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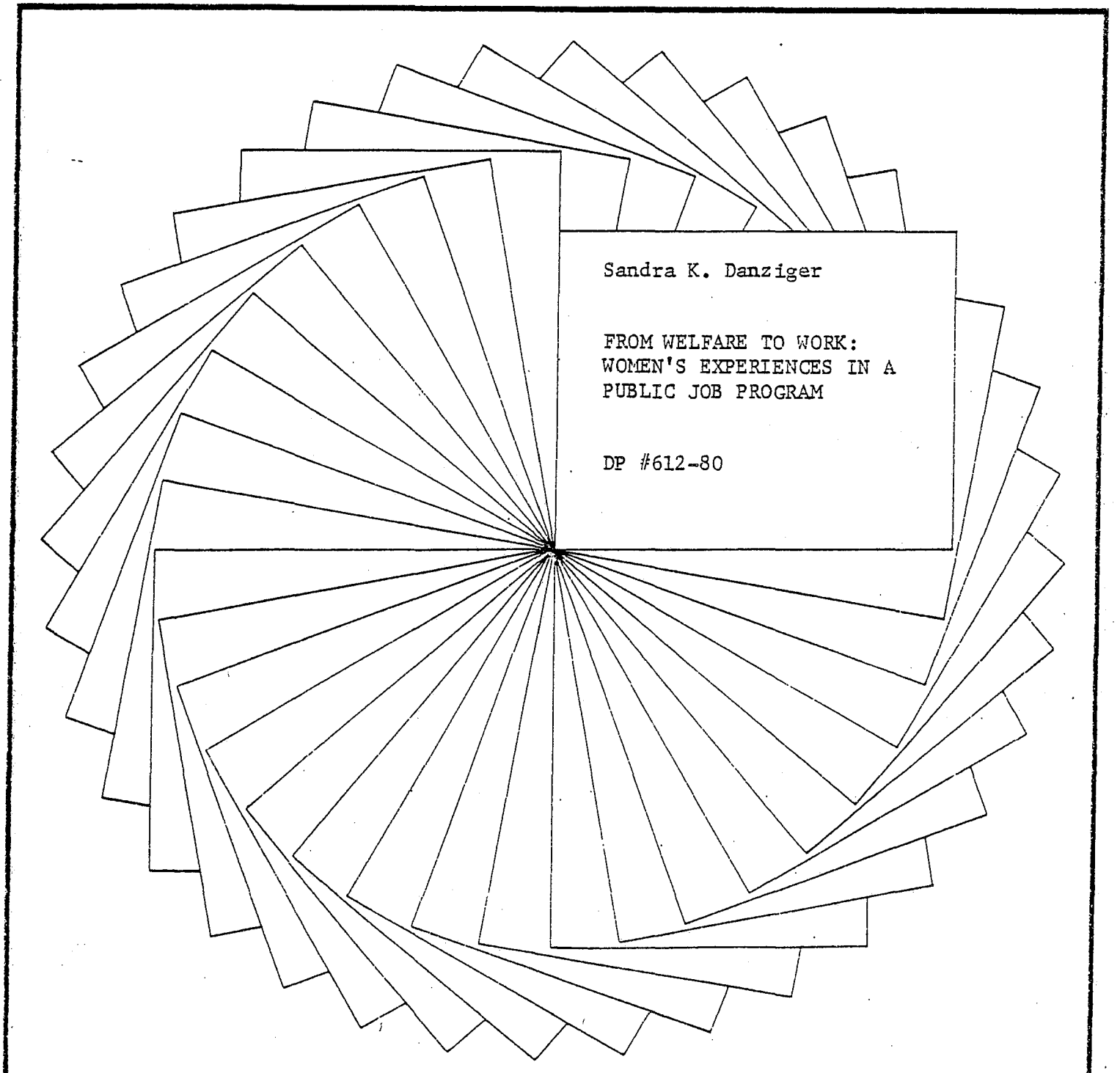

From Welfare to Work: Women's Experiences in a Public Job Program

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May 1980

The research reported here was funded in part by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, New York City, and in part by the Institute for Research on Poverty with funds provided by the Department of Health and Human Services.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes how welfare (AFDC) mothers in two cities perceive the impact of a publicly subsidized job program, the National Supported Work Demonstration. In-depth interviews were conducted with 34 women one to two years after they had completed the program. Their experiences are grouped into four categories, based on the extent to which they felt their lives had improved since participating in the program.

The major findings are that one-third of a sample of women who completed the program felt that they had achieved substantial gains in well-being. They credit these gains to both their direct placement in a regular job and the self-confidence they derived through the work experience. Many of the other women's less favorable postprogram outcomes are due to one of the following three reasons: (a) they have not yet obtained the better jobs they had come to hope for after doing well in the program; (b) they did not perceive the program as an opportunity to move from welfare dependence; or (c) they could not translate their work experience in the program into motivation to search for regular employment.

These findings were generated from open-ended interviews in which the women were asked to reflect freely on their experiences. The data offer insights for generating hypotheses for further research. For example, the women's current feelings of personal well-being were positively associated in this sample with stronger orientations to stay off welfare and with better jobs and incomes. Previous research on Supported Work did not explore this possibility, and thus neglected explanations that might have helped clarify the relative success of this program with the AFDC target group.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The rationale for developing federal job programs for the poor evolved from disillusionment with the training and other worker-enhancement programs that were the primary focus of the War on Poverty in the 1960s (Haveman, 1979). If increases in education and job training were unable to reduce poverty, and lowered neither the unemployment rates nor the welfare rolls, then perhaps the direct provision of jobs could be more effective. Thus, the latter part of the 1970s witnessed an expansion of job programs, among them the National Supported Work Demonstration, which spanned six years, involved an expenditure of about $80 million, and was sponsored by a consortium of five federal agencies and the Ford Foundation.[1]

Supported Work provided transitional work experience to four groups with extreme labor market disadvantages: recently released ex-offenders, ex-addicts in drug treatment programs, long-time recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and youth who had dropped out of school (Masters and Maynard, 1979; MDRC, 1978). Programs were developed in 15 sites around the nation, primarily in cities, and, by the second year of demonstration (June, 1977), over 5,400 participants had been enrolled. Each local program was modeled to some degree on the Wildcat experiment at the Vera Institute of Justice, which created useful employment opportunities for ex-addicts in a low-stress environment (Friedman, 1975).

The Supported Work employee is expected to enroll for approximately one year in a full-time job in a semistructured environment. Ideally, she or he works along with peers who share the same labor market disadvantages. The levels of job pressures are gradually increased, under careful supervision. Ideally, at the end of the participation period, as a result of this structured work experience, the individual locates a full-time, steady job in the regular, i.e., nonsubsidized sector (either public or private employment). Of course, the ideal pattern is not the typical one, as many participants drop out of the program, and some who do complete the program do not acquire a job.

Preliminary evaluation of the project indicates that only some groups of participants have better outcomes than their matched controls (Masters and Maynard, 1979). After 18 months of program operation, only the AFDC recipients had significantly higher employment and earnings and worked more hours than their control group peers. Of all target groups, the welfare mothers appear to have the highest percentage of program completions and the highest rate of job placement. They stayed in the program an average of 10 months; almost 30% left with jobs to start elsewhere. The ex-offenders have the next highest rate of job placement, 26%, but stayed in Supported Work only an average of 6 months. Youth and ex-addicts stayed in the program an average of 8 months; rates of placement were approximately 22% (MDRC, 1978).

Although the quantitative analyses are far from complete and the implications still open to interpretation, the early results raised several new questions that could not be addressed with the data generated as part of the initial research design. Specifically, the project managers were curious about within-target-group differences and about

participants' own perceptions of the program's impact. In the summer of 1979, a series of interview studies with selected categories of former participants was initiated. I interviewed AFDC recipients who had completed the program.

This subset of program participants was of particular interest because of their relative success. Welfare mothers were considered Supported Work's "stars" by local operations personnel. They tended to demonstrate the best work behavior and best performance on the job. The longer-run effect of success in the program was a critical question guiding our fieldwork strategy.

Design

We were interested both in the women's experiences in the one or two years following program completion, and in their perceptions of the program itself, particularly how, if at all, the program had helped them. After one or two years, what difference did it make in their lives to have completed Supported Work? Did the special features of the program that in theory differentiated it from other job programs have any impact? What accounted for the success of some of these women? Was it their own inner drive to advance themselves that was finally channeled by a rare but otherwise unremarkable opportunity? Or did the program change them in a more fundamental way, facilitating their development of new interests and commitment to work?

Although it was clear that one retrospective interview would not untangle all of these associations, it would at least provide the kind of rich, descriptive information on the women's experiences that was noticeably absent in the quantitative evaluation data. Interviews modeled

more closely upon a case study approach would reveal a great deal about the women themselves, the longer-run gains from program participation, and the manner in which the women were able or unable to take advantage of program offerings. We chose, then, to focus intensively on the views of a small number of individuals, using a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. We had no basis for hypothesizing how the women would evaluate program participation, nor did we know what level of well-being to predict one or two years after they left the program. We could not, therefore, develop an interview schedule that contained questions with coded answers designed to allow preformulated and specific quantitative analytic operations. We felt, indeed, that imposing too much structure in the interview might prevent one from discovering the important issues.

