

Linking Welfare Recipients to Jobs: Connections between Client Abilities, Previous Work and Education History, Social Isolation and Placement in a Rapid Attachment Program

Rapid attachment to the workforce programs play a prominent role in welfare to work strategies under the U.S. *Targeted Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)* legislation. For example, one state survey found that eight out of ten states relied on similar work first strategies as a primary method to move welfare recipients into the paid labor force (personal communication). “Rapid attachment” refers to short-term job search and job placement activities which stress quick placement into paid employment. The *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996* allows for six weeks of job search to count as a work related activity under this legislation. These short-term job search and job placement efforts assume that welfare recipients lack current work experience and that placing them into employment will place them on the road to permanent self sufficiency (Mead 1992).

Job search and job placement programs have long been a staple of states’ strategies to reduce welfare dependence (Handler and Hasenfeld 1991, Rose 1995). While studies show that these programs produce modest increases in employment and earnings for their participants, none suggest that they provide a road out of poverty (Gueron 1987, Riccio, Friedlander and Freedman 1995, Friedlander and Hamilton 1993). As most welfare research shows, the majority of the population on public assistance moves between welfare and low wage employment on a regular basis (Bane and Ellwood 1994, Edin and Lein 1997). The primary research studies on placement programs do not show if these programs simply hasten movement back into low wage employment. In fact, none of studies looks carefully at the nature of the jobs found through

these programs. Using data from an administrative database from a rapid attachment program in Philadelphia, this paper examines the types of jobs found through this program.

Research on job placement programs also provides little information on the role of previous occupational and educational background in placement. For example, the SWIM and GAIN studies report that having a high school diploma increases earnings, but no other information is available (Riccio, Friedlander and Freedman 1994, Friedlander and Hamilton 1993). By tracing the career and training histories of program participants, this study examines the connections between previous employment and placement through a rapid attachment program. Since the database also contains information on case manager assessments of participants' attitude, dress and presentation, as well as measures of math and reading ability, this research shows how participant characteristics affect the ability of these programs to place participants.

Scholars of persistent poverty point to the importance of segregation and social isolation in keeping welfare recipients out of stable employment (Massey and Denton 1993, Wilson 1996). However, few studies actually trace the connection between where welfare recipients live and where they work. By examining zip code data on neighborhoods and employer locations, this paper provides a preliminary look at the relationship between social isolation and employment through a rapid attachment program.

My earlier research on agencies which serve welfare populations suggests that the agency's characteristics and connections to employers also impact on the ability of that organization to place its clients (Schneider 1997). By examining the relationship of placements to the agency's physical location and their previous experience to the kinds of placements found

through this program, this paper suggests that understanding rapid attachment program results must include evaluating these factors.

Through an analysis of this database, the paper generally addresses the following questions:

1. Who are the people served by a rapid attachment program? What are their employment and educational histories? What are their actual educational skills and how prepared are they to enter the workforce? Are they isolated from main-stream labor markets?
2. How do these characteristics affect who is placed into a job by a rapid attachment program and the kinds of jobs that they find?
3. What other factors (transportation, the local labor market, agency experience and connections) influence the nature of the jobs found through these programs?

Rapid Attachment in Pennsylvania: Background for this Program

Participation in a rapid attachment program is the first step in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's TANF plan. Every welfare recipient or applicant is mandated to participate in a short-term job search and placement program before they can be evaluated for any other training program, community service or other interventions. Through this triage mechanism, additional services are supposedly made available to those who most need them.

Pennsylvania started the rapid attachment program on a pilot basis several years before passage of the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation. In Philadelphia, contracts were given to five non-profit organizations with long histories working with low income populations. The program data analyzed here comes from one of these programs. These pilot programs mandated that the most "job ready" AFDC recipients participate in job search and job placement activities. While the definition of job ready changed over the life of the project, participants were supposed

to have either a high school diploma or work experience. At the beginning, most had children old enough to be in school. For this reason, these data may not represent the experience with rapid attachment programs for the hardest groups to serve in the welfare population.

Like most rapid attachment programs, the one studied here included a combination of job readiness workshops, structured and independent job search, and job placement activities. Job readiness workshops generally focus on such issues as interviewing, resume preparation, appearance, time management and related issues. The premise of this rapid attachment model is that welfare recipients can find jobs if they are supported in job search activities and given some short term instrumental training in the soft skills of job seeking such as communications, dress and presentation in an interview. This research examines the way that participants with different work and educational experience fare in this kind of program.

Sample and Method

The data analyzed here comes from the administrative database for this program during its first year. It includes all 718 people in the program from February 1996 to February 1997. The database included the following information: 1) demographic information on participants, 2) government program utilization data, 3) information on substance abuse and criminal histories, 4) education and training experience for participants, 5) work experience and location of employers, 6) age, sex and childcare needs of children, 7) interviewer assessments of presentation, attitude, dress, interviewing techniques, TABE Math and Reading test scores and 8) information on placement status, type of employment, salary, hours, benefits and location of employers.

While this database presented a rich source of information on program participants, it also demonstrated the perils of working with administrative databases. In many cases, key

information was lacking or incorrectly coded. For example, 44 percent of the cases were either missing data or coded as “other” for the key variable of race. Information on start and end dates for employment and training programs were blank, making it impossible to perform a time line analysis of work history as in previous studies (Schneider 1997b). Many of the job and training program categories were coded incorrectly. Fortunately, the actual job titles and training program names were available, allowing the opportunity to recode these data. As a result, while this database provided important information on placement through a rapid attachment program, the research can not answer many questions regarding the role of race or several other key factors in employment.

