

Poverty, Shame and Social Exclusion

Working Paper 2 Norway

Relative' poverty in a rich welfare state: Experiences from Norway

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INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, the concept of poverty has been a focal point of Norwegian welfare activation strategies to promote economic development (Gubrium 2009, Hagen and Lødemel 2010, Lødemel and Trickey 2001). Scholars soon after began to examine the psycho-social effects of many of these strategies on Norway's social assistance (SA) recipients.¹ Underlid's (2001, 2005, 2007) studies on the psychology of poverty have explored cultural conceptions and personal experiences of poverty in Norway from a psychological perspective and have suggested that Norway's pre-2006 workfare policies tied to social assistance provision were experienced by recipients in quite negative terms. Some of the experiences that Underlid's long-term social assistance recipient participants conveyed included fear of the future via inability to determine one's circumstances, everyday insecurity and uncertainty concerning one's professional and financial future (2007), as well as social devaluation attached to the receipt of unpredictable and discretionary financial aid and to the relatively low expectations attending the one's categorization as a "social assistance recipient" (2005). This sense of devaluation and disempowerment was enhanced by the lack of security, individual attention/care, and predictability (the need to please one's case manager in order to receive money) that these individuals experienced in conjunction with their categorization as social assistance recipients and via the process of receiving public financial support.

Along similar lines, Malmberg-Heimonen (2008, 2009) reported that the high levels of institutional trust in Norway seemingly linked to the provision of strong universal welfare benefits were, in fact, threatened in the case of means-tested SA benefits and that the increased attachment of conditionality and work-related obligations tied to the receipt of SA in Norway in the 1990s and early 2000s (Lødemel and Trickey, 2001) may have further undermined social trust among these recipients. Several other studies have examined psycho-social barriers – including shame and stigma – that may occur in tandem with financial instability within a Nordic context (Angelin 2009, Jönsson 2002, Jönsson and Starrin 2000, and Starrin 2002). These studies all focus on qualitative data gathered in the first half of the 2000s.

Since this time, Norway's welfare system has undergone a vast governance overhaul with the merging of the agencies for labour, social security and welfare into a unified entity – NAV – in 2006. The NAV reform acted as the foundation for the 2007 introduction of new labour activation programming that was for the first time specifically targeted to SA recipients. This new effort – the Qualification Programme (QP) – was to offer new possibilities for eligible social assistance recipients in terms of increased and individualized follow-up by caseworkers, more extensive

¹ Since the development of the welfare state in Norway – after WWII and especially since the passage of Norway's 1967 Social Assistance Act – those individuals considered to be living in poverty are typically within the groups eligible for Social Assistance benefits. Norway's broad extension of social insurance (SI) benefits has ensured that most of its residents are entitled to a generous system of welfare benefits. Lødemel (1997) suggests that this has created a seemingly paradoxical situation in which the relatively smaller number of individuals *not* entitled to SI benefits represent Norway's most marginalized groups, who are entitled only to a "last resort", means-tested social assistance (SA) scheme (Lødemel 1997, 141). Scholars focusing on "poverty" in Norway have thus tended towards more relative definitions of the term and have focused their attention overwhelmingly on SA recipients.

programming with a broader, human capabilities approach, a higher and state-regulated Qualification Benefit (QB), as well as increased rights and expectations that were to simulate the contours of everyday work life (Gubrium 2009). What is the experience of some of today's most vulnerable welfare recipients in Norway? Have notions of shame, stigma, social exclusion and security been mitigated by Norway's new work activation programming? There is a need for empirical grounding on this front.

Living in Poverty – Everyday Experiences of Shame and Stigma

Informed by the discursive themes identified by the analysis conducted in WP1, in WP2 we conducted in-depth interviews with 28 respondents in Norway – these individuals were 1) currently receiving SA benefits, or 2) were or had participated in the QP or 3) were youths living in families receiving either benefit. Our interviews focused particularly on these respondents' experiences of shame, shaming, social exclusion, and stigmatization. The broad working question was "What does being poor mean to you?" and interviews focused on the experiences that these individuals had in relation to the anti-poverty programs and policies that are directed toward them. Special attention was paid to the terms of reference for, and ordinary reasoning about, their experiences with poverty, especially as these articulated self-identifications. An analysis of these experiences – and the discourses generated in accordance with these experiences – allowed us to trace with interview participants the possible social and cultural underpinnings for their attitudes, actions, and behaviour within social and economic realms.