The flexibility we required was available in the use of qualitative techniques designed to permit discovery of what is or is not relevant for the research problem at hand (Lofland, 1971). One approach, participant observation, has been used in previous poverty research (Liebow, 1967; Rainwater, 1970; Lewis, 1965). The second approach, intensive interviewing, is highly suited for (1) understanding the subjective meanings of the individual's experience, and for (2) discovering the processual and changing aspects of that perception. Its appropriateness for the Supported Work follow-up is clear. Its major disadvantage is that the rich data are often largely unamenable to complex quantitative analyses because of the small sample size and because the open-ended structure of the interview increases the

chances of obtaining inconsistent information from the respondents. Such data are, however, ideal for generating hypotheses for further study and for providing contextual material for comparing competing, equally plausible interpretations of the quantitative findings of other studies.

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

During the summer of 1979, we interviewed women from two Supported Work sites--Oakland, California, and Newark, New Jersey. For each city, we generated random lists of women who had completed the program in the previous two years. Our rationale for the sampling strategy was based on the program's design. We chose Oakland and Newark because of the very different organizational characteristics of the two sites and the fact that both had demonstrated relatively high rates of success with the AFDC target group.

For each city, one local field worker located a total of 15-20 women and set up interviews in the women's own homes.[2] A few individuals could not be located, and only about 5 of those contacted chose not to participate. We interviewed 34 women, 19 in Oakland, and 15 in Newark, and paid them $10 for the session. We explained that this was a study of the participants' opinions, assured them that we were interested in hearing their views of both the negative and positive aspects of the program, and guaranteed them confidentiality. Only 1 woman refused permission to tape-record the interview.

The local worker attempted to obtain equal numbers of women who left the program with job placements ("positive terminees," PTs) and women

who remained in the program as long as was allowed, but did not secure postprogram employment ("mandatory graduates," MGs), until the total number of scheduled interviews was obtained. This strategy worked in Newark (we had 8 PTs and 7 MGs), but did not prove successful in Oakland, where the pool of mandatory graduates who could be located was small. Thus, we interviewed only 6, and chose to interview more PTs (13) rather than settle for a smaller total sample.

The Data

The questions listed in Appendix I guided the interviews; the format was open-ended and relatively unstructured with sessions lasting 1 to 2 hours. I conducted all but two of the interviews, with a collaborator (Martha K. Ritter). One of us would initiate conversation while the other primarily listened, taking over the probing only at the lead person's suggestion. Although a few of the women were reticent to reveal much about themselves, many expressed appreciation for the opportunity to express their opinions, reflect on their lives, and discuss their feelings.

In addition to the self-reported information, we conducted interviews of an hour or more with key officials or supervisors who were familiar with the women's participation in the program. These sessions provided an independent source of information on work performance, problems the women might have had with other program personnel, the general program experience, and the circumstances surrounding the participants' search for postprogram jobs. The supervisors' perspectives generally corroborated

the women's reports. They even added to our understanding of what had happened to some of the women who were reticent respondents.

In a few instances, however, the supervisors totally contradicted the women's descriptions of their program experiences. The staff suspected alcohol and drug use among some of the women who reported to us their disaffection with the program. Although both accounts concur on the behavior the women displayed, they differ considerably in attributing motives. For our purposes, both sources verify that problems existed for these women.[3]

THE FINDINGS

Characteristics of the Sample

To place the demographic and personal characteristics of the sample in the appropriate context, we have, in Table 1, compared these 34 women with the entire AFDC Supported Work sample and with the general population of AFDC women. The major difference between the Supported Work groups and the general AFDC population, years on welfare, arises from the Supported Work eligibility criteria. The program sought long-term recipients, those who had been on welfare at least 3 years and whose youngest dependent was no less than 6 years of age. Our respondents are more frequently black, again probably because of program eligibility criteria and because of the racial composition of the two sample sites. They are also less likely to be living in public housing than the experimental Supported Work AFDC group as a whole.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participant Sample Compared to the Total MDRC Experimental AFDC Sample and to AFDC Women in General

	Participant Sample	Experimental	AFDC Female Adults, 1973
Median Age in Years	36 years	34 years	30 years
% Black	97.1%	85%	45.8%
Completed 12 years education or received GED	35%	27.2%	26.2%
Currently married	8.8%	3.4%	12.0%
Average no. of dependents	2.4	2.2	2.6
Median no. of years on welfare	7-8[a] years	8.6 years	2 years
% in public housing	32.4%	45.9%	?
No. in sample	34	149	2,793,547

Source: These data are adapted from Garfinkel and Krynski, 1978.

[a]These figures are based on a smaller sample than the total 34; we lack information on some respondents.

The women ranged in age from 23 to 59 years, the number of children from 1 to 9, and the number of dependents currently living at home from 0 to 6, averaging 2.4. Of the 28 who reported the number of years they had received welfare prior to entering the program, half said 7 or less, with 1 claiming only 2 years of recipiency. The other half reported from 8 to 17 years as a recipient. Six of the Newark women and 5 of those in Oakland lived in public housing.

Life History Data

The data describe the women's life histories and work experience over approximately a five-year period. Within the sample, a broad range of program and postprogram experiences were evident. Some women's lives were dramatically altered by involvement in the program; others who indicated that their lives were no different from before have mostly returned to welfare dependency and a lifestyle they associate with that status. Opinions about the job program itself spanned a range from quite positive to quite negative. For many, participation in the job program paled in significance compared to other events in their lives. The events that overshadowed participation tended to have negative consequences which were extraordinarily difficult to overcome: a physically debilitating trauma, or being a victim of a crime such as armed robbery.

For the majority, however, the program brought steadier jobs, higher wages with good benefits, increased confidence, and independence (although these benefits were sometimes short-lived). To place the program impact in the appropriate context, the paper will describe four groups

of respondents whose perceived current well-being has been assessed on a number of empirically derived criteria. Illustrations of the women's perceptions of well-being in the four groups will then be summarized. Next, the perceived impact of the program on each group will be presented. In conclusion, the primary program effects will be discussed and policy and research implications of the findings suggested.

Criteria for Within-Sample Comparisons

Respondents were assigned to one of four groups of relative well-being, based upon their average score on four types of criteria, derived from the ones most frequently used by the respondents themselves. Four dimensions consistently emerged; the first three were the most frequent factors on which they assessed their current lives. When asked how they had been getting along since Supported Work, they described (1) their employment status, (2) their family's financial situation, and (3) their own self-image, personal feelings of satisfaction and competence. In addition, in accounting for the process of how far or little they had progressed since leaving the program, they described (4) the other kinds of burdens they faced and the extent to which they or people in general could overcome these obstacles. They placed their job, financial, and personal success in the context of their success in coping with life in general.

The fact that these themes frequently emerged in the openly structured conversations is critical for our understanding of how these programs impact on participants' lives. First of all, outcome measures of economic policies rarely include nonpecuniary gains. This study indicates the

perceived importance of changes in self-image, for example. Secondly, the Supported Work program is designed to help individuals develop work habits and the commitment to work. The program planners recognized that an important component of steady work habits that was likely to be missing from the repertoire of the long-term unemployed was the attitude of willingness to work, or work "readiness." What was not understood was that underlying this willingness is a general psychological tendency or coping mechanism. The women in this sample saw their job performance as in part a function of their ability to "make the most of a situation." One respondent's comment suggests that experience in the program may help stimulate a change in the general as well as the specific trait.

> I was determined to stick it out for six months for Peralta [Oakland program]. I had seen so many people come through the program, graduates when I was just going in, who got good jobs and did not stay on more than two weeks. I would just look at them and laugh. I feel if you really want to do something, you can do it. There is no such thing as someone giving you a job that is too hard to do. That is one thing Ms. X [program supervisor] told us...she said you either work a job or let the job work you. I understand what that is. You can go in and do it right and work it or you can just let it work you. And if it works you, it's going to outwork you.

Other outcome criteria presented by the women were suggested less frequently and may thus be considered as less central. Two of these are the nonfinancial well-being of the family, as indicated by the children's happiness, for example, and the quality of their social network of friends, neighbors, relatives, and coworkers. A few women claimed that their children derived emotional benefits from the mother's employment and a couple found that their work opened them to new, more rewarding social horizons. Such indicators were mentioned incidentally, as less significant postprogram gains. The absence or opposite of these less important outcomes, e.g., difficulties with one's children during

work hours or poor coworker relations, were occasionally discussed as secondary factors accounting for employment, financial, or personal problems. However, the nature of the job, the amount and source of money one has, the feelings of self-worth, and the context in which one copes with life's stresses far outweighed the women's other concerns.