In addition to the database, this paper draws on my experience working with this agency and with others in this locality to understand the employment field which the program worked within. I use this information - along with conversations with agency program administrators, in the placement section. However, it is important to note that I did not observe this program in process and this paper does not constitute an evaluation of the program. Instead, I use these data to understand the pattern of placements in terms of locality and type of jobs found.

Analysis primarily consists of frequencies and cross tabulations on nominative data. Findings reported are mostly significant at the p.000 or p.001 level. As in other studies, I performed cluster analysis to categorize program participants by demographic characteristics and work experience. I also used cluster procedures to analyze the types of jobs found by participants. Finally, I used logistical regression analysis to look at the role of various factors in determining who was and was not placed by this program. Regression analysis was also run to look at the relationship between placement wages and hours and various participant characteristics.

Participant Characteristics, Work and Training Histories

Basic Demographics

The sample population consisted mostly of women who had never married. Eighty-six percent were female, 68 percent were single, 8 percent were currently married and the rest separated or divorced. Men were more likely to be married: 34 percent of the men in the sample were currently married compared to four percent of the women. The majority had small families: 66 percent had two children or less. Forty-nine percent were the only adult in their household, 26 percent lived with another adult, eight percent were teen parents with no adult in the household, and the remainder lived in households with more than two adults. Sixty-four percent said that their housing was stable.

These basic demographics proved remarkably similar to my earlier research on people in a wide array of training programs in Philadelphia (Schneider 1997b). In comparison, 84 percent of the Social Network Study population was female, 63 percent were single, and forty-nine percent had two children or less (Schneider 1997b: 4-6). As in this earlier study, initial analysis showed that marital status and number of children had no affect on employment and training patterns or placements. For this reason, these data are not included in the discussion below.

While much of the race data was missing, the population seemed to consist primarily of people of color. For those who responded to questions regarding race, 47 percent were African American, 6 percent white, 4 percent Latino, .6 percent Asian and 42 percent other. People who did not live in stable housing were more likely to answer “other” to race. By looking at the districts where program participants lived and comparing that information to census maps of racial segregation in Philadelphia, I was able to determine that most participants were people of color. However, since people from several racial or national groups lived in most districts, it was

impossible to accurately recode the racial makeup of the people who identified themselves as “other.” For this reason, information on race played a less prominent role in this analysis than in earlier studies.

The majority of the program participants fell into two age groups. Forty percent were between the ages of 22 and 25 and another forty percent between 36 and 45. As in earlier studies, age also had little impact on who was placed and the kinds of jobs found by program participants.

Education is often named as the key factor influencing the work prospects of low income people (Harlan and Steinberg 1989, Kingfisher 1996, Riccio, Friedlander and Freedman 1994, Friedlander and Hamilton 1993). A high school diploma is considered particularly crucial. Fifty-four percent of the program participants had a high school diploma or GED. Forty-nine percent had attended a training or educational program after leaving high school. Nearly nine percent of the program participants had attended college. As discussed in detail below, completing a diploma or GED did influence work history and placement. Additional training proved far more nebulous.

The population in this study proved to have less education than those in the Social Network Study. Sixty-eight percent of that population had a high school diploma or GED and eighty-three percent had attended a training program after high school (Schneider 1997b: 7-8). Of those who had taken additional training, sixty-five percent of the rapid attachment program participants had only attended one training program and 38 percent two programs. In comparison, 38 percent of the Social Network Study participants had only attended one program, 33 percent two and 12 percent three or more (Schneider 1997b: 8). However, the rapid attachment program participants high school completion rate was identical to that of AFDC

recipients participating in JOBS program activities (personal communication, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare).

These differences suggest two implications for scholars focusing on the links between education and work. First, results from this study can probably be generalized to the population participating in most similar programs. Second, as the fact that over 30 percent more Social Network Study participants had attended training programs than participants in the Rapid Attachment program demonstrates, the population that seeks training as an avenue out of welfare is more likely to have focused on education earlier in their lives and to continue to turn to education programs as a solution to poverty throughout their work histories.

The rapid attachment data also included information on other significant barriers to employment such as addictions, disabilities and criminal history. Seven percent of the participants reported having a history of drug abuse, but only 1 percent had been in a drug rehabilitation program. Information on alcohol abuse was largely missing. Nine percent reported that they were disabled. Most of the disabled people were older: 22 percent of those aged 45 and older had disabilities, many due to work injuries. However, these two barriers had no impact on whether or not an individual was placed by the program. In addition, 4 percent reported that they had criminal records and 2 percent were on parole.

Access to transportation also influences where an individual can work. Fourteen percent of the program participants reported that they had a drivers license. While those who could legally drive seemed to have more extensive work histories, having a drivers license had little impact on placement through this program.

Work and Education Histories

As in previous studies of welfare recipients in Philadelphia (Schneider 1997), most of the people in the rapid attachment program had significant experience with the world of work.

Seventeen percent reported no previous employment, 20 percent one job, 25 percent two jobs, 17 percent three jobs, 12 percent four jobs, and eight percent more than four jobs.

