Child Support Policy and Divorce

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Abstract

This paper develops a simple model of child support and divorce or separation, highlighting the specific conditions that must be true for differences in child support payments to affect whether or not a couple decides to divorce, given a specific shock to match quality. The benefit of using a model is that it provides an internally consistent framework to evaluate why parents make certain decisions, as opposed to just observing the decision. The model makes it clear that variation in child support guidelines across states should affect some marriages and not others. I examine the implications of the model, using individual-level data from the 1996 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation, which I combine with data on state-level child support guidelines and child support enforcement drawn from annual reports from the Office of Child Support Enforcement. I find that there is a significant negative effect of child support on the probability of divorce. Furthermore, this effect is a result of a state's presumptive guidelines, which is a factor that has not been considered in previous work, as opposed to differences in child support enforcement measures. The effect varies in magnitude with the amount of support that needs to be paid. These estimates are not very sensitive to conditioning on divorce law or using an expected support payment.

1 Introduction

In 2005, there were 1.07 million divorces in the U.S.[1] A large number of studies conclude that divorce has detrimental effects on children's outcomes (see, for example, McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). This paper examines the effect of child support policy on divorce.

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[1]See National Center for Health Statistics, 2006.

Child support is the payment that the non-resident parent is required to pay to the custodial parent. The intent of child support is to provide financial support for children when the biological parents do not live together. The required amount of child support varies widely across states. Given the high incidence of divorce in families with children, and the consequences that divorces have on the social and financial well-being of these children, it is important to consider whether the payment itself might in turn affect the decision to divorce.

To address this question, I develop a simple model that incorporates differences in child support guidelines into the the divorce decision. In my model, divorce occurs only when there is no allocation in marriage that makes both partners better off than in divorce. At the beginning of the period, each household receives a shock to match quality. When match quality dips below a certain threshold, one or both of the spouses may be better off outside of the marriage, and the couple may choose to divorce.[2] Depending on the child support requirement in the couple's state of residence, the couple can be more or less likely to divorce.

The benefit of using this model is that it gives me a framework by which I can test whether systematic differences in child support guidelines across states might affect divorce decisions. The model allows me to refute the Coaseian argument that differences in child support payments do not matter. In the framework of the model, I can show that only under certain conditions will differences in a transfer payment between spouses affect whether or not a couple chooses to divorce. If the environment in which decisions are made does not change before and after divorce, cross-state variation in child support laws will not lead to

[2]Weiss and Willis (1997) look at the role of surprises, such as unexpected changes in earning capacity, and how they might affect the divorce hazard. In doing this, they develop a dynamic model where uncertainty and new information affect the quality of match, composing a transitory component of match quality that reflects how well the marriage is working out.

cross-state differentials in divorces among otherwise identical couples. In contrast, if the decision-making environment is different before and after divorce, cross-state child support differences will cause cross-state differentials in divorce.

I examine whether child support affects the decision to divorce, using individual-level data from the 1996 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation, which I combine with data on state-level child support guidelines and child support enforcement drawn from annual reports from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE). In this study, I use state child support guidelines to calculate the amount of support that a non-custodial parent will pay after divorce.[3] I also include measures that indicate the effectiveness of a state's child support enforcement agency. The effectiveness measures of child support enforcement indicate how well states are able to hold a non-custodial parent accountable for his children. The empirical analysis uses cross-state variation in child support obligations and child support enforcement to identify the effect of child support policy on the divorce decision for ever-married couples with children.

This is the first paper that uses state child support guidelines in conjunction with microdata to evaluate how differences in state programs might affect the divorce decision. The benefit of using data at the individual level is that I can calculate the amount of support that each father would expect to pay upon divorce, using the child support guidelines from each state. This allows me to see how differences between state-mandated child support obligations affect the individual's decision making process. I find that there is a significant negative effect of child support on the probability of divorce. Furthermore, this effect is a result of a state's presumptive guidelines, which is a factor that has not been considered in

[3]I assume throughout that the father is the non-custodial parent and the mother is the custodial parent.

previous work, as opposed to differences in child support enforcement measures. The effect varies in magnitude with the amount of support that needs to be paid. These estimates are not very sensitive to conditioning on divorce law or using an expected support payment.

2 Child Support Policy

The amount of child support that a parent pays depends on his state of residence. Due to these cross-state differences in child support policy, there is a large amount of variation in the child support that a parent will pay. There are two aspects to each state's child support policy: the child support guidelines that determine how much a parent is obligated to pay and the child support enforcement program, which determines how well each state holds non-custodial parents responsible for paying their child support obligation. This section provides some background on these two aspects of a state's child support policy.

2.1 Child Support Guidelines

Few studies have considered the effects of child support generosity. Studies that compare guideline generosity between states typically take four or five representative family structures and use state guidelines to calculate the child support required in each state for the purpose of discussing guideline adequacy (Argys et al. 2001, Pirog-Good 1993, Pirog et al. 1998, Morgan and Lino 1999). Part of the reason the authors choose this approach is that differences between state child support guidelines cannot be easily generalized. Calculating child support obligations using the guidelines requires knowledge of certain characteristics that differ from family to family, such as parental income and the number of children in the household. Walker and Zhu (2006) look at child support liabilities and interactions with welfare rules in the United Kingdom, focusing on its effects on partnership dissolution. They use a discrete-

time transition rate model and hazard models of separation and find large effects on the survival rate of partnerships when comparing a system with no child support obligations to the implementation of a new reformed child support policy. Studying this in the context of the UK does not translate well to the US system.[4]

The variation in child support guidelines between states comes from the development of presumptive guidelines. Between 1988-1994, each state developed presumptive guidelines by statute, administrative regulation, or court rule/decision. Each set of guidelines follows one of three basic models: Percentage of Income, Income Shares, and Melson Formula.[5] This study incorporates the child support guidelines from 45 states.[6]

This study uses all of the 11 states that use the Percentage of Income approach to calculate child support.[7] In the Percentage of Income Method, the non-custodial parent expects to pay a certain percentage of his income as support to the custodial parent. The amount is a set percentage of his income. In some states, the percentage depends only on the number of children for whom the parent is paying support. In other states, the percentage also depends on the income of the non-custodial parent. Percentages can vary a great deal, for example, a father with five children could pay 26% in Mississippi and 50% in Tennessee.

Three states that use the Melson Formula are also included.[8] With the Melson Formula, the starting point for calculating support is a state-designated amount of rudimentary sup-

[4]The UK has a Child Benefit, which is a tax-free monthly payment to anyone bringing up a child. It is not affected by income or savings so most people who are bringing up a child qualify for it. This payment factors into divorce decisions in the UK and there is no equivalent payment in the US.

[5]The guidelines for each of the 45 states used in this study are presented in more detail in the Appendix, Table A2.

[6]Five states could not be included in the sample due to structure of the dataset. This will be discussed further in the Data and Specification section.

[7]The states are: AK, AR, CA, GA, IL, MN, MS, NV, TN, TX, and WI. California can be characterized as either a varying percentage model or an Income Shares Model. Tennessee changed to the Income Shares Model in 2005. However, TN was a Percentage of Income state during the time period of the data used in this study and thus will be classified as such throughout this paper.

[8]These three states are HI, MT, and DE.

port for each child. This is determined to be the basic support needed for the child(ren). The basic support amount is augmented by a Standard of Living Adjustment (SOLA) that depends on combined parental income. The SOLA is some fraction of the difference between the combined parental income and an amount designated to satisfy the rudimentary needs of the parents. The idea is that the parents and the child(ren) have a basic support need that first needs to be met. Above that, as parents make more money, they should share this additional income with their child(ren) in order to improve the child(ren)'s quality of life.

The remaining 31 states included use the Income Shares Model.[9] For the Income Shares Method, the combined income of both parents is used to calculate the total basic support obligation.[10] The non-custodial parent is obliged to pay a fraction of the combined basic support obligation equal to the fraction of combined income that he earned. The custodial parent is assumed to spend her portion of the obligation directly on the child(ren) who is(are) living in her household.

For the Percentage of Income states, an estimate of the father's child support order can be calculated by making the assumption that the mother retains custody. In Spring 2002, an estimated 13.4 million parents had custody of 21.5 million children under 21 years of age whose other parent lived elsewhere. Custodial mothers represented 84.4 percent of all custodial parents while the remaining 15.6 percent were fathers. This proportion has remained statistically unchanged since 1994 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). In order to extend the study to include states using both the Melson Formula and the Income Shares

[9]These are: AL, AZ, CO, CT, FL, ID, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MI, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, UT, VA, WA, and WV. The MA guideline is a hybrid of Income Shares and the Melson Formula.

[10]For CA and the Income Shares states, which calculate support based on both parents' incomes and the percentage of time spent in each household, I assume that the mother retains full custody of any children.

Model, I strengthen the assumption to one where the mother retains full custody.[11]

The expected order amount is based on the average monthly income of the father, as states generally exclude one-time payments and other non-consistent forms of income. I take this average as the mean of the father's reported income over the year. Table 1 shows the variation in child support obligations across states for a father with a monthly income of $4,228.10 and a mother with a monthly income of $1,754.48.[12] Consider this father living in Tennessee. He would pay $1,733.52 in child support for three children. However, he would only pay around half that amount if he lived in Mississippi or North Carolina (two of the states that border Tennessee).[13] There is a large variation in the amount that a father would have to pay, depending on his state of residence. If the father is paying support for one child, he could pay as little as $295.97 in Idaho and as much as $1,057.03 in California.

2.2 Child Support Enforcement

In 1975, the federal OCSE was created with the enactment of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, requiring all states to establish similar offices to enforce the payment of child support. State child support enforcement (CSE) offices serve all custodial families receiving AFDC and all other families that voluntarily seek assistance. The mission statement of the OCSE is to "assure that assistance in obtaining support is available to children through locating parents, establishing paternity and support obligations, and enforcing those obligations."[14]

States differ in the proportion of families that choose to utilize CSE services. Some states serve primarily AFDC or ex-AFDC families, while others encourage application from non-

[11] In 1990, the mother was awarded full custody 72 percent of the time, joint custody was awarded 16 percent of the time, and fathers were awarded custody 9 percent of the time. This is the most recent date for which this data have been available. (National Center for Health Statistics)

[12] These seemingly arbirary income amounts are the sample average monthly income for fathers and mothers.

