WORK, POVERTY AND WELFARE REFORM: WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMMES FOR LONE PARENTS IN DEPRESSED LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS.

A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

Jo Casebourne, November 2001
This dissertation does not exceed the prescribed limit of 80,000 words.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the impact of welfare reform on the work and poverty of lone parents living on welfare in depressed local labour markets. It uses a comparative approach to compare supply-side welfare-to-work programmes in Sheffield, UK and Buffalo, USA, and draws on current debates in geography, the social sciences and feminist scholarship to examine the connections between work, poverty and welfare. It is based on a detailed evaluation of the circumstances of sixty lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield and the programmes in which they participated.

I begin by critically assessing the literatures which examine the restructuring of work, poverty and welfare states in the post-Fordist period and discussing the importance of qualitative methods in researching welfare reform. The first of four empirical chapters examines how lone parents on welfare in depressed local labour markets live in poverty, carry out a great deal of unpaid work, and face multiple barriers to moving into employment. I then examine the different approaches to employing lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield, and assess whether the programmes move lone parents off benefit and into employment, and whether they subsequently return to welfare. The last of these four chapters shows that lone parents are moving into are poorly paid, insecure and precarious employment, often leaving them in poverty and struggling to balance their paid and unpaid work.

The dissertation concludes by suggesting that an alternative approach to welfare reform is needed that addresses the demand-side of the labour market, invests in education and training, and tackles the multiple barriers to employment faced by lone parents. I argue that whilst welfare reform ignores the geography of employment, the growth of the working poor, and the value of unpaid work, it will not be effective in ending the economic and social exclusion of lone parents.
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ABBREVIATIONS

1. UNITED STATES

AAG: Association of American Geographers
ADC: Aid to Dependent Children
AFDC: Aid to Families with Dependent Children
AFL-CIO: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
BA: Bachelor of Arts Degree
BMHA: Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority
BOCES: Board of Cooperative Educational Services
BRIDGE: EOC welfare-to-work programme to bridge the gap between education and employment for TANF recipients
CAP: Child Assistance Program
CAST: Careers and Skills Training programme run by ECC
CNA: Certified Nurses Assistant Program
CWEP: Community Work Experience Program (workfare)
DFA: New York State Department of Family Assistance
DHSS: Federal Department of Health and Human Services
DOL: Department of Labor
DSS: Erie County Department of Social Services
EBT: Electronic Benefits Transfer system
ECC: Erie Community College
ECMC: Erie County Medical Center
EDGE: Education for Gainful Employment
EITC: Earned Income Tax Credit
EOC: Educational Opportunity Center
ESOL: English as a Second Language
FA: Family Assistance Program (state welfare reform programme)
FSA: Family Support Act of 1988
GAIN: Greater Avenues for Independence (California welfare reform programme)
GED: General Equivalency Diploma (equivalent to High School Diploma)
GPN: General Practical Nurse
HCD: Human Capital Development
HEAP: Home Energy Assistance Program
HHA: Home Health Aide
HR: Home Relief Program (New York State welfare programme for single people from 1934 to 1997)
HSD: High School Diploma
HUD: Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development
IRS: Internal Revenue Service
JOBS: Job Opportunities and Basic Skills
LFA: Labour Force Attachment
LPN: Licensed Practical Nurse
NFTA: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
NLS: Neighborhood Legal Services
OBRA: Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act
PA: Public Assistance (welfare)
PELL: Federal education grant for College
PIC: Private Industry Council
REN: Regional Employment Network
SEIU: Service Employees International Union
SPAN: Strategies for Promotion and Advancement Now, EOC post-employment services programme
SSA: Social Services Administration
SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI: Supplemental Security Income
SSO: Social Service Organization
TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (The Federal welfare programme brought in under PRWORA)
TAP: Tuition Assistance Program
TCC: Transitional Child Care
UB: University at Buffalo
UI: Unemployment Insurance
US: United States
WIA: Workforce Investment Act of 1998
WIC: Women, Infants and Children Program
WIN: Work Incentive Program
WORKS: New York State DOL programme of employer incentives

2. UNITED KINGDOM

ACCESS: Course equivalent to A Levels to gain entry to University
BA: Bachelor of Arts Degree
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
CAQDAS: Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis
CRESR: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University
CSA: Child Support Agency
CSUH: Central Sheffield University Hospitals NHS Trust
CV: Curriculum Vitae
DfEE: Department for Education and Employment
DFES: Department for Education and Skills
DSS: Department of Social Services
DTI: Department of Trade and Industry
DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
ES: Employment Service
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council
ET: Employment Training Scheme
EU: European Union
EYDCP: Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
FEFC: Further Education Funding Council
HOPE: Helping One Parents into Employment, Lone Parents Programme Centre, contracted to PEC by ES
IBG: Institute of British Geographers
ILM: Intermediate Labour Market
IS: Income Support
JSA: Jobseekers Allowance
LSC: Learning and Skills Council
MA: Master of Arts Degree
MSc: Master of Sciences Degree
NDLP: New Deal for Lone Parents
NDYP: New Deal for Young People (Aged 18-24)
NHS: National Health Service
NVQ: National Vocational Qualification
OCN: Open College Network
OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONE: Scheme requiring all those claiming benefit to take part in regular work-focused interviews
PEC: Personal Evaluation Consultants
PDP: Personal Development Programme
PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SCOOP Aid: Sheffield Committee Of One Parents
SEU: Social Exclusion Unit, Cabinet Office
SRB: Single Regeneration Budget
TEC: Training and Enterprise Council
UK: United Kingdom
UNISON: Large public sector union
WFTC: Working Families Tax Credit
YTS: Youth Training Scheme
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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCING WELFARE REFORM

"Whilst welfarism was fundamental to the stabilization of Fordist wage relations, to the regulation of incomes and demand, and to the reproduction of a gendered industrial labour force, welfarist strategies are being pursued in a very different labour market. There is a brutal but undeniable logic in the way that welfarism aggressively mobilises workers for (minimum) waged work. Under conditions of falling wages, chronic underemployment, and job casualisation, welfarism maximises (and effectively mandates) participation in contingent, low-paid work by churning workers back into the bottom of the labour market, or by holding them deliberately 'close' to the labour market in a persistent 'job-ready' state" (Peck 2001a, p13-14).

1.1 THE INTRODUCTION OF WELFARE REFORM

One of the most significant domestic political issues in the US and the UK since the late 1990s has been the introduction and implementation of 'welfare reform'. Welfare reform as a term has been used to describe a number of changes to welfare benefit systems that have taken place since the beginning of the 1980s, but in this dissertation it is used in a particular sense to refer to the latest round of reforms which were introduced in the late 1990s by President Clinton in the US and Prime Minister Blair in the UK. The development of welfare states in the two countries in the twentieth century was very different, with the foundation of the Beveridge welfare state in the UK in the late 1940s being far more comprehensive than the introduction of the New Deal programmes in the US in the mid 1930s. Despite these historical differences, both governments have recently adopted a similar approach to reforming welfare in response to the increasing costs of welfare benefit systems and the failure of welfare benefits to significantly reduce poverty. As a Presidential candidate, Clinton famously pledged in 1991 to 'end welfare as we know it', and once elected, institutionalised comprehensive welfare reforms with the passing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the language of which signified the shift in emphasis from a discourse of rights to one of responsibilities. This was quickly followed in the UK by
the prioritisation of welfare reform by the Labour Party, where it featured as one of Labour’s five key manifesto commitments in the 1997 general election, and was subsequently implemented by both the first and second term Blair Governments through a range of New Deal programmes, named after the US reforms of the 1930s. The implementation of this most recent round of welfare reform has fundamentally changed the nature of welfare policy, which is now defined in both countries by ‘workfarism’:

“The essence of workfarism – as it has emerged in this variegated, transnational form – involves the imposition of a range of compulsory programmes and mandatory requirements for welfare recipients with a view to enforcing work whilst residualizing welfare” (Peck 2001a, p10).

The introduction by Centre Left administrations of welfare reform policies which would once have been associated with the New Right led to high profile resignations of Democrats in the US (Edelman 1997, Ellwood 1996), whilst in the UK welfare reform became the first issue to burst the bubble of New Labour’s first few months in office, as Labour MPs rebelled against cuts in lone parent benefits (Hewitt 1999, Rathbone 1997). Welfare reform was thus placed firmly at the top of the political agenda in both countries, and continued to be a controversial issue, especially in the UK where the government was still developing its welfare agenda, and where cuts to disability benefits in the welfare reform bill caused an embarrassing second major rebellion of its own MPs in May 1999, depicted in Figure 1.1:
Despite this controversy, both the US and the UK governments have continued with this shift from welfarism to workfarism. Social security policy has been increasingly tied to labour market policy, central to which has been the development of ‘welfare-to-work programmes’. These programmes have primarily been designed to mandate the participation of welfare recipients in employment, although their secondary objective is to remove welfare recipients from poverty through employment. In the US, programmes have focused on moving lone parents into work, reflecting the lack of entitlement of childless single people to welfare benefits and the unpopularity of welfare benefits for one and two parent families. In contrast, in the UK most emphasis has been placed on youth and long-term unemployment, with lone
parents being served by only one of a number of welfare-to-work programmes. The emphasis of welfare-to-work primarily as a solution to reducing the numbers on benefit and the costs of benefits has led to the adoption of a ‘work-first’ approach to welfare reform, where welfare recipients are moved into employment as quickly as possible, rather than encouraged to take part in skills training and education to increase their chances of getting a job that pays a living wage on entering the labour market (Theodore and Peck 2000). This work-first approach is based on the assumption that poverty is caused by a complete disconnection from work, and that moving into employment will lift welfare recipients out of poverty.

This placing of paid work at the centre of welfare reform policy ignores the complex processes and geographies of restructuring of both work and poverty that have occurred during the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist era of capitalist development (Amin 1994). Discourses of ‘welfare-to-work’ have equated work with paid employment, ignoring the value of the unpaid work of caring, childcare and domestic work done by welfare recipients. Yet, just as governments have placed the notion of paid work at the centre of their reform programmes, employment has undergone complex processes of restructuring, leading to a growth in precarious forms of employment, falling wages and job casualisation, so that for many in the labour market work is increasingly insecure and low-waged (Allen and Henry 1997, Elliott and Atkinson 1998). As the nature of paid work has changed, so has the geography of employment, with employment restructuring leaving many local labour markets suffering from chronic unemployment and a shortage of well-paid work (Kodras 1997, Lawless et al. 1998). It is precisely in these depressed local labour markets where employers have been able to experiment with introducing precarious forms of work (Hudson 1989), so that many of those living in these areas face a stark choice between precarious employment, or unemployment. This restructuring of the nature and geographies of work has in turn led to changes in the nature and extent of poverty, with poverty no longer being due only to a permanent and complete disconnection from paid work as welfare reform policy suggests. Precarious forms of work have led to a growth in the numbers of the working poor in the labour market, as low-skilled jobs within the service sector are low-paid, unlike many low-skilled jobs in manufacturing in the Fordist period (Wilson 1996). These processes of restructuring have left some groups particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially lone parents,
who face a number of barriers to entering the labour market, and to finding jobs which lift them out of poverty. Many lone parents living on benefits have low education and skills levels which restrict their range of employment opportunities, compounded by their being solely responsible for bringing up their children and doing their household’s domestic work. This affects the hours they can work, as employment must fit with their other responsibilities. Many lone parents entering the labour market therefore face the prospect of low-skilled, low-paid work in the service-sector, and, unlike women with partners, are unable to cushion themselves against poverty with a second wage.

1.2 ADDRESSING THE ISSUES RAISED BY WELFARE REFORM

The fact that work-first welfare reform has ignored these changes in the nature and geographies of work and poverty, and the uniquely disadvantaged position of lone parents, raises a number of important issues about the effectiveness of welfare reform policy that this dissertation seeks to address. Supply-side welfare-to-work programmes operating in depressed local labour markets are likely to be less successful in moving lone parents into the labour market than programmes operating in areas of economic growth (Turok and Webster 1998), and even when welfare-to-work does succeed in moving lone parents into employment, it may not be successful in lifting them out of poverty (McCrate and Smith 1998, Mueller and Schwartz 1998). Most studies of welfare reform have, however, failed to focus on the impact of reform in depressed local labour markets, and have assessed the success of reform by analysing whether it has moved lone parents off welfare and into employment (Hayward 1998), rather than by examining whether it is lifting welfare recipients out of poverty. Rather than using large-scale statistical analyses to measure the numbers who have moved off the welfare rolls, a growing number of authors have, therefore, begun highlighting the importance of using qualitative methods to examine the impact of welfare reform on the employment and poverty of individual lone parents (Churchill 1995, Edin and Lein 1996, Edin and Lein 1997, Presser and Cox 1997). Whilst some geographers have begun examining the wider implications of welfare reform policies (Clark and Schultz 1997, Cope 2001, Sunley et al. 2000, Peck 2001a, Turok and Webster 1998), they have not yet begun to focus on the specific impacts of reform on the welfare recipients themselves. This dissertation
seeks to address this gap within the discipline, using a feminist methodology based around qualitative methods, to produce a comparative analysis of the impact of welfare reform policy on the everyday lives of sixty lone parents living in depressed local labour markets in the US and the UK.

Using a comparative approach to examine the impact of welfare reform uncovers the potential problems with the way in which welfare reform policy has been designed and implemented, and enables an analysis of whether the US or the UK approach is better at moving lone parents into employment and out of poverty. Whilst the development of UK welfare-to-work programmes was largely based on policy transfers from the US, with both countries sharing a supply-side work-first approach to welfare reform (Peck and Theodore 2001), there are some key differences between US and UK welfare reform policies. Welfare-to-work programmes for lone parents in the US are compulsory, unlike the UK New Deal for Lone Parents which offers incentives for lone parents to move into work, rather than threatening sanctions. The geographical scale at which policy design takes place is also very different, with the welfare reform act of 1996 in the US devolving responsibility for the design of programmes to individual states and counties (Cope 1997), in contrast to the tight centralised framework of policy design in the UK (Peck 2001a). Welfare-to-work programmes are also much more time-intensive for lone parents in the US who are forced to attend programmes for up to thirty hours a week, whilst lone parents in the UK may only participate in one hour-long New Deal interview every month. This leads to a longer-term approach to welfare-to-work in the UK where some lone parents take part in the New Deal for a year or longer, whilst lone parents in the US are often expected to find work after attending a job club for only four weeks. It is these differences in welfare reform policies in the US and the UK that this piece of work seeks to compare, by examining their impact on a group of lone parents living in similar economic situations in the cities of Buffalo in New York State in the US, and Sheffield in South Yorkshire in the UK.

These case study cities are located within the former heartlands of Fordist industrialisation which now suffer from high levels of unemployment and social deprivation (Bluestone and Harrison 1982, Hudson 1989). Both Buffalo and Sheffield have experienced
massive declines in manufacturing since the 1970s and have failed to benefit from economic restructuring and the rise of the producer service-sector (Hey 1998, Perry 1987). The erosion of their industrial base has left them with relatively high unemployment within national economies that have, until recently, been experiencing strong economic growth. Both cities are now characterised by a lack of well-paid employment opportunities, and employment growth which, as in other depressed local labour markets, is concentrated in insecure, precarious and low-paid employment (Hudson 1989). The location of Buffalo in New York State within the ‘rustbelt’ region of the north-east of the US is shown in Figure 1.2:

![Figure 1.2: The location of Buffalo within New York State and the US](image)

Figure 1.3 shows the location of Sheffield in the UK within the old industrial region of the north of England:
The research has four main aims. The first is to examine everyday life for lone parents living on welfare in depressed local labour markets. Here I focus on whether lone parents are managing to make ends meet on welfare, the extent to which lone parents on benefit are already engaged in work, and the barriers they face to entering the labour market. The second aim is to compare the approaches adopted by welfare-to-work programmes in depressed local labour markets to moving lone parents into employment and lifting them out of poverty. To address this I assess whether welfare-to-work programmes are responding to local employment needs, and whether they are improving the employability of lone parents. Having explored the situation for lone parents in depressed local labour markets and the approaches employed to improve their situation, I then move on to see how successful programmes have been in achieving their objectives. The third aim of the dissertation is, therefore, to analyse and compare how successful welfare-to-work in Buffalo and Sheffield has been in moving
lone parents off welfare and into paid work. This is explored by investigating the extent to which welfare-to-work programmes are moving lone parents into paid work, and by assessing whether these lone parents are still in work after six months. The final aim is to analyse and compare how successful welfare reform in Buffalo and Sheffield has been in lifting lone parents out of poverty through employment. To do this I examine whether the kind of work lone parents get is typical of precarious forms of employment, and whether lone parents are leaving poverty through paid work.

1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

These issues are explored in three stages. In the first section of the dissertation - Chapters 2 and 3 – I set out the theoretical framework of the research, and outline the process behind the production of research on welfare reform. In Chapter 2 I begin by providing a critical assessment of the literatures that examine the restructuring of work, poverty and welfare states, and suggest that by ignoring the importance of unpaid work and the reality of changes to employment and poverty, welfare reform may not be successful in lifting lone parents into work and out of poverty. In Chapter 3 I then go on to outline the epistemological and methodological approaches used in the production of this dissertation, showing how methodological tools were chosen that were most appropriate to answering the research aims, and that could best explore the impacts of welfare reform on the lives of lone parents.

The next section comprises the empirical core of the dissertation. In Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 I examine each of the research aims in turn, through a comparative analysis of the impact of reform on the lives of sixty lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield. In Chapter 4 I explore everyday life for lone parents living on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield, by examining the employment situations and social deprivation levels in both cities and by comparing the characteristics of interviewees in Buffalo and Sheffield. I then explore the extent to which lone parents on welfare are working, and uncover their struggles to make ends meet on welfare. In Chapter 5 I go on to examine the approach adopted by welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield to moving lone parents into employment and lifting them out of poverty. I outline the supply-side approach of welfare-to-work in the US and the
UK and compare the impact of a devolved policy framework in the US and a centralised policy framework in the UK on the way in which programmes are delivered. I then analyse lone parents' experiences of attending welfare-to-work programmes and the implications of the work-first approach. In Chapter 6 I analyse the success of programmes in the US and the UK in moving lone parents off welfare and into the labour market. I consider whether lone parents who have moved into employment might have got their jobs without the help of welfare-to-work programmes, and assess whether the support lone parents are given when making the transition into employment prevents them from returning to a total reliance on welfare. In Chapter 7 I conclude the empirical section by providing a detailed analysis of the kinds of jobs lone parents move into and whether they are characteristic of precarious forms of employment. I analyse whether welfare-to-work is successful in lifting lone parents out of poverty through paid work, and also highlight the difficulties employed lone parents face in achieving any kind of work-life balance.

Chapter 8 makes up the final section of the dissertation. Here I bring together the results of the previous four chapters and examine the overall impact of welfare reform on the employment and poverty of the sixty lone parents who participated in the research. I then explore how this research has added to an understanding of work, poverty and welfare, and argue for a continued commitment to conducting public policy work within academia. In producing this analysis of welfare reform in the US and the UK I hope to achieve an increased understanding of the complexities of the relationship between work, poverty and welfare, and to contribute to the development of a geography of welfare reform, which, as part of a feminist geography of public policy, combines the development of situated knowledges with active political engagement.
CHAPTER TWO: WORK, POVERTY AND WELFARE STATES

Western countries have been undergoing wide ranging processes of restructuring since the 1970s. Economies have shifted from manufacturing to services changing the nature of employment and unemployment, increasing numbers of women are entering paid employment whilst they continue to do the majority of unpaid work, poverty has become an issue for workers as well as the unemployed, and changes in family structures have led to an increase in the number of lone parents who are vulnerable to poverty. Welfare states are struggling to adapt to these transformations, and liberal welfare states such as the US and the UK have been undergoing immense restructuring. Welfare reform has been a central part of this restructuring, and in the US has focused on lone parents, whilst in the UK lone parents are part of a wider group expected to enter paid employment through welfare-to-work programmes. Geographers, as well as economists, sociologists, political scientists, feminist theorists, and social policy analysts have examined these changes. This chapter provides a critical assessment of the literatures that discuss work, poverty and welfare states, bringing them together to uncover the potential problems with current welfare reform policy and the implications these have for lone parents.

The chapter begins by examining the restructuring of work, arguing that whilst unpaid work is still disproportionately being done by women, the flexibilisation and casualisation of labour markets in neo-liberal economies has led to paid work becoming increasingly insecure for both men and women. It describes the growth in precarious forms of work and the growth in the number of low-paid jobs at the bottom of the labour market, which has occurred alongside a growth in unemployment, particularly in depressed local labour markets that suffered from the effects of de-industrialisation and have not benefited from the growth in the producer service sector. This has led to a spatial concentration of poverty in areas where high unemployment remains a problem, and an increase in the numbers of the working poor in all areas, with groups such as lone parents being particularly vulnerable to poverty due to their inability to increase household income through dual wage earners. The chapter goes on to argue that just as these social and economic changes have left many more vulnerable to
poverty, welfare states in the US and the UK have been rolled back, and the safety net for those on the edges of poverty has been either reduced or removed. The chapter concludes by arguing that the development of welfare-to-work programmes that encourage or enforce paid work as the route out of poverty for all adults, ignore the importance of unpaid work and the reality of changes to employment and poverty. Lone parents living in depressed local labour markets may not be able to find paid work, and those that do move into employment may find that they are not lifted out of poverty.

2.1 THE RESTRUCTURING OF WORK

“It may seem odd that as basic a social category as work is not clear. ‘Working’ is contrasted with ‘fooling around’ [in the UK sense of messing about], ‘being unemployed’, ‘hobby’, ‘being on welfare’, ‘being a housewife’. We need such distinctions and use them to place people socially, to determine what they are entitled to, and decide how seriously to assess what they are doing. All this assumes that we can identify work when we see it, and that the category of work is more or less self evident” (Ronco and Peattie 1988, p715).

Defining ‘work’ is central to an understanding of welfare reform, but confusions and ambiguities about its meaning are widespread (Pahl 1988). Work is often defined in terms of what it is not, but whether an activity can be described as work depends on the social relations in which it is embedded, and work is therefore a social construction as well as a very real activity which structures our everyday lives. Despite challenges by feminists, notions of work based on the production of goods and services for the market persist, nowhere more clearly than in the welfare reform debate where work is equated with paid employment and defined in opposition to being reliant on state ‘benefit’ or ‘welfare’. This diametrical opposition of work and welfare assumes that those receiving financial support from Government are not involved in any kind of work, and that those involved in paid employment are no longer receiving any kind of financial support from Government. But such inaccurate distinctions are avoided with a more holistic understanding of work as the ‘application of mental or physical effort to carrying out tasks that serve human needs’ (see ‘Work’ in McDowell and Sharp 1999), an
understanding which underlines the importance of both paid and unpaid work for economic and social reproduction.

Both paid and unpaid work have in the last thirty years been undergoing immense restructuring caused by shifts in the nature and organisation of the capitalist world economy. Western economies have moved towards a tertiarization of economic development as manufacturing has shifted to newly industrialising countries and the service sector has become dominant, changing structures of production and consumption and recasting social, gender and spatial divisions of labour (Martin 1994). The rise of new information and communication technologies has occurred, alongside technological developments in areas such as microelectronics, enabling the production of highly differentiated and often knowledge-intensive products. There has also been an increasing globalisation of the capitalist economy, as markets for manufacturing, services, and especially capital, have become increasingly globally integrated, and money, people, goods, ideas and products have become increasingly mobile (Appadurai 1996). These changes have been recognised as part of a shift since the mid 1970s from one distinct phase of capitalist development to a new phase, which has variously been described as disorganised capitalism (Lash and Urry 1987), an informational economy (Castells 1989), flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989), a post-industrial society (Block 1990), late capitalism (Giddens 1990), a risk society (Beck 1992), post-Fordism (Amin 1994), corporate capitalism (Herman and McChesney 1997), an age of insecurity (Elliott and Atkinson 1998), turbo-charged, or turbo capitalism (Luttwak 1998), a new or flexible capitalism (Sennett 1998), digital capitalism (Schiller 1999) and global capitalism (Hutton and Giddens 2000). The extent to which this emerging period can be described as a radical break from the previous capitalist mode of production, or is actually a refinement or modification of past trends, is widely contested. Many have argued that this new period actually represents a continuation of the previous Fordist period and describe the current period as neo-Fordism (Aglietta 1979), whilst others have argued that the extent of processes of globalisation of the world economy have been over-stated, and that we are currently in a transitional period rather than an new economic era (Hirst and Thompson 1996).
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Much of the work within geography focusing on economic restructuring and the changing nature of employment has focused on the post-Fordism debate, which argues that the period beginning roughly at the end of the second world war to the mid 1970s was defined by a set of industrial and broader societal processes associated with the workplace innovations pioneered by the car manufacturer Henry Ford in the 1920s, and that this period came to end with a crisis of Fordism in the 1970s (see ‘Fordism’ in Johnston et al. 1994; Knox and Agnew 1994). Within the post-Fordism debate are three major approaches which emphasise different aspects of change: the French regulation school which argues that there is a new mode of regulation and a new regime of accumulation, flexible specialisation approaches which argue that mass production has been replaced by flexible specialisation, and neo-Schumpeterian approaches which argue that technological innovation has established a fifth ‘long wave’ of economic development (Amin 1994). All these approaches describe the nature of paid employment in the Fordist period, and argue that paid work has undergone immense restructuring under post-Fordism. However, they fail to describe changes in the nature of unpaid work, and tend to describe men’s experience of paid employment as universal (McDowell 1991).

Working in the Fordist era was a very different experience for the majority of men and women. The Fordist mode of production was based on unpaid domestic labour performed by women within the household, which enabled the reproduction of male and female labour power. In her sample of housewives in the 1970s Oakley found that the average working week of UK housewives was 77 hours, and argued for the conceptualisation of domestic work as work, rather than as an aspect of the gendered role of women in marriage as it had previously been seen (Oakley 1974). Although the types of domestic work done by women had changed from the early years of the century, with the mass production of labour-saving appliances such as washing machines, and changing expectations; so that it was no longer necessary to scrub the step everyday or make your own clothes, other forms of domestic work such as ironing, caring for relatives and childcare could not be taken over by appliances and continued to be done by women (Rowbotham 1997). Women also continued to undertake a great deal of unpaid voluntary work (Friedan 1963).
Increasing numbers of women were also entering the paid labour force in the Fordist era, working a ‘double shift’ of domestic work in addition to their waged work to contribute to the reproduction of the household. Although at the beginning of the twentieth century in the UK employment was widespread among single women and poorer working-class married women, after the second world war paid employment among married women and mothers with dependent children was rare (Yeandle 2000). This started to change in the beginning of the Fordist era, as the development of welfare states relieved women of some family responsibilities and became a significant source of employment, and the costs of a mass consumption lifestyle encouraged the waged work of women (McDowell 1991, Rowbotham 1997, Walby 1997, Yeandle 2000). Women’s employment, far from being a reserve army of labour, increased throughout the Fordist period, but women were concentrated in both the private and public sector in caring and servicing jobs gendered as ‘jobs for women’ based on their ‘female attributes’, and in low-skill and low-paid jobs in the manufacturing sector. Some groups of women such as lone mothers were seen as part of the deserving poor and were not expected to enter paid employment, and the welfare state therefore provided them with financial assistance to carry out the unpaid work of bringing up their children (Sainsbury 1994). For women in the Fordist period employment was often part-time, badly paid and insecure, with fewer occupational rights and benefits than were available in full-time jobs being done by men (McDowell 1991).

For men working in the Fordist era paid work had become less dangerous and insecure than in the past, with employment legislation including health and safety laws and the large scale unionisation of the workforce leading to reduced working hours, improved conditions, and better pay (Yeandle 2000). Although many middle-class men continued to work in the service sector as professionals and in business, paid employment for a large number of working-class men consisted of continuous and repetitive manual work, which was often heavy and physical and required few skills or education. Young men leaving school in the 1950s and 1960s with no qualifications could easily move into employment which, thanks to unionisation and Fordist practices, paid workers enough so that they could afford to purchase consumer goods (Pahl 1988). The lives of these men were typified by life on the factory floor working in full-time, stable, unionised, low-skilled, well paid ‘jobs for life’. These jobs
provided the male breadwinner to bring home a ‘family wage’, which was enough to support his wife to stay at home (Rowbotham 1997). These workers rarely suffered from prolonged periods of unemployment, although in the US, the labour market even in the Fordist era was more flexible than in the UK, and working conditions for the large numbers of ethnic minority migrants and immigrants in particular were less stable and secure (Glasmeier 2001). The description of work in the Fordist era in most theorisations of economic change is based on the group of white working-class men who spent their working lives in paid employment and undertook very little unpaid work.

These patterns of paid and unpaid work for women and men began to unravel in the 1970s with the ‘crisis of Fordism’. The slow-down of economic growth and the steady fall in profits in Western industrialized countries alongside increasing inflation led to a period of ‘stagflation’, when social welfare provision and the beginnings of environmental standards were also increasing the tax burden, and the move away from fixed exchange rates with the end of the Bretton Woods system led to increasing monetary instability (Knox and Agnew 1994). Oil price rises increased the costs of production and a lack of investment in research and development made it difficult to change output quickly in response to changing consumer demand, and labour intensive manufacturing started shifting to less developed countries (Pinch 1997). Governments in neo-liberal countries such as the US and the UK responded to this crisis by de-regulating their national labour markets (Haughton and Peck 1996). Neo-liberal politicians argued that there was a need to liberate the market from external influences and to give labour market forces their head, and policies therefore sought to ‘flexibilize’ labour markets through de-regulation (Peck 1996). State power was used to commodify labour and subjugate communities to the market, by weakening the power of trade unions and decentralising collective bargaining (Sunley et al. 1996), eroding social protection and withdrawing welfare entitlements. Peck has described this process of weakening labour by localising it as ‘putting labour in its place’ (Peck 1996). Alongside labour market deregulation governments have also been re-regulating workers through welfare reform policies, which force the unemployed into the low end of the labour market (Martin 2000). These processes of

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1 A concept that began in the nineteenth century and was still being used in the Fordist era to justify low pay for women (Rowbotham 1997).
de-regulation and re-regulation have led to the restructuring and re-configuration of paid and unpaid work for both men and women in the post-Fordist era.

Although attitudes towards domestic work have shifted, and more women have moved into paid employment in the post-Fordist era, gender divisions of unpaid work have not significantly changed. While men are doing more shopping and home improvements, the vast majority of washing, ironing, preparing meals, changing bed linen and cleaning bathrooms is still done by women (Yeandle 2000). The 1995 UN Human Development Report estimated that unwaged and under-waged work is worth US $16 trillion internationally, and that $11 trillion of this is the non-monetarized work done by women (Schellenberg 1996). A UN initiative to examine unpaid work done by women found that women in paid employment were doing similar activities (cooking, cleaning, vacuuming, washing and childcare) to those women doing unpaid work full-time (Luxton 1997), but carrying out fewer hours of domestic work. So whilst women in paid employment are doing fewer hours of domestic work than women who are not employed, they are still doing a great deal more domestic work than men in paid employment. In the UK women in waged work do 46 hours of domestic work a week compared to 25 hours done by men (Global Women’s Strike Campaign 2000). The value of unwaged work has been calculated as contributing £739 billion to the British economy, with unpaid caring work valued at £39.1 billion a year and formal and informal voluntary work valued at £68 billion a year (Global Women’s Strike Campaign 2000). Caring for relatives has become as increasing important unpaid activity done in the main by women in the post-Fordist era, as welfare state restructuring has increasingly placed the burden of care back on to families through ‘care in the community’ initiatives (Amott 1993). Female family members almost always do this ‘community’ based care with little support from other relatives (Parker 1988), and caring is still seen as ‘work for women’ (Bowlby et al. 1997) and is not adequately valued. This has led to arguments for the need to develop a ‘universal caregiver model’ rather than a ‘male breadwinner model’ of work (Perrons 2000, based on Fraser 1997), or a move from the (paid) ‘work ethic’ to the ‘care ethic’ (Williams 2000).

Economic restructuring and the de-regulation of labour markets have, however, led to substantial changes in the field of paid employment (Lawless et al. 1998). Geographers have
highlighted the crucial spatial dimension of the restructuring of employment caused by the shift from manufacturing to services in Western countries, examining how in the US de-industrialization of old industrial ‘rustbelt’ regions particularly in the north-east, has left mass unemployment in cities which have not benefited from the development of high-tech and information-intensive industries, which have grown in ‘sunbelt’ areas such as California (Bluestone and Harrison 1982, Kodras 1997). In the UK producer service sector growth has occurred in the southeast region away from the heartlands of Fordist industrialisation (Allen 1999), and manufacturing and mining have declined in much of the rest of the country, particularly in old industrial regions such as the north, south Wales and the east Midlands (Hudson 1989). Although some new industrial spaces have developed in old manufacturing regions (Tickell and Peck 1992), many workers have been left trapped in de-industrialized locations unable to afford to move or to commute to distant parts of their local labour market, and these labour markets have become internally balkanised, both occupationally and spatially (Martin 2000). These depressed local labour markets are precisely the locations where mass unemployment means that employers have been able to experiment with introducing radically new forms of ‘precarious work’ (Hudson 2000).

The shift to service sector occupations (Daniels 1999) has led to changes in the nature of work, with both producer and consumer service jobs requiring the deployment of interpersonal skills. The rise in occupations that are increasingly dependent on selling information and advice means that the personal performance of workers becomes part of the service that is sold, and this process of embodiment of work has led to the ‘feminisation’ of all workers, as personal appearance becomes integral to workplace success (McDowell 1997a). Service sector occupations also increasingly rely on computer skills and some level of education, even in retail and other sectors that were traditionally seen as unskilled (Green et al. 1998), and some occupations, such as nursing, are undergoing professionalization and now require a University education. Service sector work outside professional occupations is often low skilled and, unlike in manufacturing in the Fordist era, low-paid, so that adolescents leaving school with few qualifications can no longer expect to earn a living wage.
These changes have led to new patterns of employment for men and women. There have been continuing increases in the numbers of women in paid employment and the proportion of men in paid employment has declined, narrowing the employment gap between men and women. In 1961 95% of men of working age in the UK were in paid employment compared to 49% of women, and by 1999 the rate for men had dropped to 79%, as the rate for women had increased to 69% (Yeandle 2000). Men’s economic inactivity has increased as more men join the unemployment registers, and many more are forced to take early retirement or to sign on for benefit as long-term sick or disabled (Yeandle and Beatty 1998). Although it is also narrowing, the gender gap in pay persists; in 1974 women earned 62% of the average male hourly wage, compared to 75% in 1998 (Desai et al. 1999). The gap between the hourly wage of women working part-time and men working full-time has hardly changed, and is currently 39% (Equal Opportunities Commission 2001). Inequalities in weekly earnings are much larger, as men work more overtime and longer hours than women (Walby 1997). Gender differences are also important in the structuring of local labour markets. The gender division of unpaid work means that women responsible for childcare arrangements often have shorter commuting distances than men so that they are able to combine work and childcare arrangements, and their labour markets and employment opportunities are therefore spatially restricted (Hanson and Pratt 1992, Hanson and Pratt 1995, Odland and Ellis 1998). There are then still significant differences between the employment experiences of men and women, but changes in paid work have meant that divisions between workers are based less on gender than they were in the Fordist era, and more on class (McDowell 1991).

As de-industrialization has led to mass male unemployment and the end of the ‘typical’ male, stable, well-paid, low-skilled, unionised, Fordist job in manufacturing, men have become divided between those in the core and those in the periphery of the labour market (Peck 1996). Divisions between women have also opened, as some have benefited from entering well-paid occupations. Over half the growth in women’s employment in the UK between 1983 and 1990 was in professional and managerial occupations (Purcell 2000) whereas other women are trapped in the low end of the labour market. As the rise in employment rates amongst women comes almost entirely from women with working partners (Desai et al. 1999), divisions between work-rich and work-poor households have also
widened. In the UK particularly, a ‘family pay gap’ is opening as having children has a large negative effect on women’s pay because of the higher propensity of mothers to work in low-paid part-time jobs, and because even among full-timers, women with children in the UK are paid lower than women without children. Divisions between families and non-families are, therefore, also widening (Harkness and Waldfogel 1999).

Inequality also exists between different ethnic groups in terms of rates of employment. Unemployment in the US stands at 4.2% overall, but is higher among ethnic minorities, at 7.8% for black men, 6.2% for black women, and 6.1% for the Hispanic population. This compares with a rate of 3.4% for white men and 3.1% for white women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2001). In New York State unemployment amongst ethnic minorities is even higher; 14.4% for black men, 10.8% for black women, 11.6% for Hispanic men, and 13.1% for Hispanic women compared to a total state unemployment rate of 6.9% (New York State Department of Labor 1999a). In the UK unemployment rates in spring 2000 were 6.9% for white men and 4.7% for white women. Unemployment rates for ethnic minorities were significantly higher; 13% for all ethnic minorities with particularly high rates for black men from countries other than the Caribbean or Africa (26.6%), Bangladeshi and Pakistani women (23.9%) and Bangladeshi men (20.4%) (Denny 2001). Many women from ethnic minorities face a number of barriers to paid work such as difficulties with English, lack of work experience and education, the absence of social networks to help seek employment, discrimination, and in some cases the attitude of the wider ethnic community to women’s paid work (Lloyd-Evans and Bowlby 2000). The vast majority of lone parents in both countries are women: 87% in the US and 91% in the UK (Bradshaw et al. 1996). Until recent welfare reform policies these lone parents were not expected to enter paid employment, and in the UK they therefore have lower employment rates than other groups; 41% of lone mothers are employed compared to 62% of married or cohabiting mothers. The employment rate of lone mothers in the US is higher, at 62%, which is very similar to the 64% of married or cohabiting mothers in employment. This higher employment rate for lone mothers is due to a much higher rate of full-time work amongst lone mothers in the US, perhaps reflecting lower welfare benefit levels and lower wages, which encourage lone mothers to work longer hours (Bradshaw et al. 1996).
For those who are employed, the flexibilization of labour markets has led to increasing insecurity for all workers, even well-paid workers in the core of the labour market. Advocates of the flexibilization of labour markets argue that the growth in the self-employed, contracting out, and temporary and casual work should be heralded for enabling the economy to adjust to changes in the market and for providing autonomy and flexibility for workers (discussed in Pollert 1999), and some libertarians go as far as to argue that demise of wage labour and the discovery of leisure is the inevitable and progressive outcome of these processes (Gorz 1999). However, this focus on flexibility, like many theorisations of economic change, fails to emphasise the consequences of the restructuring of paid employment for workers (Herod 1999). In contrast, the ‘insecurity thesis’ is deeply critical of labour market flexibilisation, and argues that economic risk is increasingly being transferred from employers to employees, damaging long-term economic performance and forcing workers to live with insecurity (Allen and Henry 1997; Elliott and Atkinson 1998; Heery and Salmon 2000; Hudson 2000, Hutton 1996; Sennett, 1998).

This increasing insecurity is expressed by the increasing number of employees who regard themselves as insecure, by employment deregulation, the erosion of employee commitment, and the increasing barriers to skills development (Heery and Salmon 2000b). In the UK, for nearly three-quarters of the workforce, job insecurity, as measured by job tenure, has increased in the last ten years, and displaced workers who experience a spell out of work will enter jobs that pay monthly wages around ten percentage points less than the jobs they left behind. Compared to those who remain in the same post the wage gap of these individuals is 15% (Gregg et al. 2000). In 1999 46% of men and 36% of women who make a claim for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) last claimed less than six months ago (Howarth et al. 1999), showing the churning and insecurity at the low-end of the labour market. Public sector workers have seen competition erode the terms and conditions of their employment, an increase in contingent working and contracting out, the introduction of performance related pay and a decline of trade union density, increasing insecurity especially among fixed-term contract staff (Morgan et al. 2000).
For well educated, high-skilled, well-paid men and women, especially those in households with dual earners, the effects of insecurity in paid employment are to some extent mitigated. However, less highly skilled and well-paid men and women are suffering from the effects of the growth in precarious forms of employment as well as increased insecurity. In 1999 1,300,000 UK workers were in temporary jobs (Howarth et al. 1999), far fewer than in European countries such as Spain where over a third of workers are temporary, but far more than previously (Yeandle 2000). Temporary workers in general report less job satisfaction, receive less work-related training and are less well paid than their counterparts in permanent employment, and more likely to move into a permanent contract if they are educated, work in the private sector and work more hours of unpaid overtime (Booth et al. 2000). Although there has been a growth in temporary employment for men and women, women professionals are twice as likely as their male colleagues to be in temporary employment (Purcell 2000). In the US large cities have seen the growth of temp agencies operating as hiring halls employing workers on a daily basis in a fashion reminiscent of workers queuing at dockyards in the early twentieth century. In some low-income neighbourhoods of Chicago these hiring halls are the biggest employer (Peck and Theodore 1998b). Contract service work in the UK doubled in size from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s, bringing with it the repackaging of jobs and hours with a loss of redundancy rights, sick pay entitlements and fringe benefits and a loss of pay for workers (Allen and Henry 1997). Although unions are increasingly targeting non-standard workers, few temporary workers are currently unionised (Stewart et al. 2000).

Working hours have also become less standardised, with one in sixteen UK workers working at night, and one in six working in the evening. The average number of hours worked has increased over the 1990s, so that more men and women are working over fifty hours a week (Harkness 1999). A trade off between labour market flexibility and skills acquisition has also occurred, as jobs are created with no career structure and workplace training continues to fall (Arulampalan and Booth 1998, Rainbird and Munro 2000), and workers are finding that the end of the ‘job for life’ means they now have to take charge of their own career and skills development. Many of these precarious jobs are also low-paid. The US and the UK are numbers one and three in the low-pay league of OECD countries (Stewart 1999), and in the US the ‘jobs miracle’ of the 1990s has come at the expense of low pay. Real hourly wages in
the US have fallen by 13% between 1973 and 1995 (Tilly 1996a) and there has been a
dramatic increase in inequality between well educated and highly skilled workers, and low-
wage workers (Freeman and Katz 1994). In the UK in 1997 before the introduction of the
minimum wage 1.5 million workers, or one in fourteen, were earning below £3 an hour. Low
pay is no longer affecting only women and the young, and there is a growing incidence of low
pay amongst men and older workers (Stewart 1999).

The post-Fordist period has then seen widespread restructuring of work for both women
and men. The burden of unpaid work continues to fall mainly on women, leading to
continuing gender disparities in paid employment, whilst male unemployment has occurred
alongside the decline in conditions for employed men and women, especially for those
working in the low end of the labour market. Spatial restructuring has led to concentrations of
unemployment in areas that have benefited little from service-sector growth, and where
precarious forms of employment proliferate. These processes of restructuring have left some
groups of people in particular places particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially lone
parents in depressed local labour markets who are responsible for all the unpaid work in their
household, and whom welfare reform policies are encouraging or forcing into paid
employment. However, lone parents, unlike married or cohabiting parents, cannot cushion
themselves against the low pay and insecurity of depressed local labour markets with the
wages of two working adults.

2.2 THE RESTRUCTURING OF POVERTY

"Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when
they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and
have the conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely accepted,
or approved, in the societies to which they belong. They are, in effect, excluded from
ordinary patterns, customs and activities" (Townsend 1979, p31).

Welfare reform seeks not only to move people into paid employment, but also to remove them
from poverty. Townsend's classic definition of poverty raises many issues on how poverty
should be defined: whether poverty is defined as he suggests as a relative, or as an absolute, problem, how to decide a lack of which living conditions and amenities constitutes poverty, how to define which activities are customary or widely accepted and approved within a society, and how to discover what causes this lack of resources (Mack and Lansley 1984). These issues of the definition and causes of poverty are widely debated, as conflicting understandings of the nature of the problem of poverty and its causes and consequences have very different policy implications. Absolute poverty can be defined as a minimum standard of living based on a person’s biological need for food, water, clothing and shelter, rather than on their social and cultural needs. The clarity of this definition is appealing, but it fails to recognise that living standards are radically different in different cultures, and how people feed, clothe and house themselves in the West has changed drastically over time (Oppenheim and Harker 1996). The denial of poverty in the UK by neo-liberals in the 1980s was based on an absolute definition of poverty, which may also have affected public attitudes towards poverty, leading to 35% of people in the UK believing that there was no poverty in the areas where they lived (Golding 1995), which is unlikely, given the spatial nature of poverty in the UK (Philo 1995). In contrast, relative definitions of poverty highlight the debilitating effect of being poor in a rich society where people are valued according to what they own. Poverty is therefore not only about a lack of money, but about exclusion from the norms of society, such as being able to send your child on a school trip, go out with friends, or celebrate a religious festival such as Christmas (Oppenheim and Harker 1996).

The way poverty is measured can also be based on either absolute or relative notions. In the US an official national poverty line was introduced in 1968 to measure absolute poverty calculating the level of income needed to sustain a family, but this level is based on an ‘economy’ food budget deemed sufficient to maintain individuals only through temporary or emergency times (Wilson 1987). This poverty line has only been up-rated to keep it in line with prices, but not to account for changing household consumption patterns (Center on Hunger Poverty and Nutrition Policy 2000), or changes in the income of the general population (Fisher 1995). In the UK there is no official poverty line and, as in much of the rest of Europe, measuring poverty in done in relative rather than absolute terms. The EU definition of poverty is half, or less than half, of the average income of the country’s
population (Davies 1997), and in the UK the Households Below Average Incomes series measures the living standards of people in the lower half of the income distribution (Oppenheim and Harker 1996). Longitudinal and life-course studies such as this one enable the effects of long-term poverty to be examined (Heady 1997, Hobcraft 1998, Yeandle and Beatty 1998), which cannot be done using cross-sectional snapshots of poverty (Walker 1995). Relative poverty can also be measured by a lack of items considered to be essential to life in a particular country, as done in the Breadline Britain survey which sought to define what British society perceived as necessities and to measure poverty by the extent to which people lacked these necessities (Mack and Lansley 1984).

Poverty as a term has been criticized for its focus on income and material possessions, rather than acknowledging the multi-dimensional character of deprivation and the processes, mechanisms and institutions that are responsible for people being excluded from the norms of society (Atkinson 1998, Room 1995). 'Social exclusion' discourses have therefore developed, building on notions of relative poverty, but also describing “the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partly excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (de Haan 1998, p10). The term was first used in France in 1974 and has spread through EU policy and research channels, and there are now a number of different theoretical approaches within the examination of social exclusion (Evans 1998, Jordan 1996, Lawless et al. 1998, Mohan 2000), and social exclusion discourses are used in a developing countries context (de Haan 1998), as well as by international institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (Figueiredo and de Haan 1998). In the UK the Government has set up the inter-departmental ‘social exclusion unit’ to tackle multi-dimensional disadvantage and has produced a number of reports focusing on different aspects of social exclusion such as ‘sink’ housing estates (Social Exclusion Unit 1998). Measuring social exclusion is, however, much more complex than measuring poverty through income, so that one independent evaluation of social exclusion in the UK examines fifty indicators of disadvantage (Howarth et al. 1999).

The extent of poverty in the Fordist era was very different in the US and the UK, unlike in the early part of the century where in both countries the average working-class family was
living close to subsistence, and poverty was widespread amongst the young and old, in urban and rural communities and amongst workers as well as the unemployed. Although in both countries many working-class men were benefiting from the growth in low-skilled but well paid jobs in manufacturing in the Fordist period, the different trajectories of poverty reflect the impact of different levels of welfare state provisions in the two countries. In the US due to the lack of a comprehensive welfare state and the low levels of the welfare benefits that did exist during the Fordist era, poverty was still common amongst the elderly, the young, and those of working age. In the UK many working-class families in the 1950s and 1960s were cushioned from poverty through council housing, the national health service, improved secondary education, and unemployment benefits, although real poverty did still exist, as outlined in Peter Townsend’s comprehensive survey of poverty in the UK in 1968-69 (Townsend 1979), and graphically depicted by the 1966 film “Cathy Come Home” in which the life of a homeless couple and their children was explored (Sandford 1966).

In both countries certain groups such as ethnic minorities and lone parents were particularly badly off. In the US the mass migration of disenfranchised African-Americans from the rural south to the industrial cities of the north which had been going on since the 1930s, alongside the growing immigrant Hispanic population, led to the concentration of ethnic groups in cities where potential workers far outnumbered jobs (Glasmeier 2001). In the UK African-Caribbeans and Asians from the Indian subcontinent who had come to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s in response to active Government recruitment to work in sectors such as transport and the health service (see ‘Migrant Labour’ in Johnston et al. 1994), found that by the late 1950s demand for labour in the large cities where they had settled was slowing down. This, coupled with discrimination, meant that many immigrants faced a lack of work or low pay leaving them vulnerable to poverty. During the Fordist period the ‘feminization of poverty’ was intensifying, as the unequal sexual division of employment and economic resources occurred alongside the beginnings of the unravelling of the Fordist family form around which the welfare state had been designed, so that women, and subsequently children were over-represented among the poor (see ‘Poverty’ in McDowell and Sharp 1999). Changes in family forms were enabled by divorce reforms in the US and the Divorce Reform Act of 1971 in the UK, which made it easier and less costly to end an unsatisfactory marriage.
(Yeandle 2000), and also by changing attitudes to out-of-wedlock births. The resulting rise in lone parenthood led to increasing numbers of divorcees and unmarried mothers claiming welfare benefits which had originally been intended for groups such as widows who were seen as part of the ‘deserving poor’ (Rose 1995, Rowbotham 1997). The increasing spatial concentration of ethnic minorities and lone parents in the social housing estates of large cities led to the beginnings of localised spirals of decline, although poverty also existed in rural areas and small towns.