FINDINGS

For the purpose of presenting a simplified overview of findings for comparative use, empirical evidence has been moved to a separate appendix (A).

1. CONTEXTS FOR SHAME OR SHAMING

1.1 Relative poverty

For many of the respondents with children, relative poverty was felt most strongly within the context of their focus on protecting their children from being associated with their relatively lowered economic status compared to local expectations. Within this context, the shame these parents experienced via their children's peers was most commonly noted by respondents who experienced economic challenges, yet lived in the relatively affluent West Oslo suburb of Eiketangen.² Many of the respondents from this area spoke of experiences and pressures from the relative disparity of their economies and those of others in their wealthy community. This experience was especially felt through the pressure to keep one's children from looking or acting differently to what was expected according to local norms. In contrast, only one of the nine respondents we spoke with in the East Oslo industrial

² Pseudonym for study site 2 – a majority of the respondents from this area spoke of relative poverty as a source of shame.

suburb of Smeltby³ emphasized the relative poverty his child had experienced with reference to local norms. In this description, relatively lower cost items such as designer clothing and bicycles were mentioned over the larger possessions such as cars, houses and cabins listed by respondents in Eiketangen.

Relative poverty as a source of shame was also noted by a majority of the respondents from Lillefjord,⁴ a small fishing town on the west coast of Norway, many of whose residents had faced economic difficulties and struggled with drug addiction in recent years. In contrast to a focus from respondents in Eiketangen on following social norms in terms of material possessions, however, respondents from Lillefjord emphasized the challenge of maintaining “normal” or respectable identities in their small town setting, with any deviation from the norm more noticeable given the size of the town and the close nature of the social networks within.

While the shame of one’s relative poverty was largely framed in terms of one’s current status or identity, respondents also spoke of the anxiety they felt in terms of their ability to ensure that their children would in the future be able to fit into what they described as normal society, with full social participation. In discussing these concerns, the respondents referred to beliefs concerning the generational effects of receiving social assistance benefits. Many referred to others they knew who were not motivated to move off state benefits and whose parents had been on social assistance when explaining why they needed to move off social assistance. Respondents with children spoke of the importance of finding work in terms of avoiding this cycle and providing a normal or balanced life for their children.

1.2 Joblessness

1.2.1 Marginal work history

Respondents referred to feeling shame over a lack of material possessions or troubled identities in relation to the normative expectations of their surrounding communities and peers. Approximately half of our adult respondent sample had never entered the labour market on a full time basis or had not entered the labour market at all – most of these respondents had long been and continued to remain recipients of social assistance. While they attached shame and regret to their current economic status, many also attached a sense of shame and regret over bad decisions made and actions taken in the past that had led them into their current situation.

Interestingly, while many of these respondents experienced shame or shaming connected to bad decision making or situations experienced in the past, they often also drew upon these actions or situations (i.e. addiction, abuse, difficult youths, early lack of resources, etc) to rationalize how it was that they had not managed to enter the labour market. As discussed below in section 4.3.1, many of these respondents drew upon the contingencies when providing a framework to explain –

³ Pseudonym for study site 3.

⁴ Pseudonym for study site 1.

and also mitigate - the shame they had experienced in connection with their inability to transition into work.

Several respondents, however, were at a loss to explain their difficulties in entering the labour market. This group did not have a reference point – other than the possibility of a personal fault or defect – to describe perceived shortcomings, often noting that they did not understand their situation and this had led to them giving up trying to do so.

1.2.2 History of long-term work

Those respondents who had had a former status as a “good worker” and “civic participant” noted that they felt shame not only from past mistakes and actions, but also due to the dissonance between this former status and their current economically challenged one. Many of these individuals emphasized that they had been in secure employment at one time and expressed pride in their former contributions at work. A corollary to expressing this pride, however, seemed to be marked shame attached to what they described as a decrease in status.