[13] He would only pay $930.18 and $887.90 respectively in those two states

[14] http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opa/fact_sheets/cse_factsheet.html

Table 1: Expected Support Comparisons for the Average Father in the Sample[a]

Average Father's Monthly Income = $4,228.10 Average Mother's Monthly Income = $1,754.48 Combined Monthly Income = $5,982.58				
	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children
Alabama	549.65	845.62	1,014.74	1,183.87
Alaska	845.62	1,141.59	1,395.28	1,522.12
Arizona	591.93	845.62	930.18	1,057.03
Arkansas	676.50	972.46	1,141.59	1,268.43
California	1,057.03	1,691.24	2,114.05	2,431.16
Colorado	591.93	845.62	972.46	1,099.31
Connecticut	761.06	1,141.59	1,395.27	1,564.40
Delaware	884.28	1,439.25	1,830.91	2,153.35
Florida	803.34	1,226.15	1,522.12	1,733.52
Georgia	845.62	993.60	1,162.73	1,289.57
Hawaii	544.68	1,089.36	1,634.04	1,810.73
Idaho	295.97	422.81	549.65	676.49
Illinois	845.62	1,057.03	1,352.99	1,691.24
Indiana	591.93	887.90	1,141.59	1,268.43
Iowa	803.34	1,183.87	1,395.27	1,564.40
Kentucky	549.65	803.34	1,014.74	1,141.59
Louisiana	549.65	887.90	1,099.30	1,226.15
Maryland	591.93	845.62	972.46	1,099.31
Massachusetts	968.19	1,155.76	1,284.77	1,284.77
Michigan	739.33	1,132.77	1,442.04	1,624.30
Minnesota	1,057.03	1,268.48	1,479.84	1,648.96
Mississippi	591.93	845.62	930.18	1,014.74
Missouri	634.22	845.62	930.18	1,057.03
Montana	811.73	1,254.28	1,654.50	1,896.89
Nebraska	803.34	1,183.87	1,352.99	1,606.68
Nevada	500.00[b]	1,000.00[b]	1,226.15	1,310.71
New Hampshire	1,057.03	1,395.27	1,691.24	1,902.65
New Jersey	803.34	1,141.59	1,352.99	1,479.84
New Mexico	507.37	718.78	845.62	930.18
New York	718.78	1,057.03	1,226.15	1,310.71
North Carolina	591.93	803.34	887.90	1,014.74
Ohio	549.65	761.06	887.90	1,014.74
Oklahoma	507.37	761.06	887.90	972.46
Oregon	591.93	803.34	887.90	972.46
Pennsylvania	761.06	1,099.31	1,268.43	1,395.27
Rhode Island	591.93	930.18	1,141.59	1,310.71
South Carolina	549.65	761.06	887.90	1,014.74
Tennessee	887.90	1,352.99	1,733.52	1,944.93
Texas	845.62	1,057.03	1,268.43	1,479.84
Utah	422.81	803.34	1,014.74	1,183.37
Virginia	549.65	845.62	1,057.03	1,183.37
West Virginia	507.32	761.06	887.90	972.46
Wisconsin	718.78	1,057.03	1,226.15	1,310.71
Notes: [a]all amounts have been adjusted to 2004 Dollars using regional CPI data [b]Presumptive Max. effective				

AFDC families. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2001, only 36.5% of custodial parents contacted a CSE office for child support assistance. This number dropped from 5.8 million to 4.9 million between 1994 and 2002. At the same time, in 2001, 73.9% of custodial parents received at least some child support payments (this number has not changed significantly since 1993). These figures indicate that there are many custodial parents not utilizing CSE services and are thus not included in OCSE figures.

Nixon (1997) and Heim (2003) looked at the effect of child support enforcement on divorce and reached different conclusions. Using cross-sectional variation in state child support enforcement climates, Nixon examines the effect of child support enforcement on divorce among divorced and married women. She finds a small, but significant negative effect of an increase in CSE on the probability of divorce. Heim finds that an increase in CSE had an insignificant effect on the divorce rate; furthermore, he believes that the negative effect found by Nixon is because she captures an effect of unobserved state characteristics (that tend to result in stronger CSE policy, without affecting divorce law) rather than the effect of CSE efforts.

I use state-level CSE data drawn from the OCSE's annual reports. However, there is some question about the reliability of OCSE data. Guyer et al. (1996) find that the OCSE publications, though the most detailed and extensive data available, are of questionable quality. They question the reliability of the data for many reasons. States employ substantially different methods to determine caseloads and the number of families they serve, which cause several measures reported on a per case basis to be inaccurate. Also, measures do not account for differences across states in the complexity of caseloads. Some factors make collecting child support difficult, like the percentage of children in the caseload born out of

wedlock, creating the need to establish paternity, or the percentage of the caseload living in urban areas, which affects the difficulty of collection.

The CSE measures chosen by Nixon (1997) focus on examining the effect of enforcing orders and increasing collections. Heim (2003) includes a few variables to address these concerns, but he is also able to improve upon Nixon's measures, due to the OCSE requiring more extensive reporting from states, starting in 1991. Like Heim, I use measures of location rate, paternity establishment rate, and order enforcement rate as reported by each state.[15] None of the measures I use are specifically criticized in Guyer et al. (1996). A strong criticism in the Guyer et al. paper is that CSE measures need to reflect success, or the lack thereof, in obtaining awards that are adequate as well as collecting the amount owed. Their ideal comparison measure includes some calculation of a state index that incorporates estimation of an unknown father's income and assortative mating. Since I account for the relative award level between states with my measure of support amounts and incorporate the actual father's characteristics, I go some way toward addressing the limitations that were raised by Guyer et al. concerning CSE measures.

The advantage to calculating expected child support payments is that it gives a measure of the cost/benefit of divorce. The effectiveness of CSE measures indicate how well states are able to hold the father accountable for his children. However, using only measures of CSE effectiveness ignores the influence of policy variation between states for the father who regularly makes his child support payments and is therefore not included in the OCSE system. Child Support Enforcement measures only come into play in AFDC/TANF cases or when the custodial parent seeks assistance in collection. Also, some of the services provided

[15]Variable definitions are presented in the Appendix, Table A1.

by the CSE agencies are not as relevant for ever-married couples. For example, in most cases, paternity is not an issue within marriage. In fact, many states make an assumption of paternity within a marriage.[16] Using both presumptive guidelines and CSE together provides a better estimate than using CSE measures alone, when evaluating how a state's child support climate would affect divorce.

3 Child Support and Divorce

Child support payments affect directly the outside option of both parents. The outside option of the spouse is the indirect utility that he/she can receive when single. When a non-custodial parent is obligated to make a larger child support payment, this corresponds to him obtaining a lower indirect utility in his single state. Conversely, a custodial parent receiving a larger child support payment will have a higher indirect utility when single. These differences in a parent's outside option may or may not affect whether a couple chooses to divorce.

The analysis that follows in this paper applies to couples that married prior to the implementation of presumptive state child support guidelines in 1988. Couples that decide to marry after the implementation of child support guidelines know at the time of marriage what the support guidelines are. Since each spouse knows the amount of support that would need to be paid upon divorce, and also knows with some probability how many kids they will have and that divorce is a possible outcome of the marriage, this will all be taken into account when they make the initial decision to marry.[17] When couples take these guidelines

[16]Census data reveal that only 56 percent of never-married women were due child support and received payments. In contrast, 73 percent of all ever-married women were due support and received payments. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997)

[17]This issue is explored further in the second chapter of my dissertation.

into account in their marriage decision, the initial match quality of the marginal married couple will no longer be the same across states. Since the match quality distribution of those who marry differs across states, child support guidelines will affect the marriage decision. In some states, those with lower match qualities will not get married, while in others they will. For these couples, divorce rates between states will differ due to child support guidelines only through selection into marriage. In some states, lower match quality couples will marry and thus the state can also expect more divorces, as these couples are more susceptible to match quality shocks and subsequent marriage dissolution.

Prior to the establishment of presumptive guidelines, divorcing couples did not know what kind of ruling they would get on their child support order due to ambiguities in the law and the amount of discretion that an individual judge has in each case. Thus I assume that married couples have the same distribution of match qualities across states, conditioning on observables, and when facing divorce, they differ only in the amount of child support that they would have to pay, depending on their state of residence.[18] This allows me to use cross-state variation in child support laws to evaluate how these differences in child support obligations affect the same marginal couple, when making their decision to divorce.

3.1 When Child Support Does Not Affect Divorce

A simple argument can be made for why transfers between spouses will not affect divorce. Any allocation of household resources that can be made after divorce is also available to the couple within marriage. Then, if the marriage generates no surplus to be divided between the partners, divorce is the efficient outcome and will occur regardless of any required payments after divorce. On the other hand, if the marriage generates surplus, remaining married is

[18] I realize that this is a strong assumption. In future work, I will explore this issue by comparing average order amounts by state before and after the implementation of guidelines to see if there are any correlations.

the efficient outcome and the partners will make the post-divorce transfer within marriage, retaining the surplus from marriage, so that both are better off. Therefore, child support policy has no effect on the decision to divorce.

The above argument holds when the only difference between marriage and divorce is the potential surplus that can be generated from being married. This means that all other aspects of decision-making within marriage and divorce remain the same (i.e. the utility function of each spouse remains the same before and after divorce).

3.2 When Child Support Does Affect Divorce

Differences in child support across states can affect a couple's decision to divorce if the conditions of marriage and divorce differ by more than the surplus generated by marriage.[19] For example, being divorced may mean that the father no longer lives with his children, while being married means that he does. Another example might be that marriage means that you live with a person that you no longer want to live with, while being divorced means that you no longer have to do this. Differences in circumstances between marriage and divorce enable differences in state-contingent transfers between spouses to affect the divorce decision.

These differences in circumstances between marriage and divorce imply that the bundles available to the couple in marriage must differ from the allocations available to the couple after divorce. One example of how this may occur is when both spouses no longer have full access to the children. Another example is when each spouse has his/her own perception of the match quality within the marriage; in this case, differences in child support can affect the decision to divorce in the absence of any other differences between marriage and divorce.

[19] Chiappori, Iyigun, and Weiss (2007) discuss the Becker-Coase argument in the context of whether divorce laws affect divorce rates. They find that this argument holds only under strict quasi-linearity, if divorce alters the way some goods are consumed. They further conclude that in general, divorce laws will influence the divorce rate, though the impact can go in either direction.

These differences in bundles before and after divorce mean that child support obligations can affect the divorce decision. This point is illustrated in the next section as I develop the model.

4 Model

The model developed here aims to capture some of the factors that characterize the decision to divorce. At the time of marriage, each partner anticipates a share of joint marital surplus. The partner that has more marketable traits commands a higher share of the gains from marriage. In traditional societies, this transfer can take the form of an up-front payment/dowry. In modern societies, one partner may enjoy a greater share from the surplus of marriage or have more bargaining power within the household. The cooperative decision process depends on the bargaining power of each member. The individual bargaining power is determined by the best outside option available to each spouse; the best outside option corresponds to the individual's value of divorce. The value of divorce varies over time with changes in wages, number of children, and differences in child support guidelines. Improvement in the best outside option of one spouse will also increase his/her bargaining power within the marriage and thus affect household decisions as the value of his/her preferences rise. An increase in the bargaining power of a spouse corresponds with household decisions that are weighted more heavily toward his/her preferences.

When a couple chooses to marry, they do so with knowledge that circumstances may change in the future. There is uncertainty about the future, including the earnings of both spouses, the number of children the couple will have, and realizations of match quality. If the value for both partners exceed the value of remaining single and continuing search, they get

married. Despite the possibility of divorce in the future, the couple chooses to marry, doing so with the intention of remaining married. Given this desire to remain married, divorce occurs only when there is no possible allocation of resources that makes both individuals better off when married than single. During the marriage, new information about the success of the joint venture and outside options of each partner is accumulated, and the couple has to decide whether or not to divorce. Differences in child support guidelines across states result in different outside options for the partners and cause different reactions of spouses to match quality shocks, thereby affecting the decision to divorce. In the special case where child support does not affect the decision to divorce, marriage would either be preferable to divorce in all states (for all child support amounts) or divorce would be preferable to marriage in all states (for all child support amounts).