The ‘culture of poverty’ thesis emerged in the US in the 1960s, to describe and explain these changes. The term was first used by Lewis in 1968 to describe poor children who absorbed the attitudes and values of their ‘subculture’ and were psychologically unprepared to take advantage of changing economic opportunities (Morris 1993). The term built on Banfield’s study of a village in South Italy that he called Montegrano in which he argued that ‘lower-class’ southern Italians could not control their impulses and plan for the future, and that their poverty was largely explained by their inability to act together for their common good (Banfield 1958). The 1965 Moynihan report on ‘The Negro Family’ seemed to extend this racialised description of an ‘undeserving poor’, and discussions of poverty in the US, which had focused on rural poverty in areas such as Appalachia, were refocused on issues of race, cities, the ‘underclass’ and ‘ghettos’ (Katz 1989). The term underclass was originally used by Myrdal in 1962 to describe those marginalized and shut out of the labour market due to structural economic change, but was taken on in the 1980s by the New Right in both the US and the UK to describe an undeserving poor with intergenerational anti-social pathologies (Robinson and Gregson 1993). The racist underpinnings of the some of the work on the underclass were exposed by the publication of ‘The Bell Curve’, which supposedly demonstrated the link between race and intelligence (Herrnstein and Murray 1994). Nevertheless, the concept of an underclass became popular in the UK through articles written by Murray describing a British underclass which was growing rapidly, based on illegitimacy, crime and unemployment (Lister 1996). Descriptions of these ‘cultural’ causes of poverty were directly linked to the receipt of welfare benefits through arguments that increases in US benefit levels in the 1960s had encouraged people to make the rational economic decision to

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An account reminiscent of the racialised bodily impulses described in Orientalism (Said 1978).
remain unemployed and unmarried, thereby causing the growth in poverty (Murray 1984). Welfare dependency was therefore defined as the problem by liberals as well as conservatives in the US and the UK (Bane and Ellwood 1995), and used to argue for the reform of welfare systems, through cutting welfare benefit levels, by introducing or increasing a minimum wage level, and by encouraging or enforcing employment (Deacon 1996, Little 1999).

This understanding of the changing nature of poverty as an individual and behavioural problem failed to take into account the structural causes of poverty which were related to the changes in the Fordist period, and the subsequent economic and welfare state restructuring which has intensified poverty amongst ethnic minority groups and lone parents, which led to an increase in poverty among groups unaffected in the Fordist era. The Post-Fordist period in both the US and the UK has seen a massive growth in unemployment and a growth in the working poor, the very existence of which is disputed by some cultural theorists (Murray 1987), leading to the formation of a ‘new urban poverty’ (Wilson 1996). The restructuring of paid work means that employment no longer brings an end to poverty as it did for much of the working-class in the Fordist period, and the 1970s saw the beginning of the first generation-long decline in average wages in American history, which was not reversed by the sustained economic boom of the 1990s (Newman 1999). Those without college degrees have suffered particularly badly, and the opportunities for children who leave school with only basic qualifications are now extremely limited (Finnegan 1998). By 1996 the working poor numbered 7.4 million families in the US, 58% of which included a full-time worker (Newman 1999). Many of these families live just ‘one pay cheque away from disaster’, are not eligible for Medicaid and cannot afford their own health insurance. Working poverty is not just a problem for teenagers entering the labour market through low wage jobs. Minimum wage workers are more likely to be aged 25 or above, and in low-income neighbourhoods in large cities minimum wage jobs in the fast food industry are often the only jobs available to ethnic minority individuals of all ages (Newman 1999).

The work of geographers has shown how these changes in employment have reconfigured the geographies of poverty in the US and the UK, with de-industrialisation leading to concentrations of the poor in large cities and former industrial regions, whilst the
growth of the working poor has led to the continued incidence of poverty in all areas of the US and the UK. In the US the growth of the working poor means that only 41% of the poor now live in central cities within metropolitan areas (US Census Bureau 2000a), and most live in areas of mixed income (Blank 1997). In the UK a number of indicators of disadvantage suggest that although the poor are present in all areas of the country, they do mainly live in cities and in depressed de-industrialised regions (Oppenheim and Harker 1996). Despite these differences, in both countries where concentrations of poverty in urban areas do occur, the disadvantage faced by individuals is exacerbated, as communities experience localised spirals of decline. In the US the impact of de-industrialisation in the 1970s and 1980s was devastating. Plant closings led to mass unemployment and spatial concentrations of poverty in inner-city neighbourhoods where black people were abandoned by ‘white flight’, and were unable to afford to move and prevented from doing so by housing discrimination (Fainstein 1993, Field 1989, Kasarda 1990, Morris 1993). This has led to a ‘spatial mismatch’ between these communities and employment growth in suburban areas that are often inaccessible by public transport, or involve excessive costs and time to reach (Wilson 1996). In the UK context this spatial mismatch also operates in geographical reverse, as large public housing estates on the outskirts of UK cities house communities that are similarly isolated from employment located in city centres (Lawless et al. 1998). Because of the immense size of some US industries, entire regions were dependent on them for employment, and when these industries closed the multiplier effects of declining urban tax bases, decreased purchasing power and population decline led to community abandonment (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). There was, therefore, a substantial increase in the numbers living in poverty in old industrial regions during the 1980s (Kodras 1997), although since the economic boom of the 1990s the poverty rate has fallen somewhat in the northeast and is currently 10.9% (US Census Bureau 2000a).

The impact of de-industrialization in the UK was also devastating, leading to a deepening of the ‘north-south divide’, as mass unemployment in many northern areas occurred alongside service-sector growth in the south. As the politics of ‘trickle-down’ failed, there was actually a redistribution of wealth from the north to the south in the 1980s and 1990s (Martin 1995). Differences in income reflect this divide, with household disposable income per head in mid-
Glamorgan only 81% of the UK average, compared to 119% in West Sussex. Wards of concentrated poverty are clustered in inner London, Merseyside, the West Midlands, South Wales, the North East and Strathclyde (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995), and many de-industrialised areas and large cities have become locked into spirals of decline (Green 1994). Polarisation and segregation between rich and poor is especially stark in London, with wards such as Hammersmith and Fulham categorised as both areas of affluence and areas of poverty (Green 1994). Inner cities house one in fourteen of the UK population, and these areas in particular have suffered from neglect and dereliction in their physical landscape and spatial spirals of decline as those who could afford to move out did so (Hudson and Williams 1989).

The impact of the de-industrialisation of the 1980s in each society was graphically depicted in the films “Roger and Me” and “The Full Monty”, which highlighted the effects of mass unemployment on the residents of Flint, Michigan (Moore 1989), and Sheffield, UK (Cattaneo 1997) respectively.

The growth of low paid and insecure employment and spatial concentrations of high unemployment have led to sharp increases in poverty in the US and the UK since the 1970s. In the US in 1999 32.3 million, or 11.8% of the population, were living in absolute poverty (US Census Bureau 2000a), and significantly more people above the poverty line are living in relative poverty. In the UK in 1993 13.7 million people were living in poverty according to the EU definition, and with an income of £166 a week had only 55% of what they needed (Davies 1997). Contrary to claims by neo-liberal governments, the problem of poverty is not solved through income mobility, as despite movement in and out of poverty, 77% of those in poverty remain in poverty a year later (Hills 1998). The proportion of households living in poverty in the UK grew during the post-Fordist period from 14% in 1983 to 24% in 1999 (Carvel 2000), and three times as many children are now living in poverty than in 1979 (Piachaud and Sutherland 2000). The make-up of poverty in the US and the UK in the post-Fordist era is, however, very far from the behavioural underclass described by cultural theorists of poverty (Bagguley and Mann 1992, McDonald and Marsh 2000). Although there are high rates of poverty amongst ethnic minority groups and lone parents, the changing nature of work means that the poor are now mostly white, and are employed rather than welfare recipients (Blank 1997). Very few of the urban poor could be described as an
underclass in terms of their family structures (Coontz 1992, Jencks 1992, Luker 1991, McLanahan and Garfinkel 1989), and behavioural changes such as drug-taking, early pregnancy and an increase in never-married mothers described by cultural explanations of poverty are more likely to be a response to structural economic changes that have led to the unravelling of communities, rather than a growth of irresponsible behaviour amongst individuals (Hughes 1990; Robinson and Gregson 1993; Wilson 1987). The increase in mother-only families has thus been partly caused by black women confronting a shrinking pool of economically stable ‘marriageable’ men (Wilson 1987), whilst increases in drug taking and early pregnancy have become rational adaptations to lives without prospects of employment, or any other way of building self-esteem or gaining peer group respect (Bourgois 1995, Fernandez-Kelly 1994, Kasarda 1990). The social construction of lone parents on benefit as a teenagers getting pregnant to jump the housing queue in the UK (Benn 1998, Mann and Roseneil 1994), and as black ‘welfare queens’ in the US (Asen 1996, Little 1999), are, therefore, very far from the actual behaviour and diversity of lone parents receiving welfare.

Although only a minority of the population in poverty, ethnic minorities in both countries continue to be more at risk of poverty than the white population. In the US racial disparities in poverty levels are stark. The poverty rate for black people was 23.6% in 1999 and for Hispanics 22.8%, compared to only 7.7% for non-Hispanic whites (US Census Bureau 2000a). In the UK in 1993/4 52% of Black Caribbean people and 49% of Black Africans had gross weekly incomes of under £200, compared to only 41% of whites (Oppenheim and Harker 1996), and many ethnic minority groups live in areas with the most indicators of deprivation (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995). In the US between 1970 and 1995 when child poverty increased by 37%, poverty among those over 65 was reduced by more than 50% thanks to progressive social policy (Finnegan 1998), and by 1999 a record-low of only 9.7% of people over 65 were poor. In contrast, in the UK poverty amongst pensioners has increased in the post-Fordist period as state pensions were de-linked from earnings, and 25% of single pensioners are now living below the £106 a week threshold of absolute poverty (Carvel 2001).
The growth in poverty amongst women and children has intensified in the post-Fordist period in both countries, caused by economic change and the further unravelling of the Fordist family form. In the US 12.1 million, or one in six, were living in absolute poverty in 1999 (Children’s Defense Fund 1998), and children in the UK are now the poorest in Europe, with over four million, a third of all children, living in relative poverty in 1999 (Rusbridger 1999). The strong link between childhood disadvantage and poor economic and social outcomes in adulthood suggests that these children will become the adult poor of the future (Hobcraft 1998, Machin 1998). Many of these children living in poverty are living in lone parent families, 19.8 million, or 27.7% of all children, in the US (Parents Without Partners 2001), and 2.3 million children in the UK (Macerlean 1997). In the US there are now 8.6 million lone parent families, and lone parents make up 29% of all families, an increase of 46% since 1980 (Bradshaw et al. 1996). In the UK the numbers of lone parent families has also grown to 1.7 million lone parent families (Hughes 2001), which make up 23% of all families (Bates 1998), a trebling in numbers since 1971 (Hughes 2001). The proportion of lone parents living in poverty is high in both countries. In the US 50% of lone parents were living in poverty (Bradshaw et al. 1996), and in the UK 50% of lone parents have a gross household income of less than £150 a week, and 60% are living in relative poverty. Lone parents have now overtaken pensioners as the poorest group in society (Hughes 2001). In both countries families headed by lone mothers had substantially higher poverty rates than other groups (McLanahan and Garfinkel 1986, Oppenheim and Harker 1996). The growth in the working poor means that poverty is present amongst employed lone mothers as well as those on welfare, as neither welfare nor low-wage work provides enough income for lone mothers to meet their basic needs. Employed lone mothers are often concentrated in jobs which offer little advancement, are low-paid, have irregular, un-guaranteed hours, and are subject to frequent lay offs, and the added expenses of being employed mean that some employed lone mothers actually experience more hardship than welfare-reliant lone mothers (Edin and Lein 1997).
2.3 THE RESTRUCTURING OF WELFARE STATES

"The dismantling of the welfare state meant that just as low pay was becoming lower, just as jobs were becoming rarer, the government started to strip away the safety nets which for decades had ensured that the poor could not fall too far" (Davies 1997, p289).

Welfare states and social insurance systems are the part of the state’s apparatus responsible for the provision of public services and benefits (see ‘Welfare State’ in Johnston et al. 1994). Welfare states which originated in Western countries in the first half of the twentieth century were often involved in redistribution from the rich to the poor, and ensured a safety net existed for those unable to participate in the labour market. Whilst unemployment assistance was directed at the most needy through means testing, the provision of public services such as healthcare and education was often universal, so that the middle-class as well as the unemployed and working poor benefited from such services, ensuring a broad constituency of support for the welfare state. Welfare benefits and public services were often seen as a right of citizenship, and public expectations demanded quality of service in return for their tax contributions. In the 1970s this contract between the state and its citizens began to unravel, and welfare states faced increasing political and economic pressures to restructure. However, traditional theorisations of welfare states failed to adequately explain the substantial variety between A welfare state regimes, nor did they emphasise how the level of institutional involvement in family life enforces specific norms of gender relations within the family and employment (see ‘Welfare State’ in McDowell and Sharp 1999), regulating the lives of women and the poor (Fox-Piven and Cloward 1971).

Welfare states in Western capitalist countries that developed during the Fordist period vary in terms of how their social welfare policies are constructed, and how these influence employment and the general social structure. Esping-Anderson (1990) has argued that countries cluster around three main ‘welfare state regimes’, the liberal, corporatist, and social democratic welfare state. Liberal welfare states such as the US, UK, Canada and Australia work alongside the market and have modest universal transfers and means-tested benefits
with strict entitlements that are often stigmatised and cater mainly to those on low-income. Corporatist welfare states such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy are strongly committed to the preservation of the traditional family, so that benefits encourage motherhood, and rights are based on class and status, with the state displacing the market as the main provider of welfare. Social-democratic welfare states such as in Scandinavian countries have welfare states based on universalism, which promote equality of the highest standards so that services and benefits are strongly supported by the middle-class, and dependence on the family is minimised as the state takes direct responsibility for caring for children and the elderly. The differences between these regimes reflect differences in political coalition building, and the political alliances in the middle of the twentieth century of the growing middle-class. Thus in liberal welfare states the middle-class were not persuaded to turn their backs on the market, in corporatist welfare states the middle-class sought to preserve existing social structures, and in social-democratic welfare states the middle-class supported an expansion of services that would strengthen their social democracy (Esping-Anderson 1990).

This categorisation of welfare states, however, fails to recognise the gendered development of welfare states in the Fordist period, and does not examine how women have fared in different welfare states, or in what ways policy outcomes are dissimilar for men and women (Amott 1993, Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994, Sainsbury 1994). All three welfare state regime types subscribed to some extent to a ‘male breadwinner model’ of paid employment which encourages paid employment for men based on the unpaid work of women (Lewis 1992). This strength of the male breadwinner model serves as an indicator of the differential treatment of women and men in social security systems, the level of childcare provision, and the position of women in the labour market. Welfare state regimes can be re-categorised into strong, modified and weak male breadwinner states. Strong male breadwinner states such as the UK saw women as secondary wage earners and designed social policies so as not to undermine the responsibility of men to provide for their dependents. Modified male breadwinner states such as France had family policies which, reflecting a pro-natalist emphasis caused by a long anxiety about population decline, compensated parents for the costs of children and recognised women as workers as well as mothers. France therefore developed quality public child care provision. Weak male breadwinner states such as Sweden
with strict entitlements that are often stigmatised and cater mainly to those on low-income. Corporatist welfare states such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy are strongly committed to the preservation of the traditional family, so that benefits encourage motherhood, and rights are based on class and status, with the state displacing the market as the main provider of welfare. Social-democratic welfare states such as in Scandinavian countries have welfare states based on universalism, which promote equality of the highest standards so that services and benefits are strongly supported by the middle-class, and dependence on the family is minimised as the state takes direct responsibility for caring for children and the elderly. The differences between these regimes reflect differences in political coalition building, and the political alliances in the middle of the twentieth century of the growing middle-class. Thus in liberal welfare states the middle-class were not persuaded to turn their backs on the market, in corporatist welfare states the middle-class sought to preserve existing social structures, and in social-democratic welfare states the middle-class supported an expansion of services that would strengthen their social democracy (Esping-Anderson 1990).

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encouraged the dual breadwinner household, compensating women for their unpaid work and encouraging them to enter the labour market (Lewis 1992).

Strong male breadwinner states such as the US and the UK regarded women as wives and mothers rather than workers, and women’s wages were seen as a supplement to men’s (Pateman 1989). In the US although the taxation system was always based on the individual, and married couples did not benefit from filing their taxes jointly (Mahoney 2000), the welfare system was based on a division between primary insurance benefits tied to labour market individuals mostly taken up by men, and secondary assistance benefits tied to households to compensate for the lack of a (male) breadwinner and were therefore relied upon mainly by women (Fraser 1987, Skocpol 1992). The 1935 Social Security Act passed in response to the Great Depression set up the stratified system of provision between social insurance programmes which were superior in terms or payments and reputation, and welfare programmes such as Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), which in 1962 became Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) which provided support to lone mothers (Gordon 1994, Katz 1995). This system of benefits continued until the ‘War on Poverty’ in the 1960s when benefit levels were upgraded, providing the highest levels ever of public assistance and social security, and hugely increasing the Food Stamp programme, and so alleviating poverty for many, especially millions of elderly people (Katz 1989). New benefit programmes such as Medicaid, which provided medical insurance for the poor, Medicare that provided healthcare for the elderly, and housing assistance for those on low-incomes, were introduced.

Within the UK, in the Fordist period taxation system a wife’s income was generally treated as her husband’s\(^3\) and married men received the married man’s allowance reflecting the ‘responsibilities’ that were assumed to be taken on by a man at marriage (Chennells et al. 2000). Welfare policies also reflected the assumption of women’s dependence on men within the family (Rowbotham 1997). In the UK the Keynesian welfare state was founded at the end of the Second World War to underpin full employment (Hills 1990). It introduced a number of welfare benefits, using the family rather than the individual as the eligible unit, ignoring the uneven distribution of income within the family that had been highlighted by Joseph

\(^3\) Although from the 1970s women could opt for separate taxation.
Rowntree nearly fifty years earlier (Smart 1987). The assumption that women’s unpaid work underpinned the male breadwinner model meant that the allowance for caring for dependents was denied to married women, on the grounds that caring was part of their normal duties, and there was little public provision of childcare as women within the family were seen as responsible for bringing up children (Lewis 1992). A key principle of the Beveridge Report, which laid the foundations of the welfare state, was that social insurance should guarantee a national minimum income, whilst social assistance would play a residual role. The National Insurance Act of 1946 set up a social insurance system based on flat-rate contributions that would provide subsistence benefits for all who worked in periods of unemployment (Atkinson 1995), and insured married women through their husbands so that their benefits depended on their partners’ work record (Smart 1987). The National Assistance Act of 1948 introduced a secondary means-tested allowance, which was available to the unemployed, providing a safety net for those who were not entitled to insurance benefit. Many lone mothers relied on this provision (Glennerster and Hills 1998). The Family Allowance, introduced in 1946 and replaced by child benefit in 1977, was the only benefit designed to be paid to women, and was a universal cash benefit for children paid to mothers set up in response to a long campaign arguing that help for children should form part of the social security system (Atkinson 1995).

Whilst the US and the UK both have broadly liberal and strong male breadwinner welfare states, the difference in the levels of welfare state provision between the two countries reflects the attitude of society towards poverty. In the UK the problem of poverty was largely seen as an economic rather than an individual one, and a sense of entitlement increased after the First World War and with the subsequent unemployment of the 1930s, leading to the growth of organised labour movements and growth in support for the Labour Party, which in turn led to the foundation of the welfare state (Rowbotham 1997). In contrast in the US an under-democratised polity and the dominance of patronage-oriented political parties led to poverty being conceptualised as a problem for the individual rather than society as a whole (Amenta 1998). It was only during the Great Depression of the 1930s when unemployment and poverty affected the middle-class that the ‘New Deal’ was introduced, providing welfare benefits for the unemployed and for lone parents. In the post-war period this ‘culture of contentment’ (Galbraith 1992) which blamed the poor for their poverty continued, until a concern for
poverty was re-awakened in the 1960s by the civil rights movement, Kennedy’s visit to rural Appalachia as part of his presidential campaign in 1960 (Glasmeier 2001), and the national welfare rights organisation (Fox-Piven and Cloward 1971). This led to the re-conceptualisation of poverty as a structural problem.

Anti-poverty programmes existed in both countries in the Fordist period, alongside welfare benefits, and were area-based, designed to tackle the problem of the spatial concentration of the poor and ethnic minorities in inner city areas. The 1960s ‘War on Poverty’ in the US introduced the Great Society anti-poverty programmes (Glasmeier 2001). The Office for Economic Opportunity was set up to promote economic development and provided programmes that were targeted mainly to the urban black population, such as Job Corps, the Work Incentive Programme (WIN) to move welfare recipients into work, Head Start, and Community Action Programmes (Rose 1995). These programmes empowered the poor through community capacity building, and provided employment through the hiring of black women as community workers in Community Action Programmes (Naples 1998). In the UK the Urban Programme was launched in England in 1968 and also attempted to address social problems through local projects designed to end localised spirals of decline. The programme was set up in response to the realization in British politics that there was an ‘urban problem’, which was assumed to be caused by pockets of multiple deprivation rather than by broad structural changes in the urban economy. The failure of the programme led to the re-conceptualisation of post-war poverty to be an economic rather than a social problem (McKay and Cox 1978).

By the 1970s dissatisfaction with the services provided by welfare states was growing as expectations increased, and welfare states faced increasing pressures due to the restructuring of work and poverty. Changes in family structures such as an ageing population and the growth in the numbers of lone parent families, alongside growing levels of unemployment and the rise in the numbers of the working poor, led to increasing budgets just as economic restructuring was leading to declining Government revenues (Ruggles and O’Higgins 1987; Pinch 1997). The response to these challenges varied in different welfare state regimes. Whilst social-democratic welfare states expanded employment within the welfare state
corporatist welfare states reduced the supply of labour whilst maintaining existing social standards whereas liberal welfare states deregulated their labour markets and began to roll back the welfare state (Esping-Anderson 1996). Liberal welfare states were in the weakest position, as those who benefited most from the welfare state were numerically weak and politically residual, unlike other regime types where welfare states catered to the middle-class and therefore forged much stronger middle-class loyalties (Esping-Anderson 1990). The rise of the New Right in the US and the UK brought an end to the Keynesian economic and social consensus, and the gradual erosion of benefits and marketisation of the welfare state began (Cope 1997, Hills 1990, Johnson 1990, Myles 1996, Pierson 1994). This restructuring has been described as a shift from a Keynesian Welfare State to a Schumpeterian Workfare State where welfare claims are subordinated to the needs of production (Jessop 1994). The Schumpeterian Workfare State promotes innovation in the economy to strengthen the structural competitiveness of the supply-side, opens up employment in the state sector to the processes of flexibilisation and promotes work for the unemployed, whilst reducing welfare benefits, to force people into the labour market (Burrows and Loader 1994).

This process of restructuring of liberal welfare states in the post-Fordist era has led to the increasing integration of labour market and social security policies, as paid work is promoted as the route out of poverty for men and women. There has been a move away from the male breadwinner model of employment in the US and the UK to the ‘adult worker model’ of employment, where paid work is seen as central for both men and women (Williams 2000), including white female lone parents, who, unlike their black counterparts, were not previously expected to work (Little 1999). Men and women are now seen as individuals, rather than women being seen as primarily wives and mothers, and the UK tax system was finally reformed in 1990 when husbands and wives were taxed independently for the first time, and a married couples allowance was made available to either partner (Chennells et al. 2000). However, viewing women and men as equal individuals ignores the weaker position of women in the labour market due to the continuing uneven distribution of unpaid work in the home, and the continuing pay gap in employment. It also ignores the implications for women later in their lives, as pension policies become increasingly based on savings so that an individual’s capacity to provide for himself or herself in old age depends on their engagement
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with the labour market, preferably continuously and at a high wage, in earlier life. This adult worker model is also supported by an increasing number of family policies in the UK such as the Working Families Tax Credit, and the children’s tax credit that replaced the married couples allowance, which subsidizes low-wage work for men and women living in households with dependent children. The UK tax system has been transformed in a decade, moving from supporting married couples to supporting parents (Chennells et al. 2000).

The restructuring of the welfare state has also led to a restructuring of welfare and anti-poverty programmes. Most anti-poverty policy now operates at a national scale and is focused on moving people into employment, and in the UK on ending child poverty in twenty years by improving the opportunities available to today’s adults (Department of Social Security 1999). However, there are still local area-based programmes in both the US and the UK. In the US alongside nationwide welfare reform are economic development and anti-poverty policies that are area-based, such as regeneration strategies such as Enterprise Zones aimed at revitalizing inner cities (Glasmeier 2000). In England there are currently more than 500 regeneration schemes supported by the Single Regeneration Budget, 31 City Challenge Companies, several Urban Development Corporations, and Health, Education, and Employment Action Zones (Kleinman 1998). Whilst such policies tackle spatially concentrated areas of deprivation, ‘welfare reform’ has rolled back the safety net for those dependent on state support, and made eligibility for benefits dependent on engaging in some way in the labour market. Welfare-to-work programmes have developed to tackle the perceived problems of welfare dependency (Little 1999) and unemployment, whilst ignoring the spatial consequences of the restructuring of employment and poverty. In the US the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) tightened the eligibility criteria for receiving the benefit AFDC that led to 442,000 members of the working poor being denied welfare (Rose 1995). It also encouraged individual states to develop their own programmes as an alternative to the 1967 Work Incentive Programme (WIN), and enabled the Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) to grant states ‘waivers’ to waive the entitlement provisions of the Social Security Act of 1935, so that states could make eligibility for welfare benefits conditional on a recipients’ behaviour (Peck 1998a). State experimentation flourished as states developed ‘WIN Demonstration Projects’ (Handler 1995) which emphasised job placement, training and support services in states with
strong economies, and compulsory ‘workfare’, where recipients in economically depressed states work in community jobs in exchange for receiving welfare benefits (Peck 1998c). One element of state experimentation was the development of ‘behaviour modification’ welfare reform proposals, which assume that women make decisions about marriage or family size purely on the basis of economic criteria (Hoynes 1995, Moffit 1992). As well as the extension of workfare, these included the introduction of ‘Learnfare’ in 1987 in Wisconsin where AFDC eligibility became dependent on children’s regular school attendance, the ‘Family Cap’ first enacted in New Jersey in 1992 to eliminate support for additional children conceived after a mother begins receiving AFDC, and ‘Bridefare’ which provides incentives for women on welfare to get married (Handler 1995, Thompson and Norris 1995, Williams 1992).

Welfare reform continued in the US with the 1988 Family Support Act (FSA) which developed the ‘Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program’ (JOBS) shifting welfare-to-work towards education and training compared with previous welfare experiments (Handler 1995). The shift from the national system of providing welfare to a decentralized system of enforcing work was institutionalised in the passing, after much negotiation (Waldfogel 1996), of the ‘Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act’ (PRWORA) in 1996. This moved away from the ‘Human Capital Development’ approach of the JOBS programme towards ‘Labour Force Attachment’ approaches which focused on rapid re-integration into the labour market (Peck and Theodore 1998a). PRWORA scrapped the federal entitlement status of welfare, replaced the benefit for lone parents AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), removed Supplementary Security Income (SSI) from 800,000 legal immigrants, tightened the eligibility for Food Stamps, put a five year lifetime time limits on the receipt of welfare, capped spending, devolved total responsibility for the design of programmes to individual states, and mandated work participation as a condition of receiving benefits (Edelman 1997, Ellwood 1996, Peck 2001a). This reflected the growing ideological consensus that the welfare system was in need of reform through the enforcement of work (Jordan 1998, Miewald 2001, Norris and Thompson 1995), and that the right to welfare should bring with it responsibilities on the part of the recipient (Etzioni 1993). This ideological consensus was shared in the UK where welfare reform was seen as the central

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object of a new ‘Third Way’ politics (Blair 1998, Giddens 1998, Mandelson and Liddle 1996, Peck 2001a). Processes of policy transfer have led to the US experience being used as a model for other countries seeking to restructure their welfare systems (Dolowitz 1998). Many OECD countries have adopted the ‘Anglo-American model’ (Peck and Theodore 2001) of welfare-to-work (OECD 1999, Peck 1997), and in the UK in particular discourses and practices of welfare reform have been very strongly influenced by the US experience (Deacon 1997, Peck 2001a), rather than by continental European welfare policy examples which generally place more stress on stimulating labour demand, and human capital development (Lodemel and Trickey 2000, Stephens 1996). Despite the differences between their economies and policy histories the UK has increasingly moved towards an American welfare system (McLaughlin 1997). Geographers have highlighted how in the 1980s and early 1990s there was a move towards ‘trainingfare’ in the UK welfare state, as attendance in training courses was made compulsory in order to receive benefit (Clark 1994, Jones 1996, Peck and Jones 1995), and the 1989 Social Security Act required claimants to sign an ‘actively seeking work’ clause. By 1995 the Jobseekers Act linked benefit payments to compulsory training and job search, and Income Support (except in the case of lone parents) and Unemployment Benefit were replaced by JSA (Jones 1996). This Americanisation of UK welfare policy was strengthened further by links between the Democrat Government and the election of the Labour Government in 1997 (King and Wickham-Jones 1999), epitomised by a visit in December 1997 by the House of Commons Social Security Committee to Wisconsin to develop ideas for the UK system (House of Commons Social Security Committee 1998).

Welfare reform in the US throughout the 1980s and 1990s focused on lone parents, as the increase in paid employment among women, and especially married women with children, led to the argument that lone parents should also enter the labour market (Desai et al. 1999). This was exacerbated by the unpopularity of welfare which was seen as unfair to those who were employed on low wages, and was inconsistent with the ideal of American individualism (Page and Shapiro 1992). It also reflected the changing attitude towards lone parents who were no longer mainly white widows seen as part of the deserving poor that AFDC was designed to
serve, but were made up of a larger proportion of black or Hispanic women, and unmarried or divorced parents who were increasingly seen as part of the ‘undeserving poor’ (Little 1999). However, unlike in the US where welfare reform focused on lone parents, welfare reform in the UK was focused mainly on youth and male unemployment, reflecting the concern about the effects on men and the young of structural economic change in the manufacturing sector. The ‘New Deal for 18-24 Year Olds’ is a compulsory programme which receives the majority of welfare-to-work funding, and was introduced when the Labour Government came into power in May 1997 as the central part of the new Government’s welfare-to-work strategy. Other New Deals were introduced alongside this programme addressing the problems of other groups; the ‘New Deal for the Disabled’, the ‘New Deal for Long Term Unemployed’ and the ‘New Deal for Lone Parents’ (NDLP) (Rathbone 1997). The New Deal programmes were part of a broader strategy of welfare-to-work detailed in the Welfare Reform Bill (Department for Social Security 1999), that included the National Childcare Strategy (Department for Education and Employment and Department of Social Security 1998a), the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), a more generous benefit to replace Family Credit, and ‘ONE’ which will require all those on benefit, including lone parents on income support, to have regular work-focused interviews from 2002. For the first time lone parents in the UK are now required to attend interviews to encourage them to move into work, integrating them with other categories of ‘jobseekers’ whose state support is increasingly conditional on participation in welfare-to-work programmes.

Welfare states in the US and the UK have, therefore, moved increasingly towards a (paid) work-oriented welfare system which ignores the restructuring of work and poverty that has occurred in the post-Fordist period. Just as paid employment has become insecure and precarious for many employees and no longer guarantees an end to poverty for low-skilled workers, welfare reform has developed to push those on benefit into the low-end of the labour market. Welfare-to-work programmes are enforcing this move into employment, adopting a supply-side approach to unemployment even in depressed local labour markets where employment opportunities are extremely limited, and assuming that paid work still brings an end to poverty.
2.4 CONCLUSION: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WELFARE REFORM

By bringing together the literatures on work, poverty and welfare states and highlighting the inconsistencies and contradictions in the current changes, it becomes clear that the introduction of welfare reform policy may not be successful in moving lone parents in depressed local labour markets into employment, or in lifting them out of poverty. Geographers have highlighted the importance of the spatially variable effects of restructuring, but little research has yet been undertaken which explores the impact of these policies on those individuals living in depressed local labour markets. Much of the evaluation of welfare reform consists of large-scale aggregate examinations of how welfare-to-work programmes have been designed and implemented and of whether they are successful in moving lone parents into work, but few studies have assessed what happens to individuals who do leave welfare and move into paid employment and whether they are lifted out of poverty. In the following chapters therefore, I focus on these issues, comparing the US and the UK approaches to welfare-to-work as they are implemented in cities facing similar problems of high unemployment, a concentration of poverty and precarious forms of paid work. The following chapter argues that in-depth interviewing of lone parents both during and after participation in welfare-to-work programmes, exploring their experiences of welfare-to-work programmes and paid employment, their income and expenditure, and their unpaid work, is essential. In this way, the relationship between paid and unpaid work, the different approaches to welfare-to-work, and whether welfare-to-work programmes are moving lone parents into paid work and out of poverty may be explored in detail.
CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCHING WELFARE REFORM

"In the scholarly debate about welfare reform, the voices and lived experiences of single mothers are often drowned out by reams of statistics, usually aggregate numbers that, while useful, can distance us from the daily struggles poor single women face as they try to both parent and provide for their children" (Edin and Lein 1997, p18).

The impact of welfare reform on the work and poverty of lone parents can be examined in a number of different ways. Most research has relied on large scale quantitative studies to assess whether lone parents are leaving the welfare rolls, while it is less usual to examine the ways in which welfare reform impacts on the economic status of lone parents by interviewing them as they make the transition from welfare into paid employment. The results produced by welfare reform research depend on what the authors of such research choose to focus on and why, and the methodological tools they use in their research. These decisions in turn reflect the epistemological approach used as a lens through which to examine the issues.

In this chapter, I outline the epistemological and methodological approaches I used to collect the data presented in the succeeding chapters, uncovering the process of the production of the research findings. The chapter outlines how the process of research production starts from an ideal way of examining the issues and moves through the subsequent adoption of the closest realistic framework possible in the context of the limited time and resources imposed by PhD research. In exploring how and why the particular research methods were chosen, the chapter shows how the data in subsequent chapters could not have been produced though the large-scale statistical analyses of welfare-to-work programmes which dominate welfare reform research. I have chosen to adopt a research framework that allows an examination of welfare reform that moves beyond both seeing lone parents purely as numbers rather than as individuals, and measuring the success of welfare reform simply in terms of moving lone parents into employment.
Within Anglo-American academic geography 'epistemology' has been defined in relation to 'ontology' as "the different approaches theorists take to legislating what counts as legitimate knowledge about an ontologically complex world" (McDowell and Sharp 1999, p75). The epistemological framework used specifies what knowledge is and how to recognize it, who the 'knowers' are and how to become one, and how competing knowledge claims are adjudicated and some rejected in favour of others (Stanley and Wise 1993). Traditional empiricist epistemologies linked to a broader philosophy of positivism have been criticized by critical feminist scholarship which emphasises the interpretative and local quality of all knowledge claims and production, as well as the non-local power relations in which knowledge claims are made (see 'Epistemology' in McDowell and Sharp 1999).

Within feminist epistemology feminist standpoint theories developed in response to feminist empiricism which was criticised, along with other forms of empiricism, for its masculinist version of knowledge, which assumed that a knower can separate themselves from their body, emotions, values and past, so that they and their thoughts are autonomous, context-free and detached (Rose 1993). Feminist standpoint theories highlighted the gendered nature of the construction of knowledge and sought to uncover and revalorise women’s knowledge (McDowell 1993b; Stanley and Wise 1993). However, whilst some feminist standpoint theory is based on an essentialised notion of a single female experience, there has been a growing recognition of the diversity of women’s experiences and the need to move towards an analysis of difference, whilst still recognizing gender as a coherent analytical category (McDowell 1993b). The embracing of a 'politics of difference' enables feminist epistemology to move beyond both essentialist notions and the postmodernist fragmentation and death of the subject, towards a reconstruction of a female subject that recognises both difference and a common experience of gender (McDowell 1992b). As well as embracing the challenge of difference, feminist epistemology has also responded to the relativism of some post-modernist theory, which, in its rejection of all grand theories, rejects the foundationalist element of feminist standpoint theory, and therefore feminist explanations of women’s oppression. Rather than rejecting any notion of truth and accepting the equal validity of a
variety of subjective positions, feminists have argued that traditional notions of truth need to be replaced by empirically and socially accountable 'situated knowledges' which enable a rational feminist objectivity to be found through located, embodied and partial perspectives (Haraway 1991).

Feminist epistemology has, therefore, developed as a theory of knowledge that, through located, embodied, and partial perspectives, enables an understanding of the different positions of women based on factors such as class, ethnicity, sexuality and age, and an understanding of the common experiences of women based on their gender. Politically this enables feminists to combine a politics of redistribution, which has previously been given primacy in theories of justice, with a politics of recognition, to counter both culturally based and economically based forms of oppression (Young 1990). Oppression in the form of cultural imperialism and violence can thus be countered through a politics of recognition, whilst exploitation, marginalisation and powerlessness can be countered through a politics of redistribution (Fraser 1997). Feminist epistemology enables theorists and researchers to create knowledge which both uncovers the diversity of women's struggles, and seeks to change the common structures of domination and oppression.

Work within Feminist Geography has followed this evolution of feminist epistemology, from the 'add gender and stir' approach of empirical research in the 1980s (McDowell 1993a), to a focus on the gendered nature of social relations which sees gender as more than just a category, to an increasing concern with difference (Bondi 1990). Feminist geography has thus been able to move beyond the crisis of representation within much post-modernist geography, and has embraced the production of situated knowledges as a political as well as a textual strategy, to challenge women's marginality and lack of power (McDowell 1992b). This development of feminist geography has not, however, been a chronological, linear, and uncontested one (McDowell 1993a), and achieving a theoretical balance between equality and difference has not been a straightforward process (Penrose 1992). However, debates, contradictions and instabilities have expanded the interpretation of feminism within geography, enabling the production of a variety of feminist geographies, which have scrutinized the gendered nature of geographic theory, and attempted to break down taken-for-
granted dualisms within the discipline such as public/private, and work/home (Bowlby et al. 1997; Massey 1994; McDowell 1993a; Pratt 1992). If feminist geography is to not simply 'gain a piece of the pie', but is 'to rewrite the recipe' of geography (Chouinard and Grant 1995) many have argued that it is precisely by embracing fluidity, diversity, and intersections of gender, class, race and sexuality, that will enable feminist geographers to resist the dominant masculinity within the discipline. It would also ensure that feminist geography no longer remains 'outside the project' (Christopherson 1989) of mainstream geography (Rose 1993).

Whilst 'relevant' work within feminist geography includes far more than applied policy work (Hanson 1999), an engagement with public policy allows issues of social, economic and political inequality to be directly addressed as part of an attempt to create knowledge that improves social and economic conditions (Martin 2001). Within the debate on the development of a geography of public policy have been some arguments that not enough policy work is being done within geography (Peck 1999, Martin 2001), and that geographers need to better respond to Government suggestions that social science should be at the heart of policy-making (Department for Education and Employment 2000, Massey 2000). These authors have argued that by working alongside policy-makers and disseminating their work more widely outside academia, geographers could ensure that geographical research on economic and social restructuring, such as analyses of the changing nature of work and poverty, influences the design of policies. Policies would then not be based on an outdated understanding of the issues, and would not ignore complex geographies of economic and social relations. In turn, geographers argue that their policy work deserves greater recognition within policy-making circles where the contributions of economists tend to have been favoured over geographers (Peck 1999, Martin 2001). However, other contributors to this debate have pointed out that there is in fact a great deal of engagement by many geographers with policy issues both within and outside of the academy (Banks and MacKian 2000, Pollard et al. 2000). Yet this public policy work has been either ignored or sidelined within much mainstream geography, as policy-based papers published within the key geographical journals have been undervalued in preference to theoretical debates concentrating on the epistemological development of the discipline (Peck 1999, Peck 2000, Martin 2001).
policy research within geography seems to be regarded as less challenging, stimulating and ‘sexy’ than other types of work, and it has been assumed that it is atheoretical and descriptive (Martin 2001). A growing recognition of the importance and value of public policy work done by geographers is needed, both within and outside the discipline, alongside a continued commitment to the production of policy research. The further development of a feminist geography of public policy, which focuses on groups such as lone parents that are still marginalized within the discipline (Winchester 1990), and on issues of unemployment and poverty, might be a productive way to combine the development of objective and situated knowledges with direct political engagement (Casebourne 2001).

The production of a feminist geography of public policy requires the adoption of a feminist approach to methodology, using a number of research methods as techniques selected to best assess the impact of economic and social policies, whilst being consistent with feminist convictions. Whilst there is no universally accepted feminist research method, it is widely accepted that a feminist methodology should reveal the multiple locations and perspectives of women, minimise harm and control in the research process, and support research of value to women leading to social change or action beneficial to women (see ‘Feminist methodology’ in McDowell and Sharp 1999). Feminist methodology, alongside other critical methodologies, seeks to replace an indifferent and supposedly value-free and neutral approach to research with a conscious partiality and identification with those researched (Mies 1993). Feminist critiques of research practices have thus modified established methods to uncover the specificity of gender relations at particular times in particular places (McDowell 1988). In doing this feminist geographers have embraced a range of methods, from the ‘new ethnography’ which uses a range of qualitative techniques, to quantitative analysis, and have suggested that multiple methods are appropriate to uncover the complex issues of power relations, ethics, and dealing with positionality in the research process (Mattingley and Falconer-Al-Hindi 1995; McDowell 1992a).

Adopting a feminist methodological approach to researching lone parents’ experiences of welfare reform would ideally mean engaging in longitudinal research to follow the movement of individuals in and out of employment over time, to develop a longer-term perspective when
assessing whether individuals have been lifted out of poverty. However, within the time constraints of PhD research such an approach was not possible in this research, although I did re-interview many lone parents six months on from the original interview. It also might have been difficult to carry out in practice, as retaining contact with poor lone parents over long periods may have proven difficult as they may be residentially mobile or have their telephones cut off. To examine the impact of welfare reform a comparative methodology was chosen, to compare the approach of welfare reform in the US with the approach in the UK, which has been greatly influenced by US policy design but has a different approach to moving lone parents into paid employment. Using a comparative method enables an analysis of these differences, by examining the implementation of welfare reform in a US and a UK city which face similar problems of high unemployment, a concentration of poverty, and a predominance of precarious forms of paid work, in order to see whether differences in welfare reform policy lead to different impacts on the employment and poverty of lone parents living in similar economic situations. In this way a comparative approach enables researchers to reveal diversity and difference, and distinguish between macro factors which influence social and political change, and the micro factors peculiar to each social setting (May 1997c; Ragin and Becker 1992; Ragin 1987). Whilst case studies have been criticised for having little basis for scientific generalisation, they provide the basis for generalisation of theoretical propositions rather than to wider populations, so that although they may not be representative of other spatial areas or social groups, they can help to explain social processes (Yin 1984). By using case-studies as part of a comparative method it is possible to investigate public policy using multiple sources of evidence, bringing together quantitative and qualitative techniques in a multi-method approach (Berg 1989, Layder 1993, Philip 1998).

Within this comparative multi-method approach to researching welfare reform qualitative methods are particularly useful. Qualitative methods facilitate the exploration of informants' own understanding of events in the analysis of social settings, and have the potential to give a voice to the subjects of the research. Far from being impressionistic, non-verifiable, and less rigorous than supposedly 'objective' quantitative research methods, qualitative methods use interconnections between researcher and researched to create 'intersubjectivity' and rigorous research (Allan 1991; Baxter and Eyles 1997; Eyles and Smith 1988; McDowell 1992a). The
importance of using qualitative empirical work in examining lone parents' experiences of work and welfare has been highlighted by a number of authors (Churchill 1995, Edin and Lein 1996, Edin and Lein 1997, Presser and Cox 1997). Whilst ethnographic methods such as participant observation enable a detailed examination of what happens in welfare-to-work programmes, in-depth interviewing makes it possible to uncovers individuals' employment trajectories before and after programme participation, as well as providing detailed information about lone parents' income on welfare compared to their income after they have become employed. As with other studies of poor and marginalized groups living in inner city areas, using qualitative methods in welfare reform research enables some understanding of the experience of poverty and disadvantage for some of the most marginalized within western economies and societies (Bourgois 1995; Fernandez-Kelly 1994; Finnegan 1998; Newman 1999).

3.2 NEGOTIATING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.2.1 Narrowing the research focus

The making of geography involves negotiating a research process that is complex, on-going and reflexive, which inevitably produces a research product which is to some extent partial and limited, and reflects the process of 'casing' used to selectively narrow down the research focus (England 1994; Ragin and Becker 1992). My research design is based on a process of casing, which narrowed my focus from an original desire to examine welfare reform in the US and the UK, to a focus on using a mainly qualitative approach to examining the work and poverty of lone parents experiencing welfare reform in Sheffield, UK and Buffalo, US. Table 3.1 details key moments in the research process, showing the process of data collection that enabled me to narrow down my research focus:
Table 3.1: The research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Research Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1998 (Pre-PhD, MSc Geography)</td>
<td>Attended welfare reform session at AAG Annual Meeting in Boston</td>
<td>US-UK comparison of welfare reform as PhD topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1998 (Begin PhD)</td>
<td>Geographical literature on welfare reform</td>
<td>Compare two similar de-industrialised cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1998</td>
<td>Details of US welfare reform, and different UK New Deal programmes</td>
<td>Focus on lone parents. Adopt interview strategy that includes initial interviews with lone parents who are on programmes and lone parents who are employed, and follow-up interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>New Deal for Lone Parents data on which areas piloted the scheme</td>
<td>Choose Sheffield as UK city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>Data on industrial history, population size, and poverty levels of cities in northeast of US. Contact Dr Meghan Cope at University at Buffalo</td>
<td>Choose Buffalo as US city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1998</td>
<td>Literature on welfare reform</td>
<td>Formulate initial research questions. Decide on multi-method approach to data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1999</td>
<td>One week pilot visits to Buffalo and Sheffield</td>
<td>Initial ideas about case study organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July – September 1999 (Begin second year PhD)</td>
<td>Begin Buffalo fieldwork</td>
<td>Decide case study organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>Begin Sheffield fieldwork</td>
<td>Decide case study organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2000</td>
<td>End Sheffield fieldwork, Buffalo follow-up interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October – December 2000 (Begin third year PhD)</td>
<td>Data Analysis, prepare PhD structure</td>
<td>Modify aims and research questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2000</td>
<td>Sheffield follow-up interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2001</td>
<td>Begin writing PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having been interested in urban issues and issues of inequality and poverty in my undergraduate and Masters degrees in geography, I became interested in welfare reform as I was in the US when the welfare reform bill was enacted in 1996 and followed media coverage of the event. My interest in the implications of reform were deepened when I went to the launch of the New Deal in Britain. I finalised my decision to choose it as my PhD topic after attending an interesting session on geographies of welfare reform at the AAG conference in Boston in 1998. Having chosen to examine welfare reform in the US and the UK, I then decided to focus on de-industrialised cities, to explore whether the supply-side approach of welfare reform is successful in moving people into employment in areas of high unemployment and limited job opportunities. I then decided to compare the experience of lone parents as a group, as they are the key focus of welfare reform in the US, and one of the groups targeted by the New Deal programmes in the UK. To uncover information about the kinds of jobs lone parents moved into and how this affected their financial status I chose an interview-based approach as the most appropriate. I planned to undertake follow-up interviews to see whether lone parents attending welfare-to-work programmes moved into paid work, whether they were better off financially in work, and what kinds of jobs they were getting. In case I was unsuccessful in conducting follow-up interviews, I decided to interview two groups of lone parents in the first stage of the research: lone parents on programmes and lone parents who were already employed after attending programmes, to ensure I had data on the types of work lone parents moved into. As I intended to interview thirty lone parents initially, I decided not to contact those who had been through welfare-to-work programmes and had not found jobs, as I assumed that some lone parents would be in this position by the follow-up interviews, which I later found they were.

Whilst welfare reform had been operating in the US for some time, in the UK the New Deal had been introduced after the election of May 1997, and the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was only rolled-out nationally on 26th October 1998, a few weeks after I started my PhD. To enable me to interview lone parents who had already become employed through NDLP I decided to focus on one of the eight pilot areas that had been implementing NDLP since July 1997. These areas were Cambridgeshire, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, Clyde Valley, North Cheshire, North Surrey, North Worcestershire, Sheffield East, and
Warwickshire. As I had decided to focus on de-industrialised cities the obvious choice for a case study was Sheffield. To select a comparable US city, I collected data on the industrial history, population size, and poverty levels of cities in the de-industrialised region of the northeast of US, and chose Buffalo, in Western New York State, as my US case study. My assessment of the similarities between Sheffield and Buffalo was vindicated when in June 2000 Buffalo was chosen as the setting of the US musical version of the Sheffield-based film “The Full Monty”. Clearly, in image as well as statistical comparisons, the cities were similar. Some Buffalo politicians felt that the comparison was irresponsible and damaging to the city, which was trying to move away from its image as a dying rustbelt city characterised by a lack of glamour and northern austerity (Milmo 2000), whilst others simply concluded that the musical was “no longer set in bleak, depressed Sheffield, it’s now set in bleak, depressed Buffalo” (Githens 2000).

