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GRANT NO. DOJ/NIJ/2000-WT-VX-0009
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ABSTRACT

RESEARCH & EVALUATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: BATTERING, WORK, & WELFARE

This research project sought to:

1) Measure control, sabotage, and physical abuse welfare recipients experience at the hands of their intimate partners.

2) Track the timing and costs of abuse through the transition from welfare to work.

3) Understand – from the perspectives of welfare recipients – the obstacles women face and the strengths and resources poor women bring to their struggles for safety and solvency.

Interview subjects: 40 TANF recipients enrolled with a contractor providing services for welfare-to-work transition. All were non-pregnant women, at least 18 years old, and in their first days of program enrollment. Eighty-three percent self-identified as Black.

Community literacy project subjects: eight current or former welfare recipients over age 18, all but one of whom self-identified as Black.

Design: Face-to-face, structured, retrospective interviews in May-June 2001 and three quarterly follow-up interviews, some face-to-face and others via telephone, ending November 2002. A Computer-Assisted Sensitive Interview (CASI) system automated question administration and data entry. Interviewers administered both the Work/School Abuse Scale and the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist. The co-Investigator organized and led the community literacy project through twice-weekly meetings for two months in the Spring of 2002.

Methods: Analyses included descriptive statistics, correlations, and limited statistical modeling of the effects of subject characteristics and experiences on outcomes. We

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conducted thematic analyses of the open-ended questions from the interview data and the narratives.

FINDINGS: Using measures of physical violence alone results in contradictory and sometimes counterintuitive research findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Include measures of emotional abuse and work-related control as well as physical violence. Differentiate between abuse and its consequences. Ask specifically about the relation women observe between their going to work and their being abused or suffering from trauma symptoms.

FINDINGS: Physically battered women earn less than other welfare recipients. Battering aggravates women's experiences of the hardships associated with poverty. Abused women experience more hardships of poverty even if their work experiences are similar to those of other welfare recipients.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Provide abused welfare recipients with direct relief from hardships. Effectively implement the FVO through universal and repeated provision of information about battering, shelters, civil remedies, and exemptions from work requirements and time limits if appropriate. The "life skills" component of programs is a logical site for providing information about and strategies for dealing with abuse. Make creative policies and program provisions conditions for placing and serving battered women (e.g., in the context of Workforce Investment Board proposals).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH & EVALUATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: BATTERING, WORK, & WELFARE

FINAL REPORT
Approved By: M Battle
Date: 4/21/04

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

What are the costs of taking a beating?

How does poverty trap some women in abusive relationships?

How does abuse obstruct some women's transitions from welfare to work?

What strengths and diverse experiences do women bring to their struggles for safety and solvency?

These urgent empirical questions drive the efforts of program directors, case managers, job developers, advocates, and others who want to help welfare recipients overcome the obstacles to waged work and stop violence against women. The Family Violence & Self-Sufficiency Project aims to use research on the experiences and perspectives of work-first program participants in Allegheny County to inform effective implementation of the Family Violence Option (FVO) and the debate over Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) reauthorization so that women can escape the dual traps of poverty and abuse.

To these ends, the Principal Investigator obtained funding from the National Institute of Justice to carry out a three-part research project.

1) Retrospective interviews with 40 TANF recipients enrolled in late May and June 2001 at the Reemployment Transition Center (RTC), a site serving clients from SPOC, UpFront-City, UpFront-County, and Directed Job Search programs. Participants were referred by the Pittsburgh Partnership RESET Programs.

2) Three follow-up interviews over the course of the first 12-18 months of the interviewees' transition from welfare to work.

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3) A community literacy project with current and former welfare recipients. An intensive eight-week writing program resulted in a booklet of narratives and analytical dialogues by poor women about work, welfare, and relationships (including abuse) at key transition points in their lives.

The primary goals of the longitudinal interviews included:

- Measure life-time, recent, and relationship-specific prevalence of controlling, sabotaging, and physically violent actions by the fathers of children in households receiving TANF, and by other intimate partners of welfare recipients.

- Use retrospective and prospective longitudinal interviews to track the timing of physical violence and control and negative emotional effects relative to participation in waged work, employment training, welfare receipt, and transition from welfare to work in the context of a reformed welfare system.

- Continue to develop measures of abuse and related distress for use with a welfare population, using a unique Computer Assisted Sensitive Interview (CASI) protocol that standardized how questions were asked in the interviews and automated data entry.

The primary goals of the community literacy project included:

- Generate a set of autobiographical narratives to serve as sources of qualitative data on the ways current and former welfare recipients experience and perceive work, welfare, and relationships (including abuse).

- Understand – from the perspectives of current and former welfare recipients – the obstacles to women's solvent autonomy as well as the strengths and resources poor women bring to their welfare-to-work transitions and their struggles for safety and solvency.

This Executive Summary of the Technical Report on Grant No. DOJ/NIJ/2000-WT-VX-0009 highlights the central empirical findings and implications for practice and policy that are the results of meeting these research goals.

RESEARCH AND MEASUREMENT

The experience and findings of this research have important implications for the practice of research and evaluation on violence against women. Findings and recommendations include:

Welfare recipients are willing to disclose sensitive, personal information about family violence, especially in relationships that have already ended. The reliability and validity of such disclosures are likely to depend on measures to protect the dignity, confidentiality,

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and above all the safety of potentially vulnerable subjects. THEREFORE, the contexts and practices designed to elicit information about battering must be strictly scrutinized for consistency with women's safety and dignity.

Using measures of physical violence alone can result in contradictory and sometimes counterintuitive research findings. Abuse is more than just hitting – it can include emotional or financial control, for example. THEREFORE, in order to obtain a more full picture of the relationships between abuse and work-related outcomes, include measures of non-physical abuse. When screening for abuse in work-related contexts, use instruments (such as the Work/School Abuse Scale and the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist) designed to tap into abuse that is particularly likely to interfere with welfare-to-work transition.

Physical and emotional abuse can create a range of problems, concerns, and challenges for different women. THEREFORE, differentiate among measures of battering and its consequences. This is particularly important in terms of distinguishing past, recent, and on-going abuse.

Breaking the links between poverty and abuse means mandating work only when it is unlikely to precipitate or aggravate abuse and PTSD symptoms. Asking women directly is an excellent first step in risk/safety analysis. THEREFORE, ask specifically about the relation battered women observe between their going to work and their being abused or suffering from symptoms.

Screening for and discussing battering and trauma could be useful in the context of life skills courses, employment training, job placement, and other programs to monitor and promote women's transitions from welfare to work. THEREFORE, mandate and implement universal screening for – and discussion of – work-specific abuse and trauma symptoms as well as physical battering at multiple points in the transition from welfare to work.

CONTROL, SABOTAGE, AND VIOLENCE

The longitudinal interviews revealed widespread reports of control, work-related sabotage, and violence among the 40 participants in the study. We measured control, abuse, sabotage, and violence in several different ways. We used the Work/School Abuse Scale (W/SAS) to ask about life-time reports of interference and restraint tactics and their consequences for work and school. In an effort to generate point estimates of the prevalence of items from the W/SAS and to track control, abuse, and sabotage over the course of the follow-up interviews, we also asked if the items included in the W/SAS had happened in the last three months. We used the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist (WORCASC) to assess control, work-related sabotage, and violence for each significant relationship since the relationship with the father of the respondent's first child. The information gathered for each relationship provides both life-time reports and measures of abuse in the current or most recent relationship.

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According to lifetime Work/School Abuse Scale measures, boyfriends, husbands, or exes had sabotaged the car, told lies to co-workers, physically forced women to leave work, told lies about their children's health to get women to leave work, and threatened them to make them leave work or school. Five percent of the 20 respondents in relationships at the time of the retrospective interview reported at least one of these actions by their partners within the three months prior to the retrospective interview.

The results of interference and restraint tactics, also measured by the W/SAS, reveal much about abuse as an obstacle to making a successful transition from welfare to work. None of the respondents reported having been sanctioned or losing their welfare benefit because of the actions of an abusive partner. Between seven and 27 percent (depending on the item) reported consequences such as having to leave work for the day, being written up or reprimanded at work, being fired, and having to quit a job. At the retrospective interview, one respondent had been fired in the past three months as a result of actions by an abusive partner.

Thirty-five percent of respondents reported having filed a Protection From Abuse (PFA) order in at least one relationship. Twenty percent of the 20 women in relationships at the time of the retrospective interviews had filed a PFA in the course of that current relationship. All told, *thirteen percent of the women enrolled in work-first programs at this site in May-June 2001 were currently in relationships with men against whom they had at one point or another filed restraining orders.*

Out of the 93 relationships these 40 women reported in the retrospective interviews, in about one-third (32%) of those relationships, they were hit or kicked by their partner. Two-thirds of the 40 subjects reported at least one relationship in which they experienced physical assault, sexual assault, injury, or fear for their safety or the safety of their children. Ten of the 28 women in current or recent relationships (36%) reported violence during that relationship.

Specifically work-related abuse, interference, and sabotage were also reported with disconcerting frequency by these respondents. Overall, more than half of the 40 subjects in the retrospective interviews reported controlling behaviors and work-related sabotage. Fifty-three percent of the 28 women in current or recent relationships reported control in that relationship, and 61% of those women reported work-related sabotage.

Including the follow-up data, the lifetime rate at which this cohort of women filed for a protective order was 35%. Of the 31 women for whom we have at least one follow-up interview, 34% had any measure of abuse during the follow-up period (they filed a protective order, said going to work put them or their children at risk for abuse, or reported any of the W/SAS or WORCASC items).

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EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

Emotional symptoms associated with the trauma of control and violence were widespread among work-first program participants. Symptoms were highly correlated with abuse (not surprisingly).

The lifetime rate at which these 40 subjects reported a combination of at least one symptom in all three of the symptom categories (intrusion, flattened affect, and hyperarousal) required for a clinical diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder was 47%.

About 5% reported eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia, binge eating, binge and purge eating). As many as 15% reported drinking or getting high to cope with physical or emotional pain.

Five percent reported pain or difficulty working caused by recent or past family violence.

Symptoms did not vary greatly by such respondent characteristics as race-ethnicity, age, and age at first birth. More surprisingly, symptoms **also** were not correlated with weeks worked in the past year or last hourly wage. Marital status was modestly correlated with two specific symptoms related to intrusion and hyperarousal: having nightmares and having trouble falling or staying asleep. That is, women who had been married were more likely to report these symptoms than their unmarried peers. Speculatively, it is possible that married women experienced abuse over a longer duration than unmarried women and that some symptoms were correspondingly more common among them.

CONNECTIONS AMONG BATTERING, POVERTY, WELFARE, AND WORK

Compared with their peers, physically abused women earned less, worked fewer weeks, and more frequently worked part-time involuntarily. Women whose partners sabotaged their work effort experienced more hardships associated with poverty (that is, housing insecurity and homelessness, utility shutoffs, hunger and food insecurity, and the like) than did other respondents.

At 90 days post-enrollment, tracking by the work-first program case managers indicated that both employment rates and drop-out rates were high. Four in ten program participants had found a job (although not all had maintained that employment throughout the 90-day monitoring period). Fifteen of the 40 women, or 37%, were terminated for non-compliant attendance (basically, dropped out of the program). Only 20% completed their period of enrollment without a job, remained an open case, or terminated without either finding a job or dropping out.

The eight women who reported abuse during the period of the follow-up interviews (during their transition from welfare to work) saw, on average, 79 cent/hour increase in the wages from the most recent job reported at the retrospective interview to the last job

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reported in the follow-up interviews. The 17 women who reported no abuse during the follow-up interviews on average saw a 15 cent/hour decrease in their wages. The nine women who had ever filed a protective order (including one woman who filed during the follow-up period) averaged a 53 cent/hour decrease in their hourly wages over the follow-up period. The 16 women who reported no PFA reported an average 53 cent/hour increase.

COMMUNITY LITERACY PROJECT

This action-research project involved eight current or former welfare recipients (all women), who wrote about key conflicts in their lives and published their stories in a booklet that we distributed widely to readers in and beyond their Pittsburgh communities.

OBSTACLES TO SAFETY AND SOLVENCY

Analysis of the narratives revealed three main clusters of obstacles to achieving safety and solvency: unstable and damaging relationships with intimate partners, poor physical and mental health, and thin and unsupportive social and family networks.

- These stories counter the notion that marriage guarantees a woman's safety and solvency. They also suggest that promoting marriage and increasing women's reliance on men may keep women in unhappy or dangerous situations. The reality is that these women are often in unsupportive, unstable relationships. They are often unable to earn a living wage to support themselves and their children. It is this combination of factors that drives them to welfare. Moreover, welfare itself can help break their dependency on men who do not support them.

- Not all women on welfare have problems with physical and mental health. However, many do. Three of our eight writers devoted at least 20% of their text to discussion of their own serious mental health problems, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, and addictions that have sometimes prevented them from working. Their narratives illustrate how productive periods of relative good health are sometimes followed by episodes of serious illness and, not coincidentally, unemployment.

- Women tended to portray their community/environment as a source of threat, which makes sense given the surrounding culture of drugs and violence. In many cases, family members did not provide nurturance as much as they presented additional burdens, both financial and emotional.

STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

These writers drew on spirituality, school, welfare, work, and motherhood as sources of strength and as resources in their struggles for safety and solvency. Poor women clearly need emotional and spiritual solace—something food stamps and a monthly check alone cannot provide. School is not simply a means to boost self-confidence. School also is an important stepping stone to living wage employment and eventual choices about remaining with or

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leaving partners. Despite their gratitude for welfare benefits, those who have attained employment and some stability in their lives do not want to return to public assistance. Employment provides financial resources, of course, but is also a source of pride and a form of social engagement. In circumstances where women often feel disconnected and unfulfilled, children provide some comfort and sense of purpose to their lives.

CONNECTIONS AMONG POVERTY, ABUSE, WELFARE, AND WORK

It is not surprising that many women stay with, or return to, abusers because of financial dependence. Welfare can encourage healthy independence and healing by providing safe housing and other essentials. Arbitrary time limits sometimes end this support too early in what can be an unpredictable and lengthy healing process. This is especially true for women who face multiple barriers to work, including serious mental health issues, ongoing recovery from drug addiction, and weak social support networks.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Experiences with work-related sabotage and control, sexual coercion, and physical violence fill the histories of women in Allegheny County's work-first programs. Moreover, the similarities of rates across demographic groups suggest that others may be vulnerable to abuse as they assert themselves in their transition from welfare to work. Women who have been abused are not significantly different from those who have not been abused. The similarities further suggest that *it is not the characteristics of the women themselves that make them vulnerable.* On the contrary, *the women in these programs face similar risks*, especially if they are under 26, the "vulnerable years" for violence and abuse.

This Executive Summary concludes with a set of key findings and consequent recommendations in each of the relevant areas of practice and policy.

RESEARCH AND MEASUREMENT

FINDING: Using measures of physical violence alone results in contradictory and sometimes counterintuitive research findings. Between 1 in 3 and 4 out of 5 respondents with PTSD symptoms reported that working brought some relief from their symptoms. They may have been distracted from intrusive memories, or supported through social contacts. Battered women may have better work-related outcomes than expected because in some cases, the ameliorative effects of working on symptoms outweigh the aggravating effects on battering.

RECOMMENDATION: Differentiate among measures of battering and its consequences.

RECOMMENDATION: Researchers and service providers ought to ask specifically about the relation battered women observe between their going to work and their being abused or suffering from symptoms. Breaking the links between poverty and abuse means mandating work only when it is unlikely to precipitate or aggravate abuse and PTSD symptoms. Asking women directly – not only in research settings but in service

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provision and practice settings – is an excellent first step in the sort of risk/safety analysis that will allow for effective referrals and appropriate exemptions, and prevent damaging sanctions.

WELFARE REFORM

FINDING: Battering aggravates women's experiences of the hardships associated with poverty.

FINDING: Abuse shapes poverty directly rather than exclusively through the mechanism of waged employment. Abused women experience more hardships of poverty even if their work experiences are similar to those of other welfare recipients.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide abused welfare recipients with direct relief from hardships (for instance, through funds for paying utilities or housing assistance) rather than enforce work requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: Effectively implement the FVO through universal and repeated provision of information about battering, shelters, civil remedies such as restraining orders, and the availability of an exemption from work requirements and time limits.

FINDING: Women benefit from resources that can help them deal with the emotional impact of poverty. Welfare currently provides limited help with mental health issues, and its training programs focus on basic educational and workplace skills.

RECOMMENDATION: Welfare-to-work transition programs should also encourage and facilitate emotional literacy, mentoring, and social networking, which can be important both for success at work and for safety in relationships.

FINDING: Many women's support networks are thin and welfare is the safety net of last resort in many cases.

RECOMMENDATION: Battered women and others for whom welfare is the only place to turn need case-by-case consideration of time limits and work requirements.

PROGRAM PROVIDERS AND ADVOCATES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

FINDING: Physically battered women pay a wage penalty compared to other welfare recipients. The connections between non-physical abuse and some employment outcomes appear less direct.

RECOMMENDATION: Complement the traditional advocacy focus on stopping the violence with providing work supports. Such supports might include treatment for posttraumatic stress symptoms.

RECOMMENDATION: Service providers and advocates can provide resources, training, and technical assistance to welfare programs, employment training programs, and

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welfare-to-work contractors. Services for battered women are likely to be enhanced by including discussions of and referrals related to work, just as services for welfare-to-work transition benefit from materials on battering.

WORKPLACES AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

FINDING: For many women, *battering is aggravated by going to work*. Certainly, for the majority of those who report either physical abuse or work-related interference and control, going to work either precipitated or aggravated the abuse, or seemed to have no effect. Only a minority (at the most, 25%) reported that working made the abuse slacken or stop.

FINDING: Work interruption and the pay penalty attributable to battering were generally, although not uniformly, worse for those women who reported that working precipitated or aggravated battering or PTSD symptoms.

RECOMMENDATION: Workplaces as well as programs associated with welfare-to-work transition should provide reasonable accommodation to battered women who require time off for mandatory court appearances (e.g., to get an order of protection), visits to the emergency room, or physical or mental health treatment related to abuse for themselves or their children (or both).

RECOMMENDATION: The "life skills" component of many programs serving poor women is another logical site for providing poor women with information about and strategies for dealing with abuse. Make creative policies and program provisions conditions for placing and serving battered women (in the context of Workforce Investment Board proposals, for example).

RECOMMENDATION: Universally screen for – and discuss – work-specific abuse and trauma symptoms as well as physical battering. Screening for and discussing battering and trauma could be useful in the context of life skills courses, employment training, job placement, and other programs to monitor and promote women's transitions from welfare to work.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider employment one part of a multi-dimensional strategy to enable women to escape the dual traps of poverty and abuse. Some women – those who experience an increase in abuse or symptoms when they work – will benefit from exemptions from welfare time limits and work requirements such as those provided in the Family Violence Option. Others will benefit from work supports – especially transportation and childcare – that meaningfully reduce their dependence on currently or formerly abusive partners. Most will benefit from discussing safety planning and the effects of work on relationships and trauma symptoms. Welfare policy and practice can most safely encourage work on a case-by-case basis depending in part on women's perceptions of the relationship between their working and their being abused or experiencing symptoms.

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FINAL REPORT

Approved By: M Battle

Date: 1/6/04

TECHNICAL REPORT

RESEARCH & EVALUATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: BATTERING, WORK & WELFARE

Grant No. DOJ/NIJ/2000-WT-VX-0009

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TECHNICAL REPORT

RESEARCH & EVALUATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: BATTERING, WORK, & WELFARE

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

WORK AND ABUSE IN THE CONTEXT OF WELFARE REFORM

Reauthorization of the 1996 welfare reforms is just around the corner. Program directors, case managers, job developers, and administrators in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania want to help welfare recipients overcome the obstacles to waged work. The Family Violence & Self-Sufficiency Project aims to use research on the experiences and perspectives of work-first program participants in Allegheny County to inform effective implementation of the Family Violence Option (FVO) and the debate over Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) reauthorization so that women can escape the dual traps of poverty and abuse.

In Allegheny County, contractors run work-first programs designed to assist referred welfare recipients in making the transition from welfare to work. Participating in the paid work experience, job readiness, and directed job search activities offered by these programs fulfills the work requirement that the dismantling of the federal entitlement to public assistance imposed on TANF recipients. The centrality of work-related activities to TANF recipients' progress toward solvency and safety and compliance with the requirements of welfare reform means that anything that might be a significant barrier to that progress is likely to be a concern for employment training contractors, welfare reformers, and participants and their advocates alike.

The interference, sabotage, and violence that some women experience at the hands of their intimate partners constitute potential barriers to work. Surveys of welfare caseloads and interviews with clients at welfare-to-work and employment training programs around the country suggest that for a significant number of poor women, welfare does not provide independence from abusive men (Tolman & Raphael 2000; Raphael 2000). In addition, abuse may trap women in poverty as well as dangerous relationships. Physical violence and other abuse can disrupt education and work and prevent women from building the life experiences, social networks, and personal resources that are necessary to live a safe, solvent life.

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Battering and poverty co-occur in the lives of a significant proportion of women on welfare. For women, the consequences of poverty include not only hardships such as homelessness and hunger but also additional vulnerability to being trapped in relationships with abusive men (Davis 1999; Raphael 2000). The costs of women's taking a beating include physical injury, truncated education, damaged self-esteem, missed work, and limited opportunities (Brush 2003; Horsman 2000; Raphael 2000). Because battering diminishes women, the links among battering, employment, and poverty are relevant to policy and practice in workplaces, welfare offices, and job training and placement programs. Because poverty renders women vulnerable to abuse, the links among work, battering, and poverty are also relevant to policy and practice in shelters for homeless and for battered women, and in feminist and anti-poverty advocacy movements. And because battering is against the law and most jurisdictions provide civil remedies in the form of protective order, the links among work, battering, and welfare concern the police, the courts, and the rest of the legal system.

Anti-violence advocates fear that welfare reform will force battered women into further compromising their safety. Women may stay with abusive men, or feel compelled to renew contact with them, in order to avoid sanctions (Roberts 1999). Welfare reform "privatized" many work supports for poor mothers, shifting the burden of arrangements for child care, transportation, housing, and other work supports to the market or family members instead of the welfare state. As a consequence, women may find themselves relying on men who have abused them or their children in the past for practical help in meeting work requirements (Scott, London, & Myers 2001). Teen mothers and their children are especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, often perpetrated by the men (fathers and step-fathers for example) with whom welfare reforms require them to live (Boyer 1999). Women's compliance with work requirements and conformity to "family values" may put them at risk. If abusers feel threatened, they may sabotage battered women's newly-developed social networks, education and skills, self-esteem, or financial resources (Raphael 1999).

Both the abuse and the synergy between battering and public policy can obstruct women's safety, education and development, and transition from welfare to work (Brush 2000; James and Harris 1996; Raphael 1997, 1999). Welfare reform exacerbates the dual traps of poverty and abuse by punishing women for being unable to escape from either (Raphael 1996b; Brandwein 1999). Welfare rights advocates are particularly concerned because battering potentially obstructs welfare-to-work transition through short-term crises, deliberate destruction, and long-term damage.

- Battering creates crises – emergencies of health, safety, housing, and child custody. Battered women are often injured, distraught, and distracted. The dilemmas poor battered women face make it hard to comply with the demands of welfare, work, or school. For example, battered women find themselves making absurd choices between abuse and homelessness when the only way to escape a batterer is to leave "his" household (see Malos and Hague 1997; Roofless Women with Kennedy 1996). Battered women of all classes may also end up torn between obligations to themselves and to their children, and risk losing custody if they cannot protect themselves and their

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children from abuse (Atkins and Whitelaw 1996; Roberts 1999). Poor women have even fewer resources for dealing with these conflicting obligations, and are even more vulnerable to the demands of child protective services. Poor, battered women also find themselves in a bind because child protection agencies require domestic vigilance from mothers, while welfare agencies require waged work (Pearce 1999; this is a longstanding problem, as explained by Gordon 1988). The chaos, pain, and humiliation of recent or ongoing abuse make it extremely difficult for any battered woman to attend school or training programs, to concentrate on her studies or employment, and to learn the skills and content on which to build a future. For women on welfare, the trouble battering adds to survival in poverty can be overwhelming.

- Batterers sabotage women's success in school, job training, and waged work. Abusers undermine women with "physical violence, emotional coercion, destruction of books and homework assignments, and harassment ... [and by] turning off alarm clocks and fail[ing] to show up to drive their partners to important job interviews or the general equivalency diploma (GED) examination" (Raphael 1996b, p. 187; see also Raphael 1996a; Stevens 1996; Horsman, 2000). Sabotage may be subtle or blatant, and can run the gamut from racking up debts (for instance when the man makes repeated expensive long-distance calls on a telephone billed in the woman's name; see James & Harris 1996) to coercive involvement in illegal activities that at worst lands abused women in jail (Richie 1996). Either way, in the intermediate term, abusive men can easily derail women's progress in the education or job training that are prerequisites for family-supporting employment (Brandwein 1999; Raphael 1999). Attendance requirements and time limits that disregard the myriad ways men thwart women's efforts to learn and develop will simply abuse women all over again.

- The long-term consequences of battering can include debilitating injuries, disrupted education, and cognitive and emotional barriers to learning and education, training, and work performance. In particular, some battered women may need time and services to recover from physical injuries and mental health problems that can linger long after abuse has stopped. Battering and its consequences may make it particularly difficult for some currently or formerly battered women to concentrate, attend to specific learning tasks, plan training or work, contain anxiety, interact in high-pressure settings, respond appropriately to criticism, avoid depression in the face of adversity, and conform to the professional or "good student" culture of work, school, and training programs. Issues of control (over self, circumstances, and others), connection (with self and others), and meaning (in both language and life) are central to the violation of battering, and can make learning in general and literacy-oriented learning in particular a challenge (Brush 2003; Horsman 2000).

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- Persistent physical, mental, and emotional abuse can cause a range of problems, concerns, and challenges, including symptoms associated with traumatic stress (the classic feminist source is Walker 1988; see also Dutton 1992; Foa & Rothbaum 1998; Herman 1992). Trauma has multiple, cumulative, interactive effects on battered women's cognition, affective regulation, and belief systems (Friedman 1997). Traumatized battered women report these symptoms plus feelings of worthlessness and profound doubt in the orderliness and trustworthiness of reality (for a non-technical summary and review, see Murphy 1993).

Without support or time and space for healing, some battered women may find their survival strategies inadvertently obstruct their progress at school or work. For instance, some battered women may dissociate or "check out" mentally and emotionally, or imagine that the abuse is happening to someone else (Friedman 1997; Breslau, Davis, Peterson, and Schultz 1997). They may become habituated to being arbitrarily controlled and terrorized by an external force, and adopt a stance of "learned helplessness" in the face of abuse that carries over into educational and vocational settings (Lefcourt 1976; Peterson, Maier, and Seligman 1993; Seligman 1975). The experience of being violated by someone at least formerly trusted and loved may generate a level of cognitive dissonance that interferes with making other rational decisions, safety planning, and goal-setting (Blackman 1989). They may use alcohol or other drugs to manage physical and emotional pain, a strategy that distorts perception, undermines motivation, and inhibits cognition and regulation of emotions. Battering and its symptomatic consequences can spill over from the private realm of the family and mental health and derail women's progress in public settings such as school and work, thus thwarting women's achievements and aspirations (Murphy 1993, 1997).

To the extent that they fail to recognize battering and its effects, time limits on benefits that restrict support for poor women's recovery are likely to undermine some battered welfare recipients' transition from welfare to work. Work requirements, time limits, and the rigidly punitive rhetoric of welfare reform may moreover retraumatize women by reproducing the feelings of stress, failure, and lack of control that are at the heart of abuse (Horsman 2000).

In recognition of the barrier family violence may present to women attempting to leave welfare through waged work, the Murray-Wellstone provision of the welfare reform act gives States the option of exempting victims of family violence from time limits and work requirements (Pollack & Davis 1997). Pennsylvania legislators have adopted the Family Violence Option (FVO), which is currently implemented through the Time-Out provisions. In Time-Out, TANF recipients identified as victims of domestic violence can stop the "clock" on the 60-month life-time limit on welfare receipt for an initial six-month period, and may be granted an additional six months. Training materials on Time-Out issued in the Summer of 2001 (when the retrospective interviews central to this research were in the field) do not describe the procedure for identifying victims of domestic violence. However, they specify "compliance with service plan" as the criterion for receiving the time-out (Houstoun & Heller 2001).

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GOALS OF THE PROJECT

The Family Violence & Self-Sufficiency Project seeks to contribute research-based knowledge and policy recommendations to help stop violence against women. The project's primary research objective is to assess the degree to which violence, sabotage, and control present obstacles to waged work and job training for women in Allegheny County. Earlier research (conducted with enrollees at six Rapid Attachment sites in Allegheny County in 1998) established the viability of researching family violence as an obstacle to waged work and conformity with the requirements of welfare reform in the context of work-first-type settings. The current research sought to further develop and assess instruments and generate data to serve as guideposts for policy and service delivery. To these ends, the Principal Investigator obtained funding from the National Institute of Justice to carry out a three-part research project.

- Retrospective interviews with 40 TANF recipients enrolled in late May and June 2001 at the Reemployment Transition Center (RTC), a site serving clients from SPOC, UpFront-City, UpFront-County, and Directed Job Search programs referred by the Pittsburgh Partnership RESET Programs.

- Three follow-up interviews over the course of the first year (approximately) of the interviewees' transition from welfare to work.

- A community literacy project with current and former welfare recipients. An intensive 8-week program resulted in a booklet of narratives and analytical dialogues by poor women about work, welfare, and relationships (including abuse) at key transition points in their lives. The narratives from the community literacy project complement the structured interviews.

This Technical Report presents the results and policy implications from these three components of the ongoing research of the Family Violence & Self-Sufficiency Project.

The primary goals of the longitudinal interviews included:

- Measure life-time, recent, and relationship-specific prevalence of controlling, sabotaging, and physically violent actions by the fathers of children in households receiving TANF, and by other intimate partners of welfare recipients.

- Compare recent findings from Allegheny County with findings from previous local studies and similar research around the country.

- Use retrospective and prospective longitudinal interviews to track the timing of physical violence and control and negative emotional effects relative to participation in waged work, employment training, welfare receipt, and transition from welfare to work in the context of a reformed welfare system.

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- Continue to develop adequate measures of abuse and related distress for use with a welfare population, using a unique Computer Assisted Sensitive Interview (CASI) protocol.

- Gather data on the subjective assessments of welfare recipients about the responses of the fathers of their children and other intimate partners to their going to work or school and their receiving welfare.

The primary goals of the community literacy project included:

- Generate a set of autobiographical narratives to serve as sources of qualitative data on the ways current and former welfare recipients experience and perceive work, welfare, and relationships (including abuse).

- Understand – from the perspectives of current and former welfare recipients – the obstacles to women's solvent autonomy as well as the strengths and resources poor women bring to their welfare-to-work transitions and their struggles for safety and solvency.

- Qualitatively document and discuss women's experiences of the personal, familial, and institutional responses to crises in health, safety, employment, and solvency.

- Trace ways in which the meanings and experiences of work, battering, and welfare vary for poor women, especially between White and Black women.

In addition to the key methodological and substantive findings from the retrospective and prospective longitudinal interviews and the community literacy project, this Technical Report also presents implications and recommendations for policy and practice in the areas of employment, welfare reform, and advocacy for battered women relevant to the goals of the research.

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LONGITUDINAL INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH METHODS: PROCEDURES & INSTRUMENT

RESEARCH SITE & RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW ADMINISTRATION

Respondents proved eager to discuss their work and family lives, incidents of family violence and their emotional effects, their experiences with trying to cope, and sometimes the research itself. We went into the field May 29, 2001, and completed the last retrospective interview on June 27, 2001. The Principal Investigator and Graduate Research Assistant each interviewed 20 incoming morning participants in the City and County UpFront, SPOC, and Directed Job Search programs at the negotiated site, for a total of 40 respondents.[1]

Of the entire pool of program enrollees, two were ineligible because they were pregnant. The IRB agreement on protection of human research subjects precluded interviewing pregnant enrollees – an unfortunate restriction on the research, as anecdotal evidence and research on hospital admissions and other health care settings strongly suggests many women are at increased risk of violence and abuse when they are pregnant. Only two eligible respondents refused to participate. We missed only one eligible respondent due to absence. Thus, this particular set of retrospective interviews is for all practical purposes a population study (rather than a sample of enrollees).

We recruited subjects in the first days of their enrollment. We thus avoided selecting only those enrollees who actually stayed with the program (and could look at outcome of program participation without worrying about sample selection bias).[2] Of course, avoiding sample selection bias by taking a cohort approach also meant a high probability of considerable cohort attrition for the follow-up interviews. Amazingly, despite the high risk of attrition, in 26 out of 40 cases (65%), we have both initial retrospective and final follow-up interviews (see attrition analysis below).

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[1] The site was chosen because it was typical of county sites, likely to have enough respondents to fulfill the goals of the research, and featured exceptional cooperation from the site director, Paula Hustwit, who is deeply interested in the research, and to whom we are grateful for help and cooperation.

[2] The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Family Violence Option implementation policies and procedures include universal notification and an opportunity for clients to request waivers from RESET (work) programs when they apply. These policies were not uniformly in place through Pennsylvania in the Summer of 2001, when we conducted our initial retrospective interviews. To the best of our knowledge, no prospective participants had been "screened out" for domestic violence prior to being referred to the program. However, our measures of the prevalence of abuse (especially physical violence) may be underestimates for the *welfare population* – although not for the *population of welfare-to-work program participants*, the group of concern in this research.

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After explaining the research project to the intake group, the interviewers met in private with interested potential subjects. We used the consent form approved by the IRB to further explain the project, solicit and answer questions, and spell out the costs and benefits of the research as well as the measures taken to protect the dignity and confidentiality of the respondents and their personal information. Signed informed consent forms were collected and stored in a locked file cabinet in the PI's office. Even with the requirement to obtain signed, informed consent, the response rate for the retrospective interviews was 40/42 or 95%.

The Computer Assisted Sensitive Interview (CASI) protocol developed for this study automated interview administration and data entry. The investment of time and energy in this development was considerable (among the largest expenses in the budget). It yielded several important benefits.

- First and foremost, the computerized interview allowed interviewers to concentrate on establishing rapport and really listening to the women who were the research subjects. Training for interviewers could focus on ways to establish rapport and address questions and concerns the subjects raised instead of on interview administration and accurate data entry. Interviewers were able to proceed with the protocol and record field notes (observations about the interview context, overall impressions of the process, elaborated answers to open-ended questions, etc.) simultaneously.

- Likewise, the interview format allowed subjects to connect with the interviewer and concentrate on recall instead of worrying about filling out forms.

- The complex "skip map" or pattern of questions that were asked or skipped depending on responses to prior questions was completely automated. Incomplete, inconsistent, or logically impossible answers were detected automatically and could be corrected in context. Using the CASI system insured the most complete and accurate data possible.

- At the conclusion of the retrospective interview, the interviewers could automatically extract select data from the retrospective interviews, load it into a spreadsheet, and print out summary chronologies of school, work, welfare, and relationships. Interviewers then debriefed each subject using the summary results from her own experiences (see Retrospective Interview Profile Appendix).

- Once the retrospective interview was programmed, it was relatively straightforward to adapt it for the follow-up interviews.

- Once the programming was complete (and cross-checked by interviewers for accuracy), the protocol could be easily and cheaply reproduced and transferred to the project laptops for use in the field. Conceivably, automated versions of screening instrument such as the Work/School Abuse Scale and

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> the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist could be programmed and then mass-produced for use by anyone with the appropriate software (Ci3).

The only disadvantages of the CASI system were (1) the fact that nobody on the project except the programmer had the expertise required to correct small errors, (2) the fact that researchers could not easily refer to the text or choice categories of specific questions without going through the entire interview protocol, and (3) the occasional problem (especially with dates in the follow-up interviews) raised by the default settings in the program. These did not represent significant set-backs to data collection. Overall, the advantages of the CASI protocol – especially the quality and completeness of the data and the way it freed interviewers and subjects from routine survey administration tasks – were well worth the investment.

The retrospective interviews lasted between 24 and 103 minutes and were conducted in private on site at RTC. The mean completion time (not including obtaining informed consent or debriefing respondents using the printed work-school-welfare-relationships profile we produced for them on the spot) was 56 minutes. Half were completed in 50 minutes, and ten percent each were a half hour or under and an hour and a half or longer.

One key to the high response rate was the willingness of the site director to release participants from program obligations for the time it took to administer the interview. The other key factors were the Project's ability to compensate respondents with $50 vouchers from Giant Eagle (a regional chain supermarket) and to promise confidentiality for respondents. The project would have been impossible without extensive cooperation from the RTC director and staff. The response rate by program participants would undoubtedly have been far lower without the combination of compensation and confidentiality.

One of the goals of the FV&SSP is to establish the viability of conducting research on the sensitive issue of family violence with a largely inaccessible yet very vulnerable population. In this respect, the research was a resounding success.

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

A key dimension of the interview portion of this project was complementing retrospective interviews with prospective longitudinal interviews. We conducted follow-up interviews in person or by telephone (depending on the preference of the subject) and compensated respondents for the much briefer reinterviews with Giant Eagle vouchers for successively increasing amounts. As is frequently the case in research with welfare recipients, tracking and recontacting respondents was extremely labor intensive and not always successful. A total of 8 women who completed the initial retrospective interview had no known address by the time (four to five months later) we tried to contact them for the first follow-up, and we were never able to reach them. We sent multiple letters (using the return address of the employment training program in which they had been employed, to protect their safety), made multiple calls to last known phone numbers, used the latest information available from the county welfare office, and visited the last known address. Although in some cases people had moved with no forwarding information, or resident relatives reported

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"she's living on the street," in other cases these addresses proved condemned, vacant, or already demolished by the time we visited. See the findings of the attrition analysis in the results section below.

The 31 first follow-up interviews (77% of the initial respondents) averaged 32 minutes, including one extremely outlier (an interview that lasted 300 minutes). Excluding that one value, the first follow-up interviews averaged only 23 minutes (SD = 15), with a minimum of 6 minutes and a maximum of 57 minutes. The 19 second follow-up interviews (47% of the initial respondents) averaged 30 minutes (SD = 39), with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 166 minutes. The 26 final follow-up interviews (65% of the initial respondents) averaged 24 minutes, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 67 minutes. The variation in completion times is closely related to variation in the number of questions respondents answered, which in turn varied because respondents skipped sections not relevant to their current situations.

Interview dates for all subjects

ID	DATE RETRO	DATE FOLLOWUP 1	DATE FOLLOWUP 2	DATE FINAL
1	5/29/01	10/15/01	--	--
2	5/29/01	NKA	NKA	NKA
3	5/29/01	10/16/01	03/18/02	7/22/02
4	5/30/01	NKA	NKA	NKA
5	5/29/01	05/07/02	--	7/22/02
6	5/30/01	12/4/01	03/13/02	09/10/02
7	5/29/01	12/31/01	05/07/02	10/22/02
8	5/30/01	11/19/01	05/14/02	10/5/02
9	5/30/01	02/26/02	04/05/02	--
10	5/31/01	--	--	10/28/02
11	5/30/01	04/16/02	--	10/2/02
12	5/31/01	01/07/02	--	10/16/02
13	5/30/01	10/16/01	03/12/02	7/22/02
14	5/31/01	11/26/01	05/21/02	08/30/02
15	5/30/01	03/13/02	--	--
16	5/31/01	11/02/01	--	11/02/02
17	5/30/01	10/18/01	--	--
18	6/1/01	10/16/01	03/12/02	---
19	5/31/01	10/23/01	--	--
20	6/11/01	10/18/01	05/03/02	09/14/02
21	5/31/01	05/03/02	--	10/31/02
22	6/12/01	12/19/01	03/18/02	07/02/02
23	5/31/01	11/23/01	03/22/02	11/14/02
24	6/13/01	11/01/01	03/22/02	09/05/02
25	5/31/01	01/18/02	03/18/02	07/03/02
26	6/25/01	02/18/02	05/06/02	08/31/02
27	6/1/01	10/15/01	--	10/7/02
28	6/25/01	--	--	--
29	6/11/01	NKA	NKA	NKA
30	6/25/01	NKA	NKA	NKA
31	6/12/01	03/18/02	--	09/04/02
32	6/26/01	10/19/01	03/18/02	10/17/02
33	6/13/01	10/23/01	03/22/02	7/26/02
34	6/26/01	--	--	--
35	6/25/01	10/24/01	03/22/02	08/31/02
36	6/26/01	--	--	--
37	6/26/01	10/23/01	03/18/02	08/30/02
38	6/27/01	NKA	NKA	NKA
39	6/26/01	11/05/01	05/06/02	09/05/02
40	6/27/01	03/18/02	--	8/28/02

NKA = No Known Address

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Time to follow-up varied considerably, although we tried to have at least 90 days between interviews. If the time between the initial and first follow-up interview was extensive (e.g., six months), we skipped the second follow-up interview and administered the final follow-up interview on schedule. This is the case for nine respondents, for whom we do not have a complete set of follow-ups but we do have retrospective, final, and one intermediate follow-up. The final follow-up interviews were conducted between July and November 2002, that is, 13 to 18 months after the initial retrospective interview. This wide variation in the period of observation from the first to the final interviews would be a problem if sophisticated statistical analyses of the associations among work, welfare, school, and battering were the goal. Given the small number of respondents and the more "case" oriented analytical approach, the timing issue does not present a serious problem.

MEASUREMENT & INSTRUMENT

Standard survey measures of the prevalence, frequency, and severity of violence against women by current or former intimate partners contribute to understanding the costs of battering. But the contradictory findings of studies of the effects of battering on labor force participation that use standard measures (reviewed below) prompt development of other instruments perhaps better suited to the task.

CONTRADICTORY FINDINGS AND THEIR POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

In cross-sectional and some longitudinal analyses, scores on familiar measures of physical aggression and abuse by intimates and their consequences show a complex relationship between partner violence and women's labor force participation.

- A study of 824 poor women in Chicago found widespread physical abuse, significantly associated with lifetime unemployment and "a range of physical and mental health problems that can affect employability and job performance" (Lloyd & Taluc 1999, p. 375). However, in the same study, neither past nor recent violence and coercion by intimate partners was significantly related to current employment status (pp. 384-385).

- Using similar measures of physical aggression and violence in the lives of 216 low-income housed and 220 homeless women in Worcester, Massachusetts, researchers also found abuse within the 24 months of their longitudinal study to be widespread. Moreover, recent violence significantly reduced the likelihood of women's working 30 hours per week or more for at least six months (Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk 1999, p. 410). However, in the same study, "childhood experiences with physical violence ..., childhood sexual abuse, and prior experiences with severe violence by male partners were not significantly associated with the capacity to maintain work" (p. 414).

- Finally, a study of 122 job readiness program participants in Allegheny County found widespread abuse and significant effects of having sought a protective order on program dropout rates. In addition, a cluster of battering and traumatic stress-related items explained more variance in drop out rates than did items related to character and human capital deficits and caring

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> responsibilities combined. But some battering and traumatic stress symptom items were also positively associated with other program participation outcomes, such as finding a job (Brush 2000).

There are at least two plausible explanations for the apparently contradictory results of studies of the effects of battering on women's work. First, past or current violence may obstruct work in multiple ways, only some of which are captured by using the standard instruments to measure abuse. Abuse and its consequences are complicated, and it is perhaps not surprising that researchers find contradictory effects.

Second, the standard measures of violence by intimate partners fail to capture abuse specifically intended – or at least extremely likely – to obstruct women's work. Some batterers deliberately derail women's efforts to leave abusive relationships and poverty. They use control and sabotage to interfere with school, work, and compliance with the requirements of welfare reform, thus thwarting women's progress toward safety and solvency (Brandwein 1999; Brush 2003; Horsman 2000; Raphael 2000). It is one thing to observe that beating up someone or stalking her has consequences likely to reduce employability (such as disabling injuries, posttraumatic stress symptoms, or mandatory court appearances). But it is something else entirely to note that batterers may seek specifically to deter women from work through violence, control, and sabotage. Or is it? Did he beat her up because he *lost* control, or to *extend* his control? Was her being fired deliberate or unforeseen? The questions of intent, motive, and the specificity of harm defy simple answers in research on violence and victims.

Direct service providers in numerous fields (child protective services, employment training and job search programs, child support enforcement, adult education and literacy, legal services, etc.), welfare administrators, policy makers, and advocates for battered women and welfare recipients all want reliable, valid measures of battering, its effects on labor force participation and earnings, and control and sabotage specifically directed at interfering with work. Documenting and explaining the effects of battering – conceived as a systematic campaign of abuse aimed at controlling a woman through intimidation, humiliation, and/or violence (Goetting 1999) – on women's ability to work are urgent priorities when welfare reforms center on mothers' working (Brandwein 1999). Demand is especially high for screening tools that minimally trained staff can administer to welfare recipients in states that have adopted the Family Violence Option (FVO).

