

Learning What Works

Evidence from SRDC's Social Experiments and Research

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Making the Transition From Welfare to Work

Although the Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) was first and foremost a randomized field trial to estimate the effects of a "making work pay" strategy on a group of lone-parent long-term income assistance (IA) recipients, it also incorporated a much broader research strategy.

In *Sustaining: Making the Transition from Welfare to Work*, Wendy Bancroft takes an in-depth look at the lives of several lone-parent SSP mothers and their families over a two-year period as they attempt to make the transition from welfare to work. Twelve mothers were randomly selected from a list of participants who possessed characteristics common to the larger SSP sample. Some were already working and receiving the SSP earnings supplement when they were selected for the study, some had initially found work but had returned to welfare, and some had not yet taken up the supplement offer.

The mothers met with the researcher three times a year for two years to talk about their day-to-day experiences. The challenges that they discussed are common in the literature about lone parents: long spells of poverty and welfare receipt, unstable low-paying jobs, and the struggle to find trustworthy and affordable childcare while juggling family responsibilities.

However, over the course of the study several less expected themes emerged

that appear to play an important role in welfare exits. These included the ongoing presence of fathers, the importance of the physical and social environment in welfare exit decisions, the role played by key people and events in the woman's early life, and the effect that trauma has on the transition from welfare to work.

The women spoke of living in sub-standard housing complexes in unsafe neighbourhoods, surrounded by people with little hope of a better future. Women with older children who made the break from welfare and started working worried about their children's safety. Networking within their social circles led only to poorly paid and unstable jobs with few opportunities for wage increases or career advancement.

The prevalence of abuse in the stories told by these women is especially stunning; most of the women spoke of times when they or their children experienced some form of physical or psychological abuse, and how demeaned and traumatized these experiences had made them feel.

I used to be a person that my husband abused every single day — sexual, physically. He bites sometimes. It was bad, very bad — one of my ears. He punched me ... But the self-esteem goes down, down, down. I feel like I'm not able to do anything? Like I'm stupid.

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In several cases the abuser was the children's father who continued to be a presence in the family's life. In fact, in most of the families the fathers continued to play a role. While this could mean added financial support for the family, more often than not it meant continued harassment and ongoing custody battles. This, in turn, meant more stress.

I mean my mind was just constantly going, going, going: Gotta remember this, gotta do this, gotta call this, gotta write this down, gotta deal with this situation, gotta make sure my son is okay, gotta make sure I'm okay, gotta make sure we're living okay. And the tension. I was always tense. My muscles were always knots in the back and all that kind of thing.

In situations where the mother had limited or otherwise inadequate social support, this kind of stress was especially difficult. While social support is deemed essential to successful welfare-to-work transitions, the quality of that support can vary. Several mothers lived in settings where risk-taking was not encouraged, or where their own feelings of despair or self-doubt were reinforced by others close to them who lacked the vision or confidence themselves to pursue a different kind of life. For instance, attempts to move beyond their current circumstances could be sabotaged by a partner who felt threatened by this behaviour: "I don't want you doing homework tonight. I want you to come here and watch TV with me."

Sometimes, the combined stress of working, lone-parenting, poverty, custody battles, or other traumatic issues led to a sense of futility and depression where life and work-related challenges could be overwhelming:

Sometimes I wonder, why bother? Like, there've been times when I just felt like giving up on everything — being a mom, being everything.

On the positive side, there were also women who managed to find the strength to wade through the mire and improve their lives. As the study progressed, the question of why some could overcome adversity while others could not became a focus of enquiry. The notion of resilience began to emerge as a powerful explanation for this phenomenon. Guided by the literature about resilience and by the study's emergent findings, transcripts of the interviews were analyzed in an attempt to understand what set the

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more successful mothers apart and made some mothers more resilient than others. Three groups were identified:

- Sustaining — those who were working and unlikely to need financial assistance from government or charitable agencies,
- In transition — those who were not yet sustaining but were well on their way, and
- Mired — those who were consumed by and unable to see past their current poor circumstances.

These three groups were then examined to discover what coping responses, risk factors, and protective factors may have been present in their lives that might help explain the presence or absence of resilience.

