# Bilaga till rapport

Effekter av arbetsmarknads-insatser för personer med varaktigt försörjningsstöd/ Effects of active labor market programs- among long-term social assistance recipients,
rapport 351, (2022)

## Bilaga 4 Tabell över kvalitativa studier / Appendix 4 Characteristics of qualitative studies

| First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality | Aim and method | Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program | Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s |
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| **Baker**<br>**[1]**<br>**2002**<br>**New Zealand**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br><br>Examine the dynamics of flexibility as they apply to the New Zealand welfare-to-work program, the evolving labour market, and strategies used by sole mothers to retain their identities as primary care givers and family providers.<br><br>**Method**<br>Personal semi structured interviews. (Part of a larger research project). | **Participant**s<br>N=120 lone mothers.<br>Auckland<br><br>Age: no information<br><br>**Program**<br>No specific program/s. | New welfare requirements<br>For some beneficiaries, the elements of flexibility and 'choice' in this system are limited. Adherence to the client plan is monitored, work activities must be reported periodically, and the beneficiary can be summoned at any time to explain her behavior and circumstances. Pressure is exerted to find a job. Beneficiaries claim that any job will do for some case managers, regardless of its nature or the impact on family responsibilities. Sometimes, employed clients are urged to work longer hours or find a better-paying job, which many beneficiaries found unfair and unrealistic. |

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| | | | Changing labor markets<br><br>Our interviews illustrate how sole mothers have been affected by new retail opening hours, factory closures, their qualifications and employment experience, and employers' preferences for employees without family responsibilities.<br><br>Conclusion (extracts)<br>The transition from welfare to paid work presents a complex picture for sole mothers. For many, the dilemma is how best to improve their lives economically and meet state workfare demands while conforming to their own and societal images of 'good mothers'. Meeting the demands of dependent children as a sole mother requires considerable time spent in caring activities.<br><br>Welfare recipients also know that they are particularly vulnerable to accusations of child neglect.<br><br>Whatever the efficacy of supporting mechanisms – such as subsidies for childcare, transportation and housing – the successful and sustained transition from welfare to paid work for sole mothers still depends on retaining flexibility in their own lives. Economic independence through paid work also requires resolving issues related to maintenance of personal identity, a sense of well-being, and family |

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| | | | relationships. As labour market trends and social policy initiatives become more similar in liberal welfare states, these New Zealand experiences offer broader insights into the welfare-to-work transition for sole mothers. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Breitkreuz [2]<br>2010<br>Canada<br><br>Moderate** | **Aim**<br>Using a critical feminist lens, we will show the challenges of juggling paid and unpaid work for marginalized parents, revealing the substantial gaps in activation policies.<br><br>**Method**<br>Three in-depth interviews with each participant during the first year of his or her transition from social<br>assistance to employment (May 2001 to October 2002). Interviews were conducted at 6-month intervals: at the beginning of the transition, 6 months into the transition, and 1 year after participants began the transition from welfare to work.<br><br>Institutional ethnography. A critical feminist lens was used. | **Participants**<br>Lone parents<br>N=17<br>16 women, 1 man<br><br>Age: 18-41 years<br><br><br>**Skills for Work Program**<br>variety of employability programs including job-specific skill training, work experience, personal development, and academic upgrading. | At the beginning of this study, 13 of the participants were in some variation of an employability program (i.e., pre-employability life-skills programs for high-barrier workers, job skill training programs, high school upgrading, and on-the-job work experience). Throughout the duration of this study, participants moved in and out of programs and jobs. At the conclusion of data collection for this study, four participants had full-time jobs, five participants had part-time jobs, three were in new employment programs or attending high school upgrading programs, and five were not in a program, employed, or in school.<br><br>Finding paid work: the disconnect between non-standard employment and day care |

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| | | | Participants were cognizant of the reality of the low-wage labour market8 (i.e., low wage,<br>part-time shift work with little autonomy or flexibility) and recognized that finding a job that would fit with their family demands could be difficult. Several participants had past experiences in which they were fired from jobs due to work family conflicts.<br><br>The work outside the work: the day-to-day grind<br>Attending employability programs or working required a carefully planned routine which offered both benefits and drawbacks to the day-to-day schedules of participants and their families. On the one hand, participants described how attending employability programs or working improved their family functioning by providing structure in their days. Participants were required to organize their days into regular routines which got themselves and their children out of bed and out of the house in the morning. Many of them suggested that this was positive for the day to-day functioning of their families, as well as positive for their mental health. Additionally, several participants indicated that having purpose, routine, and structure in their daily lives impacted how their children viewed them, enhancing their children's well-being. |

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| | | | Recreational activities were modest for most, and included watching television, playing Nintendo,<br>listening to music, going for coffee, playing games with their children, or going to the park. Some participants used fee-reduction cards to access recreational facilities to go swimming or to register their children in city programs. There was little energy, time, or money for much else.<br><br>The relentless routine before and after work with little to no recreational time, took its toll. Many participants described having less patience with their children, yelling at them more often, which they attributed to fatigue. Some felt that their children were 'clingier', 'possessive', or 'cuddly' because they did not have as much time with their mother. Conversely, some participants felt that they were more patient with their children because they did not spend all of their time with them.<br><br>The day-to-day grind had implications for the overall health of the participants. All study participants described the fatigue and stress involved with the never-ending demands of each day, describing themselves as chronically<br>exhausted, tired, stressed, and overwhelmed.<br><br>Integrating demands and resources of work and family |