I assume that the agent's preferences can be represented by a utility function u_i, which depends on private consumption, the number of children, and match quality. All agents start out married, and agent i is endowed with an initial level of match quality θ_i that describes heterogeneity across marriages. There is uncertainty in realizations of match quality, as new information about the spouses is revealed. After receiving information about match quality, agent i chooses whether to remain married or to divorce.

When married, I assume that decisions are Pareto efficient. This means that the household will consume on the Pareto frontier each period, with the precise point determined by the bargaining power within the marriage. Each spouse must decide whether to stay married or get divorced. If the spouses decide to divorce, in the next period, the father must pay child support to the wife. The amount of child support he is required to pay will depend on his income, his state of residence, and the number of children he is responsible for. I assume

that fathers only have children with one female partner. Households consume all income. When single, agent i consumes his/her income after child support payments.

Given this setup, we can consider a realization of the world, ω, which is a vector of state variables y_1, y_2, and q, where y_i is person i's income, which depends on how many hours person i chooses to work at wage rate w_i and also includes any non-labor income, and q is the number of children in the household. Suppose the father is agent 2. The value of being single for the father after divorce, $V_{s,2}$, can be computed by solving the following standard problem:

$$V_{s,2}(\omega) = \max_{c_2} \quad u_2(c_2, q_2)$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad c_2 + rq_2 + C(\omega) = y_2$$

where r is the cost of one child, C is a function that determines the amount of child support that the father pays and the mother receives in the event of divorce. The number of children in the household is given by $q = q_1 + q_2$, where q_1 and q_2 represent the proportion of time each parent has custody of the children following divorce.[20]

The value of being single for the mother after divorce, $V_{s,1}$, can be computed solving the following problem:

$$V_{s,1}(\omega) = \max_{c_1} \quad u_1(c_1, q_1)$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad c_1 + rq_1 = y_1 + C(\omega)$$

When a couple is married, they each receive a match quality shock, which can be correlated. Under the assumption that married agents make efficient decisions, the behavior

[20] I assume throughout that the mother is the custodial parent and thus receives the child support payments. This framework allows for the father to maintain some custody of the children, but in this paper, $q_2 = 0$. The amount of time spent in each household will also affect how much support he pays.

of a couple when facing ω can be characterized as a Pareto problem. Agents take as given the relative decision power, μ, and spouses choose whether or not to work and how much to consume:

$$\max_{c_1,c_2} \quad u_1(c_1, q, \theta_1) + \mu u_2(c_2, q, \theta_2)$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad c_1 + c_2 + rq = y_1 + y_2$$

If c_i^* is the solution to the couple's problem for $i = 1, 2$, agent i's value of being married with decision power μ is then:

$$V_{m,i}(\omega) = u_i(c_i^*, q, \theta_i)$$

When married, each spouse's value of being married will depend on his/her perception of match quality, θ_i. Each match quality is observed only by that individual, so the researcher can only predict the probability of divorce, conditional on observable characteristics of the partners. An increase in match quality will cause the Pareto frontier to shift outward while a decrease in match quality will cause the Pareto frontier to shrink.

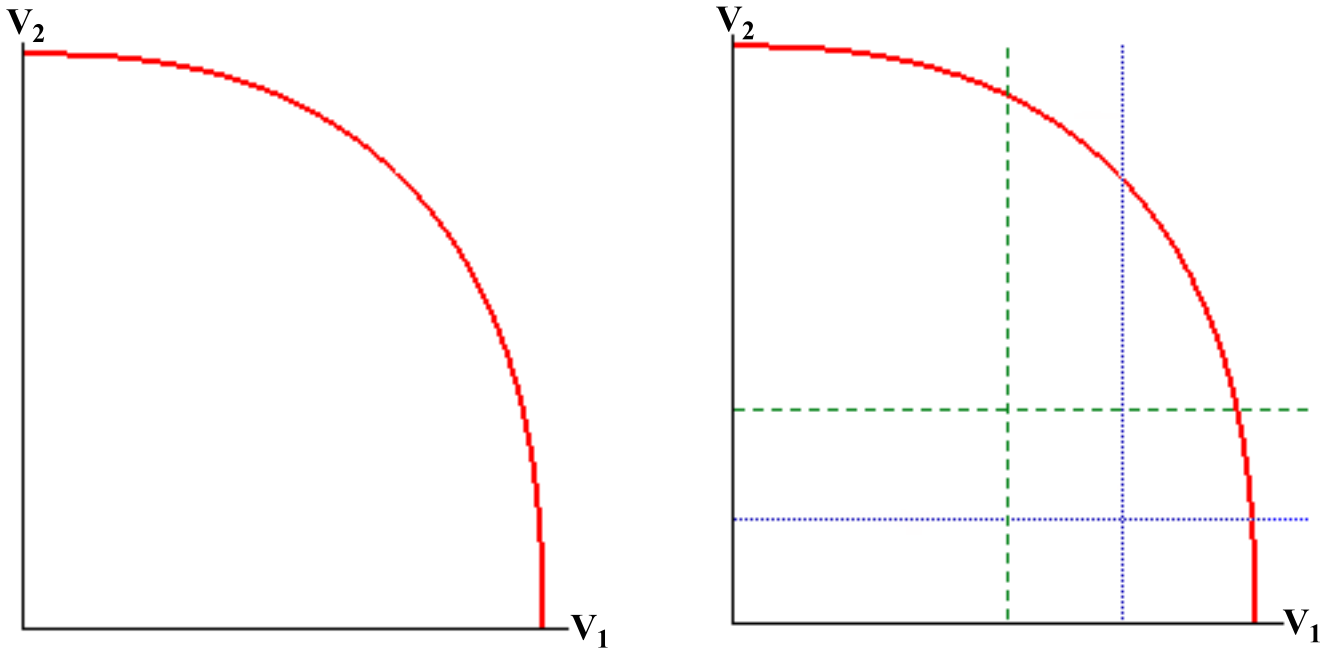
Due to variation in child support guidelines, the same couple living in two different states can face very different child support obligations. The child support obligation will affect the outside option of both parents. The next section will provide an example that illustrates, for the same shock to match quality, how variation in state child support guidelines can lead to divorce in some states but not in others.

4.1 An Example

Divorce occurs after a match quality shock when partners can not find an allocation in marriage that both spouses find preferable to their individual allocations when single. Depending

on their state of residence, non-custodial parents face different child support obligations that correspond to different levels of indirect utility outside of marriage.

Figure 1: Pareto Frontiers



The allocations available to a married couple with match quality of a given θ_1 and θ_2 are represented by a Pareto frontier, shown in the left panel of Figure 1. For the Pareto frontier to have this shape, both spouses must have diminishing marginal utility and spouses are able to transfer resources within marriage. This Pareto frontier shows all efficient bundles available to both spouses with the indirect utility of agent 1 on the horizontal axis and the indirect utility of agent 2 on the vertical axis.[21]

The mandated amount of child support varies depending on the couple's state of residence prior to divorce. When single, the bundles available to each parent will depend on this amount of child support. The father, agent 2, is the non-custodial parent and is thus

[21] All of the following analysis holds generally, but I have this worked out for specific functional forms and numbers, available upon request.

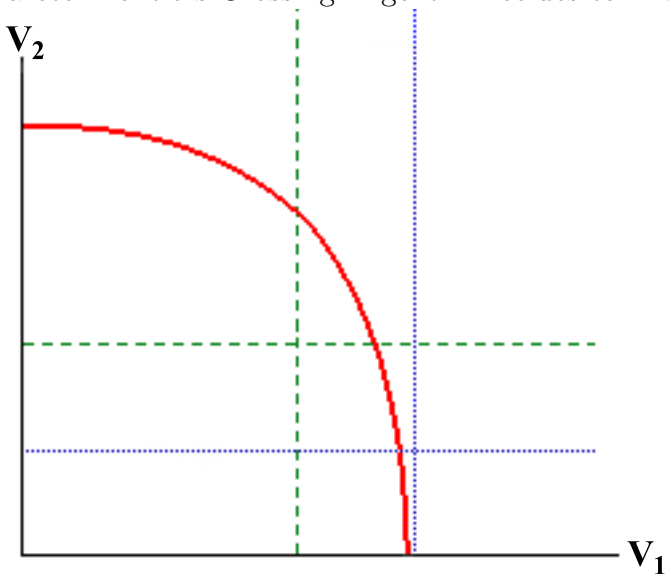
responsible for paying child support to the mother (agent 1). The outside option available to each spouse is represented graphically by a straight line. The outside option of the father is represented by a horizontal line, and the outside option of the mother is a vertical line.

The bundles available to parents in two different states are shown in the right panel of Figure 1. The outside options available to the parents in the state with a larger child support payment is represented by the dotted blue lines and the outside options available to the parents in the state with the smaller child support payments are represented by the dashed green lines. The higher payment results in a better outside option for the mother and a worse outside option for the father.

Initially, match quality is such that remaining married is preferable to divorce at any level of child support. When this is true, the outside options will cross inside the marital Pareto frontier in all states. This is the case illustrated in the right panel of Figure 1, as marital allocations at (θ_1, θ_2) exceed single allocations for both parents. When the couple receives an adverse shock to match quality, the Pareto frontier of marriage shifts inward. With a new level of match quality, (θ_1', θ_2'), it is possible that the shock is large enough to shift the marital Pareto frontier such that outside options can now lie outside of the Pareto frontier (see Figure 2). At these levels of match quality, it is no longer always preferable to remain married.

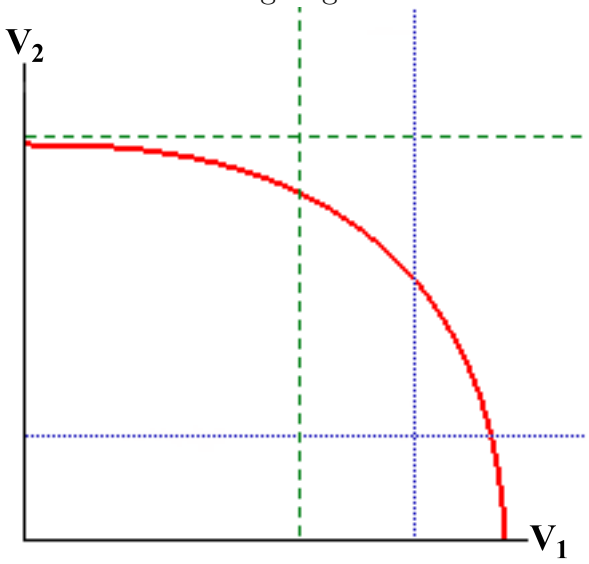
Certain match quality realizations will predict that living in a state that mandates higher child support payments increases the likelihood a couple chooses to divorce. This scenario is shown in Figure 2. Again, the dotted blue lines represent the outside options in a state with larger child support payments and the dashed green lines represent the outside options from a smaller child support state. In the state with a smaller child support payment, it

Figure 2: Pareto Frontiers Crossing: Agent 1 Decides to Divorce



is better for both of the spouses to remain married. However, if the couple lives in a state where the mandated child support obligation is larger, agent 1 prefers divorce. Since agent 1 can unilaterally decide to divorce and she can not be made a better offer in marriage,[22] divorce is more likely to occur in higher child support states, for a given shock to match quality, all else being equal.

