (Mettler and Stonecash 2008, 273–293). And youth who grow up in households that receive means-tested benefits have lower internal political efficacy and are less likely to vote compared to youth who grew up in households who received non-means-tested assistance (Barnes and Hope 2017, 1611–1621). Social programs with submerged or indirect spending structures (such as tax credits) do not create the same interest in government as direct spending programs (such as Medicaid) (Michener 2018; Rosenthal 2021, 1098–1114), but submerged benefits can positively affect political participation (such as the Earned Income Tax Credit) (Shanks-Booth and Mettler 2019, 300–323). The more visible or traceable resources are to the government, the more they impact the feedback effects (Gingrich 2014, 565–580). Scholars have found that living in public housing is not correlated per se with lower rates of participation (Gay 2012, 147–179), that contact with government agents can increase participation among the impoverished (Lawless and Fox 2001, 362–385), and that voter mobilization efforts aimed at increasing participation rates are as effective with low-income groups as they are with higher income groups (Davenport 2010, 337–368). Moreover, scholars have found that the Earned Income Tax Credit is associated with increased feelings of civic duty, and voting (Shanks-Booth and Mettler 2019, 300–323), and that receipt of means-tested social welfare program benefits can increase political participation (Clinton and Sances 2018, 167–185; Michener 2018). In addition, Kogan (2021) found that local implementation of the American Food Stamp Program (now SNAP) mobilized new voters and increased the vote share for

Democrats. Notwithstanding, there are few causal estimates of the effect of resources on participatory behavior, and existing studies have found mixed results (Baicker and Finkelstein 2019, 383–400).

Furthermore, the racialization of poverty and welfare receipt have had profound impacts on social policy design and administration (Gilens 2009; Schram, Soss, and Fording 2010). Consequently, Michener's (2019) racialized feedback framework (RFF) is appropriate here because social welfare policies have become significantly decentralized and heavily disproportionate. Michener (2019) posits that this type of inquiry will help us better understand *when* race matters and *how* race matter, two distinct but correlated issues. Decentralization is concerned with the level of government at which a given policy's benefits and burdens are designed to be administered (Michener 2019, 423–450). This is important because policy devolution has been a source of marginalization for people of color (Schram, Soss, and Fording 2010; Soss 1999, 363–380; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (or GI Bill) did more to create the American middle class than any other piece of legislation but the decentralized nature of its administration ensured that the wealth creation was almost exclusively for Whites (Katznelson 2005). The decentralization associated with the creation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) produced an irrational fear that poor people would migrate from states with lower benefits to states with higher benefits. This caused a benefits "race to the bottom" which was strongly associated with the perceived race of the welfare recipients (Berry, Fording, and Hanson 2003, 327–349).

Disproportionality is concerned with how a policy system allocates benefits and burdens, the racial composition of the recipient population, and the density of uptake within the recipient population (Michener 2017, 865–900; Michener 2019, 423–450). Racial disproportionality is also associated with racial variations in government visibility. The more visible a government entity is the better able people are to make a connection between it and the state. If a racial group receives a disproportionate share of benefits or burdens or is disproportionality targeted by a policy, the policy's visibility increases within that group. The way government is made visible or how a social policy is designed and administered has been found to have serious implications for political engagement (Rosenthal 2021, 1098–1114).

Prior research supports the argument that social welfare policies can create disparate feedback effects, although the focus has been on comparing policies targeting advantaged groups. I disaggregate the resource effects associated with two distinct social welfare programs (TANF and SNAP) and one social insurance program (UI). The benefits vary in amount but do not raise recipients above the poverty line and the durations of receipt are statutorily brief; however, for those that cycle not only on and off a program, but also between programs, these benefits can significantly impact their lives. In addition, there are social welfare programs that provide in-kind resources (e.g., Medicaid, Head Start, public housing, and Federal TRIO programs) and programs that allocate burdens (e.g., criminal justice policies and welfare sanctions) which are not included here due to limitations of scope and data. The results and implications derived from this analysis are germane to policy benefits that are monetary in nature. Below I discuss the three social welfare programs (TANF, SNAP, and UI), the justification for selecting them, and hypotheses concerning the resource feedback effects associated with receipt of each program's benefits on political participation.

Temporary assistance for needy families (TANF)

The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF provides block grant funding to states and territories to provide financial assistance for low-income families and a wide range of non-cash support services. Since 1996, the TANF block grant has remained a steady \$16.5 billion a year, which means that its real value over the past twenty-five years has decreased by 40% (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021b, 1–9). To qualify for TANF, applicants must reside within the state in which they apply, be a U.S. citizen or a legal/qualified alien, and unemployed or underemployed with a low to very low level of income. In addition, recipients must have a child 18 years old or younger, be pregnant, or be 18 years old or younger and be the head of their household. Lastly, TANF prohibits states from providing cash benefits to any family with an adult who has received assistance for 60 months (or 5 years) over a lifetime or to teen parents who do not live in a supervised setting (Falk and Landers 2021, 1–36).

In 2019, the maximum monthly benefit for a family of three ranged from \$1,039 in New Hampshire to \$170 in Mississippi. In every state, TANF cash benefits are too low to meet basic household needs, and in every state, even the maximum TANF cash benefit leaves a family of three below 60% of the federal poverty line (which is an annual income of \$13,032). In over 33% of states, the maximum TANF benefit leaves a family of three under 20% of the federal poverty line (which is an annual income of \$4,344) (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021b, 1–9).