THE W/SAS: ANSWERING DEMAND FOR WORK-SPECIFIC MEASURES

Riger, Ahrens, and Blickenstaff (2000) answered the demand for an instrument designed to measure "the ways in which physical force and other means of interfering with women's lives isolates them from activities that might provide income, social contacts, and a sense of accomplishment" (p. 161) with the Work/School Abuse Scale (W/SAS). The W/SAS is checklist of tactics abusers deploy to restrain women or interfere with their work and school activities. Riger, Ahrens, and Blickenstaff administered the W/SAS to 35 formerly employed women in a shelter for battered women. As with the standard measures of domestic violence, they found the connection between the items on the W/SAS and work outcomes is mixed. Sheltered, battered women who report having dropped out or been kicked out of

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school because of abuse report significantly more items on the checklist. Sheltered, battered women who report having been forbidden to work, missing work because of abuse, and being fired or quitting because of abuse all report consistently but not significantly more items (pp. 168-169).

The W/SAS has numerous strengths. First and foremost, its face validity is high. The items are specific to work and school. The items cover a range of restraint and interference tactics that resonate with the experiences of battered women, their advocates, and service providers in employment, welfare, and job training settings. None of the individual items seems particularly stigmatizing for respondents to discuss. None would require mandatory reporting (to child protective services, for example) if disclosed in a screening protocol in welfare or employment training offices. These are all positive qualities.

In addition, the "significant but modest" correlations Riger, Ahrens, and Blickenstaff report between the W/SAS and measures of physical and psychological abuse not specifically related to work confirm the need for such a measure (p. 167). The brevity and clarity of the checklist bolster confidence in its validity, and its reported internal consistency (alpha = .82) suggests it is reliable. The W/SAS can also be adapted to self-administered, audio-taped, or computerized survey and interview protocols. For example, in the current study, the checklist was easily incorporated into a Computer Assisted Sensitive Interview (CASI) program that standardized administration and automated data collection and data entry, thus increasing accuracy (Bloom 1998).

PROBLEMS AND TRADE-OFFS

The W/SAS also shares several problems with standard measures of violence against women, especially physical abuse and control by intimates. One of the most salient is the fact that the W/SAS includes no items to tap into conformity to race- and class-specific notions of femininity. The omission is surprising, given the centrality of gender to many theories and measures of abuse, and the continuing significance of gender difference and dominance in the organization of work, family, and welfare. For instance, no items measure the abuser's stipulation that the woman may only get a job if she keeps up with the housework, or his insistence that working mothers are bad mothers. Such tactics, although rare, are sometimes part of the constellation of work-related abuse, especially for white women (Brush 2001). It seems important to measure abuse that discourages work by ideologically as well as literally enforcing women's domesticity and dependency.

In addition, the W/SAS shares a definitional dilemma with more conventional measures of non-work-specific abuse. On the one hand, disclosure rates, reliability, and validity are all enhanced by a focus on specific acts. Measures that include a wide range of narrowly-defined abusive behaviors provide much more satisfactory research tools than questions that require women to identify or label themselves as victims, ask respondents to attribute motives to others, or define abuse so broadly as to be useless (among many others, see Desai & Saltzman 2001). In addition, if the items represent different and cumulative degrees of a phenomenon (for instance, escalating levels of work interference or severity of abuse) and therefore are associated with different points on an underlying continuum, their aggregation may have the properties of a scale (Babbie 2001).

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On the other hand, feminist analysts of violence against women emphasize that battering is not reducible to individual acts. "Abuse is not a slap, a punch, or a curse. Abuse is a campaign. [Abuse is a] vigorous concerted effort to ... coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer" (Weiss 2000, p. 46). Battering, in this view, is possible and meaningful only in the context of a set of social relations that first deliver a woman into the control of a man and then reinforce his ability to extract deference, sexual access, housekeeping and emotional services, etc., from her through threats, harassment, coercion, and violence (Goetting 1999). Counting incidents of control and violence is the best way to estimate their prevalence and frequency. However, it is not necessarily the best way to measure abuse. Furthermore, without a clear conceptualization of the underlying continuum or variable degrees of battering (in terms of escalating severity, for instance), a checklist or index is not a scale. Total scores may be difficult to interpret. More significantly, scores may have unexpected or inconsistent relationships to outcome measures such as labor force participation.

These are basic problems in conceptualizing and measuring violence and victimization, shared by the W/SAS and more conventional instruments. The contradictions cause even more trouble if the goal is measuring the ways abuse keeps women under men's control in particular and subject to social control more generally. Past and current physical violence, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and deliberate sabotage may have qualitatively as well as quantitatively different effects on labor force participation, earnings, and patterns of welfare use. Abuse may be both obstacle and incentive to work. Work may aggravate some posttraumatic stress symptoms and alleviate others. Welfare may be an escape route for some women, a trap for others.

These empirical complexities and broader definitional issues are relevant insofar as they potentially set researchers, advocates, service providers, and policy makers at odds. Measurement tasks always entail trade-offs. In this case, the mandates of researchers, policy makers and service providers, and advocates for battered women seem to work at cross-purposes. Researchers want to gather data on variation and seek to capture both commonalities and rare events or exceptions. In contrast, some policy makers and service providers want to minimize simultaneously staff training requirements, the costs of administering and analyzing screening instruments, and false positives. Advocates for battered women want to promote disclosure of information useful for risk assessment and safety planning, to protect the dignity and privacy of battered women, and to minimize false negatives. To accommodate these conflicting imperatives in a single instrument, to reconcile the "counting" and "context" approaches to measuring battering, seem complicated enough. To theorize and confirm empirically the extent to which an item checklist meaningfully measures abuse and the diverse ways it obstructs employment, are even more daunting tasks.

One objective of this research is to assess tools for measuring control, sabotage, and violence as obstacles to work and women's general welfare. To that end, interviewers administered both the W/SAS and items for an independently developed Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist (WORCASC). The WORCASC items were developed in the context of structured interviews with 122 welfare recipients in 1998 (see Brush 2000). This analysis takes advantage of having two instruments designed independently to measure the same phenomenon administered to one group of respondents.

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CONTROL & VIOLENCE: PREVALENCE & TIMING

Standard survey measures of violence against women by current or former intimate partners (such as the Abusive Behavior Inventory, the Conflict Tactics Scale, the Index of Spouse Abuse, the Measure of Wife Abuse, the Partner Abuse Scales, and the Women's Experience with Battering Scale) do not capture dimensions of abuse and control aimed specifically at sabotaging women's transitions from welfare to work or efforts to leave the relationship through work or compliance with work requirements related to welfare. Newer measures of abuse specifically directed at sabotaging women's work and education efforts (such as the Work/School Abuse Scale) are better as screening instruments in this specific area, but remain cumbersome in the context of research in which relative timing of events over the life course is a central issue.

The interviewers asked respondents about their experiences with a large number of specific controlling and violent behaviors in the context of all the significant relationships they have had, starting with the relationship with the father of their first child. The instrument allowed the respondent to disclose the frequency ("once or twice," "less than once a month," "once a month," "more than once a month") of the specific acts. We do not report those results here – as in the previous study, there was little variation in frequencies, and if they happened at all, they happened a lot. Control, sabotage, violence, and symptom variables were left in their dichotomous form. Those who reported any of these behaviors were also asked to subjectively assess the prevalence and frequency of violence and control relative to work and job training ("Did it start, get worse, or get better when you started work or job training, or not seem to be related?").

In sum, we used two instruments to measure interference, sabotage, and violence in relationships. First, *for each relationship*, we administered the three series of items from the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist (WORCASC).

- INTERFERENCE OR SABOTAGE: failed to provide promised child care; withheld car keys or promised ride; picked fights; took or wrecked your books, homework, work clothes, eyeglasses, etc.; kept you up late or interrupted your sleep; demanded sex when you needed to leave for work, study, take care of your children, or just be alone; needed help because of being drunk or high

- CONTROL AND THREATS: threatened to withhold money or gifts; threatened to hurt you or your children; seemed jealous that you might meet someone new at work; told you that you could never keep a job, learn, or accomplish things; told you working mothers are bad mothers; told you that you could work only if you kept up with the housework; threatened, bothered, or visited you at work when it was not allowed

- VIOLENCE AND INJURY: hit you, kick you, throw something at you; threaten you with a weapon or use a knife or gun to hurt you; demand to have sex with you or force you to have sex; cut bruise, choke, or seriously injure you; make you afraid for your safety or the safety of your children (this last was a new item, added after further consultation with advocates and researchers)

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For every relationship in which any of the controlling or violent behaviors appeared, we also asked if the respondent had ever filed for a Protection From Abuse order against that intimate partner. One goal of the present research is to compare the results of different ways of measuring battering, including more detailed versus less intrusive questions. The PFA question is relatively unintrusive and could be a simple, effective screening question for both past and current abuse.

We also administered the Work/School Abuse Scale. The W/SAS consists of six restraint tactics (sabotage the car, not show up for child care, steal car keys or money, refuse to give a ride, physically restrain you from going to work/school, threaten you to prevent your going to work/school) and six interference tactics (come to work or school to harass you, bother coworkers/school friends, lie to coworkers/school friends about you, physically force you to leave work/school, lie about children's health or safety to make you leave work/school, threaten you to make you leave work/school). We asked respondents if anyone with whom they had ever been in a relationship had done any of these things, and also asked if it had happened "in the past week," "in the past month," "in the past three months," or "not recently." In the follow-up interviews, if women were in a relationship, we administered the WORCASC in the context of that relationship. For all subjects, whether or not they were currently in a relationship, we also administered the W/SAS scale in the follow-up interviews. This enabled us to capture ongoing stalking and other work interference behavior by past partners.

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS: CONCEPT, PREVALENCE, TIMING

After the control, sabotage, and violence questions about each relationship, the interview protocol turned to a number of indicators of distress, some of which constitute criteria for the cognitive and emotional problems associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[3] Traumatic stress symptoms can be acute or chronic, and develop immediately or some time after the trauma is over (Herman 1992; Rigley 1985; Root 1992). PTSD symptoms include intrusive memories (flashbacks, nightmares), flattened affect (depression, hopelessness), and hyperarousal (insomnia, nervousness, angry outbursts; see APA 1994). We measured reliving or reexperiencing the trauma with questions about intrusive memories and nightmares. We measured avoidance or numbing (including a foreshortened sense of the future) with items asking about depression and diminished energy. We measured increased arousal or hypervigilance with questions about insomnia, inability to focus, irritability, and jumpiness.[4] The Principal Investigator continues to use these items (rather than using an off-the-shelf,

[3] PTSD is a syndrome or collection of symptoms associated with surviving a single serious trauma (in the case of disaster victims, for example), with combat (most recently in the Persian Gulf, but importantly in Vietnam), and with the sorts of persistent physical, mental, and emotional abuse associated with family violence (including women who have been battered or raped as well as survivors of childhood physical and sexual abuse). For an excellent introduction to the psychophysiology of trauma, see Rothschild (2000).

[4] For further discussion of measurement issues, see: Rigley (1985), Herman (1992), and Root (1992).

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self-administered instrument[5]) developed and tested in the earlier (1998) study to suit the face-to-face or telephone interview format in a non-clinical setting.

We also asked respondents about other measures of physical and emotional distress that could present barriers to safety and solvency through waged work, such as problems with disordered eating (anorexia, bulimia, "binge-and-purge eating"), problem drinking, and pain from injuries caused by past or recent family violence.[6] For all symptoms, the items asked about frequency (same as for the behaviors) and timing relative to work ("Did feeling this way start, get worse, or get better when you began work or job training, or did it not seem to be related to going to work?").

Previous research indicates that scaling for both abusive behaviors and PTSD-type symptoms is less useful than item-by-item analysis. However, a conservative measure of possible PTSD (not diagnostic) consists of symptoms from all three areas – intrusion, constriction, and hyperarousal. Those respondents who reported one item from each of the three areas were scored as "PTSD risk."

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: VARIATION & BARRIERS

The instrument asked questions about demographic characteristics. Respondents were asked about their race, current age, age at first birth, marital status, level of educational attainment, and problems with literacy; number and ages of children, presence in the household of an infant or preschool child, father's age at first birth, and whether all their children have the same father; household composition and hardships related to poverty; family, fertility, household composition, and relationships; and sources of income in their current household as well as growing up. These findings (see Demographic Appendix) form the empirical basis for comparisons among respondents. Some of the demographic factors were analyzed as barriers to safety and solvency.

SPELL DATA: SCHOOL, WORK, WELFARE, & RELATIONSHIPS

A key innovation of this new research project was to gather data on school, work, welfare, and relationships with enough precision to trace the complex connections among battering, work, and welfare over the course of poor women's lives. To do so, we collected data on the start and end dates of each period of education, each job, each period on welfare, and each relationship. For each period (or "spell") of school, work, welfare, or relationship, we asked questions about the character of the experience – full or part time,

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[5] The "industry standard" -- in a very controversial field -- is the Posttraumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale (Foa, Cashman, Jaycox, & Perry 1997).

[6] The Principal Investigator's consultations with practitioners of both vocational rehabilitation counseling and occupational theory familiar with issues of violence against women suggest that the cognitive and emotional as well as the physical effects of head injuries and other physical trauma related to being battered may be undiagnosed, underreported, and underacknowledged barriers to a successful transition from welfare to work. Future research could fruitfully explore this particular dimension of family violence as a barrier to safety and solvency for welfare recipients. On links to alcohol and eating problems, see Herman (1992), and on links between family violence and disordered eating in particular see Thompson (1994).

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occupation and wages, reason for ending "spell", and issues that might be obstacles to fulfilling family and work obligations (problems with child care or transportation, for example). These data enabled us to compare the number and length of spells at work and on welfare for women who did and women who did not report various obstacles, including battering.

RESEARCH METHODS: ATTRITION ANALYSIS

Study attrition is always a problem in prospective longitudinal research designs. Fewer than half (42%) of the original 40 respondents completed the full series of prospective follow-up interviews. Twenty percent completed only the retrospective interview. For those eight respondents, we were unable to obtain *any* follow-up. Neither the employment training program through which we recruited them nor the Department of Public Welfare had valid contact information for these respondents at any time in the 18 months we were conducting the follow-up interviews. Visits to their last known address yielded either no forwarding information, or information from friends or relatives that the respondents was "living on the streets" or "impossible to find." For four (15%) respondents, we were able to obtain a first follow-up but no subsequent interviews. For nine (22%) respondents, the first or second follow-up (or both) is missing, but we have a final follow-up interview.

Dates "in the field" with retrospective and prospective longitudinal interviews

	N	FIRST	LAST
Date of retrospective interview	40	05/29/2001	06/27/2001
Date of first follow-up interview	31	10/15/2001	05/07/2002
Date of second follow-up interview	19	03/12/2002	05/21/2002
Date of final follow-up interview	26	07/03/2002	11/15/2002

The good news is, the women who completed the full series of interviews and the women who completed only the initial retrospective interview *do not differ significantly* from each other or from the rest of the respondents on most of the measures obtained in the initial retrospective interviews. On virtually all the demographic characteristics documented in the appendix, the women did not differ significantly across interview completion categories. Women who completed the full set of interviews were significantly less likely to be never-married (p = .01), and they less frequently reported problems with reading and writing (p = .001). Perhaps not too surprisingly, women who completed the full set of interviews less frequently had trouble paying their bills in the past year (p = .015).

Most importantly, *there were no substantive (let alone statistically significant) differences in the rates at which women in the various completion categories reported any of the violence measures*, or in their 90-day post intake status with the work-first program. We therefore have no empirical reason to assume that abuse contributed significantly to attrition from the study.

The similarities on both demographic and abuse-related measures at the time of the retrospective interview between women who did and women who did not complete the full set of interviews suggests that subject attrition was random rather than systematic, and the

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results from the follow-up interviews, partial though they are, seem unlikely to be biased on any of the relevant work, welfare, or abuse measures.

KEY FINDINGS: OBSTACLES TO SAFETY & SOLVENCY

Study participants face considerable obstacles to using work to move toward safety and solvency (that is, to depend less on welfare and abusive or controlling partners and more on their own earnings to support themselves and their children above the poverty line). Spotty work histories, low wages, unstable housing, very young children, teen childbearing, sole responsibility for housekeeping and childrearing, and low educational attainment all increase the likelihood that women will be poor and depend on public assistance (cash, Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, and housing subsidies). On all these variables (see Demographic Appendix for data tables), many study participants reported multiple barriers to living-wage employment.

Limited work histories: At the time of the retrospective interviews, the vast majority of current respondents (78%) had worked at least one week during the previous calendar year. However, in addition to the 23% who did not work at all during the previous year, one in four worked fewer than four months of the year. Thus, a significant proportion of work-first program participants have limited work histories. Those who have more extensive work histories have other obstacles to obtaining and maintaining living-wage employment. See Demographic Appendix and discussion of abuse, hardships, and poverty below.

Limited occupations: Most work-first enrollees had been employed most recently doing "women's work" in the service sector. That is, they worked in retail sales, clerical work, data entry, food preparation and service, nonprofessional health service, cleaning, or personal services. See Demographic Appendix and discussion of abuse, hardships, and poverty below.

Low pay: Virtually all respondents earned the low wages typically associated with predominantly female occupations. In the retrospective interview, the mean hourly wage was $7.55 for the most recent job. Although significantly above the minimum wage, the value of this level of earnings is below the "living wage" standard being debated in Allegheny County. These earnings are unlikely to lift them above the poverty line or enable them to leave either welfare or abusive intimates, especially if they are unable to work full time. Finding full-time work that "pays" – especially for full-time child care, especially for young children – is unlikely to be a realistic goal or requirement for these women.[7] See Demographic Appendix and discussion of abuse, hardships, and poverty below.

Unstable employment: Employment for many of the respondents in the current study has been highly unstable. At the time of the retrospective interviews, they averaged four jobs, and

[7] In Allegheny County, basic living costs in 1996 were $24,376/year after taxes or $29,976/year before taxes; a living wage for a single parent with two children under 6 years of age was $14.84/hour in 1997. Adding 40 cents per hour per year to adjust for inflation and other increases in the cost of living, in 2001 (when these data were collected) the "self-sufficiency standard" for a single parent with two children under 6 is $16.40/hour. These estimates are from Bangs, Kerchis, & Weldon (1997) and conversations on updates with Ralph Bangs in September 2001.

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more than one-third had held six or seven jobs since they turned 16 (a large number both for those who have not been in the labor force long because they are young mothers, and for those who have only entered the labor force relatively recently). The rate at which the regional economy generates job openings in largely low-wage occupations with little upward mobility outstrips the rate at which it generates jobs in higher-paid, full-time, stable occupations with direct connections to internal labor markets or job ladders. As a result, most welfare recipients cycle off and on welfare and in and out of work and remain poor either way, subject to the "churn" at the bottom of the labor market (Edin & Lein 1997). See Demographic Appendix and discussion of abuse, hardships, and poverty below.

Household composition and support: Three-quarters of subjects in this study live alone with their children. Women who live alone cannot depend even theoretically on a co-resident adult for consistent help with housekeeping and child care responsibilities. The remaining subjects live with one (15%) or two (10%) other adults, most frequently a grown child, intimate partner, or mother. See Demographic Appendix.

Relationships: Two-thirds (68%) of the respondents had never been married. None of the remaining third were legally married or involved in a common-law relationship; all were divorced (23%) or separated (10%). Women reported a variety of reasons why relationships ended. The reasons for the breakups of relationships (including relationships with the fathers of their children as well as other significant relationships) included violence and control in about one-third of breakups. The most common single reason was the partner's infidelity, which was the reason for break up in nearly one in three instances. Only one respondent disclosed being in a lesbian relationship; overwhelmingly, the abusive partners of these women are men. It is impossible to tell from this research if a large proportion of those leaving welfare are doing so by getting married (one of the stated goals of the 1996 legislation). However, it would appear that current recipients are less likely to be currently married, and welfare may well be the income source of last resort for women who were poor while they were married and continue to be poor (and to have sole custody of minor children) after they are divorced. We cannot tell from these demographic data the likely effects of welfare reforms on relationships in general, but it would appear the "mandate for marriage" included in the 1996 welfare reforms is having only minimal influence on the partnering decisions of welfare recipients (Edin 2000). See Demographic Appendix and findings from the Community Literacy Project reported below.

Lack of child support and paternal responsibility: Fifty-four percent the 37 women no longer with the father of their first child received no cash or gifts for their children from the children's fathers. Twenty-eight mothers (76%) received no formal child support payments. The majority of fathers who do not pay child support are unemployed, incarcerated, or missing altogether. Nearly one-fourth of respondents who gave a reason for not having formal child support said they had no support order. Forty-one percent of the women reported that the child support order was not enforced. *One program participant said explicitly that she was trying to avoid contact with an abusive former intimate.* See Demographic Appendix.

Teen childbearing: More than half (60%) of the current respondents reported becoming mothers for the first time when they were teenagers, that is, by age 20. The average age at first birth in this group was 19 years old. Half were between 16 and 19, and only 10 percent were very

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young (15 or younger). About a third postponed their first birth until they were 21 or older. See Demographic Appendix.

Young children: Twenty-three percent of the women had an infant under one year at the time of the retrospective interview. Nearly two-thirds (63%) had either an infant or a preschool age child at home. A sizeable minority (43%) have children by more than one man. Of those, two-thirds (65%) were teenagers when they gave birth to their first child. The relatively high rates of recent job experience in this study are even more remarkable given the large proportion of respondents who have preschool age children. See Demographic Appendix.

GENERAL OBSTACLES TO MEETING WORK OBLIGATIONS

Researchers, policy makers, and advocates identify several different types of obstacles to employment and to current and former welfare recipients' earning their way out of poverty.

On the "demand side" of the labor market, occupational segregation, discrimination, harassment, the shift from industrial manufacturing to high-tech and high-touch service jobs, economic recession, and sinking real wages all contribute to the difficulties current and former welfare recipients may have obtaining and maintaining living-wage employment.

On the "supply side," limited education and work experience, physical disabilities and health problems, depression and other mental health issues, trouble with English as a second language, immigration problems, a criminal record, care obligations (usually intergenerational, for ill and aging parents or sick, disabled, or preschool-age children), or addiction to alcohol and other drugs used to self-medicate for trauma or cope with despair, can present "multiple interlocking and overlapping sets of problems" that "should give pause to any optimistic view that easy solutions will lead to steady employment and significant earnings gains" (Moffitt 2002, p. 7; see for further examples Acs & Loprest 2001; Berkeley Policy Associates 2002; Blank & Haskins 2001; Brush 2000; Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger et al. 2000; Richardson 2002; Schmidt, Cohan, Wiley, & Zabkiewicz 2002; on the specificity of barriers facing parents with criminal records, see Hirsch et al. 2002; on the complex connections between addiction and welfare, see Schmidt, Dohan, Wiley, & Zabkiewicz 2002).

For each job, we asked about several common obstacles to getting to work on time and meeting personal responsibility contract obligations.

Retrospective Interviews: Obstacles to Work (N=40)

WHEN YOU HAD THIS JOB, DID YOU EVER MISS WORK, GO IN LATE, OR HAVE TROUBLE MEETING WORK, TRAINING, OR OTHER "PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTRACT" OBLIGATIONS BECAUSE:	LIFETIME PREVALENCE N (%)	CURRENT OR RECENT JOB N (%)	HAPPENED IN MORE THAN ONE JOB SPELL N (%)
You were sick or disabled?	13(33)	9(23)	4(10)
Your child care arrangement failed?	13(33)	6(15)	5(13)
Your child was sick or disabled?	16(40)	14(35)	7(18)
You had to care for another family member, another person who lives with you (other than your child) or someone else you help out regularly or in emergencies?	4(10)	1(3)	0
You had no way to get to work?	5(13)	3(8)	1(3)

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Transportation and other caring responsibilities deter only a relatively small percentage of work-first participants from fulfilling their work-related responsibilities. However, child care – especially care for a sick or disabled child – has been a barrier to work for more than one-third of the women in this study. Child care is an obstacle for a smaller proportion of women in their current or most recent job than over their entire work history. On the one hand, this is to be expected – reports during a specific period of time are always lower than lifetime report. However, this finding could also suggest that problems with child care are less prevalent now than they have been in the past, a positive sign.

In the follow-up interviews (which cover all jobs held since the previous interview), women continued to reported these obstacles to work.

Follow-up Interviews: Obstacles to Work

When you had this job, did you ever miss work, go in late, or have trouble meeting work, training, or other "personal responsibility contract" obligations because:	1st Follow up N (%)	2nd Follow up N (%)	Final Follow up N (%)
You were sick or disabled?	3(10)	2(10)	4(15)
Your child care arrangement failed?	4(13)	2(10)	2(8)
Your child was sick or disabled?	6(20)	3(16)	2(8)
You had to care for another family member, another person who lives with you (other than your child) or someone else you help out regularly or in emergencies?	1(3)	0	0
You had no way to get to work?	1(3)	0	1(4)

In the final follow-up interview, one respondent said specifically that she had missed work because someone had tried to keep her from going to work, a form of work-related abuse with which we were particularly concerned.

KEY FINDINGS: EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

About 3/4 of the 40 respondents in the retrospective interview had extensive albeit intermittent employment histories. Twenty-three percent had not worked in the past year. Almost half had worked 16 or fewer weeks in the past year. Less than a third (30%) had worked more than 33 weeks in the past year. Their work was clustered in low-paid service occupations. One in 5 last worked in retail or personal services sales. Another 20% worked in food preparation and food service jobs, although several women recounted having quit the training programs for highly regimented, poorly-paid positions they sneeringly called "McJobs" in fast food franchises. Other jobs included night stocker, restaurant manager, and security guard. One woman was trained as a copy machine repair mechanic, but she was exceptional – few respondents had jobs in highly skilled or traditionally male (and therefore somewhat higher-paid) occupations. Another 20% worked in the "pink collar" ghetto, with jobs in administrative support, clerical and financial records processing, and data entry. One quarter worked for temporary employment agencies, generally as either clerical or financial records processors (see Demographic Appendix).

Hourly earnings at the most recent job (before the retrospective interview) ranged from the minimum wage ($5.15/hour at the time of the interview; 10% were earning at this level)

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to a few (3%) who earned as much as $13.00/hour. Mean wages in the most recent job were $7.25/hour, well above the minimum wage but below the poverty line for a single-parent household with two children (the average among these respondents). Of the 25% of respondents whose most recent job was part time, half would have preferred to work full time.

The follow-up data reveal continued problems with employment and low wages. Five of the 31 respondents with whom we conducted at least one follow-up interview did not find a job. One respondent, who had never worked before, found a job at $7.00/hour, well above her (zero!) earnings before but 25 cents/hour below the average for the retrospective interviews. The other 25 respondents who reported at least one job spell during the follow-up period averaged $7.58/hour. The average increase in wages between the most recent job reported in the retrospective interview and the last job spell reported in the follow-up period was 15 cents/hour (the maximum was $3.85/hour, and 9 respondents reported *lower* wages). See the prospective data in the Case Summary Appendix.

KEY FINDINGS: WORK/SCHOOL ABUSE SCALE

Based on the Work/School Abuse Scale (W/SAS) measures, a sizable minority of respondents had been in relationships with boyfriends, husbands, or exes who restrained them or interfered with their work or education. The fathers of their children or current or former intimate partners sabotaged the car, told lies to co-workers, physically forced women to leave work, told lies about the women's children's health to get them to leave work, and threatened them to make them leave work or school.

Ten percent reported their boyfriends or husbands had stolen the car keys or ride money, and bothered co-workers or friends from school. Thirteen percent said their husband or boyfriend sabotaged their work effort by not showing up for child care duty. Eighteen percent said their boyfriend or husband threatened them to keep them from work and physically restrained them from going to work. Twenty percent said a boyfriend or husband had refused to give them a ride to work and came to work or school to harass them. Only three percent of all respondents (5% of those in current relationships) reported any of these actions by their husbands or boyfriends "in the past three months."

The results of such interference and restraint tactics, also measured by the W/SAS, reveal much about abuse as an obstacle to making a successful transition from welfare to work. None of the respondents reported having been sanctioned or losing their welfare benefit because of the actions of an abusive partner. Depending on the item, between 7 and 27 percent reported consequences such as having to leave work for the day, being written up or reprimanded at work, being fired, and having to quit a job. One respondent had been fired in the past three months as a result of actions by an abusive partner.

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W/SAS Comparison – Lifetime & Recent Work-Related Abuse (%; N=40 unless otherwise noted)

	RIGER* PREVALENCE	LIFETIME PREVALENCE AT RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW	RECENT** PREVALENCE AT RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW	1ST FOLLOW UP N=31	2ND FOLLOW UP N=19	FINAL FOLLOW UP N=26
Restraint Tactics						
Sabotage the car	29	8	0	0	0	0
Not show up for child care	41	13	3	0	0	0
Steal car keys or money	46	10	0	0	0	0
Refuse to give a ride to work/school	51	20	3	3	5	0
Physically restrain you from going to work/school	37	18	0	0	0	0
Threaten you to prevent your going to work/school	46	18	0	0	0	0
Interference Tactics						
Come to work or school to harass you	40	20	3	0	5	0
Bother coworkers/school friends	20	10	0	0	0	0
Lies to coworkers/school friends about you	37	8	3	0	0	0
Physically force you to leave work/school	26	8	0	0	0	0
Lie about children's health or safety to make you leave work/school	41	8	0	0	0	0
Threaten you to make you leave work/school	34	8	0	0	0	0

*See Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff (2000). The frequencies are predictably higher in the original measurement study; their study was with a sample from a shelter population.

**Occurred within three months prior to retrospective interview.

KEY FINDINGS: WORK-RELATED CONTROL, ABUSE, & SABOTAGE CHECKLIST

Specifically work-related abuse, interference, and sabotage were also reported with disconcerting frequency by these respondents. Overall, more than half of the 40 subjects in the retrospective interviews reported controlling behaviors by partners and work-related sabotage; 53 percent of the 28 women in current or recent relationships reported control in that relationship, and 61 percent of those women reported work-related sabotage.

For each work-related controlling or sabotaging behavior, we report overall prevalence, the prevalence among the 28 women with current/recent relationships, the overall

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prevalence of current/recent abuse, and the proportion of respondents who experienced that action in more than one relationship.

Work-Related Control and Sabotage (%, N=40 except where noted). Retrospective Interview.

DID YOUR BOYFRIEND, HUSBAND, OR INTIMATE PARTNER EVER:	LIFETIME	CURRENT/RECENT (N=28)	HAPPENED IN MORE THAN ONE RELATIONSHIP
Work-Related Control			
Promise to provide child care and didn't.	43	18	2
Withheld the car keys or a promised ride.	32	18	2
Pick a fight when you needed to leave for work, study, or just be alone.	55	28	15
Take or wreck your books, homework assignments, or other materials for school, job training, or work.	22	11	0
Take or wreck your work clothes or other important possessions, such as your eye-glasses or dental appliance.	30	11	0
Keep you up late at night or interrupt your sleep.	68	28	13
Wanted or demanded sex when you needed to leave for work, study, sleep, take care of your family, or just be alone.	47	21	5
Needed time or help because of being drunk, high, or in trouble when you needed to leave for work, study, sleep, take care of your family, or just be alone.	42	21	2
Threats and Sabotage			
Threaten to withhold money or gifts from you or your children if you continued with job training or your job.	40	18	5
Threaten to hurt you or your children or threaten to leave you if you continued with job training or your job.	45	21	10
Seem jealous that you might meet someone new at work or in job training.	75	46	10
Tell you that you could never keep a job, learn, or accomplish things in life.	43	25	5
Tell you that women shouldn't work outside the home, or that women who work outside the home are bad mothers.	15	7	2
Tell you that you could only work outside the home if you kept up with the housework.	5	3	0
Threaten to bother you at work, or called or visited you at the training site or at work when it was not allowed.	27	11	2

Experiences of controlling behavior and sabotage are very common among work-first participants in Allegheny County. Sixty-one percent of the 28 women in current or recently-ended relationships reported at least some work-related sabotage (42% of the whole group of 40 respondents). Half (54%) of the women in current or recent relationships reported at least some controlling behaviors by their boyfriends or the fathers of their children (37% of the entire group of respondents).

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Follow Up Interviews: Work-Related Control and Sabotage (%)

DID YOUR BOYFRIEND, HUSBAND, OR INTIMATE PARTNER EVER:	1ST FOLLOW UP N=15	2ND FOLLOW UP N=8	FINAL FOLLOW UP N=16
Work-Related Control			
Promise to provide child care and didn't.	0	0	0
Withheld the car keys or a promised ride.	13	12	12
Pick a fight when you needed to leave for work, study, or just be alone.	13	0	6
Take or wreck your books, homework assignments, or other materials for school, job training, or work.	0	0	0
Take or wreck your work clothes or other important possessions, such as your eye-glasses or dental appliance.	6	0	0
Keep you up late at night or interrupt your sleep.	26	12	26
Wanted or demanded sex when you needed to leave for work, study, sleep, take care of your family, or just be alone.	0	0	6
Needed time or help because of being drunk, high, or in trouble when you needed to leave for work, study, sleep, take care of your family, or just be alone.	6	12	6
Threats and Sabotage			
Threaten to withhold money or gifts from you or your children if you continued with job training or your job.	0	0	6
Threaten to hurt you or your children or threaten to leave you if you continued with job training or your job.	26	25	18
Seem jealous that you might meet someone new at work or in job training.	33	62	31
Tell you that you could never keep a job, learn, or accomplish things in life.	6	25	0
Tell you that women shouldn't work outside the home, or that women who work outside the home are bad mothers.	0	0	6
Tell you that you could only work outside the home if you kept up with the housework.	0	12	0
Threaten to bother you at work, or called or visited you at the training site or at work when it was not allowed.	0	0	6

KEY FINDINGS: VIOLENCE & INJURY AND PROTECTIVE ORDERS

Reports of violence were widespread among this group, which is similar to findings in other studies from across the country.

Violence: Lifetime & Current/Recent Reports from Retrospective Interviews (%, N=40 except where noted)

WHILE YOU WERE IN THAT RELATIONSHIP, DID YOUR PARTNER EVER:	LIFETIME	CURRENT OR RECENT RELATIONSHIP N=28	HAPPENED IN MORE THAN ONE RELATIONSHIP
Hit you, kick you, or throw something at you?	32	32	10
Threaten you with or use a knife or gun to hurt you?	12	14	5
Demand to have sex with you, or force you to have sex?	26	18	2
Cut, bruise, choke, or seriously injure you?	19	21	2
Make you fear for your safety or the safety or your children?	28	21	10
Did you file for a protective order?	35	18	0

[1] Relationship ongoing on date of retrospective interview.

[2] Relationship ongoing on date of retrospective interview or end date of relationship within one year of retrospective interview.

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Two-thirds of Allegheny County work-first participants interviewed for this study (67%) reported at least one of the violence items ever in their lives.

About a third reported at least one item from the physical violence series in their current or most recent relationship.

The lifetime prevalence of forced sex was 26 percent; 18 percent of the 28 women whose relationships were current or recent reported forced sex.

There were no statistically significant differences in rates of reported violence by race, current age, earnings, or age at birth of first child. Separated women more frequently reported having filed a protective order than any other marital status group, and separated women had higher average scores on the W/SAS (although the latter difference was only borderline statistically significant).

Violence: Reports from Follow-up Interviews (% yes)

WHILE YOU WERE IN THAT RELATIONSHIP, DID YOUR PARTNER EVER:	1ST FOLLOW UP N=15	2ND FOLLOW UP N=8	FINAL FOLLOW UP N=16
Hit you, kick you, or throw something at you?	26	12	0
Threaten you with or use a knife or gun to hurt you?	6	0	0
Demand to have sex with you, or force you to have sex?	0	0	6
Cut, bruise, choke, or seriously injure you?	20	12	0
Make you fear for your safety or the safety or your children?	20	12	6
Did you file for a protective order?	13	0	0

Family violence is widespread in the personal histories of these women. Women's individual characteristics do not appear to make them more vulnerable or to protect them from abuse. Knowing women's demographic characteristics does not help predict the likelihood of family violence. Forced sex is apparently a serious problem, especially for those women still reporting on abusive relationships in the final follow-up interview. The good news is that a smaller and smaller percentage of the women in relationships reported abuse over the course of the prospective interviews.

Out of the 93 relationships these 40 women reported in the retrospective interviews, in about one-third (32%) of those relationships, they were hit or kicked by their partner. Two-thirds of the 40 subjects reported at least one relationship in which they experienced physical assault, sexual assault, injury, or fear for their safety or the safety of their children. Ten of the 28 women in current or recent relationships (36%) reported violence during that relationship.

These findings are high but in the range of those in comparable studies of physical abuse in the life histories of poor women, especially those who have been on welfare.

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Reported Prevalence of Physical Abuse in Recent Studies of Poor Women

PHYSICAL ABUSE STUDY	CURRENT RELATIONSHIP	EVER IN LIFE
Massachusetts statewide caseload	19.5%	64.9%
Passaic County	14.9%	57.3%
Humboldt Park, Chicago	19.5%	33.9%
Worcester, MA (housed sample)	32.3%	58.1%
Colorado welfare offices	26.0%	40.0%
Women's Employment Study, Michigan	14.9%♦	No report
Allegheny County "Rapid Attachment" 1998	40%*	69%
Allegheny County "RTC" 2001**	36%*	67%

♦ "Recent severe domestic violence"

* Reported physical or sexual violence or injury in current or most recent relationship (in 2001: relationship is current or end date of most recent relationship is within 12 months of retrospective interview date).

** According to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare website, as of May 2001, 30 Allegheny County TANF families were classified as dealing with domestic violence. This represents .4 percent of the 7,000-family TANF caseload in Allegheny County.

Sources: R. Tolman, "Guest editor's introduction." *Violence Against Women* special issue on Welfare, Work, and Domestic Violence (vol. 4, no. 4, April 1999): Table 1, pp. 357-361. Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism, "Why some women fail to achieve economic security." *The Forum* vol. 4, no. 2, August 2001: p. 1.

Thirty-five percent of respondents reported having filed a Protection From Abuse (PFA) order in at least one relationship. Twenty percent of the 20 women in relationships at the time of the retrospective interviews had filed a PFA in the course of that current relationship. All told, thirteen percent of the women enrolled in work-first programs at this site in May-June 2001 were currently in relationships with men against whom they had at one point or another filed restraining orders.

Including the follow-up data, the lifetime rate at which this cohort of women filed for a protective order was 35%. Of the 31 women for whom we have at least one follow-up interview, 34% had any measure of abuse during the follow-up period (they filed a protective order, said going to work put them or their children at risk for abuse, or reported any of the W/SAS or WORCASC items). See Case Summary Appendix.

KEY FINDINGS: WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF WORK AND ABUSE[8]

DOES WORKING PRECIPITATE/AGGRAVATE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND INJURY?

A central assumption of the provisions for battered welfare recipients is that working triggers or escalates battering for some women. This research sought to check this assumption. The first column in the table below gives the prevalence (the proportion of respondents who answered "yes") of each item for data from the retrospective interviews.

[8] Findings in this section are combine data from the retrospective interviews with data from the PI's 1998 study. The earlier research used identical items to measure women's subjective assessments of the relationships among work, abuse, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress. It was also a summer cohort study, drawn from six programs throughout the county (including the RTC program that was the focus of the 2001 study), with virtually identical demographics. By combining data from both studies, the number of subjects allows for more sophisticated analyses.

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About 1 in 6 respondents reported at least 1 of the 4 physical abuse items. Fifteen percent of the 162 respondents reported that their current or most recent partner hit, kicked, or threw something at them. The middle two columns give the percent of those respondents who reported any instance of that item who said their working precipitated, aggravated, or ameliorated the abuse. Reading across the columns, of the 25 women who were hit, kicked, or had something thrown at them, 40% said it started or became worse when they were working. Twenty percent said that being battered in this way lessened or was better when they were working. In the last column, the "stayed about the same" data appear. The remaining 40% said that this type of physical abuse happened whether they were working or not, and did not seem to be related to their employment.

Physical Violence Items: For "yes", relationship to work (N=162, in percent)

Abuse indicator	Frequency	Start or worsen	Better	No Effect
Hit, kick, or throw something at you (yes=25)	15	40	20	40
Threaten you with a weapon or use weapon to hurt you (yes=7)	4	57	0	43
Forced sex (yes=12)	7	58	8	33
Cut, bruise, choke, or seriously injure you (yes=13)	8	54	0	46

Total physical violence items: M = 1, SD = 1.4
NOTE: Last three columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

For the other three physical violence and injury items, which measure more severe abuse, the subjective assessments were even more clearly bimodal. At least half the women who reported being physically abused specifically said their working precipitated or aggravated the abuse. Most of the rest said it happened whether or not they worked. Only a very small fraction – or none – said their working improved the situation. Compare this finding with the fact that 1 in 5 women whose partners hit, kicked, or threw something at them said the abuse was less frequent or less severe when they worked.

These women reported that their working has different effects on different sorts of battering. What researchers "count" as battering may determine the observed association between abuse and labor force participation. Some of the contradictory findings of the effects of battering on employment may be artifacts of measurement, that is, simply the result of differences in whether researchers ask about hitting, weapons, or injuries.

Between 33 and 46 percent of physically battered respondents said their working seemed not to be related to the onset, frequency, or severity of physical violence and injury. The women in this category did not experience their partners as abusing them in response to, or in order to prevent, their working. This finding is consistent with the notion that although batterers often blame women for provoking violence ("if you would just do X, I wouldn't hurt you"), women's actions seldom precipitate physical abuse.

Between 4 out of 5 and virtually all respondents who reported being physically battered said the abuse was the same or even worse when they worked. For up to half of the respondents in this category, working may not be any more risky than not working, when it comes to physical abuse. However, whether their working precipitated or aggravated physical battering or not, battered women may also need urgent accommodation to the ways battering can interfere with work, so they are not sanctioned for having been hit or hurt.

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DOES WORKING AGGRAVATE WORK-RELATED CONTROL AND SABOTAGE?

The first column of data in the table below arrays the results of asking respondents each of the 8 control and 7 threat and interference items of the Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist (WORCASC). Rates range from less than 5% to more than 25%, and the respondents averaged 3 items total. One-quarter of the respondents reported 4 or more items on the checklist.

Work-Related Abuse: If "yes", relationship to work (N=162; in percent)

ABUSE INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	START/WORSE	BETTER	NO EFFECT
Work-Related Control				
Promise to provide child care and didn't. (yes=29)	18	62	24	14
Withhold the car keys or a promised ride. (yes=16)	10	38	19	44
Pick fights. (yes=37)	23	76	3	22
Take or wreck your books, homework, or other materials for school, job training, or work. (yes=8)	5	50	0	50
Take or wreck your work clothes, glasses, dental appliance. (yes=9)	6	56	0	44
Keep you up late at night or interrupt your sleep. (yes=36)	22	61	11	28
Forced sex. (yes=20)	12	55	20	25
Need help because of being drunk, high, or in trouble. (yes=17)	11	59	6	35
Threats and Interference				
Threaten to withhold money or gifts from you or your children if you worked. (yes=12)	7	67	0	33
Threaten to hurt you or your children or threaten to leave you if you worked. (yes=17)	11	71	0	29
Seem jealous that you might meet someone new at work. (yes=43)	27	67	7	26
Tell you that you could never keep a job, learn, or accomplish things in life. (yes=20)	12	50	25	25
Tell you that women shouldn't work outside the home, or that women who work outside the home are bad mothers. (yes=12)	7	84	8	8
Tell you that you could only work outside the home if you kept up with the housework. (yes=7)	4	86	0	14
Threaten to bother you at work, or called or visited you at the training site or a work when it was not allowed. (yes=5)	3	60	0	40

Total WORCASC items: M = 3.5, SD = 3.3
NOTE: Last three columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The middle two columns give the proportion of those respondents who reported "yes" on each item who said, in response to a follow-up question, that working seemed to precipitate, aggravate, or ameliorate that type of abuse. In contrast to the physical abuse items, for 14 out of the 15 WORCASC items, at least half the abused respondents (and sometimes as many as four-fifths) said that their going to work made the abuse start or increase. For 6 items, not a single woman said her working lessened the abuse. In about 1 in 4 cases, it appears that going to work deterred abusers from some forms of sabotage, such as verbally disrespecting or discouraging the women or failing to provide promised child care. One in 5 women who reported unwanted or forced sexual demands said going to work

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lessened that abuse, and roughly the same proportion who reported sabotage related to transportation also said the situation improved when they worked. Finally, in the last column, the proportion who said their working seemed to have no effect on work-related control, abuse, and sabotage varied across the items from a low of 8% to a high of 44%.

It appears (for most of these items) that going to work precipitated or aggravated the abuse rather than ameliorating it (by getting women out of the house, for example) or having no effect. Women's subjective assessments of the temporal and causal relationship between their going to work and the behaviors measured by the checklist reinforce the notion that "work-related" control, abuse, and sabotage are in fact related to work. Abused women perceive that unlike when they are physically violent, men are acting instrumentally when they engage in these forms of control and sabotage. If these women are right, then it is important to assess not only physical violence but also sabotage and interference with work in order to avoid sanctioning the women whose partners are most likely to disrupt their transition from welfare to work.

In sum: The relationship between abuse and work is a complex one. While most women subject to abuse report that the timing does not seem to be related to their going to work or job training, for an important minority their working aggravates the abuse.