Having decided on my broad research aims I formulated my initial research questions and decided that a multi-method approach with interviews at its core would be the most appropriate way of examining the research aims and questions. I then undertook a week’s pilot study in each city to conduct some pilot interviews with possible case-study organisations to see whether it would be possible to use them as a way of gaining access to the lone parents in their welfare-to-work programmes. These interviews with social service organisations (SSOs) in each city suggested that this research strategy would be feasible, and enabled me to gain the agreement of the Government agencies running welfare reform in each city to use them to gain access to lone parents: the Employment Service (ES) in Sheffield, and the Department of Labor (DOL) and Department of Social Services (DSS) in Buffalo. The pilot interviews also gave me some initial ideas about which welfare-to-work programmes to study in Buffalo. The interviews conducted are shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3:
At the beginning of the main fieldwork period in Buffalo I undertook some more interviews with SSOs and decided to use the Clarkson Center and the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) as my main case study organisations, as both organisations were interested in the research and said they would allow me complete access to all their welfare-to-work programmes. They agreed to let me attend programmes whenever I wanted, to interview lone parents taking part in their programmes if they were willing, to use separate rooms within their buildings to interview lone parents, and to contact lone parents who had taken part in their programmes previously. This openness seemed to stem from an interest in whether welfare reform was lifting lone parents out of poverty and from a friendly desire to help a researcher from out-of-town. Both organisations had a range of programmes, with EOC having an educational focus to their programmes, compared to the Clarkson Center’s more...
job-club based approach. I also decided to use Catholic Charities, Hispanics United and the Valley Community Center to access lone parents on workfare programmes in Buffalo. In Sheffield during the main fieldwork period Scoop Aid agreed to let me attend the NDLP Innovative Pilot Programme they were running, and to have access to lone parents who were taking part in the programme. I was therefore able to use them as well as the Employment Service to contact lone parents taking part in the full range of welfare-to-work programmes available to lone parents in Sheffield at that time.

3.2.2 Data collection

Throughout the research period a large amount of primary and secondary data was collected, listed with its sources in Appendix A. Four types of secondary data were collected: information from SSOs about their welfare-to-work programmes, statistics, government documents and newspaper articles. In terms of SSO welfare-to-work programmes, I collected a range of information through interviews and participant observation including: programme details, handouts designed for participants of welfare-to-work programmes, leaflets, newsletters, fact sheets, reports, briefing papers, bid documents for funding, and local sources of information on the economy, training courses and employment. Statistics were also collected from the Census, government agencies and SSOs on economic and employment information, demographic information on population, poverty and ethnicity, and information on welfare rolls and, where available, on the outcomes of welfare-to-work programmes such as the types of employment lone parents had moved into. Government documents were also collected from a variety of local and national level agencies on national and state level welfare reform laws, benefits, tax credits and minimum wages, funding for welfare-to-work programmes, government run welfare-to-work and childcare programmes, and poverty policies. Finally newspaper articles were collected using web-based searches and Lexis-Nexus newspaper searching facilities from national and local newspapers on national, state and local welfare reform, and on lone parents, employment, and poverty.

Three main types of primary data were also collected (also see Appendix A): questionnaires, participant observation data, and interview data. I took photographs of the two
cities and welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo. In designing my questionnaire I attempted to follow the advice on constructing and organising the questions found in the literature on questionnaire design (Czaja and Blair 1996; Foddy 1993; Oppenheim 1992; Parfitt 1997; Schuman and Presser 1981; Schutt 1996; Sudman and Bradbury 1982). Appendix B shows the final questionnaire, which was sent to the thirty separate organisations who were contracted or approved by Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide welfare-to-work programmes for welfare recipients, listed in Appendix C. I promised confidentiality and so the name of the organisations who responded will not be used in any published results. In this unpublished dissertation I do not disclose which 22 out of 30 organisations replied (a 73% response rate), and I do not use the names of individual organisations when discussing the results of the questionnaires. The good response rate was obtained by a series of follow-up telephone calls asking organisations to return the questionnaires, and if necessary sending replacement copies.

The second form of primary data collected was through the use of participant observation, to see how the policy of welfare reform worked on the ground by attending welfare-to-work programmes, and to access lone parents who were attending the programmes to interview. I was perhaps more accurately an observer than a participant observer, although I participated to the extent that I sat around the tables with lone parents as they took part in activities, listened to the class leader, or searched for jobs. The use of ethnography and participant observation in social science research has been discussed by a number of authors, and I read a large number of books and papers to prepare for this type of data collection (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Cook and Crang 1995; Cook 1997; Dyck 1993; Finch 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Jackson 1983; Jackson 1985; Katz 1992; May 1997b; Spradley 1980). I aimed to use participant observation to examine how macro structures of power play out in the material social practices of everyday life (Katz 1992), and to use ethnography to examine how policy change works in practice, exposing the contradictions in public policies that often only become apparent at the implementation stage (Finch 1988). I attempted to engage in this method with sensitivity, recognising that far from being a method likely to overcome some of the ethical difficulties of conducting research, it is precisely
because ethnographic research depends upon relationships, engagement and attachment that it places the subjects at risk of manipulation and betrayal (McDowell 1992a; Stacey 1988).

Carrying out this form of participant observation was made possible through my relationships with ‘gatekeepers’: the leaders of the welfare-to-work programmes. In both cities I dressed smartly whilst undertaking this research as I felt this was expected by the gatekeepers. In Buffalo in particular the participants of programmes were also expected to dress each day as if they were meeting an employer, so it seemed inappropriate for me to be dressed casually. I attended job clubs at the Clarkson Center and at EOC in Buffalo on a daily basis for some weeks, and I also attended the auto mechanics and culinary arts programme for one day each at the Clarkson Center, and EOC’s business and computer technology programme for two evenings and the Certified Nursing Assistant programme for two days. I went to the Rath building where welfare claimants are required to queue to receive welfare, and attended a number of meetings on welfare reform, which I was invited to attend by those I had interviewed in context interviews, and by job club leaders. I attended a meeting in Buffalo of the Statewide Emergency Network for Social and Economic Security (SENSES) at which the County Commissioner responded to a report on welfare reform in the state, a meeting of the Regional Employment Network (REN) to discuss how welfare-to-work programmes could be more effectively coordinated in Erie County, and a meeting of Project Dandelion at Neighborhood Legal Services which explained to welfare recipients their legal rights under welfare reform. The final form of participant observation in Buffalo was becoming an active member of the Coalition for Economic Justice, which was undertaking at the local level the national Children’s Defense Fund study assessing the impact of welfare reform. I was able to assist them in data collection, designing and planning a survey of users of emergency services such as Food Pantries, and advocacy work to gain media and political attention to the impacts of welfare reform in the county.

In Sheffield participants of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) were not required to attend daily job clubs, so there was less scope for participant observation. However, with the agreement of the Employment Service (ES) and the lone parents involved I attended a number of NDLP interviews with lone parents and their NDLP advisers, in Hillsborough job centre,
and in a job centre in the community in Stocksbridge. I attended Helping One Parents into Employment (HOPE) on four occasions, the lone parent ‘programme centre’ modified from ES programme centres for other jobseekers, where lone parents could carry out job search using the free facilities of telephones, photocopying, computers, and postage. I also attended an open day at Central Sheffield University Hospitals NHS Trust (CSUH) organised by ES for lone parents thinking of applying for employment there. Finally Scoop Aid agreed that I could attend the Career’s Course run by the Career’s Service as part of the NDLP Innovative Pilot, which I did for three days. I was not able to attend Scoop Aid’s Personal Development Programme (PDP) as this was designed for lone parents to discuss their problems and gain confidence and Scoop Aid felt that having an outsider there would have a detrimental effect on group dynamics. During all this participant observation I openly took extensive field notes, recording as much as possible, trying not to over-summarise, including factual information such as who was present, the location and time, details of the activities occurring, any topics discussed, the views of participants, nonverbal communication and my reactions to what was happening. I followed the advice of the literature on participant observation and ensured I typed up my notes each evening (my least favourite research activity!), and I also kept a separate file of analytical notes that included more general ideas brought up by the research, and kept a personal diary of the fieldwork (Cook and Crang 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Ley 1988; May 1997b; Spradley 1980).

The third and major part of primary data collection was conducting in-depth interviews with agencies involved in welfare reform, and with lone parents. Interviews were conducted with SSOs, labour unions, community groups and employers to gather information about welfare reform and the local economy in the two cities, and also to enable the selection of case-study organisations as previously discussed. Appendix D shows the interview questions used for a SSO in Buffalo, which were modified for other types of organisations, and subsequently for use in Sheffield. Appendix E lists the interviewees in both cities for these ‘context’ interviews. For organisations that I considered using as case studies but decided not to, I wrote to explain this and thanked them for their help. I had also considered conducting group interviews with lone parents to enable group discussion of their attitudes to welfare reform, but it soon became apparent that despite the benefits of group interviews described in
the literature (Carey 1994; Goss 1996; Hedges 1985; Jarrett 1993; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990; van Staveren 1997), it would be extremely difficult to find lone parents who would be able to give up their time in this way.

The advantages of using in-depth interviewing as a research strategy have been discussed by a number of authors (Anderson and Jack 1991; Brenner et al. 1985; Dex 1991; Edwards 1990; Fielding 1993; Finch 1993; Herod 1993; Jones 1985; May 1997a; McCracken 1988; Morris and Irwin 1992; Opie 1992; Pheonix 1994; Reinharz 1992; Silverman 1997; Valentine 1997). Interviewing can be used to uncover individual experiences of complex processes, in a way which develops interconnections between the researcher and researched and enables a mutual exchange of views which can to some extent break down unequal power relations and create intersubjectivity in the research process (McDowell 1992a). A large part of my research strategy was, therefore, in-depth interviews with thirty lone parents in each city, using a list of questions loosely based on those used in an earlier US study of the relationship between work and welfare for lone parents (Edin and Lein 1997). In constructing interview questions I used the literature as a guide, making the questions as clear as possible (Schutt 1996), starting with an introduction that explained the research (Cook and Crang 1995), asking the easiest life and employment history questions first (Dex 1991; May 1997a; McCracken 1988), ended with an interesting question (Oppenheim 1992), and allowing interviewees to choose their own pseudonyms (Reinharz 1992). After the first few interviews I modified the questions to include important issues that interviewees had brought up, and rephrased some questions (Foddy 1993). I used a long list of questions as a guide to ensure I covered all the topics and had prompt questions if necessary, but rarely made my way systematically down the list asking each question in order. The interview questions used in Buffalo and then adapted for Sheffield are listed in Appendix F. Within the interview I also asked lone parents if they would mind keeping a diary of their activities for a day so I could see how they balanced paid and unpaid work with attending welfare-to-work programmes. They all agreed, and 11 in Buffalo (37%) and 17 in Sheffield (57%) were subsequently returned. This diary used in Buffalo, and modified for use in Sheffield, is shown in Appendix G.
Contacting lone parents who were attending welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo was relatively easy. As I was attending welfare-to-work programmes I would explain to participants each day what the research was about and ask if anyone was willing to be interviewed. I was then able to take them out of the programme for an hour into another room where we had privacy to conduct the interview. Twenty lone parents were interviewed in this way. Using designated spaces for the interviews also maintained the lines between interview and conversation that occurred during participant observation. My perceived relationship with the gatekeepers running the job clubs may have affected whether lone parents wanted to be interviewed as well as what they did and did not say (Evans 1988), although I tried to stress that I was independent and that anything they said would not be passed on to those running the programmes. Contacting lone parents who had found work after attending programmes was far more difficult. I constructed a letter (Appendix H) to send to lone parents requesting an interview, which, following other studies (Czaja and Blair 1996, Valentine 1997), outlined the research and included the length of the proposed interview, as well as possible locations for the interview such as downtown coffee shops or at their place of employment. I enclosed my Buffalo phone number and a postage paid card to return to me with their phone number if they were willing to participate. In all 85 letters were given to EOC, the Clarkson Center, the Child Assistance Program (CAP), and the DSS Transition Teams who had agreed to send them on my behalf to former participants of their programmes, thereby retaining the confidentiality of their clients by not giving me access to the names or addresses of lone parents. I cannot be sure if all 85 letters were sent, but in all they led to only seven interviews with employed lone parents. Two other employed lone parents were attending welfare-to-work programmes to re-train or improve their skills and agreed to the interview after meeting me, and one other overheard an interview I was conducting in the coffee shop where she was working and volunteered to be interviewed as she was an employed lone parent still on welfare.

Due to the low response rate I received from the letters I also used snowballing techniques, asking all the lone parents I had interviewed if they had any employed friends who were lone parents who had been on welfare and were now in employment who might be willing to talk to me. However, most people said they could not think of anyone, and no
interviews came from this. Some employed single parents responded to my letters but I was
unable to arrange a meeting with them, as they were too busy or did not have access to a
telephone. Many of the employed single parents whom I did eventually interview took two or
three arranged appointments before the interview finally took place. Some asked me to come
to their homes for the interview, as this would have been much easier for them as they would
not have had to arrange childcare for their children whilst the interview took place, but I
explained that for safety reasons I felt unable to do this. I did not think I would feel, or
necessarily be, safe in the low-income neighbourhoods where many lone parents lived. When
conducting interviews at Catholic Charities in such a neighbourhood there were drug dealers
on street corners and I was warned by those who worked there of recent drive-by shootings.
This limitation was therefore incorporated into the research strategy.

In Sheffield I was able to use Scoop Aid’s careers programme to access lone parents, but
as the numbers participating were limited I was only able to interview four lone parents in this
way. I was also able to interview one lone parent whom I met whilst attending the CSUH
open day, but had to contact the other 25, even those participating in NDLP, via letter. In all I
gave 106 letters to the Employment Service, HOPE, and Scoop Aid to send to lone parents on
my behalf, and as in Buffalo I cannot be sure how many of these were sent. Some NDLP
advisers put ES compliments slips in with my letter so that some lone parents may have felt
that they had to respond, although none gave any indication of this. NDLP advisers may also
have picked lone parents who had a positive experience of NDLP to send letters to, although
this did not seem to be reflected in interview comments. Scoop Aid were also having their
innovative pilot evaluated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research
(CRESR), and they were only willing to send letters to those lone parents who had already
said they are willing to be interviewed by CRESR, but whom CRESR had not needed to
interview. Most of the interviews required two appointments before the interview actually
took place, and I was unable in the end to arrange three interviews. When I had interviewed
thirty lone parents and was about to leave Sheffield five more lone parents responded to my
letter, so I phoned and thanked them and explained that I would not need their help. Unlike in
Buffalo I decided I would do interviews in people’s homes as I was sure I would not be able
to complete thirty interviews if I did not, and the areas of Sheffield where lone parents lived
were less dangerous than in those Buffalo. As a precaution I bought a mobile phone and phoned friends and told them my whereabouts both before and after conducting each interview. My only negative experience was an encounter with a live pet python in one home, which I had originally assumed was a toy as it was handed to me.

When conducting interviews in both cities I did not pay participants, although for those who met me in coffee shops I bought them coffee and any food they wanted, and refunded their travel expenses. One lone parent in Buffalo was obviously experiencing severe financial hardship and was grateful to be given $20 for her $1.25 bus fare. When interviewing in lone parents’ homes in Sheffield I took a packet of chocolate biscuits to thank them. In conducting the interviews I tried not to move on too quickly so that respondents had time to think (Foddy 1993), and made sure not to pressure people into talking about issues that make them uncomfortable or distressed (Valentine 1997). However, on two occasions in Sheffield lone parents cried during the interview, and one interviewee in Buffalo spoke just before the interview ended of having an abortion.

At the end of interviews I was often asked in Buffalo about the UK, and in both cities how long I would be living there, why I had chosen the city (to which I tried to reply sensitively that I wanted study areas of high unemployment), what course I was doing, whether I had a partner (asked by women not men), whether I had children, what the welfare system was like in the other country I was studying. In Sheffield I was also asked if I knew what would happen to NDLP and the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) if the Conservatives came to power. When asked why I was interested in the research I explained why I had chosen the topic and told respondents that I had been brought up in a lone parent family and therefore had some, if limited, understanding of the difficulties they faced as lone parents. I always answered any questions as openly and accurately as I could, although I did not provide lone parents in Buffalo with information on courses that were technically available to them but had not been offered to them by their employment counsellors, as telling them to go and see their caseworker to get more information seemed too intrusive. I also, in retrospect unfairly, carried out some of the interviews in Buffalo when I had a bad cold, which put my interviewees at risk of being financially sanctioned if they became ill and were
not able to attend their job club. At the end of the interview I gave out a summary of the research project with all my contact details as suggested by other studies (Pheonix 1994), and asked them to give me their contact details if they were willing to take part in a follow-up interview which all of them in both cities were, and I gave out a change of address card in case the interviewees moved before the follow-up interviews. After the interview I then typed up notes of how the interview had gone, whether either participant had seemed tired or distracted and how open or comfortable respondents had been (Jones 1985). As I had expected none of the postcards were returned by those who did move. In Buffalo I also sent respondents non-religious Season’s Greetings cards at Christmas to thank them, and to remind them that I would be in touch again. In Buffalo I was able to re-interview twenty lone parents in June 2000, and in Sheffield I re-interviewed twenty-two lone parents in November/December 2000, response rates of 67% and 73% respectively. Of the Buffalo interviews eight were conducted in person and twelve over the telephone after a large number of missed appointments, and in Sheffield twenty were conducted in person and two over the telephone. Appendix I shows the interview questions used in Buffalo, which were modified for Sheffield.

Before conducting the research I had anticipated possible difficulties of finding single parents willing to talk openly about their lives to someone from a very different background. As a young, white, middle-class, British in Buffalo and southern in Sheffield, woman with no children, I was unsure how my respondents would react to me asking them sensitive questions about being a lone parent. When interviewing Hispanic and African-American respondents in Buffalo and mixed race and Arabic respondents in Sheffield, my shared position with them as a woman was far overshadowed by differences due to their position as women from ethnic minorities (Edwards 1990). I therefore approached interviewing not assuming to have an understanding of their position based on personal experience or commonality with the majority of respondents as women, as can be useful in some interview situations (Finch 1988; May 1997a; McDowell 1992a), but by frankly explaining why I was doing the research, asking personal questions as courteously as possible and answering any questions about my background. This broke down barriers between me and the respondents and conversations were in the majority of cases open and friendly. It seemed to be precisely because I was such
an outsider and so obviously different from them which put my respondents at ease, and
enabled me to ask questions that in another context would have been intrusive or ignorant
(Katz 1994). In Buffalo my English accent made me a novelty and many lone parents joked
that they would agree to be interviewed so they could hear me talk for an hour. My status as
an outsider also meant I was not associated with the DSS, and respondents were willing to be
open and honest with me. Only very occasionally respondents did not want to answer a
question, with most answering detailed questions about their income, and others volunteered
information that I had not asked about such as drug and alcohol problems.

Interview data does not simply discover and describe what is there in the real world
(Jones 1985, Miller and Glassner 1997), and the location of interviews, the way they are
arranged, the relationship with the gatekeeper, positionality, and the way questions are
perceived by the informants all affect what is said in interviews. Yet such interviews can still
produce ‘truths’ of experience, history and perception (Brenner et al. 1985, Personal
Narratives Group 1989). The lone parents whom I interviewed are unlikely to be
representative of the lone parent population in either city. Those who responded to my letters
were likely to be more outgoing, had fewer transport barriers as I did not say in my letters that
I could visit them at home, and perhaps had strong feelings about welfare reform. In Sheffield
any NDLP participants had chosen to take part in the programme and were therefore likely to
be the most ‘job-ready’, and perhaps more equipped to move into employment than those
being forced to in Buffalo. Lone parents least able to cope with welfare reform who were not
taking part in welfare-to-work programmes are therefore absent from this study. The lone
parents who did move into employment through welfare-to-work programmes may have had
more qualifications and skills than many lone parents in the two cities. However, whilst this
group is not representative, if these lone parents do not fare well in employment, it suggests
that welfare reform may be even less successful for other lone parents in the two cities.

Using qualitative methods such as interviewing are just as likely to raise difficult eth ical
questions as quantitative methodologies, and there are no easy ways of resolving these ethical
problems (McDowell 1992a). Even when women do get something out of the research such as
an opportunity to tell their stories, it does not challenge the inequalities on which the entire
process rests (Gilbeli 1994), and there is a danger of raising expectations of positive intervention on their behalf leading to feelings of disappointment and betrayal (McDowell 1997b). Being more aware of asymmetrical power relationships in research does not remove them (England 1994), although one potential benefit of social differences between researcher and researched is that interviewee is expert on the topic of interest to someone in a more powerful position than them in terms of race and education (Miller and Glassner 1997). Rather than focusing on the guilt of conducting this type of research it is therefore important use this ‘space of betweenness’ as a site to uncover the experiences and politics of marginalized groups, and to concentrate on actively transforming inequality by disseminating such research in the academy and beyond (England 1994; Nast 1994; Stacey 1988; Staeheli and Lawson 1994).

3.2.3 Producing the research findings

Moving from the data collected to a written thesis requires an open-ended and creative process of data analysis and writing (Berg 1989, Lofland and Lofland 1995). Although analysis and writing work alongside each other, there are some initial data analysis practices that give some ideas of the interesting or important issues that come out of a great deal of data, and suggest ways that the research report can be framed or organised. In terms of interview data the ‘coding’ of interview transcripts is one of these forms of data analysis. Of the 152 interviews I conducted in all, 111 were fully transcribed, a process that took over three months of continual work. Pilot interviews and telephone follow-up interviews were not taped, and the only taped interviews that were not transcribed for reasons of time were twelve Sheffield context interviews, which I listened to and took notes from. Transcripts were then used to generate codes, used as shorthand devices to label, separate and organize data (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

The process of coding was done with the aide of computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS), in the form of the programme ‘Atlas.ti’ which enables the speeding up of the sorting of materials, and helped to organise codes textually and graphically so that relationships between them could be seen (Crang 1997; Crang et al. 1997; Hinchcliffe et al.
Using computers to aid this process enabled the flexible movement from original texts to coded data and back again very quickly and easily, organising the data and developing ideas. The coding process started with one interview where topics were typed into the margin of the transcript document (Creswell 1994b), and then after a number of interviews had been annotated in this way initial codes were developed. As the process continued less useful codes were discarded, some were grouped together into broader topics (Lofland and Lofland 1995), and second level, or level two, codes were generated. Appendix J shows one ‘network view’ diagram produced by Atlas.ti with level one codes on the outside, level two codes further in and the level three code of ‘experience of employment’ in the centre. This level three code could then be used as the basis of a sub-section in the writing of a chapter, with print-outs of all quotations within this code helping to identify the main trends and issues brought up by interviewees around this topic.

Analysing textual data such as participant observation data, and information from SSOs, Government documents and newspaper articles was done by reading it through to familiarise myself with it, cataloguing it to describe its contents (see Appendix A), and then going back to it during the writing process to incorporate it into the text. Some of this textual data was used primarily as background information and is not directly referred to in the succeeding chapters. Secondary statistical information was analysed and where useful percentages were created from numeric data. Primary interview data was also used to generate statistics. For example, one interview code was entitled ‘Income: details’ and consisted of all interview responses to questions about financial income. All quotations for this code were retrieved and printed out, and from this qualitative data income tables were constructed to calculate average incomes, and to show what contributed most to overall income (see Chapter 7). Questionnaire responses were entered into a spreadsheet and analysed to see the variations across different welfare-to-work programmes. All this construction of information was a time-demanding process.

Very little attention is normally paid to writing, despite its importance as a process that is constitutive, rather than simply reflective, of reality (Barnes and Duncan 1992). Qualitative research writing has been criticised for not being rigorous enough in presenting research
findings, and simply cherry-picking quotes to suit the author’s argument (Baxter and Eyles 1997). However, whilst quotes may not be chosen to be exactly representative of a sample of interviews, they are representative of the processes they uncover. Rigorous data analysis ensures that quotes are selected which uncover important issues, not selected to tell the author’s pre-determined story, although the two are never entirely separate. A number of practical guides to writing dissertations now exist, to advise researchers on style, planning and structuring writing, and coping with writer’s block (Berg 1998; Calvert 1991; Creswell 1994a; Hartley 1997; Lofland and Lofland 1995). Other accounts focus on the ethical issues involved in writing, such as how to fairly and responsibly represent research subjects, the importance of producing writing for the research subjects as well as for an academic audience, and what kind of writing to return to the subjects (McDowell 2001). Whilst weaving lengthy quotes into the text is probably not a sufficient means of letting the research subjects speak (England 1994), quotes can at least to some extent allow subjects to speak for themselves, although it is the researcher who has selected what is deemed important in what subjects said (McDowell 1997b). This kind of writing which describes the experience of disadvantaged individuals can at least lift the veil of invisibility surrounding the lives of those usually deemed unimportant, and put their experience of marginality to the centre (Opie 1992). Producing research findings to disseminate to the subjects, activist groups, and the wider policy community can also attempt to make the research of practical use, and ensure that the writing is accessible to those who enabled its production (Edwards 1990). This, however, often requires writing documents other than, and as well as, the doctoral dissertation. In this research, the findings have been disseminated to Scoop Aid at every stage of the process, and they have also been given detailed information on what has been said about their involvement in welfare reform, enabling a positive collaboration for both sides to develop. I am also disseminating written findings to the UK lone parent organisation Gingerbread, and will be conducting policy briefings with them for civil servants and the media. The Coalition for Economic Justice in Buffalo will also be using a written report of the findings for their advocacy work, and the research is also being disseminated to the wider policy community (Casebourne 2001).
3.3 CONCLUSION: INVESTIGATING WELFARE REFORM

Investigating welfare reform as part of the development of a feminist geography of public policy is a complex and reflexive process. Adopting a feminist methodological approach to undertake this process has enabled me to focus on issues of unemployment and poverty, and on lone parents as a group, all of which are marginalized within the discipline, and to combine the production of research with direct political engagement. This chapter has explored the research process that I undertook, and has shown how the methods I chose were the most appropriate tools to gather data on the impacts of processes of welfare reform on lone parents. By adopting a mixed-method approach with qualitative methods at its core this research is able to move beyond traditional analyses of welfare reform. Instead it examines how lone parents experience employment and the affect welfare-to-work programmes have on poverty, as well as assessing whether programmes move lone parents from welfare into paid work. In the following chapters I present the products of this research process, beginning with an examination of lone parents living on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield, assessing the relationship between welfare and work for lone parents on benefit and examining the barriers to moving into paid work facing lone parents in areas of high unemployment.
CHAPTER FOUR:
LONE PARENTS ON WELFARE
IN DEPRESSED LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

Lone parents on welfare have been portrayed in debates on welfare reform in the US and the UK as a group of the 'undeserving poor' who prefer living off the state to providing for themselves and their families through employment. Welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) in the UK have targeted lone parents in an attempt to move them from benefit into employment, using a supply-side approach that fails to recognise the difference in employment opportunities facing those in areas of high unemployment compared to those in areas of economic growth. Before examining the nature and success of these welfare-to-work programmes it is, therefore, necessary to develop a picture of lone parents surviving on welfare, and to examine the nature and extent of the problems facing lone parents living in depressed local labour markets that welfare-to-work programmes need to tackle.

This chapter focuses on these issues, examining the lack of economic opportunities associated with high unemployment and low growth, and the corresponding high levels of poverty in both Buffalo and Sheffield. It goes on to examine both the similarities between lone parents on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield in terms of gender, family situations and educational background, and the differences in terms of race, ethnicity, housing tenure and welfare history, arguing that whilst lone parents are in a different structural position in the two cities, in neither city do they fit the stereotypes of the undeserving poor found in cultural explanations of poverty. The chapter then describes how living on welfare means living in poverty for all these lone parents, who, even with the support of family and friends, find it impossible to make ends meet on welfare, particularly in Buffalo where their income after housing costs is less than in Sheffield. It then argues that, contrary to the assumptions behind welfare reform, these lone parents are already engaged in a great deal of unpaid work and declared and undeclared employment, and are keen to leave welfare completely through employment. The chapter concludes by exploring the multiple barriers facing lone parents who seek to make this move into paid employment.
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4.1 LIVING IN DEPRESSED LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

4.1.1. Employment in Buffalo and Sheffield

The restructuring of employment described in Chapter 2 led to high rates of unemployment and a number of deep recessions in the US and the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. However, by the turn of the new century the US economy was booming with high productivity and the creation of large numbers of low-wage jobs, whilst the UK Government hailed a new era of economic stability, and unemployment hit its lowest levels in both countries since before the beginning of the economic restructuring of the 1970s. But within these national pictures of growth and prosperity some places have been left behind. Many of the areas which suffered most from de-industrialisation have not seen sufficient growth of new manufacturing and service sector jobs to replace their old industrial bases, and those living in these depressed local labour markets find they face high unemployment relative to their national economies, and employment opportunities which are characterised by the growth in precarious forms of work at the low end of the labour market. Cities such as Buffalo and Sheffield continue to face low growth, high unemployment (especially amongst ethnic minorities) and little prospect of an economic turnaround.

Employment in Buffalo reached a peak during the second world war with 460,000 people employed, 50% of whom worked in heavy manufacturing sectors producing steel, aeroplanes, tanks and ships. However, since the 1970s “perhaps no industrial region in the United States has gone through as severe and economically debilitating an era of deindustrialization as the Buffalo region” (Perry 1987, p113), and in the period between 1977 and 1982 Buffalo suffered job losses in a variety of industries that were between two and twenty times the national rate (Perry 1987). Heavy industry, which once dominated the Buffalo skyline, is now scarce, although still present in South Buffalo and near Downtown, as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2:
Figure 4.1: Industry in South Buffalo, November 1999

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne

Figure 4.2: Industry near Downtown Buffalo, November 1999

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne
The Buffalo area suffered massive job losses when plants such as Bethlehem Steel closed down, along with many large electrical plants and the Trico window wiper company (Interview with member of AFL-CIO Economic Development Group, 15.10.99). This led to dramatic declines in employment in Buffalo itself whilst employment grew in the surrounding suburbs. This shift in employment away from the city of Buffalo and old industrial areas to the south of the city which borders Canada and the east of Lake Erie, to surrounding towns and suburbs in Western New York is shown in Figure 4.3:
Figure 4.3: Buffalo area employment change 1970-1990

DATA SOURCE: Multisystems Inc 1997
Both the city itself and the south of the city are shown in red as having lost 5000 to 20,000 jobs. These economic changes led in turn to a dramatic population decline between 1970 and 1980 when 103,638 people left central Buffalo (Perry 1987), and this decline continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s with migration from the city, and population growth in suburban areas as shown by Figure 4.4:
Figure 4.4: Buffalo area population change 1970-1990

DATA SOURCE: Multisystems Inc 1997
By 2000 newly released census data shows that the population had declined by 10.8% from 328,123 in 1990 to 292,648 by 2000, in contrast to the population growth of 5.5% in New York State as a whole (Jones 2001). The population within the city itself is now below 300,000 for first time in more than a century, whilst the wider metropolitan area is also now experiencing decline (Scott-Thomas 1999).

Whilst some former industrial cities such as Pittsburgh have reinvented themselves as centres for new information technologies, Buffalo has benefited little from ‘boom-time USA’ (Borger 2000). The US economy is now the best performing of the G7 industrial nations; growing by more than 3% a year for past ten years (Elliott 1999), so that by February 2000 there had been an unprecedented 107 month period of uninterrupted economic growth, alongside the lowest unemployment in the US for more than 30 years (Kettle 2000), making it the longest economic expansion in US history (Elliott 2000). However, a recent report by a Federal economist examining the Buffalo area economy found only a 0.1% job growth rate and a shrinking labour force and stagnating wages, concluding that “I could not find a city [in the US] that had lower job growth than Buffalo that is similar sized” (Bridger 1999). Job growth in the state has occurred downstate, with 165,000 manufacturing jobs leaving upstate New York in last decade, and the region failing to benefit from the economic boom in New York City (SENSES 1999). Unemployment in Buffalo was 5.6% in 1999, compared to the New York State average of 4.2% in 2000 (Sikorski 2000) and the US rate of 4.3% in March 2001 (Elliott 2001). Alongside relatively high unemployment is significant underemployment within the Buffalo economy (Interview with member of Adult and Community Education division, Erie 2 BOCES 27.8.99, Interview with President, local chapter of Service Employees International Union, 30.9.99), and Buffalo has been designated as a Labor Surplus Area by the Federal Department of Labor (New York State Department of Labor 1999c).

Of the jobs that do exist within Western New York, 16% in 1999 were in manufacturing, compared to 40% in 1960. Erie County now has 31% of its jobs in services, 20% in wholesale and retail trade, 16% in Government, 15% in manufacturing, 6% in transport, communication and public utilities, 6% in finance, insurance and real estate, and 4% in construction (Sikorski

\[4\] Although by October 2001 the US economy was threatened with recession.
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2000). The four largest employers in Erie County are public sector employers: the State Government, the Federal Government, the County Government and the Buffalo City School District (Buffalo Business First 2000). The area has seen an expansion of low wage jobs, with 75.5% of the 65,130 projected annual job openings in the Western New York region being in jobs requiring short-term on-the-job training (New York State Department of Labor 1999b). Within this group the top five occupations projected to grow the most are Retail Salespersons, Cashiers, Waiters and Waitresses, General Office Clerks and Food Preparation Workers. For these jobs hourly wages in Western New York are low: ranging from $5.15 up to $10.80 for General Office Clerks (New York State Department of Labor 1998). Most job growth has occurred in suburban areas located far from poor inner-city neighbourhoods where many welfare recipients live (Interview with Manager of Business Development, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, 22.10.99), and so there has been a problem of spatial mismatch between the unemployed and jobs available, as well as a skills mismatch as even entry-level service sector employment increasingly requires computer skills (Interview with member of Adult and Community Education division, Erie 2 BOCES, 27.8.99; interview with Director, Employment and Training division, Clarkson Center, 15.11.99; interview with member of Perry Street Sisters, Catholic Charities, 27.9.99).

Whilst the UK labour market has lower productivity and has created fewer low-wage jobs than the US economy, it had also been growing strongly throughout the late 1990s until the last quarter of 2001 when recession seems likely. Within this context, Sheffield faces very similar problems to those experienced in the similarly depressed local labour market of Buffalo. In 1979 Sheffield’s manufacturing base began to shrink drastically leading to unprecedented levels of redundancies and wholesale closures of steel and engineering works in the 1980s. More than 10% of the city’s jobs were lost in the 1980s, of which 35,000 were in traditional manufacturing sectors (Lawless and Smith 1998). Employment in the South Yorkshire steel industry alone fell from 60,000 in 1971 to below 10,000 by the mid-1990s (Hey 1998), so that Bessemer Converters once used in the steel works of the city are now museum pieces, as shown in Figure 4.5:
Figure 4.5: Bessemer Converter on show at the Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield, May 2000

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne

The South Yorkshire region now has GDP of less than 75% of the European average, making it eligible for European ‘Objective One’ funding of £700 million to boost the area economy (Sheffield LEA 2001). It was the low level of GDP in Sheffield itself, rather than in the coalfield areas surrounding it, that gave South Yorkshire Objective One status (Interview with Director, Sheffield First Partnership, 18.4.00), so that South Yorkshire has now slipped from tenth to eighth from the bottom of a rank order of UK-wide growth rates (Sheffield
This economic situation has led to out-migration and a twenty year fall in Sheffield’s population since the mid 1970s, with the population in the 1990s continuing to fall from 529,300 in 1991 to 528,500 in 1995 (Fieldhouse 1996).

Although the UK economy has been experiencing economic growth there has been little sign of it in Sheffield, in contrast to Leeds located an hour travelling distance to the north and which also suffered industrial decline especially in the textile industry, but which like Pittsburgh has bounced back from de-industrialisation (Browne 1998). Whilst employment in finance and business services rose by 73% in Leeds between 1981 and 1991, it rose by only 40% in Sheffield (Lawless and Smith 1998). Between 1981 and 1995 Sheffield had a net loss of 23,108 jobs whilst Leeds had a net gain of 38,070 (Groom 1998). Unemployment in the UK national economy has dropped below a million for the first time in 25 years, and unemployment stands at 5.2% compared to 4.3% in the US (Atkinson and Denny 2001), but in Sheffield remains at 8.7% (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council 1998). The latest available figures dating from the early 1990s show unemployment is higher amongst men: 15.9% compared to 7.8% for women, and amongst ethnic minorities is 33.7% for African-Caribbean men and 17% for African-Caribbean women, and at 34.9% for men from the Indian subcontinent and 33.6% for women from the Indian subcontinent (Sheffield City Council 1993).

As in Buffalo public sector employment accounts for a large proportion of all employment that is available in the city. In 1996 education and health sectors accounted for the largest proportion of employment, with the retail and distribution sectors also being major employers (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council 1998). The Lower Don Valley has been transformed from being the industrial base of the city to the new centre of entertainment and retail employment. Figure 4.6 shows one of these new entertainment centres, whilst Figure 4.7 highlights how the Sheffield economy has changed: showing a sculpture of former steel workers within Meadowhall shopping centre.
Figure 4.6: The Hollywood Bowl in the regenerated Lower Don Valley, Sheffield, May 2000

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne

Figure 4.7: Steel workers sculpture in Meadowhall Shopping Centre, Sheffield, May 2000

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne
Whilst employment is forecast to decline in the retail sector, metals industry, mechanical engineering sector, and for industrial plant and machine operators, occupations such as business services and property, rental services and research services are projected to grow the most (Sheffield Training and Enterprise Council 1998). Call centres, as in Buffalo, are also increasingly important employers, with the Dixons group creating 2000 jobs at their expanding call centre in Sheffield (Griffin 2000), shown in Figure 4.8:

Figure 4.8: Dixons Call Centre in Nunnery Square, Sheffield, May 2000

As in Buffalo, earnings for the types of jobs available in Sheffield are low, with the average wage levels of job centre vacancies, which are jobs that those on benefit are likely to move into, at £3.74 ($5.61$^5$) an hour in 1997 (Sheffield Co-ordinating Centre Against Unemployment Ltd 1997). A spatial and skills mismatch of employment also exists, between

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$^5$When converting US dollars into British pounds and vice versa, I have used an exchange rate of US$1.5 to £1, as this was the approximate exchange rate during my main fieldwork period.
those living on large estates of council housing, and employment located in the city centre and Lower Don Valley which requires increasing skills levels, so that unemployment levels in some areas of the city are extremely high. The inner-city Manor estate has an unemployment level of 21%, compared to a rate of only 3% in the suburban ward of Ecclesall on the edge of the Peak district (Sheffield First Partnership 1998). Whilst the unemployment rate in Sheffield as a whole stands at 8.5%, there is a stark spatial divide in unemployment rates across the city, with very low rates in the west of the city compared to rates far above the city average in many eastern wards (Sheffield First Partnership 1998).

4.1.2 Poverty in Buffalo and Sheffield

Whilst the current economic situations in Buffalo and Sheffield are quite similar, they are very different in terms of the characteristics of their populations. The population of Buffalo is racially diverse, with 65% of the 1990 population white, 31% black, 1% American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, 1% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% of other races (US Census Bureau 1993). This compares to a white population in New York State of 67.9%, and in the US as a whole of 75.1%, and a black population in New York State of 15.9% and in the US of 12.3% in 2000 (Jones 2001). In terms of ethnicity, 5% of the population of Buffalo in 1990 were of Hispanic origin, and 1.3% of households were linguistically isolated, whilst 4% of all persons over five years old did not speak English very well. The city also has a large proportion of lone parent families, 35% of 78,245 families, and 33% of the population over 25 are without a High School Education or higher (US Census Bureau 1993). In contrast, Sheffield has a 95% white population, just above the national average, with a 2% black population, 2% from the Indian subcontinent, and 1% of other races. It also has relatively few single parent households compared to other large cities: 4% of all households, making it close to national average of 3.7% (Sheffield City Council 1992). In terms of education 9% of pupils leave school with no GCSE passes, higher than the 6.5% in England and Wales as a whole (Sheffield First Partnership 1998).

Although their populations are somewhat different, both cities have high rates of poverty, deprivation and inequality despite their growing national economies. As with the poor
throughout America those in Buffalo have seen little benefit from the sustained economic growth and tax cuts in the US, as emphasised in Figure 4.9:

Figure 4.9: ‘Poor People of America’


Whilst New Yorkers are better off on average than those in other states, 25% of children live in poverty compared to 22% in the nation as a whole (Riedinger 1999). New York State in fact has the largest income disparity of any state in America, with the poorest 40% having seen their incomes fall by 14-18% in the last decade, whilst the richest 20% have seen their incomes increase by 30% in that period (SENSES 1999). New York City and the city of Buffalo as the two largest cities in the state have the largest numbers of welfare recipients; with New York City having 71% of the state’s TANF caseload, and Erie County, including Buffalo, having 5% of the state’s caseload (New York State Department of Labor 2000). Buffalo has been designated a poverty pocket by the Federal Government due to its citywide poverty rate of more than 25% (Zremski 1999), and 19% of all households in the city had some income from Public Assistance, whilst 45% of female households with no husband
present were below the poverty line (US Census Bureau 1993). The city is extremely segregated, with one census tract characterised by public housing projects near Downtown Buffalo having 51.7% of all families below the poverty line, whilst one more affluent area of the city near to the northern suburbs has only 1% of families below the poverty line (US Census Bureau 1993).

Sheffield also suffers from poverty, and is the twenty-fifth most deprived local authority of all 354 local authorities in England, with 33% of all households in Sheffield receiving housing and/or council tax benefit (Sheffield First Partnership 1998). It is also a very spatially segregated city characterised by large housing estates with little local employment or services. Whilst many wards in the west of the city have a very low score on the local index of deprivation, many inner city areas and outer estates in the north of the city have scores four times higher than western wards (Sheffield First Partnership 1998). On the inner-city Manor estate over 50% of children now live in households with no earners (Sheffield First Partnership 1998). The incidence of lone parenthood also varies across the city, with 8.2% of households being lone parent families in Park ward, compared to 1.4% in the ward of Hallam (Sheffield City Council 1993).

### 4.1.3 Lone Parents in Buffalo and Sheffield

In both cities 93% of interviewees were women reflecting the gender of lone parents at a national scale in both countries. In Buffalo the age of lone parents ranged from 22 to 51, similar to that in Sheffield where ages ranged from 20 to 48, so that the average age in both cities was 34. However, interviewees differed greatly in terms of race and ethnicity. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the gender, race and ethnicity, and age of the lone parents I interviewed in Buffalo and Sheffield:

---

6 Where wards have been given a score based on six poverty indicators.
Table 4.1: Characteristics of the lone parents interviewed in Buffalo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>African-American</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Anna</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlotta</td>
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<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>38</td>
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DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
### Table 4.2: Characteristics of the lone parents interviewed in Sheffield

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<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Debbie</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Julia</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<tr>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Lisa</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meghan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paco</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Salah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
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<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DATA SOURCE:** Author's research

86
In Buffalo only 30% of interviewees were white, 47% were African-American, 20% were of Hispanic origin and 3% were of mixed race, whilst in Sheffield 94% were white, 3% were Arabic and 3% were of mixed race. Whilst this does broadly reflect the racial diversity of the two cities, in Buffalo African-Americans and those of Hispanic origin are over-represented amongst my interviewees. Whilst no figures of the race of welfare recipients in Buffalo are available, it is almost certain that these groups are also over-represented within the wider welfare population, and amongst the poor more generally. In Sheffield there is also no ethnic breakdown available of those on welfare, and whilst my interviewees under-represent the black population in the city, they probably do not under-represent lone parents from the Indian subcontinent, as there is a very low incidence of lone parenthood amongst the South Asian community in the UK, which is reflected in Sheffield:

[Lone parenthood is] very unusual, and I think that if you find that there is lone parenthood I think that in the majority of cases it will be someone's been widowed rather than a divorce or separation (Interview with Advice Worker, Bangladeshi Citizens Welfare Project, 25.5.00).

In Buffalo all lone parents were US citizens, and 28 were born in the US with two born in Puerto Rico, emigrating in one case seven years previously and in the other case nine years previously. Twenty-seven had English as their first language, and three who were of Hispanic origin had Spanish as their first language, including those born in Puerto Rico. In Sheffield all lone parents were UK citizens, all had been born in the UK, and all had English as their first language.

Whilst lone parents on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield had different racial and ethnic backgrounds, they were similar in terms of education, with similarly low levels of those with no qualifications, high levels of school-based qualifications, and a few lone parents with degree level education. In Buffalo only five out of 30 lone parents did not have a High School Diploma (HSD) or General Equivalency Degree (GED), and 16 out of 30 had some College education, two having completed an Associates Degree, and one with a BA degree. In Sheffield only six interviewees had no qualifications at all, with a further two having only
health and safety certificates, eleven had some GCSEs, O Levels or NVQs, six had completed either A Levels or an ACCESS to University course, two had Higher National Diplomas (HND), two had BA degrees, and one had two MA degrees.

In terms of their family situation, lone parents in Buffalo had slightly more children than those in Sheffield, with an average of 2.5 children, compared to 1.9 in Sheffield. In Buffalo, whilst one lone parent had ten children, 19 had either one or two, and in Sheffield 24 had one or two children, and the highest number of children a lone parent had was four. In Buffalo more lone parents than in Sheffield had never been married: 67% compared to 47% in Sheffield. The average age when interviewees had their first child and became lone parents were also lower in Buffalo; the average age when interviewees had their first child was 21 in Buffalo and 23 in Sheffield, whilst the average age when they became a lone parent was 25 in Buffalo and 27 in Sheffield. In Sheffield seven interviewees had become lone parents when they had their first child as a teenager, compared to five in Buffalo. Most interviewees had not been lone parents for very long, with 70% of lone parents in both cities having been lone parents for ten years or less, and many having been lone parents for less than five years. This is shown by Table 4.3, which details the numbers of lone parents in each category:

Table 4.3: Length of lone parenthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21-25 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author's research

Interviewees had also not been on welfare for very long. In Buffalo only eight had consistently been on welfare without any paid employment since became a lone parent, or since emigrating to the US, whilst the other 22 had a much more complex history of cycling between welfare and employment or receiving some welfare assistance whilst being employed. In Sheffield 17 had been consistently on benefit since they became a lone parent, although many of these had only been a lone parent for a short period, and the remaining 13
had cycled on and off benefit. Whilst there are differences between the family situations of lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield, these lone parents are very far from either US stereotypes of a racialised behavioural underclass, or UK stereotypes of unmarried teenage mothers becoming pregnant to gain access to public housing. Very few lone parents in either city became lone parents as teenagers, have never been married, have large numbers of children, and have been lone parents on welfare for many years.

In terms of their residential situation, 17 lone parents in both cities had lived there all of their lives, whilst a further five in Buffalo and seven in Sheffield had lived there under ten years, with the remainder living in the cities between 11 and 48 years. In both cities some lone parents who had not lived there all their lives had been born in the city and returned after some time away. In Buffalo most interviewees lived in the poorest areas of the city; eleven lived on the Lower West Side, nine on the East Side, three Downtown, and two in South Buffalo, whilst five lived in the more affluent areas of the Upper West Side or the suburbs surrounding the city. Many of those living in poor areas felt unsafe and did not like where they lived because of drug problems, shootings, violence, alcoholics, and the effects of the environment on their children:

*Maria:* There’s been a lot of problems related to drugs. I mean there’s guys on every corner, you just walk on the street and there’s a guy on the corner selling drugs and they’ll stop anyone and say “D’you wanna buy something?” and it’s, it’s hard because you know I have to raise my kids around here and I’m afraid to let them go outside by their self. So, I’m always outside with them because I don’t want nothing to happen to them.

In Sheffield lone parents were more spatially dispersed, with nine living on the outer estates to the north of the city, seven in inner city areas, and fourteen in other areas of city, mainly in south-east. Many of those that lived in inner city areas or on the northern outer estates were worried about violent crime and burglary, did not have modernised houses with central heating, felt unsafe, and did not like the areas due to high levels of poverty and
unemployment and bad schools, and were worried about the effects of the environment on their children:

Alice: Because I didn’t know Sheffield when I moved onto it, it’s like the roughest estate in England! [the Manor estate] It’s awful, it’s really awful. It’s not good bringing up your kids there. It costs me a lot of money, in after-school activities and that keeping them off the estate so they aren’t playing with the locals, which sounds really awful, but. There’s a very collective attitude of failure and if you’re the one person doing well that makes you awful, do you know what I mean. So it’s very difficult for even an intelligent child to get forward because then they’re really highly picked on and mocked, do you know what I mean? And because everybody else’s failing, so you’re the goody two shoes and whatever.

There were also differences between the type of housing lone parents lived in Buffalo and Sheffield, as shown in Table 4.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Housing</th>
<th>Private Rented</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Live with</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Housing Co-op</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

In Buffalo very few lone parents live in public housing projects, with the majority in privately rented accommodation, mainly in detached houses, or ‘doubles’ or ‘duplex’ apartments: detached houses divided into apartments. Four of the landlords of lone parents were family members, and two lone parents lived in ‘Section 8’ housing, where the housing authority gives the tenant a voucher to subsidize rent payments which the tenant then uses to find their own housing. Only four lone parents had problems with their housing, due to landlords not carrying out repairs, or high heating costs in winter. In Sheffield most lone parents lived in
council housing, reflecting the large council housing stock within the city, which remains high due to relatively little leaving the public sector under ‘right to buy’ legislation in the 1980s (Forrest and Murrie 1991). The next biggest group lives in South Yorkshire Housing Association housing, and one woman lives in a housing co-operative funded by Sheffield City Council. Unlike in Buffalo there are three owner-occupiers. More lone parents in Sheffield had problems with their housing than in Buffalo, with ten in council housing or Housing Association housing having repairs, refurbishment, or modernisation that needed doing, or problems with damp, or a lack of central heating.

Lone parents living on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield are similar in terms of their age and education and length of time that they have been lone parents, but those in Buffalo are more racially and ethnically diverse, have slightly larger families, more have never been married, and more are spatially concentrated in poor areas of the city. In Sheffield more lone parents live in public housing, and lone parents have been on benefit more consistently than in Buffalo reflecting the benefit system that does not allow lone parents to earn more than £15 a week and still receive welfare, unlike in the US where lone parents can combine employment and welfare. These lone parents are, therefore, in slightly different structural positions, but have many of the same restricted opportunities caused by living in a depressed local labour market with high unemployment, and high levels of poverty and disadvantage.