I chose TANF because it is colloquially understood to be “welfare,” and welfare recipients have been more thoroughly socially constructed than other beneficiaries of social welfare programs (Schram, Soss, and Fording 2010). The racialization of poverty, the racialization of welfare policy, and the narratives surrounding the deserving and undeserving poor has produced symbolic feedback effects on the political and legislative decision-making surrounding the policy design and state administration of TANF (Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019, 395–422). Designing TANF as a block grant provides states with significant discretion over how the policy is administered within their borders. The result has been that welfare rolls decreased significantly after the passage of TANF, declining from 5.1 million families in 1994 to slightly over 1.1 million in 2020 (Falk and Landers 2021, 1–36). The adoption of harsher and more aggressive TANF policies is directly correlated with the size of the state’s Black population. In addition, Black recipients are more likely than Whites to be sanctioned, and the probability that a Black recipient will be sanctioned increases substantially with the duration of receipt. After receiving benefits for six months, Black people are 30% more likely to be sanctioned compared to Whites, and at nine months, Black people are 70% more likely to be sanctioned than Whites (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). This racial bias in the administration of TANF suggests that Blacks and possibly other racial minorities will experience disparate heterogeneous feedback effects. I posit that the racialization of welfare, TANF’s punitive design, and its low monetary benefits make it unique among social welfare programs. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

- (1a) the cash amount received in TANF benefits will produce negative resource feedback effects on participation,
- (1b) the duration of TANF receipt will produce negative resource feedback effects on participation, and
- (1c) due to the racialization of welfare recipients, both the amount and duration of TANF receipt will produce larger negative feedbacks for Black people and Hispanics, compared to White.

Supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutritional benefits for eligible low-income households in the form of cash benefits that can be exchanged for foods at authorized retailers. In 2019, with a budget of \$60.4 billion, SNAP serviced 12% of the U.S. population, or 38 million people (Hall 2021). In 2019, the average monthly cash benefit for a family of three was \$365. Recipients between the ages 18 and 50 are limited to 3 months of SNAP benefits out of every three years unless they are working or in a work or training program, have children in the household, are deemed unable to work, or are pregnant.

There are two ways to become eligible for the SNAP program: (1) meet the federal eligibility requirements or (2) categorical eligibility (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021d, 1–14). To meet the federal eligibility requirements, household income—before any deductions—must be at or below 130% of the poverty line. For a family of three in 2019, that was \$2,525 per month, or \$27,020 annually. After expenses such as housing and childcare are deducted, household net income must be less than or equal to the poverty line. For a family of three in 2019, that was \$1,732 per month, or \$20,780 annually. Lastly, a recipient’s assets cannot exceed \$2,250 for households without an elderly member, or \$3,500 for households with an elderly or disabled member (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021d, 1–14).

Categorical eligibility confers SNAP eligibility on households that meet eligibility requirements for a state-run public assistance program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Board-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) allows households to qualify for SNAP based on receipt of the noncash support services funded under TANF, such as childcare assistance, job preparation, and work assistance. This allows states to confer SNAP eligibility based on a wide range of services that are available to a broader range of households at higher income levels (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021d, 1–14).

Approximately 75% of SNAP recipients are categorically eligible; however, of those, 66% (or half of all SNAP households) are eligible under the expanded noncash BBCE rules (Moffitt 2015, 213–242). Of the SNAP recipients who receive other social welfare benefits, 13% receive TANF cash benefits and 8% receive unemployment benefits. Most SNAP households that receive benefits from one or more social welfare program are elderly or disabled. The most common (20–25%) additional social welfare program in which SNAP households participate is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Moffitt 2015, 213–242).

SNAP, moreover, is one of the most effective social welfare programs in America. The SNAP budget accounts for roughly 0.5% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product and for that

expenditure, we gain a 16% reduction in poverty, a 41% decrease in the poverty gap or depth of poverty, and a 54% decrease in severe poverty (Tiehen, Jolliffe, and Smeeding 2015, 49–73). Of the fifteen U.S. domestic food and nutrition programs, SNAP contributes the most to reducing food-cost-related poverty (Davis, You, and Yang 2020, 1–9). Nevertheless, retention rates are low. Only 50% of new SNAP cases remain on the rolls for a year and a substantial number of those who exit remain eligible for SNAP benefits (Gray 2019, 1–15). In addition, one study found that 49% of eligible Hispanic immigrant households were discouraged from enrolling in SNAP due to misinformation. Propaganda about governmental reprisal and the threat of exposing an undocumented family member were associated with 85% of Hispanic households' lower uptake rates (Pelto et al. 2020, 488–491).

I chose SNAP because it is a means-tested program like TANF; however, it is more universal in its eligibility requirements and less punitive in its administration. Moreover, SNAP reaches significantly more people (38 million) than TANF (1.1 million) and is markedly more effective in reducing poverty. Lastly, the stigma associated with actual paper food stamps (colorful fake money) was alleviated the same year TANF passed. PRWORA mandated that all states implement Electric Benefit Transfer card systems, ending the use of government “monopoly money” and its associated stigma. Nevertheless, recent research has found that SNAP recipients reported stigmatizing encounters with SNAP administrators (Barnes, Michener, and Rains 2023, 3–42). Comparing the administration of SNAP and Women, Children, and Infants (WIC) scholars have found that the SNAP administration emphasized efficiency and accuracy and that the WIC administration emphasizes community outreach and case-load retention. The effect being that SNAP administrators reported being frustrated and suspicion of claimants and SNAP recipients reporting feeling stigmatized and unable to access caseworkers (Barnes, Michener, and Rains 2023, 3–42). Due to the above, I hypothesize that:

- (2a) due to the effectiveness of the program and low retention rates, the duration of receipt of SNAP benefits will be positively correlated with participation, and
- (2b) due to racial disparities in poverty rates and family sizes, both the amount and duration of SNAP receipt will produce heterogenous feedback effects for racial minorities.

Unemployment insurance (UI)

Created in 1935, Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a form of social insurance administered by the Department of Labor. Social insurance consists of a set of government programs that help workers and their family's pool risks. They provide short-term economic security or services and benefits to improve economic opportunity in the long-term. Workers (and/or employers) pay dedicated taxes during the period of employment, and at some point, the worker then qualifies for insurance benefits. The qualifying event could be reaching retirement age, becoming disabled, or being laid off (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021c, 1–4; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021a, 1–4).

Like TANF, states set their own eligibility guidelines; however, an applicant generally qualifies if unemployed through no fault of their own, if they meet their state's base

period requirements for wages earned or time worked, and if they are actively seeking work. Unemployment insurance does not cover people who quit their jobs, people looking for their first job, or people reentering the labor force after a voluntary absence. Self-employed workers, gig workers, undocumented workers, and students do not typically qualify for benefits (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021d, 1–14). Unemployment insurance programs are correlated with increased wages, lower unemployment, and increased productivity. Insured workers have been found to seek higher wage jobs, with high unemployment risk, and the market responds by creating these jobs (Acemoglu and Shimer 1999, 893–928).