Table 1: Most Frequent Types of Employment

*Figures add up to more than 100% because people could have held jobs in several categories

Job Title	Rapid Attachment Study	Social Network Study
Cashier	15%	36%
Data entry or clerical	23%	27%
Health care (mostly nursing assistant)	14%	17%
Housekeeper	15%	0%
Sales	13%	13%
Blue collar	10%	20%
Factory work	15%	23%
Restaurant work	15%	19%
Professional or professional entry level	11%	9%

As outlined on table one, the types of jobs held by program participants proved both similar and different to those in my earlier studies. As in other studies of employment for low wage workers (Edin and Lein 1997), the majority of the rapid attachment program participants worked in low paid, service sector jobs. These included cashier, nursing assistant, housekeeping, sales and restaurant work. In comparison to the Social Network Study, fewer rapid attachment participants had worked as cashiers, but many had worked as housekeepers or in other domestic occupations. This difference suggests that the Social Network Study participants were more

attached to formal sector employment which required communications and math skills while 15 percent of the rapid attachment program participants worked in more informal settings which required little formal education and communication skills.

The other significant difference between the two studies involved the number of people in blue collar and factory work. Twice as many Social Network Study participants had worked as security guards, in maintenance or construction than in the Rapid Attachment program. Twenty-three percent of the Social Network Study participants had worked in factories compared to 15 percent in the Rapid Attachment database. These differences are primarily due to the fact that the Social Network Study included a group of white, male displaced workers which are largely absent from the rapid attachment program.

In both studies, not everyone had worked in low-wage, service sector employment. Twenty-three percent had worked in data-entry or clerical jobs in the Rapid Attachment program and 27 percent of the Social Network Study participants had held similar employment. Since clerical jobs can either be similar to low-wage service sector employment or provide stable employment for women, additional information was used to evaluate the nature of work history for this population. In addition, nine percent of the Social Network Study participants and eleven percent of the Rapid Attachment participants had worked in professional or professional entry-level jobs such as social worker, caseworker or nurse. These data highlight the fact that people with significant work histories end up on welfare.

The wages and benefits for all of the people in the Rapid Attachment program were very low. Only 17 percent had earned between seven and nine dollars an hour at any point in their career. Six percent had earned between nine and eleven dollars and only four percent had ever

held a job that paid over eleven dollars an hour. Employment provided little means to support a family and seldom enough to save for hard times.

Employment vulnerability was also evident in the percentage of the population that had applied for or received unemployment insurance benefits. Overall, 22 percent had applied for unemployment and 12 percent had actually received benefits. Ability to get unemployment varied significantly by gender and race. Thirty percent of the men had applied for unemployment benefits and 23 percent had received them. In comparison, only 20 percent of the women had even applied for benefits and only 10 percent had qualified for unemployment. Forty-three percent of whites had applied for unemployment, compared to 29 percent of African Americans, 25 percent of Latinos and 8 percent of those categorized as other. The percentages actually receiving benefits differed even more dramatically. Thirty percent of the whites had received unemployment, compared to 16 percent of African Americans, 4 percent other, and no Latinos. These findings highlight the fact that people of color and women work in the unstable, small employer firms of the secondary sector (Gordon, Edwards and Reich 1982).

People left jobs for a variety of reasons. Thirteen percent had quit jobs due to pregnancy, 12 percent due to personal conflicts on the job, 12 percent because the job did not pay enough, 9 percent because the job had no future, and 15 percent quit for other reasons. Very few program participants had been fired: 2 percent for attendance problems and 6 percent for personal problems. Many had been laid off: 6 percent because the company had relocated, 23 percent for various reasons, and 16 percent for other reasons. Reasons for leaving a job had no connection to placement through this program.

My previous research identified four types of people who were on public assistance: 1) limited work experience, 2) low wage workers, 3) displaced workers and 4) immigrants and

refugees (Schneider 1997). These different populations had varying experience with work, education and welfare. Those with limited work experience had worked only one job for less than a year or never held a job. Low wage workers fit the profile of most welfare recipients. They alternate between low-wage, service sector jobs with few benefits and welfare. Displaced workers had stable employment histories, primarily in blue collar occupations, clerical or professional jobs. Immigrants and refugees had a range of experience, but most were on welfare because they had limited access to mainstream labor markets.

In the Rapid Attachment study I sought to replicate this finding through cluster analysis of types of employment, wages, and reasons for leaving jobs. Cluster analysis groups cases with similar characteristics, allowing for categories to arise inductively from the data. Unfortunately, data on dates of employment were missing, which did not allow me to measure the duration of employment for program participants in this study. Nevertheless, four clusters emerged from these data which fit the patterns from the earlier research quite well. Since the Rapid Attachment program included few immigrants and refugees (three percent said that they had a language barrier and only two were Asian refugees), this group was not found in the Rapid Attachment study population. A small percentage of the cases were reassigned from the computer created clusters in order to place the majority of those who had lost jobs due to industry relocations and those with professional training and experience together. Percentages for the major cluster variables are listed on table 2.