Several of the respondents who had been in long-term work before leaving the labour market attached such a high level of shame to their identities as unemployed that they actively avoided this identity, either by avoiding friends or telling friends and family that they were, in fact, employed.

1.3 Shame over changed status associated with transnational identity

We spoke with 10 respondents who had immigrated to Norway as adults – all had come either for love or had sought asylum to escape a bad economic or political situation in their home country. The majority of these respondents expressed shame and regret at the change in status they had experienced upon or following their move to Norway. Several focused on the shame they attached to a loss of the professional status they had known before.

Other respondents focused on the mistakes and miscalculations they felt they had made, either in choosing to move to Norway or subsequent to this move, which they felt had led to a lower economic status than previously hoped. These individuals attached shame to the idea of returning or reporting back to their home country with a lower status than they had expected.

Several adult immigrant respondents reflected less on their current unemployment situation when speaking of the shame they felt attached to a change in status, instead attributing the shame they experienced to how their change in status had directly affected their family members, most notably, their children.

1.4 Shame or shaming within a hierarchy of public dependence

All of the respondents we spoke with were either currently receiving social assistance benefits, were enrolled in the Qualification Programme – a work activation programme targeted primarily to social assistance recipients – or were

youth in households receiving social assistance benefits. Given our target population, it is not surprising that many respondents described shame in conjunction with dependence on public economic support and services. While, as discussed in section 2.1, many respondents described feeling shame in connection with their status as unemployed, many also described shame or pride connected to a hierarchy of statuses as experienced within Norway's public support system (NAV). Most described a hierarchy and trajectory that began with 1) difficult times (drugs, family situation as adult, family situation as child, cultural alienation, disability, change in status), which led to 2) a move from these difficult times or from social insurance benefits (unemployment benefits, disability or rehabilitation benefits) to social assistance benefits, and then movement forward via 3) motivation or new possibilities that enabled one to consider making positive life changes, followed by 4) movement into the QP, and subsequent 5) movement into a QP internship, with hopes for 6) the eventual transition into "normal" paid work and the security, inclusion, and balance that this status represented.

Respondents often tied this "NAV hierarchy" to an everyday trajectory forward – from living in a difficult situation, to changing one's life, to a primary focus on job attainment. The respondents we spoke with identified themselves through placement along this trajectory and, correspondingly, felt varying degrees of shame or pride, depending upon where they fell along this putative NAV hierarchy. Many respondents, however, also spoke of experiencing shame that was due less to where they fell upon the NAV hierarchy and more to the feeling of being put into a category by the NAV system and, most often, being placed in a category they felt was *beneath* them. Notably, as the respondents internalized shame from what they perceived as demeaning categorization, they also engaged in "othering" through the active refusal to identify with a particular category via the suggestion that the *typical* identity, actions and behaviours of members of this category were beneath them.

1.4.1 Shame of identity as social assistance user

Many of those respondents who were or had been recipients of social assistance described the shame and embarrassment they felt – or had felt, if QP participants – connected to their "lowest rung" status as a social assistance user. These respondents pointed to assumptions made by caseworkers and society that they were especially needy, lazy, or dependent. They also described the marginalization they had experienced as a result of these assumptions. Several other Qualification Programme participant-respondents referred to the shame that had been attached to having to "lower oneself" to accommodate the lower expectations associated with being a social assistance recipient.

1.4.2 Shame associated with social assistance services and structure

In addition to describing the need to lower oneself in order play to the assumptions tied to the identity of being an SA client, many respondents spoke of feeling demeaned by a lack of individual expectations, concern or follow-up as an SA user, most emphasizing that the expectation that users would receive benefits and little else from NAV resulted in a lack of daily structure, positive expectations – and thus

follow-up -- for this group of users, which then led to an unfortunate cycle of dependency. Many respondents described demeaning assumptions as SA users from caseworkers and the NAV system in general, suggesting that these assumptions created in many a sense of de-motivation, cynicism and frustration with the system.