The UI cash benefit known as the “replacement rate” is the ratio of the recipient’s weekly benefit amount to their average weekly wage. The replacement rate typically covers 30–50% of a worker’s weekly wage. Most states provide up to twenty-six weeks of unemployment benefits. The average weekly UI benefit in 2020 was roughly \$387 nationwide but ranged from a low of \$161 per month in Puerto Rico to \$550 per month in Massachusetts (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2021c, 1–4). Surprisingly, large benefits have not been found to disincentive work (Altonji et al. 2020, 1–24). The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provided an additional \$600 weekly payment to the state replacement rate, but when the benefits went into effect there were no large declines in employment (Altonji et al. 2020, 1–24). Higher UI benefits have been found to reduce the mismatch between worker educational attainment and job educational requirements, above all for women and minorities (Farooq, Kugler, and Muratori 2020, 1–55).

The duration of UI receipt has been found to be relatively inelastic with respect to replacement rates (Card et al. 2015, 126–130). The duration of UI benefits is positively correlated with finding a job with higher educational requirements minorities (Farooq, Kugler, and Muratori 2020, 1–55). And there is no evidence that extended durations, even in a tighter job market (i.e., a recession), affects uptake rates. Scholars have found that extended benefits reduce the rate of labor force exit by up to 20–30% (Farber, Rothstein, and Valletta 2015, 171–176). Neither is finding employment correlated with the expiration of benefits. Fewer than 1% of jobless spells have been found to have an end date manipulated to coincide with the termination of benefits (Card, Chetty, and Weber 2007, 113–118). Individuals who do have extended unemployment spells are more likely to be overly optimistic about their employment prospects (Mueller, Spinnewijn, and Topa 2021, 324–363). However, extended jobless spells are correlated with increased search intensity and decreases in job seekers’ target wage (Marinescu and Skandalis 2021, 887–931). On the other hand, some scholars have found that reducing the duration period is correlated with increased job finding rates and increased cumulative earnings (de Groot and van der Klaauw 2019, 195–208).

I chose the Unemployment Insurance program for four reasons. First, UI is a social insurance program that recipients must “earn”; thus, unemployment recipients are socially constructed differently than means-tested beneficiaries. Second, UI is like other means-tested social welfare programs in that it is used in times of economic hardship. Third, there is ample literature on the disparate effects of replacement rates and the duration of receipt and how that duration affects recipients’ economic behavior, suggesting that these resource effects would also have disparate effects on other behaviors. Fourth, in the 1940s the unemployment rates for Whites (9%) and Blacks (11%)

were relatively similar but by the 1950s, the Black unemployment rate (10%) was double that of Whites (5%). In the 1960s, the AFL-CIO estimated that Blacks, who constituted 12% of the U.S. population, represented 36% of the long-term, relatively permanently unemployed (Hinton 2016). Since then, the Black unemployment rate has averaged 2.2 times the rate of Whites (Desilver 2013). The exclusion, isolation, and marginalization created by economic racial exclusion has produced chronic mass unemployment and frustration within Black populations. Because of this, I hypothesize that:

- (3a) the combination of being laid off with the fact that UI benefits cover only 30-50% of lost wages will produce a negative resource feedback effect on participation,
- (3b) the duration of UI receipt is reflective of the job market, and as such, will produce negative resource feedback effects on participation, and
- (3c) due to the relationship between the economy and unemployment rates, and the racial disparities in unemployment rates, both the amount and duration of UI receipt will produce disparate results across races.

Data and methods

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (hereafter NLSY97) is a study of American youth born between 1980 and 1984. To date, respondents have been surveyed sixteen times. The survey includes a total of 8,984 respondents, of which 4,599 were men and 4,385 were women. Of the respondents, 4,665 were White, 2,335 Black, 1,901 Hispanic, and 83 were mixed-race (NLSY97 2020). Estimating longitudinal models using panel data is recognized as powerful analytical tool, but the limitations associated with these models are not often discussed (Hill et al. 2020, 357–369). Longitudinal models control for time-invariant characteristics, but only if those variables have the same effects at each point in time (Hill et al. 2020, 357–369; Morgan 2013). The dependent variables are interrelated and measured over time. However, longitudinal analysis uses a combination of past measures of behavior and measured covariates to account for static differences between those who have experienced welfare state contact and those who have not, reducing the effects of selection bias and measurement error. The models below were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation with robust clustered standard errors. Maximum likelihood estimation is arguably the method of choice and employing robust clustered standard errors and goodness-of-fit tests have also been found to produce results with high empirical power (Morgan 2013).

The interest model is estimated as a random-effects generalized least-squares (GLS) regression using robust clustered standard errors to control for heteroskedasticity. Compared to fixed effects models which use dummy variables, in random effects models the cross-sectional and time-specific effects are included as error terms. Post estimation I ran a Breusch–Pagan Lagrange Multiplier test. Breusch–Pagan test is used to determine if random effects are significant in panel data models. The p -value was significant so I can confidently conclude that the random effects are significant, hence the random effects model is appropriate. Next, I estimated a Hausman test. The p -value was greater than 0.05 thus I can confidently accept the null hypothesis that the coefficients of the random effects model are consistent as well as efficient.

The registration and vote models were estimated as a random-effects logistic model using robust clustered standard errors. Post estimation I ran a fitness test for the Akaike's information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC). AIC and BIC are mathematical methods for evaluating how well a model fits the data it was generated from. The random effects models had lower values for both information criterion suggesting it was a better fit. Next, I estimated a Hausman test. Again, the p -value was not significant. Consequently, I accept the null hypothesis that the random effects models are appropriate.