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| | | | Whether or not the impact of welfare to work was positive or overwhelming for participants seemed to be nuanced by a number of factors including whether the participant was in an employability program or employed, the number of hours of work in the week, the type of work, the support offered by others, and the number of personal issues to address. On balance, employability programs were positive for family functioning because they required that parents have a morning routine yet did not overly tax the parents because the programs did not entail a 40-hour work week.<br><br>Social context: what are mothers doing overall?<br>Using a critical feminist lens to examine work - family integration reveals the gendered nature of labour-force attachment. The research highlighted above shows that in attempting to find a balance between paid work and family obligations, most women are still choosing part-time work in order to leave time for their caring-work responsibilities.<br><br>Conclusion<br>The challenges, combined with the realities of the low-income labour market made it difficult, if not impossible, for most participants to effectively integrate work and family. These findings suggest that the dis-integrated nature of welfare-to- |

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| | | | work policies, which overlooks the actualities of low-income parents' lives, limits families' ability to become self-sufficient. |
| **First author (ref)**<br>**Year**<br>**Country**<br>**Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients**<br><br>**Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)**<br><br>**Conclusion/s** |
| **Breitkreuz**<br>[3]<br>**2012**<br>**Canada**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>examine the notion of self-sufficiency as the central goal of recent policy efforts in Canada to move social assistance recipients into the labor market.<br><br>**Method**<br>Three in-depth interviews with each participant during the first year of his or her transition from social assistance to employment (May 2001 to October 2002). Interviews were conducted at 6-month intervals: at the beginning of the transition, 6 months into the transition, and 1 year after participants began the transition from welfare to work.<br><br>Institutional ethnography. | **Participants**<br>Lone parents<br>N=17<br>16 women, 1 man<br><br>Age: 18-41 years<br><br>**Skills for Work Program variety** of employability programs including job-specific skill training, work experience, personal development, and academic upgrading. | The Promise: Beginning the Transition from Dependency to Self-Sufficiency<br>Study participants indicated that the programs gave them an opportunity to interact with other adults, reducing the social isolation they experienced while at home full time. The programs also gave them a sense of moving forward, in turn giving them hope for the future.<br><br>- *Struggles with the promise*.The participants not in a formal employability program were generally less optimistic about their future at the beginning of the transition. They worried more than the others that it might be difficult to find full-time work that could provide a living wage and fit with the needs of their preschool children<br><br>*Money buys happiness*. The most important factor contributing to the hopefulness of welfare-to-work participants was that, for 10 of the 17 participants, the income source changed from social assistance to student finance grant funding for the duration of the |

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| | | | program. Specifically, participants described buying better clothes, so they felt presentable in public, taking their children to eat out once a month, going swimming or to movies on occasion, and not having to say no to their children all of the time. A few participants were even able to save some money each month, putting it away for future bouts of income insecurity, which most of them anticipated despite their optimism about obtaining employment and leaving social assistance permanently.<br><br>The Reality: Making the Transition to Work<br>While the beginning of the welfare-to-work transition meant an optimistic outlook for most participants, the remainder of the transition intro-<br>duced diversity among their experiences. These differences seemed to be associated with the extent to which job searches yielded positive results and how employability programs or work affected the day-to-day functioning of the participants' families, including work-family integration, child-care arrangements, day-to-day scheduling, transportation issues, and general organization of the day.<br><br>- *Employment outcomes*. At the end of 1 year, nine of the participants (53 percent) in this study had some type of employment, four of whom<br>obtained full-time jobs: one in construction, the second in retail, the third |

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| | | | from home, and the fourth in a legal assistant position. Their annual salaries ranged from $14,360 to $18,000.<br><br>*Outcomes in family income*. Of the 17 participants, seven (41 percent) reported an increase in income from the beginning to the end of the year. The findings show that even though social assistance incomes were clearly not sufficient to meet families' needs, neither were the market derived incomes attainable for those with limited education and jobs skills.<br><br>Factors beyond Employment: Child Care and the Work Outside the Work<br>Part of the challenge for welfare recipients in finding and maintaining employment clearly has to do with factors extending beyond employment. Such factors, constituting the daily<br>grind, include transportation, scheduling, and, most important, childcare.<br><br>In summary, the findings from this study indicate that policies built on the assumption that welfare recipients are better off when self-sufficient are ultimately uninformed because they are divorced from the day-to-day realities of participants' lives. This study followed welfare recipients as they adopted the discourse of self-sufficiency, put considerable effort into |

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| | | | achieving it, but were still unable to accomplish this goal, in part due to individual barriers such as their limited employability skills and in part due to structural barriers such as the limitations of the labor market and lack of affordable and accessible child-care options that fit with their complex employment situations. In short, the promise that welfare-to-work participants will achieve self-sufficiency via employment was offset by the reality for the majority of participants: that employment and income did not notably improve and economic independence remained an unrealized goal.<br><br>In summary, the concepts of self-sufficiency and employability described by administrative texts do not accurately reflect the day-to-day realities of study participants trying to move from welfare to work. Through the standardization of needs in the text of SFI policies, the day-to-day realities of participants' lives were often rendered invisible, showing the lack of connection between policy claims and lived experience.<br><br>---<br><br>This study shows that moving welfare recipients into employment is much more complex than simply creating policies that require it. In the |

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| | | | process of reducing the multifaceted lives of welfare recipients into the requirement to be self-sufficient, individual experiences are watered<br>down, rendering them in many instances invisible. Active social policy turns attention away from need, recasting labor market attachment as a central criterion for entitlement to publicly funded benefits and programs, but the result is continued vulnerability and poverty for already marginalized families. Consequently, the intended outcomes of welfare-to-work policies, which may appear realistic and reasonable at first glance, are more difficult to achieve than first imagined by policy makers. |
| **First author (ref)**<br>**Year**<br>**Country**<br>**Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients**<br><br>**Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)**<br><br>**Conclusion/s** |
| **Broughton [4]**<br>**2003**<br>**USA**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>describe these policy initiatives as efforts at "cultural retraining,"<br>which I define as programs and policies designed to shape presumed psychological and behavioral deficiencies in order to bring them in line with dominant cultural standards.<br><br>**Method** | **Participants**<br>N=7, mostly women, who graduated from the workshop.<br><br>**Readywork**, a welfare-to-work job readiness program Ready work is a non-profit agency in a | The Readywork welfare-to-work program is aggressive, authoritarian and intentionally confrontational<br><br>"Othering" at Readywork: Maintaining Positive Identities While Belonging to a Stigmatized Group<br>In the program, participants are essentially instructed to accept their own welfare |

