

Domestic Violence and Economic Well-Being Of Current and Former Welfare Recipients

Richard M. Tolman

Sandra K. Danziger

Daniel Rosen

Michigan Program on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy
University of Michigan School of Social Work
540 E. Liberty St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210

734-998-8515

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Domestic Violence and Economic Well-Being Of Current and Former Welfare Recipients

Many women receiving welfare are current or past victims of domestic violence (Tolman & Raphael, 2000; Tolman, 1999). Changes in welfare policies have raised concerns that domestic violence may interfere with some women's ability to work, and lead to loss of welfare benefits, and outcomes such as unemployment or lack of employment stability. Without stable employment or cash assistance, battered women may be forced to choose between remaining with abusive partners, and/or experiencing extreme economic hardship.

Previous research based on cross-sectional data has not demonstrated a significant association between current domestic violence and employment (Barusch, 1999; Lloyd and Taluc, 1999; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). However, one longitudinal study (Browne et al., 1999) finds that domestic violence affects subsequent job stability. Browne et al. examined the work experiences of 285 homeless and housed women, most of whom were welfare recipients; they were interviewed at three waves. Domestic violence during the previous wave predicted stability of employment in the subsequent wave. Women who experienced physical aggression during the first 12-month follow-up period had about one-third the odds of working at least 30 hours per week for six months or more during the following year as did women who had not experienced such aggression.

Domestic Violence and Material Deprivation

Women who are victims of domestic violence often have to decide between staying with an abusive partner and foregoing sufficient shelter and food. Homelessness has been linked to domestic violence in a number of studies (Metraux and Culhane, 1999; Browne and Bassuk, 1997; Toro et al., 1995; Dail, 1990). When a woman is forced from her home due to violence, her situation is compounded by her lack of access to financial resources. Homeless women are more likely to have been the victims of recent domestic violence, have substance abuse problems, receive lower annual incomes, and have smaller support networks than a comparison group of housed low-income women (Bassuk et al., 1996; Toro et al., 1995).

Less attention has been given to the possible relationship between domestic violence and food insufficiency. Food insufficiency has been documented as a significant problem in the United States among the poor (Seifert et al., forthcoming; Rose, 1999; Alaimo et al., 1998). Nearly one in three households headed by a single mother is food insecure and over one-third (38%) of families leaving welfare struggle to provide food for their children (Brown, 2000). The economic or housing instability caused by partner violence or by the breakup of violent relationships may be ways that domestic violence brings about food shortages. Additionally, batterers may restrict their partner's behavior, for example, controlling their access to money or restricting their shopping, which could create food insufficiency. Finally, the traumatic health and mental health effects of domestic violence may lead some women to be less likely to provide for their own nutrition or that of their families. For example, a woman who is depressed as a result of domestic violence may be less able to shop for food or earn money to provide food for her family.

Previous Work

In our previous work, Tolman and Rosen (2001) examined the impact of domestic violence on employment of current and former welfare recipients in an urban Michigan county. We found that recent severe domestic violence and direct work interference did not predict which women were working 20 hours per week or more, when controlling for demographic and human capital variables (e.g. work skills, transportation, knowledge of workplace norms). However, there was a significant relationship between domestic violence and experiences of economic hardship, such as utility shutoff, eviction, homelessness, and food insufficiency within the last 12 months.

Corcoran et al. (2001) analyze the effects of mental health, physical health and domestic violence problems at one or two points in time on employment duration across the survey period and hours worked at the last interview. Some health problems, human capital deficits, and mental health problems negatively affected these employment outcomes. In these analyses, meeting the diagnostic screening criteria for depression and reporting high levels of physical limitations at either or both waves reduce employment. When domestic violence is measured as reporting severe abuse in one or both waves of the survey (versus having only lifetime previous experience of or no reports of severe abuse), it was not significantly associated with these employment outcomes.

This paper extends our previous research by examining a series of possible economic outcomes for women with different experiences of domestic violence. Specifically, we explore whether domestic violence is associated with a respondent's welfare/work status, monthly household income, monthly earnings, and experiences of material hardships. We use new definitions of domestic violence that account for the "trajectory" of abuse over time, and/or include more detailed formulations of the experience of domestic violence.