Dependent variables

This study includes two measures of direct voter participation: voting and voter registration. Voter participation is a two-stage process consisting of registration and voting. The standard predictors of turnout are more strongly correlated with registration than with voting. Vote is a dichotomous variable measuring whether the respondent voted (1) or not (0) in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010. In 2004, 4,098 respondents reported voting; in 2006, 2,640 respondents reported voting; in 2008, 3,049 respondents reported voting; and in 2010, 3,041 respondents reported voting. The youngest respondents, born in 1984, were twenty years old in 2004. When asked about voting, 62% of Black people and 57% of White said they voted or usually voted. This is consistent with the literature suggesting that African Americans tend to over-report turnout (Button 1993, 29–41) (Button 1993, 29–41). However, Stout and Martin (2016) found that Blacks are not more likely to over-report voting in districts with descriptive candidates. Moreover, White nonvoters have also been found to over-report voting (Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy 2001, 22–44). Notwithstanding, over-reporting has only been found to affect a small proportion of independent variables in standard models (Cassel 2003, 81–92), and most importantly, Miller et al. (2021) found that respondents in longitudinal studies (such as the one utilized here) and short term panel studies are significantly less likely to over-report voting compared to respondents in cross-sectional surveys. Finally, among all non-voters, the most likely to over-report are the more educated (Bernstein, Chadha, and Montjoy 2001, 22–44). Education is the strongest predictor of political participation (Cassel and Hill 1981, 181–195; Smets and van Ham 2013, 344–359) and it is also highly correlated with employment and income two things that are inversely related to social welfare receipt.

Although voting is considered the definitive act of political participation, it is not the only behavior that defines it. In most jurisdictions, one must register before one can vote. The voter registration question asked if a respondent was registered to vote (1) or not (0) in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010. Interest in politics was included because it is highly correlated with internal political efficacy, which is strongly associated with political participation (Wolak 2018, 763–784). Internal political efficacy is a feeling of personal competence that is positively associated with interest in government and voting. In addition, over the last forty years, measures of efficacy have appeared in most explanations of political participation. Efficacy is viewed as a personal resource utilized to overcome the costs associated with participation (Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk 2009, 307–330). Interest in politics was also measured in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010.

The question asked: “Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs?” The possible responses are most of the time (4), some of the time (3), only now and then (2), and hardly at all (1).

Social welfare variables

The social welfare variables include TANF and SNAP benefits, which were measured from 1994 to 2009, and unemployment insurance (UI), which was measured from 1997 to 2018. The number of incidents of TANF receipt was 2,040, while for SNAP that number was 8,621, and for UI, it was 5,787. The effect of social welfare receipt is captured in two distinct ways. First, receipt is measured by the total monetary (or cash) amount received each year. The average cash amount received per month in TANF benefits was \$207.16, or 2,486.77 annually, while the corresponding figure for SNAP benefits was \$192.58, or \$2,311.15. The average cash amount received per month in unemployment benefits, meanwhile, was \$397.25, or \$4,767.03 per year. Second, receipt is measured by the duration (or proportion) of the year, in months, that a respondent received social welfare. The average duration of receipt was measured from 0 (no receipt each year) to 1 (receipt in all 12 months of a given year). The average duration of receipt per year for welfare recipients was 0.64, while for SNAP recipients it was 0.68, and for unemployment recipients it was 0.39.

Descriptive statistics

The survey asked respondents in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 how many different residences they had lived in since the age of twelve. 654 respondents reported having lived in a different residence since the age of twelve. Thirty percent of respondents reported living in one other residence, 25% reported living in two different residences, 15% reported living in three different residences, 12% reported living in four different residences, and 18% reported living in five to thirteen different residences since age twelve. Cross tabulations of respondents who received any amount of social welfare, for any duration of time and reported residing at a different residence showed that only one respondent was both a recipient and relocated. This is consistent with how social welfare policies are designed and administered. Most means-tested programs require residency at the county or city level and changes in residency may trigger a reevaluation of a recipient’s application. Moreover, research has found that poor people are unlikely to migrate away from their social support networks even for more attractive welfare benefits. And when they do relocate, it is to their birth state or places with better job opportunities and higher wages (Bailey 2005, 125–135; Berry, Fording, and Hanson 2003, 327–349). Lastly, because the respondents did not relocate the political participation and social welfare variables have stronger predictive value.

When I disaggregated the social welfare variables by race, I found some interesting results. I examined the mean cash amount received, household size, and household income, and the likelihood that a recipient resides in an urban area. The latter is a proxy for the cost of living. I also used the measure for metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which is measured as not MSA (0), MSA but not central city (1), and MSA

Table 1. Social welfare receipt descriptive statistics by race*.

White households	TANF	SNAP	UI
Household Income	\$23,427	\$28,239	\$63,865
Household Size	3.7	3.7	3.1
Dollar Amount	\$2,223	\$2,095	\$4,063
Urban	0.79	0.68	0.7
Black Households	TANF	SNAP	UI
Household Income	\$4,721	\$21,322	\$43,662
Household Size	4.1	3.9	3.5
Dollar Amount	\$2,398	\$2,570	\$4,230
Urban	0.91	0.86	0.82
Latino Households	TANF	SNAP	UI
Household Income	\$25,775	\$26,605	\$58,512
Household Size	4.7	4.5	3.9
Dollar Amount	\$2,763	\$2,217	\$4,638
Urban	0.92	0.91	0.94

*National longitudinal survey of youth 1997.

central city (2). I chose the urban measure because it is a dichotomous variable and produces more easily interpretable results (Table 1).

TANF. White households receive an average of \$2,223 in welfare benefits per year, have an average household size of 3.7, and an average income of \$23,427. White recipients are less likely to live in urban areas (.79) compared to both Black people (.91) and Hispanics (.92). Black people (4.1) and Hispanics (4.7) have larger households compared to White recipients. The average Black household income is \$4,721 less than White household income, but Black recipients receive only \$175 more per year than White in benefits—even despite having larger families and living in more urban areas. Hispanics, on average, have higher household incomes (\$25,775) than White and receive \$540 more per year in TANF benefits than White, but they also have the largest average household size (4.7). On average, Black people had the longest duration of TANF receipt (0.55), followed by White (0.20) and Hispanics (0.22).

SNAP. White households receive \$2,095 in SNAP benefits per year, have an average household size of 3.7, and an average income of \$28,239. White SNAP recipients are less likely to reside in urban areas (.68) compared to both Black people (.86) and Hispanics (.91). The average household income of both Black people (\$21,322) and Hispanics (\$26,605) is less than that of White, but their average household sizes are larger (3.9 and 4.5, respectively). Black (\$2,570) and Hispanic (\$2,217) households receive roughly the same amount in SNAP benefits, despite having lower incomes, larger households, and residing in more urban areas than White. On average, Black people had the longest durations of SNAP receipt (0.47), followed by Whites (0.31) and Hispanics (0.20).