Table 2: Worker Type by Employment History

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	Limited Work Experience (N=124, 17%)	Low Wage Workers 1-3 Jobs (N=429, 60%)	Low Wage Workers 3-5 Jobs (N=95, 13%)	Displaced Workers (N=70, 10%)
Ever held jobs as:				
cashier	1%	17%	26%	4%
Clerical/data entry	0	22%	47%	44%
Housekeeper	0	18%	21%	26%
Sales	1%	12%	29%	22%
Restaurant	1%	16%	28%	4%
Factory work	0	17%	27%	16%
Professional entry level	0	8%	0	56%
Professional	0	0	0	57%
Ever Earned:				
less than \$5 an hour	0	79%	96%	64%
\$5-7 an hour	2%	79%	68%	59%
\$7-9 an hour	0	14%	25%	54%
\$9-11 an hour	0	5%	0	31%
\$11 and up	0	0	0	17%
Company relocated	0	4%	12%	21%
Diploma	29%	53%	77%	76%
Attended college	6%	7%	13%	17%

As in earlier research (Schneider 1997), the minority of the study population had limited work histories. Only 17 percent of the population fell into this category. Most had never worked. Only 29 percent had a high school diploma. These people also were more likely to live

in households with three or more adults, indicating family structures which may require care giving to sick adults or children or extreme poverty which required households to double up. However, contrary to assumptions that this most vulnerable group lacks work experience simply because they lack education, it is important to note that 6 percent of this group had attended college and thirteen percent had attended a training program.

The majority of the study population were low wage workers. Overall, 73 percent of the study participants fell into this category. Since I could not distinguish between people who had only worked one job for a short time and those with more significant histories, I kept the initial clusters which grouped this population into two subcategories: those who had worked one to three jobs (60 percent) and those who had worked three to five jobs (13 percent). In both cases, the types of employment were similar: cashier, clerical, housekeeper, sales, restaurant work. The majority had earned wages below five dollars an hour and had little wage progression throughout their careers. Fifty-three percent of those who had worked one to three jobs had a high school diploma or GED and 77 percent of those who had held three to five jobs had this credential. Thirteen percent of those who had worked three to five jobs had attended college and seven percent of those working one to three jobs had been to college. The majority had not lost their jobs due to company relocations.

The remaining ten percent of the program participants were categorized as displaced workers. As in the Social Network Study, this group had a different work trajectory. The Social Network Study found that first jobs for displaced workers were often early work experience unrelated to future careers (Schneider 1997b: 21-22). The Rapid Attachment population supported this observation. While 26 percent of the displaced workers had worked as housekeepers and 22 percent in sales, their employment histories were not confined to this kind

of work. A full 44 percent also held clerical jobs, 56 percent were in professional, entry level positions and 57 percent worked as professionals.

This is the only group in this study population which showed a wage progression. However, most displaced workers had gone on to low wage employment near the end of their careers. The average wage difference between the first and last job for this group was less than one dollar. This pattern is also similar to that in the Social Network Study (Schneider 1997b).

The jobs held by displaced workers were stable and well paid enough to provide unemployment compensation. Forty-five percent of displaced workers had applied for unemployment benefits and 25 percent had received unemployment as opposed to 17 percent or less who had received unemployment benefits for the other groups.

While education played a role in their success, it was clearly not the only factor in the different work histories. Roughly the same percentage had completed high school as those who had worked numerous low wage jobs. Seventeen percent had attended college as compared to 13 percent of the low wage workers who had held three to five jobs.

The Social Network Study suggested that displaced workers tended to come from the stable working and middle class with good networks to jobs that last. As discussed elsewhere (Schneider 1997, 1997d), the working and middle class often possess social capital, in the form of connections to good jobs and educational programs, family resources which can sustain them in their careers and social skills appropriate for the “mainstream” labor market learned through growing up in a working or middle class environment. To a certain extent, the class and racial characteristics of the individual’s home neighborhood can indicate access to social capital which can help people find and retain jobs. The largest percentage of displaced workers were found in a demographic cluster which included African American women with stable housing who were

separated or divorced. Sixty-three percent lived in the stable working to middle class neighborhoods of Germantown (16 percent), Southwest Philadelphia (14 percent), Fishtown, Bridesburg, Port Richmond and Frankford (13 percent), Olney (14%) and East Falls, Manyunk, Roxborough (6 percent). These findings suggest that displaced workers came from environments with social capital which could aid them in their careers.

The displaced worker population in this study is roughly half that in the Social Network Study. These differences are due to the fact that the Rapid Attachment program only included one subgroup of the displaced worker category. In the Social Network Study, displaced workers included white men displaced from primary sector blue collar employment and people of color who had worked their way into stable employment through education and affirmative action (Schneider 1997: 14-17). The Rapid Attachment program only included people in the second category. Seventy-two percent of the displaced workers in this study were African American, seven percent Latino, four percent white and seventeen percent other.

The role of education also reflected similar patterns for the displaced persons of color and limited work experience groups in the Social Network Study. In that study, two groups of people went through three training programs or more: those with limited work experience who seemed to be on a training track to nowhere and displaced workers of color who had used training early in their careers to enter stable employment and now returned to education after their jobs ended (Schneider 1997: 24-37). While the lack of dates for employment and training makes it impossible to determine the role of training in previous work history, the information on number of training programs holds for this population. Thirteen percent of those with limited work histories had attended three training programs or more and fifteen percent of the displaced

workers had gone to multiple programs compared to between five and seven percent for the other work type categories.