KEY FINDINGS: EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Family violence and control can present obstacles to waged work in two ways. Intimate partners or family members may see women's increasing independence or social connections to others and sabotage their employment training or work efforts directly. But the emotional aftereffects of current, recent, and past violence can also be barriers to waged work. Women may be coping with the effects of old injuries (from physical violence suffered as adults or as children or adolescents) and also from emotional wounds and cognitive impairments caused by the physical and emotional trauma of being abused (Horsman 2000; Brush 2003). In addition to the damage to women's self-esteem, independence, and earnings capacity caused by abuse, a complex set of distressing symptoms may result. This research did not seek to diagnose major depressive and anxiety disorders, addiction, or other mental health problems. However, the instrument included a set of questions about negative emotional symptoms mainstream psychiatry recognizes as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as other problems with alcohol and eating disorders that may indicate distress related to abuse.

SYMPTOMS OF DISTRESS

Psychiatrists recognize three distinct dimensions of PTSD: hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction.

- **Hyperarousal**: Traumatic experiences (including family control and violence) seem to put some survivors in a perpetual state of physiological arousal ("fight or flight"). Traumatized survivors may be easily startled, may have a hair-trigger defensive response, and may have trouble sleeping, all because their normal physiological systems of self-protection have been reconditioned by trauma.

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- **Intrusion**: Even after the danger has passed, memories and nightmares of the trauma may intrude on the ordinary consciousness of survivors. They may have flashbacks or feel unsafe in settings that remind them even only vaguely of the abuse. To avoid the distress of reliving the traumatic experience, survivors expend huge amounts of energy that often limits their ability to venture into the world, interact normally with others, and expand their horizons.

- **Constriction**: Traumatic situations of inescapable danger or abuse may also cause survivors to give up and shut down completely. Traumatized people may suppress memories of abuse, numb themselves by dissociating or by abusing alcohol or other drugs, or otherwise shut down their minds. If these responses to trauma occur while a survivor is trying to acquire basic life, education, or job skills (for example, literacy, study skills, or appropriate social behaviors for the workplace), achieving safety and solvency through waged work may be particularly difficult.

We measured a number of individual symptoms of distress consistent with PTSD. Reports of symptoms were widespread. We measured symptoms of distress for each relationship. For some symptoms, as many as half the respondents reported experiencing it in at least one relationship. Reports of more persistent symptoms, as with reports of violence, were more rare in more than one relationship. The table below gives the prevalence of respondent reports of each symptom in the retrospective interview.

Eleven respondents (28 percent) reported no symptoms in any relationship. In comparison, the Worcester Family Research Project found lifetime prevalence rates for PTSD of 36.2% for homeless and 34.1% for housed women on welfare, and 12.4% in the general population. The somewhat higher rates in this study are probably attributable at least in part to our having gathered symptom data about each relationship separately. This strategy may have improved recall (respondents are thinking about a specific relationship, which gives important context to retrospective reports of symptoms). Our strategy also increased the number of opportunities for disclosure.

Respondents were least likely to report symptoms related to reliving trauma. Many reported multiple symptoms related to hyperarousal. Two thirds reported at least one and often (one in four) as many as three avoidance or numbing symptoms, such as depression. Similarly, the Worcester Family Research Project diagnosed a major depressive disorder in 44.9% of homeless and 42.8% of housed women on welfare (and 21.3% of the general population).

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PTSD-Related Symptoms of Distress (N=40)

SYMPTOM	PREVALENCE	PERCENT
You have unpleasant memories of events you can't keep out of your mind.		
Never	20	50
One relationship	14	35
More than one relationship	6	15
You feel depressed.		
Never	16	40
One relationship	19	47
More than one relationship	5	12
You feel more irritable or more easily angered than usual.		
Never	16	40
One relationship	20	50
More than one relationship	4	10
You have unusual difficulty concentrating.		
Never	23	57
One relationship	16	40
More than one relationship	1	2
You have unusual trouble falling or staying asleep.		
Never	26	65
One relationship	12	30
More than one relationship	2	5
You startle more easily than usual.		
Never	20	50
One relationship	12	30
More than one relationship	2	5
You have nightmares that wake you up.		
Never	29	72
One relationship	11	27
More than one relationship	0	0
You want to make changes in your life, but don't have the energy to do so.		
Never	19	47
One relationship	19	47
More than one relationship	2	5
You feel like events or feelings aren't really happening to you.		
Never	24	60
One relationship	15	37
More than one relationship	1	2

The next table displays results of looking at the cluster of symptoms characteristic of PTSD – that is, reports of at least one in each of the three symptom areas. At least half the respondents in the retrospective interviews reported experiencing symptoms in each group (reliving trauma, avoidance/numbing, hyperarousal) in one relationship, and between a third and two-thirds reported a symptom in more than one relationship. Forty-seven percent reported a cluster of symptoms (one from each of the three symptom areas) consistent with PTSD. Nine of the 28 women in ongoing relationships or relationships that ended within a

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year of the interview reported at least one symptom in that current or recently-ended relationship. Respondents with a reported history of violence were significantly more likely than those without to report distressing symptoms associated with PTSD. Interestingly, those with a reported history of frequent controlling behaviors were also significantly more likely than those without to report the cluster of PTSD symptoms.

Clusters of PTSD-like Symptoms (N=40)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Any "reliving trauma" symptoms	20	50
"Reliving trauma" symptoms in more than one relationship	13	32
Any "avoidance/numbing" symptoms	27	67
"Avoidance/numbing" symptoms in more than one relationship	20	50
Any "hyperarousal" symptoms	28	70
"Hyperarousal" symptoms in more than one relationship	23	57
At least one symptom in each of the three categories (PTSD risk)	19	47

Additional measures of distress including drinking in order to get drunk, disordered eating, and experiencing pain from past abuse. The table below arrays the results on these items for the retrospective interviews.

Additional Measures of Distress (N=40)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
You drink to get drunk.		
Never	28	70
One relationship	8	20
More than one relationship	4	10
You get drunk or high to cope with physical or emotional pain.		
Never	29	73
One relationship	7	17
More than one relationship	4	10
You have an eating disorder (bulimia, "binge eating," anorexia, "binge-and-purge eating").		
Never	36	90
One relationship	3	8
More than one relationship	1	2
You find it painful or difficult to work because of injuries from abuse.		
Never	32	80
One relationship	8	20
More than one relationship	0	0

Mostly, the demographic characteristics of respondents were not related to the rates at which they reported symptoms. However, an analysis of the variation within and between groups of respondents showed that White women reported higher levels of nightmares, difficulty focusing, startling more easily than usual, and finding it painful or difficult to work because of injuries from abuse; the difference between White and Black respondents was statistically significant ($p \leq .01$). In addition, sleeplessness was significantly associated with low earnings, and the total number of symptoms was significantly associated with having had

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a first birth below age 20. Finally, women who filed protective orders reported statistically-significantly higher levels of having nightmares and being easily startled, and were significantly more likely to report having an eating disorder.

DOES WORKING PRECIPITATE/AGGRAVATE SYMPTOMS OF POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS?

The stunning pattern in the last three columns of the table below tells a very different story from the patterns of physical abuse and work-related control and sabotage reported above. The vast majority of women who reported intrusive memories, depression, and the hyperarousal symptoms (including hair trigger temper, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbance) indicated that their symptoms were better when they were working. Again, this table combines data from studies using identical instruments the PI conducted in 1998 and 2001.

The first column shows that reported rates of posttraumatic stress symptoms ranged from 1 in 25 to 1 in 4 respondents. Just over half (54%) the respondents reported at least one symptom. Relatively few women reported experiencing the "other problems" frequently related to traumatic stress and physical injuries caused by abuse. For 4 of the 9 PTSD symptoms, at least half (and sometimes as many as four-fifths) of the respondents who reported the symptom said that when they went to work, they had some relief. Only women with nightmares said that work had no effect at such high rates, and only women reporting dissociation (a severe form of the numbing effects of trauma) more frequently reported that their working started or worsened that symptom than otherwise.

Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms: If "yes," relationship to work (N=162, in percent)

SYMPTOM	FREQUENCY	START OR WORSEN	BETTER	NO EFFECT
Intrusive memories (yes=41)	25	2	83	15
Depression (yes=41)	25	24	61	15
Irritable or easily angered (yes=34)	21	27	50	24
Difficulty concentrating (yes=33)	20	21	64	15
Trouble falling or staying asleep (yes=22)	14	36	46	18
Easily startled (yes=17)	11	24	47	29
Nightmares (yes=6)	4	17	33	50
Want to make changes but don't have the energy (yes=23)	14	35	39	26
Dissociation (yes=21)	13	52	29	19
Total Symptoms: M=1.5 SD=1.8				
Other Problems				
Drink to get drunk (yes=9)	6	33	11	56
Drink or get high to manage pain (yes=7)	4	43	14	43
Disordered eating (yes=10)	6	30	60	10

NOTE: Last three columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The pattern of responses on these items is especially useful for interpreting the complicated links among battering, work, and poverty found in earlier research. People often develop eating disorders or use alcohol or other drugs in order to manage pain and trauma symptoms. Such behaviors are especially likely to interfere with learning, employment, and compliance with the requirements of welfare reform (Brush 2003; Horsman 2000). It is welfare recipients with these clusters of abuse-related symptoms and barriers whom

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advocates have been most concerned to protect from sanctions and other pressures that could merely aggravate their trauma symptoms and other obstacles to work.

At the same time, these data support the assertion of some occupational and vocational therapists (see, e.g., Murphy 1993) that a large proportion of women with PTSD symptoms find that the routine, social contact, and other aspects of waged work alleviate their symptoms while earned income may increase their ability to leave abusive men (see also Davis 1999; Raphael 1999, 2000). The apparently contradictory effects of battering on women's labor force participation may be explained at least in part by the fact that some abused women have relatively strong work outcomes because employment ameliorates their trauma symptoms. This finding reinforces the importance of screening not only for physical battering and work-specific abuse but also for PTSD symptoms. Battered welfare recipients must not be allowed to "fall through the cracks" if trauma symptoms obstruct employment, or if they might benefit from work in unforeseen ways.

In sum: Symptoms of emotional distress are also widespread among work-first participants in Allegheny County. These symptoms are significantly correlated with a history of control and violence. A considerable minority of respondents was flagged for reporting that they experienced a cluster of symptoms consistent with PTSD. No demographic characteristics appear to render these women either particularly vulnerable or immune to reporting negative emotional symptoms.

KEY FINDINGS: EFFECTS ON WORK OUTCOMES

The table below arrays the levels of 3 employment outcomes for respondents with and without 4 barriers to work (these are drawn from the retrospective data). The first pair of means compares those reporting that they missed or were late for work in their last job due to care obligations (including care for their own or their children's illness or disability) to those who said their care obligations did not obstruct work. The second pair of means compares those reporting other "supply-side" barriers (often considered human capital deficits) with those without this type of barrier. The third pair of means compares those reporting physical violence in their current or most recent relationship with those not reporting physical violence. The final pair of means compares respondents reporting barriers arising from work-related abuse to those with no reported work-related abuse. The 3 employment outcomes – hourly wage, weeks worked, and involuntary part-time work – are arrayed in the columns.

The number of respondents is small and the variability across respondents substantial (the large standard deviations reported in indicate considerable overlap in the distributions). Moreover, this is a cohort study, not a sample of women. Comparing the means on employment outcomes therefore is an exercise in interpretation rather than statistical analysis.

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Employment outcome by barrier (N=40)

BARRIER	EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME								
	Wages			Weeks worked			Involuntary part-time		
	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta
Care obligations									
No	$6.75	$2.63		15	15		.11	.31	
Yes	$7.67	$1.81	.20	24	15	.28	.14	.36	.06
Human capital deficits									
No	$7.49	$1.91		16	18		.00	.00	
Yes	$7.20	$2.34	.05	21	15	.12	.16	.37	.19
Physical violence									
No	$7.56	$2.65		22	17		.04	.20	
Yes	$6.80	$1.42	.17	17	15	.13	.25	.44	.31
Work-related abuse									
No	$7.07	$2.45		20	16		.12	.32	
Yes	$7.56	$1.87	.12	20	16	.00	.14	.36	.04

For example, looking at the first column of numbers in this table shows a mixed set of results. The mean wages for the groups with and without human capital deficits and physical violence differ in the expected direction. On average, women with human capital deficits made 29 cents/hour less than women without such deficits. Mean wages for women who reported physical violence were 76 cents/hour less than mean wages for respondents who did not report physical abuse. For low-wage workers, these losses for human capital deficits and physical violence can be cumulatively meaningful amounts. In contrast, the literature generally views care obligations as an obstacle to waged work. The higher mean wages for respondents with care obligations than without are therefore somewhat puzzling. However, this finding is consistent with the finding that men with dependents have higher earnings than men without (Loh 1996), and is perhaps best interpreted as a mark of the incentive care obligations present to increase household resources.

The most counterintuitive finding in the wage data is the higher average hourly wage for women who reported work-related abuse than for women who did not report such sabotage. It is possible that men have greater interest in controlling women with slightly higher earnings, or may resort to work-related sabotage as women's increased earnings threaten to make women more independent. Or women who face work-related sabotage could have greater incentives to earn their way out of the abuse trap.

The measures of association (Eta, the equivalent of a correlation coefficient between a continuous and an ordinal variable) between the work outcomes and each of the four barriers are modest. Overall, they suggest that physical violence in particular is associated with lower wages and more involuntary part-time work. This is consistent with the hypothesis that battering obstructs work and traps women in poverty. There is no variation in weeks worked by whether or not the respondent reported work-related abuse. Close to 1/3 of the variation in involuntary part-time work was explained by reporting physical violence, and between 1/5 and 1/3 of the variation in wages, weeks worked, and involuntary part time work was explained by care obligations and by human capital deficits.

The 8 women who reported any abuse during the period of the follow-up interviews – that is, during their transition from welfare to work – on average saw a 79 cent/hour increase in the wages from the most recent job reported at the retrospective interview to the

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last job reported in the follow-up interviews. The 17 women who reported no abuse during the follow-up interviews on average saw a 15 cent/hour decrease in their wages. The 9 women who had ever filed a protective order (including one woman who filed during the follow-up period) averaged a 53 cent decrease in their hourly wages over the follow-up period. The 16 women who reported no PFA reported a 53 cent/hour increase. See Case Summary Appendix.

ARE THERE ECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS WHEN EMPLOYMENT PRECIPITATES OR AGGRAVATES ABUSE?

For the subgroups of women who reported any (valid) wages in their most recent job (69% of the 162 respondents) and any weeks worked in the past year (66%), the table below arrays comparisons of these employment outcomes. The comparison here is within the group that reported any items on the WORCASC, physical abuse, and PTSD symptom lists, and between those who said that going to work precipitated or aggravated the abuse or symptom (or who reported filing a civil restraining order) and those who said that was not the case. The table presents means, the number of cases, and standard deviations. For each comparison, the table also arrays measures of the association between the dependent variables (wages and weeks worked, both continuous variables) and the independent variables (all ordinal categorical variables).

As predicted by the assertions of advocates for battered women, the mean wages earned and weeks worked were generally lower for respondents who said their working made the abuse start or get worse than for those reporting abuse for whom that was not the case. The "wage penalty" for this pattern of abuse is 88 cents/hour in the case of WORCASC items, 90 cents/hour in the case of PTSD symptoms, and 35 cents/hour in the case of filing a PFA. For women concentrated in the low-wage occupations where many former welfare recipients find work, these are sizable wage differences, even if the variability in these small cohorts means the differences between groups are not statistically significant. The average number of weeks worked in the past year range from 4 to 10 less between groups, except if a PFA was filed, where the difference is 3 weeks and in the opposite direction (presumably, because for filers the legal action is an effective way of stopping abuse that might otherwise obstruct employment).

Eta-squared is the equivalent of R^2 and can similarly be read (moving the decimal point appropriately) as the percent of variance in the continuous dependent variable accounted for by the ordinal independent variable. The WORCASC, physical abuse, and PTSD items are all modestly associated with hourly wage, although none of them accounts for even as little as ten percent in the variance in wages. The physical abuse and PTSD symptom items show weak associations with weeks worked. The largest Eta and Eta-squared values are for the relationship between the WORCASC items and weeks worked in the past year, empirically confirming sabotage as a successful instrumental strategy for men's obstructing women's employment.

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Associations between work-related outcomes and effects of work on abuse

OUTCOME	MEAN	N	SD	ETA	ETA^2
Hourly waged in last job (non-zero)[1]	$6.81	110	$1.80		
... if WORCASC "start/worse"	$6.57	48	$1.72		
... if WORCASC otherwise	$7.45	13	$1.94	.20	.04
... if physical abuse "start/worse"	$7.79	9	$2.20		
... if physical abuse otherwise	$6.72	11	$1.56	.29	.08
...if PTSD symptoms "start/worse"	$6.38	48	$1.72		
...if PTSD symptoms otherwise	$7.28	9	$1.93	.19	.03
...if restraining order filed	$6.55	28	$1.80		
...if no restraining order filed	$6.90	82	$1.80	.08	.00
Weeks worked in past year (non-zero)	22	107	14		
... if WORCASC "start/worse"	23	48	15		
... if WORCASC otherwise	27	11	17	.69	.41
... if physical abuse "start/worse"	21	9	14		
... if physical abuse otherwise	26	8	17	.18	.03
...if PTSD symptoms "start/worse"	22	50	15		
...if PTSD symptoms otherwise	32	6	17	.20	.03
...if restraining order filed	24	31	15		
...if no restraining order filed	21	76	14	.11	.01

[1]NOTE: Also excluded: One case reporting wages of $30/hour. Excluding this single outliner decreased the mean by $.21 and reduced the standard deviation by $1.00.

KEY FINDINGS: HARDSHIPS RELATED TO POVERTY

The hardships associated with poverty include housing insecurity and homelessness, problems paying utilities and other bills, and hunger and food insecurity (Olsen & Pavetti 1996; see for instance Burnham 2001; CalWORKS Project 2002b; Hastedt & Smith 2002). Moreover, many poor people face problems that come under the rubric of "work doesn't pay." Poor mothers in particular may have unreliable or substandard childcare. Poor people often have trouble meeting work-related expenses for transportation and clothes. The jobs they obtain often lack benefits such as health insurance and time off to provide care. Work requirements push women into the labor market even when the lost value of their benefits is greater than the income they gain through earnings (Wolfe 2002). Results from a wide variety of studies of current and former welfare recipients demonstrate that former welfare recipients are particularly likely to be "struggling to provide sufficient food and shelter for their families" (Loprest 1999, p. 4; see also Glenn 2002; Hastedt & Smith 2002; Loprest 2001; Marcy & Shapiro 2002; Peterson, Song, & Jones-DeWeever 2002; Porter & Dupree

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2001; Primus & Daugirdas 1999; Urban Institute 2002; Zedlewski & Loprest 2001). The hardships of poverty plague a significant proportion of current and former welfare recipients, including those who leave welfare for waged work (Danziger 2001; see also Acs & Loprest, 2001; Brauner & Loprest 1999; Tolman, Danziger, & Rosen 2002). The fact that the vast majority of current and former welfare recipients in the U.S. are women means that poverty, welfare, work, and vulnerability to battering are closely connected issues.

It is clear from a growing set of research findings that there are strong associations between battering and poverty in general and specific hardships (such as homelessness) or other problems (such as drug addiction). Women methadone users in one study were both extremely poor and likely to have been abused by their partners; some women clearly use heroin, "crack" cocaine, alcohol, and other drugs to numb the pain of having been battered (Moreno, El Bassel, Gilbert, & Wada 2002). Formerly homeless families report mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family changes as the concurrent issues associated with homelessness (Lehman 2000; see also Metraux & Culhane 1999; Roofless Women with Kennedy 1996). Interviews with low-income women in temporary or public housing show strong associations among homelessness, poverty, and domestic violence (DeKeseredy, Alvi, Schwartz, & Tomaszewski 2003; Malos & Hague 1997; Rollins, Saris, & Johnston-Robledo 2001; Vostanis, Cumella, Briscoe, & Oyebode 1996; for a summary, see Raphael CITE). The Worcester, Massachusetts, study of housed low-income and homeless women found widespread, recent partner violence (Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk 1999; see also Bufkin & Bray 1998; Toro, Ballavia, Daeschler, et al. 1995).

It is less clear what type of barrier abuse represents to working, escaping poverty, or avoiding material hardship. Strong anecdotal evidence suggests that some abusers sabotage women's waged work, limit their earnings capacity and career development, and prevent poor women's compliance with the work requirements instituted with the 1996 welfare reforms (e.g., Davis 1999; Goetting 1999; Raphael 2000; Weiss 2000). No national U.S. studies go beyond estimating prevalence to document or explain the difference domestic violence makes in women's experiences of poverty, work, and welfare. Findings from local U.S. studies that include current or recent abuse as a possible correlate or predictor of employment are often contradictory or counterintuitive (Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk 1999; Brush 2000; Horsman 2000; Lloyd & Taluc 1999; Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff 2000).

An example of a counterintuitive finding comes from a study of domestic violence and welfare receipt in Maryland. Maryland welfare recipients who disclosed "domestic violence ... were more likely to be Caucasian, be separated, and receive assistance in jurisdictions with mid-sized caseloads" than those who did not disclose domestic violence to a case manager (Hetling-Wernyj & Born 2002, p. iii). The women who disclosed domestic violence also spent less time on welfare than their non-disclosing peers. It would be simplistic to argue that moving poor mothers from welfare to work will automatically reduce battering. Furthermore, no one would suggest that policy makers should encourage battering as an incentive to move women off welfare. Nevertheless, the Maryland study raises questions about the relative importance of work, solvency (through welfare or employment), and safety planning for poor and abused women.

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Examples of contradictory findings come from other research. The CalWORKs study found opposite effects of abuse on hours worked in two California counties. In Kern County, only 17% of abused women worked at least 26 hours/week (compared with 31% of women not reporting serious domestic violence). In Stanislaus County, employment rates were higher overall (35% of those not subject to severe domestic violence worked) and battered women were even more likely to work (44% worked 26 hours/week or more; 2002a). But while these studies looked at the patterns of domestic violence in terms of employment, welfare, and demographics, none reported measures of eviction and homelessness, utility shut-offs, hunger and food insecurity, or other hardships associated with poverty.

In the Michigan Women's Employment Study (WES), domestic violence was not one of the barriers significantly associated with working 20 or more hours per week (Danziger, Corcoran, Danziger et al. 2000). Moreover, in the WES, a recent, first-time incident of violence was not associated with specific hardship experiences or the overall level of hardship, including food insecurity, homelessness, and utility shut-off. These specific findings notwithstanding, the researchers concluded that "domestic violence of a severe, recent and persistent nature is a factor in lower economic well being for women who have received welfare benefits," and "domestic violence that is both recent and persistent is associated with numerous indicators of hardship" (Tolman, Danziger, & Rosen 2002, p. 11). Contradictory and counterintuitive findings about the ways battering increases hardship and poverty specifically by obstructing work are typical of research on these issues.

The table below presents the prevalence of hardships reported by the respondents in the retrospective interviews. The first column of numbers is the number of respondents reporting that they experienced each hardship indicator. The second column of numbers is the reported rate (percent) among all 40 respondents. The far right column is the valid percent, that is, the reported rate among only those respondents who were asked the question based on their answer to the previous response period (ever, in the past year, in the past month). Thus, 8 of the 40 respondents (20%) reported hunger or food insecurity since age 16. Of those 8, 7 (17% of 40, 87% of 8) also reported hunger or food insecurity in the past year. Finally, of those 7, 3 (7% of 40, 43% of 7) reported hunger or food insecurity in the past month.

Reported hardships associated with poverty (N = 40)

HARDSHIP INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID %
Housing and homelessness			
Ever evicted or had to move in with someone else	11	27	--
Current housing substandard or overcrowded	4	10	--
Hunger and food insecurity			
Skipped meals or went to bed hungry because ran out of food, Food Stamps, or money to buy food ... since age 16	8	20	--
... In the past year	7	17	87
... In the past month	3	7	43
Trouble paying rent, or utility bills ... ever	27	68	--
... In the past year	21	52	77
... In the past month	13	32	81

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Of the 40 respondents, 1 woman was homeless at the time of the retrospective interview. In addition, in the course of conducting follow-up interviews, interviewers learned of 1 respondent whose relatives said she was now living "on the street," 1 who was evicted for non-payment of rent, 1 who left no forwarding information when her building was demolished, and several others who moved and left no forwarding address. At the time of the retrospective interview, 1 in 4 respondents had been evicted at some time since age 16. Ten percent of the respondents who were housed at the time of the retrospective interview reported that their current housing was substandard or overcrowded.

The vast majority of respondents (68%) reported they had trouble paying their rent or utility bills, 1/3 as recently as the current month. Using the lifetime recall period, 28% reported experiencing 1 of the measured hardships, and 40% reported experiencing at least 2. Of the hardships measured as current or in the past year, 3/4 of the respondents reported at least 1, and 1/3 reported 2 (only 1 respondent reported 3). Altogether, the vast majority of this cohort of welfare recipients reported experiencing at least 1 hardship associated with poverty, and most of them reported 2 or more.

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN BARRIER SETS AND HARDSHIPS

The tables below presents means and measures of association between recent and lifetime hardships and the barriers of care obligations and work-related abuse. The first table covers recent hardships. The second table covers lifetime hardships.

As with the employment outcomes, there is a lot of variation in hardships in this cohort. The standard deviations are large, and there is considerable overlap in the distributions. However, all the means differ in the expected direction (greater hardship rates where the care obligations or work-related abuse are present) with the sole exception of current inadequate housing and work-related abuse. For both recall periods, missing work because of care obligations increased trouble in paying bills. Sabotage of work effort is associated with recent (but not lifetime) trouble paying bills, and women reporting work-related abuse had higher lifetime eviction rates than women who did not report work-related abuse. The measure of association between hardship and barrier set is a relatively robust .30 or higher in 5 of the 12 associations measured in the table above.

Recent hardships by barrier (N=40)

	RECENT HARDSHIPS								
Barrier	Trouble paying bills[1,2]			Inadequate housing[3]			Food insecurity[4]		
	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta
Care obligations									
No	.16	.38		.06	.24		.05	.23	
Yes	.48	.51	.34	.14	.36	.14	.29	.46	.31
Work-related abuse									
No	.38	.50		.12	.33		.15	.37	
Yes	.79	.43	.38	.07	.27	.08	.21	.43	.08

[1] For care obligations, recent recall period is "in the past month".
[2] For work-related abuse, recent recall period is "in the past year".
[3] Recent recall period is "current".
[4] Recent recall period is "past year".

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Lifetime hardships by barrier (N=40)

	LIFETIME HARDSHIPS								
Barrier	Trouble paying bills			Evicted			Food insecurity		
	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta	Mean	SD	Eta
Care obligations									
No	.53	.51		.22	.43		.11	.32	
Yes	.81	.40	.30	.33	.48	.12	.29	.46	.23
Work-related abuse									
No	.62	.50		.16	.37		.19	.40	
Yes	.79	.47	.17	.50	.52	.36	.21	.43	.03

Missing work due to care obligations and reporting work-related abuse are both associated with higher levels of some individual hardships and with the overall number of hardships reported. None of the barrier sets is strongly associated with lower wages or fewer weeks worked. This suggests that the mechanism connecting barriers to work (including battering) with the hardships of poverty is not necessarily employment. "Supply-side" barriers made no difference in either employment outcomes (wages, weeks worked) or hardships (food insecurity, trouble paying bills, inadequate housing). This is perhaps not surprising, given the basic homogeneity in human capital or supply-side barriers in this cohort of highly disadvantaged women.

KEY FINDING: ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK, WELFARE, AND ABUSE

Respondents matter-of-factly described incidents of abuse and their impressions of the attitudes of the men who abused them.

> *He punched me in the stomach when I was pregnant. He was just angry – I don't remember why, but probably because I didn't come home or came home late.*
>
> *He was just sick. He was controlling and possessive. He would follow me and not let me to talk to anybody.*
>
> *He beat me so bad I lost the pregnancy. Just pounded on me. I think he wanted to kill me.*
>
> *He had been drinking. I gave him dinner late because he came home late. He beat me up, took me to the sink and beat my head, attacked me with a knife. I had cuts on my hands and face and throat, there was blood everywhere, and I had to call the cops and go to the hospital. He blamed me. I cleaned up the blood because of the kids.*

Other women described abuse and its effects on their feelings about relationships. As one interviewer recorded in her field notes from the retrospective interview:

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> *Respondent was involved with a very abusive man who was trained as a boxer, got into drugs, and was extremely controlling – he wouldn't let her close a door in the house [when she used the toilet for example], he didn't want her to work or meet people outside the home. ...When a subsequent potential partner seemed suspiciously controlling, she dumped him right away, even before it 'got sexual' (he had tried to prevent her and another woman from leaving the house by putting a mattress against the door, and was pushing her to have sex after only 3 weeks of dating). She said she was a bit afraid that she was being over-sensitive because of her past experience, but seemed glad not to be trapped in another abusive relationship.*

THE DIRECT EFFECT OF ABUSE ON OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING WORK

Most respondents described their partners as supporting her employment. Some reported the positive effects of work on abuse hoped for by many welfare reformers: "[When I was working, I] would get dressed up and be out at work - not under his control." In addition, some observed their working did not precipitate or aggravate abuse.

> *He did it when he was drunk, so it didn't really have to do with work.*
>
> *When he was using drugs more, then it would get worse – but the abuse was not affected by ...[my] working or not working.*
>
> *He was obsessed, crazy, a stalker, a mentally deranged person in general. His abuse did not have anything to do with my starting work.*

Some noted more ambiguity about the connection between abuse and work, and made distinctions among types of abuse and their partner's attitude toward her employment. For instance, one respondent reported that although her partner was physically violent at random rather than as a consequence of her working, "and he didn't give me bruises to keep me from working," he nevertheless objected to her employment outside the home: "He laid down the law about not working."

However, some respondents described how abuse affects their ability to obtain and sustain work. One respondent reported that her partner was "jealous that she had a job and he didn't" and that "he wanted to take care of her and he didn't want her to be independent." Other respondents vividly evoked a direct connection between abuse and work.

> *He was high and drunk and he gets very violent under the influence. He beat, kicked and punched me. He bothers me at work and demands to talk to me. He would come in and demand to talk with me when it wasn't allowed.*
>
> *He didn't want me to work, be around anyone else, or make money.*

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> *Just a look that he will give me that I am supposed to make sure that dinner is ready when I get home and the baby is cared for. He was the man and he wanted to provide -negative and not supportive. He was jealous that I had a job and he didn't [have a job] and he wanted to take care of me and he didn't want me to be independent. [When partner would call at work, the manager] would just tell him that he can't bother me - and explain that she [respondent] gets off at a certain time and he could talk to me then.*
>
> *He has not been physically abusive recently, but ... that is probably because I have not been around much. ... Going to work will put both me and my kids at risk for abuse (he has assaulted me in the past).*
>
> *Work WAS going well. I hope I will be able to continue [working]. I am at home now – I was in the hospital and have to wear a neck brace because my ex injured me this weekend.*
>
> *He was possessive, abusive, and didn't want me to work. Just an all-American guy.*

Sometimes partner's jealousy is noticeable but does not directly affect women's work effort.

> *I don't know how he would feel now [about my working] but I always felt he was a little bit jealous. He never stopped me from working, though.*
>
> *He was jealous when I met someone new but it wasn't related to work. [He would say,] Where are you going looking so cute and not for me?*

In other cases, the link between jealousy and work was explicit.

> *He always wanted to know where I was. When I was working that was hard for him.*
>
> *He ... was very jealous. He seemed worried that I'd find someone at work and leave him.*
>
> *He was trying to keep me from working. He didn't want me to work because he thought that I'd leave him.*
>
> *When I was at home, I was raising HIS daughter, and he could control me. But [when I worked] out in the real world, he got even more possessive. He would leave his job to check up on me.*

When we asked women to describe incidents where their partners harassed them at work, they noted a variety of behaviors by their partners and responses by their coworkers and employers. Some employers were supportive and others were not.

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He would either call A LOT or sometimes show up. My employer was very supportive - changed my office phone and pager and everything was on file with security there.

He would be there at my lunch break just to see what I was doing. He was a pest - calling all the time to see what I was doing. They fired me.

He would call or come to the job or be there when I got off. My boss threatened he would press charges on him and take him to jail.

He would show up and want me to go home. He'd make a scene sometimes. [The people at work would] try to make him leave or get me away from him. He went through 5 people to get to me once.

He would demand that I come over, would call and threaten the boss. He stole a VCR from the Zayre's where I was working, which got me fired.

He would keep calling. Or he would just come in and bother me. At my last job, we had a fight in the parking lot at work. They knew something was wrong and my supervisor let me go home for the day.

He called and watched me at work, and called in a bomb threat. I almost got fired. They traced his call and he went to jail.

He would show up every day at lunch time, call 20 times in an hour, and harass me constantly. One time, I was at work and he showed up. He ...made an idiot out of himself while I cried. The supervisor looked at me. He left voluntarily because they were gonna call the cops. My co-workers were shocked and felt bad for me, and tried to calm me down. They didn't like him, and were angry when he called or showed up.

VIEWS OF WORK

Respondents recalled having had fairly typical occupational aspirations when they were children. The most frequently cited occupations were nurse and teacher. Almost as frequent, however, were dreams of growing up to become a doctor or lawyer (or judge). Smaller numbers were interested in entertainment, saying they had wanted to be a dancer, singer, broadcast radio disc jockey, or model. One or two women each said they wanted to grow up to be an airline stewardess, secretary, court reporter, hair stylist or cosmetologist, or data entry worker. One wanted to be a mechanic.

Their goals for their current transition from welfare to work were understandably modest, and in most cases significantly lower than their childhood ambitions. One wanted to become a travel agent, one was training as a paralegal at a local institute, another wanted to back to school to be a sonar technician and one to be a nurse's assistant, and one aspired to "own my own child care center." One was clear about her priorities for combining work and family: "My goal is being able to take care of my son. Making sure he has everything he

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needs and making sure he's a happy kid. I also want a job I like in the process." Another concluded the retrospective interview saying,

> *I want to counsel or teach young women that it's their frame of mind that must be different before their situation is. You don't have to carry the welfare title, even if your generations were on welfare. They have to learn what to do next. I want to give back and help break the cycle.*

Many respondents had no ambitions beyond making enough money so they could get off welfare.

> *Hurry up and get off welfare - get a fresh start.*
>
> *I want to find a job that I want so I won't have to quit and start looking all over again or get back on welfare.*
>
> *I want to be off welfare and not look back.*
>
> *Get a decent job to support me and my two kids.*
>
> *Get a degree to take care of me and my baby, buy a house and not live in subsidized housing.*
>
> *Get a job and have some type of income besides welfare.*
>
> *Get an eight hour a day job.*
>
> *Going to school, getting my degree, getting a better job, making too much to be on welfare.*
>
> *Medical office management. It'll take a while to get to that point, but it's my goal.*

Some women had very definite plans related to their transition from welfare to work.

> *I need keyboarding skills. Permanent jobs at the Post Office require typing (not just the numeric keyboard). I want to apply for that job.*
>
> *I have a plan: In three years, I will have a house, not in the projects, and I'll have 2 years job experience in a good job.*

A woman who said at the retrospective interview that her goals was to "Get a job with the Federal government, move out of Pittsburgh and go back to school," managed to move to Cleveland and was in a government job by the first follow up interview (we did not follow her long enough to know if she ever went back to school).

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Not surprisingly, welfare is viewed as a temporary means to an end. Work represents stability and independence. Work allows women self-sufficiency and the ability to support their families. Work means:

> *Keeping food in the house, keeping bills paid, getting off of welfare.*
>
> *Being able to support my family on my own and never needing a man for anything.*
>
> *Self-sufficiency and can do anything you want. You don't have to depend on others and you are responsible.*

Further, respondents viewed working as conveying an important socialization message to their children.

> *Serve as a role model for children. Take care of kids better.*
>
> *Positive, feel better, feel like I make a difference, leading by example for my children. The children do what you do, not what you say.*

Respondents also connected work to making a contribution to society.

> *Being responsible, accountable, and being a part of society.*
>
> *It makes you feel good - feels like you are part of something.*
>
> *I enjoy it, enjoy meeting new people, being a part of a company or organization, helping people.*
>
> *I want to be an example to show people it can happen and no matter what life offers you it is possible to succeed. You just need people around you that care about you.*

OBSTACLES AND RESOURCES

Women cited lack of child care and lack of experience as major obstacles to meeting the goals they set for their transitions from welfare to work. Some complained that having to go through the program was a waste of time. Others said criminal convictions in their past, or problems with addiction to drugs and alcohol, were almost insurmountable obstacles.

> *Getting used to the work force again, getting into the swing of it. I got lazy.*
>
> *My credit is messed up. I'm currently unemployed so I'm in debt.*

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> *I'm trying to find a job where I can work on cars or motorcycles with only 1 year of experience in high school.*
>
> *My health -- diabetes complications.*
>
> *Getting treatment has to come first, so I can deal with my drug and alcohol problems. There is a little open door I can see.*

Overwhelmingly, the women in this study cited family and children as sources of motivation and strength for their transitions from welfare to work. Respondents were inspired by their children, wanted to provide a better life for them, and wanted to serve as role models.

> *My daughter pushes me to do better. [I am] determined to 'show them' I can do it.*
>
> *My son also - he is the reason why I want a better life for myself and him. He is the only one I have, so he is my strength.*
>
> *I am strong about taking care of my family and feel that sense of accomplishment - it helps me to be strong.*

At the same time, a significant number of women cite children, specifically providing childcare – the money it costs for others to do it or the time it takes when she provides care herself – as a hindrance to obtaining and maintaining work, especially full-time.

Respondents cited the ability to learn quickly, to be resourceful, and to show dedication, ambition, and drive as strengths in transitioning from welfare to work. At the same time, respondents also discussed having little job experience, no transportation, and having been on probation or otherwise in trouble with the law as obstacles to meeting their goals. Many cited the need for education and training – and the time that education requires – as obstacles to finding work. Some respondents connected the simultaneous need for money and time as an obstacle to maintaining employment. They note that going to school requires both time and money.

> *Money -- I have to have money to go to school, and at the same time I have to have money to provide for my children.*

Most respondents said they needed to work full time for the money. Those who were not already working full time cited time as an obstacle. As one respondent remarked, "The money would be nice but the hours wouldn't work with my schedule the way it is right now."

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VIEWS OF WELFARE

Respondents identified welfare as a necessary step to obtaining work, providing much needed medical benefits and food for their families. Yet, as one respondent said, "You cannot live on welfare." Another said, "It is degrading." The respondents defined welfare as both help and hindrance. It symbolized both independence and dependence. Respondents needed welfare to achieve their goals but felt degraded, depressed, and humiliated as recipients. Further, meeting the requirements of welfare cost them time – time that could have been spent working.

> *It has helped me a lot - definitely with the child care - it would be too expensive to put them there. Also, I have learned a lot through the many programs and found out a lot about school.*
>
> *It makes me feel less independent. I don't like to rely on the welfare for help.*
>
> *I don't like being on welfare. I don't like the rules. It's like being under someone's microscope. It seems like a game now. I resent all the paperwork to get a few bucks.*
>
> *Depressing and positive, too -- I have more benefits and opportunities to achieve my goals, but it's not enough money.*
>
> *Humiliating, not enough money, but the food stamps and the medical are important.*
>
> *It is a hindrance and help at the same time. Classes help, but if you don't take advantage of what they offer it will hinder you.*

Some women negotiate feelings of dependency and degradation by choosing which benefits to accept. For example, one respondent said about welfare, "I don't like it. [I] refuse some things like bus fare. But I need it for the girls and the food. [I] refused Section 8 [housing assistance] because others need it more."

Some respondents mentioned the fact that the amount of welfare benefits they receive is determined by hours at work. Consequently, if a woman is working a job where hours are unstable or not steady, e.g. temporary employment, her welfare benefits become unreliable as well. Respondents understood that their benefit levels depended on their hours worked and income earned.

> *The more I make, the more my benefits go down. If I make $400 every two weeks, it will go down to $80 and after that it will go down to $40. It all depends on how much I make, sometimes it goes up and sometimes it goes down. If you're off for a holiday and off for two days, it varies.*

However, they did not frame the changes in benefit levels in terms of incentives or rewards/sanctions intended to encourage rational economic choices. This is partly because respondents also experienced changes in benefit levels as arbitrary.

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> *My benefit level changed in December. My food stamps and check got cut for no reason.*

Although decreasing benefit levels as women's hours and earnings increase ostensibly creates incentives for work, the inconsistency of benefit levels and instability in employment make the transition from welfare to work stressful for these women.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings on the ubiquity and serious consequences of family violence and control in the lives of employment training participants lead to several conclusions.

- This research demonstrated that the Project and Principal Investigator could generate an excellent volunteer participation rate from program respondents. In addition, respondents were willing to disclose sensitive, personal information in the context of this research. The Principal Investigator attributes this success to the specific character of the data gathering process. Among the most important features are those ensuring the confidentiality and dignity of respondents.

- At the same time, work-first participants are not eager to disclose unsolicited information about violence in their lives. Respondents did not present violence and control as an "excuse" for their depending on welfare. They did not spontaneously mention it among the practical obstacles to waged work (on par with lack of child care or transportation, for example). Policy-makers and program staff worried about welfare fraud may rest assured that women are extremely unlikely to fabricate accounts of abuse as a way of avoiding work requirements.

- Extensive interviews with battered women who left abusers suggest that mandatory meetings with welfare office and employment training program staff can sometimes provide opportunities to disclose abuse out of earshot from the perpetrator (Goetting 1999; Weiss 2000). This makes it especially important that welfare office and employment training program staff know how to screen for and respond to control, sabotage, and violence and their consequences. It is possible that a relatively unintrusive inquiry ("Have you filed a protective order in your current relationship or against the father of your child? If so, was it in the past three months?") may serve as an effective preliminary screening device. However, preliminary analyses suggest that there is no significant relationship between life-time or recent PFA filings and program outcomes, so the unintrusive measure may be an insufficient screening device.

- The research reveals the diversity among recipients, their experiences with violence and control in intimate and familial settings, and the effects such behaviors appear to have on both their emotional lives and their ability to make a successful transition from welfare to work. However, for the most part, demographic characteristics made little difference in reported levels of control, sabotage, violence, and their emotional effects. As in the previous study, women who reported abusive relationships were not markedly different from those

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who did not. The additional life history details in this study further suggest that it is not the characteristics of the women that matter, but the characteristics of the men in specific relationships. For example, women who had filed for protective orders generally did so in only one of several relationships.

- These findings support the conclusion that universal screening for abuse is appropriate and efficient, as long as it is confidential and leads to appropriate referrals and action by the screening staff. The combination of the ubiquity and variation in the effects of battering on poor women's lives (interrupted school and work; potentially dangerous dependency on informal social networks; cognitive and emotional consequences and posttraumatic stress symptoms) mean information about safety planning and coping healthily with the negative emotional effects of past abuse could usefully be incorporated into life skills training for all welfare recipients.

- Significant proportions of those reporting control, violence, and negative emotional effects indicate some change in the abuse or their symptoms related to their participating in work or job training. Not all these women are the same, however, and those who report that the abuse or their symptoms were aggravated by work or job training will have different needs from those who indicate that work or job training ameliorate the abuse or their symptoms.

- Women have different experiences and different needs. Abuse creates a range of different problems, concerns, and challenges for different women. Women's safety concerns may encourage or discourage their disclosing abuse. Some may need temporary exemptions from work requirement and time limits. Many more are likely to benefit most from lifeskills training, safety planning, and supportive services (housing, child care, transportation, treatment for addiction or mental health disorders) and education and training (from Basic Adult Education to vocational training to the higher education degrees that are the true ticket to earning a living wage) to facilitate the transition from welfare to work. The variations among women suggest that making "time-out" provisions to stop the 60-month life time limit on welfare conditional on women's complying with a service plan (however individually tailored) disregards the fact that the best judge of risk and safe procedures is the abused woman herself.

- Past abuse sufficiently severe to prompt a woman to file for a protective order may have long-reaching effects. Thirty-five percent of the 40 women interviewed had filed a protective order at some point in their lives. The average wages over these women's transitions from welfare to work, recorded in the prospective longitudinal interviews, *decreased* by more than 50 cents/hour if they had this personal history, whereas the average wages over the transition for the other members of the cohort *increased* by roughly the same amount. The bad news is, some degree of abuse persisted during the transition from welfare to work for 34% of the 31 women for whom we have follow-up data. The good news is, women were explicit about the fact that welfare and work in some cases had allowed them to leave abusive men, and were decreasingly likely to report any abuse over the length of the follow-up period. As one respondent said after answering "no" to every item on the W/SAS and WORCASC: "I'm working so I can avoid all that."

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COMMUNITY LITERACY PROJECT

It is tremendously hard work to turn private stories of loss and hope into purposeful articulations of a problem and its causes. It takes preparation and support to create informed arguments that have a chance of being heard. This is the work of citizenship and self-advocacy that poor people often have neither the time, nor the outlines of a process, to undertake. The narratives produced in the community literacy project portion of this research is the fruitful yield of our doing this work with a dedicated group of current and former welfare recipients determined to tell their stories of toil and trouble, tenacity, and redemption.