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| | Participant observation and interviewing. Ethnographic data. | large Midwestern city that conducts a four-week, "quick attachment" program that serves poor African-American women (and a few men).<br><br>The four-week program runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. "Quick attachment" and "work first" approaches emphasize brief work programs and then entry into any kind of work, the argument being that work itself is the best kind of job training. In this model, any pre-work training is brief and therefore not oriented toward developing hard skills or educational credentials, but rather toward soft skills and attitudinal changes. While human capital development used to be more popular among many welfare recipients, policy-makers, and advocates, quick attachment programs have recently become popular under welfare | circumstance as the product of personal defect. Readywork participants are advised to discard the "victim mentality" and countenance the role of their attitudes, values, and behaviors in the causation and perpetuation of their poverty and welfare status. In this sense, the program attempts to break down the attribution paradox by compelling its clients to accept welfare status as evidence of personal shortcomings—whether one's own or someone else's.<br><br>Workshop participants neither became more sympathetic toward others or more critical of themselves over the course of the workshop.<br><br>The women at Readywork presented evidence taken from their lived experience to countervail the labels and assumptions that the blaming discourse would ascribe to them as individuals. |

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| | | reform because of their brief program duration and low cost per participant compared to longer-term training models. | |
| **First author (ref)**<br>**Year**<br>**Country**<br>**Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients**<br><br>**Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)**<br><br>**Conclusion/s** |
| **Cook**<br>**[5]**<br>**2001**<br>**Canada**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>The study had the following objectives:<br>• to understand the everyday experiences of single mothers participating in Welfare-to-Work activities:<br>• to explore how the experiences of these single mothers are influenced by broad social and economic policies and ideologies; and<br>• to explore how the experiences of these single mothers influence their and their families' health and wellbeing.<br><br>**Method**<br>Individual interviews following a general interview guide.<br><br>Critical ethnography and latent content analysis. | **Participants**<br>N=9<br><br>All were women, single mothers, out of which four were Canadian Aboriginals and five were Caucasian.<br><br>Age: from the early-twenties to mid-thirties.<br><br>Welfare to work Mandatory activities are being enforced with sanctions such as reduced, denied, suspended or eliminated | Overwhelmingly, the women indicated that their allowances were not enough to cover basic expenses. Each of the women also commented on the bureaucracy of the system and the quality of help they had received. Those who spoke more favourably about welfare services had greater family support to rely on, or through which contingency plans could be made, in the event that welfare support was not forthcoming. Three women spoke of how the bureaucracy was insensitive to their situations and how they were told there was nothing welfare could do to help them. In many cases it appeared that the benefits women received were at the caseworker's discretion. |

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| | | benefits for those who fail to participate adequately.<br><br>No detailed information about the program is provided. | Extended family and friends were also vital to the women's economic survival. They provided such essentials as food, clothes, toys, furniture, appliances, transportation and baby-sitting. The monetary value of the items ranged from negligible, such as a ride to a program, to substantial, in the case of a washer and dryer. More importantly, however, these items allowed mothers to save their resources for other necessities.<br><br>The experiences of single mothers on welfare<br>The experiences of the women interviewed were characterised by trying to raise a family in the face of financial hardship. The women relied on the support of family, friends and agencies to survive. Most of their decisions revolved around ensuring they would have food and a place to live. Their day-to-day activities were influenced by the requirements of the welfare system and the need to be mothers to their children.<br><br>The influence of social and economic policies<br>While the government dictated the majority of activities a single mother on welfare undertook, such as participating in mandatory training programs, the women |

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| | | | had some flexibility to manoeuvre within this system. Relying on family and friends was one option, but also skipping their own meals.<br><br>Conclusion<br>Findings suggest that the government overlooked the caregiving role of single mothers on welfare. It seemed that the government only viewed those who were contributing economically through the labour market as productive members of society. Welfare-to-Work policies were not 'healthy public policies' as they often compromised determinants of health. The policies did not empower women, but rather subordinated them. |
| **First author (ref)**<br>**Year**<br>**Country**<br>**Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients**<br><br>**Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)**<br><br>**Conclusion/s** |
| **Eleveld [6]**<br>**2021**<br>**Netherlands**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>whether and if so, to what extent, a specific type of Active labor market policies, namely *thin* mandatory work programmes (MWPs) can be considered in conformity with the fundamental right to work<br><br>**Method** | **Participants**<br>N=42 in three municipalities in the Netherlands in 2017 and 2018. Municipalities were selected because they all required welfare recipients to participate | Experiences of dignity, self-respect or self-esteem, and self-development or self-actualisation<br><br>Generally, however, participants mentioned both positive and negative aspects of their work at the MWP. Starting with the negative assessments: almost half |