Social Isolation

[Poverty Map](#)

[African American Map](#)

[Latino Map](#)

Scholars often assume that persistent poverty is linked to social isolation (Massey and Denton 1994, Wilson 1996, Galster 1996). Returning to the concept of social capital, Wilson in particular, infers that people that are isolated from mainstream labor markets and live among people who do not hold stable employment will not have the connections to find good jobs or the appropriate social skills to be hired or retain employment. As Stack (1974) and Edin and Lien (1997) demonstrate, low income populations in segregated neighborhoods have many social resources in the form of friends and family which help them survive on welfare and low wage work. However, these significant social networks may not provide the connections and social skills to successfully build careers in the center city and suburban labor markets. In this thesis, geographic social isolation represents the lack of social capital which can bridge into the labor markets where employers are hiring. Using zip code data from this database, this paper contains a preliminary analysis of the role of social isolation in work history.

While study participants lived throughout the city, significant concentrations lived in the high poverty neighborhoods of North Philadelphia/Kensington (19%) and Fairmount/Spring Garden (16%). These neighborhoods are also mostly African American and Latino.

Social isolation was determined by identifying people who had never worked outside of their neighborhood. This included those with limited work histories and those whose entire

careers were in their home neighborhood. Twenty-two percent of the study population fit into this category. Ninety-eight percent had limited work histories and the rest were people who continuously found work near their homes. The later group tended to be white working class who lived in the traditional factory neighborhoods along the rivers in Philadelphia. As discussed below, social isolation did play a role in placement.

Even for those who did not live and work exclusively in their home neighborhoods, the relationship between work and home seemed very important for many people in this study. Table 3 shows the relationship between home and work in the work history of program participants. Work history shows two patterns. For the stable working and middle class neighborhoods of the Southwest, Northeast, Germantown/Mt. Airy, and Olney/Logan, people increasingly leave their home neighborhoods for work in center city and throughout the rest of the area. If finding work outside of one's home community indicates connections to mainstream job networks, this work pattern shows an ability for people in stable working and middle class neighborhoods to cross these boundaries. It also indicates neighborhoods which serve as bedroom communities versus those that serve as both work and home.

Table 3: Neighborhood vs Workplace Location

(first figure is percent in same neighborhood)

Neighborhood	Job 1	Job 2	Job 3
West Philadelphia (9%)	35%	35%	60%
Southwest (10%)	36%	14%, 21% center city	0, 60% center city
Overbrook/ Westbrook (4%)	40%	0	67%
Northeast (4%)	spread all over	50%	spread all over
Germantown, Mt. Airy (10%)	23%, 27% center city	20%, 30% center city	32%, 32% center city
Fairmount/Spring Garden (16%)	45%	28%	44%
North Philadelphia/ Kensington (19%)	49%	27%	50%
Fishtown/Richmond (7%)	45%	58%	56%
Olney/Logan (6%)	43%	spread all over	spread all over
East Falls/Manyunk/ Roxborough (2%)	80%	71%	67%

Significant percentages of the remaining population work in the same neighborhood as they live. This is particularly true of the traditional factory working class neighborhoods along the rivers. Between 80 and 67 percent of the people who live in East Falls, Manyunk and Roxborough live and work in the same neighborhoods. Between forty-five and fifty-six percent of those living in Fishtown, Port Richmond and Frankford also work there. Similar relationships hold true for the more impoverished neighborhoods. For many program participants, the patterns of behavior, dress and speech of work and home coincide. Limited ability to move beyond this environment could play a role in future job placement.

Case Manager Evaluations

The Rapid Attachment database also contained codes for case manager assessments of ability to present oneself to an employer, interview techniques, eagerness to find work, and general attitude. The database also contained information from a TABE test on reading and math. However, the reading and math tests were not scored “because all of these people were assumed to be job ready (by the commonwealth)” (Personal communication). Instead, those scores list the number of questions that the individual answered correctly on each part of the test.

The study revealed that displaced workers were able to present themselves better than other groups. Fifty-one percent of the displaced workers were listed as excellent for presentation compared to 22 percent for those with limited work experience, 19 percent for low skill workers with one to three jobs, and 31 percent for low skill workers with three to five jobs. On the other end of the scale, only 2 percent of the displaced workers were rated deficient, compared to 19 percent for those with limited work histories.

Displaced workers also interviewed for jobs better. Forty-three percent of the displaced workers were rated as “excellent”, compared to 20 percent for low skill workers with three to five jobs, 14 percent for low skill workers with one to three jobs, and 10 percent of those with limited work experience. Only 6 percent of the displaced workers were listed as “deficient” compared to 26 percent of those with limited work histories.

All of these groups were equally eager to find work and all had similar attitudes toward the program. While these presentation abilities distinguished between the different groups when they entered the program, none of these factors played a significant difference in who was placed in a job. Other factors combined to make a difference. This finding suggests that, while the “soft skills” of presentation and communication may make a difference in career histories, they were not the significant factor in finding a job in a rapid attachment program.

While the TABE scores have limited meaning, they did show some predictable differences. Displaced workers had higher scores than those with limited work histories. People who worked as housekeepers had much lower scores than most other jobs. People in clerical and professional employment scored higher.