4.2 MAKING ENDS MEET ON WELFARE

For lone parents who are not engaged in employment and rely on welfare benefits for their income, living on welfare means living in poverty. Table 4.5 details the income of lone parents in Buffalo who rely wholly on public assistance from the benefit Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or from Social Security benefits, or who are waiting to re-claim TANF benefit after becoming unemployed. These lone parents are not combining public assistance with employment:

7Like the term ‘welfare’ or ‘welfare benefits’, ‘public assistance’ refers to a range of welfare benefits, of which the benefit for lone parents: ‘Temporary Assistance for Needy Families’, or TANF, is one.
Table 4.5: Monthly income of lone parents on benefit in Buffalo in US $

<table>
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<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Child Support</th>
<th>Social Security</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Social Security Disability (SSD) for long-term disabled
** Social Security Child’s Benefits for children who have one parent who is deceased or disabled
*** Waiting to return to TANF after becoming unemployed

No data is available for Carmen who was on welfare at the time of the first interview.

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Most lone parents receive the majority of their income from TANF and food stamps, although some lone parents or their children are also eligible for social security payments. Of the 19 lone parents, 12 receive no child support from the non-custodial parents of their children, five who do have child support are only receiving the $50 ‘pass through’ from DSS who keep the rest to offset the cost of their welfare benefits, and only two are receiving substantial amounts of child support. The average income for these lone parents is $683, or £451, a month. Only two lone parents have an overall income above the US poverty line of $1156 for a family of one adult and two children (US Census Bureau 2000b), but they are actually well below the poverty line as one has ten children and the other has a disabled child. All of these lone parents are therefore living in poverty. Table 4.6 details the incomes of lone parents in Sheffield who are receiving Income Support for lone parents, or have transferred to Jobseekers Allowance, or are on WFTC waiting to return to income support after becoming unemployed:
Table 4.6: Monthly income of lone parents on benefit in Sheffield in UK £

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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Child Benefit</th>
<th>Income Support</th>
<th>Child Support</th>
<th>Other Sources</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
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<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmeline</td>
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<td>372</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second interview:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>416**</td>
<td>0***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
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<td>Liz</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>350 WFTC</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Salah</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>303 JSA</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Including Child Benefit  
** After debt deductions taken by the Benefits Agency  
*** Taken by Benefits Agency

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Apart from those who were on WFTC without employment, or who had transferred to JSA, all of these lone parents received the majority of their income from child benefit and income support. As part of the rolling back of the welfare state the Conservative government introduced new powers in 1988 for the Department of Social Services to deduct money from benefit before it was paid out, and replaced grants for emergencies with loans from the social fund (Davies 1997). Six lone parents therefore had the amount of income support they were entitled to substantially reduced by the Benefits Agency to repay social fund loans they had taken out to pay for Christmas saving schemes, to fund repairs for their houses, and to replace cookers. Only two lone parents received any child support, which was only a small amount, whilst three more had child support orders but the money was taken by the Benefits Agency towards the cost of their income support payments. Three lone parents were on Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) having given up their jobs, and would go back onto income support at the end of their six-month WFTC claim period, and one of these was receiving a little income support to supplement their WFTC. Two were employed earning less than the £15 a week allowable amount whilst claiming income support, one received some Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for her son, and one was no longer a lone parent by the second interview having got back together with her husband, and had therefore left income support and was claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) with her husband. The average income of these lone parents was £457 a month, and all of these lone parents are living below the ‘low cost but acceptable budget’ calculated by the Family Budget Unit for a lone parent family with two children of £950 a month (Parker 1998). While this income level is only slightly higher than in Buffalo, lone parents in Sheffield have more income after housing costs have been paid, as they have their rent paid through housing benefit which they receive on top of the income listed in Table 6. In Buffalo rental assistance received on top of the income listed in Table 5 subsidizes rent but does not pay all of it.

Living on welfare for these lone parents and their families means being unable to afford the most basic necessities such as utility bills, food and clothing, let alone ‘extras’ such as holidays or treats. In Buffalo 60% of lone parents were having problems paying their rent, with three having recently been living in homeless shelters. One third of lone parents were
having problems paying their gas and electricity bills, and had received ‘shut off’ notices or had actually been cut off, and many relied on the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to help them pay their bills, some encouraged their children to go to friends houses or local libraries to save electricity, and one lone parent resorted to using candles. Despite very low charges for those on low incomes 45% of lone parents were having trouble paying their phone bill and had been recently disconnected, and two did not have a phone. A third of lone parents could not afford to buy proper winter clothing, such as coats and boots for the snow, for them and their children, and most lone parents could not remember when they had last bought clothes for themselves, as they always bought for their children first when they had any money. Food stamps and welfare payments were also inadequate at providing lone parents enough to adequately feed themselves and their children, as they were living below the federal poverty line, which is based on only 80% of the cost of a minimally adequate diet (Fitchen 1997). Two-thirds of lone parents were not able to afford to buy food when they needed it, and it is likely that they were not therefore able to provide their families with a balanced and healthy diet (Fitchen 1997). All lone parents were receiving health insurance through the federal Medicaid programme for those on low incomes. Most lone parents said they couldn’t afford treats or going out with their children for a day, and instead relied on free activities such as going to the park or to a family members house. One third had been able to go out for a meal at McDonalds or a buffet restaurant in the last year, whilst a few others had a treat in the summer time with help from their families. One lone parent described the last time she had a treat:

*Vanessa: A couple of years ago when my son graduated we saved enough money to take ‘em out to ... it was a kind of roaster we had. It was called ‘For Goodness Steaks’; it’s like a buffet kind of meal, so that way everybody can kind of eat as much as they want for a low price.*

In Sheffield fewer lone parents than in Buffalo were having trouble paying their rent, although despite receiving housing benefit one third had rent arrears and one lone parent had recently been homeless. Many were having problems claiming housing benefit due to the privatisation of the housing benefit system in Sheffield, which had caused huge backlogs in
payments, incorrect demand letters for hundreds of pounds being sent, and one interviewee being threatened with eviction. Very few lone parents were having problems paying their gas or electricity bills, although four were paying more for these services having been put onto meters which penalise the poor by charging a much higher rate than to those with quarterly bills or on direct debit schemes (Davies 1997). Just over half of lone parents had problems paying their telephone bill and some were on incoming calls only or had been disconnected, or had chosen to have pre-pay mobile phones rather than more expensive landlines. One fifth could not afford to buy proper winter clothes, with many using charity shops and catalogues to buy clothes cheaply, and, as in Buffalo, most lone parents could not remember when they had last bought clothes for themselves. Unlike in Buffalo only one third of lone parents could not afford to buy food when they needed it, but more lone parents than in Buffalo were concerned about debts they owed, many having borrowed money from money lenders at high interest rates, or having built up debts through catalogues used to buy clothing and toys, and four lone parents had seen debt counsellors to help pay off their debts. More lone parents than in Buffalo were able to have treats, with only a third not having been out for day or out for a meal in over a year. Unlike in Buffalo where very few lone parents had been able to leave the city for a holiday, in Sheffield two-thirds of lone parents had been on a holiday within the last year. Most of these were within the UK, often staying with friends or family, and the only two who had been abroad had been paid for by their families.

Lone parents in both cities living on welfare had real trouble making ends meet financially, and were often not able to do so, even with careful budgeting and prioritisation of expenditures, and the help of family and friends and, in Buffalo, organisations such as food pantries. Food pantries are based in community organisations, churches, and public housing estates and provide food such as cereal, tinned vegetables and bread donated by local supermarkets for free to those in need. Nearly all lone parents in Sheffield and one third in Buffalo had support from their families; mainly from their parents, siblings, or the parents of their former partner, who provided presents, treats, clothes and shoes for their children, or meals when food was short, and money when they were desperate. One third of lone parents in both cities had also had informal financial help from the other parent of their children, or from a current boyfriend. Only one lone parent in Sheffield had received help from a non-
government agency, being awarded £100 from a charity that helps lone parents in exceptional circumstances. In contrast in Buffalo half of lone parents used food pantries, and some also used such places for free clothing.

When lone parents in Buffalo were asked if their income was enough to provide them with everything they needed all said no, and said that managing on their budget was a struggle:

*Vanessa:* No way! I mean the tax payers complain about that 1.2 cents that they get snatched out of their cheques for us to survive, and I would say, there's no way. I mean $150 for every two weeks is chaotic. I mean you think 'OK once the bills is paid, then what?' Not that we're expecting luxuries, coz I understand that this is for our basic needs, but a simple pair of boots. Even with going to Payless [cheap shoe shop], the cheapest we can go. A simple pair of boots, or a nice warm winter coat.

In Sheffield 77% also felt that their income was not enough to provide them with everything they needed and found managing on their budget a struggle:

*Sally:* I can't manage. I'm in tears that many times because I cannot cope.

Lone parents in both cities described trying to make ends meet as 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. After paying bills and buying food they had nothing left for nappies, personal care items, clothes, school supplies, and their children's other expenses, and many said the only way they managed was by not going out, drinking, or smoking, and by borrowing money. Some were also making ends meet through undeclared work. Lone parents living on welfare in the US are in a worse position than those in the UK, as although their incomes are similar, in Buffalo, unlike in Sheffield, they need to pay some rent out of this income, and they therefore experienced more hardship, reflected in the need for food pantries in the city. For lone parents in both cities making ends meet on welfare benefits even with support from their families is often impossible, leading to debts, utilities and phones being cut off, and sometimes homelessness.
4.3  WORKING ON WELFARE

The debate on welfare reform assumes that lone parents on welfare benefits are not engaged in work, and that welfare-to-work programmes are therefore needed to move lone parents from ‘welfare’ into ‘work’. However, this debate defines ‘work’ as employment and therefore ignores the amount of unpaid work being done by lone parents on welfare, not least in bringing up their children in situations of extreme disadvantage. Some lone parents are also engaged in undeclared paid work whilst on benefit to help make ends meet. Contrary to public perceptions, therefore, welfare recipients are engaged in work, as highlighted by two Sheffield lone parents:

Louise: I still work but I don’t get no income from it.

Maggie: I do a lot of work and I’ve been to college, and I’ve been on my own [bringing up children]. I’m not like ‘unemployed’. I just happen to be ‘incomely challenged’!

Lone parents are solely responsible for domestic work in their households, as well as childcare and bringing up their children, and one lone parent in Sheffield was also responsible for caring for her elderly father. Two lone parents in each city were also involved in voluntary work alongside their domestic work, in Buffalo in an environmental group and as a parent aid working with families with relationship problems, and in Sheffield helping at a local school, at lunch clubs for the elderly, and with children in care. Table 4.7 shows the hours lone parents spent in work and non-work activities at the time of the first interview:
Table 4.7: Diaries of lone parents on welfare who were not employed (1 day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Domestic work</th>
<th>Travel**</th>
<th>Total 'Work' Activities</th>
<th>Time with children***</th>
<th>Free time</th>
<th>Total 'Life' Activities</th>
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* Buffalo includes any programmes lone parents are attending, Sheffield includes New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) interviews, any courses lone parents are attending, and interview preparation
** Travel to and from welfare-to-work programmes, or travel to carry out domestic work such as childcare and shopping
*** Activities such as bathing and preparing food for children are classified as domestic work and not included here. Does include helping them with homework, playing or relaxing.

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

All but one of these lone parents spend considerably more time doing ‘work activities’ than engaging in ‘life activities’, spending 7-16 hours a day working, and usually 1-7 hours relaxing. In Buffalo all were attending welfare-to-work programmes the Monday the diary was completed, whilst the structure of NDLP in Sheffield meant that the amount of time lone
parents were engaged in welfare-to-work activities was more varied. As well as unpaid work one third of all lone parents in Buffalo had been employed whilst receiving partial welfare, whilst in Sheffield one sixth had been employed whilst on benefit earning less than the £15 a week allowed for claimants of income support. As well as this declared employment, many lone parents in both cities had worked 'off the books' in paid work that was not declared to the Department of Social Services in Buffalo or the Benefits Agency in Sheffield. In Buffalo to supplement their welfare cheques lone parents had cleaned, worked in temporary jobs where they were hired for a few days at a time, worked in shops, as housekeepers, done home repairs, gardening and hairdressing. In Sheffield to supplement their income support lone parents had cleaned, decorated houses, done gardening, bar work, reflexology, child-minding, data entry, book keeping and been a coach tour guide. Fear of being discovered had led some in both cities to give up this work, especially in Sheffield after various benefit fraud campaigns by the UK Government.

When interviewees in Buffalo were asked whether if they had a choice they would prefer to have paid work or to stay at home and look after their children, 87% said they would prefer paid work. Interviewees in Sheffield had already made this choice as joining NDLP remains voluntary, but when asked if they would prefer paid work or to stay at home and look after their children if it was financially similar 87% of them said they would still prefer paid work. These lone parents wanted employment so that they had a life outside of the home, gained self-esteem and respect by working, set an example for their children, could leave welfare and become self-sufficient, had a break from bringing up children, and could gain financial security for their families. Two-thirds of lone parents in both cities felt that they would be financially better off in employment than on welfare, whilst one third felt that they would only be marginally better off, or that it would depend on the job they got, as shown by one lone parent in Buffalo:
Jasmine: It depends on the job, some jobs you'd be better off on welfare, I hate to say it. That statement angers people, 'coz you go to Department Social Services, they've got a big sign saying 'ANY JOB IS BETTER THAN WELFARE! WORK!' It's comical really, but that's what the sign says, so. But there are some jobs, minimum wage jobs, [that] are not enough to raise a family on.

Many lone parents wanted to work even if low-wage jobs and gender inequalities in the labour market meant that they would not be better off in employment, so that they could escape welfare. Lone parents in both countries felt that little was positive about being on welfare, apart from being provided with some income and financial help with housing, bills and medical expenses. In both countries lone parents felt the stigma of being on welfare from the general public; in the US when they bought food using food stamps, or went to the Doctor when on Medicaid, and in the UK when they collected free prescriptions in the chemist and when they collected their benefit at the Post Office:

Sarah: I feel really guilty about in a way you know. In the post office: get this money for doing nothing. I hate it, I feel like ashamed every time I walk in the post office, I mean they'll be a queue and people look at me and think “Oh God there's a single mother, look at her age” sort of thing, “She's got a child, she's scrounging off us” and stuff like that. But I mean I really hate that, I hate stigma and anything like that.

Lone parents also faced a welfare system that was judgemental, monitored and pressurised them, treated them as 'scroungers', was full of bureaucratic 'red tape', did not provide them with enough money, lowered their self-esteem and trapped them into dependency. This degrading and inhumane system meant that women only turned to welfare for support when there were no other means available to them (Churchill 1995). In Buffalo many had been threatened with being cut off benefit or sanctioned and had had to go through the ‘fair hearing’ process, had found it hard to get on welfare initially, and had in three cases had faced racial discrimination from caseworkers. In Sheffield many found the process of claiming benefits degrading and the atmosphere in the Benefits Agency office extremely unpleasant.
Contrary to media stereotypes of lone parents on welfare, and to the assumptions behind welfare reform, lone parents have a strong work ethic and do want paid work. A few of these lone parents do, however, feel that staying at home with their children, even if it means they are worse off financially, is the best course of action, basing decisions about whether to engage in paid work on ‘gendered moral rationalities’ rather than the approach of ‘rational economic man’ (Duncan and Edwards 1997, Oliker 1995). In Buffalo where lone parents have to move into employment or face losing their entitlement to benefit the main requirements lone parents had of employment were it being well-paid, with benefits and medical insurance. In contrast in Sheffield lone parents had the choice of whether to move into paid work, and they could therefore place constraints on the type of work they would consider going into, reflecting their commitment to bringing up their children as well as their commitment to work (Little 1999, Oliker 1995). The main requirements lone parents had of employment in Sheffield were therefore that it was part-time, and fitted with school hours and school holidays, especially as they knew that part-time work at low wages would reward them with as much financially as full-time work at low wages, due to the generous supplements to part-time work provided by Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). Lone parents in both cities were very concerned about balancing paid work with bringing up their children, and many said they would rather stay at home when the children were very young, moving into paid work when they reached school age. Many also highlighted the hypocrisy of lone parents being stigmatised for staying at home to bring up their children, especially when two parent families were not similarly treated if one partner chose to stay at home, and blamed if they go out to work for being bad parents who do not keep an eye on their children.

4.4 BARRIERS TO MOVING FROM WELFARE INTO PAID WORK

Lone parents who want to move into paid work face a number of barriers. The most fundamental of these is finding work within a depressed local labour market with high unemployment, few quality job opportunities, and spatial and skills mismatches in opportunities that do exist. Many lone parents in Buffalo had been made redundant from previous jobs and economic restructuring has made it hard for them to find work again:
Gloria: You're kicking everybody off [welfare] like that, at the same time they've got all these people losing jobs; these plants are closing down, and you know, there's nowhere to work!

As well as these demand-side barriers, lone parents face discrimination when trying to enter the labour force. One lone parent in Sheffield had found age discrimination a problem:

*Emmeline:* I have got the qualifications, I've got the intelligence, I've got the where-with-all to do most jobs, most senior management jobs and they won't let me. They are tying my hands. I just can't understand it, I mean I'm only 44 - that's nothing, that's absolutely nothing. So what that has to do with anything I've no idea.

Sexual discrimination was a bigger issue in both cities, with two lone parents in Buffalo and three in Sheffield having experienced sexual harassment in previous employment, one in each city having been sacked by their employers for being pregnant, and two in Buffalo feeling that they had not been hired after interviews because they were pregnant. Lone parents were also discriminated against by employers for having children, with many having experienced a negative reaction from potential employers at interviews when they discovered that interviewees had children, whilst two lone parents in Buffalo had been fired for taking time off work to look after their ill children. In Buffalo many had also experienced racial discrimination from employers; suffering racial harassment, racist remarks, unfair treatment, a lack of promotions, and feeling that they were not hired after interviews because of their skin colour. For the minority whose first language was Spanish, language may also have been a barrier to employment. In Sheffield, as in the Pakistani community in Reading (Lloyd-Evans and Bowlby 2000), the attitude of the ethnic community towards women with children going out to work was a barrier to employment for women from the Bangladeshi community:
I think the only way you're going to get more women into work from these communities is to educate everyone as a whole rather than concentrating on educating the women and getting them back into New Deal and things. Because it's not the women's decision on her own really, that's not to say that she doesn't have independence if she wanted to go out to work then yes she could, but there's a general feeling that, especially once you've had kids, you should be looking after your children (Interview with Advice Worker, Bangladeshi Citizens Welfare Project, 25.5.00).

Lone parents were also discriminated for being on welfare, with some in Buffalo finding employers were reluctant to employ welfare recipients, whilst in Sheffield some had found employers unwilling to employ anyone who would be claiming Working Families Tax Credit, because of the paperwork it entailed for the employer. One lone parent in Buffalo had also been discriminated against for having a criminal record, and one in Sheffield was discriminated against because of his speech impediment. As well as discrimination, some lone parents found their personal circumstances were a barrier to employment. Two lone parents in Buffalo had no telephone and so could not easily be contacted by employers, and in both cities some lone parents had medical conditions that limited the types of employment they could get. These included carpal tunnel syndrome and back problems due to previous employment in heavy industry, recovering from a major operation, a heart condition that had led to a previous heart attack, high blood pressure, depression, drug and alcohol problems, asthma, having had a kidney transplant which ruled out manual work, tennis elbow which developed due to a cleaning job, and a hereditary condition affecting the nervous system. For some lone parents confidence was also a very big barrier to employment. Many lone parents had low self-esteem, especially if they had been on welfare and at home alone bringing up children for a long time, and lacked the confidence to try to move into employment.

For some lone parents a lack of education, skills and work experience was also a barrier to employment. Five lone parents in Buffalo and six in Sheffield had no qualifications at all, and one sixth of lone parents in each city had never used a computer. Whilst lone parents' employment histories were extensive, with some in Buffalo being employed all their adult
lives and just not earning enough to leave welfare, others had very fragmented work histories
and lots of churning between jobs which did not look good on their CVs:

Cara: *I think my problem is it’s the CV and the spaces, the gaps. I think that puts a lot of people [off].*

The extent to which childcare is a barrier for lone parents depends on the level of childcare
support from family and friends, the number of children they have, the ages of their children
and the type of provision they therefore need. Those lone parents that need a mixture of all
day provision for pre-school children, and after-school provision for school age children are
likely to face the biggest barrier. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 show the school status of children under
18 living with interviewees:
Table 4.8: Ages and school status of children under 18 living with Buffalo lone parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ages of resident dependent children</th>
<th>School status of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>5,6,7,15,17</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlotta</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmela</td>
<td>7,9</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>7,8,9</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>6,14</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>10,14,16</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>11 months, 7</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>1,6,13</td>
<td>2 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td>7 months, 4</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laverne</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Ten children ages 6 months to 15</td>
<td>8 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>3,5,8,9</td>
<td>3 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>3 months, 2</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>5 months, 7</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>3,5</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>6,10,16,18</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudy</td>
<td>4,9</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>11,13,15</td>
<td>2 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willonia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Table 4.9: Ages and school status of children under 18 living with Sheffield lone parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ages of resident dependent children</th>
<th>School status of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>7,14,15</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>18 months, 5</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>20 months, 3</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>2, 7</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmeline</td>
<td>11,17</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>11,13</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>11,13</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>13,15,17</td>
<td>Not in school - took them out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>19 months</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>11,13</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>15 months, 12</td>
<td>1 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paco</td>
<td>14,16</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah</td>
<td>2, 5,7</td>
<td>2 in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>10,14</td>
<td>In school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>23 months</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Not in school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
In terms of the provision of childcare both cities have uneven provision across the city, and both need more provision to meet demand. In Buffalo most provision is by family providers rather than large daycare centres, and there are few work-based daycare centres, and a shortage of spaces:

*In Erie County we have approximately between 750 to 800 childcare providers, and we are still short of spaces. Our figure is that we have three children that need childcare for every one spot that we have, so we have a big, a big job. The city, parts of the city, are well taken care of, other parts are not (Interview with Executive Director, The Childcare Coalition, 20.6.00).*

Unlicensed, unsupervised childcare is paid for by the DSS in Buffalo raising issues of the quality of care children are receiving, and finding someone to look after their children when they are at work is a potential problem for many lone parents. As welfare recipients are required to take part in welfare-to-work programmes or find employment, many lone parents are no longer able to rely on friends and family on welfare to provide informal daycare for their children while they are at work, and many lone parents also have problems with the reliability of babysitters. Some had even negotiated with the school bus driver to pick their children up first in the morning and drop them off last in the afternoon so that could leave work after their children leave for school and be back by the time they got home. In Sheffield childcare provision is also patchy, with some areas having few childminders. In contrast to Buffalo the NDLP and WFTC will only pay for a daycare centre or registered childminders so that lone parents cannot pay their families to look after their children, and many object to therefore having to leave their children with strangers. Both cities also share a number of common childcare issues that act as a barrier to lone parents’ employment. Lone parents are restricted in the hours they can work by childcare, with hardly any provision for evenings and night shifts, and travel to and from daycare providers also limits the hours they can work. There is also a lack of emergency childcare provision for ill children and a lack of holiday provision, and the cost of childcare, even with financial assistance from the DSS in Buffalo and WFTC in Sheffield, is a huge barrier to moving into employment.
Alongside childcare, one of the biggest barriers to employment faced by lone parents is transportation. In Buffalo 64% and in Sheffield 54% of lone parents on welfare had no access to a car. This spatially restricts the labour market for most lone parents to areas accessible by public transport routes, which no longer reflect the spatial shift in employment, particularly in the retail sector, from city centres to a greater dispersal throughout the urban area. Employers are increasingly located further from where welfare recipients live, and are either inaccessible by public transport or involve longer journey times. This spatial mismatch between lone parents concentrated in the East Side of the city of Buffalo and employers dispersed throughout the suburbs as well as in the city is shown in Figure 4.10:
Figure 4.10: Public Assistance clients and location of employers

DATA SOURCE: Multisystems Inc 1997
At present journey times of lone parents are lengthened by the need to take one bus into the city centre from where they live, to change buses, and to take another out to the employer's location. This makes reliability a big problem for lone parents as buses not running to schedule may mean arriving into the city centre late, missing a connection and arriving late for work. In Buffalo this problem is compounded by extreme weather conditions in the winter months. Regular and very heavy snowfall means public transport is often forced to stop running, leaving lone parents who live a long way from where they work no means of getting to work at all. Severe weather conditions also make taking children to childcare difficult, as they have to be taken through deep snow to their school bus, before lone parents can continue their journey to work on another bus. Most lone parents would therefore ideally like to work near their homes, and although in both cities lone parents would travel further if the job was well-paid, most are looking for work within the city limits, and preferably the downtown area or city centre so that journey times are less than an hour each way, although those with a car are prepared to travel further. Transport systems in Buffalo and Sheffield also fail to cater for the increasingly flexible times of employment, and working at weekends or evening or night shifts is therefore very difficult. In Sheffield a representative of Dixons call centre recognized that the absence of trams after 11pm was a problem for those working later shifts, and said that they were not making employment offers to people who could not meet the shift requirements in terms of transport and childcare (Interview with Human Resources Manager, Dixons Call Centre, 18.4.00). The cost of transport also acts as a barrier to lone parents seeking employment.

There are also other financial disincentives to lone parents moving off welfare into employment. In both cities those living in public housing who move into employment must meet the full costs of their rent, and in Buffalo some lone parents were worried about losing their medical benefits and having to pay for their own health insurance after transitional Medicaid expired. Losing their food stamp eligibility, which is based on income, acted as a disincentive to lone parents in Buffalo to work more hours, whilst in Sheffield WFTC acts as a disincentive to working more hours at a low wage. Lone parents in Sheffield were also worried about losing their children's entitlement to free school meals when they moved into employment. For the three owner-occupiers a major disincentive to moving into work was the
threat of losing their entitlement to mortgage help if they returned to income support after three months or more of employment (Interview with Manager, Benefits Agency, 30.3.00), as they would then have to pay their mortgage themselves for the first 26 weeks on income support:

Alice: If I lose my job I don’t get any mortgage repayments for 26 weeks if I become unemployed again, I mean if you’re in rented or council [housing] they pay it straight away, it’s only people trying to buy their own homes that they do it to. It seems really silly, which sort of nearly put me off [working] really because it seems quite a big risk with three kids.

Whilst any one of these barriers is a major hurdle to lone parents moving into employment, most lone parents faced the multiple barriers of a lack of jobs, discrimination, a lack of qualifications, childcare and transport problems and financial disincentives, making moving from welfare into employment a less than straightforward process.

4.5 CONCLUSION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK, POVERTY AND WELFARE

Lone parents on welfare in depressed local labour markets are living in poverty and unable to make ends meet despite taking part in declared and undeclared employment. Contrary to public perceptions of welfare recipients, these lone parents want to leave welfare completely and move into paid employment, in the hope of raising their self-esteem, becoming self-sufficient, and being better off financially. In order to successfully enable lone parents to do this, welfare-to-work programmes need to address the multiple barriers that lone parents face, not least a lack of employment opportunities for those living in depressed local labour markets. As well as moving lone parents into employment, if welfare-to-work programmes are to also succeed in lifting lone parents out of poverty and to remove the need for any form of government support, they also need to equip lone parents with the education and skills needed to gain well-paid, rather than entry-level, employment. The next chapter compares the

8 Or 39 weeks for those with a mortgage taken out after October 1995.
approaches adopted by welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK to moving lone parents into employment and lifting them out of poverty, to see whether programmes are tackling these issues, and improving lone parents' prospects of gaining well-paid employment.
CHAPTER FIVE:
THE WELFARE-TO-WORK APPROACH

A central part of the reform of welfare systems in the US and the UK has been the introduction of welfare-to-work programmes designed to move welfare recipients into employment. This shift from providing welfare to enforcing paid work is most marked in the US where attending welfare-to-work programmes is compulsory for lone parents receiving benefit, whilst in the UK the entitlement to benefit is increasingly being linked to seeking paid work, with the introduction of compulsory work-focused interviews for lone parents and other groups of claimants. Local supply-side welfare-to-work experiments in areas with buoyant economies in the US have been used as a basis for national welfare reform, and through processes of policy transfer have been adopted internationally, with US policy becoming the basis for reform in the UK. Whilst welfare-to-work programmes are somewhat different in each country, both adopt a supply-side, work-first approach to employment, which is unlikely to address the multiple barriers that lone parents face in depressed local labour markets or to equip them with the education and skills needed to gain well-paid, rather than entry-level, employment.

This chapter examines welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK, analysing the affects of this supply-side approach and the possible alternatives to it, before comparing the impact of the scale of policy intervention in both countries. It then examines in detail a number of welfare-to-work programmes for lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield and the implications for lone parents of the work-first approach adopted in both cities, before assessing whether welfare-to-work programmes are improving the prospects of lone parents moving into skilled employment that will lift them and their families out of poverty.

5.1 THE SUPPLY-SIDE APPROACH

Welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK have adopted a supply-side approach to unemployment and poverty, assuming that paid work will lift lone parents out of poverty, and that economic expansion and the growth in low-skill employment means that jobs are
available for welfare recipients moving into the labour force. Lone parents are thought to simply lack the skills, training and motivation to secure such employment (Lerman et al. 1999). This approach to solving unemployment is based on an argument that supply creates its own economic demand: an increase in the numbers employed will exercise a downward pressure on wage inflation allowing the economy to operate at a higher level of employment, so that there is no need for government-led demand-side interventions in the labour market (Turok and Webster 1998). The assumptions of the supply-side approach have, however, been criticised for dismissing the need for job creation initiatives, for ignoring the geography of unemployment, and for supposing that employment will automatically lift welfare recipients out of poverty.

Critics of welfare-to-work programmes have pointed out that the huge supply of workers caused by mass unemployment in the 1980s failed to create its own demand, arguing that supply-side programmes need to be complemented by demand-side initiatives which recognise that unemployment stems from more than unemployability (Dickson 1997, Hall 1998). Even US advocates of the supply-side approach have questioned how far work enforcement is appropriate in the UK labour market where unemployment still remains higher than in the US, and have suggested a need for job creation proposals (Mead 1997). In both countries job creation strategies are particularly necessary in depressed local labour markets that suffer from high unemployment. The geography of unemployment suggests that the impact of welfare-to-work programmes will vary by region, and that programmes may be least effective precisely in the de-industrialised regions and inner-city areas where they are needed most to tackle acute unemployment and poverty (Accordino 1998, Hoynes 1996, Peck 2001a, Theodore and Peck 2000, Turok and Webster 1998). ‘Job gap’ studies in the US which compare the numbers seeking work with the numbers of job openings, have consistently found that not enough employment is available for all welfare recipients to move into paid work, especially in large de-industrialised cities such as Chicago where there are six jobseekers to every job (Theodore 1998). When issues such as spatial and skills mismatches are taken into account even fewer jobs are available for welfare recipients (Bernstein 1997). For welfare recipients who do find employment, jobs are often low-paid, reflecting both their lack of skills and the abundance of low-paid service-sector jobs in the US and UK economies.
These jobs do not pay enough to lift lone parents out of poverty, as shown by job gap studies that only examined jobs that paid family-supporting wages in the US, which found that gaps between jobseekers and well-paid jobs are dramatically increased (Theodore 1998).

There are, however, a number of demand-side alternatives to welfare-to-work programmes, which combine job creation with improving the skills of the unemployed. Whilst local economic development schemes which rely on ‘trickle-down’ approaches have often had little social benefit and generated few jobs for poor inner-city residents (Glasmeier 2000, Mueller and Schwartz 1998), in Western New York labour unions have formed the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) Economic Development Group to ensure a voice for organised labour in economic development, and to challenge the perception of Buffalo as a tough union town. They aim to promote successful examples of constructive and creative labour relations to attract investment to the area that will create high quality living-wage jobs (Interview with President, local chapter of Service Employees International Union, 30.9.99, interview with member of the AFL-CIO Economic Development Group, 15.10.99, interview with member of Coalition for Economic Justice, 21.9.99).

Demand-side approaches which see subsidised employment as a bridge to unsubsidised employment, have been very successful (Theodore and Peck 2000). In New York State women on welfare have campaigned for the introduction of the ‘Empire State Jobs Program’ that would employ 4000 people in temporary wage-paying jobs in public agencies and non-profit organizations throughout the state. Whilst this has not yet been implemented, they have been successful in introducing the ‘Transitional Employment Program’ in New York City (The City Council of New York 2000), which will employ welfare recipients in wage paying jobs in the social economy as an alternative to working for their welfare benefits in workfare programmes. The UK has also implemented a number of Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) schemes that provide wage-paying jobs and work experience for participants, and create new time-limited jobs in the social economy to provide a bridge for the unemployed to the rest of the labour market (Theodore and Peck 2000; Amin et al. 1999). In Sheffield the ILM scheme has a 60% success rate of moving people from unemployment into jobs in the wider labour
market. The cost of the scheme which currently employs 247 people is £13,800, far less than Government welfare-to-work programmes, and it has generated an extra £734,000 available for spending in the local economy as a result of wages, plus £180,000 in tax and national insurance payments going to the Inland Revenue (Interview with member of Centre for Full Employment, 22.3.00). Alongside the ILM scheme in Sheffield has been the creation of the Sheffield Employment Bond that raised £750,000 in loans from the general public, which will be returned without interest so that the interest can instead be used to create local jobs. So far thirty jobs have been created, through loans to small businesses and community enterprises, and through the creation of apprenticeships to build houses for the local Housing Association (Interview with member of City Life, 29.3.00). Despite the success of such initiatives which stimulate both the demand-side and the supply-side of the labour market, welfare reform has adopted a purely supply-side approach to unemployment and poverty.

5.2 THE SCALE OF WELFARE-TO-WORK POLICY

5.2.1 The scale of policy intervention

In the 1990s the US and the UK Governments prioritised welfare reform, with presidential candidate Clinton pledging in 1991 to ‘end welfare as we know it’, and welfare-to-work featuring as one of the Labour Party’s five key manifesto commitments in the 1997 general election. Placing welfare reform high on the political agenda was a response to unemployment, and the perceived problems of welfare dependency, a growth in the ‘underclass’, and the spiralling costs of welfare benefit systems (see Chapter 2). The cost of welfare benefits is, however, small compared to other Government spending. Figure 5.1 shows how, contrary to public opinion, in the US only 6% of the federal budget is spent on ‘other means-tested entitlements’ which include programmes for the poor such as Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and veterans’ pensions, as well as the benefit Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). These programmes only account for $120 billion, compared to $460 billion spent on social security for retired and disabled workers, their dependents, and survivors.
Medicare: health care coverage for elderly and people with disabilities
Medicaid: health care services for the poor
Other mandatory spending: retirement and insurance programs, unemployment insurance, and payments to farmers
Non-defence discretionary spending: education, training, science, technology, housing, transportation, and foreign aid

DATA SOURCE: Office of Management and Budget 2001

In the UK Government total state expenditure in 1996/7 was £291 billion, of which the budget for Social Security was £93 billion, or 32%, as shown in Figure 5.2:
Of this Income Support for lone parents and Jobseekers Allowance for the unemployed accounted for only £17 billion, or 18% of this social security spending, with most of the social security budget being spent on pensions and other benefits (Department of Social Security 1997). However, these relatively small expenditures on welfare benefits for the unemployed in both countries have justified policy intervention on a huge scale in the form of welfare-to-work programmes.

In terms of the geographical scale of policy intervention local welfare-to-work experiments are assuming increasing significance at national and international scales through processes of fast policy transfers (Peck 2001b). US programmes such as Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) in Riverside, California (Peck 1998b) and Wisconsin Works (Rogers 1999) have been the basis for national reform in the US and in turn the UK, due to their
success in cost savings and in moving large numbers of people off the welfare rolls. These programmes, which are operating within buoyant local labour market conditions where turnover and the number of low-skill jobs are high, are being transferred to areas of high unemployment where labour market conditions are very different. They are also being promoted through a trans-national welfare-to-work orthodoxy by international institutions such as the G8, OECD, and EU (Theodore and Peck 2000), despite having failed to secure stable employment for many participants, and having failed to make participants significantly better off than when they were on welfare (Peck 1998b). Whilst these local experiments are the basis for both US and UK policy, the geographical scale at which policy is designed and regulated in the two countries is very different.

5.2.2 The US: Devolving policy from the federal level to states and counties

Welfare-to-work programmes operating at a local level in Buffalo are funded by a variety of federal legislation: welfare-to-work and training legislation passed in the 1980s, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) signed by President Clinton on 22nd August 1996 and the major piece of welfare reform legislation, and the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Programmes are designed by both state and county level government agencies, and in one case by a local non-governmental agency, which is funded directly by the federal government. The multi-scalar nature of welfare reform policy behind welfare-to-work programmes (shown in bold) operating in Buffalo is shown in Table 5.1, which is then discussed below:
Table 5.1: The levels of welfare reform policy behind welfare-to-work programmes operating in Buffalo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding Source</strong></td>
<td>Job Training Partnership Act funds</td>
<td>Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS Program)</td>
<td>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</td>
<td>Welfare-to-Work Block Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal Government</strong></td>
<td>Department of Labor</td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>Department of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NY State Act / Plan</strong></td>
<td>JOBS State Plan</td>
<td>Welfare Reform Act of 1997</td>
<td>Welfare-to-Work Block Grant State Plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NY State Government</strong></td>
<td>Department of Labor (BRIDGE Program)</td>
<td>Department of Family Assistance (CAP Program)</td>
<td>Department of Family Assistance (Family Assistance Program, Safety Net Program)</td>
<td>Department of Labor (New York WORKS Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erie County Government</strong></td>
<td>Erie Community College</td>
<td>Department of Social Services (DSS 100 Program, Job Clubs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The passing of PRWORA in 1996 decentralised policy delivery by devolving total responsibility for the design and implementation of welfare-to-work programmes from the federal government to individual states, whilst laying down a national framework in which states could work, thereby retaining the key function of the federal government as the regulator of local regimes (Peck 2001b). The national framework set out by PRWORA consisted of placing a five year time limit beginning on December 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1996 on adults receiving the new welfare benefit TANF, and made receiving benefit conditional on TANF recipients engaging in ‘work activities’ no later than two years after beginning to receive TANF (United States Congress 1996). These work activities mean that lone parents on welfare are no longer allowed to engage in post-secondary education and instead have to take part in one of the twelve activities listed in Table 5.2 for thirty hours a week:
Table 5.2: Activities that count towards Federal work requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un-subsidized employment (where TANF recipient has their own job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized private sector employment (where business receives tax credit to hire welfare recipient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized public sector employment (where non-profit organisation receives tax credits to hire welfare recipient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience Programme (workfare, where welfare recipients are placed by DSS on a work site and work for their TANF grant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job search and job readiness (for six weeks, no more than four consecutively)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Educational Training (not more than 12 months, only available for 20% of welfare recipients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skills directly related to employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education directly related to employment if person lacks High School Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory attendance in secondary school or GED programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing childcare to someone doing community service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Neighborhood Legal Services 1998

Alongside PRWORA the federal government also provides a welfare-to-work tax credit of $8500 to employers if an employee is retained for two years, established by the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 (OECD 1999), and awards $3 billion in welfare-to-work block grants to the states to provide services for the hardest to employ TANF recipients, and non-custodial parents of children on TANF, under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (United States Congress 1997). Welfare-to-work competitive grants are also awarded under this act by the federal Department of Labor (DOL) directly to programmes that help the least job-ready into unsubsidised employment in labour markets that have a shortage of low-skill jobs and in cities with large concentrations of poverty. The Buffalo and Erie County Private Industry Council (PIC) is the recipient of such a federal grant, receiving over $4 million for its ‘Greater Buffalo Works’ programme to target welfare recipients lacking a High School Diploma, including those who are learning or developmentally disabled, and those requiring substance abuse treatment before employment. The PIC subcontracts to over twenty local social service organisations (SSOs) to provide training as part of this programme (Interview with Director of Planning, Private Industry Council, 15.9.99).

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At the state level, in response to PRWORA, on August 4 1997 the New York State legislature passed the Welfare Reform Act of 1997, and created the Family Assistance Program using the TANF block grant (Kost and Ersing 1998). The Family Assistance Program added two work activities to the federally approved ones, so that welfare recipients in Buffalo can also be engaged for 30 hours a week in the activities listed in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Additional activities which count towards New York State work requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job search and job readiness (beyond the federal six week time limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational activities which can include High School or equivalent, basic education, English as a Second Language (ESOL), up to two years post-secondary education that is directly related to employment in a two year college, trade or business school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Neighborhood Legal Services 1998

As well as the Family Assistance Program, the state Welfare Reform Act of 1997 also introduced the Safety Net Program, funded by 50% state funds and 50% county funds, for single people and childless couples who are not eligible for TANF. New York State is unique in having a constitutional amendment to protect the poor, which requires the state to provide assistance to those not covered by any federal welfare programme. This amendment to the constitution was introduced in 1934 as Article XVII and led to the introduction of the Home Relief (HR) programme, which was replaced in the Welfare Reform Act of 1997 by the Safety Net Program (Kost and Ersing 1998). From August 4th 1997 Safety Net recipients can only receive cash benefits for two years, and recipients will then receive benefits in a non-cash form through the Electronic Benefits Transfer system (EBT) where recipients use a swipe-card like a debit card to pay for goods such as food, rent and utility bills (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99). Through this amendment welfare recipients in New York State will, uniquely, continue to receive some Government support even after their five year lifetime...
limit has expired, although this fact is not publicised, and none of the welfare recipients I spoke to were aware that they did not face complete cut-off from welfare after five years.

As well as state-level programmes developed in response to the PRWORA, the state receives a welfare-to-work block grant as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. This has been used by the New York State DOL to set up the New York WORKS programme to strengthen the connection between programmes established under TANF and employers. The Buffalo and Erie County PIC who were allocated $3,676,328 by the state DOL in 1998 implement this at a local level. The state DOL is also responsible for administering state tax credits to encourage employers to hire workers with disabilities, and to hire in areas in need of economic development. Other state level programmes date from welfare-to-work legislation prior to PRWORA; the BRIDGE programme administered and funded by the state DOL and operated locally by Erie Community College and the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), and the CAP programme, funded and operated locally by the state Department of Family Assistance.

At the county level the Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for administering the state’s TANF block grant awarded under PRWORA. For states and counties to receive their share of the federal block grant of TANF funding they must have 35% of the welfare caseload participating in work activities by the financial year beginning in October 1999. The participation rates in New York State range from 31% in New York City to 83% in Hamilton County, with 55% of the welfare caseload participating in work activities in Erie County (New York State Department of Labor 2000). Whilst 55% are currently involved in work activities the remaining 45% are in the process of being seen by employment counsellors, or have just joined or just returned to the caseload (Interview with Director of Employment and Training Programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99). Of TANF individuals in Erie County participating in work activities the majority were employed welfare recipients, 47% were in unsubsidised employment, whilst 25% were on workfare, 22% were in education and training, 4% were doing community service, 2% were on job search or job readiness training and 1% were in subsidized private sector employment (New York State Department of Labor 2000).
DSS uses their share of TANF money to contract twelve local social service organisations (SSOs) to run welfare-to-work programmes, and it also approves twenty-two SSOs that are funded by other sources. DSS employment counsellors can then refer TANF recipients to programmes run by contracted or approved SSOs to fulfill their work requirements. In terms of designing policy, DSS has also used TANF funds to develop DSS job clubs that are tailored to specific populations such as young parents and substance abusers, and the ‘DSS 100 Program’, which enables 100 TANF recipients to engage in two years of post-secondary education at Erie Community College. This programme is not publicized to TANF recipients, who have to ‘show the initiative’ to find out about the programme (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99). DSS also interprets the federal and state work requirements with some flexibility, so that if a TANF recipient is working just under thirty hours a week they will overlook it, rather than making them engage in workfare to make their work activities up to thirty hours.

Whilst the county DSS contracts and approves some skilled training programmes, and operates the DSS 100 Program, it has adopted a broadly ‘work-first’ approach to welfare-to-work:

The theory is, at least as I see it, is you get a job, any job's a good job, you get a job and then you've got something, a base to move out of, to build on; you have some work experience (Interview with Supervisor, DSS Transition Team, 1.9.99).

The county is keen to publicise its work-first message, shown in Table 5.4, both within DSS, and to TANF recipients:
Table 5.4: ‘Keys to the work-first message’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External/client message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone has the responsibility to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is the goal and expectation for most clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work has financial and emotional rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is better than welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier to get a job or a better job if you have a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Assistance is temporary and should not become a way of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is accountable for his/her actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal/staff message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The client and the Department are partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A working client is a DSS worker’s goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most client interaction with the Department should be about employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client self-sufficiency is the responsibility of all staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client connection to employment, child support, transitional and other services is the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priority of all staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Department’s success is determined by our client’s success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Erie County Department of Social Services

In its most extreme form this work-first approach means that a potential TANF recipient is referred directly to a job club, sometimes before they have even started receiving TANF benefit, in the hope that they will find a job before even joining the welfare caseload. If new or existing TANF clients are unsuccessful in job clubs, or when they have no marketable skills, then are they referred to workfare assignments or employment and training programmes, and endlessly recycled through the system until they get a job; as shown in Figure 5.3:
Figure 5.3: The welfare-to-work process in Buffalo

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Within this process welfare recipients can be referred to any of the 173 employment and training programmes run by contracted or approved agencies (see Appendix C) or to one of the 460 workfare sites at a range of public, private and community organisations. These employment and training programmes are run by social service organisations (SSOs) that vary in terms of what their programmes offer. The results of my postal questionnaire (see Appendix B) sent to all contracted and approved SSOs show that 73% offered basic skills training, help with job placements and résumé preparation, 64% offered computer skills training, 59% offered job readiness help and employment counselling, 55% offered job search activities and post-employment services, 50% offered occupational skills training, education and careers counselling, 41% offered secretarial skills and 14% had on-site daycare provision. Many agencies offered a range of these services, although a few programmes specialised in skilled training programmes which resulted in state qualifications such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) programme and Veterinary Technology programme, some specialized in General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation, in English as Second Language (ESOL), and in literacy, others offered training in food service, accounting, business management, trained administrative assistants and auto mechanics, and one offered legal advice for TANF recipients, whilst another ran a clothing closet providing welfare recipients with interview clothes. Most programmes varied in length, the shortest being a two week job club, whilst the longest was the two-year Veterinary Technology programme.

In the welfare-to-work process it is the DSS employment counsellor who chooses which out of this vast and confusing multitude of employment and training programmes and workfare sites to refer a TANF recipient to. Welfare recipients themselves cannot choose which programme to attend as they might ‘shop around’ different programmes or choose an ‘inappropriate’ one, and whilst employment counsellors are supposed to have in-service training to tell them what programmes are available the referral process is in fact very haphazard:
If the counsellor has had a deal of success with one agency over another I would expect them to continue to use that, and that’s fine with me (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99).

This leads to many inappropriate referrals not based on a recipient’s needs, or on detailed knowledge of the range of programmes available, leading to frustration for many SSOs:

Some of it is not decided by us unfortunately, it’s decided by their [DSS] referral worker, and then you get into the problem that each referral worker has a program that they like, more so than others. So a person [welfare recipient] may come in here and cannot read or write, and that person they [DSS] can put directly in a work program instead of in an education program. We may have somebody come in here with five kids. Now that person, their childcare alone is costing more than they’re making, than they can ever make, so for that person for us to put them in a $5.25 an hour minimum wage job is kind of self-defeating. We’ve got to get that person some skills so that they have at least a shot at getting a bit of upward mobility. So the worker [DSS employment counsellor] downtown should be making more of a discriminating kind of a referral (Interview with Director, Employment and Training division, Clarkson Center, 15.11.99).

The relationship between DSS and local welfare-to-work providers has created a number of problems affecting both local SSOs and TANF recipients. The move towards performance-related funding contracts means that SSOs only get paid by DSS for the work they have done with a TANF recipient, if that recipient then stays in a job for ninety days or more. This means that whilst SSOs are being encouraged by DSS to adopt a work-first approach to get recipients into work as quickly as possible rather than to provide training, they are then penalised if recipients do not then succeed in the workplace. Many community based SSOs cannot afford to wait to be paid until after they have provided services, which led to the bankruptcy and closure of the Clarkson Center after twenty-nine years of providing services to the low-income population at the end of my fieldwork in December 1999 (Palazzetti 2000).
The number of SSOs providing welfare-to-work programmes has also led to intense competition for TANF funds and TANF recipient referrals.