I rated each respondent according to a score of 1-4, high to low, on each of the four criteria thus established. First, (1) her employment status was rated according to the quality of her job benefits, salary, working conditions, opportunities for promotion, and job security. To evaluate (2) her financial status, I considered whether or not she felt she could save money, get consumer credit, buy things she wanted or needed for herself and her family, and take vacations. In taking into account the self-image of the person (3), I considered postprogram changes in feelings of independence and autonomy, sense of educational and career goals, ability to communicate, and general interests in situations or people beyond her immediate personal sphere.

Finally, (4) the women's beliefs about the burdens of life were rated, placing individuals generally nearer to one polar end or the other. Some women appeared to discriminate rather finely between the societal and the personal calamities in their lives, acknowledging both their own liability and their victimization. In other words, they claimed some responsibility and credit for what happened to them and they also saw their lot in life cast in part by their race, sex, age, physical health, family status, upbringing, neighborhood, etc. Other women expressed feelings of more total victimization. They did not perceive their own personal role in exacerbating or modifying these difficulties, and they apparently did not identify or act on available options.

From their own self-reports the women distribute roughly into four groups, based on these four criteria. The scores were quite similar across outcome categories, i.e., most of the women who received a 1 (high) on job and finances were also high in self-confidence and quite flexible in their coping style vis-à-vis the burdens of life. Eighteen of the 34 women had identical scores on all four criteria. For the other 16 who received a mix of scores, placement into one of the four groups represents an average score assuming equal weighting of the four outcome criteria. The average score placed three of the women halfway between two groups (at 1.5 or 3.5); the higher overall rating was given, so that the women were assigned to Group I and Group III. Table 2 provides the distribution of average scores in each group.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PERCEIVED WELL-BEING: GROUP I

The 11 women in Group I stand out for their strong sense of economic independence. In comparison to their previous years, they see their current employment opportunities enhanced, their financial base expanded, and their self-pride dramatically changed as a result of these improvements in economic status. Almost all of them have entered primary sector jobs rather than secondary jobs, with which they were more familiar (see also Doeringer and Piore, 1971). In the current jobs, they found themselves being paid better and offered better fringe benefits, or they had better working conditions and more interesting promotion possibilities. Their determination to maintain this current level of employment (or to improve it further) appears to give these women a newfound sense of permanence and stability in their lives, and they are grateful for it. In age, number of children, years of education

Table 2

Frequency Distributions of Average Criteria Scores in Each Group

Group I (most successful)[a]		Group II		Group III		Group IV (least successful)	
Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency
1.0	7	1.75	3	2.75	3	3.75	1
1.25	3	2.00	3	3.00	4	4.00	5
1.5	1	2.25	1	3.25	1	-	-
-	-	2.50	0	3.50	2	-	-
Totals	11		7		10		6

N = 34

[a]Note that in the scoring system utilized here, 1.0 is the highest possible rating, while a 4.0 is the lowest. In terms of the specific criteria, for example, a high-paying job receives a 1, while unemployment is scored as a 4.

or work and welfare experience, however, these women do not differ from the other 23 in the sample.[4] (See Table 3 for a summary of typical group characteristics.)

Secure and Promising Jobs

The quality of their work sets these women apart. Either they have white-collar clerical positions or else they are unionized in jobs that offer wages and benefits that conpensate for the difficulties of the job. For example, three women make $8-9.00 an hour at General Motors plants, after approximately one year of employment. Their work is for the most part physically taxing, but, in contrast to other women in the sample who have rough jobs, they have particularly good disability and unemployment compensation. Although these women were facing temporary layoffs, they were not too worried and were pleased to be receiving 95% of their wages during their time off. They receive medical coverage, vacation time, and benefits that they never imagined would come with a job. For example, in terms of benefits, GM health care policies were better than Medicaid, and dental care was included in the coverage. Other women in this group have clerical jobs with the state of New Jersey, the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (CMDNJ). As hospital public employees, they have security and promotion chances that are unique in their experience. One woman, who worked as a secretary at a university, was entitled to tuition waivers for herself and her children for a private high school and for college education. Another Group I respondent described the promotion possibilities she had in the following way:

Table 3

Characteristics of Post-Supported Work Sample,
22 Out of 34 Respondents Represented

	Age	# Children	City	Current Employment	Other Income	How Located 1st SW Job	Job in SW	Job/Welfare History
I								
01	37	4	O	G.M. assembly line had since S.W. $9.00/hr		P.T.-SW found	Crew chief, intake coordinator	No work, 6-7 years on AFDC after divorce.
04	23	1	N	CMDNJ patient escort-since S.W. $3.70/hr		P.T. rollover	Housekeeping CMDNJ	Regularly worked part-time since had child at age 15, was on AFDC 3 years, single.
05	41	8	N	CMDNJ-housekeeping 3 months $3.70/hr		M.G. self w/ program contact; had been ill	CMDNJ-housekeeping crew chief	Constantly had jobs, was on AFDC 5 years when ill, after divorce.
07	34	3	N	CMDNJ-secretary since S.W.	Medicaid, AFDC for grandchild	P.T. rollover had several interviews	CMDNJ-clerk/typist	Had worked several years before going on AFDC for 11 years-was not married.
08	32	2	N	Security guard w/senior citizen center 1½ years $4.00/hr	AFDC for 1 child	M.G. self-good S.W. references	CMDNJ-security guard	Had done seasonal work, waitressing for years, was on 3rd marriage and had been on AFDC a total of 10 years.
09	28	2	O	Janitor at airport since S.W. $7.00/hr		P.T. located 3 job offers	Clerical-S.W. office	Had worked a couple of odd jobs, was on AFDC 14 years since had 1st child at age 14; was divorced.
10	30	1	N	CMDNJ-admitting clerk since S.W.		P.T. rollover	CMDNJ custodial	Had worked a few odd jobs, was on AFDC for "many" years, was never married.
II								
13	36	3	O	Unemployed, worked jobs since S.W. 3 years	UEI, husband supports	P.T.-S.W. found	Crew chief in S.W. warehouse	Had worked erratically, then on AFDC 9 years after husband left, is on 2nd marriage.
14	38	5	O	Mattress factory-2 years, quit 1st post S.W. job, $5.83/hr + overtime	Child support from father, $115 mo	P.T.-S.W. found	Crew chief in S.W. warehouse	Had worked a couple of odd jobs, was on welfare-quite a long time in between being married twice.
15	36	1	N	Dispatcher/clerk for Security Co.-since S.W., $4.50/hr		P.T.-S.W. found	CMDNJ clerical	Had worked regularly in seasonal or full time for 4+ years; left husband and was on AFDC for 4 years.
17	56	5	O	Assembly line in electronics plant for 6 months, $4.20/hr, worked 4 jobs in 1 year		P.T.-S.W. found	Crew chief in S.W. warehouse	Was on welfare 5 years after divorce from long-term marriage

Table 3 (cont.)

	Age	# Children	City	Current Employment	Other Income	How Located 1st SW Job	Job in SW	Job/Welfare History
III								
19	37	3	O	Industrial carpenter at factory since S.W., $7.00/hr	Ex-husband sends child support for 1 child	P.T.-self	S.W. warehouse	Always worked seasonal jobs in cannery while on AFDC for 17 years.
21	59	8	O	Was laid off after 9 months from factory that closed; is searching but finds age a handicap	Soc. security for daughter AFDC grandson Medicare & income tax returns	M.G.-self through S.W. co-worker	Crew chief-S.W. warehouse	Had worked 7 years as L.P.N. until husband died, went on AFDC for last 6 years.
22	32	1	O	Part-time school crossing guard since S.W., $4.50/hr.	AFDC for child, $45.00/mo.	P.T.- Self	S.W. warehouse stayed only 3-4 mos.	Had worked as clerk or in factories for few months at a time, was on AFDC 7 years, separated.
23	23	1	O	Cook, has worked 4 jobs since S.W., 1 where she claimed she made $300+ week	AFDC for child	M.G.-self	S.W. warehouse, stayed 6-7 mos.	Had worked since age 13, always has a job, was on AFDC 9 years, is divorced.
24	38	5	N	Piece work + hourly night shift at factory several months, $3.75/hr. was unemployed 1 year	Gets AFDC subsidy	P.T.-S.W. found, but left because pay was less than S.W.	CMDNJ-security guard	Had worked 8 years at seasonal work and been on AFDC 8 years, was never married.
25	32	1	N	Currently unemployed; worked at rollover job for 1½ years	May be supported by boyfriend + AFDC	P.T.-rollover but was fired after 1½ years	CMDNJ-security guard	Had worked several jobs for over a year at a time, was on AFDC 6 years, was single
26	35	3	O	Currently unemployed since S.W.	AFDC $423/mo	M.G.-self worked factory 10 months until laid off	S.W.-warehouse	Had worked "all her life" but had also been on AFDC for a long time; was single
IV								
34	29	2	O	Unemployed since S.W.-claims is searching but has no prospects	AFDC + child support	M.G. never found a job	S.W.-warehouse	Had waited tables, but worked little; had been on AFDC 4 years after separation.
32	40	4	N	Unemployed since S.W.-may apply for a job	AFDC	M.G. never found a job	Security guard CMDNJ	Had worked a couple of jobs; has been on AFDC 15 years, was never married.
31	35	2	N	Unemployed since S.W.-not looking	AFDC $326/mo + $105 mo food stamps	M.G. never found a job	Secretarial at a Boy's Club	Had worked sporadically, few months-year at a time, was on AFDC 10 years-never married.
30	37	5	N	Unemployed since S.W.-had been ill; is not looking	AFDC	M.G. never found a job	CMDNJ-kitchen work	Had worked 1 job in 1955, perhaps one other went on AFDC after marital separation "years" ago.