UI. White households receive an average of \$4,063 in unemployment benefits per year, have an average household size of 3.1, and an average income of \$63,865. White UI recipients (.70) are also less likely to reside in urban areas compared to Black people (.82) and Hispanics (.94). Black (3.5) and Hispanic (.3.9) households are slightly larger than White households (3.1). The average income of a Black household is \$20,203 less than a White household, while the average income of a Hispanic household is \$5,353 less than a White household. Black households receive an average of \$4,230 per year, and Hispanic households an average of \$4,638 per year in UI benefits. On

Table 2. Cash amount and political participation.

Cash Amount Model VARIABLES	(1) Interest	(2) Registered	(4) Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-3.86e-05* (1.65e-05)	-0.000148* (6.66e-05)	-7.46e-06 (6.87e-05)
SNAP \$ Amount	2.81e-05** (7.51e-06)	0.000117** (3.52e-05)	-4.33e-05 (3.51e-05)
UI \$ Amount	-5.23e-06 (3.74e-06)	-1.13e-06 (1.81e-05)	-5.24e-06 (1.79e-05)
Black	-0.0169 (0.0245)	0.791** (0.105)	0.661** (0.0973)
Hispanic	-0.159** (0.0257)	-0.484** (0.105)	-0.938** (0.106)
Mixed Race	0.0251 (0.102)	-0.353 (0.411)	-0.608 (0.418)
Men	0.169** (0.0198)	-0.471** (0.0820)	-0.676** (0.0788)
Age	-0.0338** (0.00707)	-0.0755** (0.0291)	-0.121** (0.0279)
Weeks Worked	-0.000160 (0.000208)	-0.000357 (0.00109)	0.00261** (0.000929)
Household Income	5.82e-07** (1.05e-07)	2.32e-06** (5.58e-07)	2.27e-06** (4.72e-07)
Education	0.146** (0.00878)	0.450** (0.0369)	0.807** (0.0410)
Household Size	-0.0149** (0.00437)	-0.0619** (0.0204)	-0.0375 (0.0192)
Urban	0.0479* (0.0200)	0.100 (0.0956)	0.149 (0.0907)
South	0.0544** (0.0189)	0.0565 (0.0841)	-0.247** (0.0779)
MSA	0.0555** (0.0140)	0.0525 (0.0666)	0.0140 (0.0628)
Year – 2006		0.844** (0.0805)	-1.027** (0.0621)
Year – 2008		0.938** (0.0860)	0.756** (0.0703)
Year – 2010		0.940** (0.0871)	-0.250** (0.0669)
Year	-0.0160** (0.00241)		
Insig2u		1.721** (0.0604)	1.858** (0.0529)
Constant	99.65** (14.70)	144.5* (57.63)	232.0** (55.35)
Observations	23,525	14,032	18,024
Number of Respondents	7,953	6,695	7,646

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

average, White had the longest durations of UI receipt (0.48), followed by Black people (0.30) and Hispanics (0.22).

Results

To estimate the effects of social welfare receipt on political participation, I examine the effects of the total monetary amount received per year and the effect of the number of months within a given year that a respondent received support. The standard independent variables associated with participatory behavior were included in

Table 3. Black recipients: cash amount and political participation.

Black amount model VARIABLES	(7) Interest	(8) Registered	(9) Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-1.74e-05 (2.20e-05)	-0.000112 (9.60e-05)	6.51e-05 (9.39e-05)
SNAP \$ Amount	3.63e-05** (1.03e-05)	0.000157** (5.39e-05)	-6.00e-05 (4.28e-05)
UI \$ Amount	2.37e-06 (7.34e-06)	0.000103* (4.49e-05)	4.97e-05 (3.48e-05)
Insig2u		1.325** (0.133)	1.498** (0.109)
Constant	90.84** (27.77)	89.16 (101.4)	272.1** (93.90)
Observations	6,108	3,410	4,689
Number of Respondents	2,110	1,734	2,013

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table 4.** White recipients: cash amount and political participation.

White Amount Model VARIABLES	(13) Interest	(14) Registered	(15) Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-5.30e-05 (3.19e-05)	-0.000332 (0.000175)	-3.27e-05 (0.000148)
SNAP \$ Amount	-2.40e-06 (1.29e-05)	-2.52e-05 (6.02e-05)	-0.000145* (6.85e-05)
UI \$ Amount	-6.38e-06 (5.35e-06)	-1.91e-05 (2.97e-05)	-2.72e-05 (2.52e-05)
Insig2u		1.808** (0.0830)	1.992** (0.0723)
Constant	106.1** (20.77)	113.6 (83.11)	237.7** (80.54)
Observations	12,271	7,184	9,629
Number of Respondents	4,090	3,401	3,982

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table 5.** Hispanic recipients: cash amount and political participation.

Hispanic Amount Model VARIABLES	(19) Interest	(20) Registered	(21) Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-0.000103* (4.22e-05)	-0.000129 (0.000309)	9.13e-05 (0.000444)
SNAP \$ Amount	-6.46e-05 (6.81e-05)	0.000188 (0.000243)	-0.000385 (0.000470)
UI \$ Amount	-5.40e-05 (6.49e-05)	0.000198 (0.000267)	-0.000322 (0.000206)
Insig2u		2.715** (0.649)	2.471** (0.635)
Constant	115.3 (156.4)	-194.5 (970.0)	-481.3 (871.0)
Observations	227	149	164
Number of Respondent	74	67	71

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 6. Duration of receipt and political participation.