PROCEDURES

At the conclusion of the retrospective interviews, one of our first tasks was to use the self-reported data on literacy to determine who might be eligible for the community literacy project. Unfortunately, by the time we were able to extract the relevant data, none of the retrospective interview subjects were able to participate in the community literacy project. Therefore, in August 2001, the PI negotiated recruitment of subjects for the project with the associate director of the Pittsburgh Partnership from a similar pool of welfare recipients making the transition to work. Throughout September and October, the PI and co-PI recruited subjects and planned a mid-October start date. Two mornings a week, we met with all the incoming recipients at the Partnership. We obtained signed consent forms from over a dozen potential participants (a high response rate; the incoming cohorts were very small during September and October).

However, the events of September 11, 2001, the nose-dive of the local economy, and rampant non-compliance with welfare program participation requirements meant that at the first sessions of the community literacy project, we had only two participants. We were able to conduct several sessions with these two TANF recipients, who began to draft narratives about their personal relationships and responsibilities and the way these factors affected their ability to function and support themselves. Given our brief time with these two participants (one obtained work shortly after she started) and the lack of a larger response group, we were not able to take them through the entire process so that they might fully analyze their own narratives and include rival perspectives and options. In the end, we used the journal one of these two respondents kept as one of the narratives in the final project (this is Jasmine's journal).

We decided to resort to a different recruiting strategy and revised the IRB protocol and consent form accordingly. We shifted to a North Side community center where the Co-Investigator had worked before. Changing to a community location gave us an unexpected advantage. When working with the previous TANF recipients in the job search-job placement context, we had been assigned to a formal meeting room in the same building

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where the women's required classes, testing sessions, and appointments with case managers took place. Potential project recruits seemed to relate to us as trainers or teachers overseeing their work. By assembling a group of women outside the institutional context of welfare, we established a more trusting environment and minimized what we call the "specter of oversight" so palpable in government agencies and institutions.

The writers – all current or former welfare recipients – were recruited into and guided through a community literacy project by Dr. Lorraine Higgins. We provided childcare, bus tickets, and a graduated system of modest compensation (in the form of vouchers from a large local chain supermarket) to facilitate and encourage participation in and completion of the writing project.

Eight women wrote the narratives and commentary on which we base the analysis that follows. The group met twice a week in Pittsburgh's Community House throughout March and April, 2002. To maintain confidentiality, the writers chose pseudonyms for themselves and other people in their writing.

We began with a discussion of participants' personal goals and the common conflicts that emerged in their experiences. We first worked with the writers to name and contrast the "ideals" and the "reals" in their lives. Then each woman outlined the critical incidents—memorable events or decision points—that had most affected their ability to reach their goals, obtain a living-wage job, and move toward safety and solvency.

Writing mentors Chris Weber, Jean Sieper, and Michael Schneider joined our group in the "outline critical incidents" phase of the project. They listened carefully, helping construct timelines and prompting writers for the often unspoken reasoning and telling details behind their stories. The mentors helped type the texts when necessary, and they suggested edits as the writers revised. In all cases, the writing mentors were careful to preserve as much of the content and language of the writers as possible. They suggested revisions only when they might 1) insure confidentiality, 2) provide clarification for a reader, 3) eliminate redundancy, and 4) help the text adhere to standard written English rules of grammar and punctuation. The writers reviewed and approved final versions of their formatted and edited texts.

But the participants in this project went beyond simple story telling. During the fourth and fifth weeks of the project, we guided them through a problem-analysis process and directed them to reflect on possible causes and constraints that may have exacerbated the problems about which they wrote. Moving from this close inquiry into a position of broader dialogue and claim making, they learned in weeks six and seven to seek out rival perspectives—the different and sometimes challenging ways that others might see their narratives. They did so by role-playing other stakeholders and discussing each other's writing. This process helped them articulate the meaning and import of what they had written. They also responded to written and verbal feedback from invited community respondents (a welfare advocate, a welfare caseworker, a member of the legal team at a shelter for battered women, an addiction counselor, and a case worker at a family support agency) who helped challenge, complicate, or provide additional insight as interested readers.

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Based on the analysis and exchange that ensued, the writers in the final phase of the project proposed changes that might be made both on a personal and public level, creating recommendations with "What if . . ." scenarios. The structure of the project is reflected in the booklet itself. Each narrative is followed by a brief analysis of causes, rival perspectives (sometimes put into dialogue with each other), the "What if . . ." recommendations, and each woman's summary of the strengths and resources that will help her "keep on keeping on."

CODING AND ANALYTIC METHODS

Each writer produced a six to eight page document for the booklet published at the end of the project, *Getting By Getting Ahead: Women's Stories of Welfare and Work.* Our analysis is based of these final texts.

We divided each writer's document into five sections, including the main narrative (N) and four follow-up sections containing their analysis and commentary. We named these four additional sections "Contributing Factors" (CF), "Strengths and Resources" (SR), "Rival Perspectives" (RP), and "Taking Action" (TA). The text unit for analysis was the sentence. Every sentence was coded for document section, substantive issues, language of agency, and effects on safety and solvency. We also coded rhetorical shifts in the narratives, distinguishing those units that were primarily reportorial from those that were more explicitly editorial.

In eliciting critical incidents from the writers, we expected some obvious substantive issues to emerge: content related to the welfare system itself, details about children, family, and intimate partners, health related issues, work, and material concerns. We were also interested in understanding how writers presented themselves and other stakeholders in terms of agency – their ability to take action and make change. Finally, we wanted to track empirically the ways these writers' representations of critical incidents pointed to factors that promoted or undermined their safety and solvency.

Narratives are by nature cohesive, with one event connecting to the next. In coding these narratives it was often difficult to make decisions about individual text units, the meaning of which was usually tied to a larger context described in other text units in the document. As we encountered each text unit (sentence), we relied on previous context in the document to understand it (as any reader would) and to code it. That is, we coded the sentences sequentially, in a process we called "coding forward." We did not return to a text unit we had coded earlier to re-code it based on contextual information we later discovered "outside of the text" or later in the text. We thought that using the latter strategy would have violated the sequential unfolding of the narrative and the connective relationships established by the writer herself through her organizational choices.

We coded all sections of the text for substantive issues.

To examine obstacles to women's safety and solvency and to identify what these writers saw as strengths and resources in their lives, we coded their final narratives (N) and two

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follow up sections of the texts: "Strengths and Resources" (SR) and "Contributing Factors (CF)" for the "effects" of the feelings, thoughts, and actions described therein. We identified whether those factors promoted or undermined the narrator's safety and solvency. Units were coded using these two categories and were double-coded when appropriate. Text units that were neutral descriptions or actions or that lacked context for interpretation (e.g., "He parked his police car in front of my house") were not coded. As in the coding for substantive issues, we used the principle of "coding forward."

The table below provides the coding categories used in the analysis.

Coding categories for narratives from community literacy project

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES	EFFECTS ON SAFETY AND SOLVENCY
Intimate relationships	Promoting
Work	Undermining
Sexuality	
Pregnancy	RHETORICAL STYLE
Motherhood	Reporting
School	Editorializing
Material life	
Friendship	LANGUAGE OF AGENCY
Family	Voice: active
Fatherhood	Voice: passive
Birth control	Description: Positive
Abuse	Personal attribute
Living arrangements	Circumstances
Environment and community	Description: Negative
Welfare	Personal attribute
Addiction and recovery	Circumstances
Crime and punishment	Description: Neutral
Physical health	Second or third person narration
Mental health	Passive verb
Spirituality	
Feelings	About stakeholder
Children	About writer

The writer's sense of agency, her sense that she is capable of making decisions and taking action for change, is a resource on which she can call. Conversely, negative and predominantly passive self image can be construed as an obstacle to progress toward safety and solvency. We therefore coded the main narrative and the strength and resource sections for what we called the "language of agency."

We then determined whether the writer and/or stakeholder took a passive position or active position in the sentence. We coded the writer/stakeholder as passive if he or she was the recipient of action, the direct or indirect object of a sentence. They were coded as active if they were active subjects in any clause of the sentence. We did not code for active or passive voice in clauses including verbs that indicate the writer/stakeholders' state of being or condition. Instead of coding them for active/passive, we coded them as descriptions.

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Adjectives, metaphors, and adverbial phrases that described either writer or stakeholder also were coded as descriptions (negative, positive, or neutral). We in turn coded those descriptions for whether they referred to a personal attribute or the circumstances of the writer or stakeholder.

We also identified shifts in rhetorical style—when writers moved from straightforward narration of events (what we called reporting) into reflection on, explanation of, or evaluative commentary about on those events (which we called editorializing). Sentences in which the writer interrupted the flow of narrative with a commentary from her present-day perspective were coded as editorializing only. When a writer explained her own feelings, reasoning, motivations, or evaluation at the time, or speculated about others' motivations, feelings, or reasoning, we coded the text as both editorial and reportorial. Text that presented straightforward narrative of who did what when, where, and to whom, either through the perspective of the narrator in the past or from the writer's present day perspective, we coded as reporting only.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN THE CODING PROCESS

We developed a list of categories for our preliminary coding of two narratives, which we (the researchers and a graduate assistant) undertook individually. After meeting to compare this preliminary coding, we then refined, added to, and combined the coding categories based on what we could actually identify in the text. After this preliminary training, we then each used the refined coding scheme individually to code the remainder of the documents. When finished, we merged all coders' work and met to review and negotiate any disagreements that arose in the merged copy. We used this approach with all coding described in this report.

It was not feasible to develop formal measures of inter-coder reliability due to the sheer number of coding categories and the possibility of multiple codings for thousands of text units. We developed stringent definitions and examples of our coding, and reconciled all coding decisions between the PI and the co-Investigator. Our sense is that all but the most technical codes (related to language of agency) are quite intuitive.

The narratives from the community literacy project provide rich data for answering several of our central research questions about the obstacles to safety and solvency, the strengths and resources welfare recipients bring to the challenges of balancing work, motherhood, and relationships, and the connections among welfare, work, and abuse.

KEY FINDINGS: OBSTACLES

What obstacles do welfare recipients identify as they describe their struggle for safety and solvency? On the whole, these women were more likely—58% of the time versus 42% of the time—to write about factors that undermined their safety and solvency than they were to invoke factors that promoted their safety and solvency. This is to be expected, because we asked them specifically to write about the conflicts in their lives. In examining those particular issues that seemed to spark a greater discussion of undermining factors than

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promoting factors, we were able to identify those aspects of their lives in which conflict is most inherent, and perhaps, intractable.

As they wrote about these conflict-laden issues, writers invoked undermining factors twice as often as they invoked promoting factors. Those issues with the highest percentage of codes for undermining factors are, in descending order: sexuality, pregnancy, abuse, birth control, addiction, physical and mental health, crime, and intimate relationships. The majority of these issues (all but crime) cluster around three serious obstacles that welfare reform and policy on serving battered women must take into account: barriers related to unstable and damaging relationships with intimate partners, barriers connected to poor physical and mental health, and barriers related to thin and unsupportive social and family networks.

UNSTABLE AND DAMAGING RELATIONSHIPS

Certainly, many individuals in our society benefit from the added security, financial help, assistance with parenting, and moral support that an intimate partner can contribute. For this reason, some welfare reformers have argued that welfare policy should encourage poor women (especially those with children) to get married and stay married. The assumption is that having a husband will improve a woman's chance of achieving economic stability, and that marriage is central to "personal responsibility" (a central emphasis of welfare reform). The actions and events writers recounted in the context of discussing their intimate partners sometimes illustrated the support a partner can offer. Overall, however, these narratives created a difficult and complex portrait of intimate relationships and their largely negative impact on women's safety and solvency.

Six of the eight women discussed events that involved one or more of their intimate partners. In three of those events, they identified the partner as a husband. In eight other events boyfriends were referenced (three of whom were described as living with the women). Two women also discussed the father of their children (in these cases it was unclear as to whether they had ever lived with or been married to these men). Overall, these women appeared to have a number of serial, mostly monogamous relationships, although their partners were rarely monogamous.

The events depicted in text units referring to intimate partners were coded as undermining women's safety and solvency over twice as often as they were coded as promoting women's safety and solvency. The writers recalled situations in which partners had lied to them, had stolen money and other property, had cheated with other women, had refused to support their own children, and had attempted to control their decisions about school, living arrangements and childbearing. Partners used manipulation, lies, and sometimes physical violence.

The negative portrait of partner behavior depicted in these texts was often implied in the actions and events themselves. The writers did not engage in "male bashing" by saturating their discussion of partners with explicitly negative descriptors. In fact, when we coded for explicit stakeholder descriptions of intimate partners (adjectives, adverbs, noun phrases), we discovered that 36% were positive and 48% negative. In comparison, the women described

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themselves as positive 30% of the time and as negative 42% of the time in the context of discussing their intimate partners. Linguistically, at least, they seemed to offer a somewhat balanced description of both parties in the relationship. When we examine those descriptions that were coded as negative, however, a consistent theme of absence and irresponsibility emerges. Consider the following list of explicit descriptions:

> *Sperm Donor (Jasmine)*
>
> *My children's father was not supportive. (Takina)*
>
> *Can't deal with responsibility (Jasmine)*
>
> *Always skipping town (Jule)*
>
> *In and out of [my children's] lives (Nikki)*
>
> *I found myself the parent of three children, four if you count my fiancé. (Robin)*

Those parts of the narrative that depicted sexual behaviors were particularly negative. Text units that referred to sexuality were coded as undermining women's safety and solvency an astounding 28 times more often than promoting women's safety and solvency. Discussions of sexuality often referred to a partner's infidelities and the emotional devastation wrought by this abandonment and betrayal. Moreover, infidelity led to break-ups, which led to additional hardships for women, such as changes in living arrangements, loss of shared income, or both.

Events related to birth control and pregnancy often had a negative impact. Text units related to birth control and pregnancy were coded (respectively) as undermining safety and solvency five and six times more often than promoting safety and solvency. Not all, but some of the pregnancies discussed were unplanned, due to difficulties in obtaining suitable birth control or ignorance about unprotected sex. When Jule thought that her pills were making her menstrual cycle irregular, she simply stopped taking them.

> *I didn't bother using any other method because I figured I only saw him once a month. (Jule)*

Nikki and Robin considered abortion, but felt compelled to continue with their pregnancies because of their religious beliefs. In addition, Nikki poignantly evoked the pressure from her husband to carry a risky pregnancy to term. Jule and Robin were in what they thought were committed relationships when they became pregnant. When the fathers abandoned them, they felt betrayed. But these women also acknowledge the role of their own naïveté at the time.

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> *I was young, dumb, and fulla cum. (Robin)*
>
> *How could I be so stupid to let this happen at this time? (Nikki)*
>
> *If I had to do it over, I would not go with a married man. (Jule)*

All of these women wound up leaving these problematic relationships at some point, although two of them have now reunited with previous partners. When Nikki, Red, and Robin severed damaging relationships, in many ways it promoted their emotional well being and safety. At the same time, however, it disadvantaged them economically. In fact, fear about paying the bills alone sometime kept women in risky relationships.

> *Red explains her ambivalence about leaving a partner who was repeatedly unfaithful and who eventually hit her: "Even though [my boyfriend] was often with that other woman, he had still been paying my bills."*

Even though all of these women worked and contributed financially to the household, it was the added (if sometime sporadic) income of a partner that allowed them to stay financially above water. Without this or, importantly, without a place to live, welfare became a critical resource. JJ's husband had kicked her out. Nikki and Red were forced to move out on their own when they split with their partners.

These stories illustrate that marriage does not guarantee both a woman's safety and solvency. They also suggest that promoting marriage and increasing women's reliance on men may only keep women in unhappy or dangerous situations. The reality is that these women are often in relationships that are unsupportive and unstable. They are often unable to earn a living wage to support themselves and their children. It is this combination of factors that drives them to welfare. Moreover, welfare itself can help break their dependency on men who do not support them. Nikki, for example, was able to become more independent, get better housing, support her children, and even take classes while on Welfare. Eventually, these resources enabled her to find a decent job with a good salary and to purchase a home in her own name. Although she is trying to reunite with her husband, she feels that her ability to make it alone gives her power and respect, and more options in the relationship, something she did not previously have.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Of course, not all women on welfare have problems with physical and mental health. However, many do. Three of our eight writers (Red, JJ, and Jane) devoted at least 20% of their text to discussion of their own serious mental health problems, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders that have prevented them from working at different times. All are still under expert care and will need to remain so for an

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indeterminate time. Their illnesses are episodic. Their narratives illustrate how productive periods of relative good health are sometimes followed by episodes of serious illness and, not coincidentally, unemployment.

JJ's several hospitalizations have pulled her out of the workforce for various periods, even though she likes and wants to work because she believes employment helps her "talk and connect with people" and "feel less depressed." Red tells how her depression and panic attacks were severe enough to interfere with her ability to focus and work. Jane had been, until recently, consistently misdiagnosed for a serious injury to her cervical vertebrae, and her untreated, debilitating pain limited her ability to stand and do physical labor as a maintenance worker and clerk. In addition, Jane's schizophrenia (which also went undiagnosed for some time) creates serious challenges in her ability to conform to the docile comportment required of workers in the service economy.

Welfare's medical benefits were critical to each of these women. Before their benefits began and when their medical benefits were withdrawn for certain periods, the women simply could not secure necessary diagnoses, medications, and expensive psychotherapy. Both Jane and Red illustrate how they self-medicated during intense periods of physical and emotional pain, which may actually have worsened their conditions. Jane explains that when her worker's compensation benefits expired, so did her coverage for narcotic pain-killers. As a result, she says:

> *I was doing a lot of street drugs to deal with the ongoing neck pain. . . At about this time I started hearing voices and believing people were taking my kids from me. I was paranoid. I believe it was the street drugs. (Jane)*

Researchers know that welfare recipients often have "multiple barriers" that suck them into a cycle of poverty. Jane demonstrates the complex and interdependent relationship between her physical and mental health and her addiction. Clearly, recovery is a lifelong process. Initial diagnosis and treatment can require serious resources and time, especially when multiple barriers are involved. Lapses are common. This has implications for current regulations that impose strict time limits. Moreover, the welfare reforms of 1996 make anyone with a felony drug conviction ineligible for welfare benefits for the rest of her life.

A fourth writer, Jasmine, also devoted a large segment of her narrative to a mental health barrier. However, the illness was not her own but her child's. A single mother, Jasmine described her son's struggle with ADHD as a major source of stress in her life and a serious impediment to keeping a predictable work schedule. His behavioral problems were so severe that child care facilities had expelled him with little notice, and Jasmine had to take time off work to care for him and to guide him through a time consuming diagnostic process.

Although these women expressed gratitude for the medication they obtained through welfare for both mental and physical health problems, they also noted ways in which the system failed to help them through crisis points. Red notes how welfare recipients' choice of

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treatment programs and doctors is limited, a particular problem because she bounced from one facility to another until an aunt finally took her to her own doctor.

Jane notes how dangerous it is for addicts who are still using drugs to receive cash benefits without mandatory addiction counseling. She recognizes that active addict cannot exercise sound judgment when what's driving them is their cravings. When she first sought welfare benefits, Jane immediately used up her cash card on alcohol and crack to get some quick relief from physical pain and withdrawal from narcotic pain-killers. Jane's caseworker wasn't trained to know about addiction issues and had no power to mandate that Jane enter a rehab. Jane writes in frustration,

> *A single addict has no responsibility. You know where that money will go.*
>
> *Why would [the caseworker] not talk to her supervisor and try to do more for people with mental health and drug addiction problems? (Jane)*

When Jane did get referrals, there seemed to be little communication between the welfare office and her many providers—her surgeon, psychiatrist, and drug counselor. In part, this may have contributed to the difficulty of obtaining a correct diagnosis. Jane still struggles with understanding the complexity of her illness. She wants more explanation, but can't seem to communicate her needs. Her emotional explosiveness in the project and insistence on being heard seemed, in part, to be rooted in her frustration with those coordinating her care.

> *My medical problems are getting better, but my mental health issues are not. Sometimes I imagine plotting things, and I'm afraid what I'm capable of doing when people say what I think is 'stupid shit' to me. But they only give me 15 damned minutes to talk to my doctor! I need to get all this out to her, but I never have time to explain it. (Jane)*

Jane's negative attitude toward her provider is typical. On the whole, these women described both themselves and the stakeholders involved in healthcare issues in a disproportionately negative terms. In the context of writing about physical health, stakeholders were described negatively 63% of the time and positively only 21% (some descriptions were neutral). In the context of mental health, these descriptions were 65% negative and 35% positive. In describing themselves in the context of physical illness, the descriptions were 71% negative and 24% positive; for mental health these descriptions were 65% negative and 26% positive. These explicitly negative descriptions underscore the seriousness of these obstacles in some welfare recipients' lives, their dissatisfaction with the service they are provided, and their frustration over what they see as a lack progress in their healing. Indeed overcoming these barriers is for many an ongoing process.

In making benefit decisions for patients with multiple, mental health barriers, case managers should, as Red suggests, take into account the uniqueness of each case. These

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narratives show the hazards of limited, standardized treatment allowances and poor communication among clients, healthcare providers, and welfare workers.

LACK OF STRONG, SUPPORTIVE, SOCIAL AND FAMILY NETWORKS

In debating welfare reform, some have asked, "Why can't welfare recipients turn to their families and community for help instead of the State?" One might hope and predict that family, friends, and community would be sources of support for these women. In a few cases, women mention family and friends offering moral support, loaning them money, giving them furniture, and providing temporary housing or childcare. And despite the predominantly negative portrait of intimate partners, some writers alluded to occasional financial or material support.

> *Even if he is not perfect, a boyfriend provides some company and some support, even if it's only buying Pampers. (Jule)*

But in examining those parts of the narratives related to community, family, and friends, we found, as in narratives about intimate partners, that women discussed factors that undermined their safety and solvency more often than factors that promoted their wellbeing. Moreover, stakeholders in all three contexts were described with more negative than positive terms.

Community support was not mentioned at all, other than Jule's reference to a church group. Women tended to portray their community/environment as a source of threat, which makes sense given the surrounding culture of drugs and violence to which they alluded. Women's relationships with family were complex. They described stakeholders in this context as negative more than three times as frequently as they used positive terms. In many cases, family members did not provide nurturance as much as they presented additional burdens, both financial and emotional. The writers described events in which family members stole their money and took their food stamps, mistreated them or their children, and exposed them to drugs. Some women were torn between working and caring for family members who were ill or who also needed help with children.

KEY FINDINGS: STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

What resources do women identify as they describe their attempts to cope with and overcome these obstacles, and as they try to achieve safety and solvency? There were several issues in which the writers tended to raise as many or more factors that actually promoted as opposed to undermined their safety and solvency, suggesting areas of hope and resourcefulness. Those issues with the highest percentage of codes for promoting factors, in descending order, are: spirituality, school, welfare, work, and motherhood.

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SPIRITUALITY

Although spirituality was rarely discussed in depth, seven of the eight texts were coded for some mention of this issue. The most positive descriptions writers made of themselves were in the context of discussing spirituality. More than four-fifths of the writers' descriptions of themselves were positive when they mentioned spirituality. Spirituality often emerged in these texts as "faith in God" or in "a higher power" – the latter language clearly borrowed from addiction recovery programs in which these women had been or were currently involved. Spirituality served as a resource by helping women cope with the emotionally depleting effects of life crises. Jule escaped the hardships of isolation by going to church, and she found a support system in a bible group, for example. Jasmine used prayer as a way to cope with the turmoil that her son's ADHD condition had created in their lives. In explaining how she survived a particularly rough period, she writes, "I gave my problems to God." Jane claims that faith is her biggest strength and attributes her faith in God to her recovery from drugs. Takina endured jail time following a drug arrest by calling on her faith.

Poor women clearly need emotional and spiritual solace—something food stamps and a monthly check alone cannot provide. Their despondency is evident as they describe their emotional states in these narratives. The writers used negative emotional terms repeatedly across the narratives, describing themselves as *stressed, crying, depressed, angry, lonely, vulnerable, terrified, fearful, discouraged*, and *ashamed.* They also used powerful metaphors to convey feelings of stagnancy and hopelessness:

> *I used to be so numb I couldn't cry. (Jane)*
>
> *I felt a fog rolling in. (Jasmine)*
>
> *He was entrapping me .... No way out. (Nikki)*
>
> *At a dead end (Nikki)*
>
> *My life was shattered. (Jule)*
>
> *My whole world had fallen apart. (Takina)*
>
> *I was wearing myself out. (Robin)*

Our examination of spirituality and of mental health issues in these texts suggests that women might benefit from resources that can help them deal with the emotional impact of poverty. Welfare currently provides limited help with mental health issues, and its training programs focus on basic educational and workplace skills rather than emotional literacy, mentoring, or social networking, which can be important both for success at work and for safety in relationships.

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EDUCATION

When they wrote about school experiences, these women discussed events and actions that promoted their safety and solvency nearly twice as often as events that undermined their safety and solvency. School is also one of the contexts in which women describe themselves in the most positive terms. Four-fifths of self descriptions were positive in this context, and only 7% negative. But school was not simply a means to boost self-confidence. The two women who had the most schooling (Robin earned a post-secondary degree and Nikki was in the process of completing one) attained living wage jobs and are no longer on public assistance. Both are able to support themselves and their children without a partner.

Robin, who received public assistance before the work first mandates, was able to achieve her lifelong goal of a college degree.

> *If I hadn't used welfare to full capacity, to get my schooling, childcare, and everything it offered, I wouldn't be where I am today." She explains, "[The SPOC program] paid for parts of my schooling while government grants paid for the rest of my tuition, my supplies, my transportation, and lunch. Public assistance paid for my childcare. (Robin)*

In proposing actions for change, several of the women mentioned education as an escape route from poverty.

> *Get your degree, find a job, and travel before you decide to include a significant other or start a family. (Nikki)*
>
> *If we had more options for jobs and education then we wouldn't feel so stuck. (Red)*

Takina wrote that she would like to obtain a degree so that she can counsel other drug addicted women. But welfare itself now requires that women work 20 hours or more per week to maintain their benefits. Work requirements and childcare considerations make it more difficult for women to attend college courses even part time. Although basic skills and GED completion are encouraged, higher education is not.

In the context of discussing welfare, women introduced factors that promoted their safety and solvency more often than factors that undermined it (38% as opposed to 25%). Many expressed appreciation for benefits that carried them though difficult times, particularly medical benefits, schooling, and job training. They drew on welfare as a resource in three situations: illness, disruption in shared living or financial arrangements with an intimate partner, and inadequate wages, benefits, or childcare coverage. In many of these cases, their assistance was temporary, and it enabled them (by buying time or providing direct resources such as medical treatment, training and education) to survive crises and ready themselves for better employment opportunities. This was the case for Jule, Robin, and Nikki.

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Despite their gratitude for welfare benefits, those who have attained employment and some stability in their lives do not want to go back on public assistance. Takina explains how she and her children wanted and needed more than a welfare check could provide—fashionable clothes, entertainment. Jule had to beg and borrow essentials such as furniture from her family while she received welfare.

> *Man, it feels good to be off welfare. I don't have to sit and wait for the check every two weeks. You never know when the government is going to stop the funds. I felt down when I was on welfare, as if I had pressure in my head. I could buy clothes but only on layaway. And the Food Stamps ran out quickly, especially if I didn't look at prices. At first I shopped carelessly, but then I got heed to it. When I ran out, I went to my family for help, but now I'm on my own and don't depend on anyone anymore. (Jule)*

JJ now works part time and accepts help from a boyfriend rather than applying for benefits again. She says, "I don't lie to get things. I don't misrepresent my work status just to get benefits." But some women with ongoing mental and physical health problems, most notably Red and Jane, fear losing their benefits and being restricted by time limits. They have applied for SSI but, unsure of the outcome, they live with uncertainty and fear. As Red put it, "I don't know what I will do when my time limit is up."

EMPLOYMENT

In the context of discussing waged work, women spoke in roughly equal proportions of factors that promote and undermine their safety and solvency. According to their narratives, work is a resource in two ways.

- Working provides financial resources. At the same time, the type of menial positions these women have been able to secure (as nurse's aids, housekeepers, maintenance workers, and cashiers) rarely provide enough for their survival. This may explain why work is associated with factors that both promote and undermine their solvency. Most have struggled to support not only themselves with low wage work, but their own children or other relatives who are unable to care for themselves. Several of the women received benefits while working, to supplement their low incomes (this was particularly important for Jule and Robin). Conversely, several women sought part time work while on welfare, although they were not required to do so under welfare regulations of the time. Ironically, their stories (some of which we describe below) suggest that public assistance itself may be the only way that some people with limited skills, small children, or disabilities can afford to go to work at all.

- But work is more than a means of earning a wage. Work is also a source of pride and a form of social engagement. Having worked as a housekeeper in a downtown hotel, for example, Nikki writes that she "loved her job at times" and "really liked meeting all of the celebrities." Several writers, such as Jule and Robin, wrote with pride about their work experience.

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> *I always wanted to make an impression on my teenagers. When teenagers see you working and doing good things in the house, they feel good, and they'll do the same. My mother was always a hard-working person and taught me how to be independent. (Jule)*
>
> *I am truly blessed to be able to say I love my job and I am no longer on Public Assistance. I can only pray that I won't ever have to use it again. (Robin)*

JJ, whose severe depression often interfered with her work as a cashier, was recently hospitalized. Although her doctor determined she shouldn't go back to work for six months, she chose to work part time almost immediately and to receive only medical benefits for her medication.

> *I work three days a week now, and I like it. . .I can't stay home every day like that. Can't do it. (JJ)*

Takina, frustrated with what she saw as a bare-bones existence afforded by welfare, became an entrepreneur. She started her own hair salon business under the table to supplement her benefits. She was happy to have the company and respect of her clients.

> *I would have a few women over per week. I did a variety of styles, and each was done with great detail and pride. This was definitely working for me. (Takina)*

Many critics of the welfare system claim that welfare recipients don't like and don't want to work for wages, and that welfare benefits only dampen their motivation further. The narratives these recipients have written challenge this assumption. Despite an inadequate wage and her employer's lack of health benefits, for example, Jule stuck with minimum wage job as a cook in a senior center while remaining on welfare. She banked on her growing resume and good work record as well as the additional training available through public assistance. This strategy eventually landed her a living wage job.

> *I worked from 9-3 during the week. Hill House paid me about $5.50 an hour, which was good, but not good enough. Later, this gave me experience and a good reputation that helped me get the job [as medical escort] I have now at Shadyside Hospital. (Jule)*

MOTHERHOOD

One might wonder why motherhood was depicted equally as promoting (29%) and undermining (28%) women's safety and solvency, given the obvious financial hardship it can introduce in a poor woman's life. Our analysis of women's descriptions of themselves as mothers suggests that women derive a great deal of self-esteem and satisfaction in caring for

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their children. About half of these writers' self descriptions in this context are positive, while only 35% of their descriptions of themselves as mothers are negative. For instance, Jule insists that although she never married the fathers of any of her children, and her pregnancies were not planned, her children are "not mistakes." She writes with pride about raising her teenagers, neither of whom, she boasts, drink nor smoke. She describes having dinner ready for her children when they got home from school, and "taking field trips with the class and helping with projects." Nikki claims her greatest strength and resource is that she "knows how to take care of herself and her children." And although Jasmine admits she is uncertain of how long she can hold onto her job when she constantly has to leave early to take care of her son's behavior problems, she says, "David is my life." In circumstances where women often feel disconnected and unfulfilled, children provide some comfort and sense of purpose to their lives.

KEY FINDINGS: ABUSE, WORK, AND WELFARE

What do these stories tell us about the way abuse and its consequences shape women's use of welfare and their work histories? In turn, what can they tell us about the way welfare and work generate opportunities or sources of risk and danger when it comes to coping with abuse?

We examined these texts for instances of abuse—lying, cheating, causing physical and/or mental harm. All eight narratives included some mention of abuse. Six of the writers mentioned incidents of personal abuse, and in each of these cases, the abuser was an intimate partner. In addition, one writer discussed a case in which her child was mistreated by a relative, another recalled a time when she witnessed police brutality, and a third reported abuse behavior from her mother-in-law. (At least two of the writers also disclosed to their writing mentors that they had been sexually abused as children, although none included this issue in their narratives.) In the supplemental sections of these documents, four of the writers alluded to the abuse of other women. The most detailed accounts of personal abuse come from JJ (about 10% of her text was coded for abuse), Nikki (12%), and Red (22%).

JJ, who had left her husband, felt she was being stalked by him on the way to work. Frightened, she stopped at the magistrate's office to report the incident, and as a result had to call in late to work. She wrote, "I went back to the bakery after that, but probably this whole incident contributed to my firing." Here, JJ exemplifies only some of the barriers women can face in trying to cope with abusive situations while holding down a job. Most obviously, physical and emotional battering might require hospitalization and doctor's visits, draining a woman's resources and allowable "sick" days. But protecting oneself can also require other time consuming efforts that can interfere with work schedules – filing police reports, spending hours in court, and changing residence (and job, if necessary).

Nikki detailed a pattern of abuse inflicted by her husband, including a time when she discovered he had been stealing rent money she had given him. Facing eviction, they were forced to move in with an in-law, who insulted and abused her. When she discovered that her husband was seeing other women (with the knowledge of her in-laws), she finally walked

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out. Nikki's decision to act in the best interests of her own safety ironically made her and her children more vulnerable in other ways. Her financial situation worsened. Welfare, however, enabled her to support her family until she found appropriate housing and a job that would allow her financial independence and therefore more "real" choice about being with her husband.

Red also described a husband who stole her money and belongings. He spent rent money on crack, jeopardizing their housing situation and forcing her to borrow money from her mother. After leaving him, she moved in with a police officer who took care of her financial needs but physically and emotionally abused her. Red recounted the many ways in which he exploited her dependency. She felt trapped.

> *He still had a key, and he was on the lease, so there was nothing I could do to keep him out. . . . I called the police, but because he was a police officer, he just got on his radio and told them to disregard the call. . . . Even though he was often with that other woman, he had still been paying my bills. (Red)*

Red finally split with him after a violent incident in which he hit her and she retaliated by holding his service revolver to his head. Although they now see each other occasionally, she explains that she resists his attempts to control her life financially and otherwise. He wants her to go off welfare, but she argues that only with welfare and the medical benefits she receives she can she become healthy enough to support herself once again. "I can block out his little comments and work on myself, and welfare makes it possible for me to do what I need to do until I can work a full day." But realistically, it may difficult for Red to maintain a healthy independence if her benefits are cut before this point.

> *I told my boyfriend I'll go off welfare when he's ready to marry me, but what I mean is I need welfare for now to help me do what I need for myself. I have applied for SSI, because my doctor has agreed that I cannot work right now. If it doesn't come through, and I don't get better, I don't know what I will do when my time limit is up. (Red)*

It is not surprising that many women stay with, or return to, abusers because of financial dependence. Welfare can encourage healthy independence and healing by providing safe housing and other essentials. Arbitrary time limits sometimes end this support too early in what can be an unpredictable and lengthy healing process. This is especially true for a woman like Red, who has multiple barriers to address, including serious mental health issues, ongoing recovery from drug addiction, and a weak social support network.

CONCLUSIONS: TALKING BACK

The current and former welfare recipients who wrote these narratives asked us, "What are you going to do with our stories?" One of the ways we used them during the last part of

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the community literacy project was to find evidence to inform our discussions of the myths and realities of being poor and being on welfare. One-on-one and in small groups, we talked about what journalists, politicians, welfare office workers, and other people with "rival perspectives" seem to think and say about poor mothers. We conclude this section of the technical report by discussing some of the ways in which these narratives speak back to common myths and stereotypes.

IT'S BEEN SAID: THEY'RE ALL A BUNCH OF UNWED, TEEN MOTHERS!

Not all welfare recipients are young women. Not all women who end up on welfare had their children out of wedlock. And not all mothers on welfare had their first pregnancies as teenagers. For example, Red, who has no children, was in her late thirties before she applied for Public Assistance. Jule and Takina show us that not all poor mothers are teens; these women had their babies in their twenties and older. JJ and Nikki were married when they had their children. Although some of our writers were teenage welfare recipients, others waited until they were older and/or married to become mothers.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE BENEFITS ONLY HELP WOMEN AVOID THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR SEXUALLY IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR.

Women are not necessarily sexually irresponsible just because they end up on welfare. Nor do they necessarily end up on welfare because they have been sexually irresponsible. Many chose to honor their religious beliefs by keeping their babies and caring for them at home. Several of the women who wrote these stories were planning families within traditional marriages. Nikki's story explains her attempts to plan her childbearing by using birth control pills and a diaphragm. Jule had her children in the context of committed relationships, and she continued to work and care for her children while she was on welfare. As did other women in our group, she faced the consequences of parenting alone, when the fathers of the children did not assume responsibility.

These women asked, "Why are the struggling mothers always the ones to be blamed? What about the dads? It's not always that simple." Many of the stories, including Jasmine's and Takina's, showed fathers who are only minimally involved in their children's lives. Robin's story shows that young mothers often feel torn between their conflicting maternal obligations and work, but they can still act very responsibly both on and off welfare. Rather than shuffling her child off to a relative, Robin chose the harder path of postponing school and working at low-wage, low-skilled jobs to support herself and her baby.

Although the women in our group named their youth, naïveté, and lack of birth control and relationship savvy as determining factors in some of their pregnancies, they do not view any of their children as "mistakes." They all think and speak of their children as the fruits of what they saw at the time as loving relationships.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE RECIPIENTS ARE TOO LAZY TO UNDERTAKE THE DIFFICULT PREPARATIONS NECESSARY FOR A BETTER LIFE.

Jule welcomed her chance to develop work skills. She would not have the job she has today without the extended informal training the subsidy from welfare enabled her to

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undertake. Robin's story shows that with hard work and determination, the resources of welfare used to make it possible to use school to better yourself. She earned a degree while taking care of her children as a single mom. Takina's example shows that welfare recipients often hunger for the education that will allow them to build the careers they want.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE RECIPIENTS ARE BAD MOTHERS.

Whether they stayed at home with their children or made the difficult decision to rely on care from others, the moms in these stories stressed that their decisions were made in the best interests of their children. JJ stayed in an unhappy marriage rather than raise her children as a single mother. Jane's choice to relinquish custody of her children was courageous and difficult, but it put them in a much safer environment as she struggled with her recovery from drug addiction. In the unstable and dangerous neighborhoods where low-income parents often live, it can be important for mothers to stay home and care for their children, as Jule, Robin, and Takina did. Jasmine fought hard for the appropriate services and programs to care for her child, who has a disability, and she finally won him the treatment he needed. Jule stayed home to care for her child, who had seizures. Takina's story shows how easy—and dangerous—it was to let her maternal desire to have the best for her children turn into illicit ways to make a quick buck.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE RECIPIENTS ARE ALL UNDESERVING JUNKIES OR CRAZIES.

While it's certainly not true that all women on welfare have problems with addiction and mental health, about half of the writers in this project did. If anything, welfare is even more important for women who face these barriers to work. Takina's story shows how the drug and party culture can be alluring and fulfilling when one's horizons are otherwise limited. The welfare reforms of 1996 make anyone with a felony drug conviction ineligible for welfare benefits for the rest of her life. These writers responded to this policy by suggesting it is much like kicking someone when she's down, because it is even more difficult to find a job with a criminal record. Moreover, welfare provides only limited treatment resources for long-term and recurring problems like addiction and mental illness. It is likely that women with these (often multiple) barriers will continue to struggle with employment and continue to need support. Many require expensive treatment and medication unavailable through low-wage jobs.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE RECIPIENTS HAVE MULTIPLE KIDS BY MULTIPLE FATHERS TO GET WELFARE CHECKS. WELFARE ENCOURAGES PROMISCUITY AND WOMEN HAVING CHILDREN THEY CANNOT AFFORD.

From an economic standpoint, it's not worth it to keep having kids for welfare benefits. Our writers agreed. Welfare, as they explained it, is a lousy meal ticket. Even with cash assistance, subsidized housing, and food stamps, these women simply did not have enough to get by comfortably each month. They had to beg and borrow from family and friends for both basic household items (such as furniture and coats for the children) and small luxuries (such as pizza for dinner). These stories express the relief and pride the writers felt when they no longer had to depend on small, stigmatizing, uncertain welfare checks, or when those checks supplemented their earnings instead of being their sole source of income. Women who had multiple children by more than one father did not do so just to increase

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their checks. In fact, many planned to marry and/or share financial responsibilities with their children's fathers. Jule argues that what matters is not the number of fathers, but the amount of love and the quality of parenting. She said, "I'm their only mother, and I'm their father too. I didn't want that to happen, but it doesn't mean I'm a bad person that I had more than one child." Most of these women were monogamous, and only initiated relationships with other men after the fathers of their children had abandoned their responsibilities. In a context where people are economically dependent, relationships are sometimes stressed and unstable. These women sought emotional and sexual connections to ease the loneliness and isolation so often affiliated with poverty.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WELFARE RECIPIENTS DON'T WANT TO WORK. PEOPLE ON WELFARE ACT AS THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT OWES THEM A LIVING.

Jule writes that work is a source of solace. Her story illustrates the point that the benefits that welfare provides—especially housing, childcare, and medical assistance—are often the only way that people with limited skills, small children, or disabilities can afford to go to work at all. JJ's story points out that work is a way for her to connect with people and sometimes makes her feel better. She continues to work part-time even though she has a mental health condition that exempts her from work requirements.

These stories illustrate many reasons why women have difficulty working. Takina's story reminds us how challenging it is to get a "straight" job with jail time on one's record. Mental and physical health problems feature prominently in the stories by Red, Jane, and JJ. Both Takina and Red speak specifically to the importance of "time out" from work while recovering from addiction or depression. And Robin's story shows how women face concrete barriers in the work place such as discrimination, harassment, and corruption. The stories in this project show that there are many women who continue working even while on welfare; they just don't make enough money to live without it.

IT'S BEEN SAID: THESE WELFARE PEOPLE ARE BUYING SHRIMP AND LOBSTER, AND ORDINARY TAXPAYERS, WORKING PEOPLE, CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY SUCH THINGS. LIVING ON WELFARE IS LIVING IN LUXURY.

Jane and Takina both tell stories that remind us that people on welfare usually have to "make do" or "do without."

> *We don't travel, own our cars or homes, get our hair done every week, wear good clothes, etc. Once in a while, though, we like to have a treat, like shrimp. It's not that we live high on the hog in all ways just because we splurge on one thing. We buy some things and have to give up other things. Even people who aren't on welfare make these kinds of choices. Sometimes a bill won't get paid. Life is more than paying the bills on time, especially when you want the best for your children. (Jane)*

Takina and Jane vividly show how hard it is to resist the temptations of "easy money"—and neither of them means welfare, which, as they explain, does not provide more than a barebones existence.

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IT'S BEEN SAID: GET OFF WELFARE—THERE ARE LOTS OF JOBS OUT THERE!

There certainly are minimum wage jobs to be had, if one can compete with the energetic and unencumbered high school applicant. But there is a difference between minimum wage and a living wage. These women underscored this point, showing how they could not support themselves and a family on $5.15 an hour. Moreover, such jobs did not offer them the important health care benefits and help with housing that they needed. Providing safe and affordable childcare for their children proved to be an insurmountable obstacle when relying on a low-wage paycheck.

IT'S BEEN SAID: WOMEN ON WELFARE ARE JUST DEPENDENT LOSERS. AMERICAN SOCIETY IS BASED ON SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. WELFARE RECIPIENTS ARE CLEARLY THE "UNFIT," AND THERE'S NO REASON TO LISTEN TO THEIR WHINING.

The community literacy project provided a unique opportunity for poor and low-income women to tell their stories. But it went beyond that. The project showed these writers that with support and time, they could analyze their own situations and the broader issues of poverty, work, relationships, and welfare. Their analyses allowed them to "talk back" in policy discussions in which they are important but generally silenced stakeholders. The process empowered them to avoid the rhetoric of complaint and blame, and instead to offer concrete illustrations of the challenges in their lives and the flaws and strengths of character with which they have confronted those challenges. The result is an informative set of narratives that encompass the complexities of real life. Policies to address the social problems of poverty, addiction, mental illness, loss, and abuse will be richer if we listen carefully to what these writers have to say.

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SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What are the costs of taking a beating? Compared with their peers, physically abused women earned less, worked fewer weeks, and more frequently worked part-time involuntarily. Overall, a lifetime history of women's work effort being sabotaged by men was associated with both lifetime and recent hardships. These findings are consistent with those reported by other researchers. Furthermore, the findings of this and other research suggest the effects of battering on women's labor force participation, earnings capacity, human capital, and experience of the hardships of poverty are complex, sensitive to differences in measures and recall periods, and highly variable across individuals.

Poverty renders women vulnerable to abuse. Abuse can trap women in poverty, and obstruct women's transition from welfare to work. Battered welfare recipients have strong incentives to increase their safety and solvency through education and employment. They may not have a prayer of doing so, especially without substantial support and resources. Welfare has historically provided poor mothers with a small measure of financial security, child care, transportation, and health insurance. They may be paltry, but the resources of welfare mean battered women have a high stake in complying with program requirements so they can maintain eligibility. Now that welfare is no longer an entitlement, the resources available to poor women are even more scanty and unreliable. Women's needs render them vulnerable to threats from abusive partners and to sanctions from an increasingly punitive welfare system.