In an earlier paper, I compared job training and placement programs for low income people to business assumptions about creating a successful product. Program participants become the raw materials for a job placement program. But, since we are not just creating widgets, these raw materials have different attributes which influence the ability of any program to place them into jobs (Schneider 1997c). Their work histories, educational credentials, the way that they present themselves, and their ability to use math and English all play a role in this process. The next section looks at the role of these various background characteristics in job placement from a rapid attachment program.

Placement

Before discussing the placement results for participants in the rapid attachment program, it is important to understand the contracting context for this program. As described elsewhere (Schneider 1997c), any employment or training program works closely within the guidelines of its contract. The contracts for this rapid attachment program were extremely strict. Agencies only received full payment if they placed their participants into jobs. While any job counted in this program, agency standards were to find jobs which paid \$6.00 an hour with benefits and which lasted at least 90 days. The contract stipulated a placement goal of at least 50 percent. The agency's responsibility was to meet these contract goals in any way possible. These included direct placement of participants and encouraging them to find work on their own.

While this project does not evaluate the ability of this particular program to meet these goals, it does show the role of the participants' background characteristics in this process. The final section examines some attributes of the agency's networks and the local labor market which also influence this process.

Placement Status

This first section looks at who was placed through this program. Data on placement status were missing for 28 percent of the participants, or 202 people. Presumably, many of these individuals were current participants in the program. Of the remaining participants, 47 percent were placed in jobs, 46 percent were not placed, .2 percent quit for health reasons and 7 percent quit for other reasons.

Percentage placed varied by whether or not a person had a high school diploma, social isolation and worker type. Fifty-five percent of those with a high school diploma found jobs compared to 36 percent of those who did not have this credential. Eleven percent of those without a high school diploma quit, versus 5 percent of those with a diploma.

Social isolation profoundly affected who completed the program. Forty-three percent of those who quit were categorized as socially isolated. Only 34 percent of the people who were socially isolated were placed in a job.

Displaced workers were most likely to be placed. A full 69 percent of this group found jobs. Only 30 percent of those with limited work experience were placed. Those with low wage work experience fell in the middle: 47 percent of those with one to three jobs and 52 percent of those with three to five jobs found work. Those with limited work experience were also most likely to quit. Fourteen percent of this population quit compared to six percent for other groups.

College education contributed both to placement and quitting the program. Sixty-four percent of those who had attended college were placed and 18 percent of this group quit.

People with work experience in several key occupations were more likely to be placed as well. Fifty-nine percent of those with clerical work experience, 55 percent of those with sales experience, 68 percent of the professionals and 61 percent of those with professional entry level experience were placed.

However, when evaluated in a logistical regression formula, none of these variables proved particularly significant in determining who was placed by this program. Only two variables were statistically significant at all: the number of questions answered on the TABE math test and being a displaced worker. Together, these two variables accounted for less than 25 percent of the variance. Clearly, background experience and education play a limited role in determining who finds work out of a rapid attachment program.

Job Placement Characteristics

These various variables play an even more complicated role in the kinds of work found by participants. Fifty-six percent of those placed found full time jobs (35-40 hours per week) and 44 percent found part-time work. Twenty-seven percent of the jobs were 20 hours a week or less. Thirty-three percent of the jobs offered health insurance and another 7 percent provided health insurance after several months. This meant that majority of those placed still relied on medicaid. The average wage was \$7.09, with a minimum wage of \$4.25 and a maximum of \$17.63.

Table 4: Major Placement Jobs

Job Title	Percent
Cashier	8%

Data entry/Clerical	19%
Nursing Assistant	14%
Child care	5%
Housekeeper	5%
Security Guard	1%
Sales	7%
Factory work	4%
Maintenance/Construction	4%
Restaurant	5%
Other	25%

Table four lists the primary types of jobs found by program participants. As with their previous work experience, many found work in clerical jobs and as nursing assistants. The same occupations seen in the list of previous employment appear again, but many jobs are less important. Far fewer were placed in jobs as cashiers, in housekeeping, in factory work and in restaurants. Only one person found a professional job while in this program.

These similarities and differences reflect a combination of past work experience, the nature of the local labor market, and the placement strengths of the agency. Previous work experience played the biggest role. Sixty-one percent of those who found clerical work as a placement job had worked in computer or clerical jobs in the past. Those with health care experience primarily found work as nursing assistants or in childcare. Forty-four percent of the nursing assistants had worked in health care in the past. Thirty-six percent of those who found work in childcare also had a health care background. Forty-seven percent of those who found sales jobs had sales experience. People with factory work experience found jobs as security guards (100 percent), factory workers (44 percent) and factory drivers (50 percent). Twenty-one percent of those who found cashier jobs and 31 percent of those placed in restaurant jobs had worked in a restaurant before. Only cashier and housekeeper had no relationship to previous employment.

The nature of the labor market is also reflected in the kinds of placement jobs. Philadelphia has steadily been losing factory work for many decades (Goode and Schneider 1994: 29-40). While the city has experienced a general loss of jobs, the few growth occupations include clerical, nursing assistant and other service sector industries. Job placements in these fields partly reflect these trends.

However, significant placements into clerical and nursing assistant positions also reflect the training and placement history of the agency. Milofsky and Hunter (1995) describe non-profits of this type as linked through network associations to similar agencies and businesses. In other papers, I discuss the way that this kind of social capital impacts on the ability of any agency to meet placement goals (Schneider 1997c, 1997d). As with individuals, agencies have access to labor markets through their connections. Part of the role of any agency running a rapid attachment program is to link program participants into the labor market through their established connections. This agency was involved in training, with a long history of sponsoring training programs in clerical and health care, particularly nursing assistant. The agency necessarily has contacts in this area. In addition, many of the clerical placements were within other divisions of the agency, thus drawing on its own need for workers to meet placement goals.