METHODS

Study Overview

We analyze data from the first two waves of the Women's Employment Study (WES), a multi-wave survey of welfare recipients in an urban Michigan county. In fall of 1997, trained interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with a random sample of 753 women who were welfare recipients in February 1997. Michigan's Family Independence Agency (FIA), which administers the state's TANF program, provided names and addresses of all single-parent cases. Respondents were re-interviewed in the fall of 1998. In both waves, information was collected on a broad and comprehensive set of indicators of economic and psychosocial well-being, physical health, mental health, partner violence, demographic characteristics, income, current/most recent job, current welfare status, and work and welfare histories. The response rate for wave 1 was 86.2 % (753/874); for wave 2, 92% (693/753). For each set of analyses reported in this paper, the sample size varies slightly, reflecting the total number of the women in both waves who have no missing observations on the specific measures utilized.

The original list sample included randomly selected single mothers between the ages of 18 and 54 who were residents of the selected urban county, had a racial identity of either White or Black, and were United States citizens. Since non-citizens and other ethnic/racial groups comprised a very small proportion of the overall caseload, there was insufficient sample size to examine these groups in detail.

Study Participants

Fifty-five percent of respondents were Black and 45 % were non-Hispanic white. Of the total sample, 27% were under twenty-five, 46% between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, and 26% who were thirty-five or over (at wave 1). In terms of urban and rural residence, 86% of the women lived in urban census tracts in the county. Nearly one-third (33%) of the respondents were living with a spouse or partner at wave 1 and fifty-nine percent were the primary caregiver for 1 or more children between 0-5.

Measures

Domestic violence. Domestic violence was assessed with a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS, Straus, 1979). We created several different measures of domestic violence. First (as in Danziger et al., 2000; Tolman & Rosen, 2001), we created a six-item severe physical violence, which includes the CTS physical violence scale (without two items sometimes considered not severe, see Table 1 for items included and excluded). (wave 1 twelve-month $\alpha=.81$, lifetime $\alpha=.86$). At wave 1, women were asked if they had ever experienced abuse in their relationships, and if they had experienced it in the past 12 months. At wave 2, they were again asked if they had experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months.

We examined the relationship of domestic violence over the two waves by creating a categorical variable reflecting the recency and persistence of domestic violence. First, respondents were divided into six groups --never, lifetime only (prior to wave 1), wave 1 only, wave 2 only, prior to wave 1 and at wave 2, and both at wave 1 and wave 2. For reasons of simplicity and cell size, we collapsed these categories into four groups, combining women who experienced violence in the past or in only one wave of the study, and also combining those who reported violence at Wave 1 and 2 and those who had past violence and at wave 2. The four groups are

1. those who never report the experience of severe violence;
2. those who experienced severe violence only in the past (prior to wave 2);
3. those who experienced only recent violence (reported at wave 2);
4. and women for whom the violence was both recent and persistent (also occurred at some prior point).

Welfare/Work Status. We divided the sample into four groups based on their employment and welfare status at the wave 2 survey month. The groups include those who are working and no longer receiving cash assistance (wage reliant), those working and receiving cash benefits (combiners), those not working and but receiving cash welfare (welfare reliant) and those no longer on welfare who report no employment. When the sample was drawn in February 1997, 100% of the women were receiving cash assistance; 40% of them were combining work and welfare and the remainder were welfare reliant. By wave 1, in Fall 1997, the women were roughly distributed into the four groups as follows -- 20 percent were working and not receiving welfare assistance, 37% were combining welfare and earnings, 35% were receiving cash public assistance and not working, and 8% had neither welfare receipt nor work. By wave two, the wage reliant group comprised almost 44% of the sample, and combiners were down to 27%.

The welfare reliant group had fallen to just over 20% of the sample and those who had neither work nor welfare was similar to wave 1, 9%.

Income and Earnings. "Monthly Household Income" measures the respondent's report of her earnings at wave 2 and those of any other worker in the household that were received in the last month, plus the sum of any other income received in the last month by any member of the household (from Food Stamps, welfare, child support, disability or pensions, unemployment or workers' compensation), and any cash help from friends or relatives. "Earnings" includes just the respondent's gross earnings from all jobs in the last month.