Figure 3: Pareto Frontiers Crossing: Agent 2 Decides to Divorce



[22]The only states that do not have unilateral divorce are AR, DE, MS, NY, and TN. (Friedberg, 1998)

Retaining the assumptions from before, other match quality realizations imply that living in a state that mandates higher child support payments will *decrease* the likelihood a couple chooses to divorce. This scenario is seen in Figure 3. A state that mandates a lower child support obligation is represented by the green dashed lines. In the lower child support state, it is better for agent 2 to divorce. If, however, the couple lives in a state where the mandated child support obligation is represented by the blue dotted lines, agent 2 now prefers to stay married. Since agent 2 can unilaterally decide to divorce and he can not be made a better offer in marriage, divorce will occur in the lower child support state but not in the higher child support state.

5 Data and Specification

The individual-level data come from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).[23] I use the 1996 panel, because it is longer and contains more households than previous panels; it was also the most recent panel that was complete when I started this study. One of the main advantages of using the SIPP is that it includes a large, nationally representative sample. It also provides, by design, better measures of income and changes in household composition than the Current Population Survey (CPS).[24] Also, since it is a panel, it provides me with the income information from both parents needed to calculate expected child support prior to divorce in the Income Shares and Melson Formula states.

The main sample for my empirical analysis consists of all ever-married men with children that married prior to 1988. These men are obligated to pay child support in the event of a

[23]The SIPP does not distinguish between certain states. In the SIPP, observations from North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming are combined, as are observations from Vermont and Maine in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

[24]http://www.bls.census.gov/sipp/sippov98.htm

divorce or if he has had a prior divorce. I choose to use an ever-married sample of fathers as opposed to only fathers who enter the 1996 SIPP married, since I only observe 171 divorces during the panel.[25] In order to address the research question, I extend the analysis to include all fathers who have also had a prior divorce. I am able to find out which fathers previously divorced using the Marital History information from the Wave 2 Topical Module. When weighted, this results in 2,565,860 divorce observations from a total of 15,001,540 fathers. The probability of divorce is 16.48 percent. This is a higher percentage than the divorced population in the Census, though this is not entirely unexpected, given the higher proportion of divorced people surveyed in the 1996 SIPP.[26] Also, the Census reports the proportion of the population that is currently divorced. In my study, remarried fathers are classified as divorced, since they chose to end a previous marriage.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics in Table 2 show sample means of the CSE variables, state characteristics, and individual characteristics.

For currently married men, expected support is calculated as the amount of support they would be obligated to pay if they divorce. All non-custodial parents (both separated and divorced) with at least one child under the age of 18 living away are considered liable for support. I assume that the mother retains custody, and thus the father is the liable party. From information provided in the Core Data Files of the 1996 SIPP, I use the relevant incomes for married couples and the number of children in the household prior to divorce to

[25]The number of observed divorces in the SIPP is substantially smaller than the number expected to occur in the 45 states during the four years of the 1996 SIPP panel. See Appendix, Table A3 for a comparison of the expected number of divorces in the SIPP when compared to divorce rates from the Statistical Abstracts.

[26]A way to benchmark the SIPP divorce data is to examine the proportion of divorced people in the SIPP compared to the actual population. See Appendix, Table A4 for these numbers.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics[a]

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Child support enforcement variables				
Location rate	3.61	4.40	0.14	37.48
Paternity establishment rate	0.57	1.16	0.07	14.47
Order enforcement rate	0.61	0.12	0.28	0.85
Individual Characteristics				
Average expected support due(monthly)[b]	895.67	914.96	0	22,477.02
Average monthly income[b]	4,228.10	4,335.30	0	57,633.39
Age	42.73	7.36	24.67	86.67
Black	0.08	0.27		
White	0.87	0.34		
Nonwhite	0.05	0.23		
Education: less than 12 years	0.12	0.32		
Education: 12 years	0.29	0.46		
Education: 13-15 years	0.29	0.45		
Education: 16 years or more	0.30	0.46		
SMSA resident	0.61	0.49		
Central city resident	0.77	0.42		
Sample Size	6,245			

Note: [a]variable definitions are provided in greater detail in Appendix, Table A1
[b]these amounts have been adjusted to 2004 Dollars using regional CPI data

calculate the projected support that a father is required to pay upon divorce.[27]

For divorced fathers, I supplement this information with data from the SIPP Topical Modules about fertility and the child support payment history of the respondants.[28] I do not have access to the income information of the divorced father's former spouse prior to divorce, and it is impossible to calculate an expected support amount in Melson Formula and Income Shares states without this information. Therefore, I make the assumption that a father would have taken his expected support amount into account prior to divorce, and that his actual support amount reflects the amount he expected to pay. Instead of calculating the amount of support divorced fathers had expected to pay prior to divorce, I use the amount of

[27]Johnson and Skinner (1986) find that separation only marginally reduced the work effort of men.

[28]Topical Module information from Waves 2, 3, 6, 9, and 12 are used. Information that I use for each father includes the number of biological children they have living with the other parent and the amount of support paid for these children.

support that they actually report paying. I thereby implicitly assume that divorced fathers correctly forecasted their support obligation prior to divorce, and they used this information when making their divorce decision.

5.2 Specification

I start my sample with all married men with children; of these men, 171 become divorced within the duration of the panel. I further augment the sample of married men by including 857 divorced and remarried fathers reporting children living with their other parent. The remarried fathers included in this total are currently married men who indicate that they have divorced in the past. This brings the total number of divorced fathers to 1,023. The rest of the sample remains married. The resulting sample is 6,245 married and divorced men with children.

To examine the effect of expected child support on divorce, I use both the expected order and some selected measures of CSE success for each state. For married men, the first measure is calculated as the amount that a father would expect to pay in support if divorce were to occur, using the presumptive guidelines as published by each state.

Nixon (1997) found multicollinearity between the CSE variables she used, and thus she included only one CSE measure at a time in her regressions. I do not find a strong correlation between location rate, paternity establishment rate, and order enforcement rate (Table 3). Since these three CSE variables are not highly correlated, I include all three in my regressions.

Table 3: Correlation between child support enforcement variables

	Ord Enf	Loc Rate	Pat Est
Ord Enf	1.0000		
Loc Rate	-0.0239	1.0000	
Pat Est	-0.1873	0.2017	1.0000

Other factors may affect the divorce rate at a given time. One issue that Nixon (1997) raises is the concern of legislative endogeneity, also discussed by Case (1998). This is an issue if there are certain factors that differ across states that affect child support laws and divorce laws in the same way. An example might be if a state spends more money on child support enforcement and also has more stringent durational requirements for divorce; both of these policies would make divorce more difficult and thus lower the probability of divorce. One way Nixon addresses the issue of legislative endogeneity is to include some variables in her regression that account for differences in states that might bias the effect of CSE on divorce; she includes the state divorce rate and percent of the population that is Catholic to account for underlying attitudes towards divorce. She also includes per capita personal income and average wages to control for economic and labor market conditions, AFDC maximum benefits to control for generosity of the welfare system, age distribution variables, and geographic region indicators.

Nixon (1997) mentions her inability to include a state fixed effect in her regression, because she does not have enough variation in her CSE measures to do so during her period of study. Heim (2003) argues that there was a substantial increase in expenditures in the CSE program from 1990-1998, and the numbers of parents located, paternities established, and support obligations established followed suit. Due to this increase in CSE activities, Heim includes a state fixed effect to control for demographic characteristics and underlying norms that he felt may bias results when using only cross-sectional variation. Using panel data, and CSE program information from 1996-1999, I also find evidence of change in CSE activities. Therefore, I include a state fixed effect in each of my regressions.

I estimate logit models where the dependent variable is a dummy indicating whether

a father either becomes divorced or enters the sample divorced. I attach state-level CSE data to each individual in the SIPP sample based on the father's state of residence and the SIPP year. I include higher order income and child support polynomials to allow for non-linearities. Explanatory variables include number of children, a cubic in the amount of child support due upon divorce or actually paid by the divorced father, a quadratic in age, a cubic in income, dummy variables for educational attainment, race and whether the father lives in an urban area and central city. Measures of the rigor of child support enforcement for the father's state of residence are also included, as described in a previous section.

6 Empirical Analysis and Results

Since the coefficients of logistic regressions are not directly interpretable, Table 4 presents the marginal effects from the logistic regression, evaluated at the means of the independent variables.

The coefficients of child support are large and highly significant. This indicates a strong negative correlation between the support a father either expects to pay or does pay and the probability of divorce. The marginal effect of child support on the probability of divorce varies in the amount of the father's child support obligation. An increase in child support of $100 at the mean would reduce the probability of divorce for the average father by 2.30 percentage points to 14.18 percent, which works out to roughly a 14 percent reduction in the probability of divorce.

The estimates of the marginal effects of support on the probability of divorce can be used to compute the elasticity of the probability of divorce with respect to child support. This elasticity is calculated using the mean of expected support from Table 2 and the weighted

Table 4: Marginal Effects from Logit estimation

	Divorce Rate	S.E.
Expected Support[b]	-0.4799**	(0.0521)
Expected Support Squared	0.1655**	(0.0153)
Expected Support Cubed	-0.0193**	(0.0022)
Income[b]	0.0618**	(0.0080)
Income Squared	-0.0040**	(0.0006)
Income Cubed	0.0001**	(0.0000)
SMSA resident[a]	-0.0039	(0.0088)
Central city resident[a]	-0.0056	(0.0107)
Education: less than 12 years[a]	0.0488*	(0.0211)
Education: 12 years[a]	0.0285**	(0.0100)
Education: 13-15 years[a]	0.0304**	(0.0102)
Black[a]	0.0518**	(0.0161)
Other Non-white[a]	-0.0284	(0.0184)
Age	-0.0076**	(0.0028)
Age Squared	0.0001*	(0.0000)
Number of Kids	-0.0079	(0.0047)
Location rate	0.0041	(0.0023)
Paternity establishment rate	0.0043	(0.0024)
Order enforcement rate	0.1300	(0.0844)
Log likelihood	-1833.8463	
State Fixed effects	yes	
Sample size	6,245	

Notes: More than 16 years of education and white are the excluded categories. Sample weights are used.
[a] for discrete change of dummy variable from 0 to 1
[b] coefficient multiplied by 1,000
**significantly different from zero at the 1 percent level
* significantly different from zero at the 5 percent level

probability of divorce from my sample. Hence,

$$\frac{\partial P(D)}{\partial S}\frac{S}{P(D)} = (3(-0.0193S^2) + 2(0.1655S) - 0.4799)\frac{0.8957}{0.1648} \approx -1.2494$$

where P(D)=0.1648 is the probability of divorce in my sample and S=0.8957 is the average amount of child support due divided by 1,000. This estimated elasticity implies that a one percent increase in child support obligation results in a decrease of 1.249 percent in the probability of divorce at the mean.