Unsurprisingly, protective factors were more frequent in the sustaining group. Without exception, they had benefited from the presence of a strong and

caring role model in their youth. They tended to have stronger sources of support in their current lives and to have gained a sense of competency through work or school. These women were goal-oriented, resourceful, and better able to solve problems and recognize opportunities. They also had more self-esteem: where a mired mother might be discouraged by unstable work hours, give up, and return to welfare, a sustaining mother would search for work that offered better security, and keep looking until she found it.

Bancroft concludes that when considering lone-parent families and their capacity to leave welfare and sustain work, it is necessary to recognize that not all seemingly "employable" parents have the capacity or resilience to make this transition; program staff should be trained to assess clients for their resilience, and specialized assessment tools should be developed to assist program staff and facilitate disclosure on the part of parents. Staff should be trained to promote resilience among lone parents, and programs should be developed to address this need. Alternatively, the paper argues, individuals who have been mired in the past but who are now sustaining could assist in a peer-mentoring program. Regardless, the paper concludes that the necessary first step may be to find supportive work environments that offer opportunities that would allow these individuals to gain a sense of self-confidence and competency. ♦

Survey of Parents of Kindergarten Students in Manitoba

SRDC was commissioned by Healthy Child Manitoba (HCM) to conduct a special one-time telephone survey of 1,000 parents of kindergarten students in Manitoba. This is HCM's initial step in gathering current robust data to support the Government of Manitoba's commitment to update and expand current knowledge of child development. With the assistance of the Canadian marketing research firm POLLARA Incorporated, SRDC contacted and interviewed volunteer parent participants in 19 school divisions over a five-

week period between May and June 2004. During these one-hour interviews, parents related the experiences of their children and families. Teachers of all kindergarten students in the survey sample had completed the Early Development Instrument (EDI) for each of their students in February 2004. The EDI, developed by researchers at McMaster University's Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk, measures a child's readiness to learn, and will help inform the Government of Manitoba about

how well prepared the children are for further schooling, and whether they are ready to learn and enjoy the experience. Parents were asked for their permission to allow SRDC to combine the information they provided in the survey with their child's EDI results, which will allow the study to learn more about the relationship between current kindergarten students' readiness to learn and their families' backgrounds and experiences. Survey results are expected to be available early next year. ♦

Self-Sufficiency Project Research Continues

Although the final impact reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) have been published, related research is ongoing. SSP tested the effects of a generous but temporary earnings supplement offered to long-term lone-parent income assistance (IA) recipients in British Columbia and New Brunswick. In one part of the experiment the financial incentive was offered in combination with job-finding assistance and other employment-related services. Since the 1992 launch of SSP a series of reports has been generated, culminating in major impact studies in 2002 and 2003 that demonstrate that the "making work pay" strategy tested by SSP actually:

- increased employment,
- reduced welfare receipt,
- raised the earnings and income of the low-income families,

- had positive effects on some of the young children in lone-parent families, and
- incurred little or no cost to government under certain conditions.

SSP was conducted as a randomized field trial involving more than 9,000 lone parents, and combined administrative records data with information collected from baseline and multi-wave follow-up surveys. Human Resources Development Canada (now Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) agreed to continue funding the project for an additional three years to allow the rich SSP datasets to be more fully explored. As a result, a number of additional analyses are being undertaken with the SSP data that will lead to a series of working papers between now and March 2006.

Two recently published papers use SSP data to explore two very different sets of questions. In *An Econometric Analysis of the Impact of the Self-Sufficiency Project on Unemployment and Employment Durations*, Jeffrey Zabel, Saul Schwartz, and Stephen Donald look at the effect that SSP had on the length of participants' employment and unemployment spells, and examine a number of factors that may have caused participants to enter or exit employment. Because many of the factors that may be important influences on the length of time that a person remains employed or unemployed are unobserved characteristics such as motivation or how much a person values time not spent in employment, this study involves complex non-experimental statistical analysis.