Q: These changes in positions, are they better jobs?
A: Yes.

Q: How?
A: I took a cut in pay when I went to patient escort from housekeeper... They were saying that if I wanted to go into a nursing profession, the college does have some programs where they will help pay your tuition for going to school so I was saying, if I could get into one department, and probably move up a bit, then maybe I could just go ahead and go back to school.

Having Money

One of the most important advantages of working that the women reported was the ability to bring home a weekly paycheck--to know that money would always be coming in, instead of having to wait for a monthly welfare check. Only four of these women were receiving any supplements from AFDC, and two received it only for a grandchild living in their household. Although saving is not altogether feasible for these women, large purchases are possible. A car, a refrigerator, a television set, or a nicer apartment, all contribute to an improved sense of well-being. One woman described this change in the following way.

Q: Instead of welfare, how has it [a job income] changed things for you?
A: I was able to do much more, get things, than I had before. $235 on welfare wasn't getting it. Some people say, 'why you go home with $95 a week from Newark Services [SW program] instead of waiting for your check every month?' I said because at least I have money every week. I don't have to wait once a month--whether it's $50.00 or $95.00. At least I had the money.

Q: What were some of the things you were able to do?
A: Well, for one thing, I started fixing up my house. On welfare, what you get you could stick in this crate. But once you say you're working, you have advantages, you have a better chance of getting what you really want. Because on welfare, you had to take what they wanted to give you. But after I started working, I could tell them

> [the sales people at stores] I didn't have to take that shit. Or maybe, because I thought I'd be rolling in dough, I knew I had the money. So I started laying things away, finding furniture, and just having my own money. I didn't have to wait to go down there every six months [to the welfare office]. They didn't ask me every little bit of my life history for the little bit of money they were giving me. It made me feel better.

Feeling Confident

Group I women displayed highly positive attitudes toward themselves and saw the job program as helping them improve this sense of self. One respondent compared herself before and after the job program as follows.

> I wasn't so negative... I just didn't have the confidence within myself. I withdrew a lot and wanted to give up. They came through for me there. They had confidence in me.
>
> Q: Did it make you feel good about yourself?
> A: It makes me feel good about me now.
>
> Q: And it's really different than before you were at Peralta?
> A: Like I said, I'm raising two children by myself and to do that and not be able to do a lot of the things for your children that you wanted, being limited educationally, going out looking for a job and not being able to find one. If you found one, you couldn't take care of your children decently. Peralta changed all that.
>
> (and later in the interview)
>
> It was a different feeling going to work everyday. After a while I felt like I was a part of what everyone was doing, instead of just sitting around doing nothing. It made me feel good that I was doing something for my children too. Before I didn't know anything like that.
>
> Q: So you think it helped the children too?
> A: Yes, I feel it did and it will help them grow up too. Building confidence in me enabled me to build confidence in them. Peralta helped me do that. I didn't feel good about myself before.

In addition to claiming these changes in feelings of pride, several women described the process by which they were helped to change their attitude. Two in particular mentioned a supportive supervisor, as in this example.

There was one supervisor who was a lot of help to me.

Q: In what way?

A: He cared. He made me feel needed. He never played favorites. The first day I was supposed to go, I called in and said my child was sick and my child wasn't sick. Then I thought about it and got dressed and went. He would give me a red A if I was late and I finally realized that I needed Newark Services. It really hit me [that]... he made us feel as if we were as good as the other women in the office [the regular, non-AFDC employees]. The first day I went to work I wore jeans and had to meet the head of the department and he told me no jeans. When you haven't been working, you don't have clothes to wear, especially on welfare.[5]

Determination to Succeed

These women have jobs with characteristics that are new to them and they are bringing in money that enables them to consume in new ways, to have credit and to budget themselves with more flexibility. They are deriving personal gratification from being members of the labor force and they claim their families are happier as a result. Lastly, they are determined to continue building on these successes. In this group were the most frequent expressions of the need for personal initiative in the face of adversity.

While never assuming total control over their life situations, these women felt strongly that they were capable of assuming responsibility, in part because they had to, but mostly because they now chose to do so. They saw a dramatic difference in the way they used to succumb to difficulty when they were on welfare as opposed to

how they would handle trouble now. Ironically, they had more lucky breaks in the last year and fewer tragedies than did some of the other women in the sample. The drive to live better than they had ever before lived prompted several to want to pursue a college education and others to think of career changes. They also worried about protecting their old age and knew that only by their own actions would they obtain any financial and emotional security.

GROUP II

The seven women in Group II displayed personal promise and the potential for future economic well-being, despite the fact that current levels were below what they had expected for themselves. Their jobs and incomes were less pleasing to them than were those of Group I women and they saw external situations as preventing them from more rapid attainment of their goals. In fact, they described more grim recent work experiences than did Group I, and, in contrast to women in Groups III and IV, they responded to these crises in positive and unyielding fashion. While they represent the upper range of ages and number of children in the sample (Table 3)[6] in previous work and welfare experience, they were typical of the sample.

Adjustment to Employment

Although all of these women left the program with jobs that appeared promising, they ran into difficulties that Group I women were spared. They are grateful to have had the opportunity for some upward mobility, but they

have been disappointed in the outcomes. Two of the seven are not currently working and only one worker is satisfied with her position.

Only two are currently employed in their first postprogram jobs, one as a receptionist/clerk in a security company and the other as a security guard in a rollover position at CMDNJ. Two other women left secretarial and factory work within months to immediately secure jobs with better working conditions. Of the remaining three, one left grueling factory work eventually to drift back into being a barmaid, then quitting; another left an anxiety-filled job, eventually being trained and employed in electronics assembly. The last woman in Group II was severely disabled on her job at GM after only two months and has worked a total of eight weeks over the following two years.

One set of problems that these women faced had to do with new discrimination experiences. They entered positions that had recently been opened to women, blacks, or to middle-aged employees. The difficulties resulted in their quitting or getting fired, as in the following examples.

> It was more likely slavery to me. It really was. We had a supervisor who was prejudiced. We just did not have a possible chance going to work there and being black...That job was killing me. That job was working me. I was clumsy about the job. Maybe because the supervisor stood right over me...I can deal with anybody or anything, but I cannot deal with prejudice. She had a voice like an overseer of a plantation...(It was) the hardest job for a woman that I have ever seen...I had to make boxes, the kind that are packed in the grocery store...You might put 24 boxes of washing powder into a big box. We made those big boxes. They would come off a line and they would be stacked 25 feet high. If they were small it was all right to take them off the stack, but it they were big, you had to put your arm around them to get them off the stack. It was just too heavy for me. The small boxes I could handle, but not the heavy ones.

> They were flat, but 25 boxes are quite heavy for a woman to pick up. Some of the workers out there told me that they had men who had come out there to work and they couldn't handle it either. I felt that I was being discriminated against because they would put women on the heaviest jobs they could find, because I heard a rumor that they didn't want women out there.

Desire for Greater Financial Security

As with their job disappointments, these women reported feeling somewhat let down about their prospects of adequately supporting their families. They are not as many steps ahead of their peers sitting at home as they would like to be. The disabled woman put this most poignantly, as follows:

> Q: When you went to GM from Peralta, were you excited?
> A: I was thrilled to death. I saw myself making it, making more money and supporting my kids. I saw the light--that's the way I looked at it. The independence for one thing was great, being able to support myself and my kids, and getting away from welfare. Basically having independence and knowing that I was capable to do it and make that much money was really good. Like, when I got my first check for $147 (for part of a week). At Peralta it took me a whole week to make $40 and I felt really good. I knew that if I went to work every day I would get paid.

However, going to work every day was not something these women could guarantee. Although they expressed the desire for and commitment to having a secure economic base, they saw this possibility as somewhat beyond their own control. Although their days of welfare might be over, they found that they now had a new set of concerns. One Group II woman who had kept her postprogram job with a company that offered no benefits and that was phasing out her position and probably cutting her take-home pay was worried about her financial situation.

> I tend to take things to heart and I'm a worrier. I'm thinking about the predicament. Like I don't have any benefits

> now. What's going to happen to me? And how am I going to be able to make it? Will I always be able to work? Most of the kinds of things you think about, because right now I'm in a limbo. I have no security whatsoever. None. I want to get stationary.