In order to put this into perspective, it is productive to look more closely at this effect relative to other factors that might affect divorce. Whittington and Alm (1997) look at how

a tax penalty for marriage might affect the probability of divorce. They find a positive and statistically significant impact on the probability of divorce, though the magnitude of the effect is very small. For men, the tax penalty only has a statistically significant effect under the assumption that the men take a standard deduction as opposed to itemized deductions, and even then, the elasticity of divorce with respect to the marriage penalty 0.38 at the mean. Whittington and Alm conclude that other factors must play a more important role; some of the factors they consider include income, education, and age.

Next, consider the CSE variables. None of these coefficients are significantly different from zero at the 5 percent level. This suggests that the enforcement success of a state's child support program does not affect the divorce decision. This is the same result found by Heim (2003). Like Heim, this specification includes a state fixed effect. These marginal effects imply that it is the actual guideline amount that would be paid in the event of divorce that affects the decision to divorce, rather than the CSE climate.

As expected, a father's income has a significant effect on divorce. This result is similar to other findings in the literature (for example, Nakosteen and Zimmer, 1997). Each of the higher order income variables is also significant. As a father's income initially increases, he is more likely to divorce, but this effect occurs at a decreasing rate. The marginal effect of a \$1,000 increase in income at the mean is calculated from the coefficients in Table 4 is 0.0333.

The results indicate that having fewer than 16 years of education increases probability of divorce. The coefficients are similar for all three education groups, with having 12 or fewer years of education resulting in a stronger effect compared to having completed high school or having between 12 and 16 years of education. Several studies have also found a significant negative relationship between education and divorce (Peters 1986, Teachman and Polonko

1990, Lillard and Waite, 1993).

Other individual explanatory variables influence divorce. Fathers are less likely to divorce as they get older, and this effect increases with age. Black couples are significantly more likely to divorce.

To get an estimate of the effect of support on the probability of divorce for fathers with children, I consider the average father in the sample. From Table 2, we know that the average father has a monthly income of $4,228.10. Recall that Table 1 shows the amount the average father would expect to pay in child support for his first four children in 43 of the states under consideration.[29] For some of the calculations, I also use the average mother's income of $1,754.48, resulting in a combined monthly income of $5,982.58.

Now consider a few examples to illustrate the effect of support found in Table 4. If the average father in my sample has one child and lives in New York, his child support obligation would be $718.78. If instead, this father lived in New Jersey, his obligation would increase to $803.34. The marginal effect of an additional dollar of child support would differ for these two payment amounts. Table 5 shows the probability of divorce and the marginal effect of an increase in child support for the average father in 43 states. Figure 4 shows with a confidence interval of 95 percent how this marginal effect changes with child support for this father.[30]

The distribution of income varies considerably from state to state. Looking at only the "average father"in the sample does not give us a good idea of how much child support obligations vary from state to state. While the "average father"discussed above may be a

[29]Results presented in Table 1 do not include the expected support payments in WA or KS. This is because in these states, the amount of support depends on the age of the children.

[30]The confidence interval is $[\widehat{\gamma} - 1.96\sigma_{\widehat{\gamma}}, \widehat{\gamma} + 1.96\sigma_{\widehat{\gamma}}]$, where $\widehat{\gamma}$ is the marginal effect of child support and σ is the standard deviation.

Table 5: Probability of Divorce and Marginal Effect of Child Support for the Average Father in the Sample[a]

Average Father's Monthly Income = $4,228.10 Average Mother's Monthly Income = $1,754.48 Combined Monthly Income = $5,982.58			
	1 Child	Probability of Divorce	Marginal Effect of Child Support[b]
Alabama	549.65	0.1586	-0.0794
Alaska	845.62	0.0385	-0.0169
Arizona	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Arkansas	676.50	0.0844	-0.0412
California	1,057.03	0.0165	-0.0060
Colorado	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Connecticut	761.06	0.0564	-0.0263
Delaware	884.28	0.0326	-0.0138
Florida	803.34	0.0464	-0.0210
Georgia	845.62	0.0385	-0.0169
Hawaii	544.68	0.1626	-0.0814
Idaho	295.97	0.5024	-0.1825
Illinois	845.62	0.0385	-0.0169
Indiana	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Iowa	803.34	0.0465	-0.0210
Kentucky	549.65	0.1587	-0.0794
Louisiana	549.65	0.1587	-0.0794
Maryland	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Massachusetts	968.19	0.0231	-0.0091
Michigan	739.33	0.0625	-0.0295
Minnesota	1,057.03	0.0165	-0.0060
Mississippi	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Missouri	634.22	0.1040	-0.0515
Montana	811.73	0.0447	-0.0201
Nebraska	803.34	0.0465	-0.0210
Nevada	500.00[c]	0.0564	-0.0263
New Hampshire	1,057.03	0.0165	-0.0060
New Jersey	803.34	0.0465	-0.0210
New Mexico	507.37	0.1959	-0.0971
New York	718.78	0.0689	-0.0329
North Carolina	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Ohio	549.65	0.1587	-0.0794
Oklahoma	507.37	0.1959	-0.0971
Oregon	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
Pennsylvania	761.06	0.0564	-0.0263
Rhode Island	591.93	0.1284	-0.0642
South Carolina	549.65	0.1587	-0.0794
Tennessee	887.90	0.0321	-0.0136
Texas	845.62	0.0385	-0.0169
Utah	422.81	0.2948	-0.1374
Virginia	549.65	0.1586	-0.0794
West Virginia	507.32	0.1960	-0.0972
Wisconsin	718.78	0.0688	-0.0329

Notes: [a]all amounts have been adjusted to 2004 Dollars using regional CPI data
[b]for a $100 increase in child support obligation
[c]Presumptive Max. effective

Figure 4: Marginal Effect of Support for the Average Father

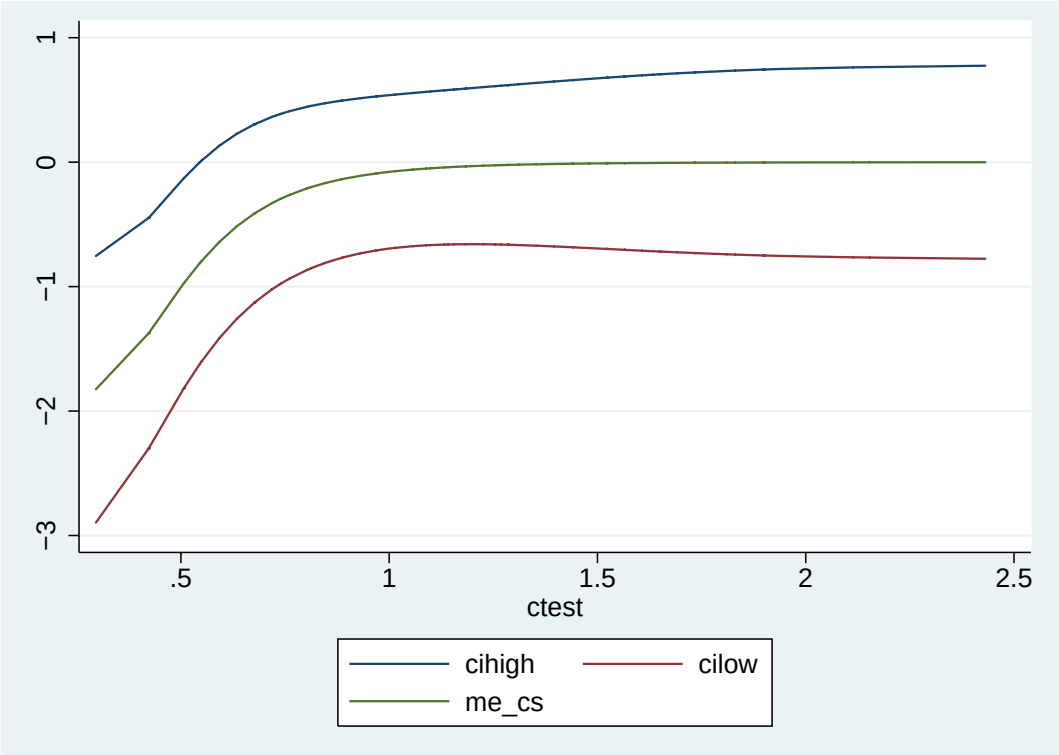


Figure 5: Marginal Effect of Support for a High Income Father

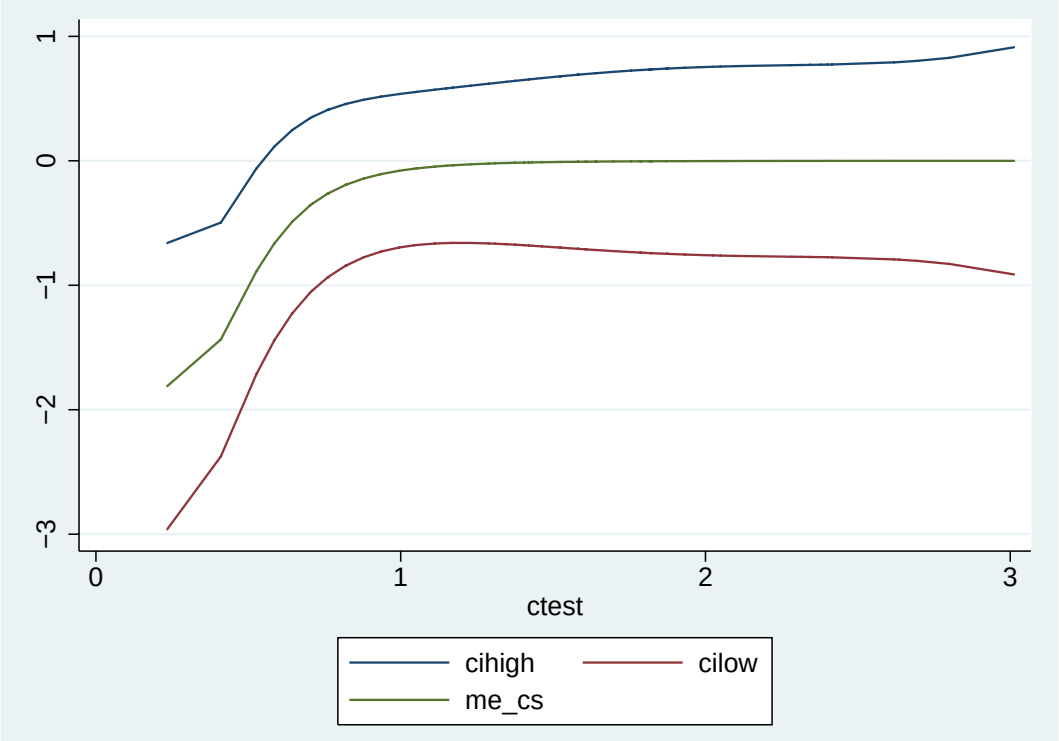
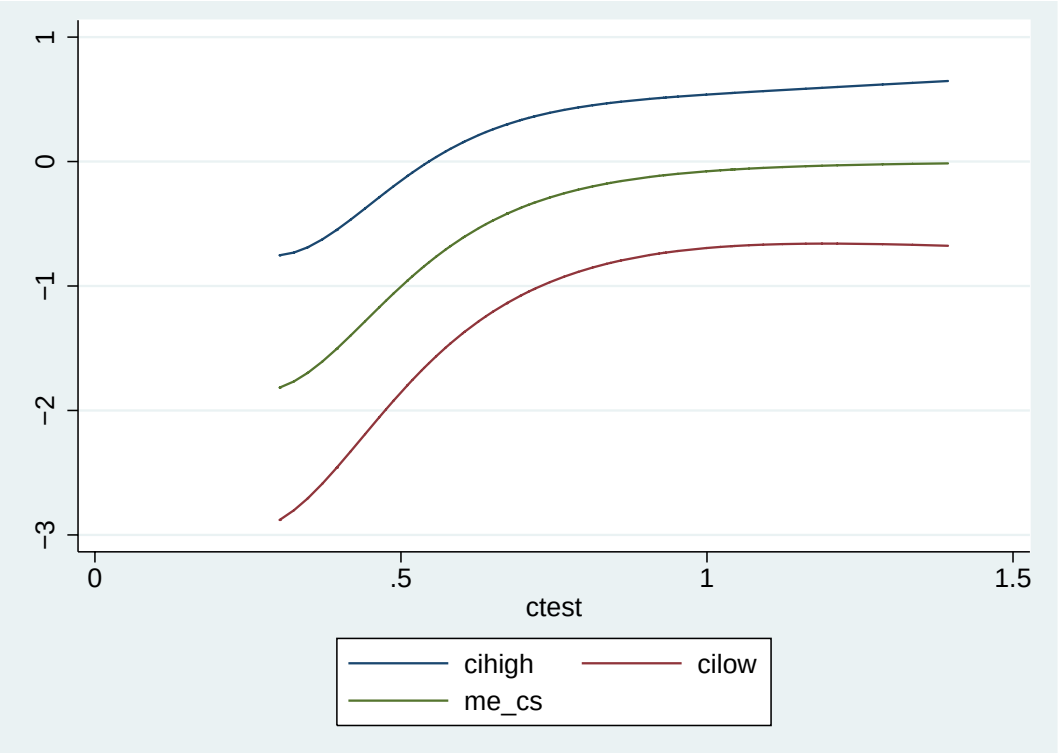


