

Do Child Characteristics Affect How Children Fare in Families Receiving and Leaving Welfare?

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Prior research

- Prior analyses of children in families recently leaving vs. currently receiving welfare
 - few differences in well-being
- Experimental evaluations of programs that increase income
 - positive impact on young school-age children
 - negative impact on adolescents

Prior research (cont.)

- Experimental evaluations of programs that increase employment but not income
 - Few impacts on young children
 - Some negative effects on health, particularly for boys

Research questions

- How does developmental risk of children in families currently receiving and in families having recently left welfare compare, when we examine children separately by
 - Age subgroups?
 - Racial/ethnic subgroups?
 - Gender subgroups?

Research questions

- For patterns of risk between leavers and recipients that differ across subgroups... why??

Data: National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)

- Nationally representative
- 44,000 households
- Data collected in 1997, 1999, 2002
- Cross-sectional
- Telephone interviews with “adult most knowledgeable” about child

Sample

- 1999 wave of NSAF
- Current recipients: Receiving TANF at time of survey (1999)
–1,121 children
- Recent leavers: Received welfare during prior 2 years, but not at time of survey
–1,271 children

Child risk measures

- Fair or poor health (0-17)
- Limiting condition (0-17)
- Behavioral & emotional problems (6-17)
- Low school engagement (6-17)
- Skipped school 2+ times (12-17)
- Suspended or expelled (12-17)
- No extracurricular activities (6-17)