Duration of Receipt Model VARIABLES	(4) Interest	(5) Registered	(6) Vote
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.142 (0.0811)	-0.631 (0.325)	0.153 (0.344)
SNAP Proportion of Year	0.0564 (0.0313)	0.419** (0.142)	-0.346* (0.147)
UI Proportion of Year	-0.0909 (0.0521)	-0.0283 (0.249)	-0.105 (0.247)
Black	-0.0140 (0.0246)	0.789** (0.105)	0.672** (0.0974)
Hispanic	-0.160** (0.0257)	-0.488** (0.105)	-0.936** (0.106)
Mixed Race	0.0269 (0.103)	-0.360 (0.411)	-0.598 (0.416)
Men	0.165** (0.0199)	-0.475** (0.0819)	-0.685** (0.0789)
Age	-0.0341** (0.00707)	-0.0758** (0.0291)	-0.122** (0.0279)
Weeks Worked	-0.000185 (0.000209)	-0.000381 (0.00109)	0.00255** (0.000928)
Household Income	5.72e-07** (1.05e-07)	2.33e-06** (5.58e-07)	2.23e-06** (4.72e-07)
Education	0.144** (0.00879)	0.447** (0.0368)	0.803** (0.0410)
Household Size	-0.0139** (0.00437)	-0.0591** (0.0204)	-0.0372 (0.0191)
Urban	0.0482* (0.0200)	0.104 (0.0956)	0.148 (0.0907)
South	0.0556** (0.0189)	0.0615 (0.0842)	-0.248** (0.0777)
MSA	0.0560** (0.0140)	0.0526 (0.0666)	0.0147 (0.0627)
Year – 2006		0.846** (0.0805)	-1.026** (0.0621)
Year – 2008		0.944** (0.0859)	0.759** (0.0703)
Year – 2010		0.945** (0.0875)	-0.261** (0.0671)
Year	-0.0161** (0.00242)		
Insig2u		1.721** (0.0604)	1.854** (0.0529)
Constant	100.7** (14.70)	145.2* (57.64)	234.1** (55.28)
Observations	23,525	14,032	18,024
Number of Respondents	7,953	6,695	7,646

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

each model. The independent variables do show some substantive effects; however, they are consistent with prior research on political participation and in their expected directions. Descriptions of and results for the independent variables appear in the appendix. Below I will elaborate on the variables of interest. Table 2 displays the models which estimate the effects of the amount received on measures of political participation. Tables 3–5 display the effects of the amount received on Black, White, and Hispanic participation respectively. Table 6 displays the effects of the duration of receipt on political participation. Tables 7–9 display the effects of the duration of receipt on Black, White, and Hispanic participation respectively. Appended, Table

Table 7. Black recipients: duration of receipt and political participation.

Black Duration Model VARIABLES	(10) Interest	(11) Registered	(12) Vote
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.0874 (0.0952)	-0.371 (0.436)	0.142 (0.383)
SNAP Proportion of Year	0.107* (0.0455)	0.438* (0.215)	-0.411* (0.196)
UI Proportion of Year	-0.00564 (0.0909)	0.995* (0.479)	0.298 (0.388)
Insig2u		1.335** (0.133)	1.495** (0.109)
Constant	91.93** (27.83)	96.02 (101.7)	276.9** (93.82)
Observations	6,108	3,410	4,689
Number of Respondents	2,110	1,734	2,013

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table 8.** White recipients: duration of receipt and political participation.

White Duration Model VARIABLES	(16) Interest	(17) Registered	(18) Vote
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.237 (0.151)	-1.659* (0.776)	0.0228 (0.715)
SNAP Proportion of Year	-0.0533 (0.0515)	0.0522 (0.243)	-0.578* (0.271)
UI Proportion of Year	-0.103 (0.0773)	-0.356 (0.400)	-0.385 (0.387)
Insig2u		1.810** (0.0830)	1.990** (0.0723)
Constant	106.9** (20.76)	112.6 (83.13)	236.9** (80.45)
Observations	12,271	7,184	9,629
Number of Respondents	4,090	3,401	3,982

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table 9.** Hispanic recipients: duration of receipt and political participation.

Hispanic Duration Model VARIABLES	(1) Interest	(2) Registered	(4) Vote
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.576 (0.495)	-1.126 (1.975)	4.581 (3.457)
SNAP Proportion of Year	-0.275 (0.239)	1.331 (1.174)	-3.498 (2.352)
UI Proportion of Year	-0.388 (1.138)	-0.329 (5.593)	-3.061 (3.730)
Insig2u		2.711** (0.696)	2.554** (0.644)
Constant	131.6 (152.6)	-272.6 (971.0)	-544.3 (926.4)
Observations	227	149	164
Number of Respondents	74	67	71

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

A1 displays the collective effects of amount and duration on the three political participation outcome variables. In addition, Tables A2–A4, also appended, display the collective effects of amount and duration on interest, registration, and voting by race, respectively.

Amount received

Consistent with expectations, the amount associated with TANF receipt has a significant negative effect on voter registration and interest in politics. These results are suggestive because interest in politics and voter registration are “preconditions” to actual voting. The amount a household receives in TANF is inversely related to a recipient’s likelihood of participating politically. Conversely, but as predicted, the amount associated with SNAP receipt is positively correlated with interest in politics and voter registration. Again, these results are suggestive because these variables are precursors to actual voting. The more a household receives in SNAP benefits, the more likely a recipient is to participate politically.

Next, I disaggregate the data by race. The models were estimated using the same estimation methods. The complete tables appear in the appendix. Again, the control variables are in their expected directions and remain consistent with prior research on political participation. I will expand below on the variables of interest. As predicted, I find that the amount received in social welfare produces disparate feedback effects across races. The amount received in TANF has a significant negative effect on Hispanic interest in politics. Nevertheless, the amount received in SNAP benefits is correlated with increased interest and voter registration for Hispanic recipients. The amount associated with Black household SNAP receipt is positively correlated with interest in politics and voter registration. These results are also consistent with my predictions of the effects of TANF and SNAP receipt on political participation. However, the amount associated with White household SNAP receipt is negatively correlated with voting. The more a White recipient receives in SNAP benefits the less likely they are to vote.

Duration of receipt

The control variables continue to show substantive effects and are in their expected directions. Below I will expand on the variables of interest. As expected, the duration of TANF and UI receipt are negatively associated with political participation, but the coefficients do not reach significance. The duration of SNAP receipt has heterogeneous effects across political participation. Inversely, the duration of time a household receives SNAP benefits is positively associated with voter registration and negatively associated with voting.