Sense of Progress

Despite their restlessness and inability to express optimism about the future, Group II women seemed happy with themselves. They expressed a sense of direction that was common to the more successful respondents, and they were proud of their determination. They did not blame themselves for their misfortunes and expressed a sense of their own transition. They seemed to believe they were in the process of moving off welfare, albeit slowly, haltingly, and somewhat erratically.

The women in this group in particular noted the difference in themselves as welfare recipients and as independent workers. Several women described how they would sit home all day in front of the soap operas on television in the old days and later describe their more recent assertiveness in standing up for themselves on the job and their dedication to put in overtime or to strain themselves physically, just to prove they could do the job. The woman who was quoted earlier for her belief that work motivation was a general tendency to "work the job or let the job work you" described her own behavior as an AFDC recipient for nine years in the following way.

> Let's face it...what would you be doing? Sitting in the house, feeling disgusted with yourself. You might as well get a chair and set it in the refrigerator, you would be in it so much. You are home trying to figure out how to make it from day to day, how to take care of your children. The welfare money is not what you need to make it. Some people do like it. They do not want to get off welfare. I want to work.

Other women talked with pride of their efforts to obtain a raise, a change in work shift, a promotion in rank. Confidence, however, was something they still had to work at, not a quality they could take for granted. Too many obstacles still stood in their way, as is demonstrated by the only white woman in the sample, one of the older women. She spent her postprogram years fighting to develop some marketable job skills through a CETA program. She described this struggle with the self-respect that many Group II women had learned.

> I knew what I wanted. I demanded them to place me because I knew they were placing a big number of minorities in good job training programs. For a while they couldn't find anything for me...I'm not prejudiced; don't get me wrong, people just have a tendency to help their own. I called in one day and I said that if I didn't get some kind of job training, I would write to Washington, and I would. Anything I disapprove of I will write about.
>
> Within a few days one of the girls called me from CETA and asked what I was interested in and I told her electronics. She told me about the school in Hayward and would I be interested and I said definitely. I didn't start for a couple of weeks but I could go out there and get involved. I hate to be put in a position where you have to say that if you can't help me I will go over your head. I don't like doing that, but I'm desperate at my age. I can't sit back and wait for everything to fall into my lap. It's a dog eat dog world and you have to fight for survival and I'm learning.

Acceptance of One's Limitations

Group II women explain that to date, they have fallen short of their postprogram expectations because neither the job program nor they themselves could have perfectly prepared them for the harsh realities they have experienced. Circumstances have impeded their progress, despite their new, but tenuous belief in themselves as capable people and their improved economic opportunities. They feel that in some ways, they left the program

with a naive and overstrong sense of their own autonomy and now have a more balanced perspective. They know, however, that they must push themselves to keep from sliding back into the welfare rut and that belief in themselves can be an effective weapon. They talk of not letting difficulties on the job stop them, of being able to handle things now that they could never imagine coping with before, and of seeing life's challenges as opportunities to pursue.

GROUP III

Such perceptions were not shared by all of our sample. While a few of the 10 women in Group III expressed a belief in their own drive, most saw themselves as lifelong victims of external circumstances. In general, their lives had changed very little before and after the Supported Work Program.

As is evidenced from Table 3, the women in this group represent the lower range of ages and number of children in our sample and the higher brackets of work experience. All had previously worked. Three had had only occasional clerical jobs for a few months at a time. The other seven had worked regularly in seasonal, factory, clerical, or pink collar (traditional female) work in the service industries.[7] Five are currently receiving some AFDC support, and their length of recipiency prior to the program ranged from 5-17 years.

Erratic Employment

As would be predictable from their common pattern of a string of short-term jobs, only half the Group III women were currently employed.

Of those five, only two were still at their first postprogram job. Only one of the unemployed was looking very carefully for work. Another woman had been set back by an on-the-job back injury which caused her to consider job training for less physically demanding work. One of the three who had not looked for work was facing hospitalization for serious exploratory surgery.[8] One of the other two was laid off because of a plant closing, the other dismissed because of an altercation.[9]

Of the five who were working, none waxed enthusiastic over the jobs. Two work in factories, one cooks for a day care center, one is a security guard at an airport, and one is a part-time school crossing guard for a police department. They receive few if any benefits and close to minimum wages, except for one who works as an industrial carpenter in a venetian blinds factory. She described the working conditions and benefits of her job as very poor. Others corroborated her views.

> On the job, they try everything in the world to keep from giving you workmen's compensation.
>
> Q: Didn't you get any?
> A: No. You really have to press those people and force them to write it down...Otherwise, they will say there is nothing wrong with you. I know a couple of people there who have had to have operations. One lady fell and tore the cartilage in her leg and her boss was saying that there was nothing wrong with her, she was just lazy...Now she's in a wheelchair and...I guess when that happens, they have to take care of you the rest of your life. Most of we seniors there either try to save money and go to school or look for another job while we are there. It wasn't too bad at first, but when they got this new system in, it really got to be a bad deal. The reason they got the point system in is because after they get all the seniors out, then they won't have to pay anyone but $3.70 an hour. That's what the point is. They don't want to pay that $7.00 an hour. They figure they will get rid of us with this point system.

The other factory laborer in this group spoke of getting bruised fingers and swollen arms from performing piece work in a barrette factory.

Q: Tell me what you do. Are you on your feet a lot?
A: You're resting when you're standing. I never sat down so much in my life and got so tired. You sit on a hard chair for hours...The rack has something like a stand and you take the little barrettes and put them on the racks and then they are shipped to the back to the spray paint. You do the work so fast and at such a pace that your arms get tired. In fact, my arm is swollen now from working.

Q: When that happens, what do you do?
A: Well, I spoke to the foreman about it and he said he would see about putting me somewhere else but I just have to get used to it and it could be a muscle hurting.

Both before and after the program, most of these women have struggled to find work to help make ends meet. The quality of their jobs did not improve as a result of program participation. Those who felt they had relatively good positions were in jobs they had found for themselves where program connections had made no appreciable difference.

Barely Making It

The women in Group III worked almost exclusively for the money; however, money was always a major source of bitterness. Some were proud of the way they could manage with so little, while others talked about how they would do almost anything for money. No one in this group seemed to feel herself moving out of the continuing partial dependency. They did not perceive somehow not needing welfare as an option the way respondents in Groups I and II did. One woman, when asked whether her work will eventually get her off

welfare, said "I don't think I'll ever be off." These women must make do within their limited economic capability. One woman described how she manages as follows.

> The last six months I was at Peralta, I was making $3.52 an hour. At that time my youngest daughter was still at home getting social security (the mother was widowed). I was still getting welfare for my grandson. I was able to save a little money with all of that. When I was at X [factory that closed down, her only post-program job to date], it was a whole different thing. My daughter was out of school and I was just getting welfare from my grandson. I started off at $3.50 and it went up to $3.85. After I got to supervisory, it went up to $4.20. We tried to get a union in there...They were talking about the union when I first went there. When I started there, those girls there were working for $2.65. Some of them got that for the next three months. Then, they found out that the WIN girls were getting $3.50, then they had to bring it up. He [the boss] and his wife just stayed three weeks in Germany, came back, and gave us a 20¢ raise.

Humiliation and Resentment

Most of the women in Group III have been able to derive pride and gratification through fighting back when situations became too intolerable. Only a couple of these women indicated that they had experienced the satisfaction of setting and pursuing goals for themselves. Instead, they tended to find themselves in a series of grim circumstances which they could only take for so long before they would get angry enough or humiliated enough to do something about it.

Many of these women found the Supported Work program to be a good example of a terrible situation. Nine of the 10 women in this group had complaints about the "kind of people" they were forced to associate with and the quality of the program. Some felt it was misleading, that they had been promised further employment and then unfairly denied it. Others felt the quality of the work in the program was degrading and beneath them. Several women said they were treated like convicts in a penitentiary. Many in Group III used the

interview as an opportunity to gossip about the conduct of other participants. While the stories of drinking, drug taking, stealing, "messing around," etc. were commonly offered by many women in the sample, the women in Groups I and II hastened to point out, however, that they had reaped quite a few benefits from being in the program. These women denied that it helped them or else admitted it grudgingly. One woman's feelings about being in the program sum up the typical attitude in Group III. Early in the interview, when asked what she did in the program she responded as follows.

> Pack bubble gum. I worked on the assembly line. It was alright. You had to learn how to adjust. I was around ex-convicts and addicts. One thing I could say about it: working with a bunch of women in a small room can be a real problem...it was really a hassle. We just had to stay away from those people, you could tell the type. And the alcoholics, it was ridiculous. Every day at lunch break they would get drinks. It got so they would be leaving the bottles in the bathroom in the commode tops. We would hold a meeting and just didn't do any good.

Later in the interview, she suggested that such conditions would probably not keep her from taking a job, despite the great differences she had been describing between the program and other work she had had, none of which she had maintained for more than several months at a time.