This localised approach to welfare-to-work policy design and implementation has the potential to be responsive to the needs of local labour markets and to build on local partnerships, capitalizing local knowledge to coordinate the range of different national, regional and local policies affecting the local area (OECD 1999). However, the devolution of welfare-to-work policy in the US from the federal level to the states and the counties has led to enormous spatial unevenness and inequality in the entitlements and provisions for lone parents on welfare, and has downloaded fiscal risks and responsibilities to the local scale and ultimately to the individuals living in poverty (Peck 2001b, Sawhill 1995). The use of block grants to fund state programmes has shifted the fiscal risks of dealing with recession and poverty growth to the states, shifting the burden particularly to states such as California and New York with the largest numbers of welfare recipients (Clark and Schultz 1997). This localisation has also made it more difficult to make the many agencies involved in welfare-to-work accountable. Little coordination between the many welfare-to-work providers in Buffalo has led to a great deal of duplication in welfare-to-work programmes and agencies have little grasp of the bigger picture of who is doing what with the host of different types of welfare-to-work and other training grants available. The proliferation of programmes and inadequate training and information means that DSS employment counsellors are often unaware of the range of programmes available to welfare recipients. Rather than matching the needs of the individual with a programme designed to serve those needs, welfare recipients in need of basic education and language training are often referred to job clubs, rather than to GED or ESOL programmes. There have, in reality, been few advantages to this localisation of policy design and regulation, although it has enabled New York State to widen the federal definition of ‘work activities’ to include more educational activities, and allowed the county level DSS to design a programme to allow some welfare recipients to gain two years of post-secondary education. However, the benefits of the local policy process in Buffalo are outweighed by the lack of a system to coordinate local programmes and to ensure that referrals to programmes are made on the basis of welfare recipients’ needs.
5.2.3 The UK: National policy with little local flexibility

Welfare reform policy design and implementation in the UK is a much more straightforward and centralised process than in the US. Welfare-to-work programmes operating in Sheffield are part of the national New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) launched in 1997 with funding from the windfall tax on the privatised utilities (now funded through the budget of the Department of Work and Pensions), or are part of the national New Deal for Lone Parents Innovative Pilots programme, launched in 1998 and funded through the then Department for Education and Employment. Whilst a number of pieces of national welfare reform legislation have been introduced since the Labour Government was first elected in May 1997, unlike in the US these welfare-to-work programmes were not set up or funded in direct response to legislation. NDLP is a nationally designed programme piloted in local areas and rolled out nationally to be implemented at a local level by Government agencies, whilst NDLP Innovative Pilots are designed and implemented by local non-governmental agencies funded directly by the national government. Unlike in the US there is no regional level of policy design and much less scope for locally designed programmes. The levels of welfare reform policy behind welfare-to-work programmes (shown in bold) operating in Sheffield are shown in Table 5.5 and then discussed below:

Table 5.5: The levels of welfare reform policy behind welfare-to-work programmes operating in Sheffield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Government</th>
<th>Department for Work and Pensions (formerly DSS and DfEE)</th>
<th>(New Deal for Lone Parents Innovative Pilots)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(New Deal for Lone Parents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Government Agencies</strong></td>
<td>Jobcentre Plus (Formerly ES and BA) (NDLP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Agencies</strong></td>
<td>PEC (HOPE)</td>
<td>Agencies providing Schedule 2 training (Large number of approved courses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scoop Aid (Innovative Pilot)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Welfare-to-work programmes in the UK have been characterised by change through time rather than by the multi-agency and multi-scalar process found in the US, with the design of NDLP being an ongoing and evolving process. Based on the Conservative 'Parent Plus' proposal of 1997, which in turn was influenced by the California GAIN programme, the Labour Government introduced NDLP as a pilot scheme on 21st July 1997 in eight local areas (see Chapter 3). These pilot schemes were run by the Benefits Agency (BA) in four areas and by the Employment Service (ES) in four areas, to see whether the BA, which had a history of working with lone parents, or the ES with its job vacancy database, was most successful in moving lone parents into employment. Unlike the New Deal for Young People aged 18-24 (NDYP) with its gateway period and structured four options of an employment placement, education and training, voluntary work, and the environmental taskforce, NDLP is based on one-to-one advice and guidance in interviews with 'Personal Advisers'. Unlike the NDYP and welfare-to-work in the US, NDLP is currently a voluntary scheme, and has a target group of lone parents whose youngest child is school age\(^9\), who are contacted by letter and invited to attend a NDLP interview to see whether they would like to join the programme. After only nine months of the locally-based pilot phase NDLP was rolled out nationally to all lone parents making new claims to income support (IS), and became available to all lone parents on IS on 22 October 1998. The government chose the ES to implement the national programme, in line with its implementation of the other New Deal programmes, and the target group was extended to lone parents whose youngest child was three years old. From Autumn 2001 NDLP will be further extended to all lone parents. From the national implementation of NDLP to the end of April 2001, 234,750 lone parents had attended initial NDLP interviews, and 207,060, or 88%, have agreed to participate in the programme nationally, in Yorkshire and Humberside and in Sheffield. 58% of these lone parents were from the target group, with people with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities just as likely to agree to participate as all lone parents (Department for Work and Pensions 2001; Sheffield Employment Service, unpublished). The low response rate in the pilot phase, coupled with the high rate of joining NDLP once lone parents had attended an initial interview, led to the government making the programme increasingly compulsory for lone parents.

\(^9\) Over five years and three months old.
The ‘ONE’ initiative was introduced as part of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill announced in the Queens Speech on 24 November 1998. This initiative, originally named the ‘single work-focused gateway’, was designed to provide a more streamlined and efficient system for claimants accessing the welfare system, replacing the need for contact with the ES, BA, Child Support Agency (CSA) and Local Authority to access benefits and get help moving into employment (Department for Education and Employment and Department of Social Security 1998b). ONE was also piloted in local areas and was voluntary in the pilot phase (ECOTEC Research and Consulting 2000), but from April 2002 it will be rolled out nationally and become compulsory for lone parents with children of all ages, as well as for other groups of benefit claimants, to attend a ‘work-focused interview’ when first signing on for benefit. Joining NDLP after this work-focused interview at present remains voluntary for lone parents. This move towards compulsion is consistent with New Labour’s ideology of balancing rights and responsibilities (Peck 2001a), and marks a further integration of social security and labour market policy. The integration of employment and social security policy has also led to the merging of the ES and the BA in June 2001 to become a new government agency called Jobcentre Plus where these work-focused interviews will take place. The agency is within the new Department for Work and Pensions formed in June 2001 from a merger of the Department of Social Security (DSS) with elements of the former Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).

Alongside NDLP the national government also invited private and voluntary sector organisations to run local ‘NDLP Innovative Pilots’ to test ideas that would improve the effectiveness of NDLP. The Sheffield Committee of One Parents (Scoop Aid) was successful in bidding for one of these contracts and started its Innovative Pilot programme in May 1999, to establish a ‘gateway’ to NDLP, offering services to lone parents who want to move towards labour market entry. This was designed to break down the barrier of distrust lone parents had towards the ES, which they associated with compulsion, and build their confidence so that they would be ready to engage with NDLP, thereby increasing the numbers of lone parents who join NDLP. This pilot programme consisted of a Personal Development Programme (PDP) run by Scoop Aid leading to an Open College Network (OCN) Level 2 qualification, and a ‘Returners’ (to the labour market) course subcontracted to Sheffield Careers’ Service,
which offered occupational and educational information needed by lone parents entering the labour market. Scoop Aid also worked on a one-to-one basis with lone parents as part of the pilot, visiting them at home to discuss employment and arranging a Careers interview for them. Lone parents were also offered free childcare, a work shadow or education taster experience, and general or specific vocational information. On completion of the pilot lone parents were offered a NDLP interview, which could be held at Scoop Aid rather than in an ES jobcentre, and left with an up-to-date CV and an action plan identifying their next steps.

Whilst pilot schemes have operated at a local level, policy design has been controlled by national government, and there has been little scope for local flexibility in the implementation of NDLP, unlike in the case of NDYP, which also has a nationally defined budget and strongly defined national standards, but has a great deal more local flexibility, being designed and delivered through local partnerships (Convery 1997; Sunley et al. 2000). The voluntary nature of NDLP does, however, leave scope for local flexibility in terms of recruiting lone parents and the ES in Sheffield have held many local events to publicize the programme to lone parents. The local ES have also used NDLP funds for job search programmes to design their own local welfare-to-work programme as part of NDLP, contracting the company Personal Evaluation Consultants (PEC) to deliver ‘Helping One Parents into Employment’ (HOPE): a programme centre for lone parents. This operates like ES programme centres for those claiming jobseekers allowance (JSA) but has an adviser specifically for lone parents providing advice and help with CVs, photocopying and postage facilities, a computer, and job search information. Lone parents are not integrated with JSA clients who are compelled to attend. Sheffield ES also has flexibility in the way it delivers NDLP, as it can use European Objective One funding to provide help for lone parents not offered under NDLP. This can theoretically include funding a wider diversity of training programmes than allowed under NDLP, and funding childcare for lone parents in education higher than NVQ Level 2, such as Postgraduate Certificates in Education (PGCE) or nursing degrees.

The welfare-to-work process for lone parents who are new claimants of IS in Sheffield is quite different to that in Buffalo, due to the voluntary nature of the programme, although lone parents choosing not to join NDLP, or those who have left NDLP, will, from April 2002, be
recycled through the ongoing work-focused interview process which may lead to them joining or re-joining NDLP. For those who do join NDLP there are three options: ongoing help from their NDLP adviser, being referred to HOPE, or being referred to a training programme run by a local agency, as shown in Figure 5.4:
Figure 5.4: The welfare-to-work process in Sheffield

- **Registration at Jobcentre Plus.** Claim for Income Support and Child Support initiated. Work-focused interview carried out.

  - **Lone Parent joins NDLP?**
    - **Yes**
      - Interview with NDLP Personal Advisor
    - **No**
      - Lone Parent continues on Income Support. Further work-focused interview arranged.
      - Lone Parent chooses to leave NDLP

- **Lone Parent referred to local training programme**

- **Lone Parent referred to HOPE**

- **Ongoing job search with help of Personal Advisor**

  - **Lone Parent Employed?**
    - **No**
      - Income Support terminated. Claim for WFTC and transitional benefits initiated
    - **Yes**

DATA SOURCE: Author's research
Whilst 22,150 lone parents nationally have taken up education or training whilst on NDLP (11% of those who decided to participate after the initial interview) unlike other New Deals in the UK, NDLP does not directly contract any agencies to provide training programmes for participants. Instead it approves programmes which lead to ‘Schedule 2 Vocational Qualifications’\(^{10}\), as long as qualifications are not higher than NVQ Level 2 and courses last for one year or less. As in Buffalo the referral process is rather haphazard, and advisers tend to suggest courses run by agencies they are familiar with, although, unlike in Buffalo, a lone parent is able to suggest a course they would like to attend, and can do so if the NDLP adviser feels it will lead to employment. Some training agencies, particularly Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, Square Mile Training, TriTec and Q Mark Training have close links to the ES, and ES refers a lot of lone parents to attend their computer-based courses. These agencies are funded primarily through Work-Based Training for Adults or the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and lead to qualifications such as NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in Business Administration and Information Technology, RSA Levels 1, 2 and 3 in Typing and Word Processing and the European Computer Driving License; a qualification which provides basic but thorough knowledge of computer operating systems and common software applications (Interview with Trainer, TriTec, 16.5.00, Interview with Director, Q Mark Training, 12.4.00) Some of these courses include work placements and lone parents may attend such courses for up to one year whilst taking part in NDLP and continue to receive IS and have their childcare funded by NDLP whilst they are attending courses.

Unlike the US, the UK operates a centralized welfare reform policy process, with the design of programmes occurring almost exclusively at the national level. This leaves local government agencies in depressed local labour markets delivering programmes which are unable to adequately respond to local economic conditions. By assuming that lone parents face similar problems in the booming economy of Basingstoke as they do in Sheffield, this centralisation of policy design ignores the geography of employment and spatial concentrations of poverty and disadvantage. Neither the devolution of policy-making in the US, nor the centralisation in the UK is adequately enabling local programmes to respond to

\(^{10}\) These are vocational qualifications approved under section 2a of the Higher Education Act of 1992, and NDLP can refer a lone parent to one of these programmes.
local labour market conditions, as in both countries national governments have set out national frameworks that make demand-side initiatives impossible to pursue at a local level, even in areas of high unemployment.

5.3 EXPERIENCING WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMMES

5.3.1 Buffalo case study programmes

Social service organisations are important mediating institutions between the welfare state and the labour market, carrying out the dual functions of regulating the labour market by providing employers with low-wage workers, and supporting the poor through advocacy work and the provision of basic goods and services (Cope 2001). With so many SSOs in Buffalo providing welfare-to-work programmes I focused on a few organisations that provided job clubs, skills training programmes and workfare placements. As well as providing lone parents with services these organisations had often formed strong links with local employers benefiting employers by providing training that suited their needs, so that employers in return supported the efforts of welfare-to-work programmes and encouraged lone parents to apply for jobs in their organisations. Many employers also had a strong sense of community responsibility and went to great lengths to work with programmes. A member of staff at HSBC showed participants of EOC’s job club around their workplace to give them a taster of the world of work, and offered to be a referee for any programme participants applying for jobs at HSBC (Interview with Insurance Manager, HSBC, 10.11.99). Kaleida Health had also gone to great lengths putting procedures in place and negotiating with unions to enable participants of the PIC programme to do work placements within the organisation (Interview with Recruiter, Kaleida Health, 7.12.99), and human resources staff from Client Logic call centre had worked with programmes so that lone parents were taught skills needed to work in the call centre industry (Interview with Human Resources Manager, Client Logic, 17.11.99). This move towards providing demand-led training is one that has been called for by both the US and the UK governments, to provide skilled workers who meet the skill needs of the labour market.
The welfare-to-work process in Buffalo meant that participants of welfare-to-work programmes at the Clarkson Center, EOC and workfare placements whom I interviewed had often been 'recycled' through a number of previous welfare-to-work programmes, with fourteen having previously been on workfare placements, four having been to a DSS job club, four having attended the PIC program, two having attended the Erie Community College (ECC) Careers and Skills Training (CAST) programme, and others having been on job clubs run by other organisations, GED programmes, college preparation programmes, a ceramics training programme, and education programmes at local colleges and at the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). This recycling reflects how attending welfare-to-work programmes does not lead directly to employment for many welfare recipients. As attending programmes is compulsory all those currently attending welfare-to-work programmes were eligible to have their childcare and transportation funded by Erie County DSS to enable them to attend programmes. Of the 78% that used childcare to attend programmes two-thirds had it paid for by DSS, although late payments often jeopardised their childcare arrangements. The rest did not claim the payments they were eligible to, often because family members looked after their children for free. 81% made use of a free travel pass from DSS, the rest not claiming their entitlement as they walked to work.

The most typical example of welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo was the job club. I attended job clubs at the Clarkson Center and at EOC, both of which operated from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday and were four weeks long; consisting of two weeks of intensive job readiness training and two weeks of job search activities when participants were often allowed to leave at lunch time. Both job clubs kept a tally of the number of jobs participants had applied for, and encouraged students to network with each other to help them find jobs. Table 5.6 shows the topics covered in the Clarkson Center’s two weeks of job readiness training:
Table 5.6: The Clarkson Center’s job readiness training timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td><strong>Job readiness and self-assessment.</strong> Test on knowledge of the workforce, and identifying strengths and weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td><strong>Job exploration.</strong> Discuss job search tools and how to use them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td><strong>How to apply and inquire about a position.</strong> Filling out job application forms and discussing what to say in phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td><strong>Communication, following directions and listening skills.</strong> Practising phone calls, communication and listening exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td><strong>Building a résumé.</strong> Discuss styles of résumés and fill out résumé worksheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td><strong>Occupational knowledge and employer expectations.</strong> Test on occupational knowledge, discuss employer expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td><strong>References, cover letters and preparing for interview.</strong> Discuss what references are, purpose of cover letter, write draft cover letter, purpose of interview and how to prepare for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td><strong>Interviews.</strong> Discuss do’s and don’ts for interviews, what to wear, common interview questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td><strong>Interviews.</strong> Discuss questions to ask interviewer, mock interviews take place in small groups, talk on interview tips from human resources manager of Clarkson Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td><strong>Mock interviews and class evaluation.</strong> Discuss local job market, mock interviews with members of staff take place, thank you letter exercise, class evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DATA SOURCE:** Clarkson Center

A typical day on this job readiness training was based on class discussion and handouts and exercises taken from guides for jobseekers produced by the State DOL, as shown in Table 5.7 describing a day attended by twelve welfare recipients:
Table 5.7: Day four of the Clarkson Center’s job club programme, Thursday 30 September 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9am</td>
<td>Class begins to arrive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.15am</td>
<td>Have photos taken for Clarkson Center ID.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.45am</td>
<td>Making the Phone call. Discuss three parts of phone call: greeting,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>content and closing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am</td>
<td>Phone call exercises. Fill in worksheet about what to say on the phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>when inquiring about a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.25am</td>
<td>Break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.40am</td>
<td>Job search tools discussion. Go over what learnt previous day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.50am</td>
<td>The application form. Exercise of assessing application forms filled in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incorrectly, take turns to present mistakes of each form to the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss illegal question, how to put required salary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12pm</td>
<td>Discuss afternoon activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10pm</td>
<td>Lunch break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Fill out personal data sheets as basis for application forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone exercise. Working in groups to practice phone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Class ends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

After the two weeks of job readiness training, participants have two weeks of job search activity where they must come in every morning, sign in, and use jobs search materials such as newspapers, the phone book and job leads given to them by staff, to apply for jobs, before leaving to deliver job applications, attend job interviews, or call on employers to ask if they have any vacancies. Figure 5.5 shows participants searching for jobs using newspapers and the yellow pages:
EOC’s job club covers similar topics to the Clarkson Center’s, although through slightly different activities. At the beginning of each day participants have a quiz to test what they learnt the previous day, and for the first week of the job club participants attended a basic computer class in the afternoon after a morning of job readiness training. EOC’s job club has a number of outside speakers who come in, and includes an orientation to the services offered.
by the Department of Labor (DOL), and participants also produced a portfolio to take away at the end of the job club. Table 5.8 shows the topics covered in EOC’s job readiness training:

Table 5.8: EOC’s BRIDGE programme’s job readiness training timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>The application. Introductions, why work, introduction to computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Written and telephone contact, résumés. Résumé preparation, telephone contact, introduction to computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Assessment test. Introduction to computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Varies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Job Search Techniques. Networking, newspapers, using temporary agencies, visit to Department of Labor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Interviewing skills. Mock Interviews, visit from Child Assistance Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Job keeping Skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Portfolio creation. Including résumé, cover letter, references, and thank you letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Dress for Success. Visit from employment specialist from DSS to discuss clothes to wear to interview, how to make a good first impression.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: EOC

Lone parents attending these programmes generally found them positive experiences and felt that job clubs had prepared them for employment, that the group environment had been supportive, and that being given job leads by the job club leaders was very helpful. However, some lone parents felt that job clubs were too short and that they would have benefited from more time in structured classes before starting job search, whilst one felt that they should be given lunch as they had no money to buy lunch and so were hungry for six hours. A few lone parents felt that being forced to attend job clubs was a waste of time when they could just be out looking for jobs. These job clubs were very effective in what they set out to do: informing lone parents of the types of jobs available in the local labour market, improving their ‘soft skills’ such as communication and team work and preparing them for employment, by giving them information about the culture of the workplace and information on the in-work support they would be entitled to. This time-intensive method ensures that all the issues connected
with entering the labour market are covered in some detail for lone parents attending the programmes.

As well as job clubs both organisations also offered skills training programmes. The Clarkson Center ran a culinary institute where welfare recipients could learn waitressing and hostess skills such as how to lay and serve a table and how to open wine, with the institute being open to the public for lunch two days a week so that participants can gain experience as well as skills. This programme had a high success rate in placing participants in skilled jobs in the food service industry. Figure 5.6 shows the room set out like a restaurant where participants of the culinary arts programme practise their skills:

Figure 5.6: The Culinary Arts programme at the Clarkson Center, November 1999

The Clarkson Center also runs a 26 week auto-mechanics programme leading to a New York State Inspection License. This programme consists of four to six weeks of customer
service training, six to eight weeks of detailing, and ten to twelve weeks of working with auto parts. As part of the programme, participants spend three days a week carrying out work placements in local dealerships, and have the choice of buying the car they have been working on at the end of the programmes, with the help of the Family Loan Programme. This programme was providing valuable skills to participants, but had only targeted male TANF recipients as the programme organiser felt that as there were less men on TANF it was cheaper, quicker and easier to only send letters inviting male recipients to join the programme. When questioned about this assumption that men were an obvious target group for the programme, the organiser said that the gendering of occupations meant that it was difficult to persuade women to pursue non-traditional female occupations. She explained that as she had to fill the places on the programme quickly she had decided to target men only, thus perpetuating gender divisions in the labour market. The site of the auto-mechanics programme is shown in Figure 5.7:

Figure 5.7: The Auto-mechanics programme site at the Clarkson Center, December 1999

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne
EOC’s BRIDGE programme also includes a Business and Computer Technology (BCT) programme and a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) programme as well as job clubs. The BCT programme takes place from 5pm to 9pm Monday to Thursday, with a Friday every fortnight for those who miss a day. The timing of the class is to attract those in employment as well as those just on welfare, and the programme uses very up-to-date hardware and software, with self-paced learning based on Microsoft worksheets, with the Instructor moving around the class helping students. The employment rates of participants graduating from the programme were very high, and participants described the instructor as excellent. Figure 5.8 shows participants of the BCT programme:

Figure 5.8: Participants of the BRIDGE programme’s business and computer technology programme at EOC, 23rd November 1999

SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne
EOC also runs a CNA programme which is an eight week course including forty hours of clinicals at Millard Fillmore Hospital. The programme runs from 12.30-5.30pm for three week days, with clinicals from 7am-4pm two days a week sometimes including weekends. DSS pay for participants’ uniforms, text books, and exams. A typical day on the CNA programme was based on class discussion, tests, and working through the textbook, as shown in Table 5.9 describing a day attended by nine welfare recipients:

Table 5.9: The BRIDGE programme’s Certified Nursing Assistant programme at EOC, Monday 8th November 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm</td>
<td>Exam information: Instructor tells students about skills evaluation, visit from State Evaluator, and final multiple-choice exam. Fill in clinical skill sheets: Skill and date obtained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Test: 50 medical terms and abbreviations they have to define. Instructor stresses that they must learn them before the exam, stresses importance of understanding a patient's care plan. Discuss last weekend's clinical experience: Discuss problems students had, diseases patients were suffering from, putting themselves in the position of the patient, dealing with aggressive and demanding patients, getting used to cleaning patients, pursuing a career in nursing. Work through textbook chapter on pre and postoperative care: Students highlight textbooks as they move through chapter, discuss psychological care of patient, responsibilities of CNAs versus Doctors and LPNs, complete quiz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30pm</td>
<td>Video on range of motion exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice range of motion: Each student takes turn practising turning another student using hospital bed. Instructor ensures they have fulfilled skills description for the exercise. Sets homework: 20 terms to look up and learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30pm</td>
<td>Class ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author's research

This classroom based training takes place at EOC where part of the room simulates a hospital room so that participants can practice skills they use in their clinical hospital based training, as shown in Figure 5.9:
This programme was also very successful, with all the participants qualifying as Nursing Assistants after passing their exams, and lone parents were extremely positive about the programme, praising the instructor and the strong team support they had with other participants. The only criticism of the programme from participants was the need for more up-to-date hospital equipment for the classroom.

As well as job clubs and training programmes a large number of public and voluntary sector organisations, as well as a few private sector organisations, offer workfare placements, where welfare recipients work as unpaid employees with no employment rights alongside paid employees in return for receiving their welfare benefits. Whilst some welfare recipients have found workfare placements a positive experience, others have found they do little to improve their employment prospects, as they are often in community sector organisations that are unable to offer permanent jobs within the organisation, whilst a lack of skills training
leaves participants unable to gain employment elsewhere in the labour market. Carlotta was carrying out a workfare assignment in Hispanics United where she had been working for twenty-five hours a week\textsuperscript{11} for the previous three years. She worked from 9am-2pm Monday to Friday doing secretarial work and distributing food in the food pantry. Maria had been working in Catholic Charities for twenty hours a week for the previous year\textsuperscript{12}, working from 9am-4pm Monday and Thursday, 9am-12pm Tuesday and Wednesday, and 9-11am Friday. Whilst she did some work in reception, her main duties were also in a food pantry, distributing food and doing an inventory when food was collected from local supermarkets. Figure 5.10 shows Maria working in the food pantry:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{mariafoodpantry.jpg}
\caption{Maria on her workfare assignment in the food pantry at Catholic Charities, October 1999}
\end{figure}

\textit{SOURCE: Photo by J Casebourne}

\textsuperscript{11} The work requirement before 1 October 1999.
\textsuperscript{12} The work requirement before 1 October 1999 for those with a youngest child under six years old.
Both lone parents on workfare felt that it was unfair that they were not paid for their work, arguing that they were not developing new skills as their work mainly consisted of working in the food pantries. Maria would have preferred to be learning computer skills and Carlotta wanted to improve her English to help her find employment. Lone parents who had no skills or had not been successful in job clubs were often referred to workfare, although they were precisely those in need of skills training programmes to help them find employment. Instead these lone parents are forced to work unpaid for many months in jobs that do not improve their employability.

Training programmes in Buffalo are of a high standard and are effective in raising the skills levels of lone parents. For those lone parents with adequate skills and education, job clubs are also highly effective in improving their soft skills and in preparing participants for the labour market. At present, however, due to the inadequate referral process, job clubs are being used for lone parents who need skills training and education, and are pushing these lone parents into low-paid work, rather than enabling them to secure skilled and well-paid employment. Workfare is of little help in preparing lone parents with either the soft or hard skills needed for labour market entry, yet it is the default option for lone parents who do not find work through job clubs, precisely those who are in most need of skills and education.

5.3.2 Sheffield case study programmes

The most fundamental difference between welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and in Sheffield is the voluntary, rather than compulsory, nature of programmes in Sheffield. All lone parents on NDLP or the Innovative Pilot in Sheffield had chosen to be involved, the vast majority because they wanted to move into employment, although a few joined because they wanted help attending courses, wanted to know what options they had, and wanted to know if they would be better off in work. Lone parents had heard about NDLP from a variety of sources, with only 35% first hearing about it on receiving the letter sent to the target group of lone parents, whilst 19% heard about NDLP from Scoop Aid, 19% through friends and family, 15% from a TV advert, 8% from going to a jobcentre and 4% through a New Deal poster. Many had already decided to move into employment and were attracted by the non-
coercive nature of the programme, which meant they could stay on benefits and would not be forced into employment:

*Julia:* Basically I wanted to go back to work but I didn't know how to go about it.

*Becky:* I didn't really know how to go about getting a job, I mean having no experience or ought [anything] I just had no idea at all. And I needed to know what benefits I were entitled to and things like that.

Another major difference from programmes in Buffalo is the less intensive and longer-term approach of NDLP and the Innovative Pilot. Whilst welfare recipients in Buffalo have to be involved in programmes for thirty hours a week, NDLP can take up as little time as a one-hour interview every month, although some lone parents attend courses or the HOPE programme centre as well as New Deal interviews. Most lone parents are on NDLP for a number of months, and there is no time limit to participation. Three lone parents I interviewed had been on the programme for more than two years before leaving for employment. This flexibility allows lone parents to fit their involvement around their other responsibilities.

Unlike with other New Deal programmes in the UK there is no direct subsidy to employers taking on lone parents from NDLP, but as in Buffalo programmes are linked with employers, mainly through the Employment Service’s (ES) formal role as the government agency which provides recruitment services for employers and advertises opportunities for jobseekers. Recruitment for the new Dixons call centre, for example, is being done through ES who have encouraged lone parents to apply for jobs there (Interview with Human Resources Manager, Dixons Call Centre, 18.4.00), and the Central Sheffield University Hospital (CSUH) NHS Trust was working with ES to plan an open-day specifically for lone parents, to raise awareness about opportunities within the organisation (Interview with Head of Educational and Organizational Development, CSUH NHS Trust, 19.5.00). The Scoop Aid Innovative Pilot Returners programme is also linked to local employers such as Sheffield Hallam University who attend the programme to publicise their opportunities to lone parents (Interview with Human Resources Manager, Sheffield Hallam University, 9.5.00). Rather
than government agencies intervening in labour market regulation by working with employers to move towards demand-led training, as agencies in Buffalo are, welfare-to-work programmes in Sheffield are simply acting as recruiters for employers, by suggesting that lone parents apply to organisations they have links with.

Far fewer lone parents than in Buffalo have previously been involved on other welfare-to-work programmes, as, unlike for other groups on benefit in the UK, it has not been compulsory for lone parents to actively seek employment, and so they have not been recycled through endless training schemes. However, two lone parents had been involved in the Employment Training (ET) scheme, and one in the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), both in the 1980s, and one was previously on the New Deal for Young People aged 18-24 (NDYP) before she had a child and became a lone parent. As in Buffalo all those attending welfare-to-work programmes were eligible for free childcare and transportation to enable them to attend interviews, courses and the HOPE programme. 60% of lone parents interviewed did not actually need childcare as their children were in school whilst they attended programmes, reflecting the flexible timing of welfare-to-work programmes around the schedules of lone parents. 23% did use formal childcare and were all reimbursed, but for the 17% that used family or friends, childcare was not refunded as NDLP and the Innovative Pilot only pay for registered childminders and daycare centres rather than informal providers. Two-thirds of lone parents travelled to programmes by bus and one-third by car, and all had their travel funded.

Participants of NDLP are given an action pack containing an appointment card, leaflets on benefit entitlements, and information sections on applying for jobs. This includes information on job search tools and action plans, preparing a CV, application forms, preparing for interviews, self-employment, training, childcare, and in-work benefits. This information pack provides similar information to that provided by job clubs in Buffalo, but lone parents on NDLP work through these topics on their own, and, unlike those in Buffalo, do not learn job search and soft skills through group work and exercises. This information may therefore have less impact and be less helpful than if these lone parents were practising these skills in a job club format. Advisers have caseloads of around forty lone parents, and are based in ES job
centres in the city centre and in local communities. The length of interviews and the number of interviews a lone parent has are based on the needs of the lone parent, with 18% of interviewees having had only one NDLP interview at their local jobcentre, 46% having two to four interviews, 25% having five or more interviews, and 11% having very regular meetings with their adviser. The initial interview with an adviser tended to be longer, with most interviews lasting between thirty minutes and an hour. As well as formal interviews, advisers also maintain contact with lone parents by phone, and send lone parents details of jobs they might want to apply for. Topics discussed in interviews are client-led, but generally included lone parents' previous work experience and qualifications, courses available, the types of jobs they are looking for, including the preferred hours and location, application advice, CV development, interview skills, self-employment, in-work benefits and childcare availability and funding. Job search was also often carried out during interviews using the ES database, and general ‘better off calculations’ were conducted to see if lone parents would be financially better off in work than on benefit, and were also done for specific jobs lone parents were applying for. Most lone parents found these better-off calculations very helpful:

Alice: She got it all on the computer and brought it all down and showed me exactly what I’d got coming in now and she accounted for the extras I’d have to pay [when employed] like the school dinners, and expenses, and stuff like that. She went right through that and it still worked out that I was something like £36 a week better off.

This process ensures that lone parents are aware of in-work benefits and means that they will only move into employment if they will be better off, unlike lone parents in Buffalo who must move into paid work whether or not they will be better off, or face losing their welfare benefits. The interview described in Table 5.10 shows the kinds of issues lone parents discussed with their advisers, and is typical of a number of interviews I observed in terms of the topics covered and the issue of nursing, which was often brought up by lone parents:
Table 5.10: Sample NDLP interview, Hillsborough Jobcentre, 28th March 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Length</th>
<th>1 hour 15 minutes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parent Characteristics</td>
<td>Female, early 20s, one son aged one year and three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parent’s Requirements</td>
<td>To find care work to gain experience before beginning Nursing Degree in September 2001 when son is aged three and starts nursery. Wants to know whether she is entitled to childcare when a full-time University student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDLP Advice</td>
<td>Not entitled to childcare when leave income support and become full-time student. Can offer childcare only for one year ACCESS to nursing course. When aged three son will be entitled to 12.5 hours a week free nursery, but she will have to pay extra normal rates for the remaining hours. No point doing ACCESS course if she cannot afford to do the nursing degree. Problem with care work is shifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Decide lone parent cannot pursue nursing career. Lone parent decides she wants a part-time job rather than staying at home. Job search on computer database for jobs that are 16 hours a week. Search through many unsuitable jobs in terms of hours, location, experience required. Suggests she applies for local job at 15 hours a week and works an extra few hours somewhere else, but she does not want two jobs. Cannot find anything that is 16 hours a week and does not involve evenings or weekends. Another interview arranged to continue job search. Lone parent will update CV using her sister’s computer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

Advisers are only able to give advice based on the tight national framework of NDLP, and have no local flexibility to enable lone parents to pursue a nursing career by providing childcare for lone parents on degree-level qualifications. Most lone parents had a very good relationship with their NDLP adviser, with 80% describing them as excellent and one describing their adviser as a ‘fairy godmother’. Lone parents found advisers extremely helpful, friendly, and supportive:
Jessica: I particularly liked the Lone Parent adviser - she were brilliant. She worked on a one-to-one basis with me, she learnt about me past, what I’d been through, what I was looking for, what I needed. If you got disheartened she more or less boosted you up and spoke to you again, and it just kept you ticking over really, feeling as though it was going to work.

As well as interviews with NDLP advisers, ten interviewees had attended courses as part of NDLP. Three had attended the Business Administration course at Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, two had attended Computers for the Terrified at TriTec, three had attended computer courses at Square Mile training, one was doing a Lecturing course at Sheffield College, one had done an NVQ Level 2 in Hotel Reception at Sheffield College, and one was attending a Pre-entry to the Police and Public Services OCN course at Dearne Valley College. This was a ten week course including transferable skills development and physical fitness.

This lone parent had difficulty getting the course approved, as although it had the potential to lead to a well-paid job which would bring financial security, it did not lead ‘directly’ to employment. This reflects the work-first approach of NDLP which prioritises fast entry into the labour market over longer-term financial security. Those who were attending skills courses at the Chamber of Commerce complained at the lack of work placements, and the low quality of placements that did exist. The referral process in Sheffield means that lone parents should have been able to attend approved skills training if they wanted to, but in practice some found it difficult to get referrals, and those that were doing courses felt that they were not of a high quality, unlike skills training programmes in Buffalo.

Although the HOPE programme centre had only been running for four months when I began fieldwork it had already been used by one-third of my interviewees. This thirteen week programme was a less structured version of jobs clubs in Buffalo, as whilst it offered an adviser who could help participants with CVs, job leads, interview technique and mock interviews, lone parents could come and go when they liked and did not have to attend for a set number of hours. Unlike in Buffalo lone parents worked alone, rather than receiving initial classroom-based training on job search and soft skills before conducting job search. Whilst some lone parents found this programme led them directly to employment, others felt that
they should be able to attend for more than three months if they had not found a job in that
time, and one felt that the programme did not feel voluntary as the number of applications
they made was monitored, and there were targets set for the number of jobs to apply for. She
therefore felt that she was being forced to apply for jobs that she did not want.

Lone parents in Sheffield also had access to the Innovative Pilot run by Scoop Aid. This
included the Personal Development Programme (PDP) and Returners\(^\text{13}\) course, both run at the
Quaker Meeting House in central Sheffield, which has an on-site crèche. The PDP consisted
of eight one day sessions from 9.30am – 2.30pm spaced over eight weeks, leading to an OCN
Level 2 for lone parents with 80% attendance who handed in a portfolio of their course notes
and handouts. The course was based on group work and discussion, with participants
developing communication skills, identifying their skills, building confidence and exploring
their feelings and needs. The Innovative Pilot also offered a Returners course for those
thinking of entering the labour market or training. This course was similar to the job readiness
section of job clubs in Buffalo, but also stressed educational opportunities and was not
followed by a period of structured job search. The course consisted of six sessions from
9.30am-2pm held over three weeks, covering the topics shown in Table 5.11:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td><strong>Introductions, Self-Assessment, Transferable Skills.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Education and Training Opportunities and Local Labour Market Information. Individual Guidance Services: discuss what offered by Career’s Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td><strong>Caring/Service/IT/Admin Jobs. Speakers arranged:</strong> to talk about jobs participants are interested in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Career’s Library.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td><strong>Job Applications.</strong> Including CVs, covering letters, application forms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Sheffield Career’s Service

\(^{13}\) A ‘Returners to the Labour Market’ course, designed originally for women who had taken time out from the labour market to bring up children and wanted to return to employment.
The course was based on handouts, exercises and group work, as shown in Table 5.12, which describes the first day of the course attended by nine lone parents:

Table 5.12: Day one of Scoop Aid innovative pilot returners course, Monday 27th March 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td><strong>Form filling.</strong> Participants fill in forms to collect information about who is participating in pilot programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am</td>
<td><strong>Introductions.</strong> Instructor gives brief introduction stressing informality of course, icebreaker exercises where participants introduce each other to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.20am</td>
<td><strong>Coffee break.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td><strong>Course Outline and Self-assessment.</strong> Instructor tells class about her background as a lone parent, goes through course outline and discusses speakers coming from Sheffield College, Sheffield Hallam University to talk about admin opportunities there, and visit to TriTec training. Group work completing exercise on what skills participants have as parents and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30am</td>
<td><strong>Coffee Break.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.50am</td>
<td><strong>Transferable Skills.</strong> Go through a list of transferable skills and what they mean, complete exercise showing where they have gained experience in different skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Lunch Break.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Psychometric testing.</strong> Instructor explains psychometric testing and its uses, makes appointments for those who want to take test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pm</td>
<td><strong>Class ends.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author's research

These courses were more time-intensive than NDLP interviews, but were timetabled to suit the needs of lone parents, being spread over some weeks so that lone parents could attend easily, and consisting of only six full days, unlike ten full consecutive days of job preparation in Buffalo job clubs. Most lone parents found the innovative pilot useful, although some were disappointed that the last Returners course was under-subscribed and so ended after only one session.
In general lone parents in Sheffield found NDLP to be a very positive experience, reflected in the fact that many felt it should be better advertised so that all lone parents on income support were aware of it. The flexible approach of timetabling interviews and courses reflects the voluntary nature of the programme, which is designed to encourage lone parents to attend, and lone parents found that they were more easily able to fit programme attendance around their other responsibilities than lone parents in Buffalo, who were forced to attend programmes for thirty hours a week. However, the quality of hard skills training programmes was not as high as in Buffalo, and lone parents were not as thoroughly prepared for labour market entry and did not develop their soft skills as much as lone parents in Buffalo.

5.3.3 Implications of the work-first approach for lone parents

Within the supply-side approach of national welfare-to-work policy both cities operate a ‘work-first’, or labour force attachment (LFA) rather than a human capital development (HCD) approach to employment. HCD programmes are designed to raise the education and skills levels of participants to help them get well-paid jobs with the potential for career advancement, and to secure a sustainable transition into work (Peck and Theodore 1998a). In contrast LFA programmes follow a shorter-term approach to achieving a rapid transition into work, and are based on a job ladder philosophy, which argues that welfare recipients can secure better jobs once they are already working (Theodore and Peck 2000).

The work-first focus on moving into the labour market was useful to many participants in both cities, building up their confidence and self-esteem so that they felt capable of attending job interviews and getting a job, and were less intimidated by the thought of employment:

*Willonia [Buffalo]: I think that it’s given me new skills as far as interviewing skills. And it’s made me more employable as far as how to interview - what not to do, what to do, getting my résumé together; that’s a big load off of my mind done. I have like the in-your-face attitude you know, and I’m ready [to work] - come on let’s do this! It’s really good.*
Debbie [Sheffield]: It made me more employable because they gave me an awful lot of confidence, they really did, they were very complimentary and it was really good to get my CV done and I'm talking of my lone parents adviser; she was brilliant at pointing out the transferable skills that I had.

Two-thirds of lone parents in Buffalo thought that the programmes they attended had given them new skills, particularly soft skills. Although in Sheffield only those who had attended computer courses felt they had developed new skills, all but two lone parents felt that NDLP or the Innovative Pilot had been useful to them, and had made them more employable.

However, to gain jobs capable of lifting them and their families out of poverty lone parents also need hard skills that many programmes do not provide, and in some cases basic education and language skills to help them move into even entry-level employment. Lone parents in Buffalo described the work-first system of referring them to a job club and then to training programmes if they did not get a job as ‘backwards’, as they needed to gain computer skills and in some cases needed GEDs and ESOL support to improve their employment prospects, before being referred to a job club to help with the job search process. Participants of EOC’s job club were disappointed with the computer training they were receiving as it was very basic and was not long enough for them to develop familiarity with software programmes. One participant was being forced to attend a job club instead of being allowed to stay at home to study for her Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) exam which, if she passed, would enable her to move into financially secure employment. Many felt that if they were pushed into ‘any job’ they were more likely to return to welfare, and that without training before entering employment they would only get unskilled jobs that would not pay them enough to leave welfare. Others wanted to use their five-year maximum time on welfare to go to college and get degrees so that when time limits run out they are able to get good jobs:

Willonia: I want to go back to College and get my degree. I would have a better chance.
Interestingly one of the strongest advocates of the work-first approach in Buffalo felt that previous programmes that had used an HCD approach to employment had been more successful in getting lone parents high-quality jobs:

_I thought we had a considerable amount of success with the JOBS program. And I think that the early evaluations really didn’t give it enough time to look at, to evaluate. Under the JOBS program we were - in Erie County specifically - we were more of a county trying to prepare and enhance skill levels for a career_ (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99).

As in Buffalo, in Sheffield many lone parents wanted to be able to go to university whilst on income support, and many felt they should be able to attend courses higher than NVQ Level 2, and longer than one year, as part of NDLP. Nursing was a classic example of this, as the professionalization of nursing to a degree level qualification meant that to pursue nursing lone parents would have to leave income support and NDLP, to become full-time students with dependents allowances but no help with childcare costs. Most lone parents in Sheffield attended NDLP interviews rather than courses or the pilot programme, and so even their development of soft skills was limited, and they were less well prepared for the labour market than lone parents in Buffalo. Whilst the work-first approach operating in both Buffalo and Sheffield may succeed in attaching lone parents to the labour force, it is not developing the human capital of lone parents so that they enter the labour market with the skills and education that will enable them to gain well-paid jobs.

5.4 CONCLUSION: IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS OF WELL-PAID EMPLOYMENT FOR LONE PARENTS?

Despite the success of initiatives which target the demand-side as well as the supply-side of unemployment, welfare-to-work programmes have adopted an entirely supply-side approach to tackling the problems of unemployment and poverty, both in areas of economic expansion and in depressed local labour markets. This supply-side approach to moving lone parents into
employment and out of poverty fails to address the lack of employment opportunities for lone parents living in Buffalo and Sheffield. Whilst the geographical scale of welfare reform policy is quite different in the two countries, a tight national supply-side framework means that in both countries welfare-to-work programmes are not effectively tailored to meet local economic needs. Despite the proliferation of programmes in Buffalo, the needs of individual lone parents are also failing to be met, due to a referral process reliant on decisions made by employment counsellors who lack information on what programmes are available. In Sheffield the national framework of NDLP leaves little room for local agencies to meet the needs of lone parents requiring more than confidence, basic skills and help with job search. Within the supply-side framework of welfare-to-work the work-first approach of programmes in both cities is not tackling the lack of skills and qualifications which are acting as a barrier to employment for many lone parents. In Buffalo the quality of training programmes is high, and the intensive approach to job clubs prepares lone parents for labour market entry, but the referral process means that lone parents do not get the skills they need before entering job clubs, and lone parents are forced into employment whether or not they are ready to move into paid work, and whether or not they will be better off. In Sheffield the one-to-one interview approach boosts the confidence of many lone parents, but means that lone parents lack intensive preparation for the labour market and do not develop their soft skills. Whilst the referral process is straightforward some of the training programmes that lone parents have been referred to have been low-quality, whilst some have had difficulty being referred to the courses of their choice.

This labour force attachment approach to welfare-to-work policy is not designed to move lone parents into skilled, well-paid employment that is capable of lifting them and their families out of poverty; rather it is designed to move lone parents quickly into unskilled entry-level employment, which it is then assumed they can use as a first step on the employment ladder. Chapter 6 therefore examines whether programmes are being successful in their primary aim of moving lone parents quickly from welfare into employment, assessing whether lone parents are moving into paid work, how they are experiencing the transition into employment, and whether they remain in employment or return to welfare through the revolving door at the low-end of the labour market. Chapter 7 then goes on to examine the
types of employment lone parents are moving into after attending these work-first, supply-side programmes.
CHAPTER SIX:
MOVING FROM WELFARE INTO PAID WORK

Welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield have been designed primarily to move lone parents off welfare and into employment as quickly as possible, rather than to invest in the education and skills of lone parents so that they can enter the labour market at a higher level. These work-first programmes have been operating in some areas in the US since the early 1980s and have been hailed by politicians and the media as a great success in reducing the welfare rolls, and have been used as models for policy transfer in recent reforms in both the US and the UK. However, even in high profile programmes such as the GAIN programme in California and W2 in Wisconsin many welfare recipients who have left welfare have not moved into employment, and many of those in employment have remained on welfare due to their low level of earnings. Where the numbers on welfare have dramatically declined there has been a great deal of debate over whether welfare-to-work programmes or economic growth has been responsible, and many evaluations have found that welfare recipients have been unable to make a sustainable transition to employment and are cycling between welfare and the low-end of the labour market. This chapter examines these issues, comparing the success of programmes in the US and the UK in both moving lone parents off welfare, and in moving them into the labour market. The chapter then considers whether lone parents who have moved into employment might have got their jobs without the help of welfare-to-work programmes. It concludes by examining the level of support available to lone parents as they make the transition from benefit into employment, and assesses whether this support helps lone parents retain their jobs, preventing them from returning to a total reliance on welfare.

6.1 MOVING FROM WELFARE INTO PAID WORK

6.1.1 Are lone parents leaving welfare?

The US has seen huge reductions in the numbers of individuals receiving TANF benefit since the 1996 reforms, with overall caseloads declining from 12,241,000 in August 1996 to 5,781,000 by June 2000 (US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for
Children and Families 2000). But these declines in ‘welfare caseloads’ have been extremely spatially uneven. Areas with relatively high unemployment and poverty have done less well in moving more lone parents off welfare than both areas experiencing strong economic growth, and states which have introduced welfare-to-work programmes with strict eligibility criteria that force lone parents off welfare. Whilst some states such as Idaho, which has the largest caseload decline, and Wisconsin have seen enormous reductions in caseloads, leading to welfare reform being hailed as a great success (Hayward 1998, Rogers 1997), other states such as Rhode Island, which has the smallest caseload decline, and New York State have experienced far smaller declines in the number of welfare recipients, as shown in Figure 6.1:

**Figure 6.1: US welfare caseload declines August 1996 - June 2000**

![Bar chart showing welfare caseload declines August 1996 - June 2000](image)

**DATA SOURCE:** US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families 2000

New York State has not seen its economy grow as rapidly as other regions of the US which did not suffer from de-industrialisation and that have benefited from huge expansions in the service sector, and it continues to have higher levels of unemployment and poverty than
many other states. Whilst New York State has done less well in reducing welfare caseloads than other areas, within New York State the decline in the welfare caseload from 1,143,962 recipients in August 1996 to 693,012 in June 2000 has also been very uneven. Work-first reforms have moved fewer Hispanic and black women off welfare than their white counterparts, perhaps unsurprisingly in terms of their increased barriers to employment caused by discrimination and, in some cases, language. Hispanic and black women are making up an increasing proportion of the welfare caseload as total caseloads decline, with the share of Hispanic families on welfare increasing by 18% between 1995-6 and 1998-9 (Rodriguez and Kirk 2000). The largest urban areas in the state, which have the highest concentrations of ethnic minority groups, poverty and unemployment, have also seen fewer people leaving welfare than other areas. New York City's caseload declined by only 37% from January 1995 to September 1999, whilst Erie County, which includes the city of Buffalo, saw its caseload decline by only 35%. It is these two areas, which have 76% of the state's welfare caseload, that bring the state-wide decline down to 39%, despite the much higher declines in other counties (New York State Department of Labor 2000). In spite of attending welfare-to-work programmes many lone parents in Buffalo remain on welfare. Of those lone parents who have been successful in moving into the labour market, many continue to receive welfare, as the entitlement for receiving TANF benefit is based on income and number of children a lone parent has. Of the 13,400 TANF recipients in Erie County, approximately 3500 are actually employed (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99). 38% of the interviewees in Buffalo who were initially on welfare-to-work programmes and re-interviewed six months later were still on welfare, three of whom had not moved into paid work, whilst two had moved into employment but were still receiving welfare.

In the UK the numbers of lone parents leaving income support are very low compared to the huge decline in numbers of lone parents on welfare in the US. In August 1996 1,061,000 lone parents were receiving income support in the UK, a level which declined by only 11% to 940,000 by August 1999. The much smaller decline in the numbers of lone parents on welfare in the UK is shown in Figure 6.2:
Figure 6.2: US and UK declines in the numbers of lone parents on welfare*

* US decline in numbers of TANF recipients from August 1996 - June 2000, UK decline in the numbers of lone parents on income support from August 1996 – August 1999


This reflects the fact that UK lone parents do not have to take part in welfare-to-work programmes, and are not forced into employment by a welfare system that offers only five years on benefit in a lifetime. UK lone parents can choose whether to take part in welfare-to-work programmes, and many have chosen not to take part in NDLP, or are unaware of the programme. This is shown by the numbers of lone parents on income support who attended an initial NDLP interview between the national implementation of NDLP in October 1998 to April 2001: only 234,750, or around a quarter of all lone parents on income support. Even a large number of those who did take part in NDLP decided that staying on benefit was a better choice for them and their families than entering the labour market: of those that did attend an interview and had left the programme by April 2001, 44% remained on income support.
Unlike Buffalo and New York State which have fared worse than many other areas in the US, Sheffield has not done badly in moving lone parents off welfare in relation to the rest of the UK, despite having a depressed local labour market with relatively high unemployment. A slightly lower proportion of those leaving NDLP remained on income support in Sheffield than the UK as a whole, but Sheffield has done badly compared to the Yorkshire and Humberside region which surrounds it, reflecting its localised unemployment and poverty which contrasts sharply with other cities in the region such as Leeds. The percentage of lone parents remaining on income support in these areas is shown in Figure 6.3:

Figure 6.3: Proportion of lone parents remaining on income support after leaving NDLP*

* UK and Yorkshire and Humberside figures from October 1998 to April 2001, Sheffield figures from October 1998 and January 2000

DATA SOURCE:

Whilst a higher percentage lone parents are staying on welfare in the UK than in the US, similar proportions of the lone parents I interviewed were staying on welfare after attending welfare-to-work programmes in Sheffield as in Buffalo. Figure 6.4 shows how of the
interviewees in Sheffield who were initially on welfare-to-work programmes and re-interviewed six months later 43% remained on income support, only slightly higher than the proportion in Buffalo:

Figure 6.4: Proportion of lone parents remaining on welfare when re-interviewed after six months

![Bar chart showing proportion of lone parents remaining on welfare in Buffalo and Sheffield]

DATA SOURCE: Author's research

However, those staying on income support in Sheffield had not entered the labour market, unlike almost half the interviewees remaining on welfare in Buffalo, who were allowed to combine welfare with employment. Work-first welfare-to-work programmes designed to move lone parents out of the welfare system are failing to lift over a third of interviewees in both cities off welfare.