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The authors find that these unobserved factors are of surprisingly low importance in explaining why an individual did or did not receive at least one SSP supplement payment, and report that various unobserved factors among those receiving the supplement appear to offset one another. For example, after accounting for observed factors such as education, age, and mental health, the people who were quickest to leave unemployment were also quickest to exit employment. Exiting unemployment for work increases the employment rate of SSP supplement receivers, while exiting employment results in a decrease. As a result, the measured employment rate of SSP supplement receivers remains virtually the same regardless of whether complex statistical methods are used or not.

Finding that those who were quickest to leave unemployment were also the quickest to exit employment was unexpected. The opposite is a more obvious assumption: people who are quickest to leave unemployment (possibly because they are more motivated to work) might be the people who would keep their jobs the longest. However, the authors speculate that those who can find work quickly may also be quicker to quit an unsatisfactory job because they can quickly find another one. In contrast, a person who has difficulty finding a job may stay at an unsatisfactory job longer because they anticipate having difficulty in finding a new job.

In Out-of-School Time-Use During Middle Childhood in a Low-Income Sample: Do Combinations of Activities Affect Achievement and Behaviour? Pamela Morris and Ariel Kalil use SSP data to examine the effect of out-of-school activities on children of low-income families.

Between the ages of 6 and 12 years of age, children begin to be exposed to more and more out-of-home environ-

ments. Teachers, school, and peer groups become increasingly important sources of influence. However, low-income children face special challenges that reduce their opportunities for enrichment: dangerous neighborhoods may keep them at home, and the lack of parks, libraries, and other recreational facilities may give them fewer enriching opportunities.

Some researchers have argued that participation in structured learning, sports, and recreation activities after school can help these children develop both academically and behaviorally, while also helping them to avoid unsupervised activities with peers in potentially

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dangerous environments. If this is true, it may be in the interests of policy makers to fund and promote these structured after-school activities.

In order to shed light on this issue, Morris and Kalil analyze SSP data for children 6 to 12 years of age to discover how they used their out-of-school time and whether these activities assisted their cognitive development and emotional well-being. They look at a variety of activities including participation in clubs, lessons, and adult supervised structured sports. They use statistical techniques to divide children into five groups according to what activities and how many activities they took part in. For example, some children participated in sports, clubs, and lessons, some participated in only sports, and some participated in none of these activities. The authors compare these groups on the basis of math

scores and school achievement, as well as by incidence of pro-social behavior, behavioral problems, and problems at school.

Morris and Kalil find that students who participated in all activities — sports, clubs, and lessons — did consistently better in school achievement and pro-social behavior than children who participated in none of these activities. The analysis uses statistical controls for parent and child characteristics, as well as estimation techniques that control for unobserved family characteristics. Similar benefits are found for the sports-only group (in school achievement and pro-social behavior) and for the sports-and-clubs group (for math test scores). However, these results are not as consistently observed across estimation techniques.

The authors conclude that their study provides evidence that for children from low-income families, participation in certain combinations of structured after-school activities is associated with beneficial outcomes, and note that participation in sports is always present in the combinations where benefits are observed. They hypothesize that team sports might help children develop skills that are important to successful development during this stage of their life, including athletic competency, emotional and behavioral self-regulation, and the development of ties to peers and adult mentors.

Despite these associations, Morris and Kalil are cautious about saying that participating in sports, clubs, and lessons cause higher school achievement and greater pro-social behavior. They note that children with certain unobserved characteristics — the highly motivated or the highly social — may be more likely to engage in many activities, and these same characteristics may also allow them to perform better in school and exhibit more pro-social behavior. ♦

Social Capital, Inclusion, and Cohesion: Where Are the Boundaries?

Distinguishing related outcomes in CEIP with a network-based approach

That there is widespread interest in the concept of social capital cannot be denied. The concept has been the subject of inquiry and theory in a wide range of social research, but it comes as no surprise that such diverse interest has not produced one singular definition. Stone (2001) acknowledges that despite considerable contemporary use, debate regarding social capital “has seen the conceptualization of social capital race ahead of the development of tools for measuring it empirically.” A similar problem can be found in the related concepts of social inclusion and social cohesion. Jenson (1998) identifies several measures of social cohesion that are also found in the literature’s definition of social inclusion. She acknowledges that social cohesion is “an ambiguous concept because it can be used by those seeking to accomplish a variety of things.” Crawford (2003) also notes “there is considerable diver-

sity and even confusion in terms of the definitions and dimensions of social inclusion.” As a result of this ambiguity, we are faced with concepts that overlap in ways that can prevent independent modeling of outcomes.