> Q: If you could choose between all these other jobs you've had and having the experience you did at Peralta, would it be such a great difference that you'd rather not work there?
> A: No, I'm not going to say that. It depends on the people. If the people can't get along, there's no need for me to work there. I could never tell you that I wouldn't work for Peralta. If they called me, I'd work and see what type of environment that I was around. I know what's best for me - where I should work or where I shouldn't. I might get around Peralta people where the environment is nice and I would continue on. I'd go back to work there.

Chronically Overburdened

As much as Group III women claim to act as though independent and in control, they describe their lives in no uncertain terms. They report primarily the bleak side of their experiences, the troubles they have had to "deal with." While respondents in Group I convey their past in such terms and Group II indicate that such troubles are far from over, they feel they have now changed in a way that may alter their life conditions. Group III women, on the other hand, see only their burdens. While a few of these women appeared to be physically burdened with injuries, illnesses, or in the one case, faced with serious age discrimination on the job market, others seemed burdened in part by their own perspective.

For example, the previous quote sums up the contradiction in outlook shared by several of these ten women. They have mostly complaints about aspects of their situations, which they feel are due to external factors. Yet they do not appear to see opportunities for initiating changes which might improve these conditions. Although the woman in this last quote thought of herself as a "real-go-getter," she described a series of passive reactions. Time and again, she would eventually quit a job and hustle for a new one, rather than issue a grievance or confront a supervisor about a problem. She and others like her pride themselves on their responses to such chronic adversity, but they illustrated a rather narrow range of reactions.

Two women exemplify this overburdened perspective. One bitterly complained that no one in the program had helped her get a job although, from her viewpoint, job placement had been the program's primary intent. A Supported Work staff member recalled that while she

was in the program, she had refused to participate in job search activities, that she never showed interest in the opportunity to interview for jobs. The second woman described her life as a series of incidents in which she was driven to volatile reactions, the ultimate instance being when she once assaulted a couple of policemen. She spoke with utter contempt about her living conditions, "this is a place I hate...the worst place in the world." Despite her decent salary and the additional income brought in by her son's employment and some child support, she felt unable to make a move out of public housing. Instead, she had wished for a major catastrophe in the building so that "they would get me out of here."

GROUP IV

The last six respondents in this sample have perhaps the least promising outlook. While all but one were temporarily heartened by program participation, they have returned to a lifestyle of almost total dependency. Prior to the program, all but one had been on welfare from 9 to over 15 years (see Table 3). Their ages and number of children were typical of the total sample. Half of these women had graduated from high school, but their previous work experience had been poor. In at least three cases, this work experience had been obtained before the women went on welfare, in the early 1960s.

Life of Welfare

For these women, the job program represented only a slight variation in their continued recipient status. Although they worked in the program

a full 12 months, they were clearest about the fact that they never stopped receiving the monthly welfare check. None of these women left Supported Work with jobs and only one has held a job for any length of time since then. She worked as an aide in the public schools for one month through the WIN program. She was hired at the end of the school year, liked the job well enough, but never bothered to report back to the school the next fall.

Only one of these women was particularly disdainful of her experience in the program, claiming that she "got nothing out of it" and that "everyone was always loaded on something."[10] Two were disappointed that they were not placed into permanent jobs and the other three had few complaints. They did not mind working; in fact they rather liked it, but they also seem to like not working. One woman claimed that she was looking into a job like one her friend recently acquired, but the women generally have no prospects for work in the future and they report little motivation to search for jobs. Two women said that while they were not currently looking, they felt that when the kids went back to school in the fall or when they "heard of something," they would resume a search. Of the other three, one honestly claimed she had no interest in working ("I ain't in no hurry"). Another professed absolute certainty that she could not get a job; and the other said that the bus routes have changed, making it impossible for her to get to the unemployment office. The one woman who showed no interest in a job put it in the following way.

Q: Since you liked Newark Services (Supported Work), have you thought about asking WIN some time about other programs?

A: No. They might just give me one.

Living Month to Month

In general, the women found their lives on welfare to be tedious, empty, and somewhat lonely. Their lack of financial options, however, seemed to remove any bitterness toward the welfare system. One woman for whom "Welfare's alright with me because I don't bother them and they don't bother me" manages with $400 a month (after public housing rent) and $168 in food stamps to spend on herself and 5 children.[11] How she feels about it is summed in the following remark.

> Q: Are there things that you would like to have or do for yourself that you can't because of not enough money...?
>
> A: No...I have no mind to think about going or doing anything right now. I'm not interested in anything right now.

Despite this feeling that they had nothing, none expressed difficulties with being a recipient. While they wished they could have more money and they wished it would come more often, they seemed to accept the system. In addition, these women did not perceive the financial advantages from working that others did. While a few spoke of the changes they made in their lives while they had received an additional $100 or so a month from Supported Work, they were more familiar with the fact that the welfare check decreased, the public housing rent increased, and a job could mean increases in food stamp costs and loss of Medicaid eligibility. For this group, the loss of welfare dependence was largely inconceivable.

Self Pity

In addition to being resigned to a life on welfare, these women accepted themselves as having nothing in particular to offer. Several

could not imagine who would ever want to hire them or why they would be good at a particular job. They saw themselves as totally victimized by the environment and as a result, three lived in fear and three others seemed blasé about their surroundings.[12] Of these fears, one woman said the following.

> You know how the projects are. If you let your kids out there playing, you never know what might happen. With the other kids around. You see it on television, on the news all the time, so much happening in the projects. We find them on top of the roof and stuff like that.
>
> Q: So you're pretty strict?
>
> A: Yes. I don't allow them in anybody's house. When I send them outside, I say, stay right in front of this door. Back in the playground or the rec right there, because I can see out of my bedroom window, too. I don't allow them to go to anybody's house. Because I don't know any of these people. Except my cousin. I don't go out with the men I meet. All I do is speak to them as they're standing in front of the door. They speak, I speak. But I don't bother with any of them. I don't go to their houses, nothing.

For the most part, Group IV women were the least communicative about their feelings and their lives of all the women interviewed. They did seem to become animated when they discussed the program. They liked getting out of the house, visiting with people, and having something to do. They perceived their current status, however, as a result of their victimization, once again, this time by the program. Quotes illustrate their feelings.

> Q: Do you think the program could have done more?
>
> A: I think it could be permanent. Just starting you out working, and then they cut you off in a year. I don't think that was right. When you tell people that you worked for Peralta they don't consider that experience. So you have nothing going for yourself... When you go to an interview if they've heard about Peralta, they say, that's training, not experience.

> They (the program) classified women in two categories: women on welfare and women who just worked there. I don't think that was right to classify the women on welfare...Some of the women felt they were given more work because they were the women on welfare...Sometimes when it came time for the breaks of the women who just worked there, two of them would go on a break and ask one welfare woman to take over. So she had to work by herself. They would take long breaks.

No Options

The women in this group express more defeatist attitudes toward their situation than any others in our sample. While they had managed to come to work in the program for a full year, they had not seen this activity as a possible alternative to their current way of life. Those who admitted they missed the routine of a job and the chance to leave home every day seemed saddened by their loss, and all but one would return to the program were it offered to them. For these women, however, this interest is not strong enough to encourage them to look for a job.

In other words, if handed an opportunity, most Group IV women would probably take it, but none seemed to conceive that she might create her own. These women seemed to expect others to offer the direction they lacked. In contrast to Group III women, who were continually hustling to put together work and welfare support, these women seemed to have given up, at least for the time being. They described current outlooks similar to ones that women in Group I and II were proud to have left behind them.

> Well, mostly I will clean up my house, go visit somebody, or just stay around the house...I don't do much of nothing now...

Q: What are your days like when you're not going there [to work]?

A: Not so hot. Mostly I watch the stories [on television]... I go outside, or go to somebody's house...I feel lost sometimes. I know I have a lot to do but I'll just sit outside and feel free. But you still have the problems when you come back to reality.

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

The group ratings indicate not only broad differences in current well-being, as defined by the women themselves, but also differences in how the program may have helped them. Perhaps not surprisingly, the women who feel most successful at present are generally the most appreciative of the program; those who are less happy with themselves report the negative aspects. In general, though, the women were not in agreement on the program features that they found most--or least--helpful.

Program Performance Differences

How do these groups compare on indicators of program performance? Did Group I women get more out of the program in an objective as well as subjective sense? Table 4 shows that by several criteria, group ratings compare favorably with program classification ratings. For instance, most of the women who were mandatory graduates--and very few positive terminees--fall in Groups III and IV.

Whether or not a person made crew chief or whether she was rolled over in a job had varying significance at the two sites. Virtually all work assignments at Oakland's Peralta Service Corporation were single-site, crew operations. The women worked in small groups with rotating

Table 4

Distributions of Program Performance in the Different Groups

	Positive Terminees vs. Mandatory Graduates		Made Crew Chief or Rolled Over		Oakland vs. Newark Program	
	PT	MG	Made	Did Not	Oak	New
I Total = 11	9	2	7[a]	4[b]	5	6
II Total = 7	7	0	6	1	5	2
III Total = 10	5	5	3	7	7	3
IV Total = 6	0	6	1	5	2	4
Totals = 34	21	13	17	17	19	15

[a]Only 1 Oakland respondent had been rolled over and only 1 Newark respondent had been a crew chief.