Figure 6: Marginal Effect of Support for a Low Income Father



fair approximation of the average father from Ohio, he is making far less than the average father in New Jersey and far more than the average father in Mississippi. Table A5 in the Appendix shows the amount of support the average father in the sample, the average father in New Jersey, and the average father in Mississippi would be required to pay for one child in each of the 43 states.[31] Figure 5 shows how the marginal effect (with a confidence interval of 95 percent) of additional child support varies with the payment amount for the high-income father and Figure 6 shows how the effect of additional child support varies (with a confidence interval of 95 percent) for the low-income father. The probability of divorce for these two types of fathers as well as the marginal effect of child support at these payment levels are also shown in Table A5.[32]

[31]The income of the average father is $5,854.68 and the income of the average mother is $2,228.99 in New Jersey. The income of the average father is $2,323.04 and the income of the average mother is $1,075.94 in Mississippi.

[32]The child support obligations in the table are all for one child.

7 Robustness Tests

In order to ensure that my empirical model is robust to alternative specifications, I also look at the following model specifications.

7.1 Percentage of Income States

A potential problem with my empirical model is that I use an expected child support obligation for married men making the divorce decision and actual support paid for divorced fathers that have already made the divorce decision. The reason for this is that I do not have any information about income for the divorced father's ex-wife. Without this information, it is not possible to calculate what the father's share of the obligation would be in the Income Shares and Melson Formula states. To test whether using actual support for divorced fathers is a good proxy for expected support prior to divorce, I use only the 11 Percentage of Income states to test my specification. For these 11 states, I have enough information to use the Child Support Guidelines to calculate the father's expected child support obligation prior to divorce. The results are presented in Table 6, column (1).

Child support amount and all higher order support variables are still significant at the 1 percent level. There is still a large and significant negative effect on the probability of divorce, though there is some difference in the magnitude of the effect. An increase of $100 in a father's expected child support obligation will result in a decrease of 1.36 percentage points in the father's probability of divorce. This is a smaller effect than the 2.30 percentage points found for the entire sample.

A father's income still has a significant effect on divorce, though the higher order income variables are now less significant. As a father's income increases, he is more likely to divorce,

Table 6: Alternate Specifications

	Divorce Rate (1)	S.E.	Divorce Rate (2)	S.E.
Expected Support[b]	-0.3213**	(0.1117)	-0.2910**	(0.0557)
Expected Support Squared	0.1087**	(0.0273)	0.0841**	(0.0235)
Expected Support Cubed	-0.0118**	(0.0017)	-0.0083*	(0.0035)
Income[b]	0.0518**	(0.0206)	0.0483**	(0.0075)
Income Squared	-0.0037**	(0.0015)	-0.0031**	(0.0005)
Income Cubed	0.0001*	(0.0000)	0.0001**	(0.0000)
SMSA resident[a]	-0.0118	(0.0091)	-0.0005	(0.0079)
Central city resident[a]	-0.0029	(0.0092)	-0.0070	(0.0093)
Education: less than 12 years[a]	0.0107	(0.0114)	0.0606**	(0.0226)
Education: 12 years[a]	0.0047	(0.0081)	0.0460**	(0.0122)
Education: 13-15 years[a]	0.0055	(0.0081)	0.0381**	(0.0118)
Black[a]	0.0108	(0.0108)	0.0384**	(0.0147)
Other Non-white[a]	-0.0285*	(0.0136)	-0.0157	(0.0199)
Age	-0.0050	(0.0035)	0.0076**	(0.0028)
Age Squared	-0.0000	(0.0000)	-0.0001**	(0.0000)
Location rate	0.0006	(0.0027)	0.0033	(0.0018)
Paternity establishment rate	0.0087	(0.0087)	0.0040	(0.0020)
Order enforcement rate	-0.0017	(0.0498)	0.1388	(0.0701)
Number of Children			-0.0138**	(0.0038)
Age of Youngest Child * Expected Support			-0.0054**	(0.0020)
Log likelihood	-618.0905		-1,492.5089	
State Fixed effects	yes		yes	
Sample size	2,370		6,245	

Notes: More than 16 years of education and white are the excluded categories.
Sample weights are used in the estimation.
[a] for discrete change of dummy variable from 0 to 1
[b] coefficient multiplied by 1000
**significantly different from zero at the 1 percent level
* significantly different from zero at the 5 percent level

though this effect occurs at a decreasing rate. The marginal effect of a $1,000 increase in income at the mean is calculated from the coefficients to be 0.0244. This is considerably lower than the 0.0333 found in the primary specification. The reason for this is that in Percentage of Income States, there is no variation in order amount based upon income. A father's child support obligation is a fixed percentage of his income, dependent only on the number of children he is responsible for and in some states, his income range.

There is also evidence that some of the other individual explanatory variables influence divorce. Fathers are less likely to divorce as they get older, and this effect decreases with age. Non-Whites are significantly less likely to be divorced than Whites.

The reason why the marginal effect is lower at the mean in this specification is likely due to the higher average child support payment in this sample. In the full sample, the average monthly support payment is $895.67, and in this sample with only 11 states, the average monthly support payment is $1,024.38.[33] From Table 5, we know that when the payment for the average father increases in this range, the marginal effect of an additional dollar of child support is lower. In the context of Table 5, the marginal effect found in this specification is reasonable.

7.2 Child Characteristics

There is reason to believe that the effect of a father's expected child support payment will vary, depending on the age of the children for which he is paying support. A father paying support for a younger child, for example, will expect to continue paying his obligation for many years, while a father with a teenager, will expect his obligation to cease in the near future. Differences in child support guidelines should thereby have a stronger effect for the

[33]The average income in the full sample is $4,228.10 and $4,162.66 in this sample.

father with younger children. To test this, I include an interaction term for the age of the youngest child and the father's child support obligation.

The results from this specification are presented in Table 6, column (2). There coefficients on the explanatory terms are smaller, though the signs continue to be in the same directions.

The other results are substantively the same. Child support and all higher order support variables are still significant at the 1 percent level. There is a slight change in the magnitude of the effect. An increase of $100 in a father's expected child support obligation at the mean will result in only a decrease of 1.60 percentage points in the father's probability of divorce compared to a decrease of 2.30 percentage points at the mean for the main specification above. Most of the other regressors have similar coefficients and the same sign as before.

7.3 Divorce Law

Empirical evidence generally finds that divorce law does not affect divorce rates. Peters (1986) and Gray (1998) do not reject the hypothesis that the frequency of divorce is similar for households facing unilateral and mutual consent divorce laws. Friedberg (1998) finds that the adoption of unilateral divorce law could account for about one sixth of the increase in divorce rates. However, Wolfers (2006) argues that Friedberg's result is misleading. He finds that the divorce rate rises sharply following the adoption of unilateral divorce laws, but that this rise completely reverses within a decade.

According to these findings, an efficient result should occur regardless of whether a state allows unilateral divorce or requires mutual consent. Changes in divorce laws should not affect efficiency in marriage or divorce rates as long as we have symmetry of information and trivial bargaining costs. This paper does not intend to make a statement about the effect of divorce law on the probability of divorce. However, since the issue has not been completely

resolved, I estimate a specification of the model that includes controls for no fault divorce, incompatability, separation requirements, judicial separation, and durational requirements. The results are virtually identical in both sign and magnitude for all explanatory variables in the main specification; three divorce terms are significant: incompatability at the 1 percent level, and separation and judicial separation requirements at the 5 percent level. These results indicate that when incompatability is grounds for divorce, divorce is more likely and the longer the requirement for the couple to be living separate and apart before divorce is granted, the lower the probability of divorce.

8 Conclusion

I set out a framework for understanding how child support policy can affect a couple's decision to divorce. If divorce alters the way some goods are consumed, the Becker-Coase argument, which implies a transfer between spouses after divorce cannot affect the divorce decision, will be a special case. Thus, it is possible that an otherwise identical couple will choose to divorce in some states but not others, due to differences in the child support laws in these states. The child support transfer can affect whether or not a couple chooses to divorce.

The prediction of the model is ambiguous in that a higher child support order could make divorce more or less likely, depending on the types of shocks that each spouse receives to his/her perception of match quality. I develop a specific example where each spouse has a different perception of match quality and the husband is less likely to divorce when his child support obligation is higher. This is supported by my empirical results, which find that there is a significant negative effect of child support on the probability of divorce. This

effect is primarily the result of a state's presumptive guidelines, a factor that has not been considered in previous work. Also, in contrast to the results of Nixon, I find that CSE does not have an effect on the probability of divorce. Heim (2003) also finds that the CSE climate has no effect on the probability of divorce.

Estimates of the effect of child support payments are substantial. For a $100 increase in a father's child support payment at the mean, I find a decrease of 2.3 percentage points in his likelihood of divorce. This corresponds to an elasticity of divorce probability with respect to child support of -1.13. I find that the marginal effect of an additional dollar of child support varies in magnitude with the amount of support that needs to be paid. The effect is larger for lower support obligations and smaller for higher support obligations. The marginal effects also vary with the father's income.