For the concepts of social capital, inclusion, and cohesion to be useful to policy researchers and practitioners, they must be clearly defined in a way that allows each concept to be measured independently. In a unique approach, the Community Employment Innovation Project (CEIP) proposes to measure social capital formation using a definition of social capital that is based on social networks, with network-based measures of social capital clearly distinguished from those of related CEIP outcomes such as social inclusion and social cohesion. Similarly, measures of social cohesion and social inclusion used in CEIP do not overlap.

Social Capital, Inclusion, and Cohesion: Conceptual Ambiguity

Many of the definitions of social capital acknowledge the concept of “networks” of connected individuals; Stone (2001), for example, views social capital as “networks of social relations which are characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity.” This viewpoint is particularly relevant to CEIP, and emphasizes the role of social networks and social ties. However, Woolcock (2001) believes that it is important not to confuse social capital with its consequences, noting that definitions of social capital have a tendency to include both “networks” and values like trust and reciprocity. Advocating for a definition that focuses on what social capital is rather than what it does, he suggests that while “trust” is a consequence of social capital, it is not an appropriate

CEIP: Support for the Unemployed and Local Community Development

The Community Employment Innovation Project (CEIP) is a long-term research and demonstration project that is designed to test an alternative form of income support for the unemployed. CEIP is sponsored by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services (NSDCS).

Eligible individuals in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) were offered the opportunity to exchange their entitlements to Employment Insurance (EI) or Income Assistance (IA) benefits for a “community wage” that is earned by working for up to 3 years on projects developed and operated at the local level. Beyond addressing the immediate need for employment, CEIP hopes to influence participants’ longer-term employability by improving both their human and social capital.

A significant feature of CEIP’s design is the central role given to local communities to identify and prioritize local needs, and to develop, approve, and implement projects to meet those needs.

element of the definition. He also suggests that much of the current interest in social capital has been fueled by a definition that includes not only the structure of networks and social relations, but also behavioural dispositions such as trust, reciprocity, honesty, and institutional quality measures such as the rule of law and civil liberties. The danger in an expanding definition is that social capital will become all things to all people, and therefore meaningless as an analytical tool.

This ambiguity is particularly problematic when the possible consequences of social capital are themselves independent outcomes of CEIP. For example, enhanced social cohesion is a possible intermediate or long-term outcome that may be observed in CEIP. Trust and reciprocity are central to many definitions of social cohesion, particularly those that focus on feelings of belonging and shared identity. Though related to both the concepts of social capital and social cohesion, trust and reciprocity cannot be independent measures of both concepts.

Similarly, enhanced social inclusion is an outcome of interest in CEIP. Many definitions of social inclusion refer to opportunities for participation in economic, political, and cultural life of a community (Crawford, 2003). However, the fact that this dimension of “participation” is also present in the concepts of social capital and social cohesion raises concern about overlapping measures. For example, participation in various associational and non-associational community activities has been viewed as an indicator of social capital as well as of enhanced inclusion or social cohesion (Jenson, 1998). The definition and measures of social capital need to be distinct from related concepts, particularly when the intervention may affect these outcomes independently.

Social Capital: Resources in Networks and Their Structural Characteristics

CEIP's definition of social capital focuses on the resources that are embedded within social networks, independent of measures of social cohesion or inclusion. It is these resources, available and accessible within networks, which are the essential elements of social capital. In CEIP, the types of resources that are measured are those that are potentially influenced by the intervention and also related to CEIP effects such as help finding a job, available specialized advice, emotional support, and help with household activities.

In addition to quantifying the types of resources accessible, CEIP also measures the structural characteristics of the networks themselves. In particular, the density and homogeneity of contacts within a network have been identified as important characteristics in the development of social capital. According to Woolcock and Narayan (2000), “less dense and less homogeneous networks should help individuals confront poverty, vulnerability, resolve disputes, and/or take advantage of new opportunities.” Johnson (2003) formalized elements of this theory in a model of social capital formation that explores how the characteristics of networks such as size, homogeneity, and density evolve and are influenced by the factors described in the model. Size, homogeneity, and density are clearly definable aspects of social networks that can be measured separately from those of related outcomes.