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| | Semi structured interviews, 1-2 hours. Observations at work floor and in welfare offices. Interviews with supervisors, welfare officers and policy makers were also performed.<br><br>Coding in Atlas TI.<br><br>Analysis according to Ritchie et al. | in *thin* MWPs. They focus the development of very basic employee skills (for example, being on time at work,<br>listening to a boss, keeping up the work rhythm, and so on.<br><br>24 women and 18 men.<br><br>Most respondents were aged 40 or older and threequarters<br>of the respondents had a Dutch ethnic background. A third of the respondents reported that they were partly incapacitated for work.<br><br>Program<br>Recipients first attend a work-training programme to learn how to prepare a CV, apply for jobs and so on. Subsequently, they can be referred to a thin MWP where they perform non-paid work activities in order to develop or to improve very basic employee | of the interviewed participants complained that they could not develop any professional or other useful skills at the MWPs which was contrary to its main aim. Generally, participants thought that 'learning general workers' skills' was pointless.<br><br>Participants not only felt that participation in an MWP did not contribute to their self-development, some also felt particularly belittled being at work as a *welfare recipient*, and therefore, disrespected. The fact that participants did not receive a wage appeared to be an important source for feelings of disrespect. However, a third of the interviewed participants said that they gained recognition because of the work and that it had enhanced their self-respect. Some even felt more respected and recognised at the MWP than at their previous precarious jobs.<br><br>Most interviewed participants (almost three-quarters of them) also mentioned that they liked the work because they could socialise with others.<br><br>Working at the MWP, the participants could forget their daily personal problems and made themselves feel more useful, which contributed to feelings of dignity. In addition, more than a third of the participants said that the work at the MWP helped them to develop themselves. Participants also mentioned that they felt |

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| | | skills. Two MWPs compel employers to hire social assistance recipients who have been participating between 26 and 40 hours a week for a period from two to four months at a so-called probationary MWP. In other MWPs, recipients would normally work between 20 and 32 hours for a minimum period of three months and often (much) longer. The work involved in all programs is relatively straight forward and includes such things as (simple) production activities, call centre work, maintaining municipal green spaces, postal delivery, canteen work or serving coffee to people in nursing homes. | much less pressure compared to the regular work they used to do.<br><br>Only a small minority thought that the MWP was a useful transition to paid work. Yet, the idea that working at the MWP did not contribute to a transition to a regular job did not necessarily bother them. Being entitled to social assistance benefits provided a stable, albeit meagre, income. Indeed, for some participants the security and structure that the MWP offered was of pivotal importance, particularly for participants who had experienced uncertain times in the past.<br><br>Conclusion<br>Overall, the work in the MWPs infringed the right to work. However, part of the MWP participants were able to realise the right to work to the extent that participation in an MWP enhanced their dignity, self-respect and their opportunities for self-development. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Fletcher [7]<br>2008<br>USA** | **Aim**<br>The purposes of the study are to | **Participants**<br>N= 18 families. Iowa | Advances in education were instrumental in helping some of the respondents qualify for better jobs. Respondents reported that their overall health improved from the first |

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| **Moderate** | 1. document changes in family position, employment, housing, and program participation<br>2. report how recipients experience such changes.<br><br>**Method**<br>Six in depth interviews over three years. The qualitative analysis is organized around the pattern of changes in the receipt of cash benefits over the six interviews. | Age: At the first interview, five respondents were under age 25 and six were over 35 years old. At the last interview, none of the respondents was under 25 years old.<br><br>**Program**<br>No specific program | interview to the last. Seven respondents were employed full time at the beginning of the interviews and six were employed full time at the last interview.<br><br>Findings reveal that the 11 families who left the cash benefit program were usually still dependent on Food Stamps, Medicaid, and other need-based programs to supplement family income. Income sources within families were often one or two low-wage jobs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) payments. In addition, chronic health problems plagued most families still receiving cash benefits, and those cycling on, and off cash benefits experienced frequent changes in employment and/or family composition.<br><br>The context of change<br>Leavers (11), Stayers (4), Cyclers (3)<br><br>Findings paint a more vivid picture of over-whelming complexity in the lives of many low-income families. They highlight certain resiliencies in the face of difficult daily stresses: coping skills that result in access to resources; tenacious mothers of disabled children<br>seeking out appropriate educational and social service programs; and management abilities to balance parenting responsibilities despite long work shifts at low wages. Our case studies also |

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| | | | reveal some of the most troublesome scenarios of<br>family life: alcohol addictions, family violence, chronic mental and physical health problems that go unattended, and hardworking adults struggling in labor markets that simply fail to reward low-skill jobs adequately.<br><br>Our findings also illustrate the fragmented nature of our welfare system and the bureaucracy surrounding it. Although families were often quick to praise welfare caseworkers, they also were likely to voice frustrations about the rigidity of rules and regulations. We observed instances where families failed to participate in programs such as transitional Medicaid or Iowa's child health insurance program. What is unclear<br>is whether this was a conscious choice o r a result of lack of awareness of the programs. In some cases, families were critical of caseworkers who showed a lack of respect and treated them in a condescending manner. Not surprisingly, some families were willing to forego cash benefits rather than return to a system that treated them poorly. |
| **First author (ref)**<br>**Year**<br>**Country**<br>**Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients**<br><br>**Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)**<br><br>**Conclusion/s** |