Hardship Outcomes. Hardship measures were based on responses at wave 2 to questions about experiences of various forms of economic hardship between waves, reported at wave 2 -- gas or electricity shut-offs, evictions, homelessness, and food insufficiency. For shutoffs, evictions and homelessness, respondents were asked whether they had ever experienced any of these over the period between the two interviews. The food insufficiency measure is a widely-used single item, "Which of the following statements describes the amount of food your household has to eat -- enough to eat, sometimes not enough to eat or often not enough to eat?" A dummy variable is coded as 1 for respondents who answer "sometimes" or "often" do not have enough. We also use a dichotomous variable of any hardship, based on experiences of any of these four hardships.

In addition, we measured current financial strain and anticipated financial strain, using two items adapted from a three-item scale of economic hardship (Kessler, Turner and House, 1987; Vinokur, Caplan, and Williams, 1987). These compare whether the respondent says it has been at all difficult vs. not difficult to live on her current household income and whether she anticipates experiencing any financial hardships within the next two months.

We also count up the number of hardship-mediating activities they report engaging in over the last six month to make extra money or "when times are hard." We sum up if they had ever done any of nine activities ranging from baby sitting or keeping house for others, styling hair or selling things out of the home, pawning things, to engaging in illegal activity or begging for food or work.

Control Variables. In the multivariate models, we control for a number of demographic variables, human capital characteristics, and health and mental health status and trajectories. With respect to demographics, we include race (African-American, White-non Hispanic) and urban residence (urban-non-urban census tract). We categorized respondent's age at wave 1 into three groups -- those between ages 18-25, 25-34, and ages 34-54. Caregiven children was measured by the number of children for whom the respondent has primary responsibility in her household who are between ages 0-2 and between ages 3-5 (at wave 2). We created a dummy variable for whether the respondent was cohabiting (either married or unmarried) with an intimate partner (compared to respondents who were living without a partner at wave 2). We also control for whether the respondent became pregnant between waves 1 and 2, given that this could exempt a respondent from work requirements. Finally, we include a measure for long-term welfare receipt, in this case, whether the respondent had received welfare for 7 or more years at wave 1 (this was the sample mean).

Human capital variables that are associated with the ability to find or maintain stable employment include whether a respondent has a high school diploma or GED, her knowledge of work norms, work skills, and past work experience. Each of these is measured at wave 1. Work norms are measured by a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent knew that less than five out of a set of nine work behaviors would be problematic, such as showing up late or leaving early without notification, or arguing with customers or supervisors (adapted from Berg, Olson and Conrad, 1991). Work skills are measured by a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent had performed on all previous jobs less than four different tasks of a possible nine, including items such as wrote letters or memos, used math, worked with electronic machines, worked with customers (adapted from Holzer, 1996). Low prior work experience is measured by whether the respondent had worked in less than 20% of the years since she turned 18. Finally, we include a measure of perceived job discrimination based on respondents reports of experiencing more than 4 types of workplace discrimination out of a possible 16 types based on race, gender, or welfare status (adapted from Bobo, 1995).

We also control for the extent to which respondents experience any mental health or health problems. Our mental health measures examine whether a woman meets the diagnostic screening criteria for at least one of four different psychiatric diagnoses (defined by criteria specified in the revised third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R) (APA, 1987). We measure whether or not the respondent meets the screening criteria for major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, social phobia, and/or generalized anxiety disorder at one or both waves. We classify the women into one of four groups -- those who did not meet the criteria for any disorder at either wave, those who meet criteria for any disorder at wave 1 only, those meeting any of the screening criteria at wave 2 only, and those meeting the criteria for disorder at both waves.

We classify women's health problems based on two measures -- whether she has serious physical limitations in functioning (scores in the bottom age-specific quartile) and whether her self-rated health is fair or poor. These measures are subscales of the SF-36 (Ware et al, 1993), a widely used indicator of health status, and are coded into 4 groups -- women who do not have either of these health problems at either wave, those who have both health problems at wave 1 only, those with both health problems at wave 2 only, and those who report both problems at both waves.