Trouble paying the bills may make some women more vulnerable to entering or staying in an abusive relationship. Being in an abusive relationship may make it harder for some women to keep track of bills and the money to pay them. Men may deliberately withhold bills or money, or otherwise sabotage some women's efforts to keep on top of their household budgets. The causal arguments in all directions are plausible. Irrespective of the direction of causality, work-specific abuse and some of the hardships of poverty co-occur in a significant proportion of welfare recipients' lives. Even if we cannot determine whether battering has persistent consequences for women's hardships, or poverty consistently increases women's vulnerability to abuse, the fact of the association is clear even in a cohort with very small numbers. Welfare reforms, employment programs, and anti-poverty efforts would do well to consider both the effects of abuse and the prevalence of some forms of work-related control and sabotage. The community literacy project recorded episodes in which husbands or boyfriends stole rent money in order to buy drugs or a car or drinks for their friends. Such anecdotes suggest an important direction for future research: measuring how men use power and control not only to prevent or sabotage women's work but also to aggravate the hardships of women's poverty.

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These findings on the ubiquity and serious consequences of family violence and control in the lives of job readiness-job search program participants in Allegheny County lead to several general conclusions.

- This research further substantiated the notion that welfare recipients are willing to disclose sensitive, personal information about family violence, especially in relationships that have already ended. Findings from other longitudinal and interview projects suggest that women are less likely to disclose current abuse while the relationship is on-going. This means reports of current and recent abuse are especially likely to be underestimates of actual sabotage, control, and violence while women are making the transition from welfare to work.

- Extensive interviews with battered women who left abusers suggest that mandatory meetings with welfare office and employment training program staff can sometimes provide opportunities to disclose abuse out of earshot from the perpetrator. This makes it especially important that welfare office and employment training program staff know how to screen for and respond to control, sabotage, and violence and their consequences. It is possible that a relatively unintrusive inquiry ("Have you filed a protective order in your current relationship or against the father of your child? If so, was it in the past three months?") may serve as an effective preliminary screening device. However, although an unintrusive inquiry may be a reasonable screening device, it will NOT provide sufficient information for assessing risks, making referrals, or making decisions about eligibility for exemptions.

- Women who reported abusive relationships were not markedly different from those who did not. The additional life history details in this study further suggest that it is not the characteristics of the women that matter, but the characteristics of the men in specific relationships. For example, women who had filed for protective orders generally did so in only one of several relationships. These findings support the conclusion that universal screening for abuse is appropriate and efficient, as long as it is confidential and leads to appropriate referrals and action by the screening staff. The combination of the ubiquity and variation in the effects of battering on poor women's lives (interrupted school and work; potentially dangerous dependency on informal social networks; cognitive and emotional consequences and posttraumatic stress symptoms) mean information about safety planning and coping healthily with the negative emotional effects of past abuse could usefully be incorporated into life skills training for all welfare recipients.

- At the same time, women have different experiences and different needs. Abuse creates a range of different problems, concerns, and challenges for different women. Women's safety concerns may encourage or discourage their disclosing abuse. Some may need temporary exemptions from work requirement and time limits. Many more are likely to benefit most from lifeskills training, safety planning, and supportive services (housing, child care, transportation, treatment for addiction or mental health disorders) and education and training (from Basic

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Adult Education to vocational training to the higher education degrees that are the true ticket to earning a living wage) to facilitate the transition from welfare to work. The variations among women suggest that making "time-out" provisions to stop the 60-month life time limit on welfare conditional on women's complying with a service plan (however individually tailored) disregards the fact that the best judge of risk and safe procedures is the abused woman herself.

- Screening for battering and its consequences should lead to meaningful options for battered women. Services should not be contingent on "cooperation" or "compliance" with one-size-fits-all plans, or even on disclosing abuse in welfare or work settings. Political and organizational commitments, and methodological and empirical complexities, do not preclude some ground rules:
    - honesty about the strengths and weaknesses of different measurement strategies,
    - clear distinctions among the goals of research, policy, and practice,
    - consistent awareness of the variations among women, and
    - commitment to do no harm as well as respect for the importance of battering.
- The temporary waivers from work requirements and time limits allowed under the FVO may increase safety and successful outcomes for some battered welfare recipients. These findings certainly recommend against sanctioning battered women for not complying with program attendance requirements. But waivers are not the whole answer. The evidence from this research also confirms the notion that education and employment are important routes to solvency, safety, and self-respect for women. Women's healing from the physical, economic, and emotional damage of battering may include rehabilitation through school, job training, waged work, and incorporation into the common life. Exemptions should never be another way of pushing women out of school or training programs, denying them services, or meeting performance mandates at the expense of dealing with seemingly intractable social problems or difficult-to-manage individuals.

What does this research suggest should be at the core of the concerns of researchers, service providers, advocates, and policy makers?

RESEARCH AND MEASUREMENT

FINDINGS: Using measures of physical violence alone results in contradictory and sometimes counterintuitive research findings. Between 1 in 3 and 4 out of 5 respondents with PTSD symptoms reported that working brought some relief from their symptoms. They may have been distracted from intrusive memories, or supported through social contacts. Battered women may have better work-related outcomes than expected

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because in some cases, the ameliorative effects of working on symptoms outweigh the aggravating effects on battering.

RECOMMENDATION: Differentiate among measures of battering and its consequences. Researchers who use the Work/School Abuse Scale (Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff, 2000) should keep in mind the fact that it has no items to tap into men's use of work-related abuse to enforce norms of feminine domesticity. The Work-Related Control, Abuse, and Sabotage Checklist developed in this research, in contrast, includes items that extend the reach of the measure in some important directions, especially for the gendered dimensions of work-related sabotage.

RECOMMENDATION: Researchers and service providers ought to ask specifically about the relation battered women observe between their going to work and their being abused or suffering from symptoms. Breaking the links between poverty and abuse means mandating work only when it is unlikely to precipitate or aggravate abuse and PTSD symptoms. Asking women directly – not only in research settings but in service provision and practice settings – is an excellent first step in the sort of risk/safety analysis that will allow for effective referrals and appropriate exemptions, and prevent damaging sanctions.

WELFARE REFORM

FINDING: Battering aggravates women's experiences of the hardships associated with poverty (that is, housing insecurity and homelessness, utility shutoffs, hunger and food insecurity, and the like).

FINDING: Abuse shapes poverty directly rather than exclusively through the mechanism of waged employment. Abused women experience more hardships of poverty even if their work experiences are similar to those of other welfare recipients.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide abused welfare recipients with direct relief from hardships (for instance, through funds for paying utilities or housing assistance) rather than enforce work requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: Effectively implement the FVO through universal and repeated provision of information about battering, shelters, civil remedies such as restraining orders, and the availability of an exemption from work requirements and time limits.

PROGRAM PROVIDERS AND ADVOCATES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

FINDING: Physically battered women pay a wage penalty compared to other welfare recipients. The connections between non-physical abuse and some employment outcomes appear less direct.

RECOMMENDATION: Complement the traditional advocacy focus on stopping the violence with providing work supports. Such supports might include treatment for posttraumatic stress symptoms.

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RECOMMENDATION: Service providers and advocates can provide resources, training, and technical assistance to welfare programs, employment training programs, and welfare-to-work contractors. Services for battered women are likely to be enhanced by including discussions of and referrals related to work, just as services for welfare-to-work transition benefit from materials on battering.

WORKPLACES AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

FINDING: For many women, *battering is aggravated by going to work*. Certainly, for the majority of those who report either physical abuse or work-related interference and control, going to work either precipitated or aggravated the abuse, or seemed to have no effect. Only a minority (at the most, 25%) reported that working made the abuse slacken or stop.

FINDING: Work interruption and the pay penalty attributable to battering were generally, although not uniformly, worse for those women who reported that working precipitated or aggravated battering or PTSD symptoms.

RECOMMENDATION: Workplaces as well as programs associated with welfare-to-work transition should provide reasonable accommodation to battered women who require time off for mandatory court appearances (for example, to get an order of protection), visits to the emergency room, or physical or mental health treatment related to abuse for themselves or their children (or both).

RECOMMENDATION: The "life skills" component of many programs serving poor women is another logical site for providing poor women with information about and strategies for dealing with abuse. Make creative policies and program provisions conditions for placing and serving battered women (in the context of Workforce Investment Board proposals, for instance).

RECOMMENDATION: Universally screen for – and discuss – work-specific abuse and trauma symptoms as well as physical battering. Screening for and discussing battering and trauma could be useful in the context of life skills courses, employment training, job placement, and other programs to monitor and promote women's transitions from welfare to work.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider employment one part of a multi-dimensional strategy to enable women to escape the dual traps of poverty and abuse. Some women – those who experience an increase in abuse or symptoms when they work – will benefit from exemptions from welfare time limits and work requirements such as those provided in the Family Violence Option. Others will benefit from work supports – especially transportation and childcare – that meaningfully reduce their dependence on currently or formerly abusive partners. Most will benefit from discussing safety planning and the effects of work on relationships and trauma symptoms. Welfare policy and practice can most safely encourage work on a case-by-case basis depending in part on women's perceptions of the relationship between their working and their being abused or experiencing symptoms.

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DEMOGRAPHIC APPENDIX

This appendix presents tabulations of findings from the longitudinal interview portion of the research along with interpretive commentary on those issues not noted in the main body of the report. Percentages sometimes do not add to 100 due to rounding or due to the fact that in some cases respondents could choose more than one response.

RACE-ETHNICITY

Although most people in Allegheny County are White, the largest share of women in the work-first programs is Black. There are very few other racial-ethnic groups in Allegheny County. Most of the respondents in this study were Black.

Table A1. Racial Self-Identification

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Black	33	83
White	5	13
Native American	1	3
Other	1	3

At first glance, this racial distribution – in which Black women are employment training program enrollees far beyond their proportion of the county population – begs explanation. Only 26 percent of county residents are Black. Only 45 percent of the county residents eligible for cash and medical assistance from the Department of Public Welfare were Black. However, Black women are about 65 percent of female household heads in the county, and their poverty rate – 56 percent – is more than twice that of non-Hispanic White female household heads. Thus, upon closer inspection the racial imbalance in program enrollment seems to be at least partially explained by the racial gap in poverty rates for female-headed families (which is exceptionally wide in the county; Bangs & Weldon 1998, p. 15). Black adults and children are vastly over-represented among those receiving cash assistance (66% of recipients are Black; Bureau of Program Evaluation 1998).

Several other factors may have contributed to the over-representation of Black mothers in the cohort of program enrollees. First, the site (RTC) is located "downtown," that is, in the central city, where residents are predominantly Black. In contrast, White enrollees are more common at smaller, satellite sites in mostly White districts (the city is the tenth most residentially segregated of the 49 largest cities in the nation; Bangs & Hong 1996, p. 25). Neighborhood racial segregation and the geographic dispersion and unequal size of the sites thus partially explain the relatively small proportion and absolutely small number of White women in the cohort.

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Second, Black and White women may have been referred to the program at proportionate rates but White women may have been disproportionately unlikely to be enrolled in the program, either because they perceived alternatives or felt less threatened by sanctions for noncompliance.

Black-White differences in program participation outcomes and in patterns of battering and its consequences were few but striking. White women dropped out more frequently than did Black women. There were no significant Black-White differences in reported violence and injury. However, White women reported significantly higher rates of some nonviolent abuse, specifically threats enforcing their conformity to traditional notions of maternity, domesticity, and economic dependence on men. Both White and Black battered women may need help with safety planning and should not be sanctioned if battering derails their compliance with welfare reform timetables. However, Black women will benefit even more from structural changes that make waged work a more viable route to safety and solvency.

CURRENT AGE

The age distribution of respondents in this study is bimodal. The two largest age groups are in the 18-to-21 range (relatively new mothers), and in the 30-to-35 range. In fact, 61% of the women in this study are over 30. The relatively high average age suggests that a significant proportion of the TANF caseload is longer-term welfare recipients. This is not surprising, given the secular decline in welfare caseloads since the 1996 reforms. That is, those who remain on welfare at this point, and especially those who, like the women in the study, recently entered a work-first program, are either relatively new mothers or older women who face significant barriers to employment.

Table A2. Current Age (N=40)

AGE IN YEARS (M=31)	NUMBER	PERCENT
18 to 21	10	25
22 to 25	4	10
26 to 29	2	5
30 to 35	11	28
36 to 40	6	15
41+	7	18

CHILDREN AND MOTHERING

All interview subjects were mothers. More than half (60%) reported becoming mothers for the first time when they were teenagers, that is, by age 20. The average age at first birth was 19 years old. Respondents averaged one or two children, and generally had custody of all of them.

Pregnant women were not eligible for the initial interview, and there were no additional births during the follow-up interview period (12-18 months post initial interview).

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Table A3. Childbearing (N=40)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
How old were you when your first child was born? (μ=19)		
15 or Under	4	10
16 to 19	20	50
20 to 25	14	35
26 and older	2	5
How many children have you had? (μ=2.4)		
1	12	30
2	13	33
3	8	20
4	4	10
5	2	5
6	1	3
Do all of your children have the same father?		
Yes	23	57
No	17	43

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Table A4: Household Composition (% yes)

	RETROSPECTIVE N=40	1ST FOLLOW UP N=31	2ND FOLLOW UP N=19	FINAL FOLLOW UP N=26
Do you have a preschool age child living with you now?	40	58	47	42
Do you have an infant (child under one year) living with you now?	22	22	11	9
How many adults usually live in your household?				
1	75	77	67	68
2	15	16	22	24
3	10	7	11	8
Who are those other adults? Do you live with your ...	N=10	N=7	N=6	N=8
Mother	14	14	33	0
Aunt	0	14	17	0
Uncle	0	0	17	0
Sister	0	0	17	0
Brother	0	0	0	12
Grown child	28	43	0	12
Intimate Partner	28	43	33	88
Other relative	7	0	0	12
Other non-relative	14	0	17	0

Having a preschool age child (especially an infant under one year) to care for at home is often a significant barrier to full-time employment. Attrition of participants from the follow-up portion of the study makes it somewhat difficult to interpret the slight increase in the

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percentage of respondents with a preschool age child living in the household, especially compared to the steadily decreasing percentage of respondents with an infant at home. In the latter case, the infants clear "aged out" of the category. In the case of the preschoolers, "aging out" would also be expected. Attrition analysis indicated women with preschoolers were NOT more likely to remain in the study than women with school-age children, so it is unlikely that the increase is an artifact of attrition. Some women may have begun caring for preschool age children of relatives.

Having no other adult at home to help with childcare or housework is another important barrier to work. The vast majority of respondents lived alone with their children at the time of the initial retrospective interview and at all three follow-up interviews. When there was another adult in the household, it was most frequently an intimate partner or grown child (the latter was obviously the case only for the older mothers). The frequency distributions identifying the "other adults" in the household do not add to 100 because in some cases, respondents lived with more than one other adult.

RELATIONSHIPS

Most respondents had never been married and none of the respondents were married at the time of the interview. Altogether, the 40 women in this study had a total of 93 significant relationships (that is, unions that either resulted in a birth or the respondent otherwise considered "significant") at the time of the retrospective interview. About one-half of the respondents reported being in a relationship at the time of the retrospective interview. That group, plus the 9 respondents whose most recent relationship ended within the year prior to the retrospective interview, are the 28 for whom we report features of the "current or most recent relationship." That is, 30 percent of the 93 relationships were "current or recent," and 70 percent of the 40 women had been in a relationship that was continuing or had ended less than a year before the retrospective interview date.

Of the 20 women currently in relationships (at the time of the retrospective interviews), 40 percent characterized the relationship as "casual" or "dating." Ten percent were engaged. Nearly half (45%) of those with current partners were cohabiting, including one who considers her relationship to be a common-law marriage. Thus, less than one-quarter of the women were cohabiting – a finding consistent with the household composition data reported above.

The follow-up interviews revealed some potentially interesting patterns in women's relationship over the 13-18 month period of this particular transition from welfare to work.[9] Toward the end of the prospective interview period, very few women were reporting starting new relationships. Many mentioned that finding and maintaining work and mothering responsibly meant they were simply too busy to start new relationships.

[9] Attrition makes interpretation speculative; table available upon request.

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Table A5. Marital Status, Reason for Break-up

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
What is your marital status? Are you ... (N=40)		
Divorced	9	23
Separated	4	10
Never-married	27	68
Why did the relationship end? Was it because ... (N=37)*		
Weren't in love	5	14
Bad communication	3	8
Partner too controlling	4	11
Emotional dissatisfaction	5	13
Violence or abuse	8	22
Partner's drug or alcohol problems	8	22
Partner's frequent unemployment	2	5
Partner's frequent absences	3	8
Partner's infidelity	12	32
Wanted to be more self-sufficient	4	11

*Percents do not add to 100 because respondents could report more than one reason for breakup, and for more than one relationship; the 37 respondents with breakups had 73 breakups altogether.

Using the combined retrospective and prospective interview data, we calculated the total number of months in relationship, the total number of relationship spells, and the average months per relationship spell. The spell data for the respondents who did not complete the study are of course truncated at the study date, 13-18 months earlier than those who completed the final interview. The variation in the final interview dates means moreover that these comparisons are less precise than the fact that we have "start" and "end" dates for each spell might make it appear. When we averaged the number of months in relationships over the number of relationship spells, the median average spell length was 43 months. These 40 women averaged only two relationships they considered "serious" (including by definition the relationship with the father of their first child, although in at least one case that pregnancy was not only unintended but not actually in the context of what the respondent considered a "relationship").

Table A6. Cumulative Relationship Spells

	NUMBER (N=40)	PERCENT
Total Number of Months in Relationship (M=134, SD=94)		
7-12 months	1	2.5
13-24 months	2	5
25-48 months	4	10
49-60 months	2	5
61-120 months	12	30
121 months or more	19	47.5
Total Number of Relationship Spells (M=2, SD=1)		
1	7	17.5
2	15	37.5
3	8	20
4	7	17.5
5-6	3	7.5

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In the general population, fathers are older than the mothers of their children. As reported above, the mothers' average age at first birth was 19 years old. The fathers were on average 23 years old. The longer women postponed their first birth, the closer in age the father was likely to be.

Table A7. Father's age at birth of first child, contact

QUESTIONS ABOUT FATHER OF CHILD(REN)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
How old was the father of your first child, when that child was born?		
16 to 19	11	28
20 to 25	18	45
26 and older	11	28
Do you still see the father(s) of (any of) your child(ren)? (N=37) Yes	33	89

The respondents were remarkably forthcoming about informal support they received from the fathers of their children. Nearly half of the women in the work-first program said they received cash or gifts. Approximately one-fourth received formal child support payments, an improvement over the national record before the welfare reforms of 1988 and 1996 (but still pitifully low). Those who did not receive formal child support payments said for the most part that the father was unable to share his income with his child, either because he is unemployed or incarcerated. Nearly one-fourth, however, still had no support order, and in a substantial number of cases (55%) the order was not enforced or the father was missing. Thirty-eight percent of the women in this study reported incarceration as the reason for lack of formal support payments. *One respondent said she feared to establish paternity or comply with child support enforcement because of violence or abuse.*

Table A8. Informal and Formal Child Support (N=40)

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Do you receive cash or gifts (diapers, school clothes, toys) from the father(s)? (N=37) Yes	17	46
Do you receive formal child support payments? (N=37) Yes	9	24
Why not? Would you say it's because ... (N=51 relationships, 29 respondents)*		
No support order	7	24
Order not enforced	12	41
Pass through not worth it	0	0
Trying not to alienate father or in-laws	0	0
Paternity never established	0	0
Father unemployed	12	41
Father incarcerated	11	38
Father missing	4	14
Problem with visitation or custody	0	0
Trying to avoid father	1	3
Father is abusive	1	3
Other	10	34

* Respondents were able to choose more than one explanation for lack of child support.

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

At the time of the retrospective interview, 20% of respondents had a high school diploma or GED as their highest educational attainment. Twelve percent had only completed 10th or 11th grade and had no GED. Thirty percent had completed some sort of technical school, and the remaining 27% had started but not completed technical school. Few sought additional training after their initial spell of school (that is, after they dropped out of school or graduated from high school), even if they had less than a high school diploma or the equivalent. A few had extended vocational training program experience, and nearly half had two education spells in addition to the first spell. However, none had more than 2 years of post-secondary training or education.

Table A9. Cumulative Additional Education Spells (N=40)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Total Number of Months in School or Training after first spell (M=11, SD=11)		
No additional school or training	6	15
1-6 months	10	25
7-12 months	12	30
13-18 months	5	12
19-24 months	1	2.5
25-36 months	3	7.5
37-48 months	3	7.5
Total Number of School Spells after the first one (M=1, SD=1)		
0	6	15
1	12	30
2	19	47.5
3	3	7.5

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Table A10. Recent Work Experience, Occupation, and Wages (N=40)

EMPLOYMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
About how many weeks did you work in the past year, that is, since [date] 2000? (μ=20)		
None	9	23
1 to 16	10	25
17 to 32	9	23
33 to 52	12	30
What was your last job?		
Sales workers, retail and personal services	8	20
Administrative support and clerical	4	10
Financial records processing, data entry, clerks	4	10
Food preparation and service	8	20
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	3	8
Cleaners	1	3
Personal services, incl. beauty and child care	1	3
Other	11	28
How much were you making? (per hour) (μ=$7.55)		
Zero (no earnings ever)	1	3
Minimum wage = $5.15 or under	4	10
$5.16 to $5.99	2	5
$6.00 to $7.99	18	45
$8.00 to $9.99	9	23
$10.00 to $12.99	5	13
$13.00 and above	1	3

The "other" occupational category for last occupation was comprised mostly of various types of jobs (many clerical) through temporary agencies as well as telemarketing positions. However, the jobs were varied and included positions such as optician's assistant, gospel singer, U.S. Army and Navy positions, letter carrier, hospital project director, and preschool worker.

The respondents in this study varied both in their total work experience (measured by the total number of months they have been employed since age 16) and in the number and length of the spells they have spent on welfare. Forty-six percent have been on welfare for more than 60 months over the course of their lives (obviously, not all of it since the welfare reforms took effect in Pennsylvania in 1997).

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Table A11-R. Work and Welfare Spells

RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW	NUMBER (N=40)	PERCENT
Total Number of Months Employed (μ=66)		
6 months or fewer	4	10
7-12 months	3	8
13-24 months	7	18
25-48 months	8	20
49-60 months	2	5
61-120 months	10	25
121 months or more	6	15
Total Number of Employment Spells (μ=4)		
0	1	2
1	4	10
2	3	8
3	9	23
4	5	13
5	4	10
6	7	17
Total Number of Months on Welfare (μ=76)		
6 months or fewer	4	10
7-12 months	2	5
13-24 months	7	18
25-48 months	8	20
49-60 months	1	3
61-120 months	11	28
121 months or more	7	18
Total Number of Spells on Welfare (μ=2)		
1	17	43
2	14	35
3	5	13
4	3	8
5	1	3

Including both the retrospective and prospective interview data, nearly 80% of respondents were only in their first or second "spell" of welfare. Half of all respondents had average welfare spell lengths of about 24 months.

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Table A12. Cumulative Work and Welfare Spells

	NUMBER (N=40)	PERCENT
Total Number of Months Employed (M=73, SD=69)		
6 months or fewer	3	7.5
7-12 months	1	2.5
13-24 months	8	20
25-48 months	8	20
49-60 months	2	5
61-120 months	9	22.5
121 months or more	9	22.5
Total Number of Employment Spells (M=5, SD=2)		
0-1	2	5
2-3	6	15
4-5	15	37.5
6-7	10	25
8-10	7	17.5
Total Number of Months on Welfare (M=77, SD=78)		
6 months or fewer	4	10
7-12 months	2	5
13-24 months	7	17.5
25-48 months	7	17.5
49-60 months	2	5
61-120 months	11	27.5
121 months or more	7	17.5
Total Number of Spells on Welfare (M=2, SD=1)		
1	17	42.5
2	14	35
3	5	12.5
4	3	7.5
5	1	2.5

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CASE SUMMARY APPENDIX

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Summary From Retrospective and Prospective Interviews

ID	RACE	MAR STAT	AGE FIRST BIRTH < 20	AGE	CHANGE IN HOURLY WAGE	FILED PFA	ED SPELLS POST H.S.	TOTAL WORK SPELLS	TOTAL REL SPELLS	TOTAL WELF SPELLS	AVERAGE LENGTH ED SPELLS POST H.S.	AVERAGE LENGTH WORK SPELLS	AVERAGE LENGTH REL SPELLS	AVERAGE LENGTH WELF SPELLS
1	Black	Never	No	34	$.25	No	2	5	5	4	9	12	26	30
2	Black	Never	Yes	19	--	No	0	3	1	1	0	2	85	22
3	Black	Div	No	40	$3.85	No	2	4	3	1	16	26	14	174
4	White	Never	Yes	22	--	No	1	1	2	2	2	6	28	5
5	Black	Never	Yes	22	$.00	Yes	0	5	4	2	0	11	21	21
6	Black	Never	No	42	$.00	No	1	4	2	1	12	24	146	305
7	Black	Sep	No	35	$2.50	Yes	2	10	4	3	3	11	50	66
8	Black	Never	No	30	-$.25	Yes	0	2	2	1	0	3	10	18
9	Black	Never	Yes	19	$3.15	No	2	4	2	1	4	9	36	17
10	Black	Never	Yes	30	$1.00	No	2	5	3	2	6	16	65	63
11	Black	Never	Yes	28	$.59	No	2	9	2	1	4	12	32	1
12	Black	Never	Yes	21	$1.15	Yes	2	7	2	1	3	6	54	23
13	Black	Never	Yes	19	-$.50	No	0	8	2	1	0	2	17	3
14	Black	Never	Yes	21	$1.00	No	2	3	1	1	11	5	86	53
15	Black	Never	Yes	37	$.00	No	1	4	5	2	2	21	33	56
16	Black	Never	Yes	20	$.00	Yes	2	5	3	1	18	8	21	33
17	Black	Never	No	22	$.00	No	0	0	1	1	0	0	91	31
18	Black	Never	No	36	$.00	No	1	4	2	5	4	6	81	17
19	Other	Sep	No	44	$.00	Yes	2	6	2	2	7	56	143	59
20	Other	Div	Yes	41	$1.50	No	2	9	4	1	18	24	61	1
21	Black	Sep	No	33	-$2.35	Yes	1	8	3	2	2	15	44	32
22	Black	Sep	No	43	$.00	Yes	1	4	6	1	6	4	30	288
23	White	Div	Yes	35	-$1.00	Yes	1	4	4	2	2	31	98	16
24	Black	Never	Yes	39	$.50	Yes	3	8	2	4	12	21	115	12
25	Black	Never	No	32	$7.00	No	2	7	3	3	6	13	56	16
26	Black	Never	Yes	19	$.30	No	1	4	1	1	1	4	8	8
27	Black	Never	Yes	21	-$1.85	No	2	6	3	1	3	4	7	20
28	Black	Never	No	22	--	Yes	1	2	1	2	7	12	42	10
29	Black	Never	Yes	30	--	No	2	7	2	2	8	7	29	33
30	Black	Never	Yes	30	--	Yes	1	5	4	2	13	8	43	56
31	Black	Never	No	21	-$1.00	No	1	9	3	1	15	5	21	1
32	Black	Never	Yes	45	-$1.00	No	0	4	4	2	0	44	9	32
33	White	Never	Yes	18	$.00	No	3	4	2	1	4	3	34	16
34	Black	Never	No	33	--	No	2	2	1	2	13	7	80	52
35	White	Div	Yes	41	$.75	No	2	2	2	2	24	28	174	133
36	White	Div	Yes	43	--	Yes	1	6	2	3	8	25	127	13
37	Black	Div	Yes	35	-$2.50	No	2	6	2	4	6	14	115	26
38	Black	Never	No	29	--	No	2	7	1	2	5	3	140	22
39	Black	Div	No	37	-$5.35	Yes	2	6	3	3	4	20	63	45
40	Black	Div	Yes	39	$2.93	No	3	7	4	3	3	19	22	32

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Retrospective Data from Initial Interview

ID	WEEKS WORKED PAST YEAR	MOST RECENT HOURLY WAGE	ANY W/SAS BAD OUTCOME	TOTAL W/SAS	WORK NOT SAFE	FILED PFA	WORK SPELLS	REL SPELLS	WELF SPELLS
1	0	$7.25	Yes	3	No	No	4	5	4
2	20	$6.25	Yes	1	No	No	3	1	1
3	12	$5.15	No	0	No	No	3	3	1
4	24	$6.50	Yes	7	No	No	1	2	2
5	40	$6.00	Yes	2	No	Yes	5	3	2
6	0	$5.15	No	0	No	No	3	2	1
7	0	$6.50	Yes	8	Yes	Yes	7	3	3
8	0	$5.40	Yes	3	No	Yes	1	1	1
9	36	$5.35	No	0	No	No	3	2	1
10	36	$8.00	No	0	No	No	2	3	2
11	52	$8.00	No	0	No	No	7	2	1
12	8	$6.10	No	0	No	Yes	5	1	1
13	14	$6.50	No	0	No	No	4	1	1
14	20	$6.00	No	0	No	No	1	1	1
15	0	$7.25	No	0	No	No	4	5	2
16	24	$5.15	Yes	0	No	Yes	4	2	1
17	0	$.00	No	0	No	No	0	1	1
18	24	$10.51	No	0	No	No	3	2	5
19	0	$6.00	No	2	Yes	Yes	6	2	2
20	24	$6.50	No	0	No	No	6	3	1
21	20	$7.50	No	0	No	Yes	6	2	2
22	35	$6.00	Yes	6	No	Yes	4	5	1
23	36	$7.25	Yes	5	Yes	Yes	3	3	2
24	44	$9.50	Yes	4	No	Yes	7	1	4
25	0	$.00	Yes	0	No	No	6	3	3
26	8	$5.15	No	0	No	No	3	1	1
27	8	$7.00	Yes	0	No	No	7	2	1
28	4	$9.00	No	8	No	Yes	2	1	2
29	16	$10.00	Yes	1	No	No	7	2	2
30	16	$8.20	No	0	No	Yes	5	4	2
31	10	$9.00	No	0	No	No	7	3	1
32	40	$7.00	No	0	No	No	3	4	2
33	36	$5.15	Yes	0	No	No	6	2	1
34	48	$8.25	No	0	No	No	2	1	2
35	43	$7.50	No	0	No	No	1	2	2
36	24	$8.65	Yes	3	No	Yes	6	2	3
37	26	$13.00	No	0	No	No	5	2	4
38	16	$10.25	No	0	No	No	7	1	2
39	36	$11.60	No	5	Yes	Yes	3	3	3
40	0	$9.13	No	0	No	No	6	4	3

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Prospective Data on Transition from Welfare to Work

ID	LATEST HOURLY WAGE	CHANGE IN HOURLY WAGE	ANY MEASURE OF ABUSE	WORK NOT SAFE	FILED PFA	NEW JOB	NEW REL	NEW SCHOOL SPELL
1	$7.50	$.25	No	No	No	1	No	No
3	$9.00	$3.85	No	No	No	1	No	No
5	$.00	$.00	Yes	Yes	No	0	No	No
6	$.00	$.00	Yes	No	No	0	No	No
7	$9.00	$2.50	Yes	No	No	3	No	No
8	$5.15	-$.25	No	No	No	1	No	No
9	$8.50	$3.15	Yes	No	No	1	No	Yes
10	$9.00	$1.00	No	No	No	2	No	No
11	$8.59	$.59	No	No	No	1	No	Yes
12	$7.25	$1.15	No	No	No	1	Yes	No
13	$6.00	-$.50	No	No	No	2	No	No
14	$7.00	$1.00	No	No	No	3	No	No
15	$.00	$.00	No	No	No	0	No	No
16	$5.15	$.00	Yes	No	No	1	Yes	Yes
17	$.00	$.00	No	No	No	0	No	No
18	$10.51	$.00	No	No	No	1	No	No
19	$6.00	$.00	Yes	No	Yes	1	No	Yes
20	$8.00	$1.50	Yes	No	No	2	Yes	No
21	$5.15	-$2.35	No	No	No	1	Yes	No
22	$.00	$.00	No	No	No	0	No	No
23	$6.25	-$1.00	No	No	Yes	1	No	No
24	$10.00	$.50	No	No	No	2	No	Yes
25	$7.00	$7.00	No	No	No	1	No	No
26	$5.45	$.30	Yes	No	No	1	No	No
27	$5.15	-$1.85	Yes	No	No	4	Yes	No
31	$8.00	-$1.00	No	No	No	1	No	No
32	$6.00	-$1.00	No	No	No	1	No	No
33	$.00	$.00	Yes	No	No	0	No	No
35	$8.25	$.75	Yes	No	No	1	No	No
37	$10.50	-$2.50	No	No	No	1	No	No
39	$6.25	-$5.35	No	No	No	3	No	No
40	$12.06	$2.93	No	No	No	1	No	Yes

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RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW PROFILE APPENDIX

The printed "profiles" from the retrospective interviews created side-by-side time lines for spells of education, employment, welfare, and relationships. If there were any indicators of abuse, a relationship spell was printed as a darker bar. We used the profiles to debrief respondents at the conclusion of the retrospective interviews and to generate a qualitative, "at-a-glance" means of comparing spell patterns for respondents. Although we collected data on spells that started before 1980, these profiles only include spell data since 1980. Therefore, the profiles of the older respondents are visually truncated.

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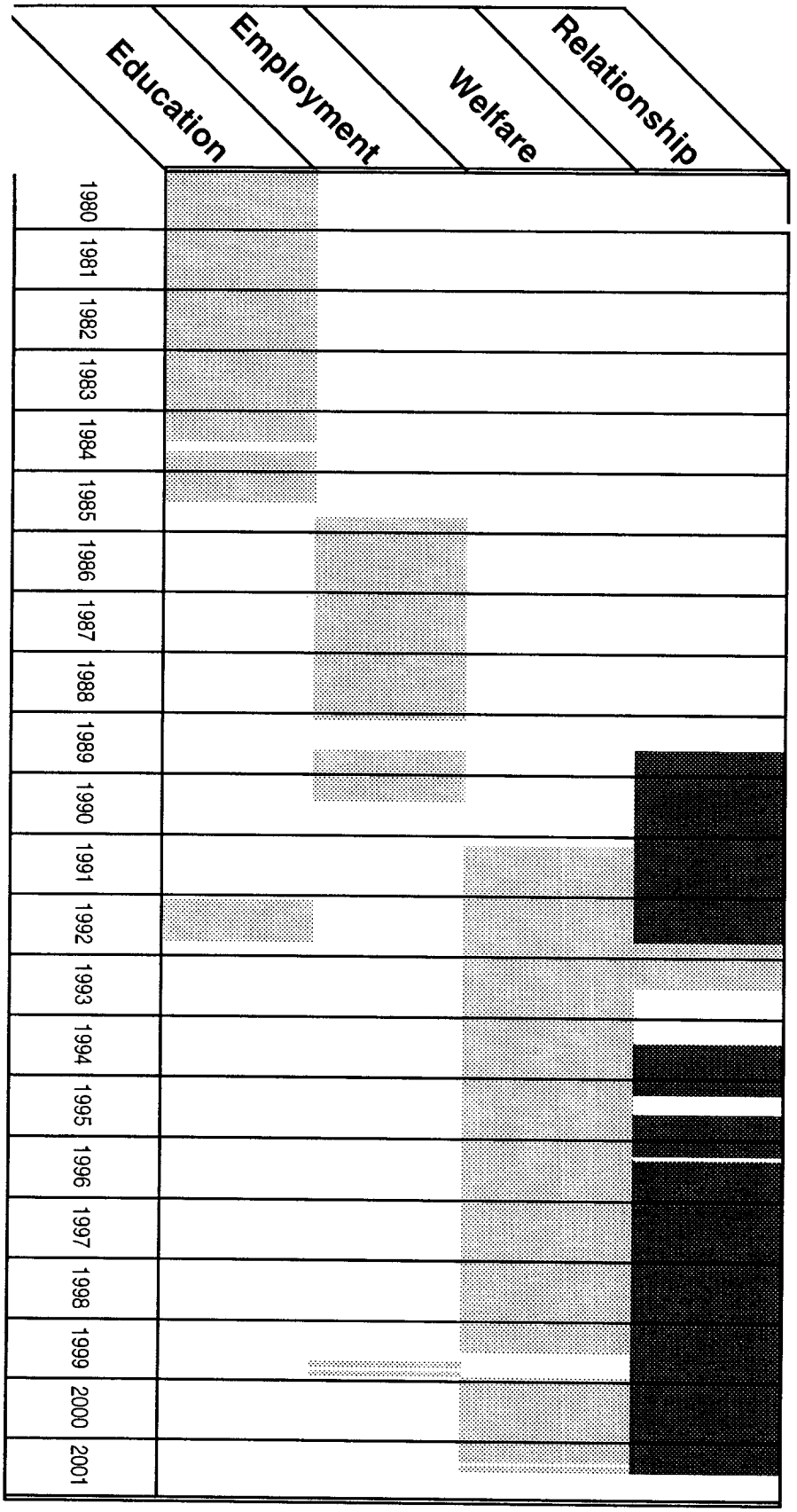

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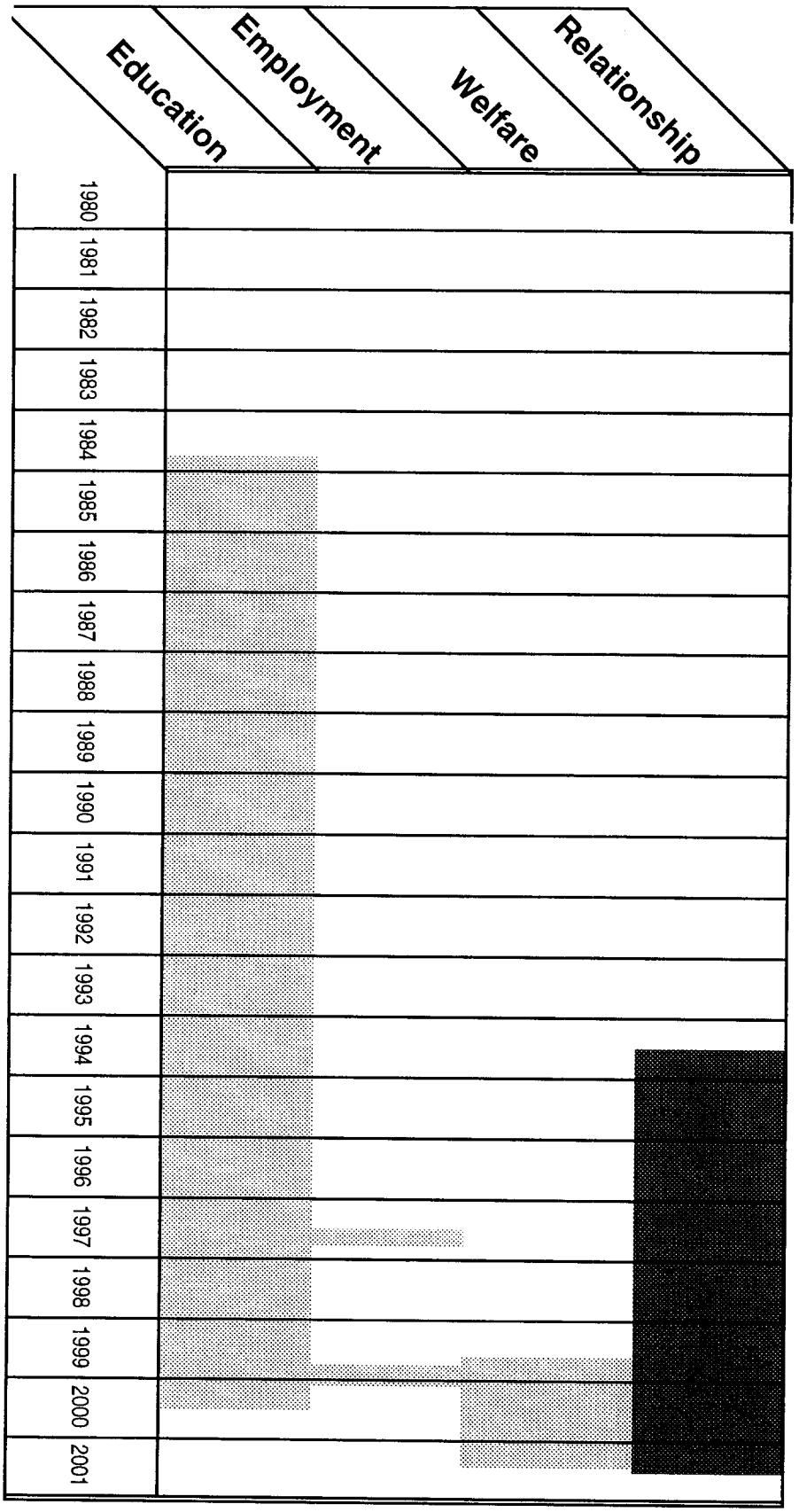

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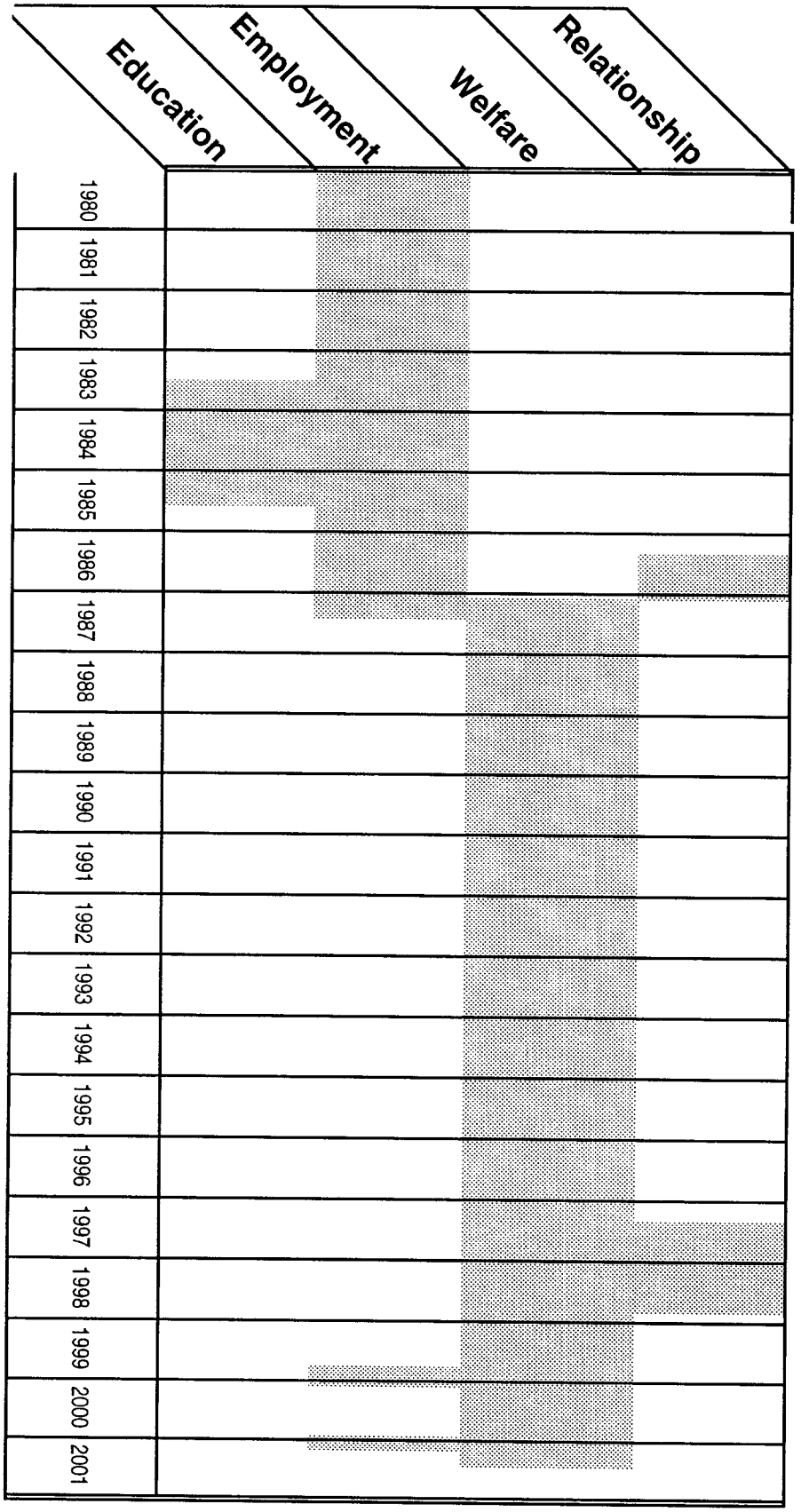