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| **Hildebrand [8] 2005 USA**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>To explore women's perceptions of their health and well-being while enrolled in a work-based welfare program.<br><br>**Method**<br>An interview guide was used to gather narrative, qualitative data. NVivo was used.<br><br>Data were also gathered using the General Well-Being (GWB) schedule, a self-administered, 18-item survey tool used in the U.S. Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES). | **Participants**<br>N=34<br>All were single mothers.<br><br>31 were African-American, 2 Hispanic, 1 Caucasian.<br><br>Age: mean 32 years, range 21-47 years.<br><br>**TANF-program**<br>Services or supports offered through work-based welfare in one Midwestern state, Wisconsin, are job training, earned income credit, job access loans, case management and assistance with public housing, childcare, and transportation. Food stamps and health care through Medicaid are programs separate from work-based welfare. There is a 5-year lifetime limit for cash assistance for families. | There was a significantly higher level of distress in the study sample than in the U.S. population ($\chi 2$ 76.84, df= 2, $p < 0.001$).<br><br>Wellbeing<br>Many of the reasons given for perceived lack of wellbeing were out of the control of the participants.<br><br>Health<br>82% of the women said there were negative effects on their health while on work-based welfare. Many of the women verbalized that their health problems were chronic problems and represented recalcitrant barriers. The problems were exacerbated by the demands of working away from home and managing their family needs within their limited resources.<br><br>Anxiety<br>All the women expressed anxiety about their life situation. A frequently cited concern for these women in entry-level jobs that had few benefits was that women lost wages when they took off time to care for sick children or took their children to health care providers for immunizations and well-childcare or sought health care for themselves.<br><br>Depression<br>During the interviews in the qualitative part of the study, half of the 34 subjects |

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| | | | indicated feelings of depression while enrolled in TANF.<br><br>Self-control and vitality<br>Women were thrown into very new experiences by the new work-based welfare expectations. Their lives changed dramatically, and some women saw it as a challenge while others were overwhelmed.<br><br>Conclusion<br>Results of this study suggest that current policies do not effectively support health and well-being of single mothers enrolled in work-based welfare programs. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Kissane [9]<br>2008<br>USA<br><br>Moderate** | **Aim**<br>explore the views and experiences of poor women living in Philadelphia who attended welfare-to-work programs provided by nongovernmental providers.<br><br>**Method** | **Participants**<br>N=40, all women<br><br>Age: mean age 31years (range 20-49).<br><br>**Program types** | Overall, the women in this study described a range of problems they had with welfare-to-work programs. They believed that the programs were often a waste of time, complicated their already difficult lives, and forced them to interact with sometimes disrespectful, hypocritical, and indifferent staff. The women also felt that |

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| | Individual interviews, 45-240 minutes. Interviews were about experiences of programs over a five-year period.<br><br>QSR NVivo. | - Job clubs and job readiness programs<br>- Transitional jobs programs,<br>- Occupational skills training programs. | they were under-compensated for the work that they did in transitional jobs programs.<br><br>While there were problems with all programs, they were particularly dissatisfied with those that included job readiness training. Similar to findings reported elsewhere (Monsma 2006), they favored programs that concentrated on hard skills (e.g., occupation-specific skills training) and led to full-time employment that paid livable wages over those that did not. Because the interview covered all of the programs the women had used over a five-year period, they discussed another significant problem—they received the same type of instruction repeatedly and often did not learn new skills. To make matters worse, the women argued that some of the advice they received in the programs (e.g., how to dress) was irrelevant given the types of jobs for which they were presently qualified. The findings of this study also highlight the complexity of the lives of welfare recipients who participate in welfare-to-work programs. The women's physical and mental health issues and demanding (and sometimes abusive) networks often complicated their ability to complete or participate fully in the job programs. Repeatedly, the women talked about how program staff "demeaned" them, treated |

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| | | | them like children, and failed to consider their needs and problems.<br>_____<br>The Programs are "a waste of time"<br>The women's notion of "usefulness" involved many considerations. In particular, they viewed welfare-to-work programs as useless when they met all or some combination of the following interrelated conditions: 1) they did not result in decent, full-time, paid work; 2) they failed to focus on areas that the women saw as important and focused instead on what they considered irrelevant.<br><br>Programs do not result in employment<br>When evaluating the usefulness of the programs, the women were very focused on what they considered the main point—obtaining employment. Conversely, programs that were "useful" resulted in employment. At times, the women emphasized that "useful" programs also provided them with self-confidence and determination. Importantly, however, they rarely mentioned improved self-confidence or determination as resulting from programs unless<br>they also could point to having gotten a job, certain hard skills, or a credential.<br><br>Programs neglect critical skills in favor of less relevant ones. Overall, they were clear that most of the programs they encountered did not deliver instruction in |

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| | | | the areas that they thought they needed but instead focused on skills they saw as irrelevant to getting ahead in life. More specifically, some of the women said they had hoped or expected that they would learn useful occupational skills through the programs, but they found that they did not.<br><br>Based on their labor force participation, they recognized a mismatch between how they were being told to dress, the types of jobs available to them, and the jobs they were pressed to take.<br>In fact, they noted that it did not matter much how they dressed for the low wage work in the service industry that comprised the bulk of jobs for which they applied and interviewed. Subsequently, not only did the women think that program staff were taking precious time away from instruction in the areas that they saw as important (e.g., GED preparation or job-specific skills) to cover how to dress, but they also thought they received poor advice and, at times, were getting set up for disappointment and embarrassment.<br><br>Programs focus on things you already know<br>The women consistently argued that they already had many of the skills that program staff were trying to teach them.<br><br>Barriers to Program Participation |

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| | | | Besides seeing them as a waste of time, some of the women admitted that they were not prepared to cope with the welfare-to-work programs they entered because they were dealing with multiple problems in their lives. The women I interviewed suffered from mental and emotional problems, had difficulties juggling work and home, and had lives complicated in other ways (e.g., sick children, intimate partner violence, doubled up housing situations etc.). Attending a job readiness class, occupational-skills training program, or transitional jobs program was another facet of their lives that they had to manage to keep their welfare benefits. For some, this proved too difficult and they either quit welfare-mandated programs or attended them only sporadically.<br><br>Problems with Program Staff<br>First, the women complained a great deal that program staff treated them with little or no respect. Second, some of the women found program staff to be hypocritical. Amy was one of the respondents who griped that the program instructors did not "practice what they preached." Last, but most importantly for most, the respondents did not think that staff tried to understand their lives, the problems they faced, or their particular needs. The women especially complained that program staff pressured them to take |