I find that these estimates are robust to alternative specifications. When I use only the 11 percentage of income states, the results are substantively the same. The marginal effect at the mean is smaller, but this is consistent with the primary findings, as the average child support payment in this subsample is $128.71 higher than the full sample. The age of the youngest child seems to affect the probability of divorce. Certain divorce law requirements also seem to lower the probability of divorce.

In this paper, I present evidence that a state's child support policy does affect the decision to divorce. This can be explained in the context of a model where couples react to changes in their perceptions of match quality. The empirical evidence shows that states with more stringent child support guidelines have a lower incidence of divorce.

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Appendix

Table A1: *Explanatory Variables in the Divorce Equation: Variable Names and Definitions*

Child Support Enforcement Variables: 1-3

Grounds for Divorce and Residency Requirement Variables: 4-8

1. Location rate: Absent parents located divided by the average number of absent parents requiring location to enforce or modify an order.
2. Paternity establishment rate: Number of paternities established divided by the average number of children requiring paternity establishment.
3. Order enforcement rate: Number of orders for current support where a collection was received divided by the number where support was due.
4. No Fault: sole ground, no fault added to Traditional, or not grounds at all.
5. Incompatibility: Binary variable equal to 1 if incompatibility is grounds for divorce.
6. Living Separate and Apart: for different durations ranging from 60 days to 3 years.
7. Judicial Separation: Binary variable equal to 1 if it is grounds for divorce.
8. Durational Requirements: for different durations ranging from 6 weeks to 1 year.
9. Race: Binary variables for white, black and other nonwhite (omitted category: white).
10. Age, age^2: Age in years and age squared.
11. Income, income^2, income^3: average monthly income, average income squared, and average income cubed.
12. Education: Binary variables for 12 years or less, exactly 12 years, 13-15 years,16 or more (omitted category: 16 years or more).
13. SMSA resident: Binary variable equal to 1 if SMSA resident.
14. Central city resident: Binary variable equal to 1 if resident of a central city.

Table A2: *Brief Description of Presumptive Guidelines by State*
Percentage of Income States

1. Alabama:[1] Table of varying amounts:[c] 9-20% for one child, 9-29% for two, 9-35% for three, 9-39% for four, 9-41% for five, and 10-43% for six or more children.

2. Alaska:[2] Fixed percentages: 20% for one child, 27% for two, 33% for three, and an extra 3% for each additional child.

3. Arizona:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 24-8% for one child, 34-10% for two, 40-11% for three, 44-12% for four, 49-14% for five, 53-15% for six. Presumptive maximums (for combined incomes over $20,000): $1,600 for one child, $2,000 for two, $2,200 for three, $2,400 for four, $2,800 for five, $3,000 for six or more children.

4. Arkansas:[2] Table of varying amounts:[a] (for incomes less than $5,000): 24-15% for one child, 35-22% for two, 42-26% for three, 46-29% for four, 50-31% for five or more. Fixed percentages (for incomes over $5,000): 15% for one child, 21% for two, 25% for three, 28% for four, 30% for five, 32% for six or more children.

5. California:[2] Calculated for one child: CS = K (HN - (H%)(TN)), where K = amount of both parents' income allocated for CS; HN = high earner's disposable income; h% = approximate % of time high earner has w/child; and TN = total disposable income of both parties; K is calculated as follows: K = (1 + H) fraction, if H% *leq* 50%, and K = (2 - H) fraction, if H% > 50%; fraction is calculated as follows: fraction = 0.20 + TN/16,000, if TN $\in$ $0-800; fraction = 0.25, if TN $\in$ $801-6,666; fraction = 0.10 + 1,000/TN, if TN $\in$ $6,667-10,000; and fraction = 0.12 + 800/TN if TN > $10,000 multiply CS by 1.6 for two, by 2 for three, by 2.3 for four, by 2.5 for five, by 2.625 for six, by 2.75 for seven, by 2.813 for eight, by 2.844 for nine, and by 2.86 for ten or more.

6. Colorado:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 22-9% for one child, 32-13% for two, 38-16% for three, 41-17% for four, 45-19% for five, 48-20% for six or more children.

7. Connecticut:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 24-15% for one child, 35-23% for two, 43-27% for three, 47-30% for four, 52-33% for five, 55-36% for six or more children. Presumptive minimum (for combined incomes over $10,833): $1,600 for one child, $2,453 for two, $2,964 for three, $3,302 for four, $3,597 for five, $3,861 for six or more children.

8. Delaware:[3] The combined support obligation is determined by a certain rudimentary requirement per child, which is adjusted by a percentage of a SOLA (standard of living adjustment) that depends on parent income.[b] The noncustodial parent is responsible for a proportion of this obligation (less his own basic need) depending on his proportion of the total combined income.

9. Florida:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 24-14% for one child, 37-22% for two, 45-28% for three, 51-32% for four, 54-34% for five, 58-37% for six. Presumptive maximum (for combined incomes more than 10,000): $1,400 + 5% (of combined income) for one child, $2,200 + 7.5% for two, $2,800 + 9.5% for three, $3,200 + 11% for four, $3,400 + 12% for five, and $3,700 + 12.5% for six or more children.

10. Georgia:[2] Varying percentages: 17-23% for one child, 23-28% for two, 25-32% for three, 29-35% for four, 31-37% for five or more. For GA, I use the average support amount within the range provided, since it is unclear how the exact percentage is determined.

11. Hawaii:[3] The combined support obligation is determined by a certain rudimentary requirement per child, which is adjusted by a percentage of a SOLA (standard of living adjustment) that depends on parent income.[b] The noncustodial parent is responsible for a proportion of this obligation (less his own basic need) depending on his proportion of the total combined income.

12. Idaho:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 18-3% for one child, 26-6% for two, 30-9% for three, 32-12% for four, 35-15% for five or more.

13. Illinois:[2] Fixed percentages: 20% for one child, 25% for two, 32% for three, 40% for four, and 50% for five or more.

14. Indiana:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 25-8% for one child, 36-12% for two, 50-16% for three, 50-17% for four, 50-19% for five. Presumptive maximum: 50% of combined income.

15. Iowa:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts depending on the amount earned by each parent ranging from:[c] 11-26% for one child, 13-37% for two, 17-43% for three, 25-50% for four, 25-52% for five or more.

16. Kansas:[1] The combined support obligation is determined depending on a child's age, by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] for a child under six (amount per child), 15-11% for one child, 12-8% for two, 10-7% for three, 9-6% for four, 8-5% for five, or

7-5% for six or more; for a child between 7 and 15 (amount per child), 17-12% for one child, 13-9% for two, 12-8% for three, 10-7% for four, 9-6% for five, 8-6% for six or more; for a child between 16 and 18 (amount per child),19-14% for one child, 15-10% for two, 13-9% for three, 11-8% for four, 9-7% for five, 8-6% for six or more.

17. Kentucky:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 8-20% for one child, 12-29% for two, 15-35% for three, 18-40% for four, 19-46% for five, 20-43% for six or more children.

18. Louisiana:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 9-22% for one child, 13-32% for two, 16-37% for three, 17-40% for four, 19-42% for five, 20-45% for six or more children.

19. Maryland:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 21-9% for one child, 32-13% for two, 38-16% for three, 41-17% for four, 45-19% for five, 48-20% for six or more children.

20. Massachusetts:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a bracket scheme ranging from:[b] 21%-$723+25% for one child, 24%-$862+30% for two, 27%-$962+33% for three or more children

21. Michigan:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts depending on the amount earned by each parent ranging from:[a] 25.5-15.9% for one child, 39.6-24.4% for two, 49.4-30.5% for three, 55.6-34.5% for four, 60.8-37.3% for five or more children.

22. Minnesota:[2] Table of varying percentages:[b] 16-25% for one child, 19-30% for two, 22-35% for three, 25-39% for four, 28-43% for five, 30-47% for six, and 32-50% for seven or more.

23. Mississippi:[2] Fixed percentages: 14% for one child, 20% for two, 22% for three, 24% for four, and 26% for five or more.

24. Missouri:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 23-8% for one child, 31-11% for two, 36-12% for three, 39-13% for four, 43-14% for five, 45-15% for six or more children.

25. Montana:[3] The combined support obligation is determined by a certain rudimentary requirement per child, which is a percentage of the parent's personal allowance. If parent income exceeds the personal allowance amount, the primary child support is supplemented by a SOLA (standard of living adjustment) that depends on parent

income.[b] The noncustodial parent is responsible for a proportion of this obligation depending on his proportion of the total combined income.

26. Nebraska:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 17-26% for one child, 23-36% for two, 26-42% for three, 31-48% for four, 34-53% for five, 37-57% for six or more children.

27. Nevada:[2] Fixed percentages: 18% for one child, 25% for two, 29% for three, 31% for four, an extra 2% for each additional child. Presumptive maximums (amounts per child): \$500 for incomes $\in$ \$0-4,168; \$550 for incomes $\in$ \$4,168-6,251; \$600 for incomes $\in$ \$6,251-8,334; \$650 for incomes $\in$ \$8,334-10,418; \$700 for incomes $\in$ \$10,418-12,501; \$750 for incomes \$ $\in$ 12,501-14,583.

28. New Hampshire:[1] The combined support obligation is: 25% for one child, 33% for two, 40% for three, 45% for four or more children.

29. New Jersey:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 25-16% for one child, 36-23% for two, 43-27% for three, 47-29% for four, 51-32% for five, 55-34% for six or more children.

30. New Mexico:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 21-11% for one child, 29-16% for two, 34-19% for three, 37-21% for four, 40-23% for five, 42-24% for six or more children.

31. New York:[1] The combined support obligation is: 17% for one child, 25% for two, 29% for three, 31% for four, 35% for five or more children.

32. North Carolina:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 8-22% for one child, 10-30% for two, 11-34% for three, 12-38% for four, 13-41% for five, 15-43% for six or more children.

33. Ohio:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 20-10% for one child, 29-15% for two, 34-17% for three, 37-19% for four, 40-21% for five, 42-22% for six or more children.

34. Oklahoma:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 9-21% for one child, 13-30% for two, 15-35% for three, 17-38% for four, 18-41% for five, 20-44% for six or more children.

35. Oregon:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 8-20% for one child, 10-28% for two, 11-32% for three, 12-36% for four,

13-38% for five, 14-41% for six, 15-43% for seven, 16-45% for eight, 16-47% for nine, 16-47% for ten or more children.

36. Pennsylvania:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 14-25% for one child, 20-36% for two, 23-42% for three, 26-46% for four, 28-50% for five, 30-54% for six or more children.

37. Rhode Island:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 10-20% for one child, 15-31% for two, 19-38% for three, 21-42% for four, 23-45% for five, 25-47% for six or more children.

38. South Carolina:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 9-22% for one child, 13-30% for two, 16-35% for three, 17-38% for four, 19-41% for five, 30-43% for six or more children.

39. Tennessee:[2] Fixed percentages: 21% for one child, 32% for two, 41% for three, 46% for four, and 50% for five or more.

40. Texas:[2] Fixed percentages (for incomes less than $6,000): 20% for one child, 25% for two, 30% for three, 35% for four, 40% for five, and not less than 40% for six or more (for incomes over $6,000): pay the amount for $6,000.