Next, I disaggregate the duration effects by race. The models were estimated using the same estimation methods. The complete tables with these results appear in the appendix. I find that White recipients who have longer spells of TANF receipt are less likely to register to vote and that White recipients who have longer spells of SNAP receipt are also likely to vote. The proportion of the year a Hispanic household receives SNAP benefits is correlated with interest and registration. Again, these results are suggestive because interest in politics and voter registration are “preconditions” to actual voting. The duration of UI receipt has a racially disparate effect. The duration of time that an African American household receives

UI is also positively correlated with voter registration. UI receipt has no effect on White and Hispanic participation. Interestingly, the duration that an African American household receives SNAP benefits is significant in all three political participation models. The duration of SNAP receipt is positively correlated with interest in politics and voter registration and negatively correlated with Black voting.

Lastly, I estimated the effects of the amount received and the duration of receipt together to better understand which matters more. The tables appear in the appendix.¹ As expected, the control variables across all the models have substantive effects consistent with prior research on political participation. Below I will expand on the variables of interest. I find that SNAP is the only social welfare program that significantly impacts political participation. This is consistent with the previous findings and the research showing that SNAP is the most effective poverty program in the U.S. The amount of SNAP received has a significant positive effect on interest in politics; however, the duration of SNAP receipt has a significant negative effect on interest in politics. Again, I find that SNAP produces heterogeneous effects. The duration of SNAP receipt is also significant and negatively associated with voting. This suggests that at certain point SNAP receipt begins to have an adverse effect on recipient political engagement. Next, I disaggregate the effects by race. I estimated the effect the amount and duration of receipt have on interest, registration, and voting by race, respectively. The amount of SNAP benefits received had a significant positive effect on Black and Hispanic interest in politics. The amount and duration had no effect on registration across racial groups. However, TANF receipt had a heterogeneous effect on Hispanic recipients. The amount received in TANF benefits had a significant negative effect on Hispanic voting; nevertheless, the duration of TANF receipt had a significant positive effect on Hispanic voting. This suggests that over time TANF receipt increases the probability that a Hispanic recipient engages in politics.

Discussion

The key findings are that consistent with my expectations in hypothesis 1a and 1b, the amount, and the duration of TANF receipt has a consistent negative effect on political participation, namely for Whites and Hispanics. Moreover, I also find support for hypothesis 1c. Among Hispanic recipients, the amount and duration of TANF receipt was found to both encourage and discourage voting, respectively. Surprisingly, neither the amount nor the duration of TANF receipt had any significant effect on Black political participation. Nevertheless, the signs for the coefficients are mixed.

SNAP receipt had the most consistent effects across race and produced the most consistent disparate feedback effects across race. In support of hypotheses 2a and 2b, I find that both the amount and duration of SANP receipt had a positive effect on Hispanic recipients' level of interest in politics and voter registration, the precursors to voting. Both the amount received and the duration of SANP receipt had a significant negative effect on White voting behavior. Interestingly, the amount and duration of receipt had both significant positive and negative effects on both Black recipient's political engagement. The amount and duration of SNAP receipt had positive effect on their level of interest in politics and voter registration; however, the duration of SNAP receipt also had a significant negative effect on the likelihood of voting. It appears that the amount associated with SNAP receipt encourages Black participation, but as the duration of

receipt continues, SNAP receipt begins to discourage African American participatory behavior.

Regarding unemployment insurance, I only found partial support for my hypothesis. Although the coefficients for UI receipt were mixed, they did not reach significance for Hispanic and White recipients. The only significant effect found for UI receipt was associated with Black recipients. As predicted in hypotheses 3c, the duration of UI receipt was positively correlated with Black political participation.

Conclusion and implications

These results are consistent with the data showing that there are significantly higher rates of poverty among African Americans, and that in the U.S., Black people have higher unemployment rates than Hispanics and a rate double that of Whites. Persistent high rates of unemployment and high rates of poverty create a situation wherein unemployment receipt could make a more significant impact in a Black household as compared to a White or Hispanic household. Moreover, due to the social construction of welfare recipients compared to the fact that UI is earned, there is a possibility that Black UI recipients are experiencing a unique affirmative, attitudinal feedback effect compared to other racial groups.

The primary goal of this article has been to illuminate how the amount received and duration of receipt of social welfare benefits produce disparate resource policy feedback effects. The policy design literature has provided significant insight into the effects of policy design and feedback effects on political participation and the behavior of mass publics (Schneider and Sidney 2009, 103–119; Laenen and Meuleman 2017, 37–54; Laenen and Meuleman 2019, 454–467; Gielens, Roosma, and Achterberg 2019, 442–453). However, social welfare programs are unique in that claimants must present themselves to street-level bureaucrats and substantiate their inability to effectively care for themselves and/or their dependents. In addition, social welfare comes at a cost. Campbell (2012) argues that the mechanisms through which resource feedback effects are theorized to influence behavior are their positive impact on recipients' capacity for participation and (2) their affirmative impact on recipients' attitudinal outcomes. As such, I posited that two of the most important distinctions in understanding the resource feedback effects associated with social welfare receipt are between the amount of aid a person receives (the impact on capacity) and the duration of time they receive it (the affirmative impact). This is important because the challenge of understanding political participation remains elusive in the literature and demonstrating that the decision to participate is made at the margins is quite different than explaining why citizens choose to participate in the first place.

This study sought to demonstrate this by using validated measures of social welfare receipt and political participatory behavior. Relying on longitudinal data spanning up to a decade, as well as independent measures for participation and two separate methods of estimation, this research makes a stronger case for how social welfare programs are affecting participatory behavior. The first step has been to confirm that welfare state contact can have disparate effects participation; the next is to determine how the effects are occurring. Once we better understand these causal mechanisms, we can take the final step of addressing the phenomenon with public policy reform. As future researchers explore the relationship between welfare state contact and participation, they should

continue to examine the myriad of ways that contact affects feedback mechanisms. Essentially, social welfare policies and program administration are shaping participatory behavior, ideas of citizenship, and ultimately, the government itself, and the effects are unique to the amounts received, the duration of receipt, and the race of the recipient.