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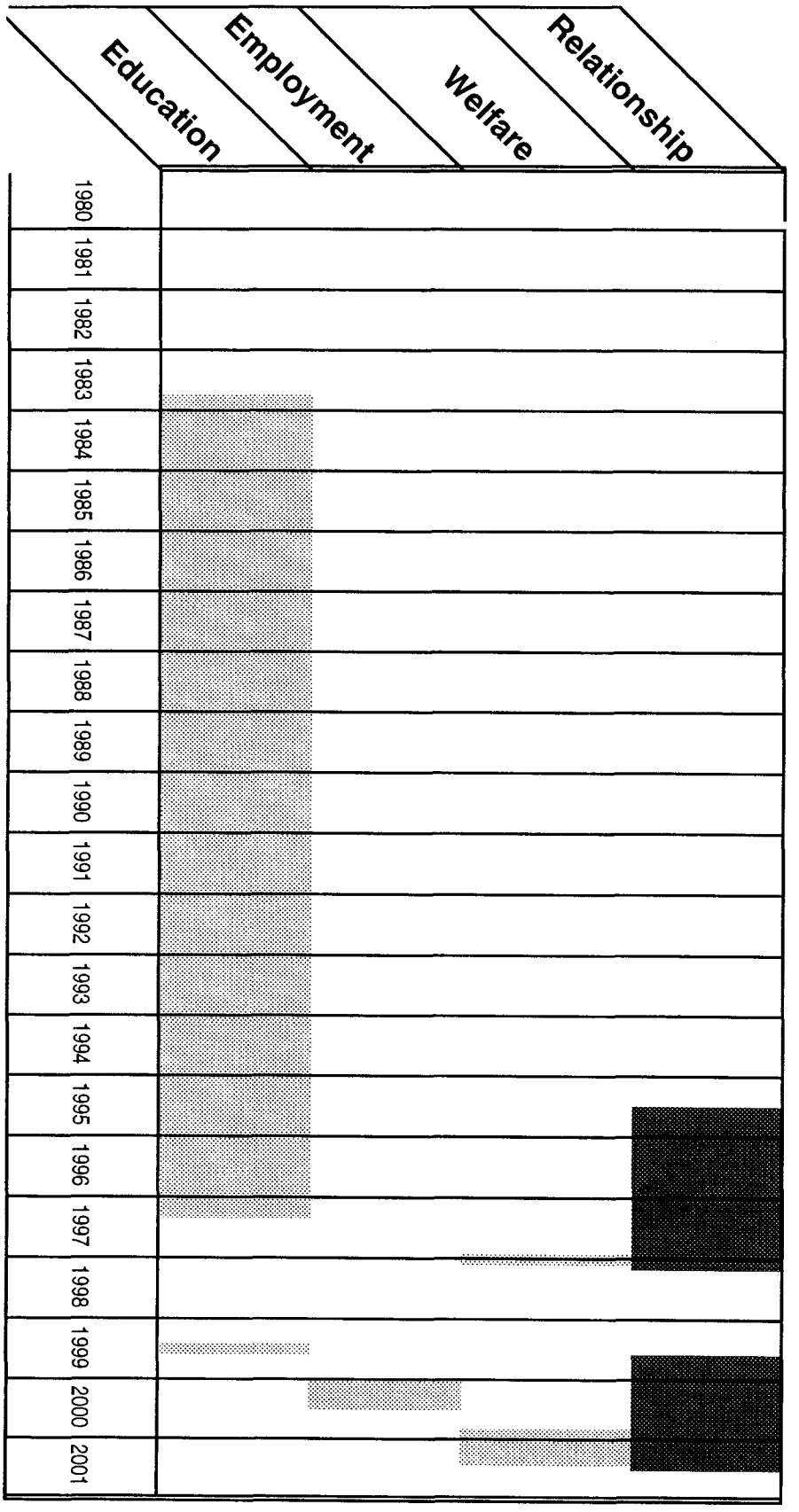

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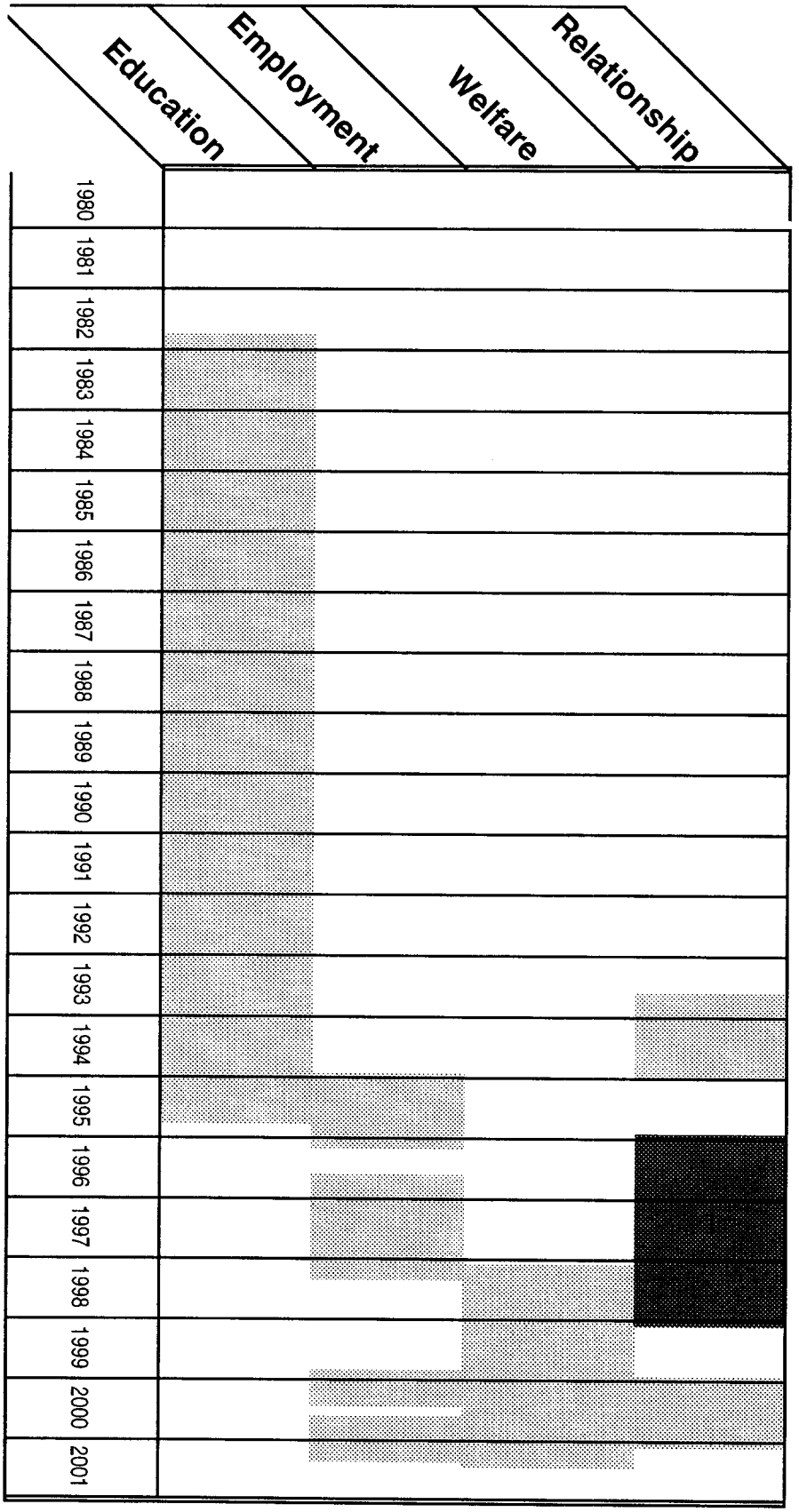

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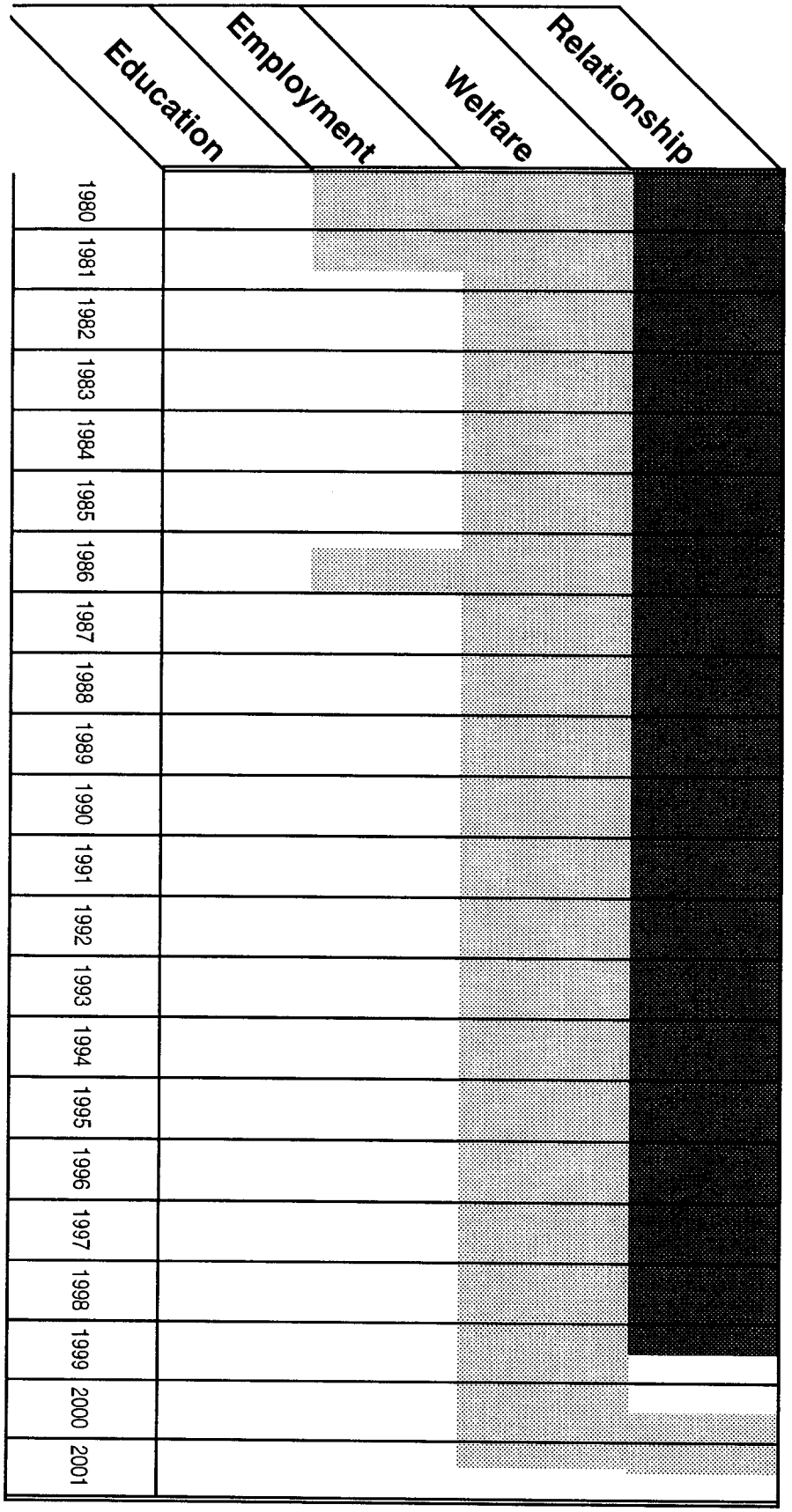

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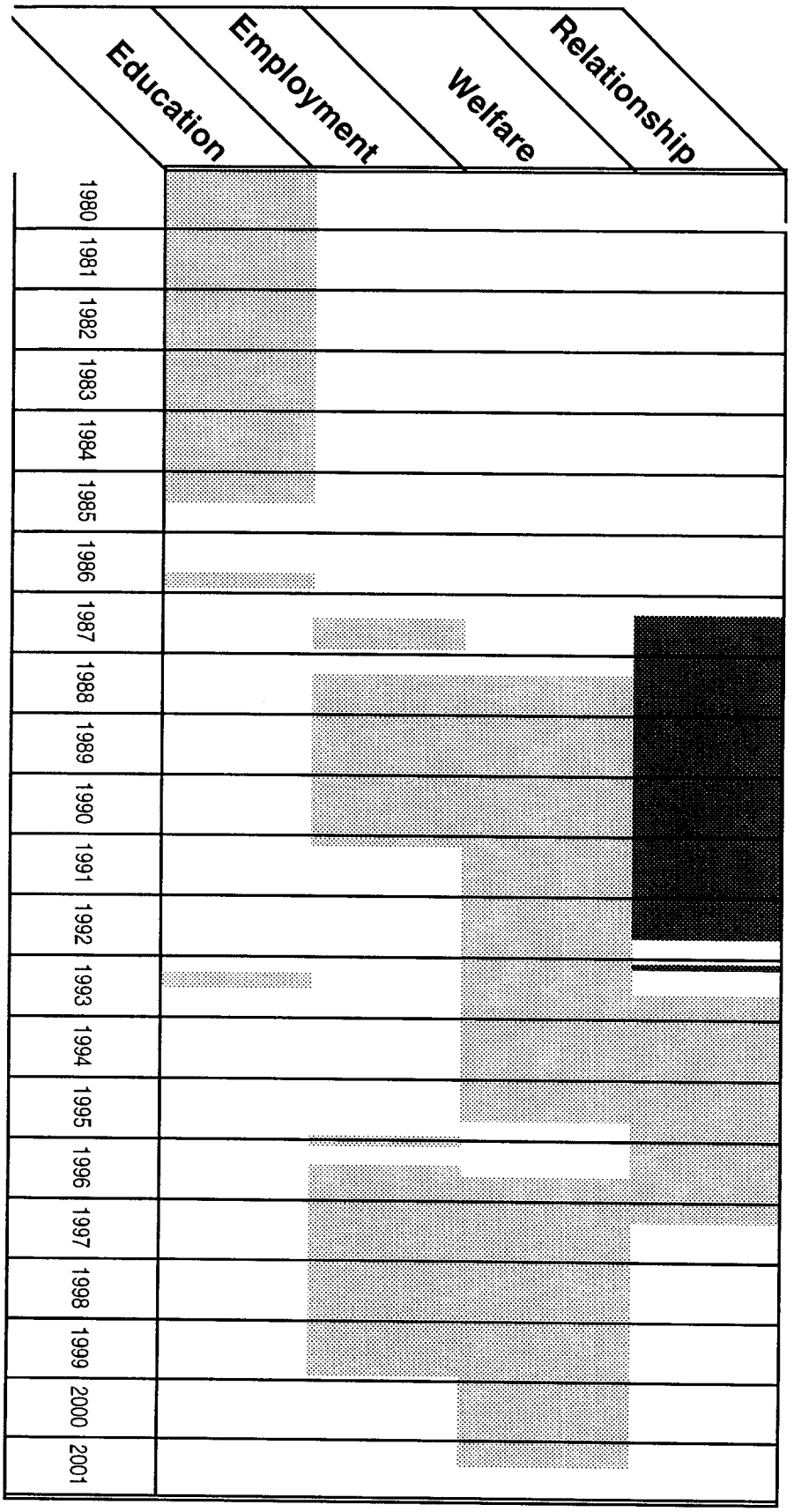

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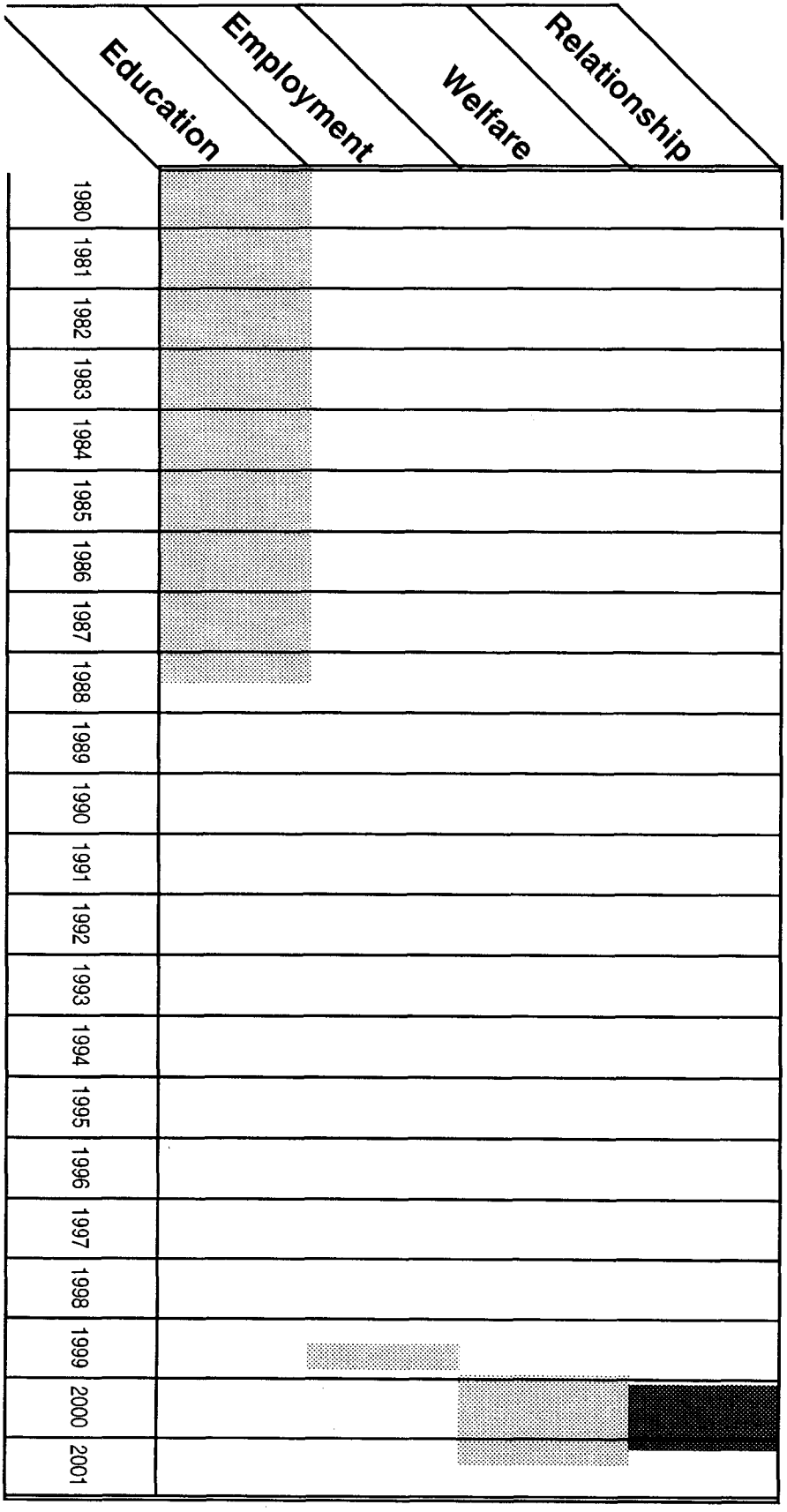

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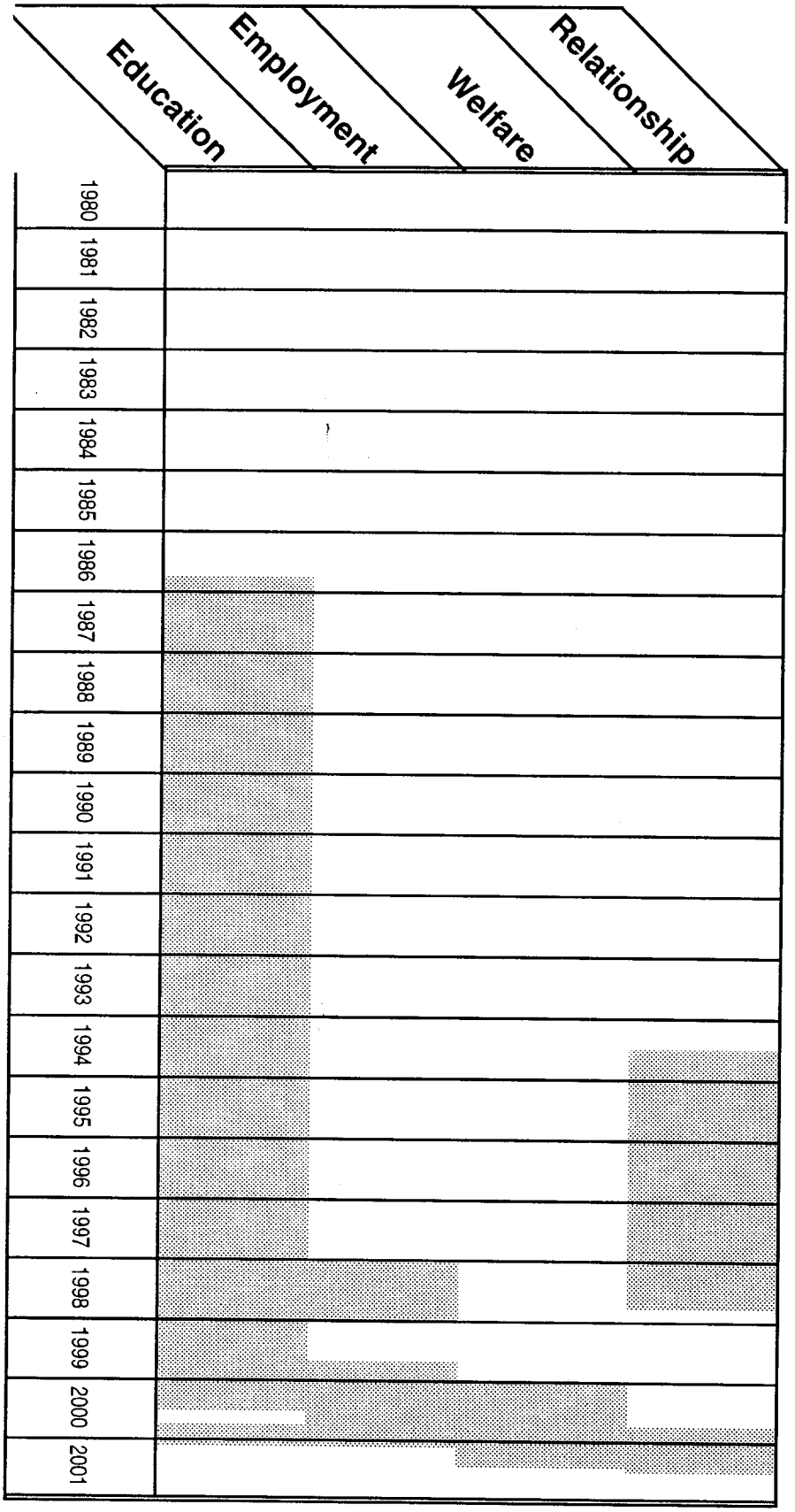

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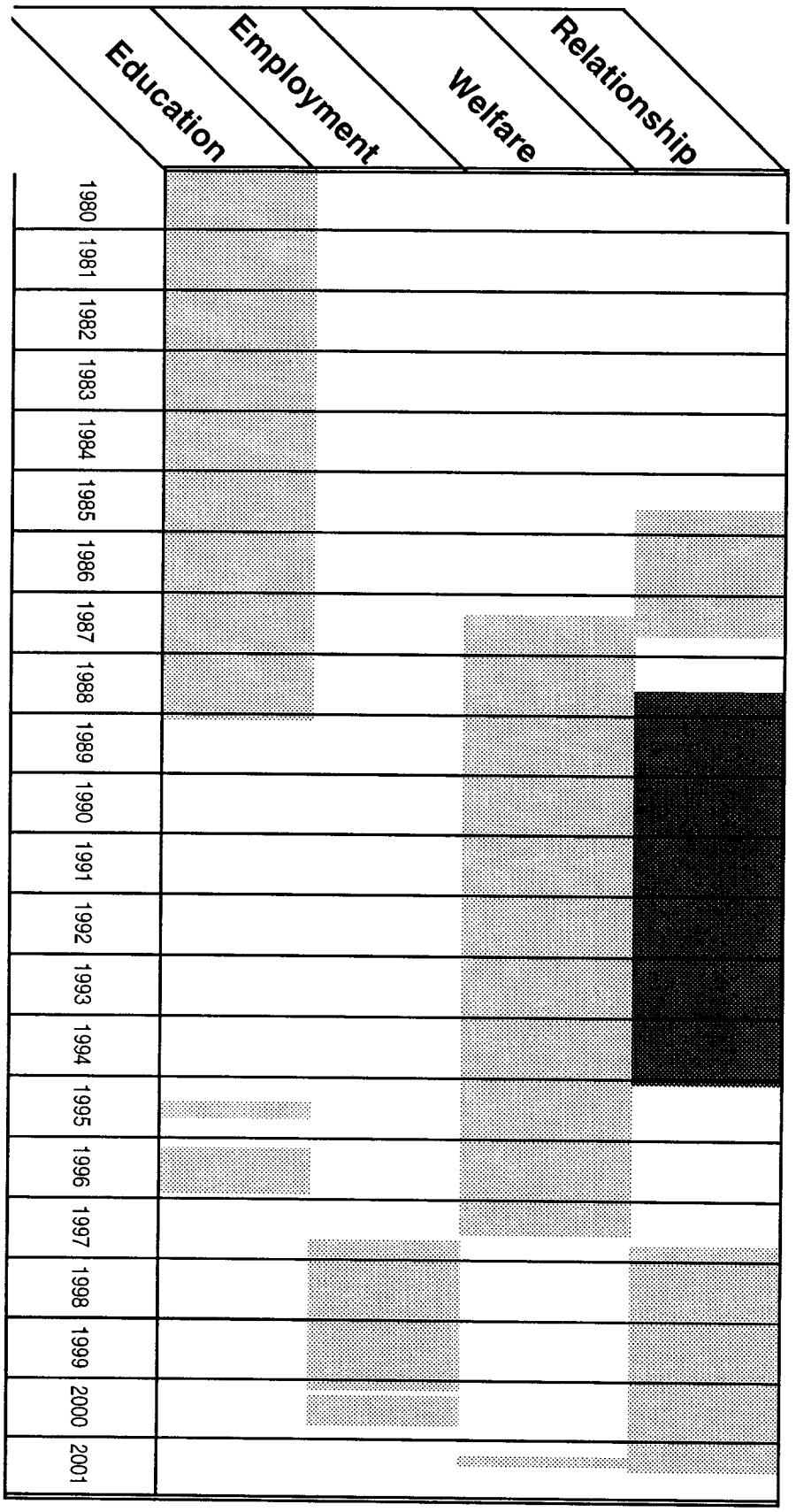

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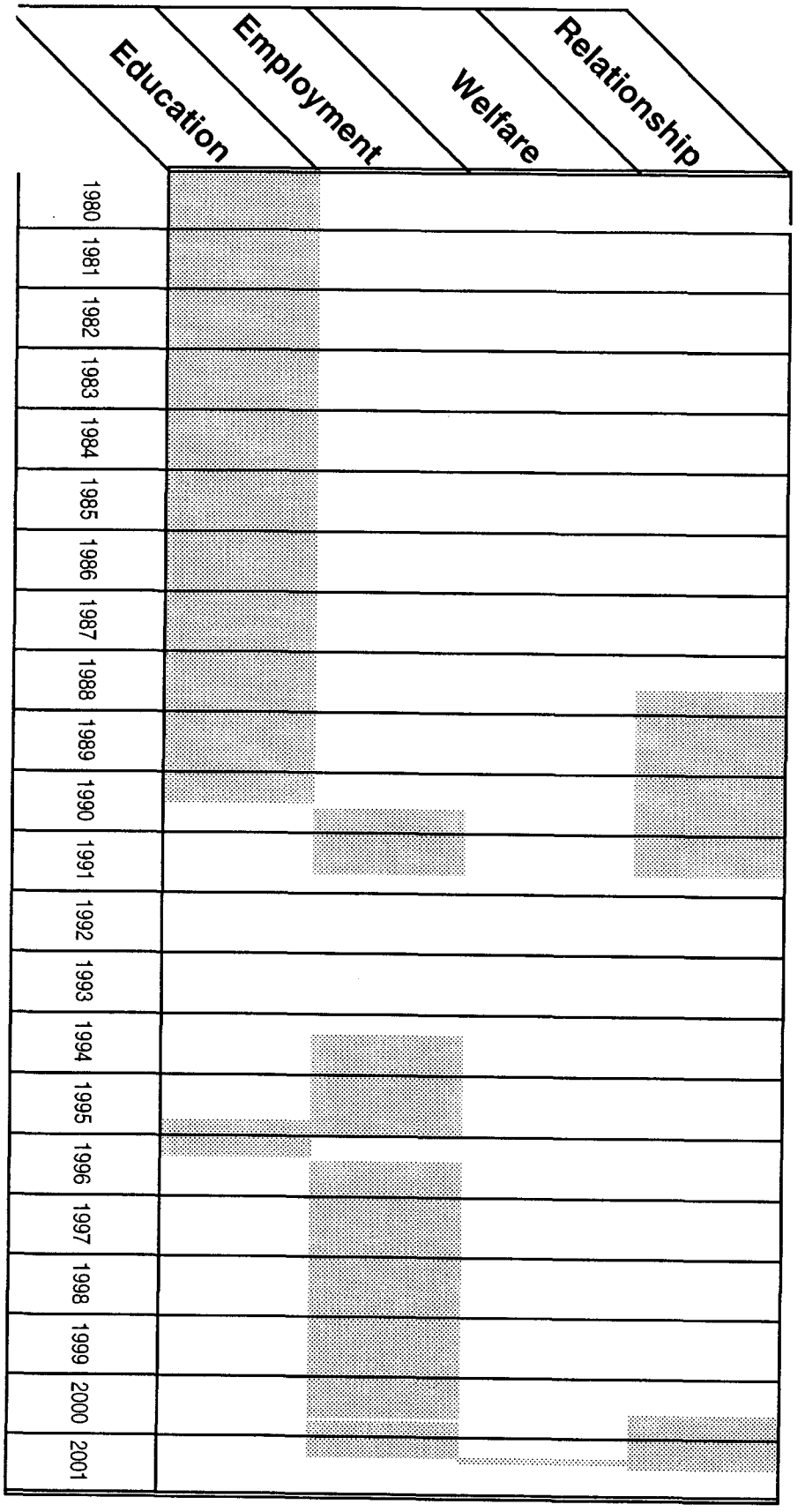

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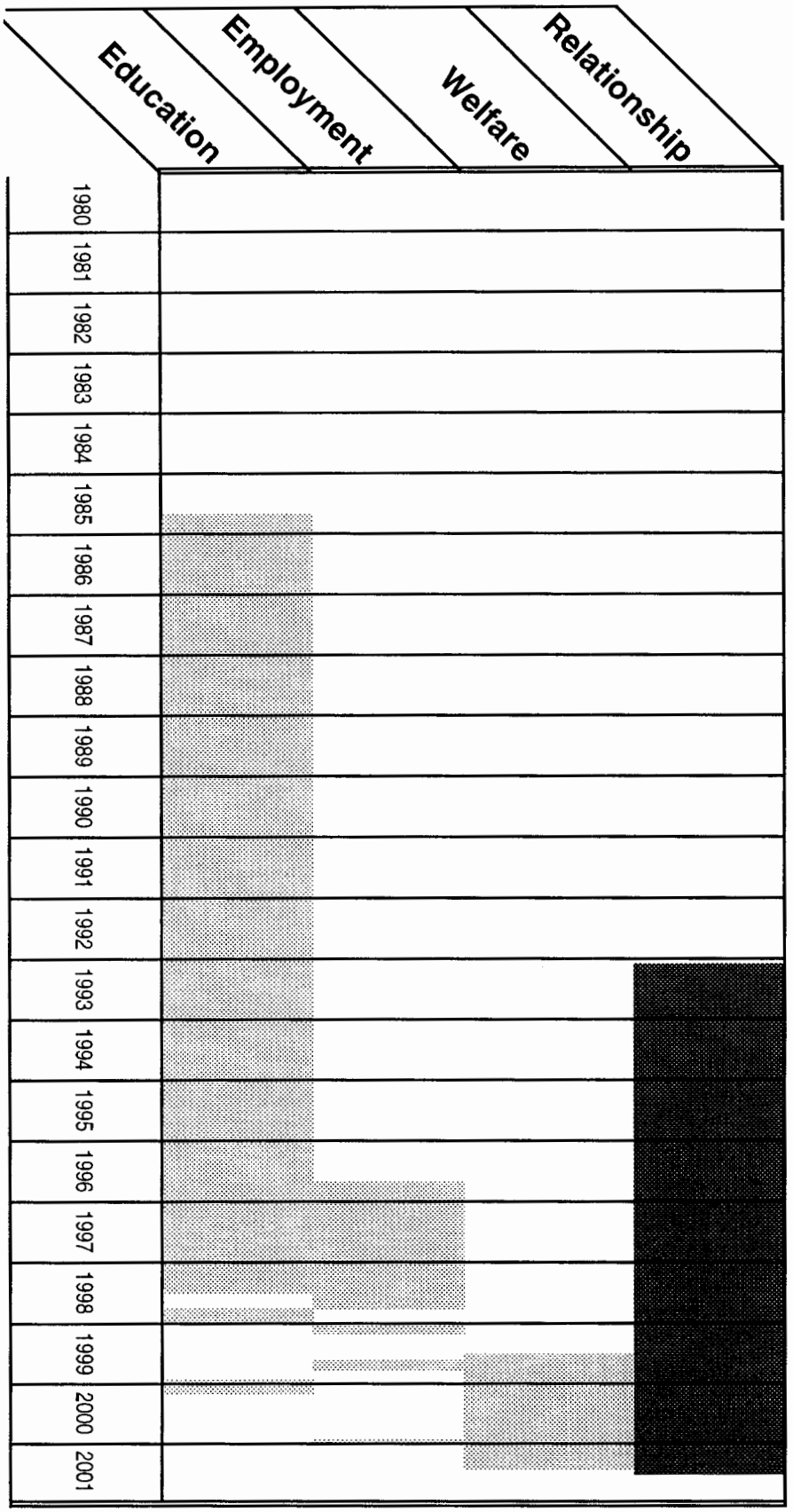

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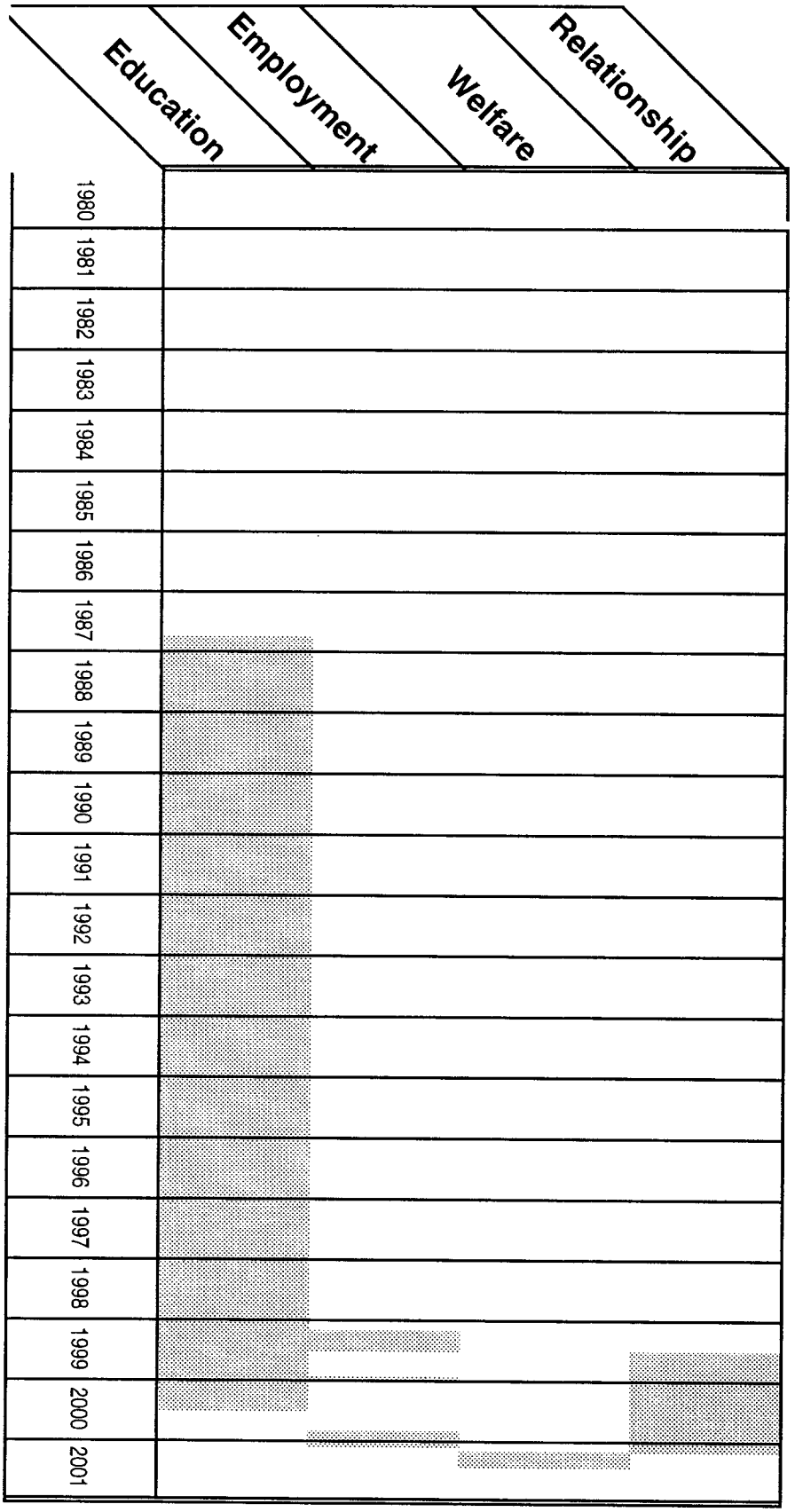

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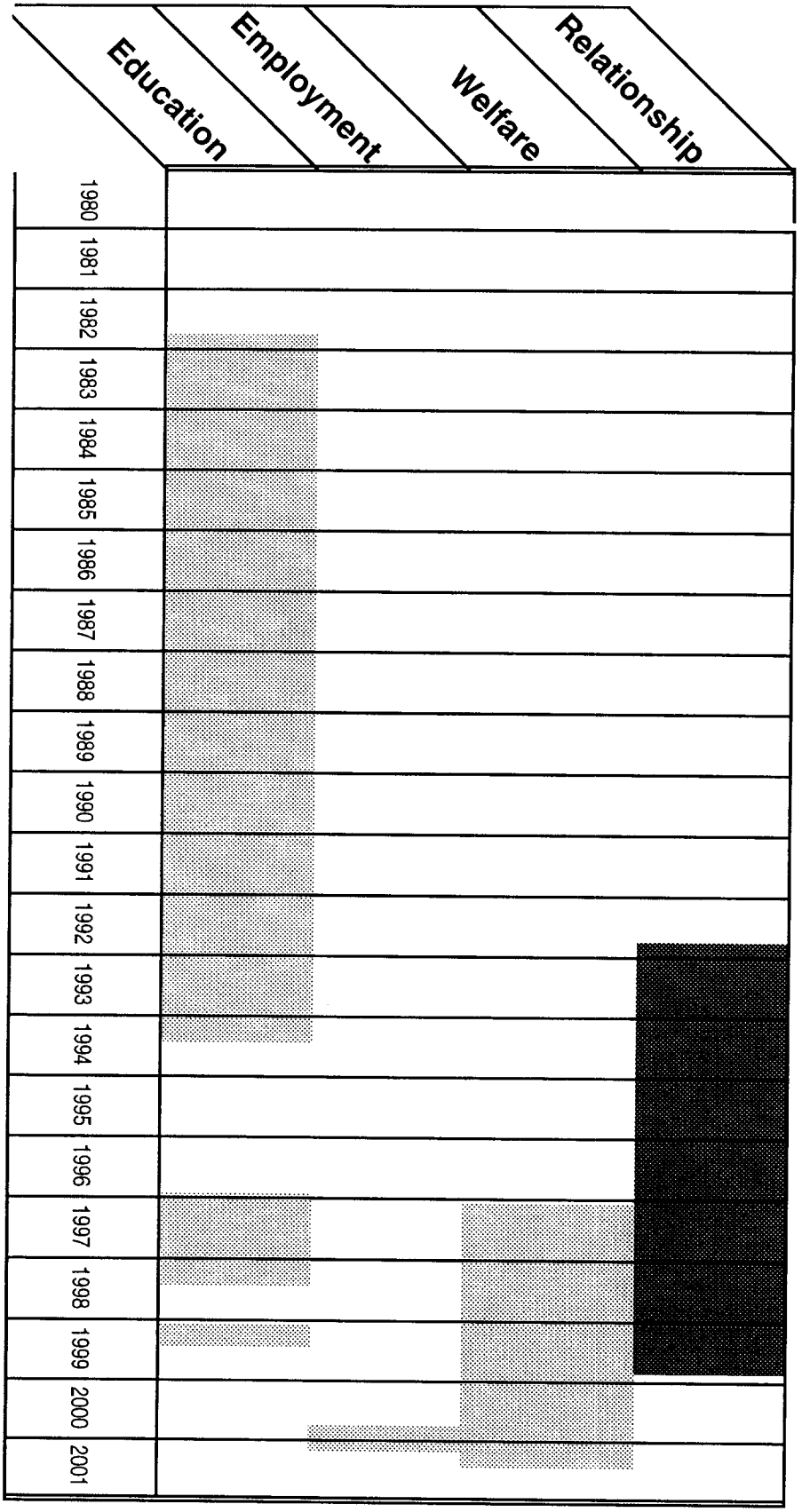

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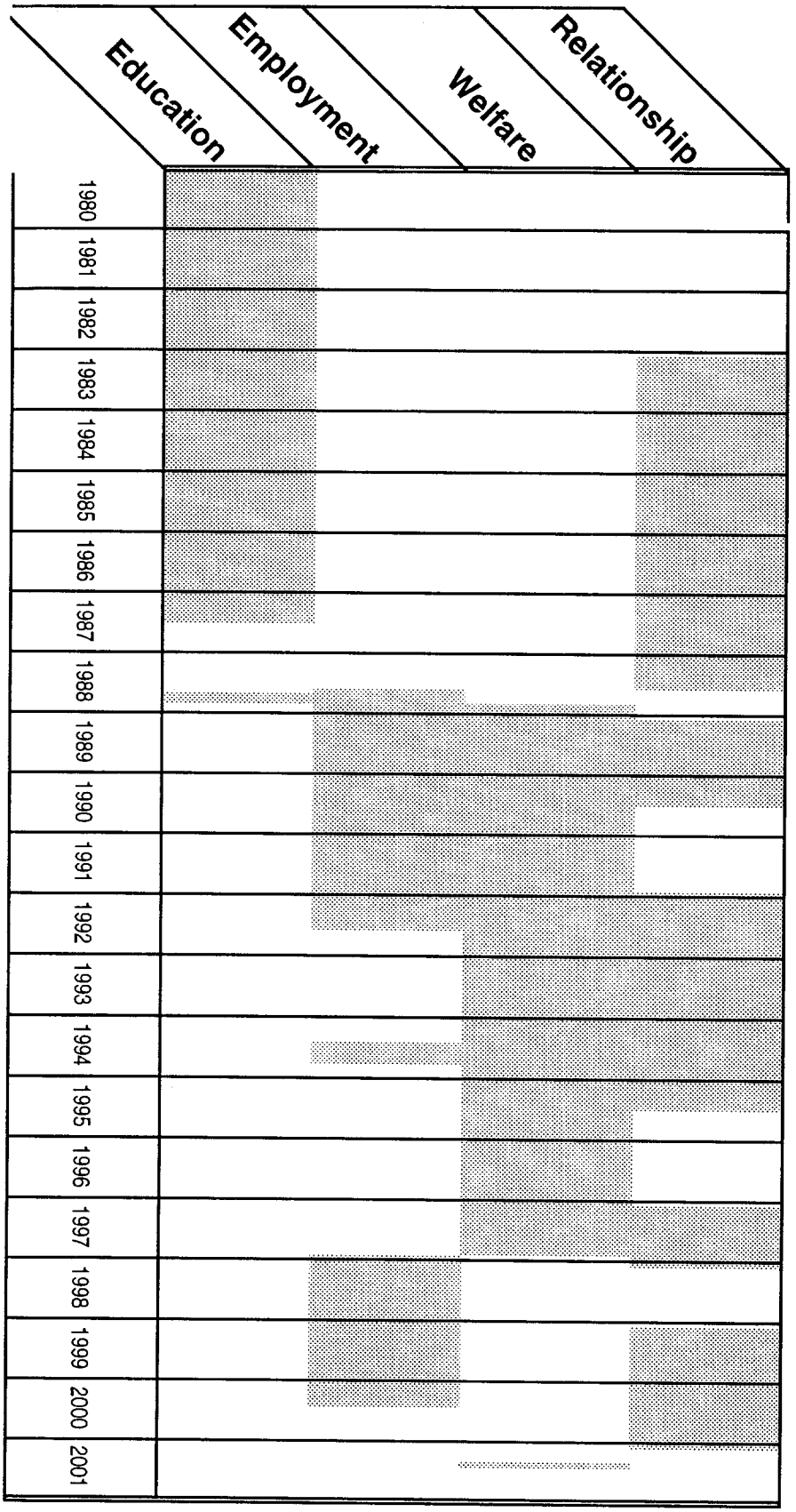