Analysis

We first examine the prevalence of different experiences of domestic violence among respondents. In examining each economic outcome, we first present bivariate results by domestic violence history. We then use multivariate techniques to control for human capital, demographic, and health and mental health status differences that may also affect economic well being.

RESULTS

Prevalence

At wave 1, domestic violence prevalence was quite high, as compared to national norms (see Tolman & Rosen, 2001; Danziger et al, 2000). These high rates continued in wave 2. As can be seen in Table 1, prevalence for domestic violence behaviors was similar at both waves for most items, the exception being threats to take your children away, which

dropped from 11.7 to 6.6 percent. Overall, 15.6% of the sample experienced severe abuse over the period between waves 1 and 2, compared to 14.9% in the year prior to wave 1. It should be noted that the interval between wave 1 and wave 2 was not exactly 12 months, as respondents were asked to report since the date of the previous interview. Therefore, estimates of wave 1 and wave 2 prevalence are not exactly comparable.

Although prevalence rates appeared quite comparable over the wave 1 and wave 2 periods, there was notable change for some individuals. Table 2 shows the extent of these changes. Totaling up the rows with no changes, 563 (81%) of the sample did not change abuse categories from wave 1 to wave 2. This includes 310 women (44.7%) who never experienced severe violence, 212 (30.6%) who experienced severe violence prior to wave 1 only, and 41 women (5.9%) who experienced severe violence at both wave 1 and wave 2. Of the 19% who changed abuse status, 63 women (9%) were abused at wave 1, but not at wave 2; 31 (5.2%) were abused for the first time at wave 2; and 36 (5.2%) were abused at wave 2, prior to wave 1, but not at wave 1. According to the four-variable category indicating the trajectories, 44.7% never report severe abuse, 275 or 39.6% had past abuse only, 4.4% had recent only, and 11.1% had both persistent and recent abuse.

Help-seeking. While a single act of domestic violence may cause injury or great distress for a victim, the impact of domestic violence may vary by the severity, frequency, chronicity and other aspects of the abuse. One measure of the seriousness of abuse is the degree to which it prompts help-seeking by respondents. Table 3 shows that our classification of severe violence is associated with respondent's seeking help for domestic violence. Those women with recent-only (column 3), and persistent severe abuse (column 4) appear to be more likely to have called the police, needed and received medical treatment, left home to protect themselves, sought counseling or legal protection, and disclosed abuse to their welfare workers. Because women are unlikely to take these actions for violence that they view as minor, or not seriously harmful, the high level of help-seeking can be seen as evidence of construct validity for our domestic violence criterion. Over three-quarters of the women with recent only and persistent severe violence reported some form of help seeking, compared to only 2.3% of those never experiencing severe violence and 6.6% whose only experiences of severe violence were prior to wave 2.¹

Domestic Violence and Welfare/Work Status

Proponents of the Family Violence Option argued that changes in welfare policies would put battered women at risk, because they would have greater difficulty complying with work requirements or achieving economic autonomy in the time limits set by federal mandates. These concerns would be consistent with the prediction that domestic violence victims would be less likely to become wage reliant and more likely to remain welfare reliant over time than women who do not experience this abuse. In addition, the proportion of domestic violence victims who leave the welfare system without work would be higher than among women who were not victims.

¹ However, some respondents who have not experienced severe violence by our definition seek help, suggesting that they may also suffer serious consequences. Of the 310 women who never experienced severe abuse, 11% reported some other forms of domestic violence at wave 2. Of the 274 who experienced severe abuse only in wave 1 or earlier, 21.8% experienced some non-severe abuse at Wave 2.

Table 4 classifies women in each of four domestic violence categories by their work/welfare status at wave 2 -- those who are wage reliant (working/no welfare), combiners (working/welfare), welfare reliant (not working/welfare) and those neither working nor on welfare. The rows within each trajectory column sum to 100%. Those with past domestic violence (column 2) do not appear to differ from those who have never had severe violence (column 1) on any of the welfare/work statuses. Those with persistent domestic violence (column 4) are almost twice as likely to be welfare reliant as those who have never had domestic violence (39% vs. 20.7%). The percentage of wage reliant women varies in the same way, i.e., the persistent domestic violence group is half as likely to be wage reliant as those who never experienced severe violence (18.2% vs. 40.1%).