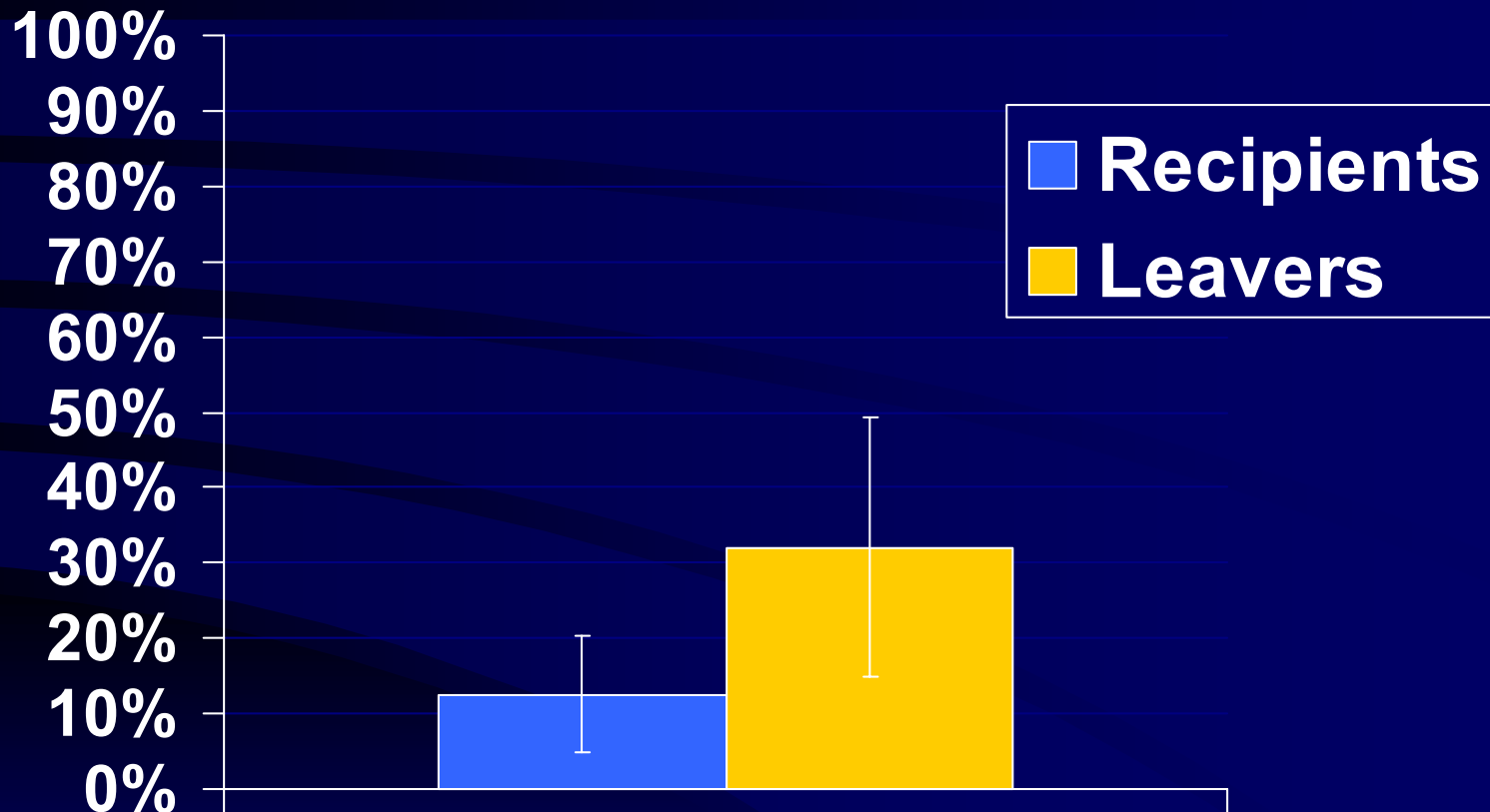
Methods

- Bivariate analyses: % of leavers vs. % of recipients, t-tests
 - All children
 - Age, gender, and race/ethnicity subgroups
- Difference-of-difference t-tests to compare findings across subgroups