In CEIP, homogeneity is measured using survey questions to compare a respondent's own demographic characteristics with those of his or her social network. The density of the network is assessed through questions

that elicit the nature and interconnects of these relationships, and additional measures are used to identify the formal or informal nature of the contact. With social capital measures focused on the characteristics of networks and the resources available within those networks, both behavioural dispositions and community participation can be treated as consequences associated with social inclusion and cohesion.

Social Inclusion: Diverse Access to and Participation in Valued Dimensions of Society

Although the definition of social inclusion varies in the literature, equality of access to and participation in valued dimensions of society is central to most definitions (Crawford, 2003). The particular dimensions that one chooses to focus on determine the basic orientation of the concept and the associated measures. For example, much of the literature deals with the economic dimension of social inclusion, focusing on measures of employment, equality of income, and poverty. One of the central notions in the economic dimension of social inclusion is equality of access and participation in market activity including labour markets.

The economic dimension of social inclusion is particularly relevant to CEIP given that one of the central aims is to enhance the social economy in Cape Breton. In much of the literature the economic dimension of inclusion is paramount. As Jenson (1998) states, “In this literature, inclusion means bringing people into contact with a recognized form of economic activity.” Effects on community are seen as the product of economic activity and participation in paid employment. Consistent with this

notion, the CEIP community effects study reviews many community economic outcomes with measures related to economic inclusion, including adult and youth unemployment rates, income distribution and extent of inequality, reliance on social assistance, and poverty.

However, for a number of reasons it is important that CEIP adopt an expanded definition of inclusion and consider participation in a wider set of valued societal situations, including political, cultural, and social dimensions. This expanded definition is more consistent with CEIP's broader view of the social economy that incorporates the voluntary sector and a wider range of non-profits than those fitting the common definition of a social enterprise; although sponsoring organizations in CEIP have many of the features of a social enterprise, CEIP did not impose a formal definition or organizational structure on communities, due in part to the fact that it was not consistent with the central CEIP tenet of community control over project development. Although to some the voluntary sector falls outside of the domain of the social economy — it is absent in one particular enterprise framework (Ninacs, 2002) — its importance is widely acknowledged. Literature on the voluntary sector takes the perspective that the economic autonomy that comes from having sufficient income is only one of many avenues to improved social inclusion. Participation and involvement in valued aspects of community life — political, cultural, and social — are just as important to social inclusiveness as economic self-sufficiency.

As a result, CEIP's measures of social inclusion assess the degree of access to community institutions and the extent of participation in various associational

Measuring Network Size: Number of Contacts That Provide Access to Resources

CEIP follow-up surveys quantify the size of an individual's social network by measuring the total number of contacts the individual has that give access to resources that are related to outcomes of interest in CEIP. The surveys ask respondents to write down their contacts for each resource type, and the total number of individuals is then determined.

Write down the names of relatives, close friends, and acquaintances that you could easily get help from with:

- Finding a job, such as telling you about job leads, writing a reference letter, or recommending you to a potential employer
- Household activities such as childcare, household maintenance, household chores, or personal care
- Specialized financial, medical, or legal advice
- Emotional support such as encouragement, reassurance, or confidential advice

Measuring Network Density: Interconnectedness of Contacts

CEIP follow-up surveys also measure how interconnected the contacts within the network are. Specifically, the surveys ask respondents how many of their contacts know each other, how many are family, and how many are close friends.

For the people that you listed:

- How many of these people would you say know each other?
- How many are members of your family, your relatives, or your in-laws?
- How many are close friends of yours, or close friends of each other?
- How many have you worked with?

Measuring Network Heterogeneity: Diversity in Characteristics of Contacts

CEIP follow-up surveys also measure how diverse contacts within the network are. Specifically, the surveys ask respondents about the gender, age, area of residence, and education of their contacts.