Multivariate analyses. We next examine whether domestic violence is significantly associated with work/welfare status, net of other predictors and barriers to employment. We use multinomial logistic regression to assess which variables significantly differentiate welfare reliant women (work < 20 hours/receive cash assistance) from those who are wage reliant (work > 20 hours/no cash assistance), combiners (work > 20 hours/receive cash assistance) and those who are not employed and receive no cash assistance. The sample size for this analysis excludes respondents who became SSI recipients.

Table 5 shows the results. Persistent domestic violence significantly and negatively predicts wage reliance relative to welfare reliance at wave 2. Women with persistent domestic violence have almost 4 times the odds of being welfare reliant than wage reliant compared to the women who never experienced severe domestic violence (odds ratio = .26). Other significant predictors of wage reliance relative to welfare reliance include cohabitation, number of children under 2, being pregnant between wave 1 and wave 2, having low work experience, less than a high school education, transportation problems at both waves, and health problems either at wave 2 or both wave 1 and wave 2.

The following variables significantly differed for combiners vs. welfare reliant women: pregnant between waves, less than high school education, fewer than 4 job skills, and mother's health problems at both waves. Women who were not pregnant, who had a high school education, had more than 4 job skills, and did not have health problems at both waves were more likely to be combiners rather than welfare reliant. In addition to recent domestic violence, welfare reliant women differed from those neither working nor on welfare on several variables including age 25-34, cohabitation, number of children between ages 3-5, prior years on welfare, and transportation problems at both waves. The recent-only domestic violence group had 9 times the odds of being welfare reliant than having neither work nor welfare, compared to the group who never experienced severe domestic violence (odds ratio = .11). Women who were 25-34, and who were married or cohabiting were more likely to be in the no work/no welfare group than to be welfare reliant, whereas those who had more children ages 3-5, longer than average welfare history and lacked access to transportation were more likely to be welfare reliant than to have neither work nor welfare

Domestic violence is significant for two of these comparisons net of other factors and this is interesting compared to other WES analyses. In other papers, mental health status is significant for employment outcomes and domestic violence is not. Our

outcome measures here are different and our significant domestic violence categories here capture a more specific and serious victimization trajectory. With respect to mental health, in this paper the diagnostic category is broader (meeting any of the 4 types of criteria) but also more time-sensitive than in our previous work; however, having any disorder does not predict work/welfare status.

Income

Bivariate results. To examine the relationship between domestic violence and monthly income, we specified two dependent variables: total monthly household income and the respondent's own monthly earnings. Each variable was measured for the month prior to the respondent's interview at wave 2. A significant association of different domestic violence trajectories with income, while not demonstrating a causal link, would support concerns that domestic violence may be a factor that impedes economic well being.

Table 6 shows the means for the two income variables for the domestic violence trajectories. Overall, those women who experienced recent domestic violence, whether for the first time (row 3), or as part of a persistent pattern (row 4), had lower than average total household incomes and earnings in the past month. We examined mean group differences with ANOVA, with post hoc testing of pairwise group differences using the least significant difference (LSD) method. For household income, the persistent domestic violence group had significantly lower earnings than the past only violence group (row 2), but did not differ from those who never had domestic violence (row 1). Those with recent-only violence had significantly lower household income than the past only and never violence groups.

For respondent's own monthly earnings, the persistent violence group earned significantly less than the past only or the never violence groups. The recent-only group also earned significantly less than those two groups. The earnings result is consistent with our analysis in the previous section that showed fewer recent and persistent domestic violence victims were wage reliant, and more were welfare dependent at wave 2 than were women with only past or no domestic violence. The total household income results also demonstrate that households where domestic violence has occurred recently have fewer other economic resources than do those of women who have not experienced recent or persistent violence.