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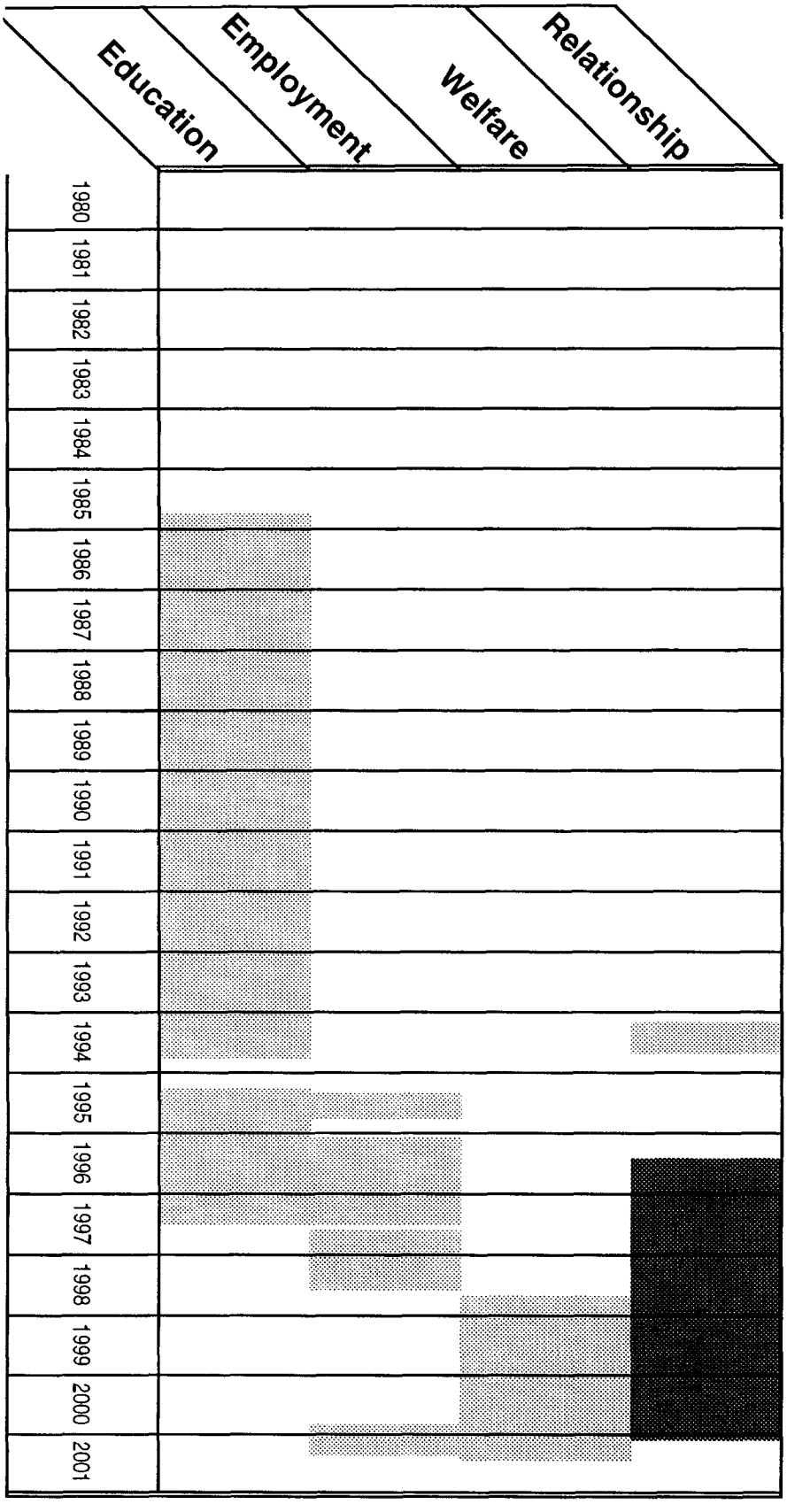

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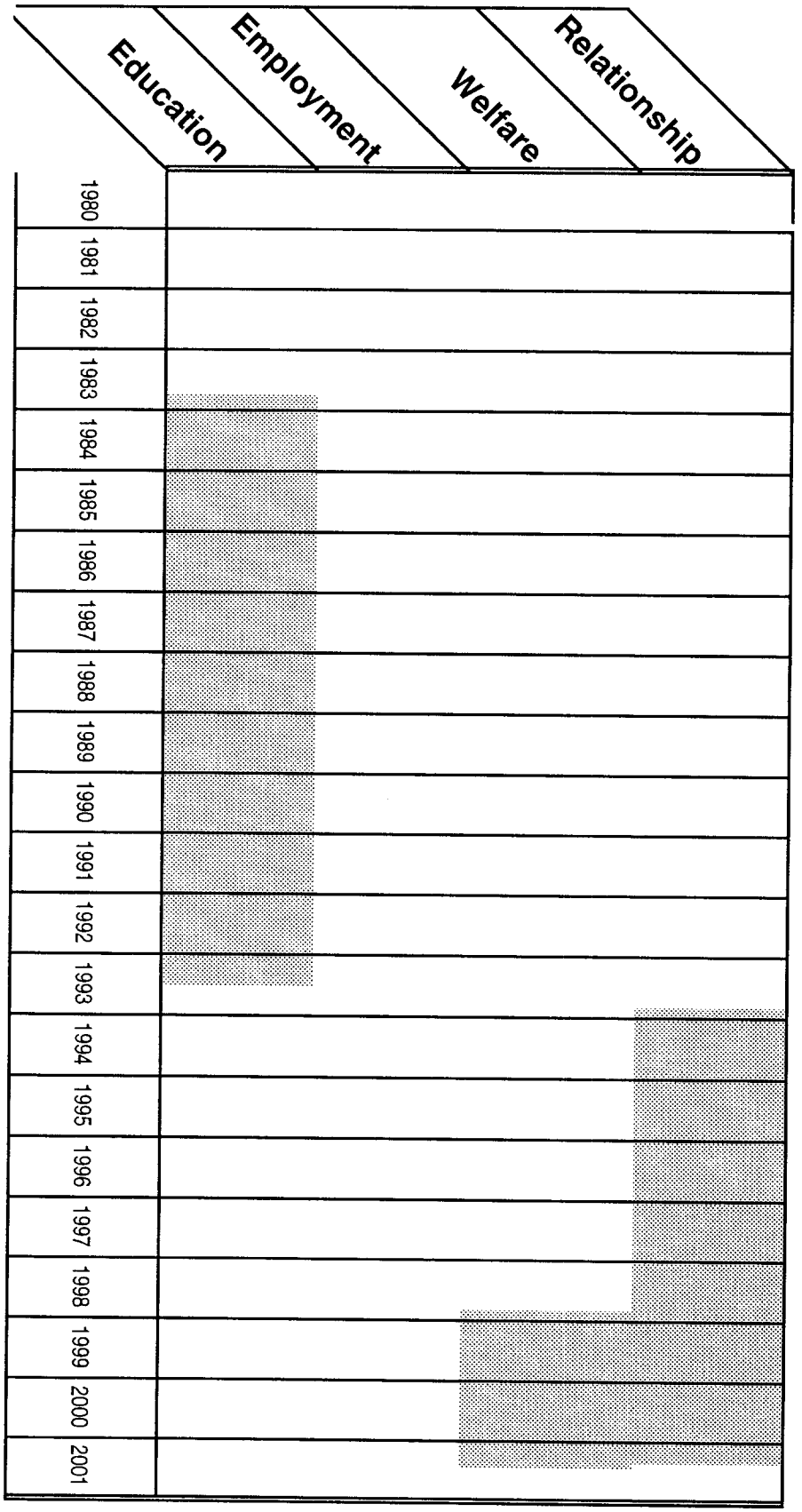

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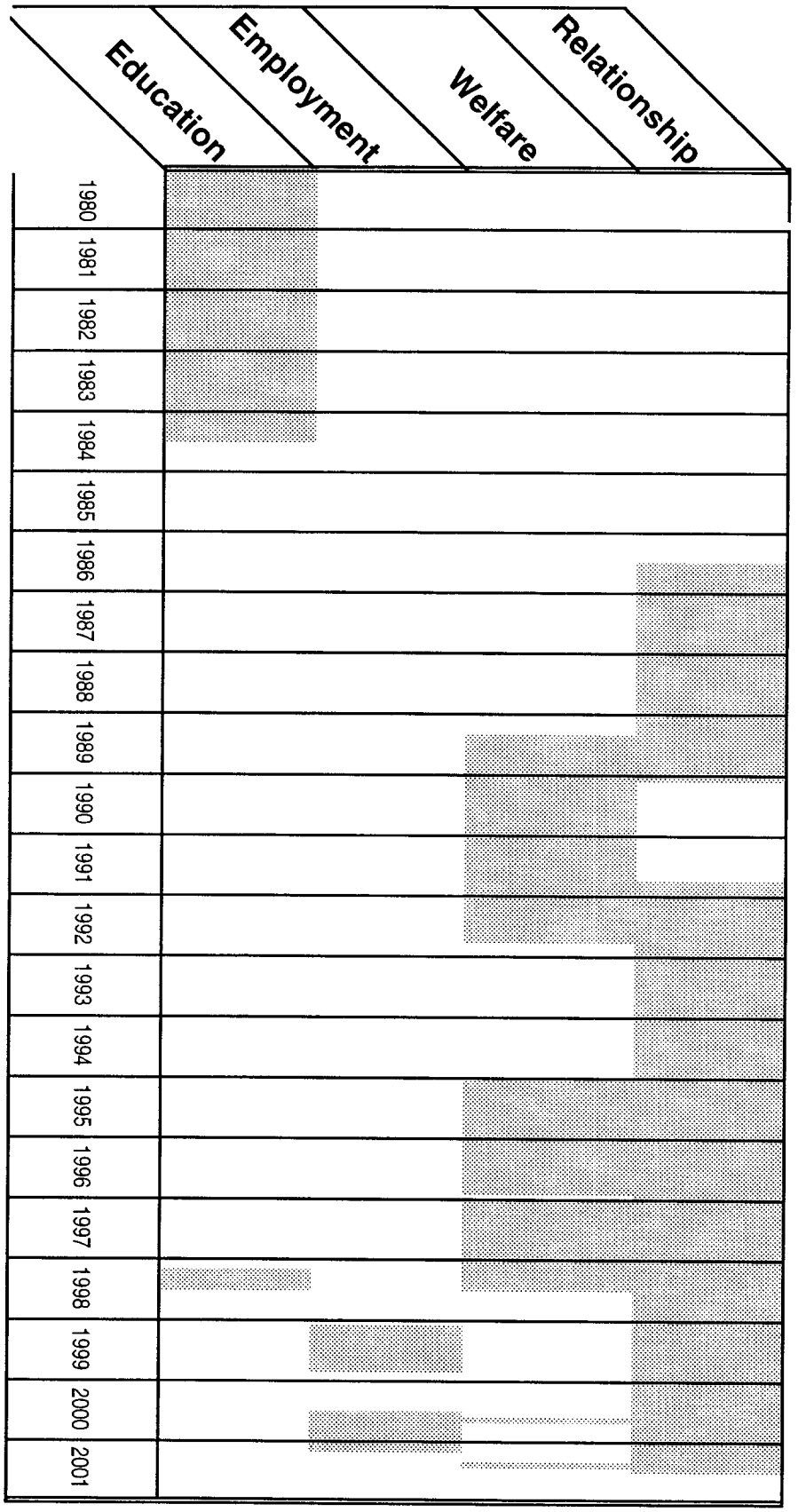

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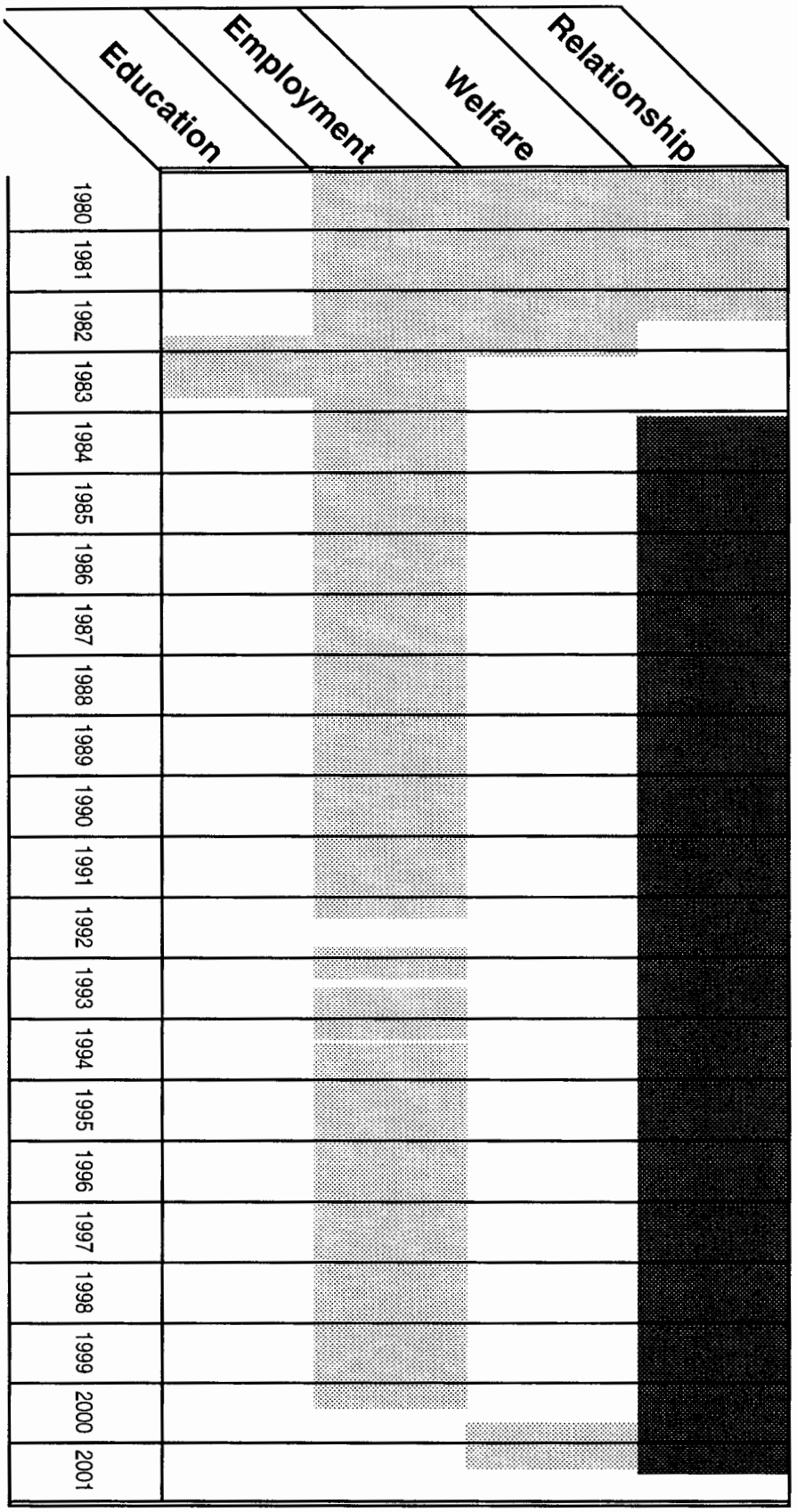

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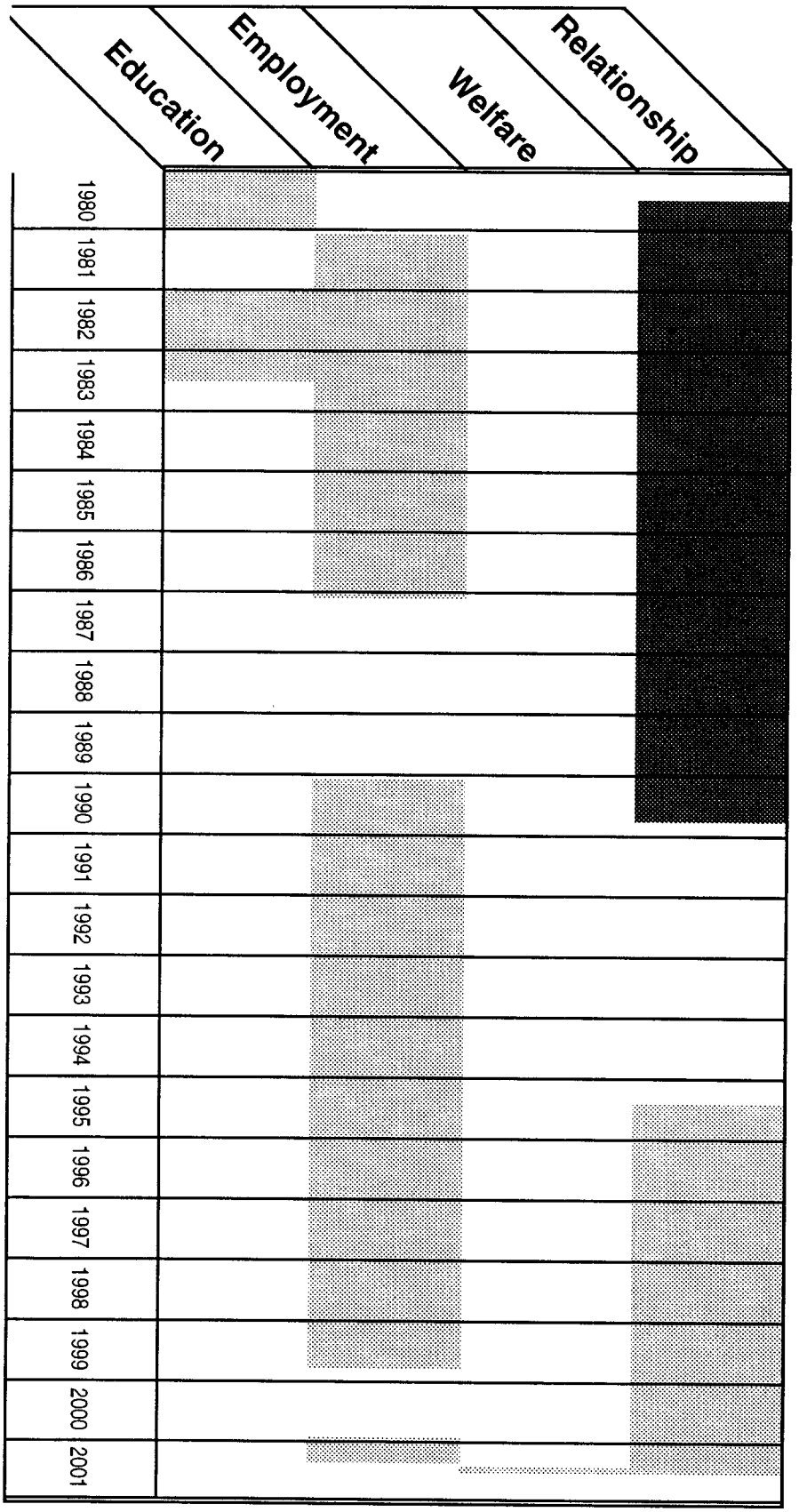

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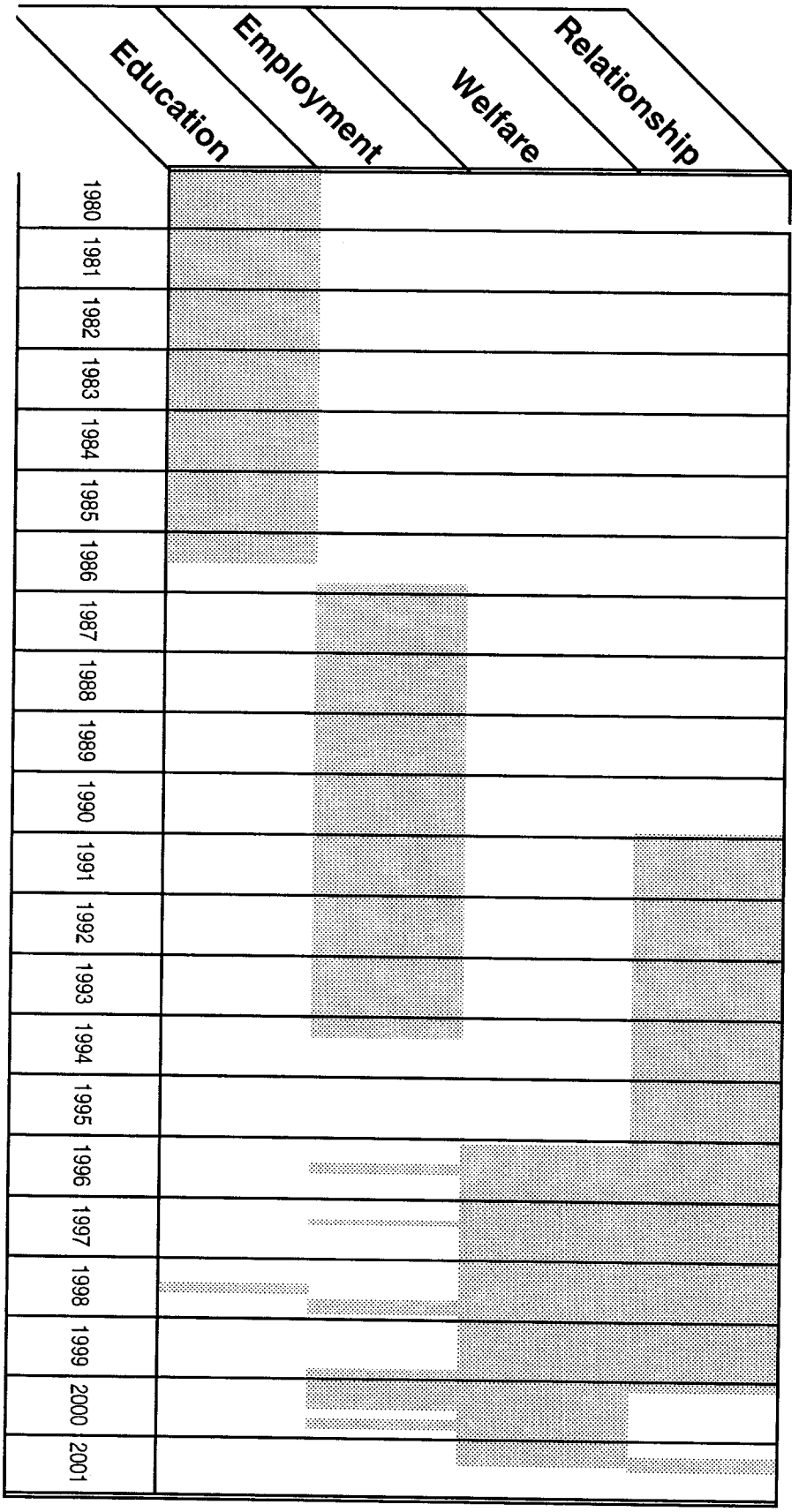

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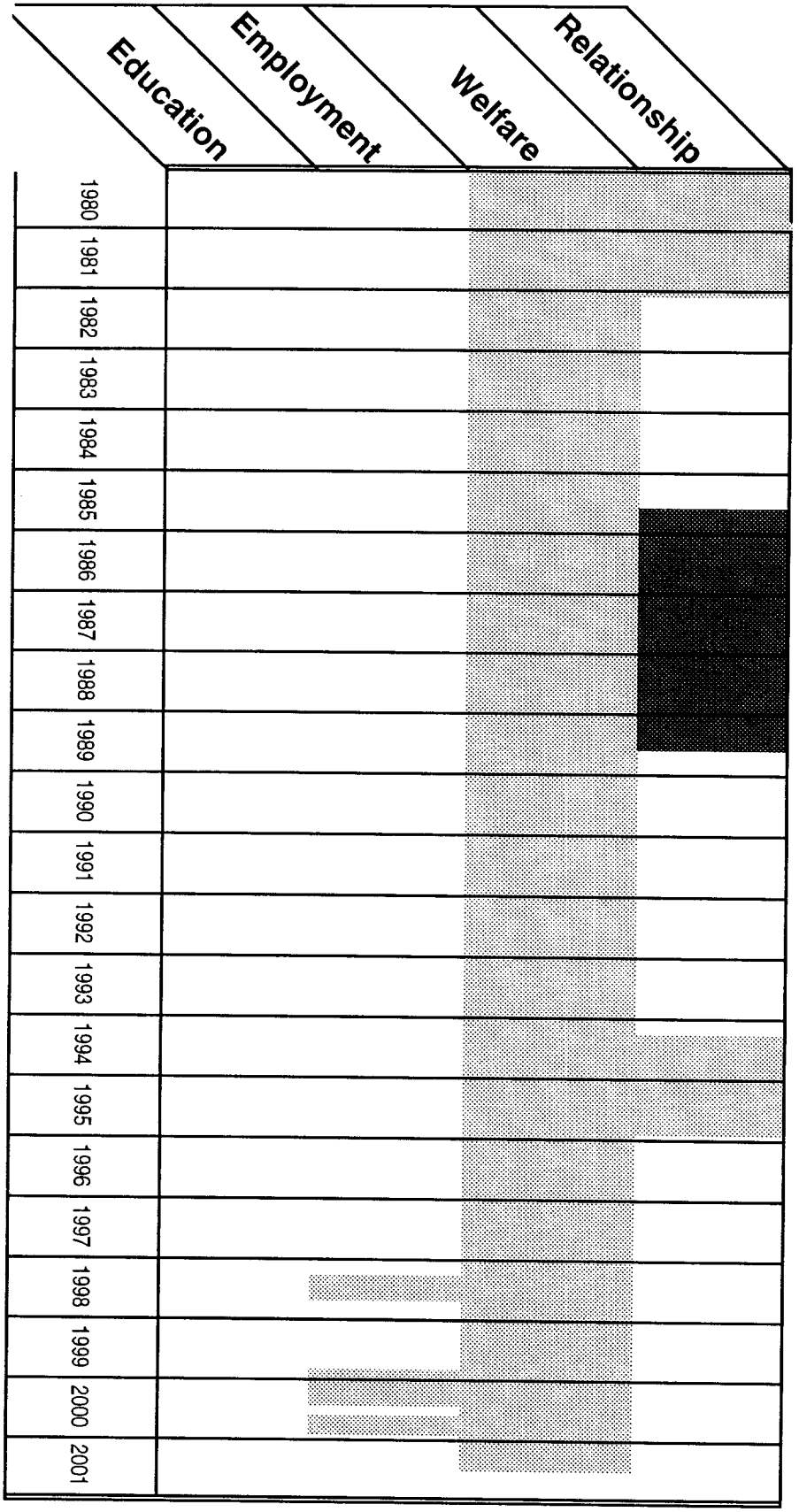

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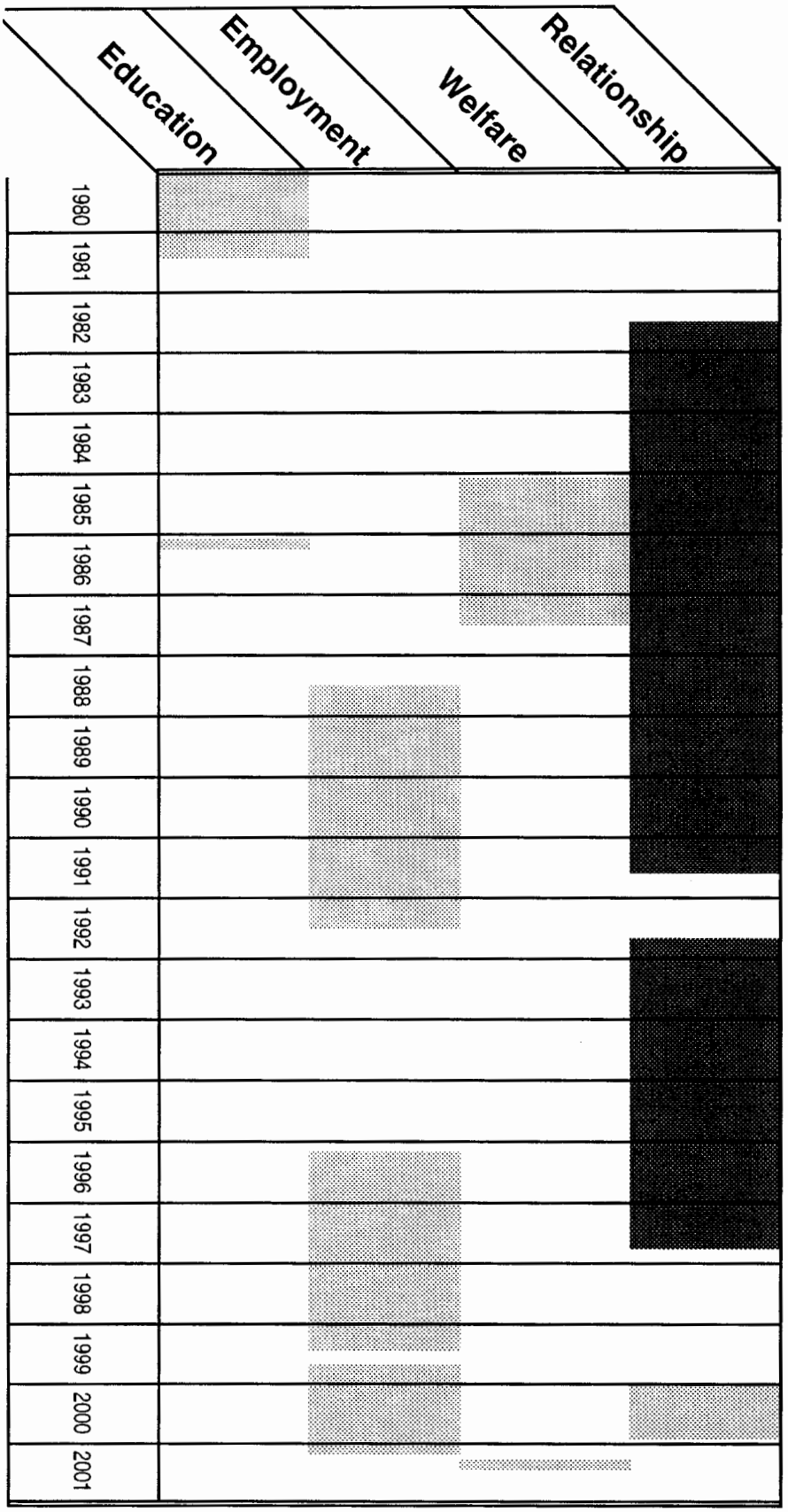

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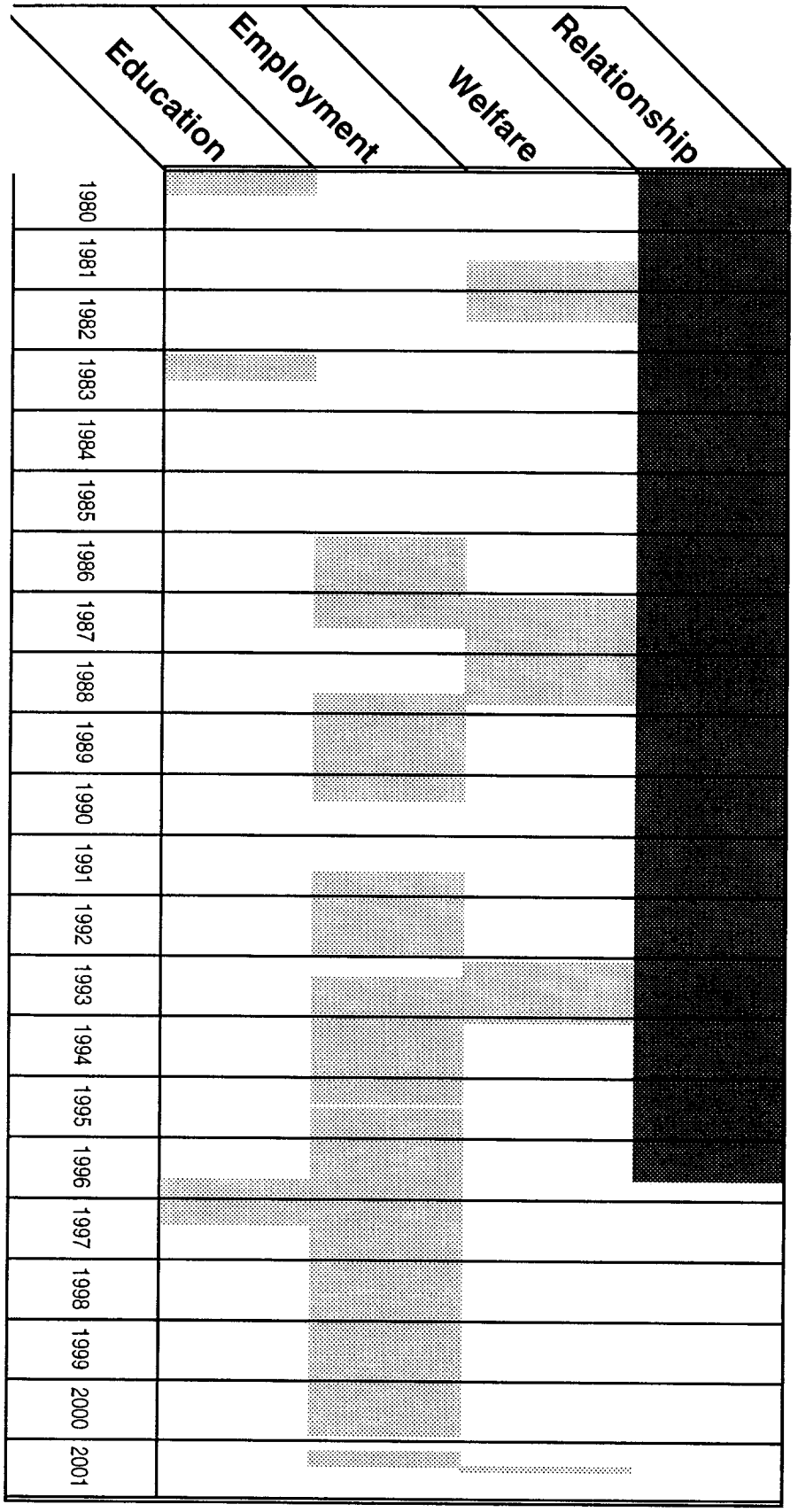

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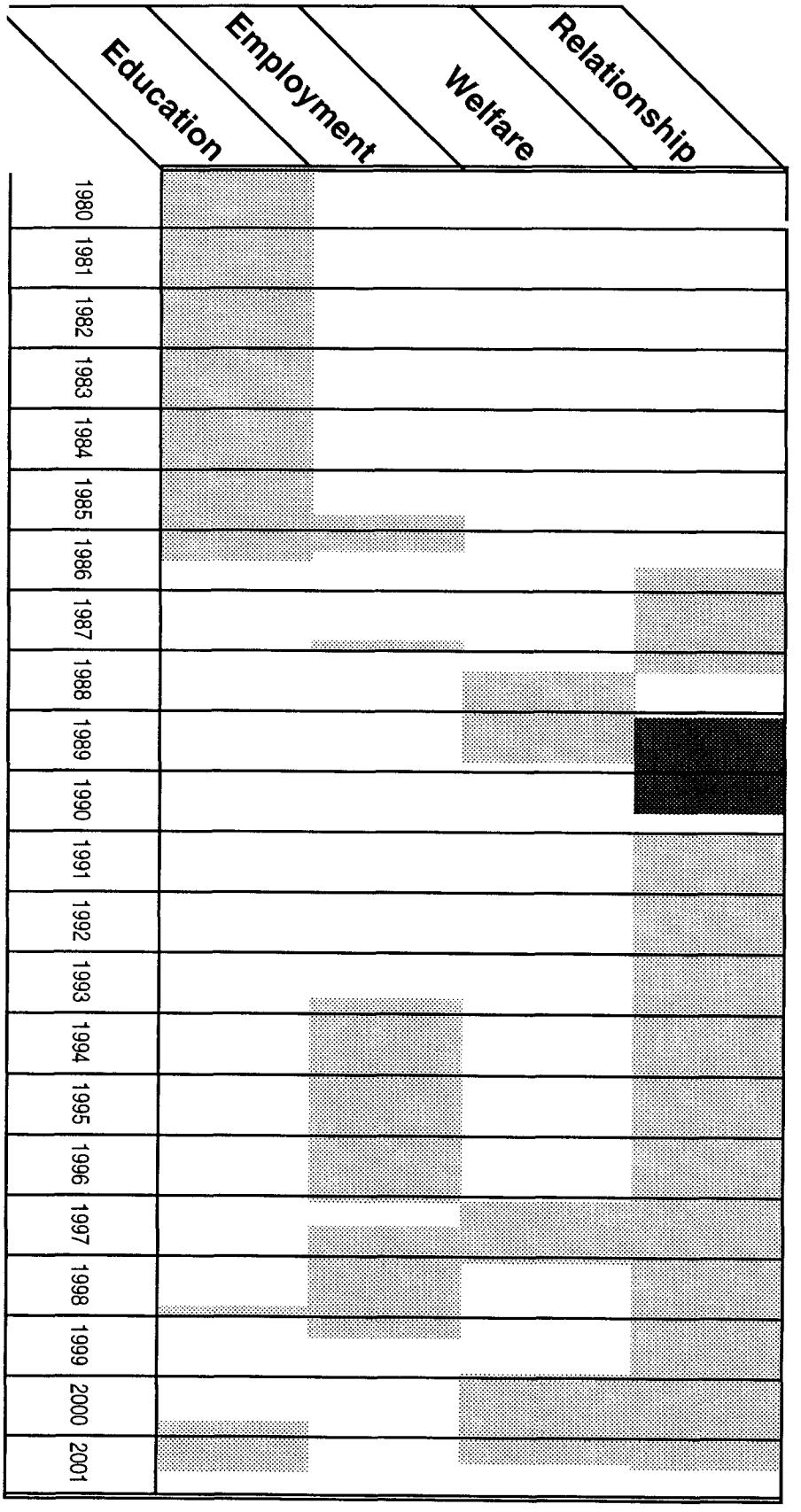

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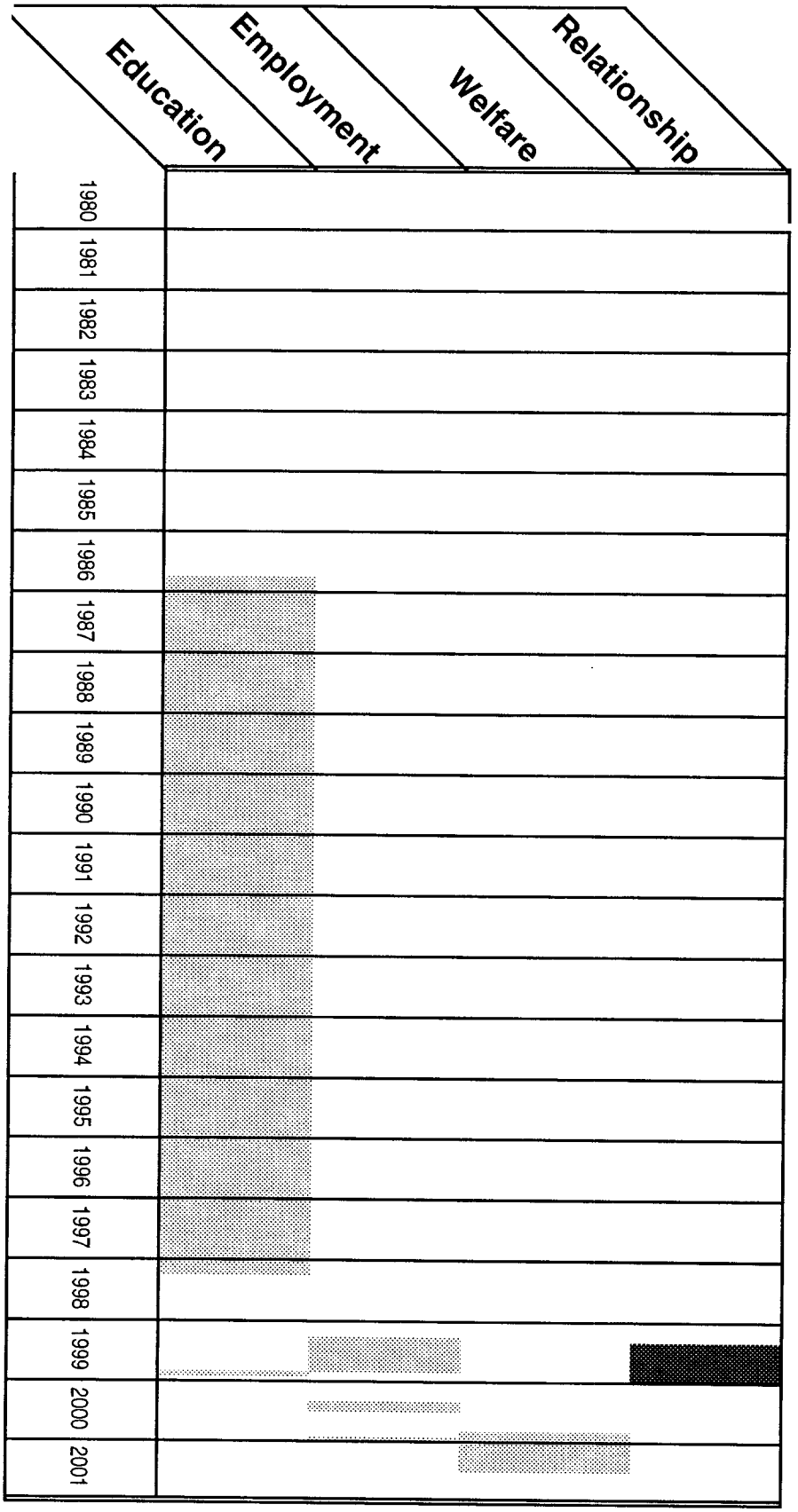

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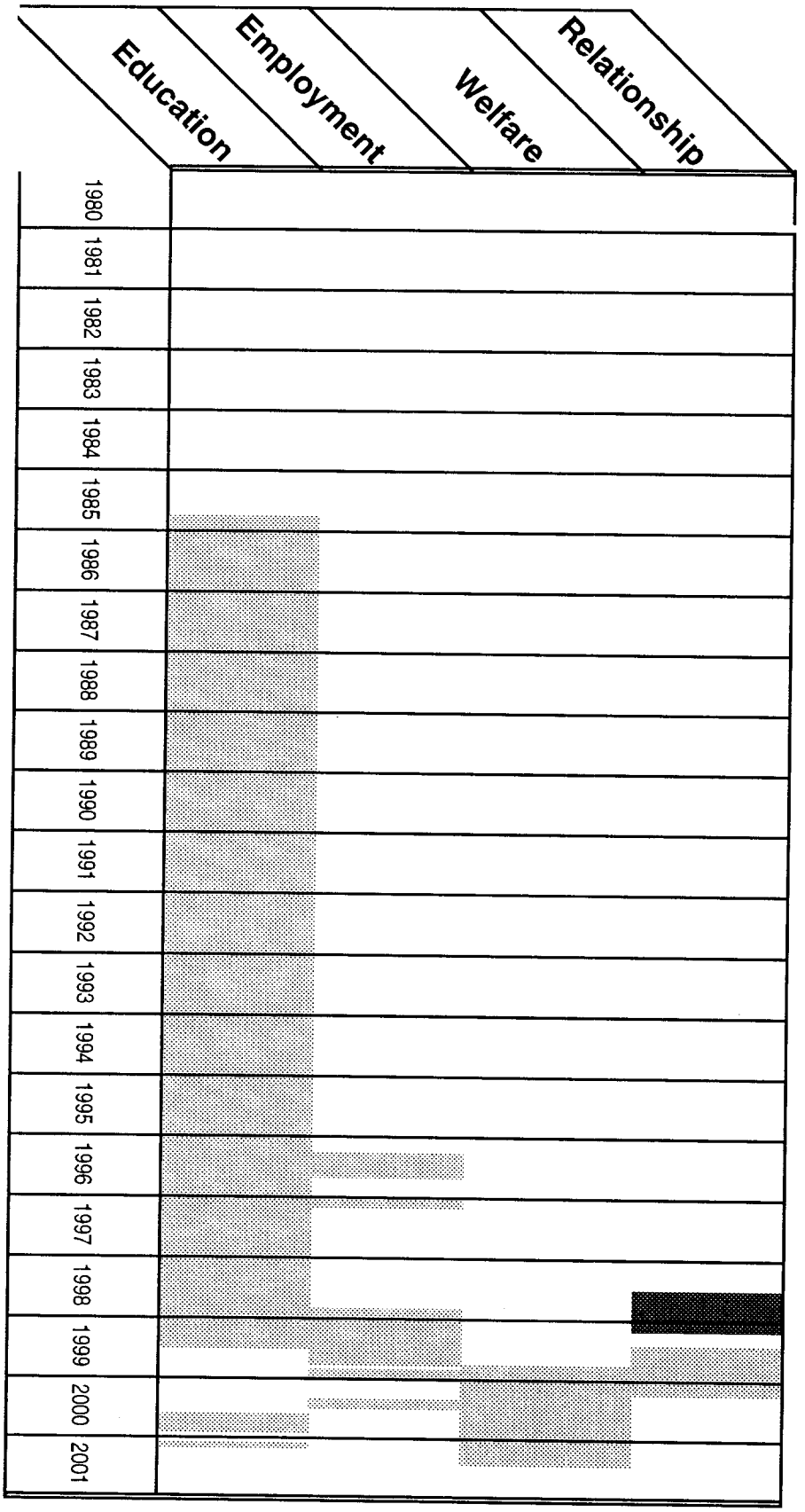