Conflict over resources and political power are central determinants in economic relationships. Having a better understanding of how these social welfare policies create politics is key to moving toward a more just political economy and avoiding the fallacy of purely structural explanations. Are our social welfare programs creating the opportunities they are supposed to generate and are they creating them in an equitable manner? As a society we should aim to expand opportunities available to all members. Nevertheless, if our social welfare system is inadequate or otherwise failing to redistribute resources justly and reliably as it pertains to the realization of a more just political economy, that has serious implications for social equity. Moreover, if these opportunities are being created, are social welfare recipients able to take advantage of them. Do recipients have the things necessary to make these opportunities valuable? This gap in the literature warrants further examination to expand our understanding of race, representation, and public policy. My hope is that future research will fill these gaps in the literature.

Declaration of interest statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

Note

1. I included mixed race individuals in the tables for the sake of transparency. There are substantive results for mixed race individuals, but the sample size is very small and thus has low statistical power which creates validity concerns. As such I do not expound on those results.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendices

Table A1. Amount & duration of social welfare receipt.

Amount & Duration Model VARIABLES	(19) Interest	(20) Registered	(21) Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-2.60e-05 (3.17e-05)	-0.000125 (0.000114)	-5.63e-05 (0.000132)
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.0446 (0.155)	-0.140 (0.573)	0.364 (0.662)
SNAP \$ Amount	5.56e-05** (1.55e-05)	0.000104 (6.89e-05)	6.16e-05 (6.03e-05)
SNAP Proportion of Year	-0.138* (0.0606)	0.0670 (0.275)	-0.562* (0.253)
UI \$ Amount	2.92e-06 (8.67e-06)	2.50e-06 (4.34e-05)	6.69e-06 (4.19e-05)
UI. Proportion of Year	-0.127 (0.122)	-0.0565 (0.595)	-0.190 (0.580)
Insig2u		1.721** (0.0604)	1.853** (0.0529)
Constant	101.0** (14.70)	144.3* (57.65)	233.6** (55.25)
Observations	23.525	14.032	18.024
Number of Respondents	7.953	6.695	7.646

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A2. Effect of amount & duration of receipt on interest.

Interest Model by Race Race VARIABLES	(22) (WYT) Interest	(23) (BLK) Interest	(24) (HSP) Interest	(25) (MXD) Interest
TANF \$ Amount	-2.68e-05 (6.68e-05)	1.48e-05 (3.75e-05)	-0.000107 (7.65e-05)	-4.32e-05 (0.000115)
TANF Proportion of Year	-0.124 (0.302)	-0.153 (0.182)	0.251 (0.438)	-0.320 (1.012)
SNAP \$ Amount	3.49e-05 (2.52e-05)	5.13e-05* (2.25e-05)	7.59e-05* (3.43e-05)	1.97e-05 (0.000148)
SNAP Proportion of Year	-0.173 (0.0969)	-0.0759 (0.0894)	-0.115 (0.138)	-0.374 (0.531)
UI \$ Amount	1.04e-07 (1.30e-05)	1.32e-05 (1.52e-05)	1.04e-05 (1.81e-05)	-0.000271** (9.22e-05)
UI. Proportion of Year	-0.105 (0.190)	-0.150 (0.195)	-0.324 (0.273)	3.572** (0.917)
Constant	106.9* (20.84)	92.58* (27.57)	82.27* (31.24)	114.0 (151.5)
Observations	12.271	6.108	4.919	227
Number of Respondents	4.090	2.110	1.679	74

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A3. Effect of amount & duration of receipt on registration.

Registered Model by Race	(26)	(27)	(28)	(29)
Race	(WYT)	(BLK)	(HSP)	(MXD)
VARIABLES	Registered	Registered	Registered	Registered
TANF \$ Amount	-6.97e-05 (0.000457)	-6.22e-05 (0.000143)	-0.000413 (0.000269)	-0.000269 (0.000750)
TANF Proportion of Year	-1.444 (1.677)	-0.276 (0.698)	1.573 (1.755)	0.307 (5.370)
SNAP \$ Amount	-0.000133 (0.000118)	0.000219 (0.000116)	0.000234 (0.000142)	-0.000680 (0.000686)
SNAP Proportion of Year	0.507 (0.464)	-0.279 (0.420)	-0.103 (0.604)	4.005 (2.782)
UI \$ Amount	3.19e-05 (6.73e-05)	0.000107 (0.000136)	-3.51e-05 (7.12e-05)	0.00143 (0.00110)
UI. Proportion of Year	-0.748 (0.934)	-0.0562 (1.293)	-0.102 (1.207)	-18.88 (17.89)
Insig2u	1.808** (0.0831)	1.329** (0.136)	1.815** (0.121)	2.995** (0.736)
Cono-stant	112.7 (84.00)	89.54 (102.6)	266.1* (123.3)	-218.6 (1.193)
Observations	7.184	3.410	3.289	149
Number of Respondents	3.401	1.734	1.493	67

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table A4.** Effect of amount & duration of receipt on voting.

Vote Model by Race	(30)	(31)	(32)	(33)
Race	(WYT)	(BLK)	(HSP)	(MXD)
VARIABLES	Vote	Vote	Vote	Vote
TANF \$ Amount	-0.000158 (0.000252)	0.000234 (0.000200)	-0.00126** (0.000429)	-0.132** (0.0239)
TANF Proportion of Year	0.716 (1.355)	-0.678 (0.838)	6.091** (2.244)	429.8** (71.92)
SNAP \$ Amount	-8.34e-05 (0.000144)	3.68e-05 (6.52e-05)	0.000296 (0.000199)	0.00405 (0.00252)
SNAP Proportion of Year	-0.296 (0.550)	-0.539 (0.303)	-0.911 (0.770)	-25.38 (15.49)
UI \$ Amount	-2.62e-05 (6.27e-05)	0.000146 (8.33e-05)	2.11e-05 (8.92e-05)	-0.00428** (0.00160)
UI. Proportion of Year	-0.0192 (0.941)	-1.200 (0.902)	-0.657 (1.349)	55.35*** (18.45)
Insig2u	1.992** (0.0722)	1.498** (0.110)	1.852** (0.117)	2.605** (0.754)
Constant	238.0** (81.27)	276.1** (94.00)	157.8 (122.2)	-629.6 (1.,033)
Observations	9.629	4.689	3.542	164
Number of Respondents	3.982	2.013	1.580	71

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.