[b]For Group I respondents, neither crew chief nor rollover was possible in her program job.

crew chiefs and assistant crew chiefs, except for a few who worked as nonpool clerk-typists. These office jobs were available in both cities and were not organized into work crews. All but one of the Oakland postprogram placements depended on external job search activities.

At Newark Services Corporation, most of the respondents had worked under supervisors at their host agencies. Twelve out of the 15 women worked in various departments of the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (CMDNJ). Some worked in crews, but most had both Supported Work and College supervision. Here, the important evaluation of a person is made if and when she is in a position to be considered for rollover into a permanent slot at the College. Not all women who worked at CMDNJ while employed by the program were considered for permanent positions. Some Newark jobs were not potential rollover positions. Furthermore, a good work record did not help some women obtain jobs in, for example, periods of hiring freezes. Many postprogram placements in Newark, then, also developed from external job search activities. Here, too, group ratings match rather closely those of the Supported Work supervisor. Half of the sample either made crew chief or got rolled over, and of these, 13 were rated in our two highest categories.

An interesting difference in programming at the two sites is suggested here. In Oakland, major effort went into developing postprogram placement opportunities for participants, since direct rollover to a permanent job was almost impossible.[13] In Newark, however, host agency relations were designed for rollover for some but not all of the program participants; hence, problems occurred for those who wanted to get rolled over, but

were denied the positions. Many of these women were further frustrated to find the other jobs for which they interviewed to be even less attractive than their program jobs. Finally, a few rollover denials were made by the host agency on unreasonable grounds, according to Newark Services staff. In the medical school's security department, for example, a few women who had complained of sexual harassment by their host agency supervisors were not rolled over, despite the favorable recommendations of their Supported Work supervisors.

These program differences may be relevant for the different distributions of Newark and Oakland respondents across our rating categories. As can be seen in Columns 5 and 6 of Table 4, the Oakland women are more frequently in the middle groups, while the Newark respondents cluster at the very top and very bottom of the spectrum. The Newark women, in essence, either got rolled over and did very well, or else they were in no jobs or poor jobs. If they did not get rolled over, only a few found their lives significantly altered by being in the program.

Although some in Newark were able to secure fair jobs on their own or through the program's external placement efforts, the best available jobs were with the host agency. Only 3 Newark women in Groups I and II went to positions that allowed no rollover, and one of these managed to get hired back at the medical college. In Oakland, postprogram employment opportunities were more varied. Several women broke into union jobs at larger firms, and one became involved in a union organizing effort. They worked more frequently in traditionally male jobs, on the assembly lines,

in shipping warehouses, as a supervisor, a fork lift driver or an industrial carpenter. The new set of risks and benefits (the physical demands, the higher wages) that came with the new status as the family breadwinner helped provide these women with a longer perspective on their futures.

Many Oakland participants, including those in Group II, spoke of learning about themselves, about their needs, and about personal effectiveness through the classes they took on job search activities. They attributed these insights to the influence of the Supported Work staff member who taught them. In terms of their self-image and outlook, these women were most similar to those Newark women who had obtained roll-over positions and who could document their progress in more concrete, objective terms.

Another confounding factor that could be even more important than program differences is environmental or regional variation in the sample. The women in California may indeed feel less hopeless, grim, frightened, and victimized than those in New Jersey. More Oakland women in our sample had migrated from other states with their families to try to find a better life for themselves. In contrast, more of the Newark women had grown up in New Jersey or come when they were young. They tended to describe themselves as being stuck there, as being, for example, unable to move out to a suburb. In addition, the quality of housing, the age, density, and appearance of the neighborhoods, and the climate appeared better for respondents living in Oakland. Finally, Oakland women were paid better wages, and only one in 19 had not tried to work at all since leaving the program. In Newark, wages were closer to the minimum and four of the 15 respondents had not taken jobs since they left Supported Work.

Program Effects

One-third of the women in this sample were succeeding pretty much without welfare. They comprise the majority of the women in the study who had made it while in the program, which suggests that either the program had an effect or that these women entered Supported Work with more determination, job readiness, etc. From the women's perspectives, three advantages could theoretically be gained through program participation: (a) contact with external, regular market employers, (b) a record of employment experience, and (c) the development of specific job skills. Although the potential benefits were suggested by some women in all four groups, the women rated in the top two were more likely to perceive these effects, the others their absence.

Job contacts. Over two-thirds of the women we spoke with had not been out of the home and in the world of work with any regularity in the several years prior to the program. The jobs of the other one-third were primarily part-time or seasonal, and low-paying. Almost half of the women had had very little work experience whatsoever. On leaving Supported Work, some women found that the program provided contacts for a whole new arena of jobs in the primary market sector. Those who went to work at the medical school in Newark and the auto plant in Oakland were especially struck by this effect. Many had found these employers inaccessible before they got in the program. Some had even applied for these jobs with no success in previous years.

For those who left the program for secondary-level jobs, such as custodial work in a nonunion firm, the program may not have been viewed as providing a helpful contact. Nonetheless, even these jobs were more welcome than the prospect of welfare dependence for the rest of one's

life or the prospect of "day work." No one was willing to put up with "cleaning white folks' houses," the most degrading job they imagined and almost the only job that had been available to their mothers. Piore (1973) finds this same disdain among second-generation northern black men and in second-generation immigrant Hispanics and Chicanos. Many were unwilling to take the only jobs that were open to them, the jobs that their fathers took gratefully.

In some ways, our respondents are like first-generation immigrants, in that they entered jobs at both the primary and secondary levels that had been closed to women a decade earlier. Some were proud and willing to put up with conditions that their male counterparts would not have tolerated. Others, especially those in Group III, found their lives not sufficiently bettered by having to endure terrible working conditions with no benefits or security. Contact with employers brought about through the program allowed perhaps half of these respondents to move at least from welfare dependence and subsistence-level living to the increased purchasing power of the working poor.

Work Experience

The second important effect of the program was the provision of experience. To have a recent and full year of work, of putting in time at a job, was a crucial market advantage, according to many of the working women. They felt it enhanced their employability in two ways. First, personnel officers could see they had the record that so many job ads seem to require. The women felt their time at home on welfare to be particularly disadvantageous: no one would hire a person who had not been working; thus, one could never obtain that initial experience.

Secondly, the experience of working turned out to have important personal benefits, most of which we have discussed earlier. Group I and Group II women found that they were able to make the transition to going to work on a daily basis. In addition, they were surprised at their own performance levels, and they found others encouraging, supportive, and impressed with their talent, motivation levels, and their efforts. These women discovered that they were hard and capable workers.

A similar finding occurs in Rubin's study of working class two-parent families (1976). The housewives who entered the labor force in order to supplement their husbands' incomes experienced relief from the drudgery of being at home and tended to stay on in their jobs. They discovered that being rewarded financially for their effort counteracted the extra burden on the family of household chores. Indeed, the women in our sample found they could rely on their children for babysitting, cooking, cleaning, etc.[14] A large proportion of women in both Rubin's study and this sample derived a special sense of competence from the experience of working outside of the home.[15]

While these feelings were expressed primarily by women in the first two groups, even Group IV women made a comparable discovery. They learned that they could leave home, spend time executing some structured tasks, and get paid. Except for Group III women, the work experience was of some personal benefit whether or not it led to later employment. Thus, perhaps two-thirds of the sample derived some positive effect from the chance to work in the program.

The Development of Skills

The last major job market handicap that the fewest numbers of our sample were able to improve through program participation was the lack of

particular skills or training. For those who were security guards in Newark or were clericals at either site, a total of 8 of the 34 women, the training became extremely advantageous for later jobs.[16] Included are five from Group I, two in Group II and one in Group III. These women, primarily trained at the Newark site (6 of the 8), obtained jobs in which their program skills were directly utilized. As a result, they expressed a dramatic sense of increased opportunities. A few had been promoted in their current positions from security guards to security officers or from clerk-typists to secretaries; they had plans for future on-the-job promotions or for career advancement in their fields.

Problems with the lack of program impact on skills were most evident for women in the middle two groups. For several Group II women, the absence of developed skills was viewed as an impediment to current employment opportunities. One woman had been trained in the program to drive a fork lift, but others felt that each new job involved additional vocational training, and that the program's promise exceeded its returns.

Group III women were especially strident about the quality of Supported Work jobs. The Oakland women in particular felt that the work itself, the job conditions, and the worker relations were abysmal and that the absence of training hampered their later job search. As a result, they viewed the program not as an opportunity, but rather, as just another job in a series of temporary jobs to keep in order to make extra money. They saw little future and little to be learned; indeed, some reported sheer annoyance that the program job had a definite termination date.