Analysis of the employers which hired people from this program supports this theory. In a separate run, the agency provided a list of the name and number of placements for all employers who have hired people from this program from 1996 until March 1998. This included 384 jobs with 200 separate employers. Two patterns were evident. On the one hand, blocks of placements, from three people to twenty were placed with several employers. Most of these employers were health care providers, a few were clerical, and some were blue collar or clerical jobs like UPS. Fifteen employers accounted for 121 jobs, or 31 percent of the placements. Nine

percent of the placements overall were in-house and 31 percent of the large block placements were within the agency.

Table 5: Location of Placement Job

Neighborhood	Percent
West Philadelphia	3%
Southwest	6%
Overbrook/ Westbrook	15%
Northeast	1%
Germantown, Mt. Airy	3%
Center City	54%
Fairmount/Spring Garden	3%
North Philadelphia/ Kensington	4%
Fishtown/Richmond	0%
Olney/Logan	4%
East Falls/Manyunk/ Roxborough	3%
New Jersey	1%
Suburban PA	8%
Other PA	2%

These major employers share several characteristics. None were major firms in the city like the large hospitals, hotels or universities. Nor was this agency able to make many successful contacts with the suburban firms which have most employment opportunities in the Philadelphia area. The agency talked about limited success in making connections outside of the city.

The majority of the block employers were midsized firms which evidently had some ties to the agency. This was also true of the entire list of placements. The list of employers included several agencies which work with the agency running this program as well as government offices

with ties to this agency. Geography played a role both in the large block employers and overall placements. Fifty-four percent of the placement jobs were in center city, many near the agency.

The rest of the job placements cover a range of employers, most hiring just one person. Many of these jobs are service sector retail, clerical and some health care. The list also includes government, factories and a variety of other firms.

Placements from these programs came about in two ways. The first involved direct placement by the agency and the other involved participants finding jobs on their own. Many of the single placements probably reflect this second trend. Here we see a combination of people relying on their own networks, agency guidance, and work close at hand. Given that the agency was located in center city, it is no surprise that the majority of jobs were found within short distance from the agency sponsoring the program.

[Transportation Map](#)

As table five shows, people were no longer finding jobs in their local communities. Locality based employment networks did not provide employment for most of these participants. This is no surprise given that these networks had failed for a sufficient amount of time for most program participants to end up on welfare. The only contradiction to this trend were the socially isolated people in East Falls, Manyunk and Roxborough who managed to return to those networks once again to find employment.

Placements instead reflect primary locations for different kinds of work and transportation routes. Center city is the hub for most public transportation and the logical place to seek work for many people who lack cars. Center city is also one major place within the city for clerical and health care employment.

Overbrook/Westbrook is on a bus line and is the location of several restaurants and hotels. In fact, 32 percent of the jobs found in this neighborhood were restaurant work. Thirty-five percent of the jobs found in Manyunk and the Northeast were also restaurant work, reflecting this kind of service sector employment in these neighborhoods. Manyunk has become a trendy neighborhood hosting upscale restaurants and galleries. The Northeast is a suburb within the city which contains a number of chain restaurants and strip mall employment opportunities. Nineteen percent of the jobs in the Northeast were sales jobs, and 25 percent each in Olney and East Falls, neighborhoods with local services as bedroom communities.

Table 6: Placement Job Characteristics¹

Job Type	Percent	Average Wage
Service sector, full time, insurance	2%	\$7.59
Service sector, full time, no insurance	6%	\$5.28
Service sector, part time, no insurance	12%	\$6.00
Clerical, full time, insurance	4%	\$8.71
Clerical, full time, no insurance	9%	\$8.09
Clerical, part time, no insurance	6%	\$6.39
Helping professions, full time, insurance	2%	\$8.02
Helping professions, full time, no insurance	6%	\$6.25
Helping professions, part time, no insurance	16%	\$6.36
Blue collar, full time, insurance	6%	\$6.30
Blue collar, part time, insurance	6%	\$8.30
Blue collar, part time, no insurance	19%	\$8.16
Other, part time, insurance	2%	\$10.36
Other, part time, no insurance	4%	\$6.90

The nature of the work found by program participants reveals a disturbing trend in relation to the kinds of the jobs which participants with different background characteristics may find through a rapid attachment program. Table 6 summarizes the types of jobs found through this program and the average wage for each. The majority found work in the service sector (cashier, restaurant, sales), helping professions (nursing assistant, child care, teacher's aid) or clerical jobs. Many of these jobs were part-time, with no insurance, little difference from work held before entering this mandated program. Rapid attachment was able to help them find work, but largely put them back into low skill jobs. The fact that most of those with professional and professional entry level experience found work in clerical, sales or helping professions highlights the fact that under time pressure, people with good experience will end up in low-paid, no benefit secondary sector jobs.

Participants with various characteristics reacted to the rapid attachment program differently. These findings are perhaps the most disturbing trend in this study. Regression on wages and hours showed absolutely no relationship with previous experience or worker type. In fact, having a diploma alone had no effect on either wages or working conditions. College training showed no significant difference. Other training also made no difference.