41. Utah:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 8-15% for one child, 14-28% for two, 18-34% for three, 21-40% for four, 23-40% for five, 24-43% for six or more children.

42. Virginia:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[c] 10-20% for one child, 16-31% for two, 20-37% for three, 22-40% for four, 24-44% for five, 26-46% for six or more children.

43. Washington:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] for a child under 11, 22-14% for one child, 34-22% for two, 42-27% for three, 48-32% for four, 55-35% for five or more children; for a child between 12-18, 19-14% for one child, 30-20% for two, 39-27% for three, 44-32% for four, 50-35% for five, 54-36% for six or more children.

44. West Virginia:[1] The combined support obligation is determined by a table of varying amounts ranging from:[a] 23-9% for one child, 34-13% for two, 40-15% for three, 44-17% for four, 48-18% for five, 51-19% for six or more children.

45. Wisconsin:[2] Fixed percentages (for incomes less than $7,000): 17% for one child, 25% for two, 29% for three, 31% for four, and 34% for five or more Fixed percentages (for

incomes ∈ $7000-12,500): 14% for one child, 20% for two, 23% for three, 25% for four, and 27% for five or more. Fixed percentages for (for incomes over $12,500): 10% for one child, 15% for two, 17% for three, 19% for four, and 20% for five or more.

For Income Shares states, the child support obligation determined by the state is a combined amount for both parents. This amount depends on the combined income of both parents. Since the custodial parent is assumed to spend her obligation directly on the children, the noncustodial parent is obligated to pay his share of the support obligation, an amount determined by his share of the combined income. His share of the child support obligation is the same as his share of combined income.

For Melson Formula states, a basic support need for each parent must first be met. Then, the parent must meet some basic need of his children. Finally, a Standard of Living Adjustment (SOLA) is used so that additional income is also shared at some percentage with children. The actual amount paid depends on the proportion of combined parental income earned by the parent.

Note: all income requirements are for monthly incomes, Method of Calculation: [1]Percentage of Income, [2]Income Shares, [3]Melson Formula; [a] percentages decrease as incomes increase, [b] percentages increase as incomes increase, [c] percentages increase and then decrease as incomes increase.

Table A3 - Divorce Rate Analysis

State	Avg. Divorce Rate (1996-1999)[1] (per 1,000 population)	1996 SIPP (full sample)[2]	Expected # of Divorces
Alabama	5.7	3,994,458	90,275
Alaska	4.8	806,055	15,315
Arizona	5.7	5,933,141	134,089
Arkansas	6.4	2,069,640	52,983
California	4.3[a]	33,742,080	580,364
Colorado	5.5[b]	2,840,888	61,363
Connecticut	2.9	3,391,871	39,007
Delaware	4.6	878,726	15,993
Florida	5.5	13,741,083	300,930
Georgia	4.7	6,878,100	128,620
Hawaii	4.3	632,629	10,818
Idaho	5.6	1,527,098	34,360
Illinois	3.3	12,087,103	157,132
Indiana	6.4[c]	6,145,615	157,328
Iowa	3.5	2,714,603	38,276
Kansas	4.2	2,578,478	42,803
Kentucky	5.7	3,702,253	84,041
Louisiana	4.3[d]	3,925,968	67,527
Maryland	3.1	4,210,515	51,368
Massachusetts	2.6	5,431,939	55,949
Michigan	4.0	8,779,346	141,347
Minnesota	3.3	5,124,945	67,137
Mississippi	5.0	2,888,294	57,188
Missouri	4.9	5,950,601	115,442
Montana	4.1	1,507,397	24,872
Nebraska	3.8	2,208,388	33,567
Nevada	8.7	1,124,357	39,240
New Hampshire	4.7	1,502,382	28,395
New Jersey	3.1	8,361,461	103,682
New Mexico	6.0	1,210,277	29,168
New York	3.3	16,185,922	213,654
North Carolina	4.9	7,859,445	154,831
Ohio	4.3	10,595,410	183,301
Oklahoma	5.7	4,048,497	91,901
Oregon	4.7	3,104,491	58,675
Pennsylvania	3.3	12,982,945	168,778
Rhode Island	3.4	902,519	12,365
South Carolina	3.9	3,812,939	59,101
Tennessee	6.0	4,659,027	111,351
Texas	5.0	19,667,444	389,415
Utah	4.4	2,352,170	41,633
Virginia	4.4	6,905,309	120,843
Washington	5.2	5,575,403	114,853
West Virginia	5.2	1,830,868	38,082
Wisconsin	3.3	5,222,931	69,465
Totals		261,595,011	4,586,826

Notes: [1]from 1998-2003 Statistical Abstracts

[2]using sample weights [a]1990, [b]1995,[c]1985, [d]1980

Table A4 - Divorce Levels Analysis

State	% of Population Divorced[1]	1996 SIPP	# Divorced in 1996 SIPP	% of SIPP Divorced
Alabama	10.6	3,152,111	448,636	14.2
Alaska	11.7	594,901	73,391	12.3
Arizona	11.1	4,584,683	542,152	11.8
Arkansas	11.0	1,664,305	195,602	11.8
California	9.5	25,818,688	3,082,932	11.9
Colorado	11.0	2,299,483	348,220	15.1
Connecticut	9.3	2,695,763	333,014	12.4
Delaware	9.8	640,725	74,237	11.6
Florida	11.6	11,164,816	1,433,868	12.8
Georgia	10.3	5,335,989	563,018	10.6
Hawaii	9.0	514,660	47,809	9.3
Idaho	10.6	1,176,367	143,745	12.2
Illinois	8.9	9,534,564	964,216	10.1
Indiana	10.9	4,837,806	593,696	12.3
Iowa	9.1	2,222,942	190,017	8.5
Kansas	10.1	2,103,762	212,242	10.1
Kentucky	11.0	2,935,265	366,033	12.5
Louisiana	10.2	3,112,762	425,835	13.7
Maryland	8.8	3,341,973	396,697	11.9
Massachusetts	8.3	4,444,600	451,717	10.2
Michigan	10.3	6,913,772	836,660	12.1
Minnesota	8.7	4,022,016	377,182	9.4
Mississippi	10.1	2,188,221	226,388	10.3
Missouri	10.8	4,713,223	605,701	12.9
Montana	10.9	1,233,146	174,551	14.2
Nebraska	9.0	1,757,784	143,247	8.1
Nevada	13.8	899,227	159,865	17.8
New Hampshire	10.5	1,208,178	121,243	10.0
New Jersey	7.5	6,547,715	580,705	8.9
New Mexico	11.6	953,623	129,983	13.6
New York	7.8	13,031,832	1,363,271	10.5
North Carolina	9.0	6,314,351	805,061	12.7
Ohio	10.6	8,499,640	978,459	11.5
Oklahoma	11.6	3,182,688	395,397	12.4
Oregon	11.6	2,531,185	453,607	17.9
Pennsylvania	8.1	10,508,864	1,088,659	10.4
Rhode Island	9.4	744,646	62,811	8.4
South Carolina	9.2	2,931,353	365,436	12.5
Tennessee	11.3	3,752,612	466,788	12.4
Texas	9.8	15,030,411	1,855,022	12.3
Utah	8.1	1,695,913	183,021	10.8
Virginia	9.0	5,579,024	697,603	12.5
Washington	11.4	4,414,529	603,170	13.7
West Virginia	10.4	1,517,913	180,868	11.9
Wisconsin	9.0	4,276,980	441,238	10.3
Totals	9.6	206,625,011	24,183,013	11.7

Note: [1]from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Table A5 - Child Support Comparisons

State	CS for the Avg. Father	CS (High-income Father	Prob. of Divorce	Marginal Effect	CS (Low-income Father)	Prob. of Divorce	Marginal Effect
AL	549.65	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	325.23	0.4497	-0.1766
AK	845.62	1,170.94	0.0111	-0.0036	464.61	0.2416	-0.1170
AZ	591.93	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	441.38	0.2701	-0.1283
AR	676.50	878.20	0.0334	-0.0143	441.38	0.2701	-0.1283
CA	1,057.03	1,309.73	0.0074	-0.0020	580.76	0.1357	-0.0679
CO	591.93	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	418.15	0.3012	-0.1396
CT	761.06	995.30	0.0207	-0.0080	534.30	0.1713	-0.0855
DE	884.28	1,149.68	0.0119	-0.0039	572.62	0.1414	-0.0708
FL	803.34	936.75	0.0261	-0.0106	487.84	0.2157	-0.1060
GA	845.62	1,170.94	0.0111	-0.0036	464.61	0.2416	-0.1170
HI	544.68	710.28	0.0717	-0.0344	347.33	0.4114	-0.1698
ID	295.97	234.18	0.6156	-0.1810	302.00	0.4913	-0.1816
IL	845.62	1,170.94	0.0111	-0.0036	464.61	0.2416	-0.1170
IN	591.93	819.66	0.0431	-0.0193	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
IA	803.34	995.30	0.0207	-0.0080	511.07	0.1923	-0.0954
KY	549.65	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	348.46	0.4094	-0.1694
LA	549.65	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	348.46	0.4094	-0.1694
MD	591.93	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	418.15	0.3012	-0.1396
MA	968.19	1,374.84	0.0062	-0.0016	510.90	0.1924	-0.0955
MI	739.33	932.55	0.0266	-0.0108	475.52	0.2291	-0.1118
MN	1,057.03	1,463.67	0.0050	-0.0011	580.76	0.1357	-0.0679
MS	591.93	819.66	0.0431	-0.0193	325.23	0.4497	-0.1766
MO	634.22	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	441.38	0.2701	-0.1283
MT	811.73	1,044.90	0.0172	-0.0063	537.78	0.1683	-0.0841
NE	803.34	1,053.84	0.0167	-0.0061	557.53	0.1525	-0.0764
NV	500.00[c]	1,053.84	0.0167	-0.0061	418.15	0.3012	-0.1396
NH	1,057.03	1,463.67	0.0050	-0.0011	518.76	0.1851	-0.0921
NJ	803.34	1,053.84	0.0167	-0.0061	534.30	0.1713	-0.0855
NM	507.37	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	348.46	0.4094	-0.1694
NY	718.78	995.30	0.0207	-0.0080	394.92	0.3349	-0.1505
NC	591.93	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	418.15	0.3012	-0.1396
OH	549.65	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
OK	507.37	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
OR	591.93	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	418.15	0.3012	-0.1396
PA	761.06	936.75	0.0261	-0.0106	487.84	0.2157	-0.1060
RI	591.93	761.11	0.0563	-0.0263	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
SC	549.65	702.56	0.0744	-0.0359	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
TN	887.90	1,229.48	0.0093	-0.0028	487.84	0.2157	-0.1060
TX	845.62	1,170.93	0.0111	-0.0036	464.61	0.2416	-0.1170
UT	422.81	526.92	0.1777	-0.0887	302.00	0.4913	-0.1816
VA	549.65	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	325.23	0.4497	-0.1766
WV	507.32	644.02	0.0990	-0.0490	371.69	0.3711	-0.1606
WI	718.78	995.30	0.0207	-0.0080	394.92	0.3349	-0.1505