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| | | | jobs that did not meet their needs or the needs of their families.<br><br>Problems with Paid Work Experiences<br>Some of the women who attended transitional jobs programs complained about the compensation that they received for their subsidized jobs. They saw themselves as workers who should be paid according to the work they did, not the standard $5.15 an hour that all program participants received. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Medley [10]<br>2005<br>USA<br><br>Moderate** | **Aim**<br>to discern the factors that distinguished women with greater success after welfare from those who were less successful.<br><br>**Method/s**<br>Ethnography.<br><br>In-depth interviews data. | **Participants**<br>More successful women<br>N=60<br>Mean age 32.3 years<br>Less than high school 12%<br>Poor work history 15%<br>Workforce Readiness Program<br>55% | Factor 1. Knowledge of Services and Resources<br>More successful women indicated greater knowledge of services and transitional programs designed to aid them in making the move from welfare to work.<br><br>Factor 2: Participation in Employment Assistance Programs<br>More successful women were nearly twice as likely to benefit from standard TANF programs such as the Workforce Readiness |

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| | Demographic and trend data from administrative records and studies from the South Carolina Department of Social Services. | Less successful women<br>N=24<br>Mean age 26.8 years<br>Less than high school 33.3%<br>Poor work history 25%<br>Workforce Readiness Program 29% | Program and reported finding these programs useful in their work preparation.<br><br>Participation in such programs and getting needed help were not always automatic. Rules and restrictions at times had to be overcome.<br><br>Job training programs were not a major resource for either of the two groups, but 23% of more successful women stated they had received help with job training as compared to 8% of less successful respondents. When it was available, such training was typically provided by outside agencies with specially designed programs for women leaving public assistance,<br><br>Factor 3: Mentorship and Caring<br>More successful women spoke more often of the assistance received in the job search from various sources. For several, the most important encouragement came from caseworkers who believed they could succeed. Receiving less assistance was more characteristic of less successful respondents, with most of these women acknowledging that caseworkers gave them information about time limits and the necessity of going to work, but offered little assistance beyond standard information on services. |

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| | | | Being able to see the "big picture" and address barriers was characteristic of more successful women, particularly those who recognized that overcoming such barriers could not be avoided. Barriers included managing time for school, and adjustments required to take advantage of jobs requiring extensive training, sometimes at out-of-town locations. For many of these women the childcare problem was significant // Other characteristics of more successful women included their greater knowledge of career paths, organization structure, and the need to network.<br><br>Several of the more successful women also reflected a broader view of their employment prospects and acted on their recognition that typical jobs would not suffice economically for their family needs. They sought and accepted nontraditional jobs in criminal justice, construction, and health care, and were willing to pursue these options despite the training rigor such jobs entailed<br><br>Conclusion<br>For the women included in this study, post-welfare success grew out of an interplay of programmatic and personal factors that aided these former welfare recipients to more productively pursue avenues of education, training, and employment. |

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| | | | Our research shows that such a trajectory incorporates not only education, training, and job attainment, but also includes developmental and assistance supports that help clients effectively engage available opportunities. Access to resources for post-welfare women includes provision of educational and job training programs, transportation assistance, childcare, and healthcare. More successful women used all of these resources to one degree or another, facilitating educational attainment and job procurement.<br><br>Furthermore, where women participated actively and consistently in programs such as Workforce Readiness and similar job preparation and training programs, they received critical assistance in moving forward. These programs were particularly effective when they emphasized personal developmental dimensions such as self-confidence and personal initiative.<br><br>However, the key for social service agencies to consider is the difference in the help these women received from case managers, compared to the experience of those who did less well.<br><br>Training programs should be structured to include job-specific training paths that combine basic skills training (e.g., GED) and specific job skills training. |

| First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality | Aim and method | Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program | Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s |
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| **Ohls**<br>**[11]**<br>**2017**<br>**Norway**<br><br>**Moderate** | **Aim**<br>What are the reasons for ill-being and well-being among participants in the Norwegian Qualification Program?<br><br>**Method**<br>Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, 60-80 minutes. Interpretative phenomenological analysis. | **Population**<br>N=20; 13 women.<br>Age: 30-50 years<br>13 had a minority background. Most had been living in Norway for fewer than 7 years.<br><br>One held a master's degree and several had completed their bachelor's or vocational degree, but the majority lacked formal education and/or had not completed higher education.<br>**Intervention**<br>**Norwegian Qualification**<br>Program is organized by a publicly funded activation center in Oslo. The overall aim of the Qualification Program is to increase the employability and self-sufficiency of long-term social assistance recipients. Individual plans are to be tailored according to individual | Physical and mental health<br>Nearly all of the participants touched upon problems related to physical and/or mental health. For three participants, physical health issues stemming from previous physically demanding work affected their ability to find employment. Their poor health restricted the type of work they could perform. The participants' mental health<br>problems were described as depression, sleeping difficulties and anxiety.<br><br>Adequate housing<br>Financial circumstances prevented a number of participants from finding adequate housing.<br><br>Educational opportunities<br>the education lost meaning when she was not able to use it. Still, the dream of new educational opportunities was a recurring theme for some participants.<br><br>Engaging in meaningful activities<br>A common theme of all interviews was the desire to find paid work.<br><br>Being treated with dignity |