Overall, displaced workers earned about one dollar more than the other groups, with a median wage of \$8.00 per hour as opposed to \$7.00 for other groups. However, looking closely at the job type characteristics reveals that most displaced workers were taking work which was either part time or has no insurance. Thirteen percent took clerical full time jobs with no insurance, 22 percent took blue collar part time jobs with insurance, 13 percent took other, part-time jobs with no insurance. The strategy seemed to be to take the easiest job to find, which often meant not getting the most stable, family sustaining employment.

Those with limited work experience or only one to three low skill jobs found work in part time helping professions with no insurance and blue collar part-time jobs with no insurance. Twenty percent of the low skill workers with one to three jobs found helping profession part time jobs and 19 percent found blue collar part time jobs. Forty-two percent of those with limited work experience found work in these two categories (21 percent for each category). None of those with limited work experience found jobs with insurance. The most vulnerable program participants often found work in the worst jobs.

However, many of the most secure, good paying jobs went to those with only one to three low skill jobs. Seventy-nine percent of those in clerical, full time jobs with insurance and 83 percent of those in helping profession jobs with insurance fell into this category. None of the displaced workers found full time clerical work with insurance, the kind of employment characteristic of numerous displaced workers before losing their stable jobs. Since one would ordinarily expect the displaced workers to get these better jobs, another principal may be operating here. While there is no way to verify this suspicion in this study, my ethnographic work with program participants suggests that these individuals with limited work experience may have avoided taking the less stable employment because of the potential lack of wages and benefits. Since they have relied more on the agency for placement than the displaced workers or those with more work experience in low-skill jobs, they also may have benefited more from the program priority to find full time work with insurance than those with better personal resources. In this case, a few of the more vulnerable participants with some work experience actually found better jobs than their previous work experience through the rapid attachment program. It is important to note, however, that only nine percent of the people in this work type category found

these stable jobs. In most cases, rapid attachment meant quickly finding unstable, secondary sector employment.

Conclusion

Analysis of this rapid attachment program reveals several findings related to the role of this welfare to work strategy as a method to move welfare recipients into stable employment. On a positive note, many people found jobs through this program, including 34 percent of those with limited work experience. Placements in this program also moved many program participants into firms located in center city, which may give them access to “mainstream” labor markets as opposed to neighborhood based employers who had been a major source of employment in the past. However, it is important to note that these individuals may simply be finding low-paid, part-time secondary sector jobs in center city as opposed to their local neighborhoods. The location of the work may change, but not the nature of the work. The kinds of work connections may or may not lead to more stable, lucrative employment. People who had worked in personal services like housekeeping before found work in jobs which were more likely to provide social security. If these placements truly represent a first step into stable employment, these shifts in job location and type of employment could eventually lead to incorporation into the wider labor markets of the city.

However, results from this analysis show that rapid attachment is not changing the work experience potential for many of the participants. Those most likely to find work had significant, stable work histories before entering the program and the majority found employment in the same fields as their previous experience. Rapid attachment, therefore, means re-attachment to similar employment, often in secondary sector jobs offering part-time hours and no health insurance benefits. It is impossible to tell if these “entry-level” jobs will turn into full time

employment. Earlier research suggested that displaced workers were able to parlay part-time clerical work into full time jobs earlier in their careers and may be able to follow the same trend now (Schneider 1997,1997b). Those with low-skill work experience, particularly those without a high school diploma, were not able to use “entry-level” jobs as a stepping stone (Schneider 1997). The previous work experience trends in this study and others suggest that re-attachment simply continues the cycle of poverty.

These data also suggest that rapid attachment can not replace the need for background skills, communications skills and experience. Those who were socially isolated were more likely to drop out of the program. Those with limited work experience were least likely to be placed and often found the worst jobs. Ability to present oneself well had no affect by itself in determining who found work. This may indicate that the program’s job readiness courses are working to correct these initial deficits. However, given that displaced workers presented themselves better than other groups, it is more likely that the combination of good work experience and appropriate presentation skills sell a particular participant to employers.

Taken together, these data suggest that rapid attachment may be a first step back into paid employment for welfare recipients which fulfills the work experience requirements of the new Federal law. However, if people are expected to rely on government aid for only five years in a lifetime, it can not be the only strategy to reform welfare. Other strategies are needed for those with limited work experience, particularly when this combines with social isolation. Many of these program participants who found jobs are likely to find that they still can not make ends meet, or that jobs end due to the seasonal or unstable nature of the employment. The most important government interventions may need to occur **after** the rapid attachment program, through a strategy of continued case management to retain employment and placement support to

find more stable, better paid jobs. This strategy must also support appropriate education combined with work. Now that states are moving past initial implementation of TANF, it becomes increasingly important that they pay attention to changing the nature of the work found by their program participants if there is any hope of ending welfare as we know it.

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**Linking Welfare Recipients to Jobs:
Connections between Client Abilities, Previous Work and Education History, Social
Isolation and Placement in a Rapid Attachment Program**
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1. Service sector jobs include sales, cashier, and restaurant work; clerical includes both clerical and data entry; helping professions includes limited education jobs working with people: nursing assistant, child care, teacher's aid; Blue collar includes security guard, maintenance/construction and factory work; Other includes jobs listed as other and one professional position.