- How many are male?
- How many are within 10 years of your age?
- How many live in the same community as you?
- How many have about the same level of education as you do?

and non-associational activities of community members, while at the same time identifying what barriers to access and participation exist. By also collecting detailed demographic data in each community, indicators can be constructed that measure not only the extent of aggregate participation in various community activities, but also the level of diversity in each area relative to the demographics of the community at large. Using indicators of inclusive participation, any effects that CEIP has on socially excluded groups can be identified beyond that uncovered with community-level economic-based indicators.

Social Cohesion: Sense of Belonging, Trust, and Shared Values

Although Jenson (1998) puts forth five dimensions of social cohesion that overlap with aspects of social capital and inclusion, she does identify one unique dimension that most definitions of social cohesion found in the literature share. Her dimension of “belonging” lends a sense of shared values and a collective community identity to the definition of social cohesion. A sense of shared identity allows individuals to feel connected to their community and is associated with reduced feelings of isolation. Trust is also an important component of social cohesion, particularly as it relates to the “belonging” dimension.

Measures of social cohesion associated with belonging, shared values, and trust are particularly relevant for CEIP. This conceptualization of social cohesion has been linked not only with outcomes on social capital and inclusion, but also with others of interest in CEIP at both an organizational and individual level, including improvements in the voluntary sector and positive outcomes on the health and well being of individ-

uals. Furthermore, with social capital measures focused on resources in networks and social inclusion assessed through access and participation, measures of social cohesion are best oriented towards the perceptions, attitudes, and values of community members. The independence of these measures allows the effects of CEIP and relationships between social capital, inclusiveness, and cohesion to be explored.

As a result, CEIP defines its measures of social cohesion with a focus on the feelings of belonging, trust, and shared identity, and includes indicators of the perceived level of connectedness and engagement with community, the extent of community satisfaction and utility, measures of civic and generalized trust, and the degree to which individuals identify with social or ethnic groups within the community.

Mechanisms by Which CEIP May Affect Social Capital, Inclusion, and Cohesion

CEIP may affect the social capital, inclusiveness, and cohesion of those in participating communities through the important avenues of process and product effects. Process effects are those that arise from the communities responding to the CEIP offer and implementing the project, including the process of community engagement, electing representative community boards, strategic planning and capacity assessment, and the mobilization of local organizations in the social economy to develop and run projects. Product effects are those that are experienced by the community as a result of the output of CEIP projects. These effects occur at both individual and organizational levels, and translate into aggregate effects for the community.

Process effects can be experienced by individuals and organizations associated with the community boards, the project sponsors, or members of the community at large. For example, individuals participate in the establishment and management of the community board — engaging the community, planning, priority setting, and overseeing project development — through discussion and democratic processes. These activities bring individuals together more often, formally and informally, and can expand social networks. In this way, individuals become more accountable to each another, contributing to a stronger community identity and increased social cohesion. For the community, the consequence of greater interaction, expanded social networks, and a stronger community identity is greater participation in its institutions and collective activities, leading to enhanced social inclusion.

Product effects are derived through the consumption or utilization of goods and services produced by projects in the social economy. The goods and services produced by CEIP community projects should be consistent with community needs as identified by strategic planning, and therefore of direct value to the community. Depending on the nature of the product, this may engender further interaction and participation, leading to enhanced networks and social inclusion. In addition to the direct effects of the output of CEIP projects, there is also a possible indirect or “multiplier” effect, in that projects may support or strengthen existing organizations and institutions of the communities. For example, a seniors transport service may generate additional attendance at church, or the provision of a new childcare centre might enable more parents to undertake paid or voluntary work.

Through process and product mechanisms, CEIP can lead to direct effects on social capital, inclusion, and cohesion at the individual level, but organizations within the social economy can be similarly affected, resulting in mediating effects to social capital, inclusion, and cohesion. There is also feedback between social capital, social inclusion, social cohesion, and the social economy, with each supporting the others. Though the CEIP research design is focused on detecting the outcomes of CEIP, the longitudinal nature of many of the data sources along with some of the qualitative approaches allows for an exploration of the dynamics involved.