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| | | needs. Participants follow the program for 2 years with a possible 12-month extension. The program offers follow-up and individualized options, such as work training, counselling and some educational possibilities to enhance employability. | QP respondents also expressed positive emotions about their experiences, especially concerning the QP counsellors at the centre. The respondents described the counsellors as kind and helpful, and they trusted them and felt supported and recognised by them. In contrast, Ingrid recalled poor experiences with the social welfare office, using phrases as 'they ruin things for you' and 'they disrespect you'.<br><br>Right to engage politically<br><br>Conclusion<br>the mismatch between the QP's intended direction of change and the actual direction of change in the participants' lives could arise from what participants experienced prior to entering the program. The past could be haunting some participants, blocking them from taking full advantage of the program opportunities at the present time. From a policy perspective, there ought to be an increased awareness on how past issues may impact participants' program trajectory in the present. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Ohls [12]** | **Aim** | **Participants**<br>N=20; 13 women. | The majority of the participants had been involved in program activities for the |

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| **2020**<br>**Norway**<br><br>**Moderate** | contribute to a better understanding of dignity-based<br>activation services, turning both to service users and<br>service providers (anm. not reported here) to gain better knowledge of how they perceive activation services.<br><br>The main goals of the study were to: (1) examine the extent to which participants in a public-financed activation program experience their dignity as being reinforced or undermined during participation, and (2) explore the characteristics<br>of dignity-based practices based on the accounts<br>of activation workers.<br><br>**Method**<br>Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, 60-80 minutes. Interpretative phenomenological analysis. | Age: 30-50 years<br><br>13 had a minority background. Most had been living in Norway for fewer than 7 years.<br><br>One held a master's degree and<br>several had completed their bachelor's or vocational degree, but the majority lacked formal education and/or had not completed higher education.<br><br>**Intervention**<br>Norwegian Qualification Program is organized by a publicly funded activation center in Oslo. The overall aim of the Qualification Program is to increase the employability and self-sufficiency of long-term social assistance recipients. Individual plans are to be tailored according to individual needs. Participants follow the program for 2 years with a possible 12-month extension. The program offers follow-up | previous 6 to 18 months at the time of being interviewed. They participated in activities at a center that was perceived as a 'last resort' when other initiatives within the Qualification Program had not succeeded (i.e., participants did not find employment).<br><br>Accounts of autonomy<br>The participants did not explicitly highlight activities such as the 'work training course'.<br><br>Work placement turned out to be a source of frustration, especially when it did not lead to paid employment. Some felt trapped, which hindered their autonomy. However, some participants indicated that participation had given them 'guts' to try new things, including applying for work outside their comfort zone. In the long term, this could strengthen their ability to be self-sufficient.<br><br>Constrained autonomy<br>Examples participants gave of limited autonomy were related to not having the right to choose their program activities, but it was also a consequence of being unemployed. For example, the possibility to pursue further education was limited due to the program's design. Lack of choices as a consequence of being unemployed also led to circumstances where participants could not live as they preferred. Difficulty in acting |

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| | | and individualized options, such as work training, counselling and some educational possibilities to enhance employability. Participants normally took part in a 'work training course' (focusing on work norms, CV writing, etc.) lasting a couple of weeks followed by a longer period of work placement ranging from about 3 weeks and upwards. | independently might be related to a low degree of user involvement, which hindered immigrant participants from exercising self-governance. Low levels of Norwegian language skills and limited knowledge of how the system works might also limit independence. Hence, involving and supporting participants is critical for enabling autonomy.<br><br>Accounts of empathy<br>None of the participants reported having experienced lack of empathy on the part of their activation workers. On the contrary, the majority of participants acknowledged the activation workers' expressions of empathy. Similarly, another participant, who harbored negative feelings about previous experiences from another course, appreciated being treated with empathy and feeling respected at the activation center.<br><br>Accounts of rights<br>Generally, the participants did not stress rights during the interviews, with some exceptions. Only two participants mentioned that their legal rights had been enhanced by joining the program. |

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| | | | Conclusion<br>In terms of the use of work placement, participants reported feeling that promises had been broken when the placement did not lead to paid work. Restriction in educational opportunities also prevented participants' from choosing freely. If employment is a measure of full autonomy, the majority of the participants had not achieved this 'statuses at the time of the interview. When participants are unable to conform to the ethos of the work approach, it may lead to increased feelings of shame. Hence, activation may work against its intention to promote increased self-sufficiency or autonomy.<br><br>In response to the first research question, the findings indicate that the relational aspect of dignity in the context of expressed empathy is the most striking. Participants reported fewer instances of their autonomy and rights being enhanced. It is somewhat challenging to distinguish between the impact of program participation and that of contextual and structural issues on enhanced/diminished dignity.<br><br>Regarding the second research question, the findings suggest that the characteristics of dignity-based practices contain the following elements: tailor-made solutions, cooperation with key players such as doctors and social workers, and support extended to participants for |

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| | | | exercising their legal rights. This study shows that when activation workers follow up on legal aspects regarding contracts for example, they support participants in terms of exercising their rights – an approach that aligns with social work principles. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Pearlmutter [13]<br>2000<br>USA<br><br>Moderate** | **Aim**<br>To explore the TANF´s participants' knowledge and understanding of the changes in the AFDC-TANF program, especially about employment and training services that might be available to them, their use of subsidized childcare services, and their relationships with welfare<br>workers, and to determine their perceptions of the effects of these changes for their lives and the lives of their families.<br><br>**Method**<br>3 focus groups.<br><br>No analysis presented. | **Participants**<br>N=53 (24 + 14 +15).<br>Women: at least 36.<br>Age: 17-35 years appr.<br><br>**AFDC-TANF program**<br>Ohio and California. | Knowledge and Effects of Changes<br>expressed significant confusion and doubt about the help available to them for obtaining jobs, particularly in relation to education and job training. They did not clearly understand the new rules for sanctions or the specific requirements for participation in work activities. People in both counties expressed fear that they would lose<br>cash assistance even if they were trying to find and/or keep jobs. The participants did not believe that individual situations were taken into account.<br>The welfare program was described as very generalized.<br><br>Employment services |