6.1.2 Are lone parents moving into paid work?

As well as failing to move all lone parents off welfare, welfare reform is also failing to move them into the labour market. An examination of one of the most publicised US welfare-to-
work experiments, California’s ‘Greater Avenues for Independence’ (GAIN) programme found that half of the participants were never employed during a three year period after leaving the programme (Peck 1998b). Studies by the Urban Institute have also found that 20% of women who left welfare in the US between 1995 and 1997 are not involved in paid work (Loprest 1999). Research in New York State has also found that many former welfare recipients were not engaged in employment, with 71% of recipients who had last received TANF in March 1997 having no employer-reported earnings a year on; a no-earnings rate up from 61% the year before (Sherman et al. 1998). Of lone parents in New York State who have left welfare, a significant minority are leaving welfare because they have failed to meet a requirement of welfare reform, rather than because they have moved into the labour market. 38% of welfare cases closed in the first quarter of 1997 in New York State were closed because the TANF recipient had failed to meet a requirement of welfare reform legislation, such as participating in a work activity for thirty hours a week, not because they had found employment (Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government 1999, SENSES 1999).

In Erie County the replacement of the JOBS programme, which focused on education and training, with a work-first approach, which encourages and enforces rapid labour market entry, has led to increased numbers of lone parents leaving welfare for employment. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of all the county’s welfare cases that are being closed for employment, up from 15% of all those on welfare leaving welfare for employment in October 1997 at the beginning of the state’s welfare reform, to 26% by September 1999 (Erie County Department of Social Services, no date, unpublished). However, despite the growing proportion of welfare recipients leaving welfare for employment and the proliferation of local welfare-to-work programmes, large numbers of lone parents still remain on welfare without employment. In response to my questionnaire to social service organisations providing welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo only one third of organisations reported that between 81-100% of welfare recipients who attended their programmes in the previous year had moved into employment. Most organisations failed to move at least a third of lone parents into the labour market, as shown in Table 6.1:
Table 6.1: Success of social service organisations in moving lone parents into employment

September 1998 – September 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of lone parents moved into employment</th>
<th>0-20%</th>
<th>21-40%</th>
<th>41-60%</th>
<th>61-80%</th>
<th>81-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of SSOs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

Figure 6.5 shows that of my interviewees in Buffalo who were initially on welfare-to-work programmes and re-interviewed six months later, the majority had moved into employment, although others were left without employment on welfare, and some in severe financial need without employment or welfare:

Figure 6.5: Buffalo lone parents’ employment status when re-interviewed after six months

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

In the UK a far lower proportion of lone parents are entering the labour market after attending welfare-to-work programmes than in the US. Lone parents on NDLP who do not
move into employment are able to remain on income support without time limits to receiving benefit, the threat of sanctions, or having to take part in compulsory work activities. This means that in the UK 119,452, or 58% of those who had agreed to participate in NDLP since October 1998 had not gained employment by April 2001 (Department for Work and Pensions 2001). Of those who had actually left NDLP by April 2001, only 45% had left the programme for employment. This is a particularly low proportion gaining employment, as lone parents taking part in NDLP are likely to be more job-ready than the general population of lone parents, as they have agreed to join a voluntary programme designed to help them move into the labour market. A lower proportion of disabled lone parents and lone parents from ethnic minority groups had left NDLP for employment than the general population of lone parents on the programme, which may reflect the greater barriers they face to employment due to discrimination in the labour market and, in some cases, not having English as a first language. Figure 6.6 shows this disparity:

Figure 6.6: Proportion of UK lone parents leaving NDLP for employment from October 1998 to April 2001

DATA SOURCE: Department for Work and Pensions 2001
Sheffield has also been less successful in moving lone parents on NDLP into employment than both the UK as a whole and its surrounding region, as shown in Figure 6.7:

**Figure 6.7: Proportion of lone parents moving into employment after leaving NDLP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Yorkshire and Humberside</th>
<th>Sheffield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>40%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* UK and Yorkshire and Humberside figures from October 1998 to April 2001, Sheffield figures from October 1998 and January 2000

**DATA SOURCE:**
Department for Work and Pensions 2001 and Sheffield Employment Service

The lower proportion remaining on income support in Sheffield compared to the UK average (see Figure 6.3) is not due to Sheffield moving a larger proportion of lone parents into employment than in the UK as a whole, but rather is due to a higher proportion of lone parents in Sheffield leaving income support for other benefits, or leaving because they were no longer eligible, or leaving to unknown destinations, as shown in Figure 6.8:
A far lower proportion of interviewees in Sheffield who were initially on welfare-to-work programmes and re-interviewed six months later had moved into employment than in Buffalo: 43% compared to 62%. This reflects the fact that in Sheffield lone parents can take longer to find a suitable job, as they do not have their benefits threatened if they do not leave income support for employment. Interviewees who had left NDLP for employment had sometimes been on the programme for up to two years before moving into employment. Most of Sheffield interviewees were not in employment after six months, and were either on income support, Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), or Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), as shown in Figure 6.9:
Figure 6.9: Sheffield lone parents’ employment status when re-interviewed after six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moved into Employment</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Income Support</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On JSA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On WFTC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

In both cities welfare-to-work practitioners highlighted that the longer welfare-to-work programmes continued, the harder it was to move lone parents into employment. Although there continues to be an inflow of lone parents claiming welfare benefits for the first time, of those lone parents who had been on welfare for some time, the most job-ready with fewest barriers to employment had joined welfare-to-work programmes and moved into employment when programmes were first introduced. Many of those left on welfare after the first few years of reform are longer-term welfare recipients who are more difficult to place than those who have been more recently engaged in the labour market, and more mentoring and support services are therefore needed to move them into employment (Interview with member of Adult and Community Education division, Erie 2 BOCES, Buffalo 27.8.99; Interview with Job Club Leader, EOC, Buffalo, 10.11.99; Interview with Advice Worker, Scoop Aid, Sheffield 14.3.00).
6.1.3 Would lone parents have moved into paid work without welfare-to-work programmes?

There is a great deal of debate about whether those lone parents who have moved into employment did so because of attending welfare-to-work programmes, or whether they would have moved into employment without the programmes, due to increased employment opportunities caused by economic growth. In the US a major study of the decline in the welfare caseload found that declines were attributable largely to the economic growth of states and not to welfare reform. In the 26 states experiencing at least a 20% welfare caseload decline between 1993 and 1996, 78% of declines were caused by the business cycle and only 6% was due to welfare-to-work programmes. Even in Wisconsin, heralded for the success of its programme, only 11% of the welfare caseload decline was due to welfare reform, whilst 53% was due to the business cycle (Ziliak et al. 1997). In the UK political critics of NDLP have argued that 80% of lone parents getting jobs would have done so anyway without the help of NDLP, and have highlighted how the caseload of lone parents on income support has not declined since the implementation of the NDLP. Whilst 939,000 lone parents were on income support in November 1998, the first full month of national implementation of NDLP, 940,000 were on income support in August 1999 (Willetts 2000). Evaluations of the pilot phase of NDLP, from July 1997 to October 1998, found that 17% of lone parents in the pilot areas moved into employment, compared to 18% in areas where NDLP was not operating (Hales et al. 2000). After eighteen months only 3.3% more lone parents had left income support in the NDLP pilot areas compared to the comparison areas (Hasluck 2000). Early evaluations also found that NDLP personal advisers were working largely with people who were already on their way to starting employment (Hales et al. 2000). This reflects the views of practitioners I interviewed, who felt that early participants of welfare-to-work programmes had been more job-ready than current participants, and might, therefore, have started employment without NDLP. Of those who did gain employment from NDLP between October 1998 and April 2001, 97% found new jobs, with only 3% being lone parents who already had a part-time job on joining NDLP but increased their hours of employment to take them off income support (Department for Work and Pensions 2001). However, some of those
moving into new jobs may have joined NDLP to see whether employment was financially feasible, and then applied for or accepted jobs they had already found.

Evidence from the US and the UK, therefore, suggests that lone parents may have moved into employment without the help of welfare-to-work programmes. As it was not possible to compare the outcomes of lone parents I interviewed with a control group of lone parents who had not taken part in welfare-to-work programmes, I asked all the lone parents I interviewed who had moved into employment after attending a welfare-to-work programme how they got their jobs, and whether they felt they would have moved into paid work without the help of welfare-to-work programmes. Figure 6.10 shows the role of welfare-to-work programmes in moving lone parents into employment in Buffalo and Sheffield:

Figure 6.10: The role of welfare-to-work programmes in moving lone parents into employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Buffalo</th>
<th>Sheffield</th>
<th>Buffalo</th>
<th>Sheffield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found job through welfare-to-work programmes</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not have moved into employment without welfare-to-work programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

Only 47% of interviewees in Buffalo said they had directly found their jobs through attending welfare-to-work programmes, with the rest finding employment through
employment fairs, friends, employment agencies and by responding to advertisements without help from programmes. However, whilst the majority in Buffalo did not find their jobs directly through welfare-to-work programmes, 75% felt that they would not have got their job without the welfare-to-work programme. They explained that whilst they wanted paid work, they were not actively looking for work until being forced to attend programmes, and move into employment or face sanctions, or did not have the skills needed to gain employment before attending programmes. 63% of the lone parents I interviewed in Sheffield had found their job as a direct result of NDLP, either through job search done with their adviser or at the lone parents programme centre, or by advisers registering them with employment agencies: a much higher figure than in Buffalo. The remainder found their jobs through friends, voluntary work, in the newspaper, and one through an advertisement at their child’s school. This higher level finding jobs directly through programmes in Sheffield may reflect the large amount of time in NDLP interviews given to guided job search through the Employment Service’s job database, whilst in Buffalo lone parents attending job clubs were encouraged to use friends, newspapers, and other sources to find jobs. 80% of interviewees in Sheffield felt that they would not have got their job without NDLP, only slightly higher than in Buffalo, but their reasons were very different. These lone parents felt that before NDLP they did not have the confidence, were not actively looking for work before joining, and did not know whether employment was financially viable for them, unlike Buffalo lone parents who found work through programmes because they risked losing entitlement to benefit if they did not move into employment. This evidence suggests that whilst economic growth may be responsible for moving lone parents into employment in more buoyant areas, it is welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield which have led to lone parents moving into the labour market.
6.2 EXPERIENCING THE TRANSITION INTO EMPLOYMENT

6.2.1 Financial support and services offered during the transition into employment in Buffalo

In Buffalo many lone parents making the transition into employment remain on the welfare benefit TANF due to their low level of earnings. These lone parents are eligible for an ‘Earned Income Disregard’, where the first $90 of recipient’s earned income is disregarded when calculating entitlement to TANF to offset the costs of travel to work, and 46% of the remainder is then disregarded as an incentive to work. These lone parents also continue to receive public assistance Medicaid, Daycare and Food Stamps. These benefits are replaced by a range of transitional benefits for lone parents whose income is high enough to move them off TANF, as shown in Table 6.2:

Table 6.2: Transitional benefits available to lone parents in Buffalo when they move off TANF into employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Allowance</td>
<td>One-off payment for work clothes when lone parents move off TANF into employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Medicaid</td>
<td>Eligible for six months after TANF case closes, then, after re-certification, for a further six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Daycare</td>
<td>Eligible for twelve months after TANF case closes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Collated by author from a number of sources

After this transitional period ‘Low-income Medicaid’ and ‘Low-income Daycare’, which are means-tested, then replace these transitional benefits. Lone parents on low incomes are also entitled to the in-work benefits of ‘Low-income Food Stamps’ where the first 20% a recipient’s earned income and any daycare costs are disregarded when calculating entitlement, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as soon as they leave TANF. This range of benefits for those still on welfare, and for those who rely purely on their wages should ensure that
making the transition into the labour market is a smooth and financially viable process. However, not all lone parents receive their entitlements.

Welfare eligibility caseworkers in Erie County DSS have very large caseloads, and when a TANF recipient contacts their caseworker to say they have found a job, rather than putting transitional benefits into place, many caseworkers simply close their TANF case. Although DSS produces a booklet entitled ‘Ongoing and Transitional Benefits’ for welfare recipients who are moving into employment, which is given out at some welfare-to-work programmes, welfare recipients do not automatically receive a copy on moving into employment, and some therefore remain unaware of their entitlements. Other lone parents do not apply for transitional benefits as they no longer want anything to do with the welfare system. Those that do apply have to cope with an enormous amount of paperwork, and have to make multiple appointments to apply for different benefits at different offices which is extremely difficult for those in full-time work. Of the employed lone parents I interviewed in Buffalo most were receiving the majority of their entitlements, due to being informed of them by the leaders of welfare-to-work programmes they had attended. All interviewees had received their entitlement to either transitional Medicaid or public assistance Medicaid if they were still on TANF when they moved into employment, and 56% of employed interviewees had received daycare help when moving into employment, the others not needing daycare or not wanting to apply for help. However, only 28% had received a clothing allowance, which ranged from $79 to $150, which reflected a lack of knowledge about this entitlement.

As well as being eligible for financial support when making the transition into employment, there are also a range of ‘post-employment services’ available to lone parents in Buffalo. DSS ‘Transition Teams’ were set up in September 1997 to work with lone parents who move into employment. They started as an experiment with one eligibility worker handling a caseload of fifty people\(^\text{14}\), much smaller than the normal DSS welfare caseloads of a few hundred. After receiving state and county funding they expanded to four teams consisting of six eligibility workers and one employment counsellor, as well as one child support collection worker who works with all the teams. The transition teams aim to ensure

\(^{14}\) Similar to the NDLP personal advisers’ caseloads of around forty people.
that employed former recipients have all the transitional benefits they are entitled to, and do not have to take time off work to apply for programmes they can be automatically enrolled in, like transitional daycare. They also aim to increase the hours or wages of employed TANF recipients so that they can earn enough to leave TANF. Currently the transition teams work with only a small number of those who have moved into paid work, and their clients are mainly referred from DSS job clubs and the PIC programme, although they are hoping to expand, subject to funding (Interview with Supervisor, DSS Transition Team, 1.9.99).

As well as the county level transition teams New York State’s Department of Family Assistance runs the CAP programme available to employed TANF recipients in Buffalo to help them become self-sufficient through earnings and child support. This programme is also based on individual intensive case management with appointments made to fit the client’s employment schedule. Participants get help with budgeting, and continue to receive cash assistance and public assistance Medicaid and daycare beyond the earnings level at which they would normally be cut off from TANF, and only begin using up their transitional benefits at this higher financial cut-off point. To be eligible, TANF recipients must register for CAP when they first get a job, and must have a child support order, or have done all they possibly could to get one. Whilst this programme theoretically is available to all employed TANF recipients, not all are aware of its existence, whilst some would rather leave welfare than continue to attend meetings with caseworkers, and others without child support orders are reluctant to instigate child support court proceedings against former partners and so cannot take part. Other agencies that provide welfare-to-work programmes are also moving into providing post-employment services, although little funding is yet available for this work. The PIC programme, as part of their federal funding, provides free bus passes for up to a year to participants when they move into employment, and also pays for the part of transitional childcare that the recipient normally pays. By June 2000 EOC’s BRIDGE programme had just begun providing post-employment services. Clients were referred by DSS to their programme entitled Strategies for Promotion and Advancement Now (BRIDGE SPAN), where staff develop action plans to help participants get promotion, help improve their work performance, and enrol them on short-term training.
Whilst a range of post-employment services are available to lone parents in Buffalo availability does not cover demand, and access to services is haphazard and depends on which welfare-to-work programme a lone parent was initially referred to. The four lone parents I interviewed that had used the transition teams had had mixed experiences, some having problems getting hold of caseworkers, whilst others benefited from contacting caseworkers regularly for advice, and from having child support orders initiated. One lone parent had received a great deal of post-employment support from the PIC programme, whose staff had personally delivered the bus pass she was entitled to to her workplace in the suburbs, as she was unable to collect it from PIC’s downtown office due to the long hours she worked. The vast majority of lone parents had, however, received no post-employment services, and two-thirds of interviewees had therefore faced problems making the transition into employment. Many had found it hard to get used to budgeting and dealing in cash after having Food Stamps and rent vouchers, and had difficulty with the increased paperwork. The first month of employment was often a real struggle for lone parents who had been cut off TANF and had to pay rent and bills before receiving their first pay cheque, making the transition into employment very stressful, and described by one as ‘a nightmare’. Many found themselves in debt from the start of employment, and two lone parents had their utilities cut off, whilst others found they could not afford to pay their share of transitional daycare.

The patchy and uneven nature of post-employment services provision means that many lone parents are not automatically made aware of their benefit entitlements and are left without support when moving into employment. Lone parents in Buffalo would benefit from the UK system of post-employment support, where supporting lone parents as they move into the labour market is an automatic and integral part of the New Deal programme.

6.2.2 Financial support and services offered during the transition into employment in Sheffield

In the UK when lone parents move off income support into employment they are entitled to a much wider range of transitional benefits than those offered in the US, as shown in Table 6.3:
Table 6.3: Transitional benefits available to lone parents in Sheffield when they move off income support into employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobfinders Grant</td>
<td>One-off payment of £200 when lone parents move into employment. Lone parents are eligible if job lasts longer than 13 weeks and pays under £5 an hour. (Lone parents are no longer eligible for the ‘Job Grant’ which replaced this benefit in April 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to Work Bonus</td>
<td>Lone parents are eligible if they had declared earnings of over £15 whilst on income support that they were not allowed to keep. Paid as tax free lump sum when lone parents come off income support. Can be up to £1000 depending on earnings whilst on income support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Maintenance Bonus</td>
<td>Lone parents are eligible if they received child maintenance that they are not allowed to keep whilst on income support. Builds up by up to £5 a week whilst on income support, paid as lump sum of up to £1000 when leave income support for employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Support Run-on</td>
<td>Lone parents are entitled to an extra two weeks of income support in the first two weeks of employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Benefit Run-on</td>
<td>Lone parents are entitled to an extra four weeks of housing benefit in the first four weeks of employment. When they do start paying means-tested council rent their income is calculated after taking off any childcare costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax Benefit Run-on</td>
<td>Lone parents are entitled to an extra four weeks of council tax benefit in the first four weeks of employment. When they do start paying means-tested council tax their income is calculated after taking off any childcare costs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Collated by author from a number of sources

As well as these transitional benefits, employed lone parents were also entitled to in-work benefits as soon as they leave income support for employment, in the form of Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) which includes a childcare tax credit. These transitional benefits have been designed as an incentive to persuade lone parents to leave welfare and move into paid work, by removing some of the financial insecurity facing lone parents moving from the stability of income support into the labour market. These benefits are far more comprehensive than those available in Buffalo, and should enable a smooth financial transition into employment.
The structure of NDLP means that lone parents are automatically made aware of these benefits by their personal advisers, and all the employed lone parents I interviewed in Sheffield had received all of their entitlements to transitional benefits, although some were not entitled to these benefits. 44% had not received the Jobfinders Grant because they earned too much, were on temporary contracts, or had not been on income support long enough. Only one lone parent had received a Back to Work Bonus (of £460) due to her declaring earnings whilst on income support, and only two lone parents received Child Maintenance Bonuses (of £277 and £570), as they had received child maintenance whilst on income support. All interviewees received the Income Support Run-on, except one who was not eligible as they had not been on income support for long enough. Three-quarters had received the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Run-ons, the other quarter being ineligible for being on income support for long enough, and for being owner occupiers. These run-ons ensured that, unlike in Buffalo, lone parents were not left with no income in the first month of employment.

The New Deal is designed so that the same personal adviser who guides lone parents through the process of finding employment in the UK also provides post-employment services. In Sheffield, turnover among NDLP staff is higher than in other areas of the UK, as there is a great deal of movement between staff in local jobcentres and the Employment Service headquarters. Some lone parents had to be transferred to a different adviser when their adviser left, but even when this led to a loss of continuity for lone parents, unlike in Buffalo they are still guaranteed one-to-one support from someone with access to all of their employment details. In the UK 33% of lone parents who have gained employment through NDLP continue to receive this in-work support from NDLP (Department for Work and Pensions 2001), and this figure is much higher in Sheffield, where 67% continue to receive in-work support (Sheffield Employment Service, no date, unpublished). This may reflect a stronger commitment amongst NDLP advisers to providing this service in Sheffield, as Sheffield is where the national Employment Service is based, and may also reflect the restricted economic opportunities available to lone parents in Sheffield, so that some may need help in finding more suitable employment after moving into their initial job. Unlike in Buffalo, this intensive case management system is automatically in place for all lone parents,
so that when they find employment their adviser gives them advice on childcare and helps fill in all the forms to claim their entitlements to transitional and in-work benefits. Advisers also follow up any problems with claims, and provide help where necessary in finding lone parents more suitable jobs with more hours or that are better paid. After eight weeks NDLP advisers send a letter to check that lone parents are receiving all the in-work benefits they are entitled to, and to offer to help if they are having any problems with childcare or any other aspect of the transition into paid work. Lone parents often return to their adviser to renew their claim for WFTC six months after leaving income support.

This system is intended to ensure a smooth transition from welfare into paid work for lone parents in the UK, but in fact only one-third of lone parents in Sheffield found the transition easy. The remainder experienced problems, particularly with claiming WFTC, whilst others did not at first receive their entitlements, or found that despite the run-ons they had very little money in the first month of employment. One lone parent found the transition extremely difficult as he did not qualify for the run-ons or bonuses as he had not been on income support for long enough. He was paid a month in arrears, and so, like many lone parents in Buffalo, had no income for the first month of employment. Another lone parent became a full-time student whilst on WFTC and was receiving income from many different sources, and did not know what she was actually entitled to and was afraid of over-claiming. Many others found the process of leaving income support ‘scary’, and found it difficult getting used to managing their own money and paying for rent, mortgages and council tax themselves. Although the proportion of those who found the transition difficult is the same in Sheffield as in Buffalo, the reasons for this were somewhat different. Lone parents in Buffalo often had no money for the first month of employment, whilst those in Sheffield who had problems with benefits had them dealt with promptly by their personal adviser. They found the transition difficult mainly because of getting used to being employed and budgeting, rather than because they were struggling financially during the transition, or lacked support services. Lone parents in Buffalo would benefit enormously from transitional benefits which supported them for the first month in employment, and an integrated post-employment system that ensures that they receive one-to-one advice and guidance.
6.2.3 Failed transitions to employment

The difficulty in making the transition into paid work and to sustaining low-wage employment means that many lone parents cycle between being wholly reliant on welfare and the labour market (Edin and Lein 1997). In the US many evaluations of the success of welfare-to-work programmes have found a large minority of participants who left programmes for employment subsequently returned to full welfare. A major study of four programmes begun in the 1980s in Virginia, Arkansas, Baltimore and San Diego concluded that five years after initial enrolment in welfare-to-work programmes only half or fewer of all enrolees were still employed (Friedlander and Burtless 1995). A more recent study of former welfare recipients found that, of those who had found employment since the 1996 reforms, 29% had subsequently returned to welfare (Loprest 1999). In New York State 27% of cases that closed during 1997 returned to welfare within two months. 17% of those who left the welfare rolls in the first quarter of 1997 were on welfare one year after their case closing, whilst only 40% of all cases with an adult who was employed sometime during the four quarter follow-up period showed continuous employment in all four quarters (Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government 1999, SENSES 1999). A significant proportion of those making the transition into employment are, therefore, returning to unemployment on welfare.

In Erie County in 1997 the DSS studied 200 TANF recipients whom they had helped place in employment, and found that 60% had lost jobs within four months (Interview with Director of Employment and Training programmes, Erie County Department of Social Services, 9.11.99). The transition teams were set up in response to this, and have been far more successful in helping more lone parents to stay in employment after leaving welfare. Of the TANF cases closed for excess income by transition teams in July 1998 only 17% had returned to welfare after twelve months (Interview with Supervisor, DSS Transition Team, 1.9.99). Whilst the intensive case management approach of the transition teams has reduced the recidivism rate, lone parents going through welfare-to-work programmes with little post-employment support have been less successful in staying in employment. Of the 168 lone parents who had found jobs after attending the Clarkson Center in 1999 very few were still employed six months after leaving the welfare-to-work programme, as shown in Figure 6.11:
Figure 6.11: Length of time lone parents were employed after leaving the Clarkson Center's welfare-to-work programmes for employment in 1999

DATA SOURCE: Clarkson Center, Buffalo

Given these figures, and despite the lack of support given to many of the interviewees in Buffalo, a very low number returned to welfare after making the transition into employment. The threat of sanctions for lone parents who 'voluntarily quit' their jobs meant that many found alternative employment immediately on leaving their jobs, rather than returning to welfare. However, three lone parents I interviewed had become unemployed after making the transition into employment. Vanessa had been fired from her job after failing a computer skills test and returned to the Clarkson Center job club to look for employment. Francine was fired from a factory job after complaining of sexual harassment, and the temporary employment agency who employed her failed to find her alternative work. Margaret had three jobs since leaving the welfare-to-work programme, leaving the first after one month because she felt unable to continue working night shifts, being fired from the second after five months.
after a dispute with a manager, and leaving the third after suffering back and neck strain whilst pregnant.

Incredibly, in the UK no employment retention figures for lone parents who were on NDLP are collected by the Employment Service at either a national or a local level. Although the lone parents I interviewed in Sheffield received far more post-employment support than those in Buffalo, more subsequently return to welfare, as they are able to leave inappropriate jobs voluntarily, without losing their entitlements to benefit. In all one-third of lone parents who had made the transition into employment had left their jobs. Katherine had been unfairly dismissed and had threatened her employer with an industrial tribunal before being paid the wages she was owed. Liz had left her job as she was missing her nine-month old child and was not much better off in work after paying childcare. Sarah had left her job as she felt her two-year old son was too young to be in full-time nursery. Lisa had left her job after pressure to work shifts that did not fit around her child's school hours. Emmeline had left her job because she was not much better off financially and left before becoming ineligible for mortgage relief for the first 39 weeks back on income support. Sally had a few seasonal jobs which ended and was then fired from her next job after being discriminated against. Even with a high level of transitional benefits and support, the reality of the low-end of the labour market, with its low financial returns and pressure on family life, led many lone parents in Sheffield to choose income support over low-wage work.

6.3 CONCLUSION: MOVING LONE PARENTS FROM WELFARE INTO PAID WORK?

Welfare-to-work programmes have been primarily assessed in the media and by politicians in terms of whether they have been successful in moving lone parents off welfare and into paid work. High profile examples of welfare caseload declines in some areas of the US have led to the assumption that welfare-to-work is succeeding in moving lone parents from welfare into paid work. However, the depressed local labour market of Buffalo has done far worse than other areas in New York State and the US as a whole in moving lone parents off welfare, so that a third of interviewees remained on welfare after six months, either with or without
employment. Far lower proportions of lone parents have left benefit in the UK than in the US. Like Buffalo, Sheffield has also done worse than its surrounding region in moving lone parents off welfare, reflecting its localised high levels of unemployment, and here too over a third of interviewees remained on welfare after six months, although unlike in Buffalo all were without employment. Whilst the majority of interviewees in Buffalo had moved into employment after attending welfare-to-work programmes, in Sheffield the majority had not, having chosen to stay on benefit. Even in Buffalo where lone parents were threatened with losing their entitlement to welfare if they did not find employment, over a third of interviewees had not moved into paid work. These results show how programmes in both cities are failing to address the multiple barriers to employment faced by many lone parents.

For those lone parents that have made the transition into employment, transitional support and benefits are far better in Sheffield than in Buffalo, where a lack of support leads to many lone parents facing severe economic hardship in the first few weeks of employment. Despite this hardship few lone parents in Buffalo had given up employment, as voluntarily leaving their job would mean losing their entitlement to welfare, whilst in Sheffield despite better support structures more had returned to income support, as they were able to leave inappropriate jobs. Chapter 4 has shown how those lone parents who remain on welfare without employment are living in poverty, struggling to make ends meet. Chapter 7 examines whether programmes have been successful in lifting lone parents who have moved into the labour market out of poverty. It does this by studying the types of employment lone parents have moved into, to investigate whether employed lone parents are trapped at the low end of the labour market, or whether they are able, as government rhetoric suggests, to leave poverty through paid work.
CHAPTER SEVEN: 
SURVIVING ON THE MARGINS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK are successfully moving some lone parents into the labour market, leading politicians and the media to hail them as a great success. However, most analyses of welfare reform fail to examine what happens to these lone parents after they have made this transition from welfare into employment, and does not assess whether programmes are succeeding in lifting lone parents and their families out of poverty. Whilst much research examines the nature of welfare-to-work programmes and lone parents' experiences of them, as well as their success in reducing the welfare rolls, few studies have examined the types of jobs lone parents are getting, whether lone parents are in fact leaving poverty through paid work as policy-makers have assumed, and how lone parents are coping with the dual burden of bringing up their families and being the sole wage earner in their household.

This chapter examines these issues, describing the kinds of work lone parents move into and discussing whether these jobs are characteristic of 'new' forms of flexible and precarious employment. It then goes on to analyse whether lone parents are any better off financially in paid work, or whether they have simply moved from living in poverty on welfare to joining the ranks of the working poor. It concludes by highlighting the difficulties of achieving a work-life balance for lone parents, examining the consequences of 'working a double shift' of both paid and unpaid work. In tackling these issues this chapter gets to the heart of an examination of what welfare reform is really about: increasing the workload of lone parents by getting them into the labour market, but failing to lift them out of poverty.

7.1 JOINING THE CONTINGENT WORKFORCE

7.1.1 What types of jobs are lone parents getting?

The primary focus of Government agencies delivering welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK is clearly shown by the kinds of information they collect about the outcomes of
welfare-to-work programmes. Statistics on the numbers who have left benefit and moved into employment are regularly released and widely available, but detailed information on the types of jobs lone parents have moved into is not officially collected by government agencies in either country. County and state level Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) statistics and national New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) statistics do not include the sectors lone parents moved into, whether they are working part-time or full-time, and whether they are employed by the rising number of temporary employment agencies. Individual social service organizations within Buffalo and the Employment Service in Sheffield do, however, unofficially collect more detailed information on the jobs lone parents get. Figure 7.1 shows the type of employment at the time of leaving the Educational Opportunity Center’s (EOC) BRIDGE welfare-to-work programme in Buffalo, for the 392 participants who left between July 1996 and September 1999.

Figure 7.1: Sectors employing lone parents who moved into employment from EOC’s BRIDGE Programme in Buffalo (July 1996 to September 1999)

DATA SOURCE: EOC

15 Agencies that find jobs for people seeking work and assist employers by locating temporary personnel to fill particular jobs.
The main sector in which welfare recipients found jobs was healthcare\textsuperscript{16}, reflecting the dominance of the healthcare industry within Buffalo\textsuperscript{17}. This figure also reflects EOC’s welfare-to-work programmes which include a Certified Nursing Assistants programme, as well as job clubs and business and computer technology programmes, as outlined in Chapter Five. The next two biggest sectors are telemarketing, reflecting how sales work based in call centres has become a large sector of Buffalo’s economy as it has in many de-industrialised regions (Hilpern 2001), and temporary employment agencies. The rise of temporary employment agencies as part of a restructuring of work away from Fordist forms of employment has been documented by a number of authors (Allen and Henry 1997; Booth et al. 2000; Howarth et al. 1999; Peck and Theodore 1998b; Purcell 2000; Stewart et al. 2000). These figures bear out their conclusions that temporary employment agencies are increasingly supplying workers who would once have been directly employed by the companies that they are working within. The other sectors lone parents have moved into reflect the mixture of service industries dominant in Buffalo’s economy, with manufacturing making up only 4% of all employment, although some temp agencies in Buffalo do supply workers for the manufacturing sector. These destinations of EOC’s welfare recipients are reflected in the responses to my questionnaire, where social service organisations providing welfare-to-work programmes stated that healthcare, telemarketing and temporary employment agencies were the biggest employers of lone parents who had found employment through their programmes. The Clarkson’s Center’s figures show similar trends, as detailed in Figure 7.2:

\textsuperscript{16} Including hospitals, residential care homes, doctors and dentists practices, and in-home care.

\textsuperscript{17} Kaleida Health alone, which operates a number of hospitals within the city, is the largest private sector employer in Western New York, employing a workforce of 13,000 (Interview with Recruiter, Kaleida Health, 7.12.99).
Of the 168 welfare recipients who moved into work from the Clarkson Center in 1999, temporary employment agencies were the biggest employer\(^\text{18}\), followed by hotels and restaurants. Manufacturing employs a larger percentage of former participants than at EOC, and banks are not such big employers, and healthcare is also a smaller employer, reflecting the lack of nursing training in the Clarkson Center’s welfare-to-work programmes. In Sheffield the local Employment Service (ES) has also calculated the percentages of lone parents moving into different occupations. Between April 1999 and March 2000 131 lone parents found paid employment having participated in NDLP. The ES has classified these individuals as falling into ten different categories, as shown in Figure 7.3:  

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\(^{18}\) Employing lone parents in a large range of sectors.
As in Buffalo, almost all lone parents are now working in the service-sector in this mainly de-industrialised city, with retail, clerical work, ‘domestic’ cleaning work and catering being the biggest sectors. An examination of the jobs gained by the lone parents I interviewed in both cities shown in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 shows that they were all employed in entry-level positions, defined as positions that someone with less than 1.5 years of experience could apply for.
Table 7.1: Jobs obtained by Buffalo lone parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Job type</th>
<th>Job description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western New York Children’s Psychiatric Center</td>
<td>Educational Assistant to Disabled Children</td>
<td>Work with behavioural problems, calming disturbed children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabled Association</td>
<td>Administrative Office Assistant</td>
<td>Receptionist, phones, filing, photocopying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Bank</td>
<td>Customer Service Representative</td>
<td>Dealing with client transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M and T Bank</td>
<td>File Clerk</td>
<td>Maintaining files in commercial credit file room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Fargo Gas Station</td>
<td>Sales assistant</td>
<td>Changing tyres, customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes Collection Bureau</td>
<td>Debt Collector</td>
<td>Contacting those in debt and collecting money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altamont Reintegration Program</td>
<td>Administrative Office Assistant</td>
<td>Computer work, typing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services</td>
<td>Care Worker</td>
<td>Filing, administration, administering medication, cleaning, dealing with clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaufmanns Department Store</td>
<td>Sales Assistant</td>
<td>Inventories, customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan’s Downtown Deli</td>
<td>Food Preparation</td>
<td>Preparing food, stocking products, cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Frontier Vocational Rehabilitation Center</td>
<td>Secretarial Clerk</td>
<td>Secretarial work in traumatic brain injury department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breath of Life Daycare Center</td>
<td>Daycare</td>
<td>Preparing food, changing nappies, playing with children, paperwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Bureau</td>
<td>Assistant Crew Leader</td>
<td>Checking people’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>Family Partner</td>
<td>Run classes for parents, support parents, paperwork, visiting children in daycare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA Paediatric Agency</td>
<td>Licensed Practical Nurse</td>
<td>In-home care including feeding, G tube insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS Temp Agency</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>IV bag production on assembly line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Lutheran Rehabilitation Center</td>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
<td>Nursing Alzheimer patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beef Station Restaurant</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>Waitress and food preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telemarketing Company</td>
<td>Telemarketer</td>
<td>Phoning potential clients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
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<td>Telemarketer</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

196
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Job type</th>
<th>Job description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield City Council Housing Department</td>
<td>Housing Officer</td>
<td>Receptionist, home visits, arrears chasing, following up housing benefit claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuels Jewellers</td>
<td>Sales Assistant</td>
<td>Customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsley Jet Petrol Station</td>
<td>Sales Assistant</td>
<td>Customer service, cashing up, phone, security, stock replenishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Marie’s Primary School After School Club</td>
<td>Daycare</td>
<td>Providing safe environment, fund and awareness raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield City Council Archives</td>
<td>Archive Assistant</td>
<td>Reception, administration, issue desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEC Employment Agency</td>
<td>Administrative Office Assistant</td>
<td>Typing, photocopying, dealing with clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordanthorpe Doctor’s Surgery</td>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td>Dealing with patients, making appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Service</td>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
<td>Administering pilot scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Service</td>
<td>Frontline Jobcentre</td>
<td>Dealing with public, assessing claimants, data entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Health and Safety Community Project</td>
<td>Drugs Education</td>
<td>Writing and designing programmes, presenting and organising sessions in schools and youth clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Catherine’s Nursing Home</td>
<td>Carer</td>
<td>Bathing patients, taking them on trips, working alongside nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern General Hospital</td>
<td>Domestic Assistant</td>
<td>Assistant in linen store, washing up, portioning and cleaning departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallamshire Hospital</td>
<td>Medical Secretary</td>
<td>Secretarial work, booking appointments for cancer study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Care Home</td>
<td>Residential Social Worker</td>
<td>Making sure children attend school, providing home environment, paperwork, cooking, cleaning, driving, resolving conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debenhams Department Store</td>
<td>Financial Office Assistant</td>
<td>Counting money and depositing in safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Taxi Driver</td>
<td>Taxi driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela’s Temp Agency</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>Cleaning offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temp Agency</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>Cleaning nursery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temp Agency</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>Cleaning homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>Bar Maid</td>
<td>Serving customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Company</td>
<td>Administrative Office Assistant</td>
<td>Greeting clients, managing bills and invoices, co-ordinating seminars, typing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
Whilst these jobs require little previous experience the majority of employers did require applicants to have some skills or qualifications prior to becoming employed, with only five of the 19 jobs of Buffalo lone parents requiring no skills or qualifications, whilst only nine of the 21 jobs of Sheffield lone parents required no skills or qualifications. The gendering of skills and occupations means that despite requiring in some cases a fairly high level of skill (Ehrenreich 2001), many jobs in the service-sector are undervalued and low-paid (McDowell 1991).

7.1.2 Are these lone parents flexible and precarious workers?

There is a major difference between the proportions of lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield who are moving into full-time and part-time work. In Buffalo 50% of the 392 lone parents covered by the EOC’s figures were full-time, 53% of the 168 lone parents who had attended the Clarkson Center were full-time, and 58% of the Buffalo interviewees were full-time. These figures reflect the structure of welfare reform in the US: lone parents receiving any cash assistance from welfare with a youngest child over six years old are required to work 30 hours a week or more, or they have to make up the difference in hours by attending a welfare-to-work programme. To leave welfare completely a lone parent needs to work more than 30 hours a week if they are on a low wage, and a large number therefore move into full-time employment. The US Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) can be claimed by a lone parent working any number of hours as long as they have earned income.

In the UK to claim Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) a lone parent must be working 16 hours a week or more, with WFTC offering strong incentives to take part-time work but weaker financial incentives to move into full-time and higher paid work (Coe et al. 1998). Incredibly there are no figures at a national or local level on the number of hours worked by lone parents who have left NDLP. Although it is possible to get a breakdown of the hours worked by lone parents claiming WFTC in the UK it is not possible to see which lone parents have come from NDLP. It does, however, give some indication of the prominence of part-

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Defined as 40 hours a week in Buffalo and 37.5 hours a week in Sheffield.
time work reflecting the incentive structure of WFTC, with the average normal weekly hours worked by lone parents claiming WFTC being 26.7, whilst only 25% worked 36 hours a week or more (Inland Revenue 2000). The figures for the Sheffield interviewees also show this prominence of part-time work, with 76% working part-time. This difference between the hours worked by lone parents in Buffalo and Sheffield also reflects the national figures for full-time and part-time work amongst lone mothers in the US and the UK, where full-time work amongst lone mothers is much higher in the US than amongst UK lone mothers (Bradshaw et al. 1996).

My interview data allows for a detailed examination of the hours lone parents are working, and by categorising them into a typology of the types of hours they are working it is possible to show the numbers working a traditional working week compared with more flexible hours and shifts. Firstly are ‘traditional workers’; a group of full-timers who work the same eight hour shifts daily from Monday to Friday between 7am and 6pm. Secondly there is a group of ‘flexible full-timers’ who work the same number of hours each week at non-traditional times including evenings and weekends and changing shift patterns; thirdly ‘traditional part-timers’ who work the same part-time shifts daily from Monday to Friday between 7am and 6pm, and finally ‘flexible part-timers’ who work non-traditional hours including the evenings, weekends and changing shift patterns. The percentages of lone parents in each category in Buffalo and Sheffield are shown in Table 7.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional workers</th>
<th>Flexible full-timers</th>
<th>Traditional part-timers</th>
<th>Flexible part-timers</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

This table shows the high proportion of traditional workers in Buffalo in contrast to the dominance of flexible part-timers in Sheffield, and the greater level of overall flexibility in Sheffield, with 74% of all lone parents working flexible hours, compared to only 37% in
Buffalo. Where as in Buffalo part-timers are fairly evenly split between those working flexible and more traditional hours, in Sheffield nearly all part-timers have flexible work schedules. Lone parents in Sheffield are therefore far more characteristic of the flexible workers described as typifying precarious forms of work (see Chapter Two) than are lone parents in Buffalo, although even in Buffalo one-third of lone parents are working flexible schedules. Although more lone parents in Buffalo were working full-time, including those doing shift work, when asked whether they were happy with their hours many said they wanted to work more hours, reflecting the low pay of these jobs, the fact that EITC is paid annually rather than monthly, and the aspiration of lone parents to leave welfare completely. Many would also have preferred to work more standard hours, and highlighted the problems with non-standard hours:

*JC: And you’d rather not work at night?*

*Renee: I’d rather not, only because I walk. Now if I had a car it might be a little different, but because I walk at 10 o’clock at night Downtown it’s still, it’s still Buffalo, it’s still bad. If you turn the news on OK, it’s still bad out, and I’m single, I’m a woman, and it’s 10 o’clock at night - I don’t like walking home. Personally, I don’t like walking home. If Kentucky Fried Chicken wasn’t there with all the lights and their cleaning crew I would really not walk it - I wouldn’t do it.*

*Carmela: What childcare provider is going to work with you when your schedule is flip flop like that?*

In Sheffield half of the lone parents who were working flexible hours had control over their own flexibility, working flexi-time to fit their hours around their other responsibilities. This reflects the voluntary and longer-term nature of NDLP, compared with welfare-to-work programmes in the US, which enables lone parents to choose when and whether to move into employment, so that they are more likely to find employment with hours that meet their needs. One interviewee was able to fit her hours around attending college, and another worked more hours in term-time and fewer during the school holidays. In general lone parents...
in Sheffield were therefore happier with their hours than those in Buffalo; 74% compared to 42%.

My interviewees generally experienced a certain amount of churning, moving between jobs after a relatively short period of time reflecting the revolving door at the low end of the labour market (Martin 2000; Peck 1996). In Buffalo four lone parents were already in their second job since leaving welfare, and in Sheffield three were in their second job since leaving welfare, and one was in her third job within six months. Some of this labour market churning was due to the increasing importance of temporary employment agencies who employed 18% of the interviewees in Buffalo, and 42% of the interviewees in Sheffield. These jobs by definition were precarious, with short-term contracts, fewer benefits and little job security for the lone parents working in them. One lone parent in Sheffield highlighted the lack of long-term security in temporary jobs:

*Lucy: I don’t think it’s stable no, simple because it’s a three month temporary contract. So basically at the end of this three months they might say to me ‘thank you very much’, or they might say ‘yes we’d like to take you on for another three months temporary contract’, which I have to say I don’t mind too much, what I do mind is that I’d like to buy my house. So I need a mortgage and you can’t get one with a temporary contract.*

Many of these lone parents are typical of a disposable ‘Kleenex workforce’ (Martin 2000), experiencing labour market churning, and unable to make a stable transition into permanent and stable employment.

7.1.3 A foot on the employment ladder?

The work-first philosophy of welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield is predicated on the existence of job ladders, so that lone parents who move into the low-end of the labour market can then move into higher-skilled and better-paid work over time as they gain experience. However, lone parents starting at the bottom of job ladders are unlikely to
move up an employment hierarchy unless they are equipped with skills through employment-based training. Although many lone parents got their jobs with the help of training or qualifications they already had, two-thirds had had no training subsequently as part of their job, reflecting a lack of work-based training detailed by previous studies (Arulampalan and Booth 1998, Rainbird and Munro 2000). Of those who received training, about half had an initial induction into their jobs at the start of employment, and only a handful of employers had a real commitment to ongoing training that would equip their staff with the skills needed to move up an employment hierarchy, and these were mainly large public sector employers of entry-level workers.

Frustration with jobs held in the past that had offered no progression was common. One Buffalo lone parent had worked for eighteen years as a home health aide at minimum wage, and found she was paid more when she became a food preparation worker:

Francine: It had no benefits, no benefits at all, you know, you could be there all those years. If you didn’t put in so many hours you wouldn’t even get a weeks vacation. Having worked for them all those years it didn’t advance me in any way. I could of ... the 18 years I worked for them I could have went to school for nursing, and, and then be better off. You know what I’m saying! 18 years of just doing the same thing, no advancement. [She describes the job she got next which is less skilled but pays more] It took me twenty something years to get a job for $7 an hour?! I mean, they was paying me $7 to just make food!

Contrary to the maxim of welfare-to-work programmes that ‘any job is a good job’ many lone parents expressed the desire for a career rather than just any job:

Anna: I mean yeh I clean; I have no worries about cleaning, but as a career, no!

In contrast to some of the previous experience of lone parents, there is some evidence of progression in the jobs they had recently moved into, both in terms of pay rises and promotions. This was more common in organisations which traditionally have a strong
internal employment hierarchy such as public sector organisations and banks; although lone parents working in a debt collection bureau and a shop had also received pay rises. For lone parents who managed to find stable employment in such organisations there is some chance of working their way up a job ladder, and some lone parents had managed to leave their initial employer to move into more stable or well-paid work. With so many lone parents finding work in temporary employment agencies and within new employment sectors such as telemarketing renowned for the lack of career progression, it is, however, likely that some lone parents will be staying at the bottom of the job ladder, rather than progressing to better-paid work which can lift them out of poverty in the longer term. Contrary to the work-first philosophy of welfare-to-work programmes, these lone parents are finding themselves trapped in the low-end of a divided labour market.

7.1.4 The reality of working in the low-end of the labour market

Perhaps surprisingly at first glance, the vast majority of lone parents were enjoying their experience of working in the low-end of the labour market. Lone parents detailed many positive aspects of their work; many enjoyed the kind of work they were doing, liked the people they worked with, found it rewarding to help people, and enjoyed dealing with the public. The fact that they were enjoying the experience of being employed reflects that these lone parents, far from aspiring to stay at home and live off the state, want to enter the labour market, and are benefiting from the increased self-esteem that comes from leaving welfare and having a life outside of being a parent:

Betty [Buffalo]: I enjoy it very much. I look forward to it in the morning; I can’t wait to get to work! I like it a lot better than sitting at home. Sure I had things to do there, housework and stuff, but it’s not the same. I mean I feel I have a purpose and the money that I bring in now, I’m earning it and it just makes me feel so much better that you’re providing for your family. Not somebody else sending you the money, you’re earning it. It’s a great feeling.
Alice [Sheffield]: [I enjoy] not being unemployed. There’s quite a big stigma to go with that. ... Because my money doesn’t come from the dole at all now, it’s the Inland Revenue [Working Families Tax Credit] and my company, so absolutely nothing to do with the unemployment at all. Just filling in a form employed/unemployed, it feels so much better to be employed. And when people ask you what you do [and you say] “Oh I’m a housewife”, do you know what I mean? And you haven’t got stuff to talk about if you’re at home with kids and shopping and watching soaps in the afternoon. So it is a lot nicer to be able to talk about it, and you feel a lot better in yourself.

However, although most lone parents found paid work preferable to being on welfare, employment in the low-end of the labour market comes at the price of low-pay, stress and exhaustion (Ehrenreich 2001). Interviewees described a range of disadvantages to their jobs:

Evelyn [Buffalo]: I wish it was more pay, and I might have to move on [to another job] because it’s not enough to support my family, but for now I need that hands on experience.

Mary [Buffalo]: And it gets tiring like sweeping, mopping, cleaning up every day, it’s tiring.

Debbie [Sheffield]: [Who works for the Employment Service] It’s just when you see all these people queuing and they’re all tapping and watching the clock and it’s a different kind of attitude. I mean there used to be long queues in the Housing Office but not such an antagonism between them and the organization. So that’s quite scary.

One lone parent was also suffering from a work related illness, having developed tennis elbow through her cleaning jobs, and was finding sleeping at night very difficult because of the pain. As well as experiencing stress, tiredness and physical problems, many lone parents felt that their jobs did not make full use of their experience and abilities and a number were applying for other jobs that would increase their hours, were higher paid, or had employment stability and a chance for promotion. Lone parents were also suffering from restricted opportunities for
women, ethnic minorities and parents, caused by discrimination in the labour market. A number of interviewees in Buffalo had experienced racial discrimination limiting their labour market opportunities; feeling that employers were not taking the process of interviewing them seriously, and that they faced a triple disadvantage as black women with children. Another lone parent was discriminated against because of her criminal record making it very difficult to find work. Lone parents in both Buffalo and Sheffield felt that employers discriminated against them for having children, assuming their family responsibilities meant that they would not be committed to the organisation. Some had been fired because they had had to take time off to look after their children when they were ill, and because they were pregnant, whilst others had been rejected after interviews when employers had found out they had children.

The work-first approach of welfare-to-work programmes in both cities has led to lone parents joining the contingent labour force, moving into entry-level, service-sector jobs which are precarious and do not necessarily lead to progression up an employment hierarchy. However, the voluntary approach of welfare-to-work programmes in the UK means that lone parents in Sheffield are moving into these jobs voluntarily because they know they will be better-off due to in-work benefits. In contrast, whilst lone parents in Buffalo want paid work, they have to move into employment even if they will be no better-off, or face losing their entitlement to benefit.