Multivariate analyses. We also conducted multivariate analyses to see if the differences in income by domestic violence history held when controlling for demographic, human capital and other health and mental health differences in respondents. For total household earnings, we estimated an OLS regression. The results presented in Table 7 indicate that those women with recent-only violence have lower total household incomes than do those who never experienced violence. Those with past only violence had higher household incomes than did those who never experienced abuse. Other factors significant for monthly household income at wave 2 include whether married or living with a partner, knowledge of work norms, transportation problems, and persistent health problems.

We used tobit analysis to analyze respondent's monthly wages in the current month. Tobit corrects for left-censored data, in this case, the large number of women who had zero earnings in the past month (29% of the total sample). The pattern for

respondent's own wages differed from total household income. In this case, those with persistent domestic violence had significantly lower wages than did women who never experienced severe violence, net of mental health and health problems. Other variables significantly and negatively associated with earnings include number of children under 2, being pregnant between waves, low education, low work experience, transportation barrier at both waves, and health problems at wave 2 only and at both wave 1 and wave 2.

Hardship

Bivariate analyses. Table 9 shows the relationship of domestic violence to a number of different hardships that respondents reported in the period of time between wave 1 and wave 2.² The pattern is quite striking. For each of the hardships, as well as the combined "any" hardship variable, those with persistent domestic violence have highly elevated rates of hardship, when compared to those who were never severely abused or those who were severely abused only in the past. Those who were abused only recently did not differ from those who were never abused or abused in the past, except on evictions.

In addition to examining the hardships categorically, we computed the mean number of hardships women experienced since wave 1 (see column 4, Table 10). We also examined the level of hardship women experienced in the following categories: current financial strain, anticipated financial strain in the next two months, and the number of hardship activities they have engaged in within the past six months (e.g. housekeeping for other people, pawning personal possessions, searching in trash cans, asking for spare change or begging for work). Mean differences for hardship reveal that women in the persistent severe violence group report higher levels of each type of hardship than do the never severe violence group and the past violence only group. Further, the persistent group also had a higher number of material hardships than the recent only group. All three violence groups (persistent, recent only, and past only) reported higher levels of anticipated financial strain than the never severely abused group.

Multivariate analyses. We used logistic regression analyses to explore the effect of domestic violence for experiencing any hardship (from Table 9 -- eviction, homelessness, utility shutoff, and food insufficiency), controlling for demographic, human capital, health and mental health differences. Results indicate that persistent severe violence, rather than recent or past violence was significantly associated with hardship (see Table 11). These women have twice the odds of experiencing material hardships than do women without severe abuse. Of the control variables, women who had less knowledge of work norms and who had at least one mental health disorder at any wave or at both waves were significantly more likely to experience material hardship. For example, the women who met the screening criteria for any disorder at both waves had three times the odds of experiencing hardship than did women without a mental health disorder.

Hardship summary. A clear pattern emerges across individual hardship items and the summary measures. In each case, those women who have experienced recent and persistent domestic violence have higher rates of economic hardship than do women who were never victims. This is the case for reports of objective hardship (like homelessness) as well as subjective measures (such as worries about not having enough income in the next two months). Those women with domestic violence that occurred only in the past

do not differ from those women who have never experienced domestic violence in terms of economic hardship, except in terms of anticipated financial strain. The multivariate analyses reveal that the association of persistent domestic violence and hardship remains significant, even when controlling for these other characteristics. None of the demographic differences are related to hardship and of the human capital measures, only lack of knowledge of work norms is significant. Mental health disorders but not health problems are significant for material hardship.

DISCUSSION

Our results suggest 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. Severe abuse is prevalent for the sample and recent and persistent experiences are associated with welfare reliance without work, lower earnings, and greater likelihood of material hardship and financial strain. Our previous analyses (Danziger et al, 2000; Corcoran et al, 2001) did not demonstrate a significant impact of domestic violence on employment. However, our results here show that a more detailed examination of domestic violence trajectories holds promise for understanding the economic impacts of abuse with respect to some types and amount of income and deprivation. For example, women who experience persistent and recent severe domestic violence are more likely to be welfare reliant or to have left welfare and not be working than are women with other abuse trajectories. These women are nearly twice as likely to be welfare reliant than wage reliant compared to women who have never experienced severe violence. Women with past-only abuse do not appear to differ from those who were never severely abused in their work/welfare pattern. Recent-only victims are more likely to be welfare reliant and less likely to have neither work nor welfare than are respondents with no history of violence.