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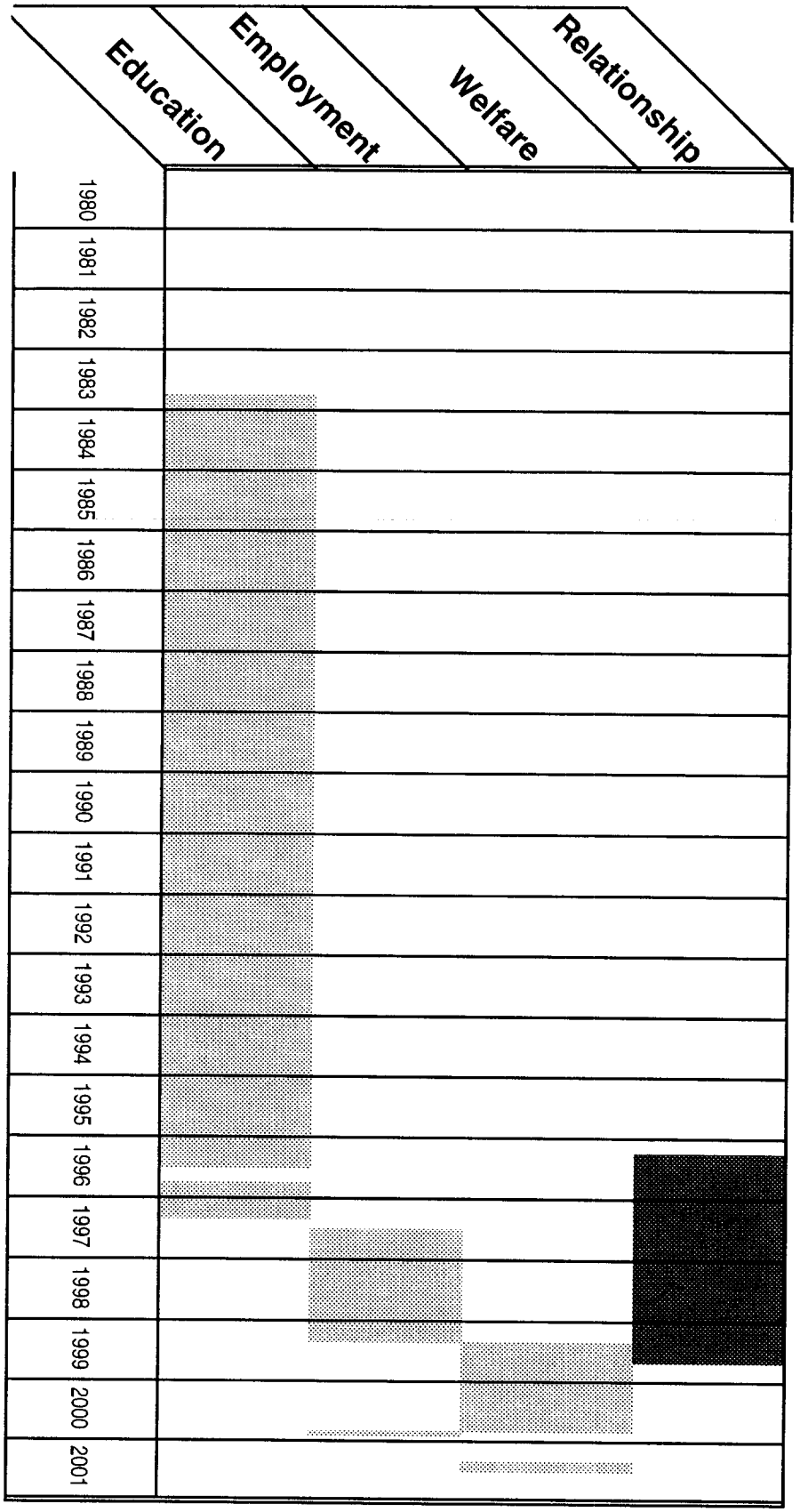

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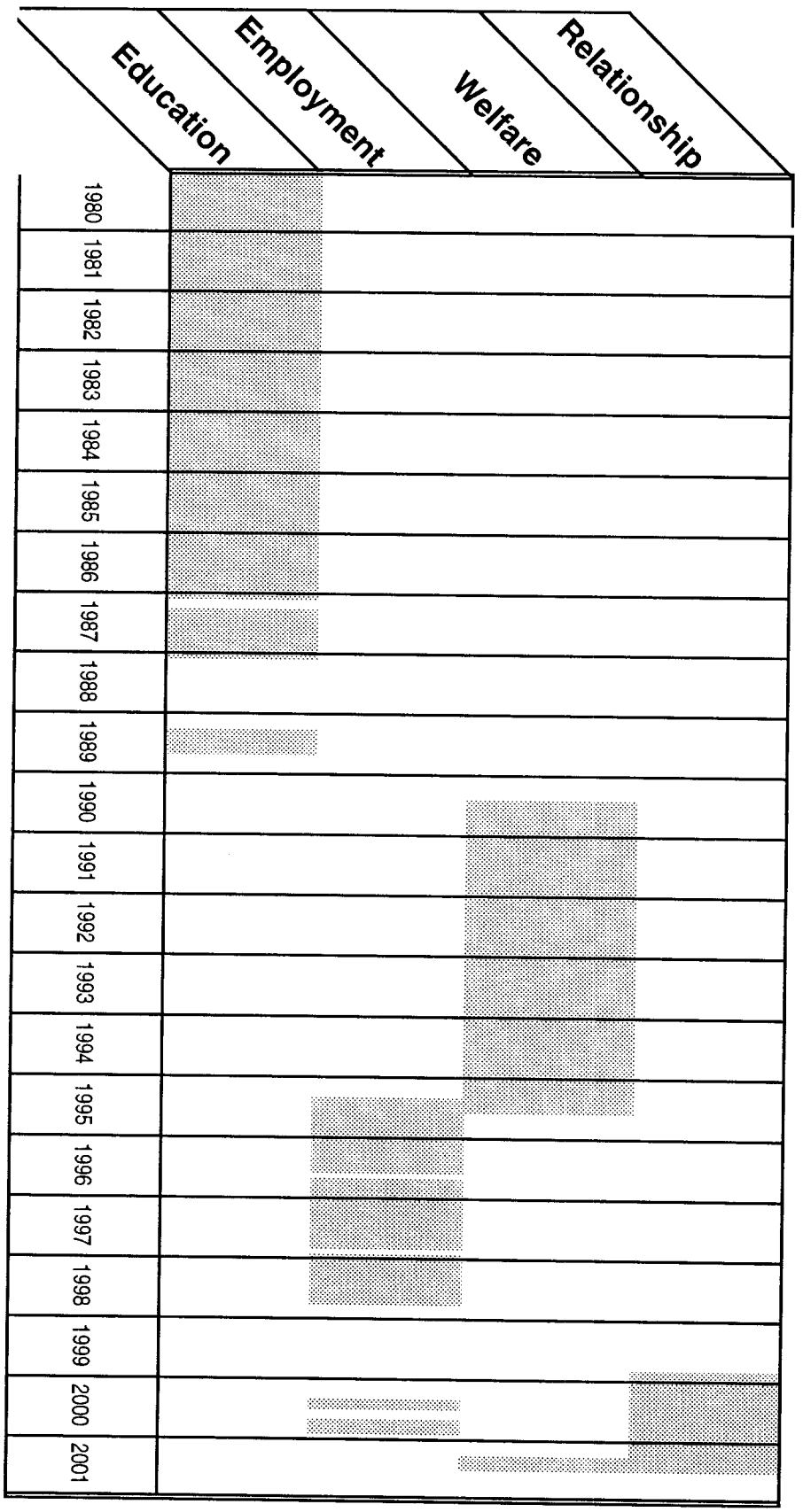

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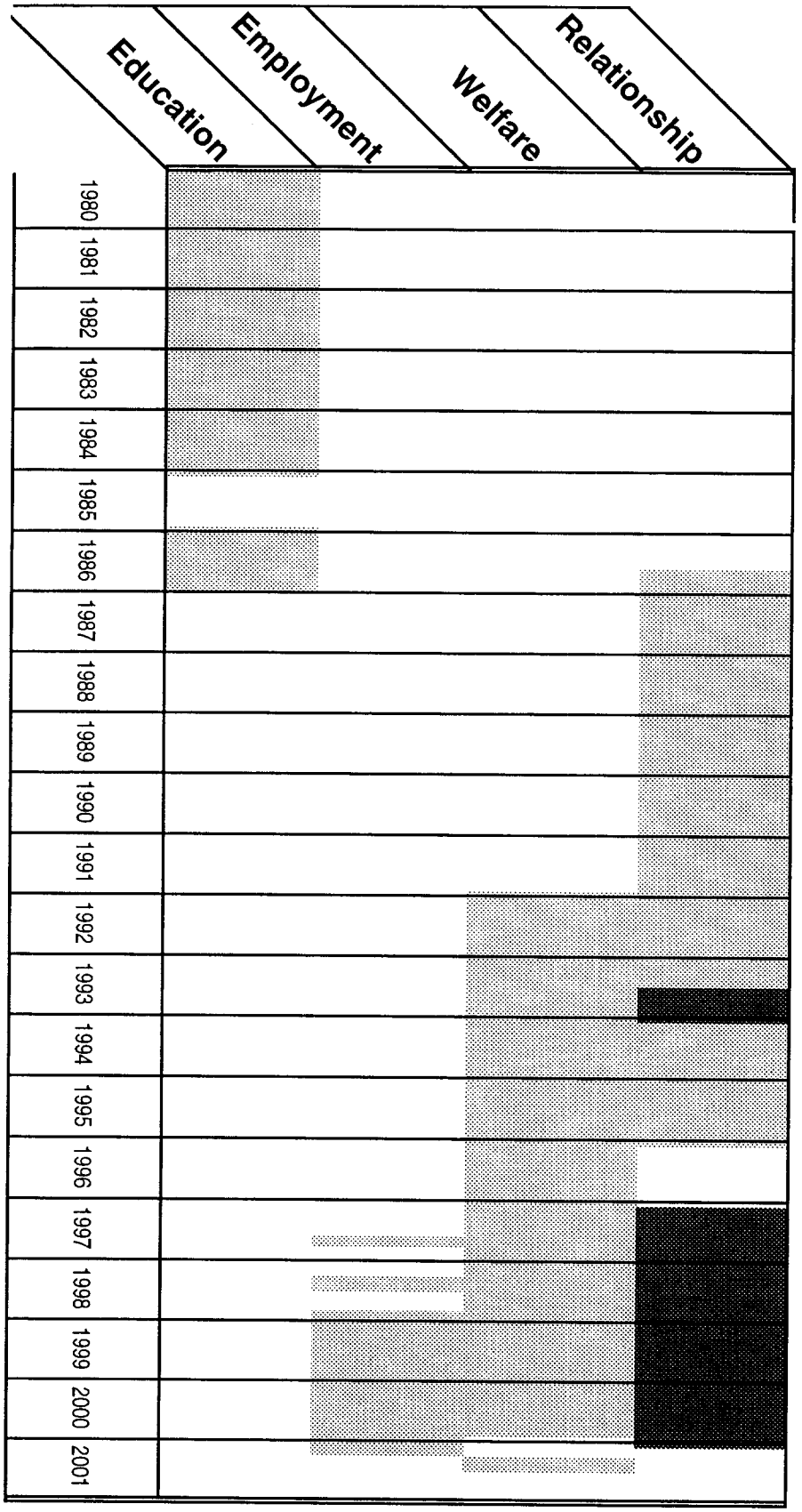

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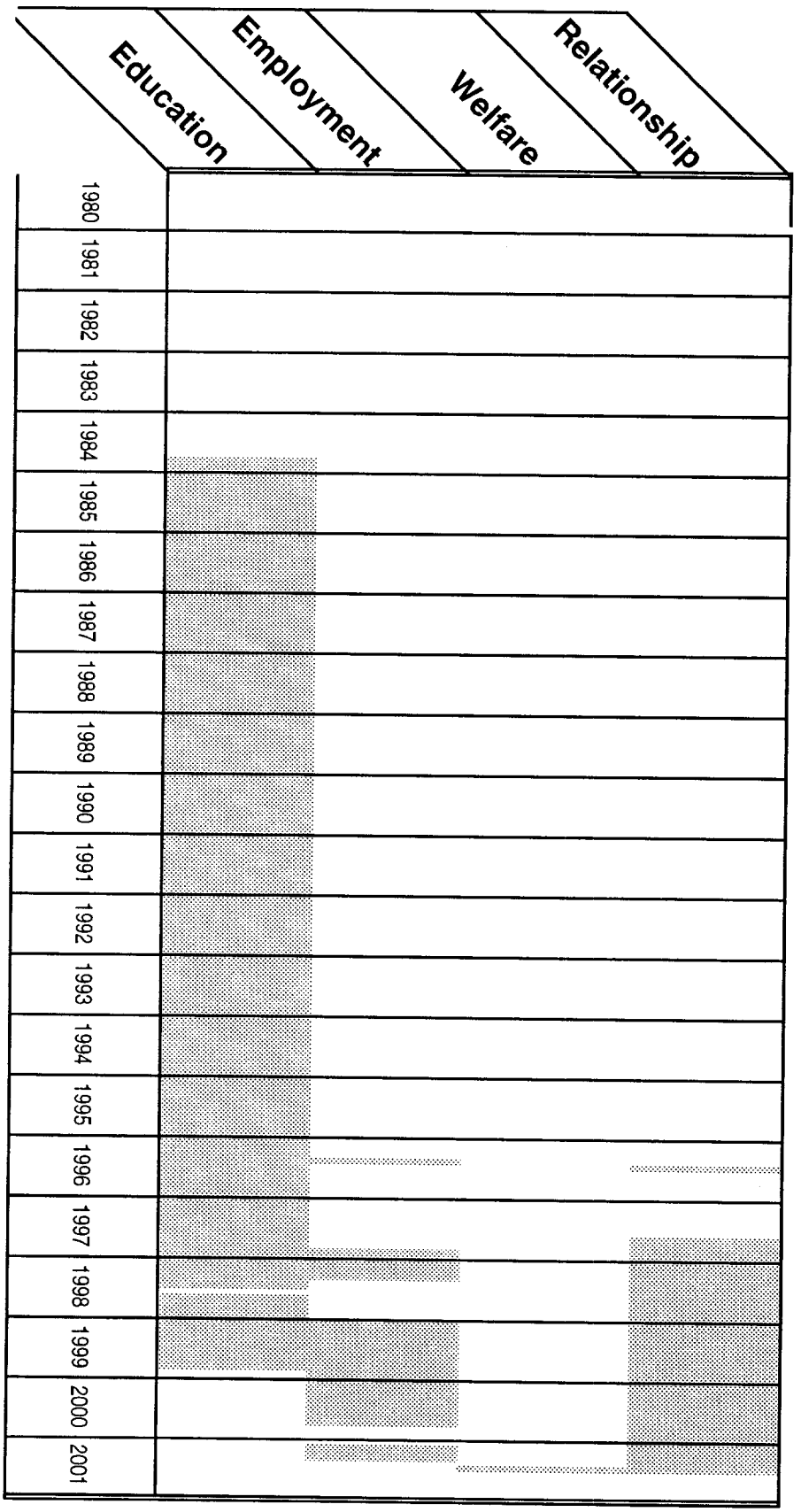

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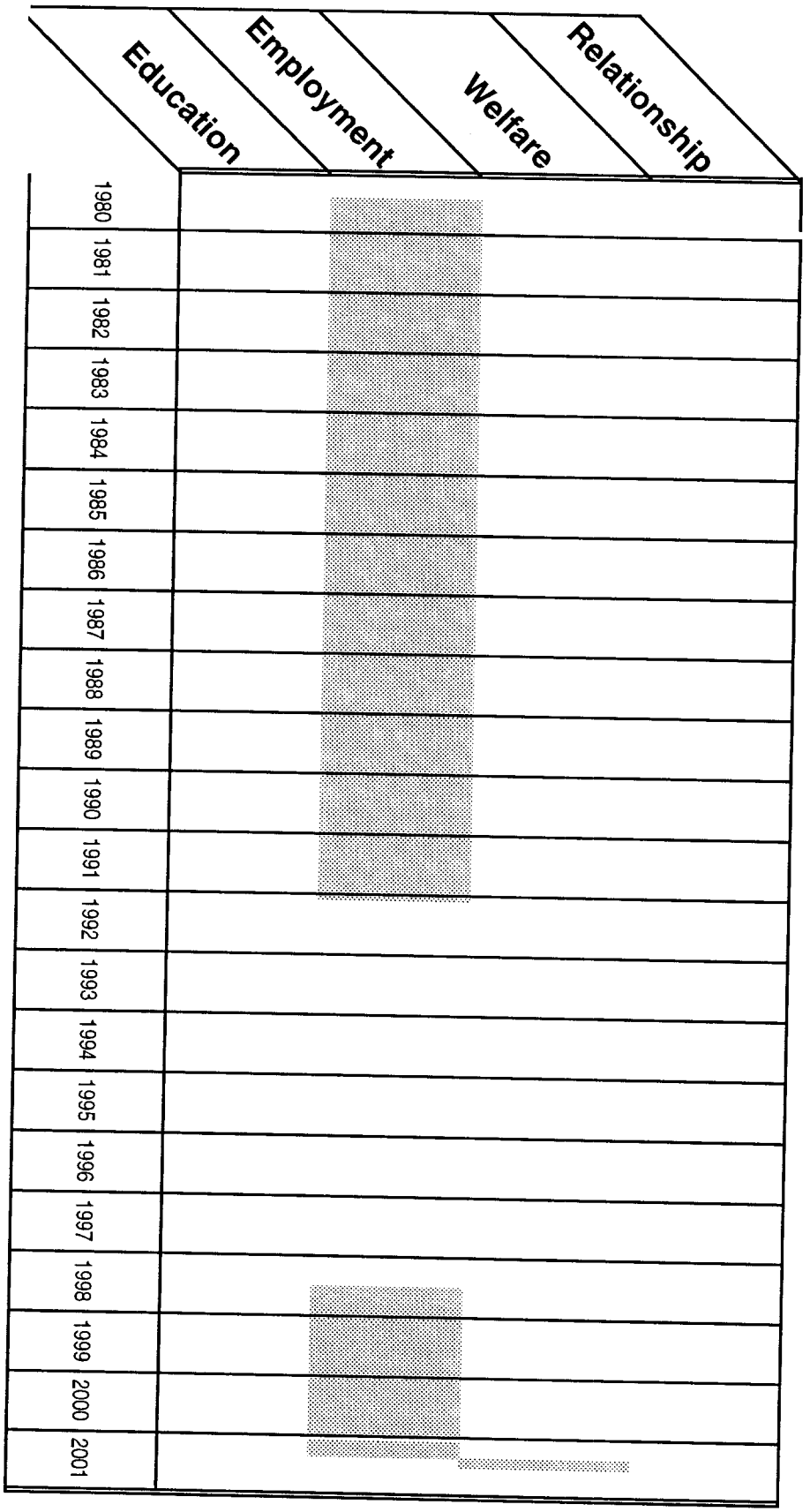

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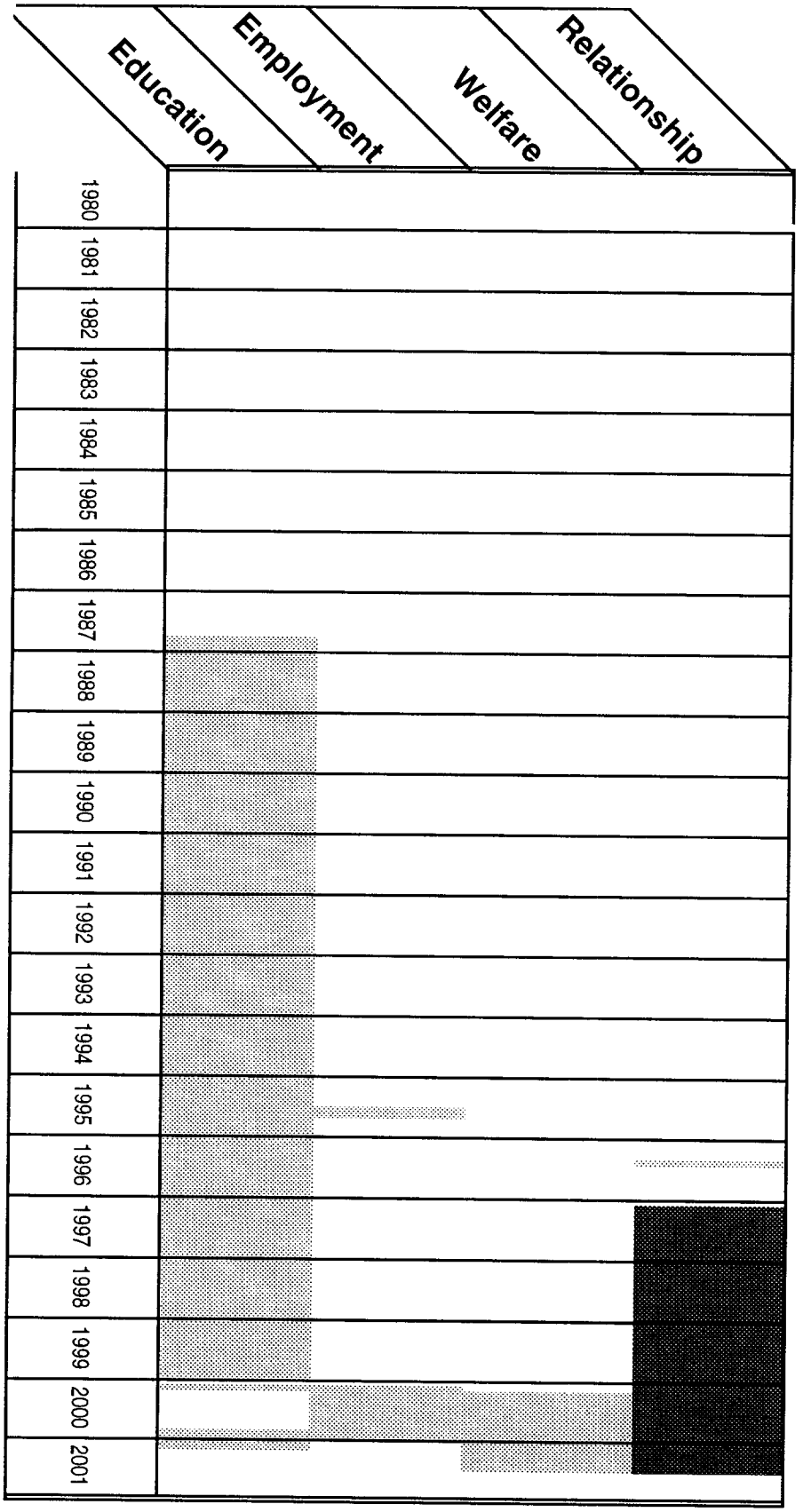

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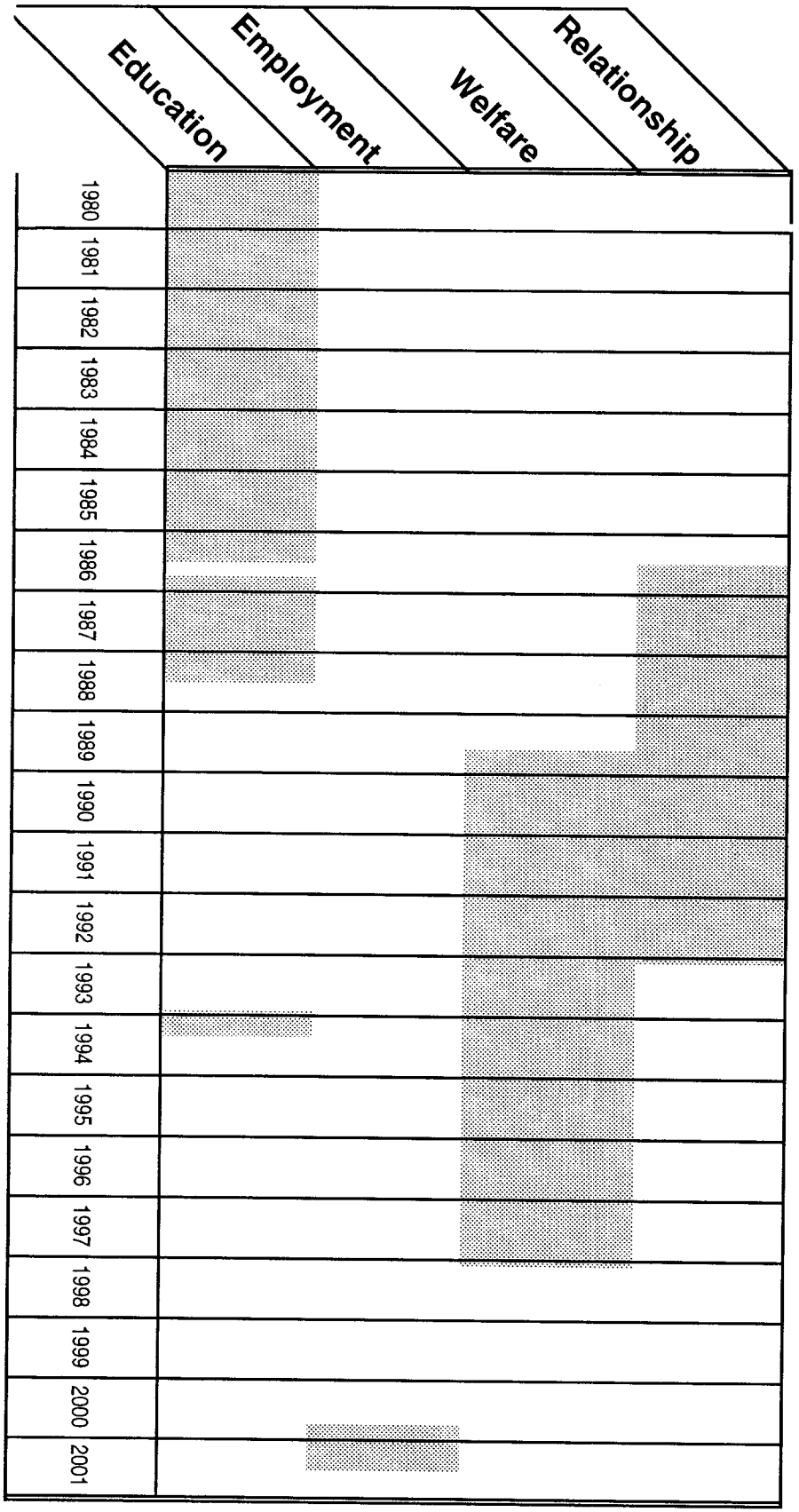

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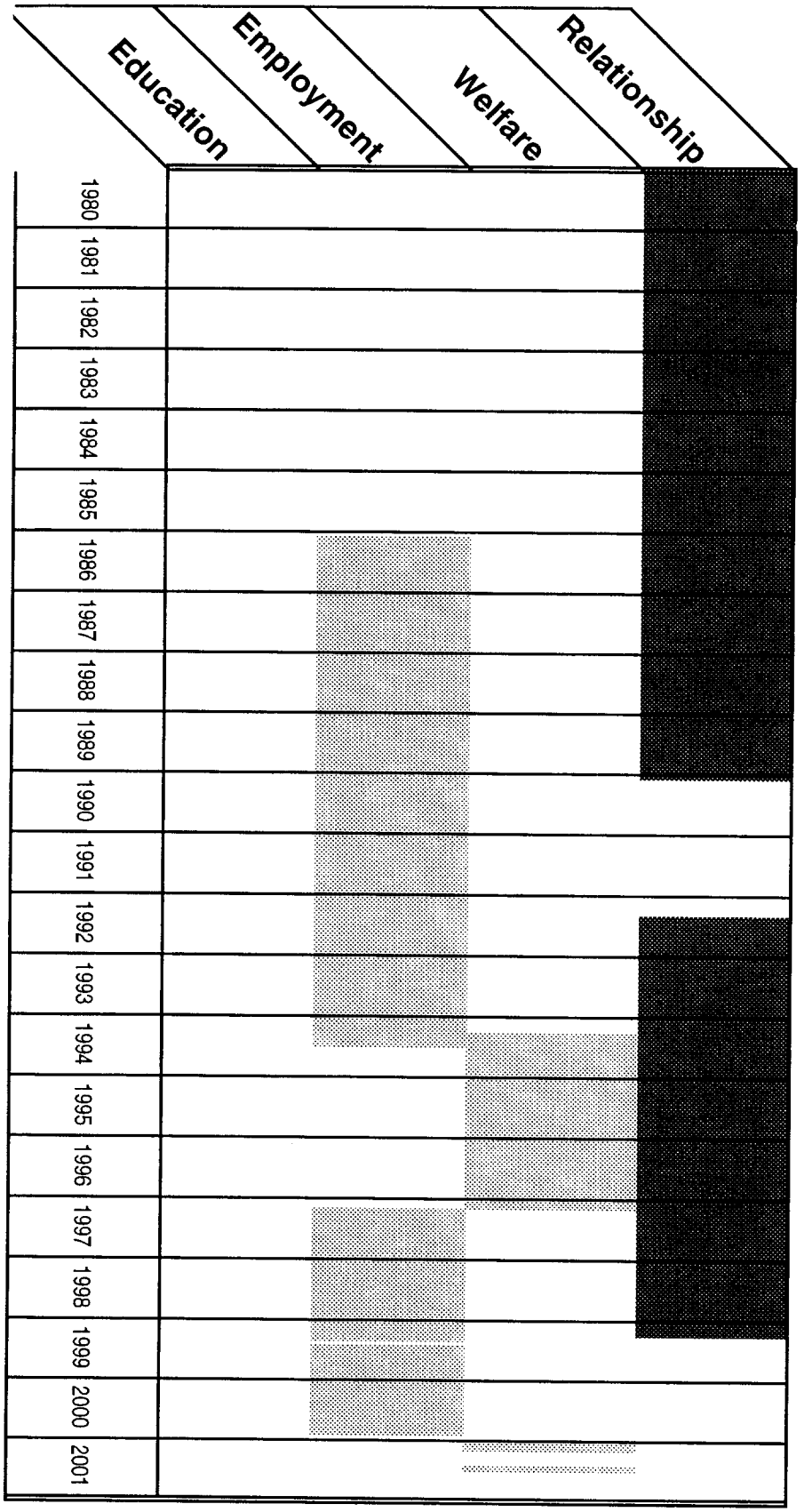

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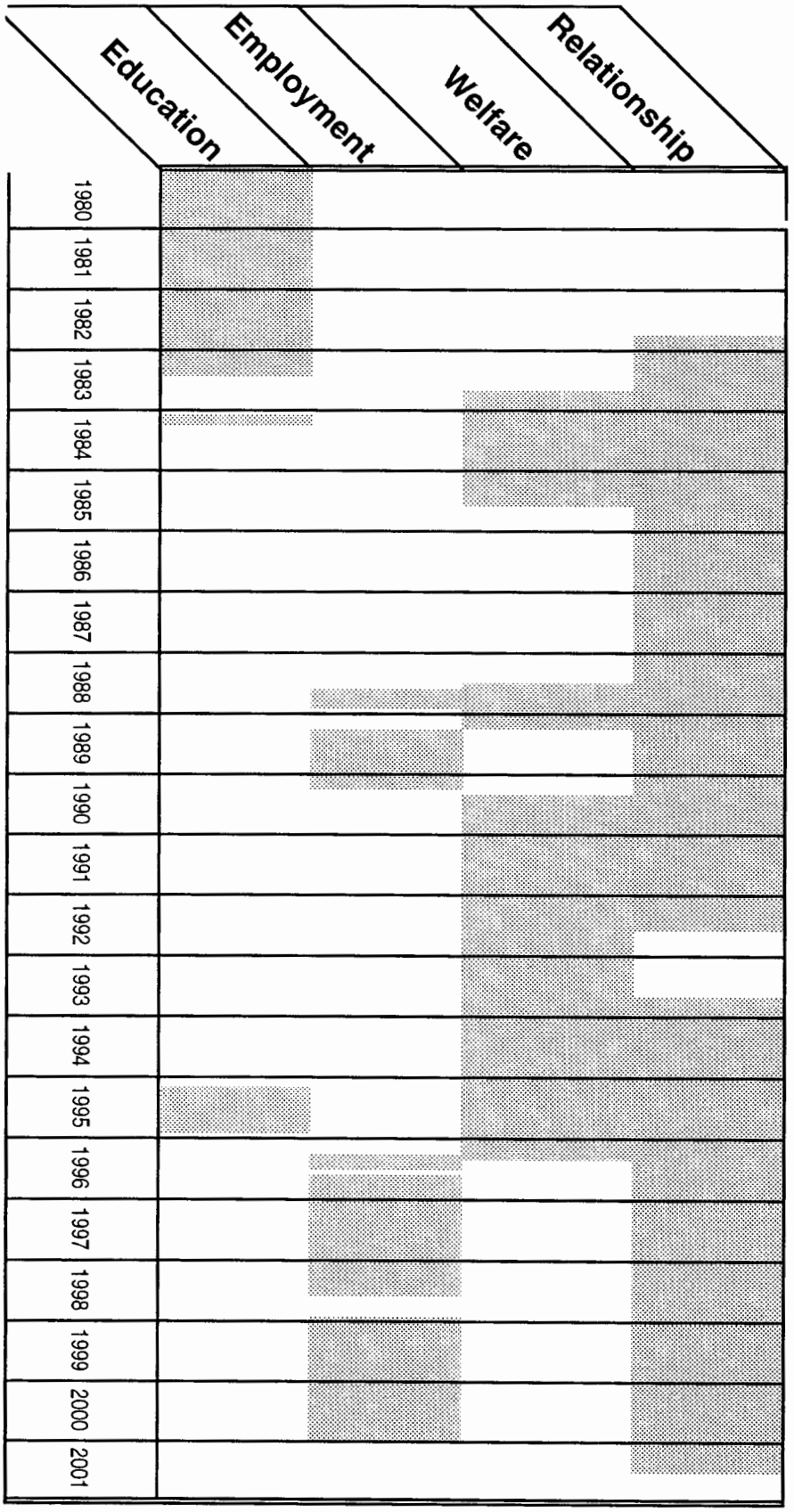

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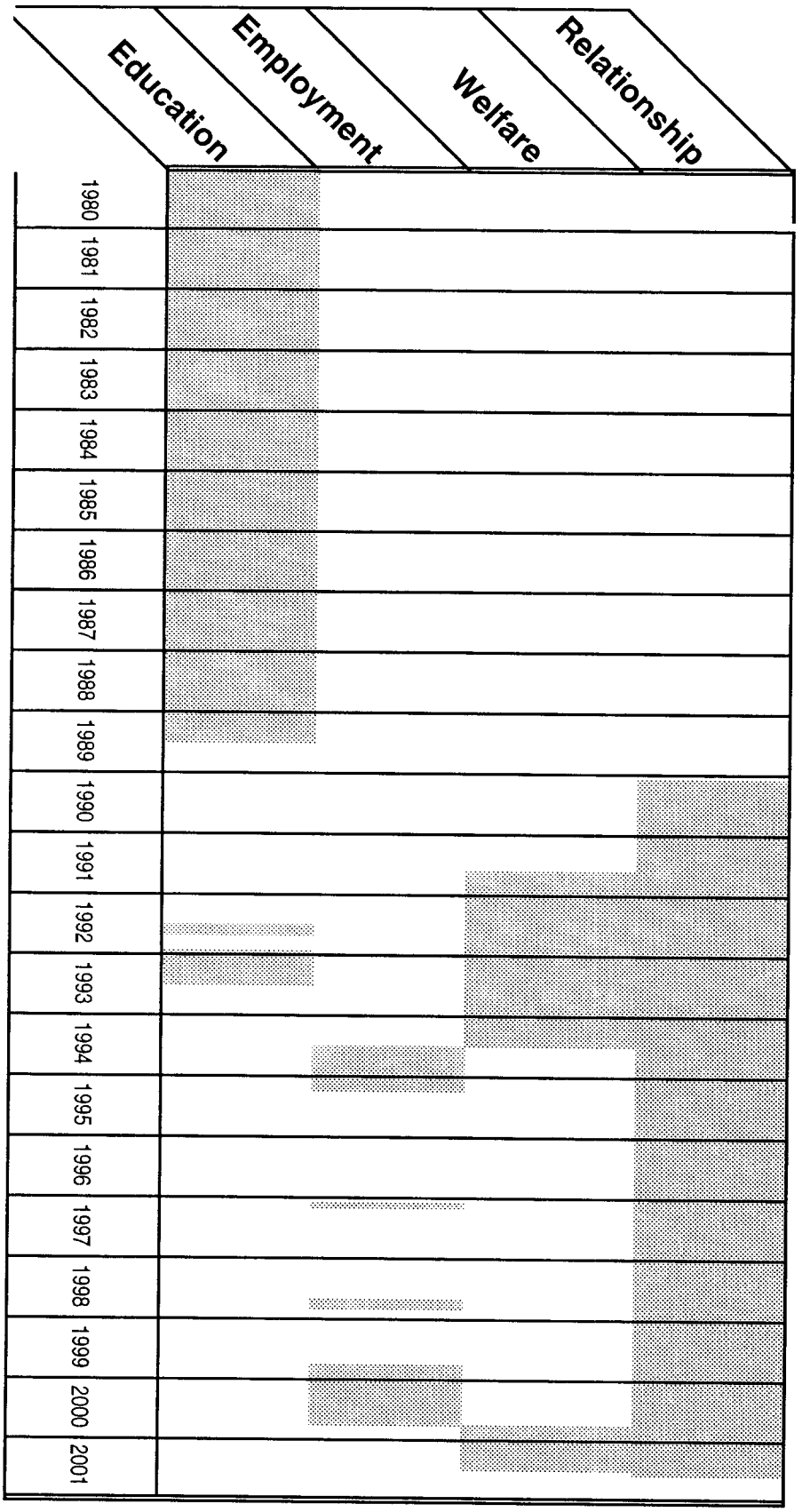

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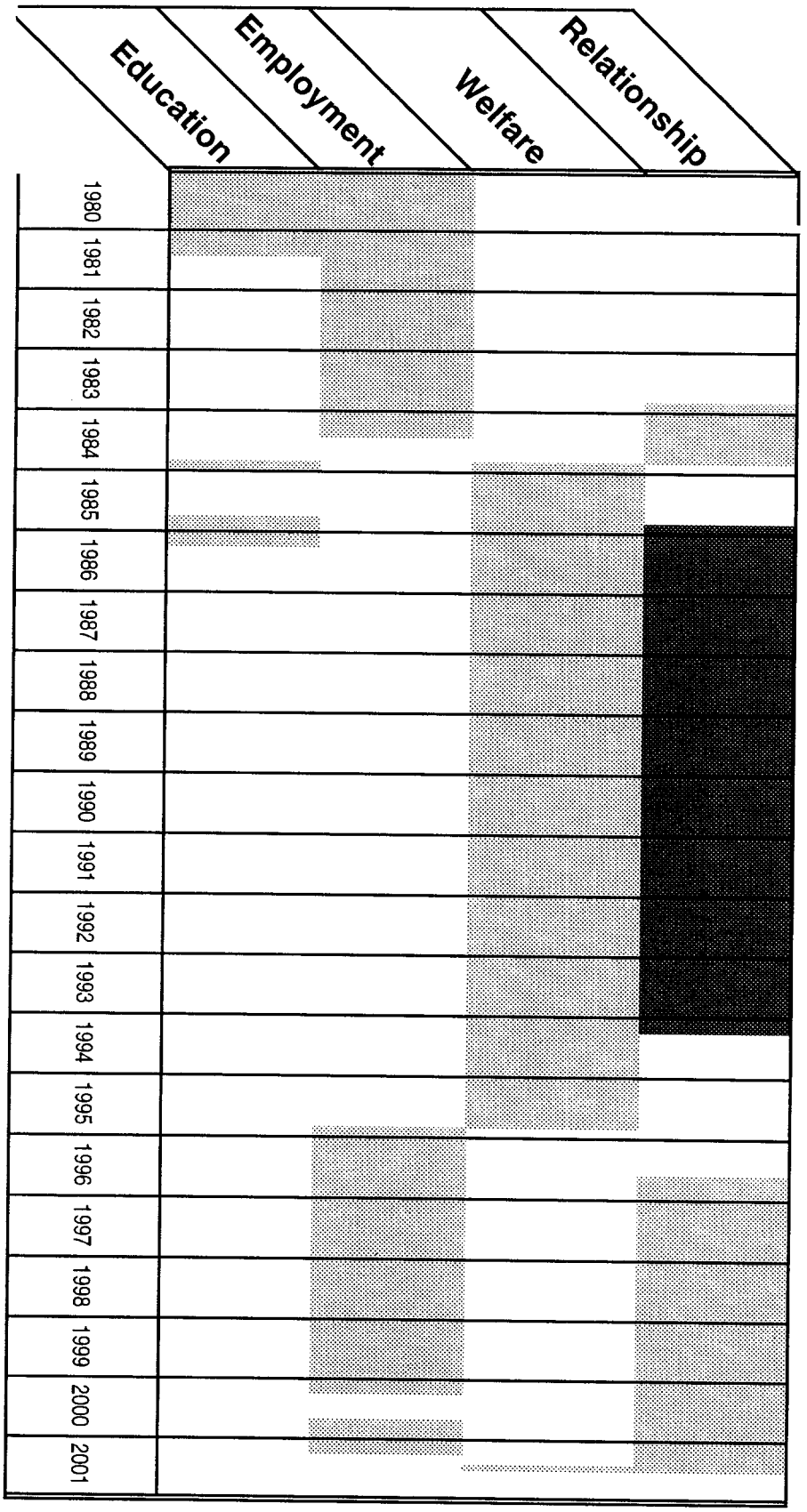
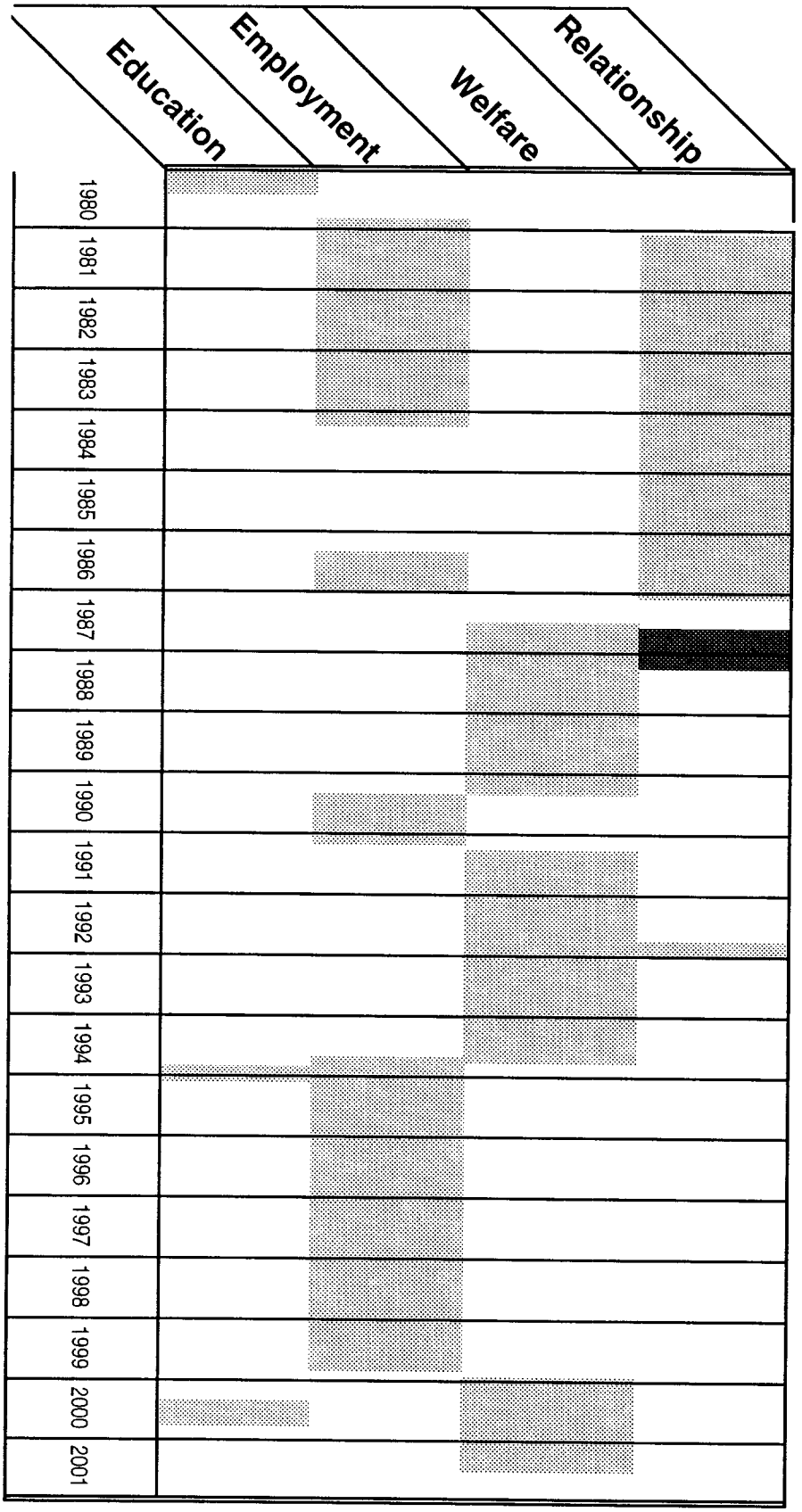
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