Leaver vs. recipient differences on risk measures

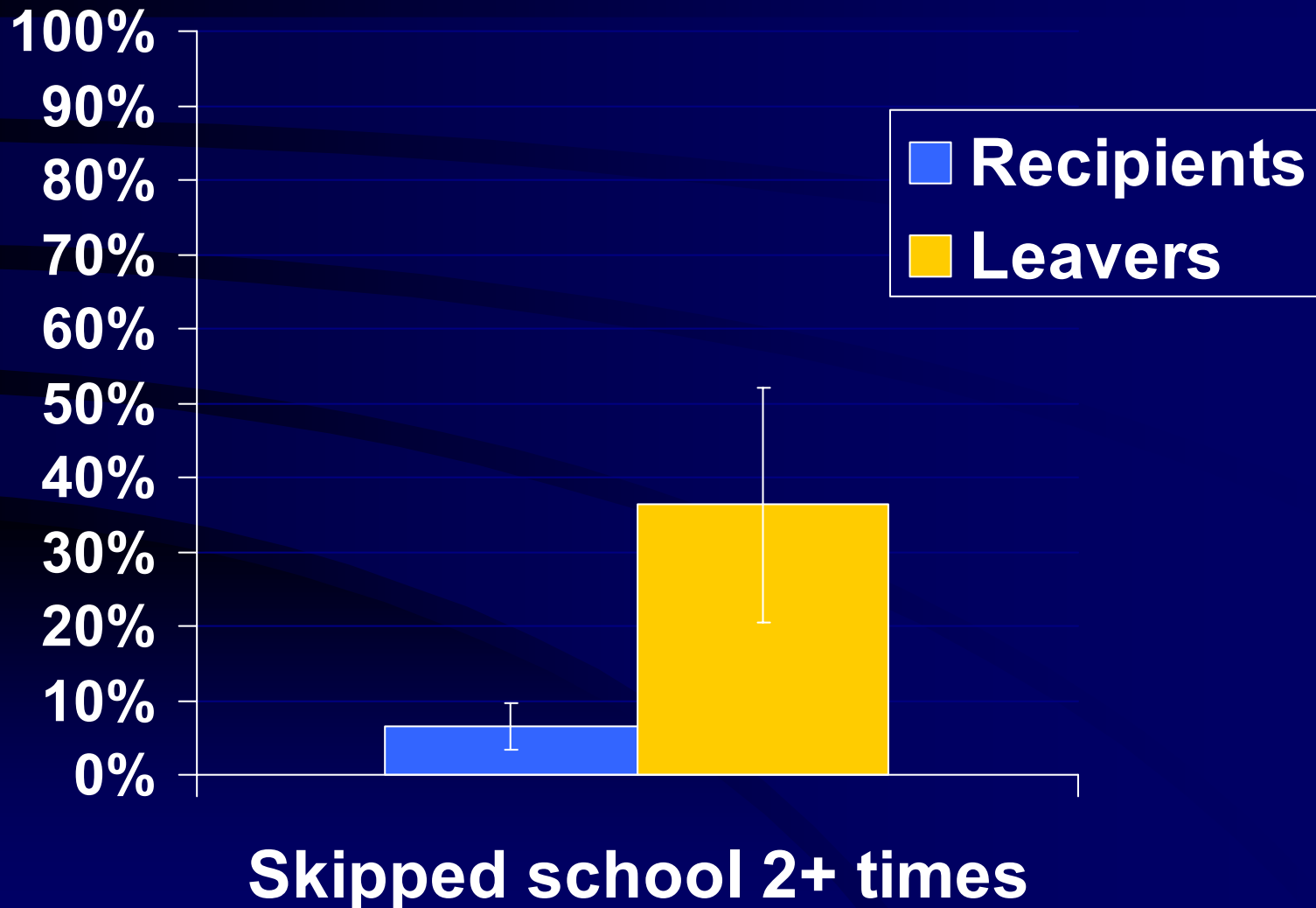
- Race/ethnic subgroups
 - no pattern
- Age and gender:
 - 12-17, boys: 4 differences on 7 measures