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| | | | With regard to the helpfulness of the employment services, three major issues surfaced: sanctions, assistance in finding jobs that pay living wages (and include benefits), and adequate support services such as childcare and transportation.<br><br>- Sanctions. The participants who were receiving job training or were working in the paid labor force saw sanctions as the object of much confusion for both them and the welfare workers:<br><br>- Jobs with living wages<br>Jobs with living wages. The participants agreed that if employment services are to be helpful, they need to focus on finding jobs for participants that pay well and offer medical<br>benefits.<br><br>- Support Services.<br>The lack of support services, namely, childcare and transportation, affected the participants' ability to take advantage of job training services as well as to find jobs.<br><br>- Use of Child Care Services<br>Whereas in California the nonpayment of childcare providers was the central issue, in Ohio, the main concerns were the accessibility and quality of childcare.<br><br>Relationships With Welfare Workers |

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| | | | The participants complained that their welfare workers were disrespectful, kept people waiting, did not return telephone calls, and gave confusing or inaccurate information to clients.<br><br>Underlying themes<br>*Inadequate and inaccurate information*. All the participants had inaccurate information about the ongoing receipt of food stamps, childcare vouchers, and Medicaid; education and job training opportunities; and available mental health services.<br>*Lack of support from workers or the system*. The participants saw little change in the ways their workers were treating them. They felt disrespected and ignored and were aware that<br>the system operated through punitive measures and that sanctioning was always a threat. Their experiences with the welfare workers demonstrated that the participants would continue to endure arbitrary and unjustified withdrawals of benefits. Furthermore, the participants thought they would need assistance to find well-paying jobs that would permit them to stay free of the welfare system.<br><br>*Childcare options*. Overall, the participants were deeply concerned that the childcare available to them was unsafe and did not provide high-quality experiences for their children. |

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| | | | *Fear of not finding living-wage jobs and losing benefits*<br><br>Conclusion (abstract)<br>The results suggest that participants are not receiving the support they need to obtain and retain jobs that will lead to self-sustaining careers. |
| **First author (ref)<br>Year<br>Country<br>Study quality** | **Aim and method** | **Population: welfare recipients<br><br>Welfare to work program** | **Results (themes)<br><br>Conclusion/s** |
| **Schmidt Hansen [14]<br>2021<br>Denmark<br><br>Moderate** | **Aim**<br>to explore the lived reality of a Danish workfare program.<br><br>**Method**<br>Ethnography.<br><br>Field observations for 12 months, amounting to 370 hours. In depth interviews.<br>Staff, supervisors and case workers were also interviewed.<br><br>**Background**<br>First, workfare is compulsory in the sense that non-compliance with its requirements carries the risk of lost or reduced<br>benefits for the welfare recipient. Second, workfare is primarily about work. This means that work more often than not is both the aim of the programme and the means to achieve | **Participants**<br>N=34<br>22 men and 12 women.<br>28 were ethnic Danes.<br><br>**Program**<br>'Utility Jobs' was located in a desolate forest area on the outskirts of the residential area of a large Danish city. At the site, participants<br>are required to perform manual labour five hours each weekday for 13 weeks.<br>The different work tasks consist of tidying up nearby public parks, trimming | Group solidarity: An informal relationship between participants and work supervisors<br><br>The relationship between the work supervisors and the participants is characterised by an informal tone. A social community where a jovial and light-hearted tone characterised their interaction was found.<br><br>Participants also created strong companionships with their fellow participants.<br><br>Informal regulation of the accepted amount of work: A norm of not working too hard the norms, the daily routines and the community at the activation site were influenced by one important factor: there simply was not enough work to keep between 20 to 40 participants occupied |

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| | the aim – for example, through work-for-the-benefit<br>programmes. Third, workfare is defined as a condition tied to being in a 'last resort income programme' with no further safety net for the recipient. | trees and plants, picking up trash and keeping the area clean.<br>Participants are divided into two teams with 10 to 20 people on each team.<br>The first team is at the site from 8:00 a.m. to 1: 00 p.m. and the second team arrives at 9:00 a.m. and stays until 2:p.m. | for 25 hours per week. Participants also repeatedly emphasised how the majority of their activation was spent 'doing nothing'.<br><br>An alternative value system: The establishment of new ideas of meaningfulness. Although the participants fully acknowledged the apparent 'uselessness' of these assignments, over time they came to ascribe new forms of meanings to the activities. This is the third finding of our analysis: the establishment of an alternative value system, which leads participants to accept the way things are at the site. Nevertheless, most participants still portrayed their personal participation in the activation project as meaningful. The interviewees stressed that it gave them a purpose in their everyday lives, such as escaping isolation, learning to get up in the morning, meeting new people or getting some exercise. Moreover, a significant number of the interviewees came to appreciate being outdoors and stressed how the fresh air gave them time to reflect on their lives and to view the work as therapy.<br><br>Conclusion<br>The contrast between the political rhetoric that justifies the workfare programme and the lived reality of it is striking. While the programme is justified as a means to put the passive unemployed to work, there is a norm of working less, not more at the site. |

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| | | | The participants spend most of their time waiting or conducting seemingly meaningless work assignments. However, over time, the majority of the participants begin to embrace this modus operandi at the site. This article answers this apparent paradox by turning to concepts from the anthropology of industrial work. Such concepts allow us to analyse how camaraderie exists amongst participants as well as work supervisors at the site. Particularly, the camaraderie is based on group solidarity, an informal regulation of work efficiency and an alternative system of value. Hereby, the article adds to previous findings on the 'lived experiences' of welfare recipients. |

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