Absence of Effect on Group IV

For these women, the absence of training was not of major concern, nor was the absence of contacts with employers, the most critical advantage to be gained from participation. Over one-fifth of this sample were not job-ready at the end of their 12 months in the program. They left with work experience but with very little desire to apply it toward obtaining further employment. The question occurs as to whether any program could instill motivation in them. A slight bit of evidence, the fact that 4 out of 6 Group IV women were from Newark, suggests that perhaps the more comprehensive approach to job search offered only at the Oakland site may have affected some of the women's perceptions of themselves as workers.

Many at the Newark site did not even participate in job market classes, but everyone who had been enrolled for a minimum length of time at Oakland was exposed to three months of intensive job development classes, the intent of which was to teach individuals to "market themselves." According to respondents and staff, these classes offered guidance and counseling that extended beyond strict vocational and career concerns. Many respondents indicated that they were helped to overcome their debased sense of worth and to think of themselves as having valuable talents and special interests that deserved to be rewarded.

The women in Group IV did not indicate a sense of themselves as worthy of having a job, although, as pointed out earlier, only one or two of them expressed a preference for not working. None fits the

negative stereotype of the welfare mother who is interested only in having more children and spending her check as flippantly as possible. Unlike the profile of a welfare mother exemplified in Sheehan's work (1976), the unemployed women in our sample were basically discontent with their lives.

IMPLICATIONS

The program was the transition from welfare to work for about a third of these women, all of whom were enrolled for a full year. For another 20%, the program was perceived to be a transitional opportunity, but the better jobs they had hoped for had not fully materialized. For almost another third, the program effected no change in lifestyle. The women continued to work at poor jobs and to collect partial AFDC support. For the final group, nearly 20% of this sample, the program was a fairly positive experience, but no changes occurred in their lives of welfare dependence. The most important feature of the program for longer-term well-being was the connections or contacts that allowed for placement into permanent jobs. The chance to obtain work experience was also beneficial, but more likely to be personally gratifying rather than financially rewarding. Attitudinal factors such as self-confidence are clearly significant in the transition from welfare to work. Job programs must offer opportunities to improve women's feelings of self-worth, especially because welfare recipiency reinforces a degraded sense of self.

Programs such as Supported Work can only motivate participants to a limited extent. They must also offer realistic placement

possibilities. Programs with both comprehensive support services and a major commitment to placement should be effective for all but a very few welfare mothers. With attitudinal assessments conducted at the time of initial enrollment, we might be able to predict the performance and later outcomes of participants. Women who are at least mildly motivated to get out of the house, i.e., who are discontent with welfare dependency and with housework, and who perceive the program as an opportunity to make a change in their lives, ought to be the most successful candidates of good programs.

It is important to remember that most of this sample of women had been welfare recipients because they had no other options. Their bad luck was responsible for their status, not their laziness or a cycle of welfare in their families, or other factors in their lifestyle. Hard luck hit in the form of a first or second pregnancy or a loss of other support due to a marital separation or inability to work because of illness or disability. Once they became welfare recipients, the women developed an emotional dependence that was difficult to overcome. The lack of money and outside obligations kept them housebound for the most part of every month, which reinforced certain stereotypical characteristics. They claim that they grew lazy, fat, dull, and withdrawn, having no activities beyond watching television and doing housework. They could not have gotten out of that cycle by any route, except to have been recruited for and handed a job. It appears important that this first job was easy to keep and was one where others understood the life situation of being on welfare. It may have been important that the programs were primarily staffed by blacks and that the initial work environment was not altogether different from the neighborhood.

We cannot underestimate the potential significance of these factors for even the most highly motivated women in Group I, a few of whom were attempting to pull themselves off welfare even before the program came along. For instance, one woman was facing the choice of a job with a long daily commute, from Newark to Manhattan, or a job with Supported Work. She chose the program because (1) the commute would cost too much lost time away from her children and (2) she feared that the larger income taxes she would have to pay to work in New York City would eat away the extra income. If the program had not been offered, she may eventually have found another position, but she was not at all certain of the likelihood. Instead, she credited the program with providing her the best possible placement.

The structure of welfare recipiency appears to demand comprehensive approaches to preparation for employment, including appropriate placement options and support services. We cannot separate the relative impact of these two factors, nor can we estimate the additional effect that skills training would have had for this sample of women. Further research in these areas may enhance the opportunities for more women to move their families away from the need for welfare support.

Appendix I: Interview Guide

1. What is your current job situation? (Be sure conversation covers the following):

Hours and place of work
Skills required
Other workers
Social and physical conditions
Supervisors
Pay

2. How does this job compare with other work experiences you've had (comparing the same characteristics as above)?

3. (If unemployed) How do you feel about not working now?

4. Do you expect to stay at this for very long or how would you feel about making a change?

5. How different is your life now from when you were on welfare before (Supported Work Program)? (Cover the following:)

People you see, friends (neighbors)
Activities for leisure and Household work
Life for your children, values you set and financial needs you can satisfy
Place you live
Interests you have

6. Tell us about when you first came to (Supported Work Program). How did you find out about it and what was it like? (Cover same range as in Q.1)

7. In thinking about your life since the program, what do you think the job program may have given you that you didn't have before? (See if respondent offers the following, then perhaps probe for the following:)

Self confidence
Desire to work
Opportunity of job
Contact with employers
Training in skilled area
Training to communicate with people
Training to personally manage holding a job
Training to present oneself publicy
Friends, support network

8. What did you expect the program to do for you? (Cover same range as in Q.7)

9. Looking back, what things might have been better? What could they have provided that they didn't? (Cover work experience issues, program details from Q.1 and Q.7)

10. What is important to you about working? (Elicit thoughts about responsibility, independence, being away from the house and kids; being with people; feeling worthwhile; having a structural routine; making money; becoming self-sufficient; or opposite of these)

11. How important is having a job to you? What would you really rather be doing now if you had your choice? (Posit varying extremes of options to get determination to work)

12. Tell us a little about your own family. What was it like for you growing up? (Get material well-being and feelings of closeness with family; was father present; was mother on welfare?)

13. What about your own children? How old are they now; what are they doing and how do you feel about them? (Get sense of closeness or detachment; extent to which she is disappointed or feels proud and sees them as a reflection of her role; is grown daughter on welfare; how does she feel about that?)

NOTES

[1]The five agencies are the channel agency, Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor, LEAA, NIDA, HUD, and the Office of Planning and Evaluation, DHEW (now HHS). The project was managed by a private, nonprofit agency, Manpower Demonstration Research Corp.

[2]Three women chose to be interviewed at Supported Work offices rather than in their homes.

[3]A final source of data used to confirm the self-report of the women was information on their ages and addresses during participation in Supported Work from the program contact sheets. Although accuracy in this area does not verify the accuracy of all the information they provided, it does show that they were cooperating with us.

[4]The work history information we obtained is not consistent for all respondents, but in general, 4 women stated that they never really had a job before the program. Another 12 claimed very erratic or minimal experience, e.g., a couple of jobs lasting less than one year each. The other 18 women had worked with some regularity at either part-time, full-time, or seasonal jobs that lasted from 1 to 7 years.

[5]This woman went on to describe the double-bind of welfare stigma. Not only does a recipient not know how to dress for work, but also, if she overdresses, others will think she is not humble enough or will be suspicious. "When I did wear new shoes, the women asked where I got them from and they really made you feel that if you were on welfare, you weren't supposed to have decent clothes."

[6]No education information was obtained from 2 of the 7 women in Group II. One other might have graduated from high school.

[7]One woman in Group III had been a manicurist for a year and another had been a licensed practical nurse for 7 years. Pink collar work designates usually low-skill, low-paying, female-concentrated jobs (see Howe, 1977).

[8]The health of women in this sample was generally poor, but particularly so for Group III. Three were under medical treatment for injury or illness and four others indicated stress-related symptoms including nervousness, high blood pressure, obesity, taking Valium, and being suspected of alcohol abuse. These problems could be contributing to their erratic work patterns.

[9]While she claims it was an unfair dismissal and may attempt legal proceedings, the program staffers claim that she was "drinking and partying" on the job.

[10]Ironically, this woman was suspected of drug use, "uppers," by the Supported Work staff.

[11]She was paying $83 a month rent for an 8-room unit in the projects and getting $486 per month from AFDC. The oldest child was also looking for work, having recently been fired from a job.

[12]The three who were blasé are the ones suspected by program staffers to have alcohol or drug use problems.

[13]Only one Oakland respondent was rolled over into a staff position at the Supported Work program. The organization did not have a roll-over policy.

[14]A couple of women in Groups III and IV indicated that an inablilty to find care for their children at certain hours had prevented them from working. Many more women in the sample reported that they had no trouble with finding such arrangements and that their working was beneficial for the children.

[15]The opposite was true for women who were not working, especially for those who had returned to total welfare support. A sense of aimlessness filled their days, which may in part be caused by the lack of structure in the work of housework (see Oakley, 1974). Ferree (1976) found that dissatisfaction with housework among working class wives could be traced to the low self-esteem, social isolation, and powerlessness it promotes.

[16]Included in this 8 are 4 clericals, 3 security guards, and 1 woman who was trained to help manage the Supported Work gas station operation.

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