Leaver vs. recipient differences on risk measures, boys age 12-17

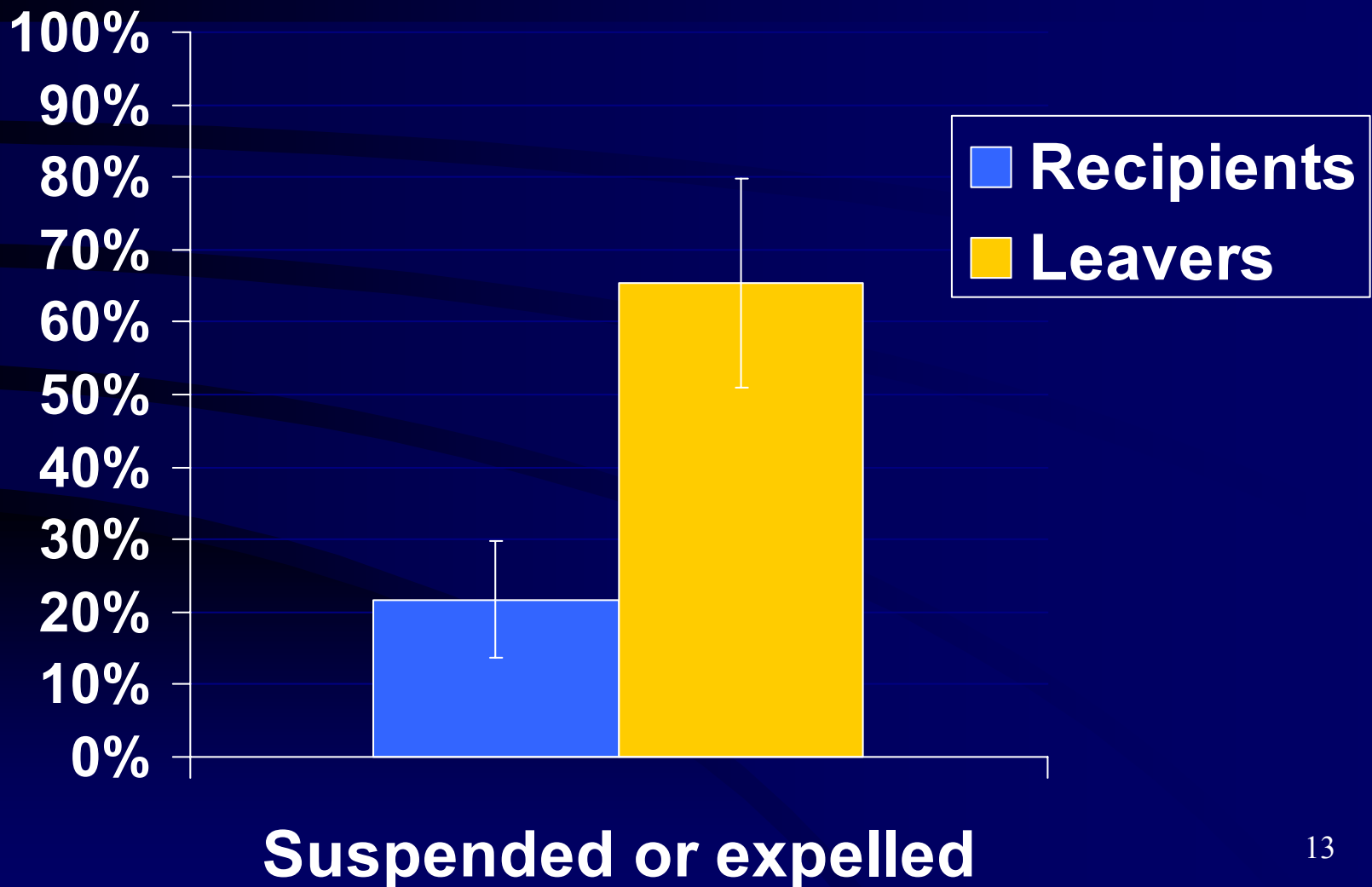


High behavioral & emotional problems

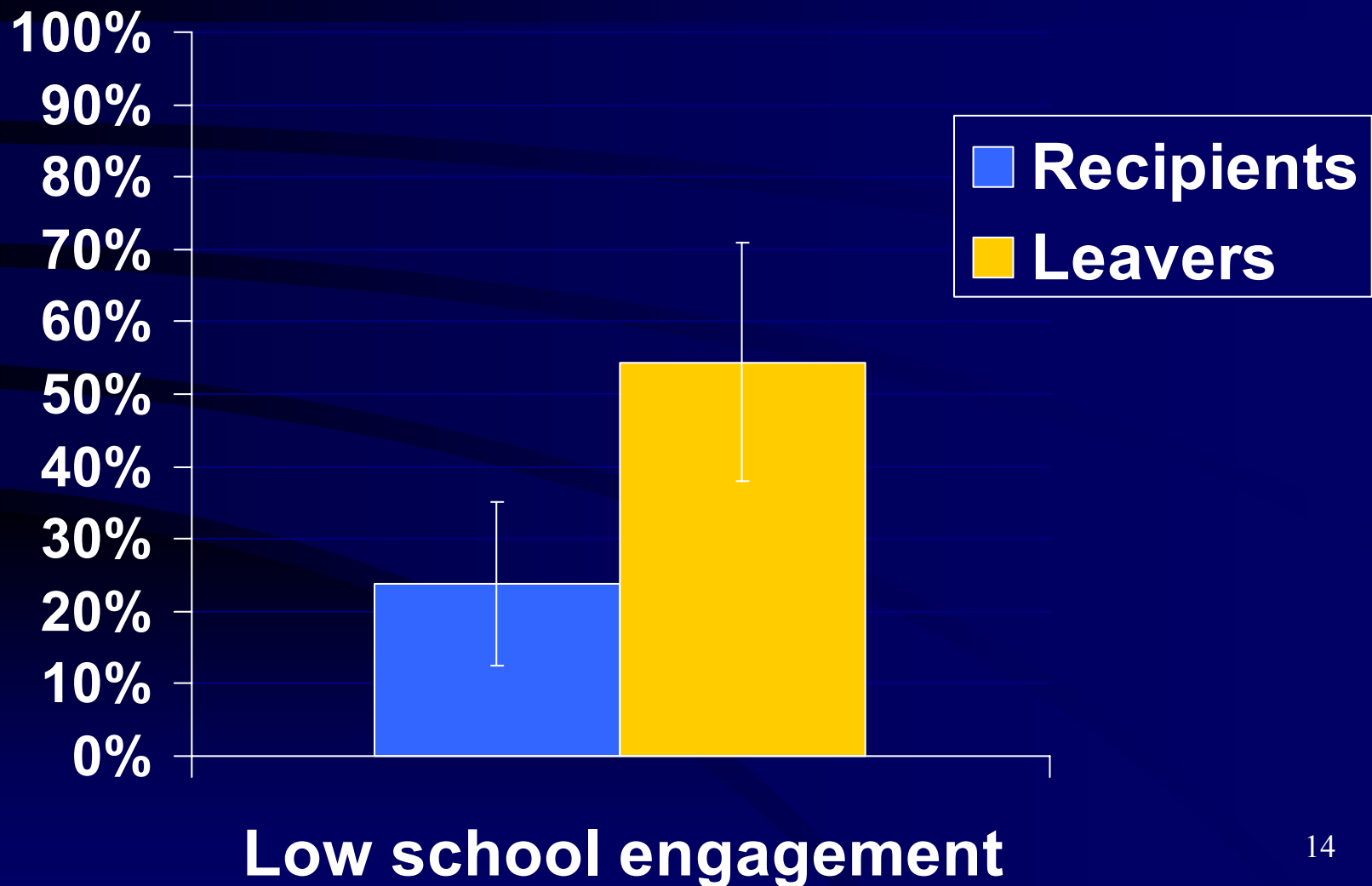
Leaver vs. recipient differences on risk measures, boys age 12-17



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Leaver vs. recipient differences on risk measures, boys age 12-17

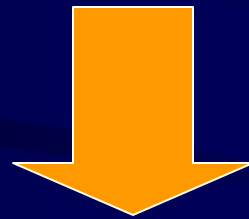


Why might it be that among boys, but not girls, adolescents in leaver families fare worse than those in recipient families?