7.2 LEAVING POVERTY THROUGH PAID WORK

Welfare-to-work programmes are often evaluated by examining the number of people who have left the welfare rolls, rather than the numbers who have been lifted out of poverty. Little analysis has yet been undertaken to examine what happens to recipients after they have left the welfare rolls (Theodore 1997/1998), and when poverty is evaluated success rates are often found to be dismal (Friedlander and Burtless 1995, Handler 1995, McCrate and Smith 1998). Evaluations of the success of four programmes begun in the 1980s in Virginia, Arkansas, Baltimore and San Diego concluded that the great majority of programme enrollees did not obtain stable employment at above average earnings levels (Friedlander and Burtless 1995). An examination of the one of the most famous state welfare-to-work programmes in the US,
California’s ‘Greater Avenues for Independence’ (GAIN) programme found that the work-first approach led to participants being only $52 a month better off (Peck 1998b). None of the published research commissioned by the Employment Service on the New Deal for Lone Parents has examined the effects of employment on the poverty levels of lone parents (Dawson et al. 2000; Hales et al. 2000; Hasluck 2000). By interviewing individual lone parents, this research is able to analyse the effects of employment on the levels of poverty and hardship experienced by lone parents.

7.2.1 Do wages bring financial security for lone parents?

The Federal minimum wage in the US was first introduced in 1938 at a level of 25 cents, with the latest increase in 1997 taking it to a level of $5.15, or £3.40, an hour. In the UK the first ever national minimum wage became law on 1 April 1999 at £3.60 an hour for workers over 21, and was raised from its current level of £3.70 an hour to £4.10 an hour on 1 October 2001, bringing it to a significantly more generous level that the US minimum. These minimum wages are supposed to ensure that workers are lifted out of poverty. Whilst government agencies do not collect data on wage levels of former welfare recipients, in Buffalo both EOC and the Clarkson Center collect data on the starting wage of lone parents leaving their programmes. Over the period from July 1996 to September 1999 EOC had an average starting wage of $6.65, or £4.39 an hour, whilst the average starting wage of lone parents leaving the Clarkson Center for employment in 1999 was slightly lower at $6.16, or £4.07, an hour. This compares to the higher average wage of my interviewees in Buffalo of $7.81, or £5.15, an hour. Their wages ranged from $3.20 an hour plus tips for a waitress20, to $13 an hour for an educational assistant to disabled children. In Sheffield no information on wage levels of lone parents leaving NDLP for employment is collected. The average wage of my interviewees was £4.96 an hour, ranging from the then minimum wage of £3.70 an hour for cleaning, bar maid and care worker jobs, to £7.79 an hour for a residential social worker. Wage levels were slightly lower in Sheffield, as lone parents were aware that if they moved into low-paid work their wages would be supplemented by monthly tax credits, unlike those in Buffalo who were unaware of the option of receiving tax credits monthly. The low wage levels in both cities

20 The minimum wage for waitresses is lower.
reflect the work-first approach of welfare-to-work programmes which follow a labour force attachment approach to employing lone parents, rather than a human capital development approach, where lone parents get the skills training needed to move into skilled work which is better paid.

These low wages meant that in Buffalo two lone parents were working more than one job in order to supplement their low incomes, whilst in Sheffield five were engaged in supplementary jobs. Financial security is not only dependent on wage levels, but also on the benefits package that comes with employment, which can include the right to sick pay, personal time, and paid holiday time, as well as subsidised health insurance. Of the employed interviewees in Buffalo 58% had a benefits package, and only 26% had health insurance through their jobs; the other 74% being dependent on Medicaid. Of the lone parents in Sheffield 28% were not entitled to statutory sick pay as they were on temporary contracts or were self-employed. Welfare-to-work programmes are based on the premise that paid work lifts lone parent families out of poverty, but lone parents who had left welfare and moved into work were in fact concentrated in low-wage and financially insecure employment, like many others in the low-end of the labour market (Stewart 1999; Tilly 1996a). These jobs pay low wages, despite requiring some skills, reflecting the gendering of skills, with traditionally female occupations being less valued and paying less well than jobs traditionally gendered as male (McDowell 1991).

The living wage movement in the US was initiated in 1994 by unions, community groups and religious organizations, who argued that the minimum wage was not lifting people out of poverty and that its level should therefore be raised (Freeman and Katz 1994, Pollin 1998). It has succeeded in passing ‘living wage ordinances’ in a number of large cities, which change municipal laws and cover public sector workers employed at the city level, rather than those employed by the county, state or federal Government (Pollin 1998). Buffalo’s living wage ordinance was passed in July 1999 and was set at $8.62 (£5.69) an hour when a worker does not have health benefits, and $7.69 (£5.08) an hour for a worker with health benefits. This level is based on calculations based on full-time work and after-tax earnings, and is to lift a two to three person household out of poverty. It will be phased in to eventually reach a level
of $8.08 for those with health benefits and $9.08 for those without health benefits by the year 2002 (Coalition for Economic Justice 1997). Wages for low-end service sector jobs in New York State and Erie County rarely reach this level. A state-wide picture shows that 87% of jobs with the most growth pay less than a living wage, with 53% of these jobs paying less than half of a living wage (National Priorities Project 1999). Examining the wages earned, and the health insurance status, of lone parents in Buffalo, shows that only 41% of Buffalo respondents had jobs that paid a living wage. In the UK the largest public sector union UNISON is also campaigning for the national minimum wage to be increased to a living wage level of £5 an hour (UNISON 1999). Like Buffalo, Sheffield is also an area with a predominance of low wage jobs, and only 19% of Sheffield respondents had jobs that paid this living wage level, whilst another 24% were being paid a living wage but were only working part-time hours. Welfare-to-work programmes are moving most lone parents into jobs that do not pay them a living wage, and paid work alone, despite the introduction of minimum wages, is not enough to successfully lift all lone parents out of poverty. This reflects early evaluations of US welfare reform which show that in March 1998 only 8% of the previous years welfare recipients had jobs that paid weekly wages above the poverty line (Sherman et al. 1998).

7.2.2 Are lone parents' overall incomes lifting them out of poverty?

Governments in both the US and the UK have introduced other measures alongside minimum wages to 'make work pay' for low-wage workers. These initiatives are designed to increase non-wage incomes, by supplementing wages with tax credits and child support. It is possible to measure the effects of these initiatives on lone parents by comparing their overall incomes to the absolute poverty line or poverty threshold; the total income needed before tax to sustain a family. The US Census Bureau has calculated that in the year 2000 the poverty line for a family of one adult and two children is an income of $1156, or £763, a month (US Census Bureau 2000b). In the UK the Family Budget Unit has calculated the 'low cost but acceptable income' without alcohol for a lone parent family with two children as £950 a month (Parker 1998).
The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was introduced in the US in 1975 as an in-work benefit providing financial assistance to the working poor families in the form of a tax credit administered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), rather than as a benefit administered through local DSS offices. To be eligible for EITC an individual must have earned income in the last year, and they must have a child under 19, or under 24 if in full-time education. The EITC embodies a recognition that low wages mean that paid work alone may not lift a family out of poverty, and that the working poor as well as the nonworking poor need and deserve income transfers to support their families (Alstott 1995). The level of the EITC was raised by President Clinton in 1994 as one part of welfare reform, so it would lift a family with children supported by a full-time minimum wage worker above the poverty line (Mueller and Schwartz 1998), and it was raised again in 1998, and now provides families up to $3756 a year. National evidence shows that the EITC has led to 4.7 million people, including 2.6 million children, being removed from poverty (Johnson 2000). This success of the federal EITC has led 15 states, including New York, to enact a state EITC that supplements the federal credit. New regulations now encourage the introduction of state EITCs as part of state welfare reform programmes, as some of a state’s EITCs can now be funded from the TANF block grant. This combination of the federal EITC and state EITCs closes the poverty gap for many welfare recipients moving into the workforce (Johnson 2000).

In New York State in the 2000 tax year the state EITC was 22.5% of the federal EITC and will rise to 30% by 2003. This combination of the federal and state EITC means that employed lone mothers in New York State should be significantly better off working even at a minimum wage than relying solely on welfare. A single mother with two children has a monthly net income that is 77% of the poverty line when she has no paid work, 112% of the poverty line when she has a part-time job of twenty hours a week at the minimum wage, and 134% when she works thirty hours a week at a minimum wage job (Coe et al. 1998). The EITC should, therefore, be lifting employed lone parent families out of poverty. However, there are some problems with the way the EITC is designed and delivered, the major issue affecting employed lone parents being the way EITC is paid. Recipients themselves do not have to apply for EITC as the IRS checks eligibility when an individual files income taxes. Although workers are allowed to claim their projected tax credit throughout the year rather
than as an annual lump sum as 'the Advance EITC', virtually no EITC recipients choose this option, as they may incur tax liability due to overpayment during the year, as advance payment systems tend to overpay during the year to those with fluctuating incomes (Alstott 1995). The impact of lone parents receiving their EITC at the end of the tax year is threefold. Firstly many poor families may not normally have to file tax returns except to claim for EITC, so some of those who are eligible may not be claiming. Secondly those who are claiming often pay a commercial tax preparer to file their tax return which is a hidden cost to the lone parent of claiming EITC, and thirdly although receiving it in a lump sum allows lone parents to make large investments, for example in buying a car, it means that week by week they are worse off, and may not be lifted above the poverty line in terms of their regular monthly income.

In the UK WFTC was introduced on 5 October 1999 and replaced Family Credit, which had been available to low-income working families previously and was a lot less generous. When it was first introduced it was paid in the same way as other benefits at a Post Office every week, or into a bank account every two weeks, but from April 2000 it has been paid directly through the employees' pay packet. The design of the WFTC was based on the thinking behind the EITC, and it is also administered through the Inland Revenue rather than the Benefits Agency. WFTC is means-tested and the amount received depends on net weekly income disregarding any child maintenance received. Families where a lone parent is working 16 hours a week or more are entitled to claim if their children are under 16, or under 18 if in full-time education, and if they have savings of £8,000 or less. These criteria are therefore stricter than EITC, which has no requirement to work a minimum number of hours, and where a lone parent is eligible if they have a child under 19, or 24 if in higher education. WFTC can include a childcare tax credit to cover childcare expenses, unlike in the US where childcare costs are subsidized through the county level DSS offices. Those receiving WFTC are also entitled to free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment as they are when on income support. The maximum level of WFTC for a lone parent family with two children under sixteen where the lone parent works more than 30 hours a week and requires no childcare assistance is £117.45 a week, and this will increase by £5 a week from June 2001. The maximum childcare tax credit only available if formal childcare, such as nurseries and registered childminders, is
used, is another £105 a week for two or more children (Inland Revenue 1999). WFTC is twice as generous as the EITC and should effectively raise hourly income of those on a minimum wage to £6.40 an hour.

Few studies have yet been completed assessing the effects of the WFTC on lifting lone parent families out of poverty due to the short time that it has been in place. Most assessments to date have been on the possible effects of WFTC as a work incentive (Blundell et al. 2000; Blundell and Reed 2000; Duncan and Reed 2000), highlighting potential problems with the way WFTC has been designed. The take up of WFTC is lower than that of EITC in the US, perhaps reflecting the fact that lone parents must claim for WFTC rather than getting it automatically as they do in the US. There have also been suggestions that by administering WFTC as a tax credit rather than a benefit it increases stigma, as paying it monthly through the wage packet means that employers are aware of which employees are recipients (Willetts 2000). WFTC is also re-assessed every 26 weeks and lone parents have to re-apply to continue receiving it. Some lone parents in Sheffield had experienced problems re-applying for WFTC; with money disappearing, repeated changes between two weekly giros and monthly payments within the pay packet making budgeting difficult, and incorrect dates being given for deadlines, leaving one lone parent with a period without WFTC over Christmas which jeopardised rent payments and the purchase of Christmas presents.

As well as wages and tax credits, the reform of the child support system has been designed to increase the income of lone parents. In the US the collection of child support from non-custodial parents is a major part of welfare reform handled by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and its local agencies (Garfinkel et al. 1998). The Office of Child Support Enforcement within Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) collected over $44,000,000 in 1997 from absent parents (Erie County Department of Social Services 2001). Lone parents on welfare have their child support cases filed with the local child support unit automatically, and if they do receive child support they only collect a $50 ‘pass through’ from DSS every month. When lone parents move into work they are eligible to receive all of their child support money, and so for those receiving child support this should substantially increase in-work incomes. However, many lone parents in Buffalo are having difficulties with
used, is another £105 a week for two or more children (Inland Revenue 1999). WFTC is twice as generous as the EITC and should effectively raise hourly income of those on a minimum wage to £6.40 an hour.

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the child support system, and are finding it hard to get payments from their former partners because they are not working, have given up their jobs so they do not have to pay child support, are lying about their incomes, or are refusing to cooperate. Some lone parents were happy to accept informal support from their former partners to keep goodwill in the relationships between fathers and their children, especially when the fathers were not working anyway. However, the emphasis given to child support collection is reflected by the eight out of 17 employed lone parents in Buffalo, or 47%, who do receive child support.

In the UK the national Child Support Agency (CSA) was set up as part of the DSS in 1993 to assess, collect and pay child support maintenance for children under the age of nineteen (Child Support Agency 2001). Lone parents claiming income support may be required to make an application for Child Support Maintenance, unless there is a risk of harm or undue distress to them or their custodial children. Although the work of the CSA is part of welfare reform in the UK it has not been given as high a profile as in the US. Lone parents in Sheffield had similar problems to those in Buffalo in claiming child support. Many found it difficult to extract payments from former partners who were either not working or ‘working the system’, and others preferred informal arrangements that they felt were better for their children. A lack of support for the CSA among lone parents and a lower profile of child support collections in the UK than in the US, coupled with the non-obligatory nature of lone parents on income support making an application for child support, meant that only two employed lone parents in Sheffield were receiving formal child support, many less than in Buffalo.

The combination of tax credits and child support should theoretically lift employed lone parents out of poverty. My interview data enables an examination of the real impacts of these measures on the income of lone parents, data that are not collected by any of the agencies involved in welfare-to-work in the two cities. To see whether the interviewees in Buffalo had actually been lifted out of poverty the monthly income for every employed lone parent was calculated by adding together all their monetary income, excluding EITC as most Buffalo lone parents were unaware of the advance payment option and did not receive EITC monthly. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 7.4:
Table 7.4: The monthly income of employed lone parents in Buffalo in US $

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>TANF benefit</th>
<th>Food Stamps</th>
<th>Child Support</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>First interview:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1677</td>
<td>1677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>1462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>296</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>325</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1877</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Second interview:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>586</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>1408</td>
<td>1658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>312</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1083</td>
<td>1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>300*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>182</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>1005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
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<td>488</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2083</td>
<td>2083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SSI for disabled daughter rather than TANF grant

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research
The average monthly income before tax for these lone parents\textsuperscript{21} was $1238 (£817), a little over the US poverty line of $1156 a month. However, this poverty line is a very low level, measuring absolute poverty which does not adequately sustain a family (Center on Hunger Poverty and Nutrition Policy 2000; Fisher 1995; Wilson 1987). This average figure also hides the 38% of employed lone parents in Buffalo whose income was below even this low poverty threshold, and the lone parents who have more children than the two used to calculate the poverty line. Child support contributed in many cases a small amount to the monthly budgets of lone parents, and for three lone parents it contributed more than 30% to their monthly incomes and so significantly boosting their incomes. However, Buffalo lone parents were being lifted out of poverty mainly through their wages and any TANF benefit or food stamps they received, rather than due to EITC or child support. The incomes of Sheffield lone parents were also calculated by adding together all their monetary income, as shown in Table 7.5:

\textsuperscript{21} Calculated by adding the totals from both the first and second interviews together, and dividing by all those employed at the first interview and all those employed at the second interview.
### Table 7.5: The monthly income of employed lone parents in Sheffield in UK £

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Child Benefit</th>
<th>WFTC</th>
<th>Child Support</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>1152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
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<td>104</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>454</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>373</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>1322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghan</td>
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<td>316</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>126</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>1159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>600</td>
<td>974</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>368</td>
</tr>
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<td>452</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>433</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* £321 due but not received, due to being given incorrect deadline for re-applying
** includes £2000 student loan

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

The average income of these lone parents before tax was £1003, a little above the UK poverty thresholds of £950 a month for a family of three. However, this average is higher due to one lone parent having a student loan, and would be £908, below the absolute poverty level, without her. The average also hides the four lone parents who are below this level, and as in Buffalo some lone parents have more children than the number used to calculate the
poverty threshold budget. Only two lone parents were not claiming WFTC, one because of her new partner’s wages and the other because she was a full-time student. One-quarter of the lone parents who were claiming WFTC actually received more income from WFTC than from their wages, whilst the others were mainly receiving a third or more of their income from WFTC. In Sheffield it is WFTC supplementing wages that is primarily responsible for lifting lone parents out of poverty. Child support had very little impact on the overall incomes of most lone parents. However, of the two lone parents who were receiving it, child support made up one-fifth of their monthly income. Whilst the incomes of Sheffield lone parents do in some cases bring them to a survival level, they do not allow them to make provisions for their pensions, for their children’s education, to become owner occupiers, or even make possible an annual holiday out of their cities. Lone parents are better off in Sheffield than they are in Buffalo, where the average income is only £817 a month, largely due to WFTC. However, the supplementation of paid work with tax credits and child support is not necessarily a route even out of absolute poverty for employed lone parents in either city.

7.2.3 Are lone parents still experiencing hardship?

Managing on these low incomes means that many lone parents are still experiencing hardship despite employment. Evaluations of US welfare reform have found that one-third of former welfare recipients who are working report serious economic struggles around providing food, and one-fifth have problems paying rent (Loprest 1999). Most lone parents in Buffalo said that managing on their current budget was a struggle. They were having problems affording bus fares, daycare expenses, and meeting their children’s needs in terms of clothes, school trips and Christmas presents. Many were also struggling to pay off student loans or other debts such as payment plans for utilities, or rent arrears accrued when they were on welfare. Many lone parents felt there was nothing left after the bills were paid, and found working as much of a struggle as being on welfare:
Jasmine: I think it’s ... this is the misconception was that you won’t really live cheque to cheque because you’re not on welfare, welfare teaches you to live cheque to cheque and my biggest misconception was that when you work you don’t have to live cheque to cheque. I’m still living cheque to cheque.

In terms of housing, just over a quarter of the interviewees in Buffalo were having problems paying their rent and were currently in rent arrears. A third of employed lone parents were also unable to pay their gas and electricity bills and had received shut-off notices warning them that they would be disconnected. Many of these lone parents had been to HEAP, the Home Energy Assistance Program, that gives basic help in paying gas bills to those on low incomes, and provides two emergency payments when shut-off notices have been issued. This was a real lifeline for many lone parents as heating bills are high in Buffalo because of the long, cold winters. Others were on payment plans with gas and electricity companies to pay off their debts. Those living in public housing did not have this problem, as their utility bills were included in their rent. In terms of non-housing necessities, only one lone parent had had their phone disconnected since they had been working; reflecting the very low basic phone packages in the US which include free local calls, and only one lone parent was currently going without proper winter clothing because they could not afford to buy it. Many used thrift stores, yard sales and their families to ensure they and their children had boots and coats to negotiate the snow in winter. However, one third of employed lone parents had needed food but not been able to afford to buy it since they started working. These lone parents relied on Food Pantries, their families, and the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) which provides free milk, cheese, eggs, cereal and fruit juices to pregnant women and children under five years old. Even with these sources many of these lone parent families were still running out of food regularly at the end of each month. These are families who are going hungry despite working, in some cases, full-time jobs.

In Sheffield fewer lone parents were really struggling, and generally lone parents felt they were more able to make ends meet than lone parents in Buffalo, reflecting their higher incomes due to WFTC. However, some lone parents still experienced hardship despite being employed. One fifth had problems paying their rent, and one respondent had recently been
served an eviction order. Only three lone parents had been unable to pay their gas or electricity bills and had been put onto meters, which makes electricity much more expensive than other methods of payment, and effectively forces lone parents to cut themselves off when they cannot afford to pay (Davies 1997). As in Buffalo, many lone parents were trying to catch up with rent arrears and other debts that had built up when they were on benefit, such as debts from catalogues, which enable lone parents to buy clothes and children’s toys on credit, but charge a very high interest rate. More lone parents than in Buffalo had had their phones disconnected: just over one third were disconnected when I interviewed them, or were on incoming calls only, or had been disconnected since they were working. Only one lone parent could not afford proper winter clothing, whilst others acquired clothes from family, friends or charity shops. Only two lone parents had needed food but not been able to afford to buy it since they started working, compared to over a third in Buffalo. This reflects the abundance of low budget food shops in Sheffield, which do not exist in Buffalo:

Kelly: No because there’s always Netto and I don’t care what anybody says; you can buy a loaf of bread for 20p and a tin of beans for 9p and there’s a meal. There’s always money for food, always.

Those not currently experiencing hardship stressed the longer term impacts of poverty on them and their families:

Maggie: I think that my income is probably adequate on a short-term basis, but the thing I think we miss out on is building towards a long-term secure future, so we live sort of like day by day; so I don’t pay a mortgage, I’m 35 and I’ve only just started paying into a pension and so all those are sort of like long term legacies of poverty that are going to stay with me for years, not sort of like day-to-day.

7.2.4 Are lone parents better off financially in employment than on welfare?

Measuring poverty in terms of income fails to acknowledge the increased costs to lone parents of employment. Comparing income before employment with incomes of employed lone
that the $1238 average monthly income of employed lone parents in Buffalo is much higher than the $683 average monthly income of lone parents on welfare in Buffalo (see Table 4.5). This is also the case in Sheffield where the average income of employed lone parents is £1003, compared to the average monthly income of lone parents on welfare of £457 (see Table 4.6). Lone parents therefore seem much better off in employment than they were on welfare, but this comparison is too simplistic a measure, as paid work entails expenditures such as childcare, transportation and work clothes. Only half of lone parents in Buffalo felt better off financially in work than they had on welfare, the rest being about the same as they were on welfare or actually worse off. Many highlighted how the loss of benefits such as means-tested low-income Medicaid and Food Stamps meant that although their cash income was more than it was on welfare they were actually no better off. These findings are consistent with other studies which found that for many lone parents full-time work brought them no closer to balancing their budgets than welfare did (Edin and Lein 1997).

In the UK ‘better off calculations’ are an integral part of New Deal interviews (see Chapter Five), so lone parents in Sheffield know exactly how much better off they are, or will be, in work. These calculations take into account the benefits lone parents will no longer be receiving in employment, such as housing benefit and free school meals for their children, and the increased expenditures of working such as travel. The voluntary nature of the NDLP means that lone parents in the UK are unlikely to move into paid work unless they will be better off:

Laura: I am better off; I mean otherwise I wouldn’t be doing it.

Only one lone parent in Sheffield felt she was financially worse off in paid work, as she was working term-time and survived only on her WFTC income in the holidays, which remained at the same level as in term-time. This lone parent continued working as she really enjoyed her job running an after-school club. Some lone parents felt that they were in a financially similar position to when they were on income support, but in all three-quarters of lone parents felt they were better off than they were six months ago. They had also been able to do things in the past six months that they could not do before; such as day trips with their children,
buying Christmas presents, going out with their new work colleagues, buying a computer, buying new clothes, subscribing to digital television and occasionally eating out. The voluntary nature of NDLP means that many more lone parents are better off in employment in Sheffield than in Buffalo.

7.3 ACHIEVING A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

7.3.1 Coping with transport and childcare

In Buffalo 37% of lone parents worked downtown, 37% worked in the rest of the city of Buffalo, 21% worked in the suburban areas surrounding the city and one lone parent worked in both the city and the suburbs\(^{22}\) doing in-home care for the disabled. In Sheffield slightly fewer lone parents in Sheffield worked in the central business district, and slightly more worked in the surrounding city than in Buffalo, with 29% working in the city centre, 67% working in the rest of the city of Sheffield including the suburbs, and one lone parent worked in both the city centre and the rest of Sheffield as a taxi driver. The location of the employers of the lone parents in both cities is consistent with the trend of employment increasingly moving out of city centres and becoming more dispersed throughout the urban area (Lawless et al. 1998; Wilson 1996). Lone parents in Buffalo are working in areas located far from the low-income, racially segregated areas of the inner-city where they live, whilst lone parents in Sheffield are increasingly working in areas of the city far from the outer-estates of council housing or inner-city areas in which they live. Although physical distances between these areas may not seem great, the time taken in travelling between them can be significant, due to the poor access to reliable, affordable, convenient and child-friendly public transport.

In Buffalo seven lone parents travel to work by car, six by bus (two on more than one bus), four walk, and one uses two buses and the light rail system. The situation is similar in Sheffield, where seven travel by bus, six by car, three walk and two take the bus or walk.

\(^{22}\) In the UK these suburbs would be defined as part of the city, and they are no further geographically from the city centre than many of the suburbs within the city of Sheffield.
Although distances were fairly similar Table 7.6 shows that journey times were longer in Buffalo as more lone parents had to change buses:

**Table 7.6: Journey times one-way to work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-10 minutes</th>
<th>11-30 minutes</th>
<th>31-59 minutes</th>
<th>1 hour or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DATA SOURCE:** Author’s research

For those who do not have a car travelling across Buffalo can be hard work:

*Josephine: Uh! It is just a hard travel. It’s like I live on the other side of town so I have to take a bus, then the train, then another bus. So it’s like, uggghh!*

*JC: And how long does it take you now to get from home to here?*

*Josephine: About an hour and a half.*

*JC: An hour and a half each way?*

*Josephine: Yep.*

*JC: So that really adds on to your working day?*

*Josephine: Yes.*

*JC: And does it mean you need more childcare as well?*

*Josephine: That’s why I have childcare full-time. [Although she was only working part-time]*
Lone parents in Sheffield were having similar problems:

Sarah: *I used to go to nursery, drop Daniel off at Little Rascals nursery first, so roughly to be honest about an hour, depending on rush hour traffic. It was an epic because of dropping Daniel off at nursery, I mean it still is in the morning; you can't avoid it. I mean it takes me about an hour and a quarter to get to work in the morning.*

Travelling to work placed a big financial burden on lone parents, whether by running a car, or paying for bus passes and train tickets. A few lone parents in each city therefore chose to walk to work to avoid the financial costs of travel:

*Carmela: Most of the time I walk because I don't have the bus fare!*

These problems reflect how the use of public transport extends the working day for lone parents and is badly designed for the ‘trip chaining’ done to combine travel to work with childcare arrangements (Turner 2000). Coping with childcare arrangements is more of a feasibility problem and a financial burden for some lone parents than others, as the number of children and their ages determine the type, amount and cost of childcare needed by lone parents. In Buffalo 24% of employed lone parents had one child, 53% had two or three children and 24% had four or five children. 47% of these employed lone parents had children who were all school age, 24% had children who were all pre-school, and 29% had children who were both school age and pre-school. Roughly half of lone parents therefore did not have to arrange childcare within school hours if they were working at that time, which a large proportion of them did, whilst one-quarter needed a larger amount of care for their pre-school children, and one-third had a more complicated situation of needing all-day childcare for their younger children, and childcare after school hours for their older children. Three of these lone parents needed childcare for a child under one year old. Informal care provided by family members was the most significant type of childcare used; with family members looking after the

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23 Age five to eighteen if still in school.
children in eleven cases. Only four lone parents used daycare centres, and one used a
childminder. In terms of cost, 59% of lone parents were receiving financial help from DSS to
pay for childcare, and 41% were not, either because they did not need childcare, or because
they were no longer eligible for transitional daycare or the means-tested low-income daycare.
Childcare needs for lone parents in Buffalo were quite high, and mainly met through the
support of the lone parents’ families and with the financial help of DSS.

In Sheffield 40% of employed lone parents had one child, 53% had two or three children
and 7% had four or five children, with none of the lone parents having a child under one year
old. Employed lone parents had fewer children than employed lone parents in Buffalo, and
their children were generally older, with 93% of the lone parents having children who were all
school age, 7% had children who were all pre-school, and none having a mixture of school
age and pre-school children. This makes childcare situations easier, but although most lone
parents were working part-time, a large number worked in the evenings and weekends as well
as during school hours. However, fewer lone parents in Sheffield needed childcare, as more of
their children were older, and old enough to be left alone or in the care of an older sibling.
40% of lone parents did not need to use any form of childcare, 20% were using family for
childcare, 20% were using friends, 13% were using daycare centres and 7% using their
current partner. As in Buffalo, the importance of informal childcare is clear, with little use of
formal daycare centres and childminders. In terms of costs, the prevalence of informal care
coupled with overall lower needs meant that 73% of lone parents were not paying for
childcare at all, 7% received the childcare tax credit as part of WFTC, and 7% were paying
for childcare themselves.

However, childcare is still a significant issue for lone parents in both cities; arranging
childcare in the holidays is difficult, some find the cost of childcare a huge financial burden,
others have problems getting children to and from daycare centres, and the availability of care
in some areas of the cities is still a major problem. Many felt guilty about leaving their
children, and about the burden they are putting on family members. The highest paid lone
parent interviewed in Sheffield was only able to work night shifts at a children’s home
because of the support of her sister:
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childminder. In terms of cost, 59% of lone parents were receiving financial help from DSS to 
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children, and about the burden they are putting on family members. The highest paid lone 
parent interviewed in Sheffield was only able to work night shifts at a children’s home 
because of the support of her sister:
Louise: I’ve got a fantastic sister, without her it wouldn’t happen. None of it would be possible without my sister, my sister has them the majority of the time. She won’t sort of take money off me formally so I sort of pay for her driving lessons, like her washer broke down so I bought her a washer, that sort of thing.

Another major problem for lone parents is the lack of provision for emergencies, especially when children are ill. The vast majority of lone parents felt that they could take time off work relatively easily if their children were ill, and felt that their employers would understand, especially when they themselves had children. However, children’s sickness was a big issue for lone parents, who highlighted a number of problems; such as sickness passing from one child to another lengthened the time off work they needed, the problem of not being able to give employers any advanced warning, and feeling that taking time off was not possible after saying at interview that having children would not be a problem for them. One lone parent in Buffalo felt she would be jeopardizing her job if she took time off work, despite her children being at risk of sickness from germs she brought home from working in a daycare centre. Taking time off work to care for sick children is obviously not ideal, as lone parents, like other workers with children, are then seen as unreliable and not as committed to their work as other employees.

7.3.2 Domestic work and education

Lone parents are solely responsible for unpaid as well as paid work, and a number of lone parents described the difficulty of balancing paid employment with domestic work and looking after their children:

Evelyn [Buffalo]: The negative thing is I’m tired a lot. Being a single parent I don’t have much time, I don’t have much of a life. So um, you know I gotta do all the shopping, Doctor’s appointments and this and that, so I’m tired.
Alice [Sheffield]: And you don’t get the weekends off either like normal people coz then I have to do all the housework and washing I haven’t been doing all week.

Sally [Sheffield]: I certainly feel like the house is suffering.

Some lone parents were also balancing paid employment, domestic work and childcare with some form of educational attendance. One Buffalo lone parent attended an evening class in Business and Computer Technology at EOC after working full-time during the day, and another was taking part in a programme one evening a week that helped parents to deal with their children’s behaviour. In Sheffield, more employed lone parents were involved in education, perhaps reflecting the higher incidence of part-time work. One lone parent was taking part in a parenting class one afternoon a week and another was attending a computer training course one evening a week after work. Two lone parents were attending Sheffield College; one was finishing an NVQ in Hotel Reception and was studying for some typing qualifications, and another was doing an ACCESS course, hoping to go on to university to become a teacher. One lone parent was at university full-time doing a BA degree in Social Work and working part-time in a residential children’s home for 22 hours at the weekend. These lone parents are working a quadruple shift: involved in education, domestic work and childcare, as well as their paid employment.

7.3.3 Managing multiple responsibilities

The issue of work-life balance has been prominent in the US where working hours are long and holidays are short, and has been taken on by the UK Government who are promoting policies that aim to help employees obtain a better balance between work and the rest of their lives (Department for Education and Employment 2000). The UK Government is encouraging employers to introduce family-friendly working practices through a work-life balance challenge fund of £10.5 million set up to help businesses adopt family-friendly practices (Britton 2001), and has also introduced a number of changes to maternity pay and parental leave. After an extensive review and public consultation (Department for Education and Employment 2000; Department of Trade and Industry 2000) government is raising maternity
pay for employed women to £100 a week by 2003 and extending paid maternity leave from 18 to 26 weeks, is introducing a paternity leave of £100 for two weeks (Finch and Ward 2001), and introducing unpaid parental leave of up to three months. Whilst some employers have adopted family-friendly working practices, in practice the personal attitude of the immediate manager or supervisor is as important, if not more so, than the company policy (Himmelweit and Sigala 2000), and, with sole responsibility for their children, a lack of childcare provision, and limited family-friendly practices, it is lone parents who suffer most from trying to balance work and family life (Britton 2001, Walter 1998). The Government’s emphasis on the importance of family life is in sharp contrast to welfare reform policies designed to move lone parents into paid work, which ignore the value of unpaid work done by lone parents in bringing up their children.

To assess whether lone parents who have moved into paid work are managing to achieve any kind of ‘work-life balance’ I asked lone parents in both cities to complete diaries of their activities. Diaries were completed for the Monday following the interview, and they allow an examination of the way lone parents divided their time between ‘work activities’ of paid work, domestic work\(^24\), travelling to and from work and childcare, and ‘life activities’ such as education, spending time with their children\(^25\), and free time to relax. Table 7.7 shows the way employed lone parents who completed their diaries spent their time.

\(^{24}\) Including preparing meals, childcare, house chores, shopping, and preparing for work.

\(^{25}\) Including helping them with their homework.
Table 7.7: Lone parent diaries: hours spent in work and non-work activities on the day the diary was completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Paid work</th>
<th>Domestic work</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Total 'Work' Activities</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Time with children</th>
<th>Free time</th>
<th>Total 'Life' Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>4**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheffield:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>4**</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gloria and Theresa were not working on the Monday they completed the diary as they worked at weekends, and they were therefore engaged in more domestic work or education.

** Mary and Helen were working part-time and were therefore able to spend more time with their children or relaxing.

DATA SOURCE: Author’s research

Most lone parents had a working day of 11-14 hours and spent 1-5 hours a day engaged in non-work activities. When lone parents were asked what the effects of this were on family life, the vast majority said life was better now that they were working. Being financially better off meant they could do more activities with their children and provide them with the things they needed and wanted. Many felt that working was setting a good example to their children, and described how it had removed their children’s stigma of being on welfare and how their children were now proudly telling their friends that their mother was working:
Betty [Buffalo]: My oldest daughter she is so proud of me now, I mean, she just made me when I got my first pay cheque take a copy of it and she wants me to frame it, and I mean she’s just bowled over. She says ‘my Mum’s working now’, so, it’s ..., it makes me feel good that she realizes. Because she basically, she’s seventeen, she grew up on welfare, and she knew there was a stigma attached to it and now that I’m working it’s like gee this is the greatest thing in the world!

However, some lone parents felt it would be better for their children if they stayed at home instead of going out to work. They described the guilt they felt at not having as much time for them and how much they missed their children. They felt that although working was better financially, it did have a detrimental effect on family life:

Jessica [Sheffield]: Financially it’s better while I’m working. As a family it’s better when I’m not working because you’ve more contact with your family, with the children. And you can do more things together and plus you can keep a tag on them, what they’re up to and things like that. Because I think if you neglect that side of your family, children, not having contact with them and it’s just a matter of you going out to work and not seeing the children, that’s when they can start to stray, you lose them.

Many described in detail the difficulties of balancing paid work with looking after their children. In Buffalo most lone parents said that if they had the choice they would rather stay at home with their children when they were under five, emphasising the importance of helping them with their development at a young age and teaching them reading, writing and cognitive skills before they started school. Helping their children with their education was also important to parents of older children who pointed out that lone parents were vilified for not working, and also blamed when their children drop out of school, misbehaved or got pregnant at a young age, which was sometimes a consequence of them being left alone while their parents were at work. Many lone parents in Buffalo also worried that their children would drift into gangs and drugs when left alone after school, as many lone parents were working full-time hours and not home when their children returned in the early afternoon. In Sheffield
lone parents has similar concerns about the implications of employment on family life, saying they felt guilty leaving their children when they were ill or had exams, and stressing the difficulties of establishing a routine for their children when they were working shifts. They felt that they could work more hours as their children got older, especially when they were at secondary school and were more independent, but also felt guilty for being too tired to play with their children or help with their homework when they did get in from work. Two employed lone parents felt quite desperate about their situations. One in Buffalo had had three asthma attacks in the last month brought on by the stress of working and looking after her children and felt hopeless about the future, and the other in Sheffield was feeling desperate and at the end of her tether worrying about one daughter who was developing a genetic illness and her other daughter who was refusing to attend school. She felt that she was sinking into depression and alcoholism, and when asked how she felt about the future she replied:

Well you know when you have light at the end of the tunnel? Well there isn't any.

Lone parents are very far from achieving any kind of ‘work-life balance’, with the dominance of work marginalizing the time or energy for ‘life’ activities such as spending time with their children, let alone having any life outside of being a parent.

7.4 CONCLUSION: SURVIVING ON THE MARGINS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Lone parents in both Buffalo and Sheffield are moving into low-paid and precarious forms of employment, reflecting the work-first approach to welfare-to-work programmes. Lone parents in Sheffield are choosing to do this as their monthly wages are supplemented by WFTC, whilst lone parents in Buffalo have to move into employment whether or not they will be better off, or face losing their entitlement to benefit. The rationale of welfare-to-work programmes is that lone parents should move from welfare into the lower end of the labour market so that they will then be in a position to move up a job ladder over time, enabling them to achieve long-term financial stability. However, this research suggests that employment hierarchies are by no means universal, so that for many lone parents joining the contingent
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Lone parents are very far from achieving any kind of ‘work-life balance’, with the dominance of work marginalizing the time or energy for ‘life’ activities such as spending time with their children, let alone having any life outside of being a parent.

7.4 CONCLUSION: SURVIVING ON THE MARGINS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Lone parents in both Buffalo and Sheffield are moving into low-paid and precarious forms of employment, reflecting the work-first approach to welfare-to-work programmes. Lone parents in Sheffield are choosing to do this as their monthly wages are supplemented by WFTC, whilst lone parents in Buffalo have to move into employment whether or not they will be better off, or face losing their entitlement to benefit. The rationale of welfare-to-work programmes is that lone parents should move from welfare into the lower end of the labour market so that they will then be in a position to move up a job ladder over time, enabling them to achieve long-term financial stability. However, this research suggests that employment hierarchies are by no means universal, so that for many lone parents joining the contingent
workforce, starting at the bottom may mean staying at the bottom. Whether welfare reform lifts lone parents out of poverty in the initial transition is therefore important not only in assessing whether welfare-to-work programmes are successful in the short-term, but is also important because if wages for lone parents may not increase much over time, then there is an even greater need for welfare-to-work programmes to move lone parents from welfare directly into higher-skilled jobs with training opportunities, that provide them with a living wage. Welfare-to-work programmes, which focus on labour force attachment rather than human capital development, are currently failing to do this.

Lone parents in Sheffield are generally better off than those in Buffalo due to WFTC, but many lone parents still find that paid work is not a sustainable route out of poverty for them and their families. When some employed lone parents and their children are going hungry, welfare reform can hardly be hailed as a success. Lone parents are surviving, rather than thriving in the labour market; barely surviving financially, and struggling to balance paid work with their other responsibilities. Paid work for lone parents comes at the expense of family life, with the need for lone parents to achieve a work-life balance being subordinated by the governments’ desire to move them into employment. The case of lone parents highlights how the current preoccupation in policy circles with paid work may be misplaced, as paid work for these workers is not the panacea that it is assumed to be.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
EXAMINING THE FUTURE OF WELFARE AND WORK

"Welfare systems do need to be reformed, but not in ways that simply bend to the imperatives of flexible labour markets; they should instead play an active role in reforming and remaking these labour markets, underpinning decent wages, a fair distribution of work, and employment security. It is time to reform work as well as welfare" (Peck 2001a, p366).

This dissertation has explored the ways in which welfare reform has shaped the lives of lone parents living in poverty in depressed local labour markets. In this concluding chapter I examine the implications of this research, arguing that to tackle poverty and social exclusion among lone parents, both welfare and work need to be reformed. I begin by comparing the impact of welfare reform in Buffalo and Sheffield, analysing the reality of life on welfare for lone parents, the approach of welfare-to-work programmes, and whether they have been successful in lifting lone parents into employment and out of poverty. Having shown how welfare reform is currently failing lone parents I examine the implications of these findings for our understanding of work, poverty and welfare policy in this period of economic and social restructuring. I argue that whilst welfare reform continues to ignore the value of, and the time devoted to, unpaid work by lone parents on welfare, the impact of the uneven spatial distribution of unemployment, and the continuing expansion in the numbers of the working poor, it will not be effective in ending the economic and social exclusion of lone parents and their children. I propose the need for the introduction of welfare and employment policies that give lone parents the choice of whether to enter employment, adequately support those who choose to stay at home, and ‘make work pay’ for those who do move into the labour market. I conclude by stressing the need for geographers to participate in public policy debates on the future of welfare and work, so that policies tackle the realities of precarious employment and working poverty and their uneven impact in the labour market.
8.1 THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM

In the empirical core of this dissertation I began by examining the reality of life for lone parents living on welfare in depressed local labour markets, and showed how for lone parents in both the US and the UK, living on welfare means living in poverty. Welfare benefits provide so little income and in-kind benefits that they are not able to lift lone parents and their children above official absolute poverty lines set at a minimum survival level. For welfare recipients in the US who receive less adequate housing subsidies than those in the UK, severe hardship is extremely common, so that many have to rely on food pantries to feed their families. Whilst being on welfare means living in poverty, it does not, however, mean disengagement from work. Contrary to public perceptions of welfare recipients as lazy and work-shy, lone parents are by definition solely responsible for bringing up their children and are also carrying out a great deal of domestic work, childcare, and in some cases also caring for relatives, as well as participating in voluntary work. Alongside this unpaid work many lone parents are also having to engage in paid employment to supplement their welfare benefits, either declaring it to welfare officials and losing almost all the economic value through reduced benefit levels, or carrying out such work undeclared, with the constant fear of being discovered and losing any entitlement to benefit. This day-to-day reality of life on welfare means that not surprisingly most lone parents want to leave welfare and move into the labour market, but they face multiple barriers to paid work, not least of which is the lack of well-paid and secure employment opportunities in the depressed local labour markets of Buffalo and Sheffield.

The second aim of this dissertation was to examine the similarities and differences in the approaches adopted by welfare-to-work programmes in the US and the UK. Recognising the numbers of lone parents and their children living in poverty on benefits as a major problem, the US and UK governments introduced welfare reform to move lone parents off welfare and out of poverty through employment. In the US the widespread racialised stereotype of lone parents on welfare as ‘welfare queens’ who are part of the undeserving poor and opposed to the values of work has led to employment participation being enforced, through the introduction of compulsory welfare-to-work programmes and the removal of the right to
welfare. In the UK, welfare reform has concentrated mainly on youth and male unemployment rather than on lone parents, and discourses have emphasised ‘welfare dependency’ supposedly caused by a lack of economic incentives to enter the labour market. Recognition of the importance of the role of lone parents in child rearing has meant that they have been given the choice of whether to leave welfare benefits for employment, unlike the young unemployed. The emphasis of the New Deal for Lone Parents has been on making work pay, rather than on enforcing work. It is, therefore, unsurprising that when expressing their opinions of the welfare reform process lone parents in Sheffield were much more positive than those in Buffalo, emphasising the importance of the voluntary nature of the New Deal and how much they valued being helped into employment without any pressure being put on them. In contrast, lone parents in Buffalo were unhappy with changes to the welfare system and felt that they should have a right to welfare and should not have their benefits time-limited. Many described the future without welfare as terrifying, and one which might lead to an increase in crime, and a return to the type and extent of poverty of the Great Depression before help for the poor was introduced. Whilst the attitude to compulsion is a major difference between the approaches of the US and the UK, my research has shown how welfare-to-work programmes in both Buffalo and Sheffield have adopted a similar work-first approach to employment, designed to move lone parents rapidly into the low-end of the labour market, without considering policies to improve the conditions of employment in these jobs.

The third aim of this dissertation was to analyse how successful this approach to welfare reform is in moving lone parents off welfare and into paid work. The compulsory nature of welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo led to nearly two-thirds of interviewees moving into employment in Buffalo compared to just over one-third in Sheffield. This has resulted in the UK government making it increasingly compulsory for UK lone parents to take part in welfare-to-work programmes. But many lone parents in the UK who want to move into employment and are most job-ready have already joined the New Deal voluntarily, and lone parents who are forced to join in the future are likely to be harder to serve and to face multiple barriers to employment. Making welfare-to-work compulsory for UK lone parents is, therefore, unlikely to substantially increase the numbers moving into paid work, unless the
government follows the US in time-limiting the right of lone parents to state support and forces lone parents into employment. Although Buffalo programmes are more successful in moving lone parents into the labour market, in neither city did programmes move all the participants in this research into employment, despite the fact that these lone parents are likely to be more employable with fewer barriers to employment than the general welfare population, as they were taking part in welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo, and had chosen to take part in the voluntary programme in Sheffield. The fact that welfare-to-work programmes are unable to move even all of these most job-ready welfare recipients into the labour market suggests that they are not adequately tackling, or able to resolve, the barriers to employment faced by lone parents.

The final aim of the dissertation was to analyse whether these programmes are successful in lifting lone parents out of poverty. For those lone parents in the UK who do not move into employment after attending welfare-to-work programmes, staying on welfare benefits means staying in poverty, albeit with some guaranteed financial support. In the US failing to move into paid work has far more drastic consequences, as lone parents with the greatest barriers to employment who have been on welfare continuously since reform was introduced in 1996 will be cut off from all state support on 1st December 2001. Uniquely, lone parents living in New York State will still be provided with some limited support after this point, but those outside New York State will, for the first time since the foundation of the US welfare system in the Great Depression, be left without income from employment or welfare to provide for themselves and their children. Whilst these lone parents will face extreme poverty, those lone parents in both Buffalo and Sheffield who have successfully made the transition into the labour market are also struggling to make ends meet, with incomes that take them only just above the official poverty line in the US and the threshold defined by the Family Budget Unit in the UK. However, this poverty line is set at a higher level in the UK than in the US, and employed lone parents in Sheffield have significantly higher incomes than employed lone parents in Buffalo, reflecting the voluntary nature of the New Deal for Lone Parents that enables lone parents in Sheffield to move into work only if they will be financially better off. This research has shown that the work-first approach of welfare-to-work programmes in both the US and the UK is failing to tackle all the barriers faced by lone parents to moving into the
labour market, is failing to move all lone parents off welfare and into paid work, and, even in Sheffield, is failing to help all lone parents move into employment capable of lifting them and their families out of poverty and bringing them financial security.

8.2 THE RESTRUCTURING OF WORK, POVERTY AND WELFARE

While the research aims of this dissertation focused on examining the impact of welfare reform on the work and poverty of lone parents, the broader theoretical aim of the dissertation was to explore the impact of the restructuring of work on the incidence and nature of poverty, and to show its relationship to welfare reform, especially the move towards 'workfare'. In this dissertation I have built on the work of feminist geographers and other feminist scholars who have argued that the concept of work needs to be re-defined to acknowledge the importance of both paid and unpaid work for economic and social reproduction (Bowlby et al. 1997, Friedan 1963, Hanson and Pratt 1995, McDowell and Pringle 1992, Oakley 1974, Rowbotham 1997). The unpaid work of lone parents needs to be both economically and socially valued (Schellenberg 1996), so that lone parents on welfare are no longer seen as 'unemployed', and those engaged in waged work are able to fit employment around their other responsibilities.Whilst feminist geographers have emphasised the importance of unpaid work, they and other geographers writing within different theoretical traditions have also analysed the geography of employment restructuring (Herod 2000, Perrons 2000b, Wills et al. 2000), and shown how some areas have been left behind by the decline in manufacturing and the rise of service-sector employment (Kodras 1997, Lawless et al. 1998). Although Hudson has argued that it is precisely in depressed local labour markets with high unemployment and a large labour supply that employers can experiment with introducing precarious and flexible forms of employment (Hudson 1989, Hudson 2000), much work in economic geography has focused on the flexibilisation of employment in new industrial spaces (Massey 1999, Scott 1988, Storper 1993), rather than on this rise of precarious employment in depressed local labour markets. By detailing the employment opportunities available in Buffalo and Sheffield and uncovering the precarious forms of employment that lone parents are moving into at the low-end of the labour market, I have shown the effects of being trapped in depressed labour markets left behind by economic restructuring, and described how opportunities are limited.
for workers in these areas. Whilst studying areas in decline may not seem as innovative or popular as exploring areas at the forefront of the development of new technologies driving the post-Fordist economy, they provide a hard case for understanding the impacts of precarious employment and insecurity on some of the most vulnerable workers in Western economies: workers who face a stark choice between precarious employment or unemployment.

My study of Buffalo and Sheffield has outlined the increasing insecurity and transfer of risk from employers to employees that is the price of labour market flexibilisation (Allen and Henry 1997, Elliott and Atkinson 1998, Heery and Salmon 2000b, Hudson 2000, Hutton and Giddens 2000, Sennett 1998). The types of service-sector jobs in these depressed local labour markets are increasingly requiring substantial skill levels (Green et al. 1998), but because they have been gendered as female these jobs are undervalued (Albelda and Tilly 1997, Ehrenreich 2001, McDowell 1991). Lone parents moving into such employment in Buffalo and Sheffield do not have the value of their skills recognised, and so find themselves joining the low-wage labour force. This research also provides evidence of the churning which occurs at low-end of labour market (Howarth et al. 1999), forcing lone parents to move in and out of employment, or move between different jobs. My data also supports the findings of studies which have shown that working hours at the low-end of the service-sector have become increasingly flexible (Harkness 1999, Perrons 2000b), and that many workers are forced to work fixed-term contracts (Morgan et al. 2000), are in temporary jobs where they receive less work-related training (Howarth et al. 1999), have fewer employment rights and fringe benefits (Allen and Henry 1997), and are rarely unionised (Stewart et al. 2000).