The CEIP Research Design

The CEIP research design includes an experimental participant impact study, which employs a random assignment design. Participants are randomly assigned to either a program or control group. The program group receives the CEIP treatment while the control group, ineligible for the program, serves as a counterfactual — a measure of what the outcome would have been in the absence of the program. Any differences that are observed over time in the experiences of the two groups can be attributed with confidence to CEIP because random assignment ensures that there are no pre-existing differences between the groups.

The experiences of participants in the program and control groups are assessed through a series of follow-up surveys and administrative data sources. Follow-up surveys conducted at 18, 40, and 54 months after random assignment are the key source of data on the employment, earnings, education and skills, and health and well being of those in the study and will provide the basis for measuring the impacts of CEIP. Because survey data

are collected for both program and control group members, consistent and reliable estimates of the impact of CEIP on social networks and volunteering can be assessed separately from outcomes related to labour market experiences and well being.

In addition to the participant impact study, the CEIP research design also includes a comprehensive study of community effects. This involves a multiple-methods research design that relies heavily on both a “theory of change” approach and a quasi-experimental comparison community design. A range of data collection methods is used in this design including a longitudinal community survey, administrative indicators, and a series of qualitative research approaches. The longitudinal survey is being administered in three waves to a random sample of community members in both program and comparison communities, and includes questions about economic activity and employment, household composition, health and wellbeing, time use and community participation, attitudes towards local community, and social networks. Indicators can be constructed on the evolution of social networks, attitudes towards local community including trust and reciprocity, and volunteering and participation in community activities, which will allow the effect of CEIP on the evolution of social capital, community cohesion, and social inclusion to be analyzed separately from each other and related community outcomes.

Status

Initial surveys with CEIP study participants and the first wave of community surveys provide a “baseline” measure of social networks for study participants and the members of the CEIP and comparison communities in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality

(CBRM). However, to assess the effect of CEIP on social capital and associated outcomes, data from additional follow-up surveys is required. The 18-month follow-up survey with study participants was in the field until early 2004 while the follow-up wave of the community survey was just completed this summer. As a result, the first report of effects of CEIP can be expected in early-to-mid 2005.

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Bulletin Board

Publications

Out-of-School Time-Use During Middle Childhood in a Low-Income Sample: Do Combinations of Activities Affect Achievement and Behaviour? by Pamela Morris and Ariel Kalil

This paper uses Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) data to examine the effects of out-of-school activities on low-income children in middle childhood. Participation in all of the structured activities considered (sports, lessons, and clubs) is consistently significantly associated with small benefits for children. Those who participated in structured activities achieved better results than those who did not, when evaluated on the basis of a math test and parental reports of academic achievement and social behaviour. In particular, the paper suggests that sports participation should be encouraged but finds no evidence that participation in clubs alone assists middle childhood achievement or behaviour.

An Econometric Analysis of the Impact of the Self-Sufficiency Project on Unemployment and Employment Durations, by Jeffrey Zabel, Saul Schwartz, and Stephen Donald

This paper evaluates the short-term and long-term impacts of SSP on employment and unemployment durations for those who received SSP supplement payments. The paper finds evidence of significant short-term impacts on employment and unemployment durations. The paper also finds that SSP appears to have a long-term positive impact on the employment rate of the take-up program group. This appears to be due to the long-term decrease in the probability of exit from employment for take-up program group members. The paper obtains unbiased estimates of durations by estimating a joint model of employment and unemployment durations that controls for unobserved heterogeneity and non-random selection into work. The paper finds that these two factors had little influence on exits from employment and unemployment.

Sustaining: Making the Transition From Welfare to Work, by Wendy Bancroft

This working paper records the lives of several single mothers in the Self-Sufficiency Project as they attempt to make the transition from welfare to work. During in-depth interviews recorded over a period of two years, the mothers speak about factors that influenced their ability to leave welfare for long-term employment. The women discuss working conditions, the roles that their children's fathers and others play in family well-being, and for most of the women, how

they cope with the after-effects of spousal abuse. Taking these factors into account, the study ultimately focuses on the role of resilience in welfare exit and the implications of resilience in work transition policies.