- Selection hypotheses
- Mediation hypotheses
 - Version A
 - Version B

Why? Selection hypotheses

Child risk level & gender

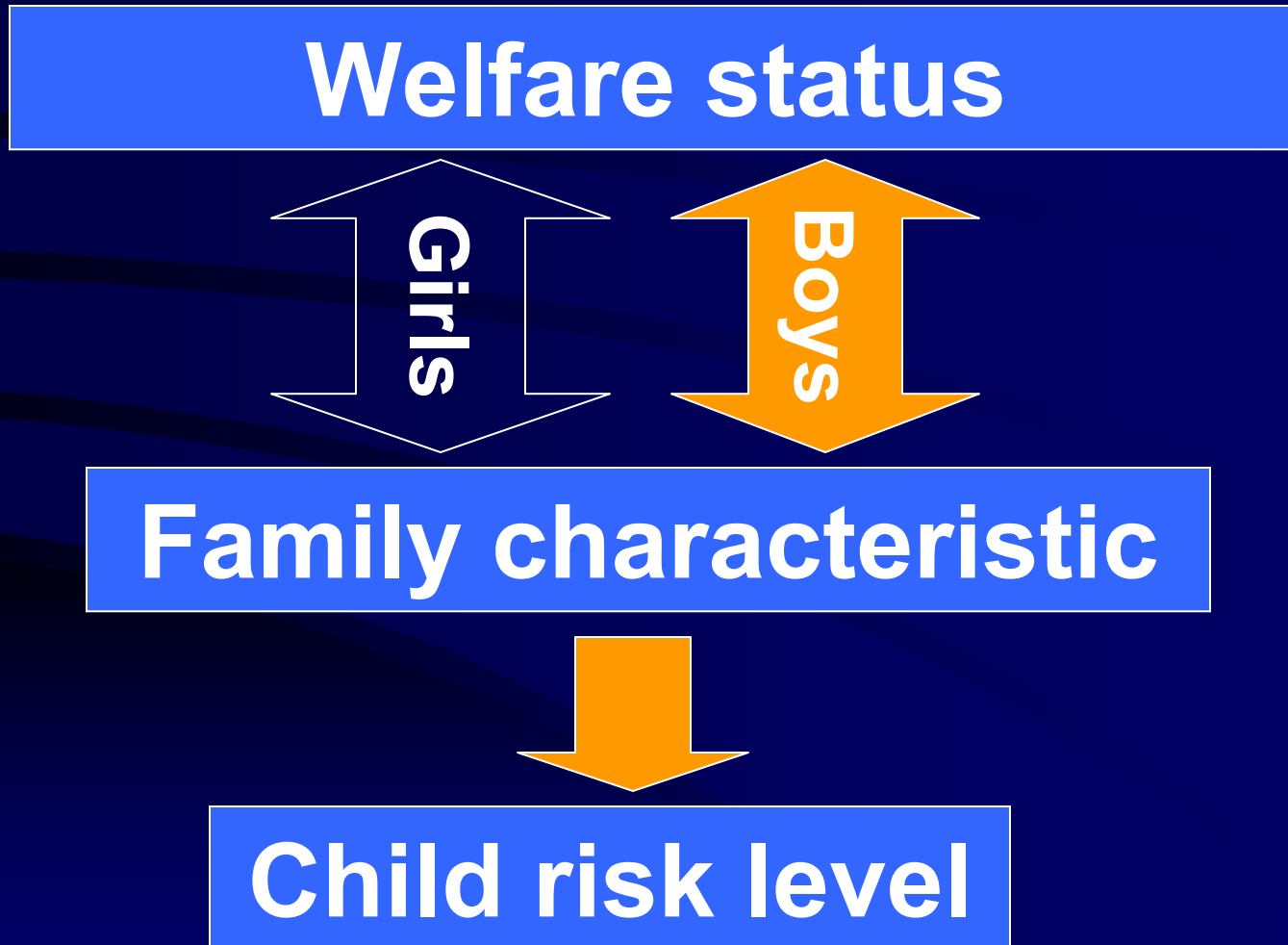


Family characteristic

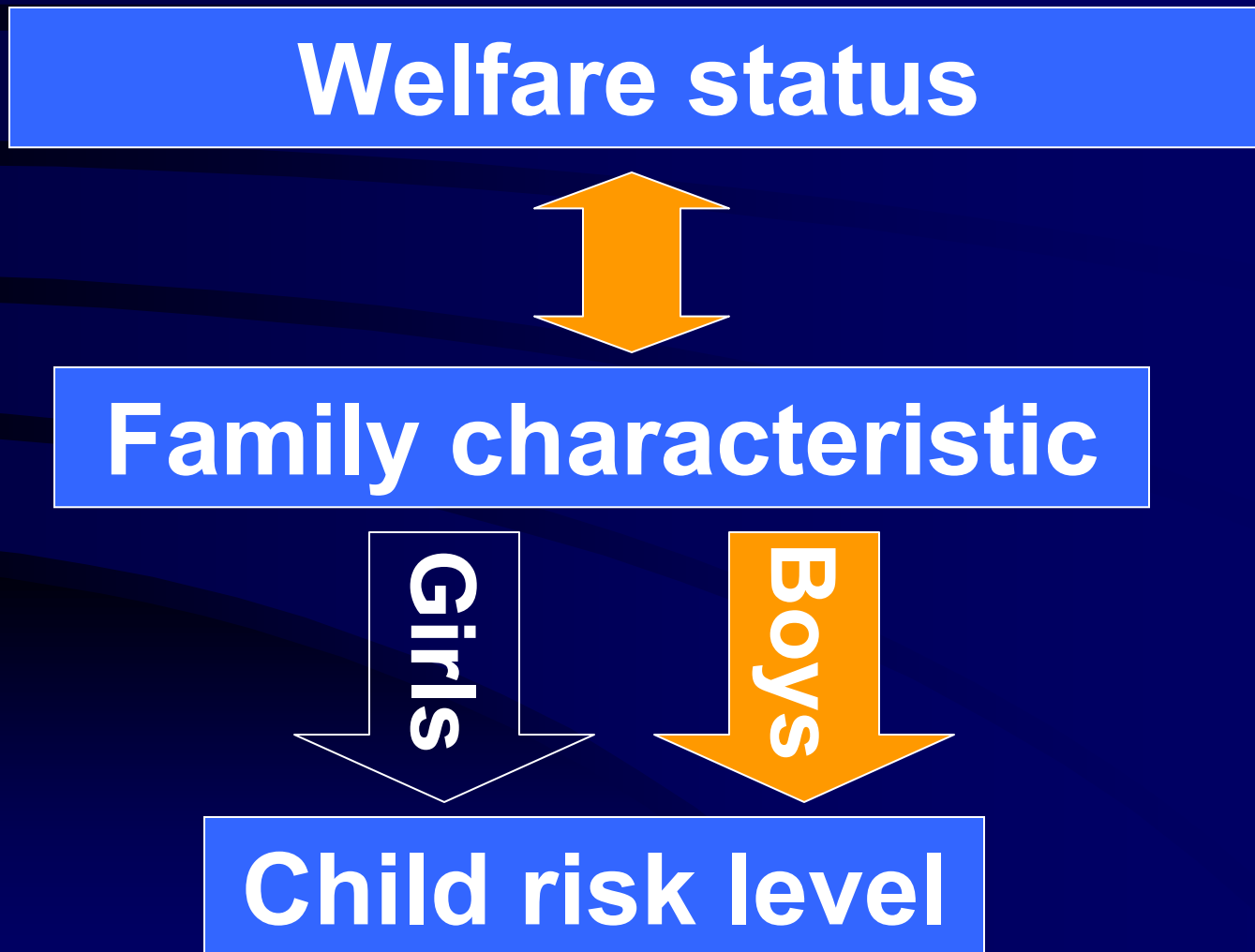


Welfare status

Why? Mediation hypotheses (A)