In terms of income, the domestic violence trajectory has a clearer association with women's own earnings than with total household income. Women experiencing recent and persistent violence have significantly lower wages than women without severe abuse. When controlling for health and mental health problems (which for some women may result from the violence they experience), persistent violence remains significant. Partner's work interference is one plausible mechanism through which wages could be kept lower since such interference could contribute to a woman being less able to get raises or moving to a better job.

The trajectories significantly associated with household income net of other factors are not consistent, because past victims have higher income but recent victims have lower income (and those with persistent violence are not different) than the never-abused group. The strongest factor for predicting total monthly household income is partner/cohabiting status, which is an expected result. Subsequent analyses will further examine possible interaction effects between current partner and domestic violence trajectory.

The material hardship results extend our previous work in several ways. We examined a broader array of hardship indicators with respect to domestic violence over time. Domestic violence that is both recent and persistent is associated with numerous indicators of hardship; however, recent violence, when it appears to occur for the first time, is not clearly associated with increased overall hardship. Likewise, past victims of

violence do not appear to suffer more hardship than those who have never experienced domestic violence.

The specific hardship indicators suggest some important policy directions. Since homelessness is more likely for the persistent group and evictions more likely for both recent-only and persistent violence groups, stabilizing battered women's housing should be considered as part of the array of welfare-to-work services that may be needed. Lack of affordable housing can affect how battered women weigh the risk of remaining with or leaving an abusive partner, and think about seeking emergency shelter or other options for keeping themselves and their children safe (Correia, 1999a; 1999b). Options for addressing the need for housing assistance for battered women include expanding availability of emergency and transitional housing and housing vouchers (Hammeal-Urban, 1999). Innovative collaborations between battered women's advocates and housing and welfare agencies may lead to creative new solutions for poor women facing domestic violence (Correia, 1999a; Schechter, 1999).

Women experiencing severe persistent violence were more likely to report food insufficiency for themselves and their families. This points to the need to maintain food stamp eligibility, and to conduct outreach and referral for WIC, local food pantries and feeding programs, and child nutrition assistance, in order to meet families' food needs (see also Siefert et al, forthcoming)

Women who experienced any severe domestic violence were significantly more likely to report anticipated financial strain than those who were not victims. Such worries about the economic future may be part of some battered women's reluctance to leave an abusive partner, as many domestic violence researchers and practitioners have suggested (Dutton, 1992; Jones & Schechter, 1993). It could be that services within the welfare to work process that in fact help women achieve more economic stability could encourage battered women to end relationships with abusive partners.

Our results suggest that states should develop screening procedures that account for the chronicity and persistence of domestic violence over time, in order to identify and better serve women who are least likely to see improvement in their economic circumstances through currently typical welfare-to-work activities. While it is important not to ignore the potential devastating impact of even a single act of domestic violence, the clearest effects for economic well being appear to be for women who have experienced persistent or recurrent domestic violence. The needs for assistance and types of services may vary depending on the pattern of violence a woman has experienced, and should be based upon a full assessment of her circumstances, including her needs for health and mental health services. In addition, services that prevent persistent domestic violence may improve future economic outcomes and decrease the need to return to state cash assistance.

The fact that recent and persistent severe domestic violence is associated with less work reliance, greater welfare reliance and lower earnings highlights the need for waivers from welfare time limits for battered women. If domestic violence reoccurs after a woman has exhausted time benefits, she may be at greater risk of extended economic hardship. Some states are apparently considering a policy of "stopping the clock" for women who seek help to address domestic violence.

While language in federal welfare reform promotes marriage and the increasing involvement of fathers in the support of their children, there is also widespread

acceptance that women should not be forced, because of economic dependency, to withstand criminal maltreatment by their intimate partners. Our analyses demonstrate that domestic violence can reduce the economic success of welfare reform for women and their families. Assessment, support and services to enhance the economic capacity and stability of domestic violence victims are warranted.

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