Employment Insurance and Family Response to Unemployment: Canadian Evidence From the SLID, by Rick Audas and Ted McDonald

This working paper provides a first look at the role regular EI benefits play in spousal labour supply decisions when the main income earner experiences a job loss. Using longitudinal data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) for the period of 1993 to 2001, the authors show that while in general the main income earner's eligibility for EI is found to have little impact on the spouse's decision to seek employment or to work more, it does appear to have a significant impact when children are present in the household or when the job loss occurs for reasons that are by nature non-seasonal. This conclusion suggests that EI may be giving families greater flexibility in balancing their work and family responsibilities.

Events

SRDC researchers attend the AVID Summer Institute

Three SRDC researchers attended the AVID Summer Institute held in San Diego from August 2 to August 6, 2004 in connection with the British Columbia Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) project, one of the pilot projects of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. SRDC is responsible for conducting the evaluation of the British Columbia AVID project, which is intended to identify students who are academically "in the middle" in Grades 7 or 8, and support them during high school so that they are able to access post-secondary education. Reuben Ford, Susanna Gurr, and Elizabeth Dunn of SRDC learned about AVID study skills and program implementation with staff from British Columbia schools districts that will be implementing the AVID program, and were able to meet with the staff and explain the research design. Representatives from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, the British Columbia Ministry of Education, and the Chilliwack School District were also in attendance, and met with staff of the AVID Center (also based in San Diego) who will be assisting with the program implementation and research.

SRDC presents lessons learned from *learn\$ave* at the 2004 IDA Learning Conference

Representatives of governments, corporations, foundations, and financial and academic institutions met in New Orleans from September 21 to September 23, 2004 to share innovations and best practices in the field of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and asset-building. The United States Department of Health and Human Services sponsored the conference, which included a number of workshops on research, evaluation, and international IDA initiatives. As part of a panel that included speakers from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, Paul Kingwell of SRDC and Barbara Gosse from SRDC's *learn\$ave* partner SEDI (Social and Enterprise Development Initiatives) presented the *learn\$ave* project and provided up-to-date project findings.

SRDC Research Associate makes recommendations to the House of Commons

SRDC Senior Research Associate Carole Vincent presented recommendations on Employment Insurance (EI) reform to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on May 11, 2004. Based on the conclusions of the SRDC report *Understanding Employment Insurance Claim Patterns: Final Report of the Earnings Supplement Project*, Dr. Vincent argued that despite ongoing efforts to improve EI's support of Canadians, the EI program does not adequately recognize the current realities of the labour market. She advised the committee that priority should be given to evaluating the merits of a true hours-based program that would extend full EI coverage to all workers who are in paid employment and who are therefore required to pay premiums.

SRDC participates in an expert panel on the measurement of social capital

On June 8, 2004, David Gyarmati and Darrell Kyte of SRDC participated in an expert panel on the measurement of social capital coordinated by the Policy Research Initiative (PRI), and discussed the measurement and dynamics of social capital. Gyarmati and Kyte presented CEIP's approach to measuring social capital as resources within social networks and discussed various experimental and non-experimental methods of exploring the dynamics between CEIP, social capital, and other outcomes of interest. The workshop was well attended by a wide range of Canadian and international researchers and policy makers.

SRDC presents at the 38th Annual Canadian Economics Association Conference

SRDC presented the results of the final report of the Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) Applicant study at the 38th Annual Canadian Economics Association (CEA) Conference in Toronto on June 4, 2004. Report authors Doug Tatttrie, Reuben Ford, and David Gyarmati told the conference that SSP's earnings supplement increased full-time employment, reduced welfare receipt, and decreased poverty among lone-parent welfare applicants in British Columbia. The SSP applicant study was an experimental study involving 3,315 participants from February 1994 to March 1995, and was one of three related SSP studies: the SSP Recipient study examined the effects of earnings supplement on long-term welfare recipients while the SSP Plus study looked at the effects of earnings supplement in combination with employment services.

Ian A. Stewart joins the SRDC Board

On September 30, 2004, Ian Stewart was appointed to the Board of Directors of SRDC. Dr. Stewart is a graduate of Queen's University and holds a Ph.D. from Cornell University. After teaching at Queen's and at Dartmouth College, he joined the Bank of Canada. Subsequently, he had a long and distinguished career in the federal public service, including senior positions in the Privy Council Office, and appointments as Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and as Deputy Minister of Finance. ♦