Through an examination of welfare reform this dissertation has added to the understanding of the restructuring of employment, by focusing on the impact of these changes on the everyday lives of lone parents. Lone parents as a group have been affected particularly badly by the growth of precarious employment at the low-end of the labour market, yet, with few exceptions (Hughes 2001, Perrons 2000b, Winchester 1990), they have not received a great deal of attention from geographers. In the US, lone parents who have left welfare for employment lose their entitlement to benefit if they ‘voluntarily quit’ their jobs, and so have to put up with poor working conditions which, as non-unionised workers, they have little
power to change. Precarious forms of employment leave many lone parents stuck in a secondary labour market unable to move up an employment ladder over time because of employment churning and a lack of training. These forms of employment also create insecurity, which increases the pressure on individuals already struggling to balance their paid and unpaid work, and leave lone parents and their families in poverty despite employment. The vast majority of lone parents are women, and whilst some women have benefited from employment change in the post-Fordist era (McDowell 1991), women continue to carry out the majority of domestic work and childcare, which often restricts the paid work they can do, leading to continued gender disparities in employment (Hanson and Pratt 1995, Odland and Ellis 1998, Perrons 2000a). Women continue to bring home far lower weekly earnings than men (Walby 1997) and so are less likely to be lifted out of poverty through employment, and women with children are paid even less than women without children (Harkness and Waldfogel 1999). As women who are both single, and parents, lone parents are triply disadvantaged: unable to cushion themselves against their low-pay and job insecurity with the wages of a partner. For lone parents from ethnic minorities who earn less than their white counterparts, employment brings even less financial reward (Denny 2001).

As well as focusing on the impact of employment change on lone parents, this research has also shown the impact of welfare reform on the labour market as a whole. Welfare reform is increasing the entry of welfare recipients into the bottom-end of the labour market, increasing the low-wage labour supply and providing a ready pool of workers for bottom-end service-sector jobs. As in all over-supplied labour markets, this leads to wages and working conditions that favour employers. Welfare recipients who have been forced into employment in Buffalo are willing to take jobs that other members of the workforce would not, and employers use this to their advantage by actively recruiting workers from local welfare-to-work programmes, rather than raising the conditions of employment to make jobs more attractive to potential employees. The growing numbers of welfare recipients entering the labour market in both the US and the UK leads to increased competition for low waged jobs, displacing workers and depressing wages (Mishel and Schmitt 1995, Tilly 1996b). This is exacerbated by offering employers tax breaks to take on welfare recipients that put other low-
wage workers at a disadvantage. This competition at the bottom-end of the labour market adversely affects all those cycling between welfare and low-wage work:

"Those now struggling in precarious, low-paying jobs will have to compete directly with former welfare recipients in a labour market that cannot even adequately provide for the existing workforce" (Mishel and Schmitt 1995, p2).

This dissertation has also highlighted the impact of the restructuring of work on the incidence and nature of poverty. The gender division of unpaid work and the restructuring of employment has left many women, and particularly lone parents and women from ethnic minorities, vulnerable to poverty (Oppenheim and Harker 1996, US Census Bureau 2000a). The lone parents living in poverty on welfare who participated in this research were not poor because they were not engaging in work. Far from the stereotypes of cultural theories of poverty of welfare recipients as lazy and work-shy, and whose poverty is caused by an unwillingness to engage in work (Murray 1984), these lone parents have a strong work ethic, both in terms of the unpaid work they carry out in their families and their communities, and also in terms of wanting to participate in the labour market. Indeed, these lone parents probably need a stronger work ethic than most to take part in employment that brings them so little reward:

The nation's working poor do not need their values reengineered. They do not need lessons about the dignity of work. Their everyday lives are proof enough that they share the values of their mainstream, middle-class counterparts. Indeed, it would be fair to say that they hold these values dearer because the intrinsic rewards of their employment are so much less than what the rest of us enjoy (Newman 1999, p297).

Whilst this research has shown how lone parents are committed to work, it has also shown how they are also committed to bringing up their children, and when given the choice, decide whether to enter the labour market by weighing up whether it is in the best interests of their families, as well as whether they will be financially better off. Far from failing to grasp the economic benefits of employment these lone parents make decisions based on gendered
moral rationalities', rather than on the approach of 'rational economic man' (Duncan and Edwards 1997). Many feel their responsibilities as lone parents constrains the type of employment they can participate in, and would rather stay at home to bring up their children until they are old enough to attend a nursery or start compulsory schooling (Little 1999, Oliker 1995). Whilst the poverty of these lone parents on welfare is caused by the low levels of welfare benefits and their lack of income from employment or from the employment of a partner, this research has shown that it is not only a lack of employment that causes poverty, as welfare reform policy suggests: employment no longer brings an end to poverty as it did for many in the Fordist period. The denial of working poverty by cultural underclass theorists (Murray 1987) can no longer be sustained in the face of overwhelming evidence that full-time, low-paid work can not sustain single adults, let alone those with families to support (Ehrenreich 2001, Newman 1999). My research has revealed how this growth in working poverty means that neither welfare nor work is enough to lift the majority of lone parents out of poverty, leading many to cycle between employment and welfare, through the revolving door at the low-end of the labour market (Edin and Lein 1997).

The relationship between socio-economic and spatial causes of poverty and the need for socio-economic or spatial policies to combat poverty continues to be debated by geographers (Dorling 2001). In this dissertation I have shown how the uneven geography of employment change has led to concentrations of poverty in depressed local labour markets caused by localised high unemployment and a growth in working poverty due to employers in these areas introducing precarious forms of low-paid work. Within Buffalo and Sheffield many lone parents live in public housing in inner-city areas, and, in Sheffield, also in isolated outer-estates on the edge of the city. Both inner and outer estates have suffered from spirals of decline caused by unemployment of the 1980s and 1990s, and the departure of those residents who could afford to leave. More recent employment growth within the cities has occurred away from these areas, leading to a spatial mismatch between employment and the unemployed (Wilson 1996) at the metropolitan level, so that lone parents in these areas are unable to take advantage of the employment opportunities available in parts of the labour market that are inaccessible by public transport, or involve excessive costs and time to reach. As well as tackling the a-spatial economic causes of poverty, policies to alleviate poverty
need to tackle the spatial concentration of the poor which intensifies the negative impacts of economic change, by targeting area-based investment to depressed local labour markets and poor areas within them. This research has shown how current welfare reform policy tends to ignore the spatial concentration of poverty, and the increased disadvantages facing lone parents living in poverty in poor areas of depressed local labour markets.

In this research I have highlighted the contradiction between the introduction of welfare reform policy to push those on benefit into the low-end of the labour market, just as paid work has become insecure and precarious for many employees and no longer guarantees an end to poverty for low-skilled workers. Despite these changes to employment, paid work has been seen as the main route out of poverty for those on benefits, and social security policy has been increasingly integrated with labour market policy. Governments in both the US and the UK have moved from a male breadwinner model of employment towards an adult worker model (Perrons 2000a), which requires, or encourages, all adults to enter paid work, including groups such as lone parents previously not expected to enter employment (Sainsbury 1994). I have argued that this reform of welfare policy has ignored the value of unpaid work, ignored the uneven geography of employment, and ignored the growth of working poverty. If governments are serious in their aspiration to end the poverty and social exclusion of lone parents, they must reform their approach to both work and welfare (Peck 2001a). The findings of this research suggest a number of ways of reforming welfare and employment policies so that they tackle precarious employment and working poverty in the labour market.

The first step towards reforming both welfare and work is for governments to change their attitude towards work. Rather than equating work with paid employment, they must recognise the value of the unpaid work done by lone parents on welfare. Instead of threatening to cut benefits and making welfare-to-work programmes compulsory, lone parents must be offered the choice of when to stay at home to bring up their children and when to move into the labour market. For those who do stay on welfare benefits the social and economic value of domestic work needs to be remunerated, to ensure that welfare benefits for the poor are high enough to lift them out of poverty. This could be achieved through a minimum income guarantee for all those on benefits, in line with the one introduced for
pensioners in April 2001 by the UK government. As well as ensuring benefit levels are high enough to lift people out of poverty, all parents should be given the opportunity of being paid to stay at home and bring up their children when they are young. To do this the US and UK governments could follow the advice of the UK independent Childcare Commission which proposed that parents should be paid generous financial support to stay at home for first three years of child’s life to give parents the choice of caring for their own children in the early years. Whilst this report did not recommend an amount to be paid, family groups have suggested a figure of £150 a week in 2001, significantly higher than the average of £80 income support Sheffield interviewees were receiving each week in 2000. A change in attitude to the often unpaid work of child-rearing, which sees childcare as just as key an element of public spending as health or education, would justify the increased cost of this approach to the Treasury (Hall 2001). Whilst enabling lone parents to choose whether to enter paid work without threatening their benefits would give psychological security to lone parents, paying those that choose to stay at home would also provide those on welfare with economic security.

Just as governments need to change their attitude towards work, they must also change their approach to helping those on welfare who do want employment to enter the labour market at a level that will lift them out of poverty. To increase the access of lone parents to employment, governments need to start by improving childcare and transport systems. Unspent TANF funds in New York State, and European Objective One funding in Sheffield, provide financial opportunities to those in charge of local welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield to develop creative plans for transportation and childcare. In both cities the level of childcare provision needs increasing, and childcare needs to be made accessible and affordable to those living in poor areas. Emergency childcare networks need to be set up to ensure that lone parents do not put their jobs in jeopardy when their children are ill, alongside employer initiatives that ensure parents have access to ‘family days’, extending the concept of ‘personal days’ offered by some employers that can be used to attend health appointments. More innovative approaches to designing reliable and child-friendly public transport could reduce journey times to employment for lone parents, and make public transport a service that lone parents could rely upon to get them to work on time. Whilst
technology such as in-home public transport calling cards for lone parents could eventually be introduced (Turner 2000), public transport routes could also be changed to reflect the geography of employment within both cities, and to reflect the more flexible hours worked in the modern economy, as is being developed in Buffalo by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority.

In addition to removing these barriers to employment, welfare-to-work programmes also need to be reformed, as the current work-first programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield are incapable of moving large numbers of lone parents into skilled and well-paid jobs that would lift them out of poverty. The work-first philosophy needs to be replaced by an approach to employment which has human capital development at its core (Peck and Theodore 1998a), offering all lone parents the opportunity to increase their education and skills to the extent that they can move into the labour market at a higher level, and be lifted out of poverty through employment. Allowing lone parents to complete their basic education and ensuring that they have good English skills is vital, whilst enabling them to attend college and University would also allow them to move into skilled jobs and to begin careers. Welfare-to-work programmes need to be based on high-quality training, like that found in some programmes in Buffalo, to tackle the lack of skills which acts as a barrier to employment for many lone parents. Training should be focused on getting lone parents well-paid jobs, building on the approach of the UK’s New Deal Innovation Fund which is promoting training designed to enable participants to access jobs that last at least six months, and which pay at least £15,000 (Boyer 2001). After attending education and training whilst on welfare, lone parents could then progress to intensive job preparation schemes similar to job clubs in Buffalo, which thoroughly prepare them for the job search process and for moving into the labour market. This education, training and job preparation needs to be timetabled around the other responsibilities of lone parents, as achieved in the New Deal Innovative-Pilot in Sheffield.

To guide lone parents through this welfare-to-work process lone parents in the US need advisers who work with them on a one-to-one basis as happens on the New Deal in the UK, who are adequately trained so that they are aware of all available training and education options, and who continue to provide in-work support and guidance once lone parents have
moved into employment. The US is beginning to move towards this system through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 designed to integrate pre- and post-employment services for welfare recipients, so that they have an individual case manager to help them access benefits, job search assistance and training programmes, both before and after they enter the labour market (United States General Accounting Office 2000). This kind of comprehensive workforce investment system ensures that lone parents receive help in retaining employment, by solving any problems they are having, and helps them move into higher-skilled and better-paid work once they have entered the workforce. In the UK the government is introducing the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and giving control of Work-Based Training for Adults to the Employment Service to simplify, coordinate and promote high-quality demand-led training for the employed (Department for Trade and Industry and Department for Education and Employment 2001). The LSC has established a workforce development plan to encourage employers and individuals to invest in training, and to improve the quality and relevance of post-employment training, to close the growing gap between the skills required by the labour market and the skills of the workforce. Both governments must continue to develop these systems which enable life-long learning and training for those in employment, and must encourage more employers to develop training opportunities for the workforce, to prevent the working poor being trapped in the low-end of the labour market in precarious forms of employment incapable of lifting them out of poverty.

Whilst governments need to change their approach to helping those on welfare, they must also change their approach to helping those in employment. For lone parents in depressed local labour markets one of the major barriers to employment, and to leaving poverty through employment, is a shortage of well-paid jobs. Economic growth and falling unemployment in national labour markets has led governments to assume that there are enough jobs for all lone parents to move into employment. Welfare reform has failed to acknowledge the fact that not all geographical areas have benefited from the restructuring of employment, and that depressed local labour markets with relatively high unemployment may need interventions to stimulate the demand-side of the labour market, to enable the unemployed to move into paid work. This is particularly the case in the final quarter of 2001 as the UK manufacturing sector officially enters recession, and as the US and UK economic slowdown threatens to turn into a
global recession (Stewart et al. 2001). Welfare reform must take into account the uniquely disadvantaged position of people living in poverty in these depressed local labour markets, by introducing job creation measures alongside supply-side welfare-to-work programmes. One way of increasing the numbers of highly-skilled well-paid jobs in these depressed local labour markets would be to ensure that training is designed to meet the needs of high-skill employers within the national labour market, so that they are attracted by a skilled local workforce and invest in the area, creating high-quality living-wage jobs. This would be more effective than investing in demand-led training that simply meets the needs of the low-skill jobs that currently exist in depressed local labour markets. Initiatives such as intermediate labour market schemes could also be more widely introduced, which both train the unemployed and create wage-paying time-limited jobs (Amin et al. 1999, Theodore and Peck 2000). Whilst there is a need to tackle localised high unemployment found in depressed local labour markets, governments must also work to improve the employment conditions for those in all areas who are working in precarious forms of employment. To reduce the incidence of working poverty minimum wage levels in both countries need to be increased to family-supporting living-wage levels (Pollin 1998, UNISON 1999), and in the US the Earned Income Tax Credit needs revising so that, like Working Families Tax Credit in the UK, it is paid monthly and raises lone parents on low wages above the poverty line (Alstott 1995). Legislation also needs to be introduced to increase employment security for the workforce, and especially for those working in precarious forms of employment (Heery and Salmon 2000a).

By focusing on the impact of welfare reform in depressed local labour markets this dissertation has been able to outline the best practice occurring in welfare-to-work programmes in Buffalo and Sheffield. I have argued that policy-makers can learn from both the US and the UK experience, and develop a new transatlantic model of welfare reform, based on re-targeting welfare reform spending, which addresses the undervaluing of unpaid work, the uneven geography of employment, the growth in precarious forms of employment, and the growth in working poverty. Only then will welfare reform be effective in ending the economic and social exclusion of lone parents and their children.
8.3 A FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY OF PUBLIC POLICY

Within academia most research examining welfare reform policy has used large-scale statistical analyses of the numbers who have moved off the welfare rolls to evaluate the success of welfare reform in moving welfare recipients off welfare and into employment. Far less work has moved beyond seeing lone parents primarily as numbers rather than as individuals, to examine the impacts of welfare reform on the employment and poverty of lone parents. A growing number of geographers have begun examining welfare reform, exploring the development, diffusion and implementation of welfare reform policies, how different approaches to welfare reform might affect social exclusion, the way geographies of employment and poverty shape the impact of welfare reform, and the role of social service organisations in implementing welfare reform (Clark and Schultz 1997, Cope 2001, Sunley et al. 2000, Mohan 2000, Peck 2001a, Turok and Webster 1998). But whilst work done by geographers has examined the implications of welfare reform policies, rather than simply examining their success in reducing the welfare rolls, it has not focused on the specific impacts of reform on the welfare recipients themselves. To address this gap, I have produced a comparative analysis of the impact of welfare reform policy that focuses on the everyday lives of poor lone parents, using a feminist methodology with qualitative methods at its core. This comparative approach to research has highlighted the effect of differences in welfare reform policy on the employment and poverty of lone parents living in similar economic situations. Within this approach, adopting a feminist methodology has allowed the use of methodological tools which are both appropriate to answering the research aims, and are consistent with feminist aims of linking the lives of individual women to aggregate social policies, and conducting research which is a positive experience for participants (Mies 1993). By using qualitative methods this dissertation follows a number of other studies of the impact of current employment change that have used ethnographic methods to both give a voice to the subjects of research, and to develop an understanding of the experience of poverty and disadvantage for some of most marginalized groups in western economies and societies (Edin and Lein 1997, Ehrenreich 2001, Finnegan 1998, Newman 1999).
Public policy work in academia plays a crucial role in ensuring that policies are based on an understanding of the issues and tackle the problems faced by marginalized groups. At present welfare policy debates are often far removed from the everyday experiences of the poor:

“Policy debates are created and conducted far from the geo-social, economic and political spaces occupied by welfare recipients” (Churchill 1995, p5).

Alongside other academics, geographers need to conduct research in the spaces occupied by welfare recipients, and ensure that their work is accessible and disseminated widely outside academia as well as in conventional academic sources, so that it gains recognition from policy-makers, influences welfare reform debates, and enables the voices of welfare recipients to be heard (Casebourne 2001). Far from being less challenging, stimulating or analytical than other work done within geography, entering public policy debates allows geographers to address issues of inequality and to create knowledge that has the potential to improve social and economic conditions (Martin 2001). More policy work needs to be done within the discipline (Peck 1999), not least in examining the continuing impact of welfare reform policies. Longitudinal work that examines the longer-term impact of reform on welfare recipients is needed, whilst what happens to US welfare recipients who will be cut off from all state support on 1st December 2001 needs urgently investigating, as does the impact of recession on the success of welfare reform. In carrying out this work, and contributing to a feminist geography of public policy which focuses on groups such as lone parents still marginalized within discipline, and on issues of work, poverty and welfare, geographers are able to combine the development of objective and situated knowledges with direct political engagement, in ways which may assist in improving the life chances of some of the most disadvantaged members of Western societies.
APPENDIX A:
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA CATALOGUE

1. BUFFALO

a) Interview data (total 77)

Pilot interview notes from 9 interviews
Transcripts from 18 context interviews
Transcripts from 30 lone parent interviews
Transcripts from 8 and notes from 12 telephone lone parent follow-up interviews
Atlas.ti generated coded data and network views
Lone parent diaries (11)

b) Participant observation data

Coalition for Economic Justice: My notes, living wage information, welfare reform monitoring project information including results of their survey
EOC: My notes, computer club handouts, BRIDGE programme details, WIC details, CAP details, Child Health Plus details, Job Club handouts: salary calculator, timetable for classes, portfolio, budgeting, clothing banks, retention procedures, employability assessments, TANF federal, state and county budgets, cover letters and follow up letters, list of employment agencies, soft skills leaflets, Department of Labor job search guide
Clarkson Center: My notes, Department of Labor books on job search, résumés and interview preparation, list of employers, jobs newspaper, timetable, auto mechanics leaflet, welfare-to-work system flow chart, summary of program, Job Club
handouts: telephone techniques, filling in an application, handling difficult questions, world of work quiz, cover letters

SENSES Meeting Notes
REN Meeting Notes
Notes taken in Rath Building where lone parents claim welfare
Project Dandelion Meeting Notes

c) Questionnaire data

22 returned from SSOs with contracted or approved programmes

d) Photos

Job clubs, Downtown, industry, CNA programme, auto mechanics programme, food pantry, computer class, catering programme

e) Social Service Organisations information

SENSES: 'From Welfare to Work' report: New York State programmes
AFL-CIO: 'Constructive Labor Relations' report
NFTA: Hublink and Reverse Commute programme reports
REN: Report, including employers and zip code list
Everywoman Opportunity Center: Programme details
Valley Community Center: Newsletter
PIC: Grant proposal, programme details, Kaleida Health involvement e-mails
Buffalo Urban League: Leaflet
Catholic Charities: Programme details
Buffalo Access Center: Programme details, employer list, postcode details of clients (confidential)
Hispanics United: Newsletter and programme details
Buffalo Lutheran Employment Service: Programme details
Clarkson Center: Closure details, jobs newspaper, programme details, press cuttings
EOC follow-up: Job retention, new SPAN programme
Neighbourhood Legal Services: Project Dandelion details, self-help guide for transition, Summary of State and Federal reform bills, newsletters, fact sheets on public assistance
Childcare Coalition: Programme details, newsletter
Welfare-to-work Partnership: Details
Center for Community Change: Newsletter covering unspent TANF money
Empire State Jobs Program: Demand side plan for job creation

f) Statistics

DHHS: State caseload declines
New York State DOL: Wages, expanding occupations, labour surplus areas, unemployment rates, employment in different occupations, labour force by occupation, sex, race and ethnicity
EOC: Job placements, salary, full-time/part-time
Clarkson Center: Job placements, wage, retention
Erie County DSS: Welfare rolls by zip code Erie County, those gone into employment or training Erie County, state annual TANF caseload and caseload decline by county, type of activity they are engaged in, quarterly reports on caseload figures
Census Data: Population estimates, census tract map, poverty, ethnicity, education, language
g) Government documents

Federal DHHS: Welfare spending figures
Federal SSA: Types of benefits information
Federal DOL: Welfare-to-work competitive grants, Unemployment Insurance details, minimum wage information, Welfare-to-work tax credit
Federal HUD: Rental assistance details
New York State DOL: Employment figures, acronyms, state legislation, New York WORKS employer incentives
New York State DFA: State TANF plan, county grant figures, web page programme details
New York State Department of Education: TAP and PELL
Erie County DSS: CWEP sites, Erie County web pages, Transitional benefits booklet, Transition Teams report, Employer tax credits, list of contracted and approved Welfare-to-work programmes

EITC
Child Health Insurance
State Welfare Reform descriptions
Federal Welfare Reform Bill

h) Newspaper articles

Articles on federal, state and local welfare reform
Employment and Poverty articles
2. SHEFFIELD

a) Interview data (total 75)

Pilot interview notes from 6 interviews
Transcripts from 5 context interviews, 12 un-transcribed taped context interviews
Transcripts from 30 lone parent interviews
Transcripts from 20 and notes from 2 telephone lone parent follow-up interviews
Atlas.ti generated coded data and network views
Lone parent diaries (17)

b) Participant observation data

ES: Notes, CSUH open day notes
Scoop Aid Pilot: Notes, Job club handouts: course timetable, transferable skills, psychometric testing, telephone techniques, action plan

c) Photos

Sheffield city centre, Meadowhall steel sculpture, Dixons call centre, Lower Don Valley regeneration and old factories, steel museum

d) Social service organisations information

Scoop Aid: CRESR notes, flow chart, pilot tender document, PDP course outline, Educare leaflet, single work-focused gateway briefing, leaflets, Scoop Aids contribution to EYDCP
EYCDP: NSPCC age of leaving children alone, area childcare profiles, summary of EYCDP plan, newsletter, DfEE childcare as a gendered career report

Furnival Project: Outline of program, funding sources, poverty map

Citylife: ESRC Studentships information

SOVA: Youth Stats, ND18-24 mentoring

Darnall Joblink: Outline and leaflets

SRB: Background briefing, North West inner city proposal

UNISON: Living wage information

Career’s Service: Lone parent courses

Centre for Full Employment: Leaflets on back to work bonus, ES direct, ILM briefing paper

Training: Sheffield College, Choices brochure, Square Mile, TriTec, Q Mark, Chamber of Commerce, schedule 2 vocational qualifications list

Employers: CSUH Information pack, Dixons brochure

e) Statistics

Scoop Aid: Pilot outcomes

DSS: Benefit levels

ES: National NDLP statistics, Sheffield NDLP statistics, New Deal evaluation objectives booklet

TEC: Sheffield Economic Bulletin, Sheffield Economic Assessment, South Yorkshire Labour Market Information: average earnings, unemployment

Centre for Full Employment: National job centre vacancies survey

Sheffield First: Sheffield Trends, Strategy for Sheffield, newsletter

Census Data: Population estimates, Sheffield ward profiles, detailed Sheffield results, comparison with other areas
f) Government documents

SEU: Web pages on what they do
Political speeches/interviews: BBC welfare reform bill info, interviews with Alistair Darling October 1998 and September 1999, Budget 2000 lone parent information, interview with Gordon Brown

DTI: Minimum wage information

DfEE: David Blunkett press releases on New Deal, Meeting the Childcare Challenge consultation document

DSS: Welfare Reform Focus Files, press releases, WFTC leaflet, Opportunity for all: Tackling poverty and social exclusion report, fact sheets, different benefits information

ES: NDLP Action Pack, NDLP flow chart, leaflet, operational vision, employer magazine, programme centre leaflets, delivering New Deal magazine, regional prototypes information

g) Newspaper articles

Articles on welfare reform, lone parents, poverty, Sheffield articles on economy, employment, Sheffield First, lone parents
APPENDIX B: EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Please fill in and check all appropriate boxes. Please leave blank any boxes you cannot answer.

1. What is the name of your organization? (This will not be used in any published research results.)

2. What year was your organization established?

19

3. How long have you been running employment and training programs?

[ ] Years [ ] Months

4. How long have you been contracted by Erie County DSS to provide employment and training for TANF recipients?

[ ] Years [ ] Months

5. How many TANF recipients used your employment and training program between September 1998 and August 1999?

[ ]

6. What percentage of all your clients are TANF recipients?

[ ] %

7. Does your program specialize in serving a particular client group? (e.g. age group, gender, ethnic group)

[ ] Yes [ ] No

If yes, what client group do you specialize in serving?

[ ]
8. What percentage of your clients belong to the following ethnic groups?

- Black/African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- White (non Hispanic)
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Other (please specify below)

9. Which of the following activities does your employment and training program provide? (Please check all that are applicable.)

- Basic Skills Training
- Job Search Assistance
- Job Placement Assistance
- Job Readiness Preparation
- Resume Preparation
- Occupational Skills Training
- Secretarial Skills Training
- Computer Classes
- Employment Counseling
- Career Counseling
- Education
- Post-Employment Services
- Day Care
10. Does your program specialize in a particular type of training, education or skills development?
   □ Yes        □ No

If yes, what activity do you specialize in?

□ Other (please specify below)

11. How long does your program last?
   □ Years □ Months □ Weeks

12. Of the welfare recipients taking part in your program between September 1998 and August 1999, what percentage had found employment when they left the program?
   □ %

13. Who are the five biggest employers of welfare recipients from your program? (Please mark in order of the biggest employer first.)
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 
   5. 

□ There are not five easily discernible biggest employers, as welfare recipients from the program find work with a wide range of employers.
14. Do you have any comments you would like to make?

If yes, please enter below.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.
Please return it to Joanna Casebourne in the postage paid envelope provided.
APPENDIX C:
ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:
CONTRACTED AND APPROVED WELFARE-TO-WORK
PROGRAMMES (October 1999)

1. **Contracted Programmes** (12 organizations)

- Back to Basics Outreach Ministry
- Buffalo ACCESS Center: Auto-mechanics Program
- Buffalo Urban League: PALS Program
- Clarkson Center: Auto-Mechanics Program, Culinary Institute
- Erie Community College (ECC): CAST Program
- Everywoman Opportunity Center: Assessment, Career Readiness Training, Job Retention, Life Skills, Vocational Testing
- Hispanos Unidos De Buffalo
- International Institute of Buffalo Inc.
- Literacy Volunteers of New York State Inc.
- Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS): Project Dandelion
- New York State Department of Labor: Erie JOBS Program
St Augustine’s Center Inc: STRIVE Program

2. **Approved Programmes** (22 organizations: 173+ programmes)

Adult Learning Center: Adult Basic Education, Assessment, Case Management, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Preparation, Job Development and Placement, Job Readiness, Job Skills, Life Management Program

Asbury Shalom Zone: GED Program

Blind Association of Western New York: Job Development and Placement Services

Bryant and Stratton: Accounting Assistant Diploma, Medical Office Assistant Diploma, Office Assistant Diploma, Travel Office Assistant

Buffalo ACCESS Center: Job Club, Job Development, Job Placement, Job Readiness Workshops, Supervised Job Search

Buffalo Municipal Housing Association: Computer Training Program

Buffalo Public Schools: Project Prepare; Auto Repair, Building Maintenance, Introduction to Computers, Nursing Assistant, Plumbing, Welding, other unspecified programmes

Career Blazers Learning Center: Help Desk Professional, PC Access, PC Specialist

Catholic Charities: Middle Start Adult Basic Skills Program

Clarkson Center: GED, Job Development and Placement

Community School Improvement Center: Case Management, GED, Job Placement, Job Retention, Life Skills
Educational Opportunity Center: Academic Preparation, Bank Teller, Business and Computer Technology, Child Care Worker, Chiropractic Office Assistant, Communication and Media Arts, Computer Skills Training, Dental Assisting, Emergency Medical Technician, ESL, GED preparation, Job Readiness/Job Search, Medical Billing, Nurse’s Assistant, Occupational Degree Program, Small Business/Retail Training

Erie Community College: Advance Degree Outcome Education, Automotive Technology, Automotive Technician, Automotive Trades/Auto Body Repair, Basic Literacy, Biomedical Equipment Technician, Building Management and Maintenance, Business Administration, Case Management, Chemical Technician, Child Care, Civil Engineering Technician, Community Work Experience Program (CWEP), Computer Information Systems, Construction Technology, Criminal Justice – Police, Dental Hygiene, Dental Lab Technician, Dietetic Technician, Drafting – Mechanical, Electrical Engineering Technology, English as a Second Language, Fashion Buying and Merchandising, Fire Protection, Food Service Administration/Restaurant Management, GED, Hotel Technology/Culinary Arts, Industrial Technology, International Business, Job Coaching, Job Placement, Job Retention, Manufacturing Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Medical Lab Technology, Medical Office Assistant, Medical Office Practice, Mental Health Assistant, Medical Record Technician, Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Office Technology, Office Management, Ophthalmic Dispensing, Paralegal Assistant, Radiological Technician, Recreation Leadership, Respiratory Care, Telecommunications Technology, Visual Communications Technology, Youth Partnership Programme

Erie 1 and 2 BOCES (Board of Cooperative Education) 5 sites: Advanced Academic Preparation, Advertising Design and Production, Assessment, Auto Body, Auto Mechanics, Basic Literacy, Basic Skills, Building Trades, Case Management, Child Care, Computer Aided Drafting, CWEP, Computer Information Processing, Cosmetology, Counseling, Dental Assisting, Dental Lab Technology, Electrical Systems, ESL, Food Services, GED, Horticulture, Image Processing Clerk, Job Development, Job Skills, Life
Skills, Medical Transcription, Machine Tool Operations, Marina Operations, Medical Office Procedures, Nursing Assistant, Pharmacy Aide, Police Security, Practical Nursing, Printing, Technical Electronics, Welding

L K Painter Community Center: Crisis Management, Job Development and Placement, Job Survival, Life Skills

Medaille College: Veterinary Technology

Metalworking Institute: Machine Trades Training

People, Inc: Employment Assistance for the Disabled

78 Restoration Corporation: Nursing Assistant Training Program

Supportive Services Corporation: Job Development

Trocaire College: Business Administration, Business Sales, Clinical Laboratory Technician, Computer Office Specialist, Customer Service, Early Childhood Education, Health Care Management, Health Information Technology, Hospitality Management Assistant, Medical Assistant, Medical Coding Certificate, Medical Office Technology, Medical Transcription, Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Surgical Technology

Women for Human Rights and Dignity: Basic Skills, Business Skills, Case Management, CWEP, Life Skills, Support Group Counselling
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BUFFALO CONTEXT
INTERVIEWS

1. Introduction

2. Description of the welfare-to-work program

Can you tell me about the kinds of training, education and skills development that your program provides? Technical skills, what education level, any formal qualifications?

Do you teach computer skills?

Can you describe what happens on a typical day on the program? What time does it start and finish each day? Is that Monday to Friday?

Is any childcare provided for participants of the program? If so, could you tell me about it? (Free, hours, on site?)

Is any help with transportation costs given to participants of the program?

Can you tell me about post-employment services?

3. Experience of participants after leaving program

Is there enough employment in the Buffalo economy to enable TANF recipients to find jobs?

If yes, despite depressed area economy?

What types of jobs are there? (Examples)

And do these jobs mainly pay the minimum wage, or more than that?
Do you keep any statistics of what happens to participants after they have left the program? Or do any follow up interviews?

Do you have any information about what jobs the participants had got when they left the program?

How many of participants who have left your program would you estimate are being paid $9.08 without healthcare and $8.08 with healthcare – Buffalo’s new living wage level?

Is the employment that participants of welfare-to-work programs get usually entry-level employment?

Is the employment that participants move into full-time, regular and secure?

Do you know whether former participants of the programs follow movement up a job ladder within or between companies, or do they move between similar jobs, or do they move back into unemployment?

Do you think TANF recipients’ employment opportunities are restricted by the financial cost and time taken to reach employment located far from poor neighborhoods?

Do you think TANF recipients’ employment opportunities are restricted by the availability and cost of childcare?

4. Analysis of success of welfare-to-work

What do you think of welfare-to-work as a policy? Is a good idea, is it working in getting people off the rolls?
Is it successful in lifting single parent families out of poverty, and successful in getting them employment that provides a living wage?

What impacts are the programs having on the lives of single parents?

Are welfare-to-work programs helping people become self-sufficient and no longer reliant on Government aid?

Would these people be getting jobs anyway without these programs?

Do you think this work-first approach to welfare-to-work is effective in tackling poverty?

How do you think welfare-to-work programs could be improved?

What do you think it would take to get these TANF recipients jobs that pay a living wage?

What do you think will happen to TANF recipients when their time limits expire?

5. Using this organization as a case study

I would be very interested in using this organization as a case study. I would like to focus on this organisation, not to assess the effectiveness of individual programs, but to enable me to reach a wide range of TANF recipients, and to examine programs with different specialties. Would it be possible for me over the next four months to sit in on some training sessions, interview some participants of the program, and if possible contact previous participants of the program? (To maintain confidentiality I could give you letters stamped and ask you to write on the names and addresses on the envelopes).

All of this research, including all interviews, is totally confidential, the names of anyone who agreed to talk to me would not be disclosed to anyone, nor published in research.
APPENDIX E: CONTEXT INTERVIEWS

Table 1: Buffalo Context Interviews

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<tr>
<th>Organisation Type</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>SSO</td>
<td>Erie 2 BOCES</td>
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<td>Educational Opportunity Center</td>
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<td>Private Industry Council</td>
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<td>SSO</td>
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<td>SSO</td>
<td>The Childcare Coalition</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Transition Team</td>
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<td>Erie County Department of Social Services</td>
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<td>AFL-CIO Economic Development Group</td>
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<td>Community Group</td>
<td>Catholic Charities</td>
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<td>Community Group</td>
<td>Project Dandelion</td>
<td>28.9.99</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
<td>Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority</td>
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<td>Employer</td>
<td>HSBC Insurance (USA) Inc.</td>
<td>10.11.99</td>
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<td>Client Logic</td>
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<td>Employer</td>
<td>Kaleida Health</td>
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Table 2: Sheffield Context Interviews

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<td>SSO</td>
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APPENDIX F:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BUFFALO LONE PARENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

My name is Jo Casebourne, I’m a student from Cambridge in England and I’m interested in looking at issues of how women with children manage their lives, and the access of single parents to work. I’d like to talk to you about the jobs you’ve had and your experience of welfare-to-work programs. Thanks very much for your willingness to participate in this research project, I really appreciate it. This is going to be a very informal interview, so please feel free to say anything you like.

The six areas I want to talk to you about are your personal history such as when you came to Buffalo, your education and the age of your children, your experiences of being on welfare, the welfare-to-work program, any jobs you’ve had, how you manage financially, and what you think about welfare and working. The interview should take about an hour.

This research is independent of the Government, the DSS, the Department of Labor, and the University at Buffalo. Just before we start the interview I would like to assure you that as a participant in this interview you have several very definite rights. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time. You are also free to withdraw from the interview at any time. This interview will be kept strictly confidential.

I would like to tape record this interview, so I don’t forget any of the information you tell me, is this OK? No-one but myself will have access to these tapes, so your employer/program organizer will not be allowed to hear them. I know we are sitting in the program office but please feel free to be critical about the program if this is what you feel - everything you say is totally confidential. Extracts of this interview may be part of the final research report, but

These questions were modified for use in Sheffield, and were designed for lone parents currently attending welfare-to-work programmes.
under no circumstances will your name be included in this report. I would like to start by asking you some questions about yourself such as when you moved to Buffalo, and how old your children are.

First of all can you say your name, just for the tape.
When did you move to Buffalo?
Which area Buffalo do you live in now?
How do you feel about living round there?
What sort of housing do you live in? (Is that public housing?)
Do you have any problems with your housing?
Do you have a telephone?
How many children do you have?
How old are they? Are they at home or in school?
When did you become a single parent?
Why was this?
Have you ever been married? (Are you now divorced, widowed or separated?)

2. THE WELFARE TO WORK PROGRAM

Can you tell me about your experience of the welfare-to-work program?
   How long have you been on the program?
   What kind of things do you do there?
What kind of training or education activities are there?
Do they teach computer skills?
Who runs the program? Where is it located?
Can you describe a typical day on the program?
What time did you start and finish every day?
How many days a week is that?
   How many hours a week is that (workfare)?
And how many weeks or months have you been on the program?
Who looks after the kids when you are on the program? (day care, family, friends)
Does the program provide free childcare, or give financial help for childcare?
How much do you still have to pay for childcare?
How do you usually travel to the program?
Do you have access to a car or a car share?
How long in total does it usually take you to travel from home to the program?
Does the program help finance your travel?
Do you still have to pay for some travel to the program?
Do you feel the program is useful to you?
Which bits are particularly good or bad?
Do you feel program has given you new skills or made you more employable?
If you could, what would you change about the program?
Is this the first welfare-to-work program you have been on?
If no, tell me about the previous welfare-to-work program.
If no, after leaving your first welfare-to-work program did you get a job?
So I can get an idea of a typical day for you at the welfare-to-work program and how you
manage childcare and transportation, I was wondering if I could ask you to keep a diary
of your activities just for a day? It would look like this

3. EMPLOYMENT AND LIFE HISTORY

I would like to ask you some general questions about where you were born, your education
and employment history before you started on the welfare-to-work program, and some details
about when you first went on welfare.

Personal:
What year were you born?
Are you a US citizen?
Were you born in the US?
If not, where were you born?
When did you come to the US?
Is English your first language?
Which racial or ethnic group would you describe yourself as belonging to?
If Hispanic, Which Hispanic group do you belong to?

Education:
How old were you when you left school?
Did you complete 12th Grade? If not, what was the highest grade you completed?
Did you get a High School Diploma, or its equivalent (GED)?
Did you go to College?
Have you returned to education since leaving High School?
If so, can you give me details of when this was, what courses you did, what college you were at, any qualifications you got?
Did you get any help to fund that, or did you have to pay for it yourself?

Welfare and work history:
When did you first go on welfare?
Why was this?
Can you tell me about any jobs you had before you went on welfare?
Have you ever been involved in some employment whilst being on welfare? Can you tell me about this job?
Since you first went on welfare have you ever found a job and come off welfare? Can you tell me about that job?
Why did you go back onto welfare after that job?
Have you ever come off welfare for any other reason?
Why did you go back on welfare after that?

Employment questions for most recent job:
How did you get the job?
Who were you working for?
Was the job full-time or part-time?
What time did you start and finish each day?
What type of shift pattern did you work?
How many hours a week did you work?
Were you happy with these hours?
Would you have preferred to work more or less hours?
Who looked after the kids when you are at work?
If you don’t mind me asking, what was your hourly/weekly or monthly rate?
Did you feel that this job was stable, or that you might be made unemployed at any time?
Did you feel this job makes full use of your experience and abilities?
Were you promoted whilst you were there?
Did your employer pay you anything when you are off sick?
If your children were ill could you get time off work easily?
How long did you stay at this job?
Why did you leave?
If sacked, did your employer give you reasons for dismissing you?
Did you enjoy this job?
What were the advantages and disadvantages of the job?

**Discrimination:**

Have you ever experienced what you think was racial discrimination from the DSS or Department of Labor?

Have you ever experienced sexual discrimination from the DSS of Dept of Labor, or been discriminated against because of being a mother, or because of your age?

Have you ever experienced what you think was racial discrimination from an employer, or someone you applied to for a job?

Have you ever experienced sexual discrimination from an employer, or someone you applied to for a job, or been discriminated against because of being a mother, or because of your age?
4. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

If you don't mind me asking I would like to ask you some questions about your income to see whether you find it hard to manage on welfare. As with all this interview this information is completely private and will not be told to the program organizers, your employer or the DSS.

How much is your welfare check?
How much in Food Stamps do you get per month?
Other than your welfare check what other sources of income do you have? (Do you have a job, get help from family or friends, from other organizations?)
Do you receive any child support from the father of your child?
Is that through the DSS, or directly from the father?
Do you and your children have health insurance?
Before beginning the welfare-to-work program were you involved in some employment whilst being on welfare?
Have you had to give this up since the program started?
Would you say that managing on your budget is easy, or is it a struggle?
Has their ever been a time when you could not afford a place to stay, or when you could not pay your rent? (When was the last time that happened to you?)
Has there ever been a time when you needed food but could not afford to buy it?
Has your electricity or heat been turned off because you could not afford to pay the bill?
Has your phone been disconnected, or have you gone without a phone because you could not afford to pay the bill?
Has there ever been a time when you or your children needed to see a Doctor or Dentist, but could not afford to go?
Did you or your children ever go without proper winter clothing because you could not afford it?
When did you last buy new clothes for yourself?
When did you last take you and your children out for a day?
When did you last leave Buffalo for a holiday?
Do you think that your income is enough to support you and your family, and to ensure that you have everything you need?
Do you think you are financially better off on welfare than if you were working?

5. GENERAL ATTITUDE TO WELFARE AND WORK

What kinds of jobs do you think you could get with your present education, skills and experience?
What kind of job would you ideally like to have?
What would it take for you to get that job?
How many hours a week would you ideally like to work?
What would make it possible for you to work?
What is the furthest you would be prepared to travel to work?
What is the longest time you would be prepared to spend travelling to work each day?
What are the positive and negative things about receiving welfare?
What are the positive and negative things about working?
If you had a choice, would you prefer to work or to stay at home to look after your children?
Overall do you think life is better for you and your children when you are working, or when you are receiving welfare?
What do you think about welfare reform and welfare-to-work programs?
Have they helped you?
What do you hope to be doing six months from now?
What are your hopes for the future?
If the President were to ask you what the Government could do to assist lone parents, what advice would you give him?

OK, the main part of the interview is over now.
Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
I’d be very interested to find out how you get on in the future. Is it OK if I get in touch with you again in June? Where is the best place to contact you?
When I refer to this interview in the project I will use a different name rather than your real name. Would you like to choose this name, or would you prefer if I chose one for you?

**TRANSITION FROM WELFARE TO WORK**

Can you tell me what it was like to make the transition from welfare into work?

Did you face any particular problems making that transition?

Were you worried about losing medical help when you moved into work?

Are you receiving transitional benefits? (clothing allowance, childcare help, transportation help, Food Stamps, transitional Medicaid)

Have you received any help from the Welfare-to-Work Transition Teams?

Are you using any Post-employment services?

Do you feel it is helping you with your job?

Do you think it will help you get promotion or move to a better job?

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27 Questions for lone parents who were currently employed included this section.
APPENDIX G: DIARY

Please look at the left hand corner of the table where it shows each hour of the day. For each hour please tick a box that shows what you were mainly doing during that hour. If it was not one of these activities please write what you were doing in the box called 'Other activity'. If between 6 am and 7 am you were travelling to work the table would look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>In bed</th>
<th>Doing house chores</th>
<th>Taking children to and from school</th>
<th>Taking children to and from childcare</th>
<th>Travelling between home and work / program</th>
<th>At work /program</th>
<th>Having a meal</th>
<th>Looking after children</th>
<th>Other activity (please specify)</th>
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Please fill in the table for next Monday until 6am Tuesday
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APPENDIX H:
LETTER SENT TO EMPLOYED LONE PARENTS IN BUFFALO

University at Buffalo Headed paper

5 September 1999

My name is Joanna Casebourne and I am a PhD Student at the University of Cambridge in England. From August until December 1999 I am visiting Buffalo to carry out research into the impact of welfare-to-work programs on the living standards of single parents receiving welfare benefit. In my PhD research I will be assessing whether welfare-to-work programs enable single parents to find jobs, and whether they enable single parents to find employment that provides them with a living wage. This study will examine how successful welfare reform is being in terms of lifting people out of poverty, rather than assuming programs are successful simply because people leave the welfare rolls.

In my study I am particularly interested in talking to people like yourself who have been on welfare, have experienced job-training programs and are now making the transition to employment. The insert organisation name suggested that as someone making this transition you would have valuable input into this study.

I would be extremely interested in meeting with you to discuss your experiences of being on welfare, what you thought of any welfare-to-work programs you attended, and your experiences of employment. This would take about an hour of your time. I appreciate the many and increased demands on your time you face as an employed single parent, but it is precisely because of your position in employment that your input would be so valuable. I was hoping that we could meet in September wherever would be most convenient to you – possibly at your place of employment or in a coffee shop Downtown.

If you would be willing to participate in this project I would be grateful if you could telephone me on (716) 882 2672 and leave a message with your name and phone number if I am not available, or return the enclosed postcard with your name, address and phone number and I will then contact you. Everything you say in the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be passed on to staff at the DSS or the insert organisation name program.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours faithfully,

Joanna Casebourne
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS WITH BUFFALO LONE PARENTS

Any big changes in life since I last saw you in MONTH?

Moved, been ill, had another child, no longer SP, have car?

When did you leave the Clarkson Center/EOC?

Was it to go to a job?
If not, why did you leave?
Did you go to another welfare-to-work program?

Are you currently employed?

How did you get your current job?
When did you start?
Who are you working for?
Where are they located?
How do you usually travel to work?
Do you have access to a car or a car share?
How long in total does it usually take you to travel from home to work?
What kind of work do you do?
What are your main duties?
Have you taken part in any training as part of this job?
What did that involve?
Is the job full-time or part-time?
Do you work regular hours or do shift work?
What time do you start and finish each day?
How many hours a week do you work?
Are you happy with these hours?
Who looks after the kids when you are at work?
If you don’t mind me asking, what is your hourly/weekly or monthly rate?
Do you feel that this job is stable, or that you might be made unemployed at any time?
Do you feel this job makes full use of your experience and abilities?
Have you been promoted?
Does your employer pay you anything when you are off sick?
If your children are ill can you get time off work easily?
Do you enjoy this job?
What were the advantages and disadvantages of the job?
What are the positive and negative about working?
Is life better now that you are working?
Is this your first job since the welfare-to-work program?
Do you think you would have got this job without the welfare-to-work program?
You were applying for TYPE OF JOBS when I last spoke to you, is this job different and if so why?

What was it like making the transition from welfare into work?

Did you face any particular problems making that transition?
Were you worried about losing medical help when you moved into work?
Did you receive transitional benefits? (clothing allowance, childcare help, transportation help, Food Stamps, transitional Medicaid)
Did you receive any help from the Welfare-to-Work Transition Team?

Are you currently on a welfare-to-work program/workfare?

Is this the same program? If no:
How long have you been on the program?
What kind of things do you do there?
What kind of training or education activities are there?
Do they teach computer skills?
Who runs the program? Where is it located?
Can you describe a typical day on the program?
What time did you start and finish every day?
How many days a week is that?
How many hours a week is that (workfare)?
And how many weeks or months have you been on the program?
Who looks after the kids when you are on the program?
Does the program provide free childcare, or give financial help for childcare?
How do you usually travel to the program?
Do you have access to a car or a car share?
How long in total does it usually take you to travel from home to the program?
Does the program help finance your travel?
Do you still have to pay for some travel to the program?
Do you feel the program is useful to you?
Which bits are particularly good or bad?
Do you feel program has given you new skills or made you more employable?
If you could, what would you change about the program?

Have you been employed since I last spoke to you? (ask employment questions)
Why did you leave?

**Income Questions**

How much is your weekly welfare check / pay check?
Do you get any Food Stamps? If so how much do you get per month?
Do you have any other sources of income?
Do you receive any child support from the father of your children?
Do you and your children have health insurance?
Would you say that managing on your budget is easy, or is it a struggle?
Since I last spoke to you has there been a time when you could not afford a place to stay, or when you could not pay your rent?

Since I last spoke to you has there been a time when you needed food but could not afford to buy it?

Since I last spoke to you has there been a time when your electricity or heat has been turned off because you could not afford to pay the bill?

Since I last spoke to you has there been a time when your phone has been disconnected, or have you gone without a phone because you could not afford to pay the bill?

Since I last spoke to you has there been a time when you or your children needed to see a Doctor or Dentist, but could not afford to go?

Do you think that your income is now enough to support you and your family to ensure that you have everything you need?

Are you financially better or worse off than when I last spoke to you?

Have you been able to do things since I last spoke to you that you couldn’t do before? Since I saw you have you been cut off welfare?

If the person responsible for the welfare-to-work program you were on was sitting with me now, what would be the main thing you’d want to say to them?

**Future:**

When I last spoke to you, you said THESE were your goals and ideal job

Are you any nearer your future goals and ideal job?

How do you feel about the future?
APPENDIX J:
NETWORK VIEW OF ‘EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYMENT’
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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