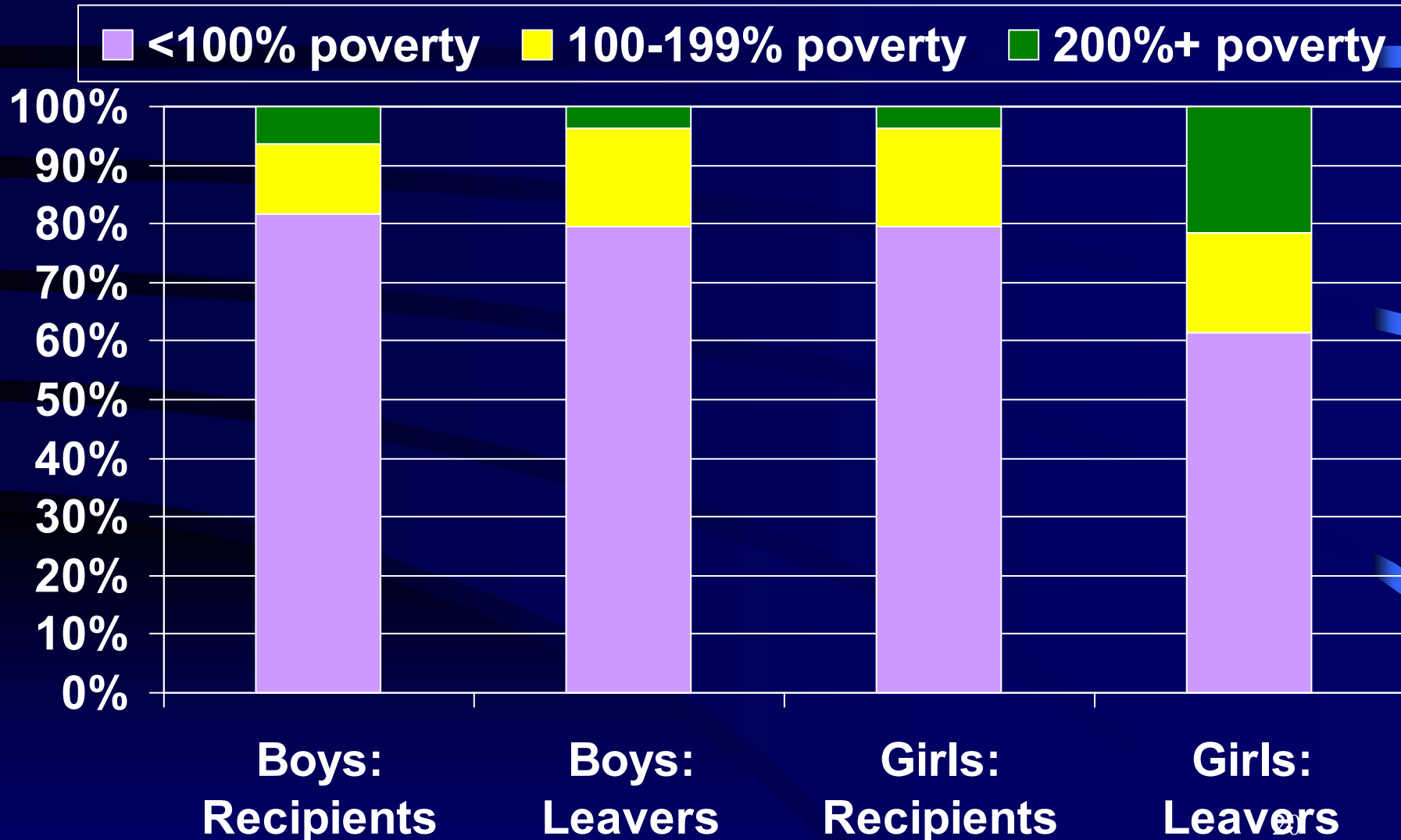
Why? Mediation hypotheses (B)



Methods for exploring “why:” For selection hypotheses

- Bivariate comparisons of family characteristics across gender/welfare groups
- Multivariate analyses to look for mediation

Family income, by welfare receipt status & gender



Limitations

- Cross-sectional data only
- Sample is a small portion of entire NSAF
- Fewer measures for younger than for older children
- Parent-reported measures only
- Can't distinguish between internalizing and externalizing

Summary

- No systematic patterns of differences between leavers and recipients by race/ethnicity or for young children
- Among adolescent boys, leavers at higher risk than recipients
- Higher family income among adolescent leaver girls

Next steps

- Investigate using 2002 NSAF data or other data sources
- Re-test the selection and mediation hypotheses
- Consider adolescent characteristics (e.g., adolescent employment)



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