Respondents described how a lack of consistency, as well as a lack of individual concern and tailoring or follow-up translated into lower motivation and focus. Several suggested that these issues meant that – as SA users – they had found that activation only worked for those who were “active” enough to be able to persist in what was otherwise a frustratingly slow and unresponsive system. In conjunction with frequent movement between caseworkers, several respondents noted that this movement was also especially problematic within the context of caseworker discretion – and thus inconsistency – in the offer of certain benefits (housing, vacation, SA level, continue higher QP benefits, child benefits) and the application of certain rules regarding the granting of benefits and privileges. Thus, caseworker discretion became a site for arbitrary decisions and judgment, a demeaning experience that led to the perception of extreme insecurity for many of our respondents.

1.5 The Qualification Programme: a move away from shame?

1.5.1 New status as QP participant: “Not forgotten anymore”

To some, the constant and higher benefit structure of the QP helped alleviate the insecurity and feeling of having to demean oneself or being demeaned (although, notably, one individual interviewed said that her benefit had been cancelled sporadically throughout the program’s duration if she were not taking a course or in an internship position) as a SA user. Many felt that caseworkers involved with the QP had higher expectations for participants and worked harder to help them move forward, rather than giving them money and hoping they’d disappear. For many respondents, the QP had helped them to move out of frustrating/demeaning treatment and allowed increased follow-up from NAV and their individually-assigned caseworkers. They were happy not to be “forgotten” anymore, to have more daily structure and activity, as well as more security.

1.5.2 Reduced shame due to “normalized” QP benefit format and source

As long as respondents were earning above what they felt was a sustainable threshold, many noted that the rules and provisions surrounding the provision of the QP benefit (QB) as well as the source of the benefit was as or more important than the increase in benefit level when entering the QP. SA benefits list “NAV” as the distributor and many spoke of this source as shameful compared to receiving the QB (or internship wage) via their local municipality. Respondents also suggested that the changed contours of the QB were important to reducing the sense of stigma and shame they attached to receiving help and referred to these differences when describing how they fit into the NAV hierarchy and the trajectory back into regular society. Respondents noted that the activities they engaged in within the programme

felt like a transition into a “normal” and “balanced” working life. At the same time, many also emphasized that they had attached shame to their prior inability to engage in civic participation via paying taxes or being a part of the pension system. The QB is taxable and counts toward a pension contribution and thus for many represented a move forward into a fuller social participation. Many respondents suggested that the increased sense of social inclusion and the ability to plan more securely for one’s future helped to mitigate the self-dissatisfaction that one was a burden on society. In contrast to what many described as a negative cycle of inactivity tied to SA receipt, many described as their forward movement on the trajectory back to ordinary work life as a primary stimulus for increased motivation to keep moving forward.

In addition to the “normal” expectation that QP participants pay taxes and contribute to the pension system via their wages, they also are allowed some of the rights due to regular employees, including 5 weeks paid vacation a year. The provision of regular worker rights and expectations therefore mitigated the shame and frustration that many respondents had felt through their other welfare provisions and created a sense of transition into a system of broader and clearer expectations.

Many respondents who were participating in the QP explained that although the monthly support benefit they received was substantially higher than it had been with SA, most were also now expected to pay for housing and electricity bills, which had previously been covered by NAV. Thus, the exchange when entering the QP seemed to be one of increased autonomy accompanied by increased responsibility. Despite the lack of total monetary benefit, several respondents spoke of finding motivation by being challenged – at their internships, by caseworkers, by the system – to do more with their lives. While more money and more autonomy translated into more responsibility to pay bills, they were also accompanied by higher expectations and follow up, with the goal of moving into work.

1.5.3 QP to de-individualize/internalize blame

As described below in section 3.1, many of our respondents described social exclusion as a consequence both of their status as relatively poor, as a reflection of their lack of social and economic resources, as well as a consequence of the shame and lower self-esteem that resulted from this situation. Several of the respondents noted, however, that the social networking possibilities afforded by the QP had enabled them to move beyond internalizing the shame they felt due to their status and had allowed them to place less individual blame on themselves for their situation.

1.5.4 QP’s mitigation of shame: contingent upon trajectory

Respondents’ experiences and perceptions concerning the QP’s “success” tended to change depending on 1) how each identified themselves, often in connection to a perceived NAV hierarchy, 2) where one was in the trajectory into “normal” described in section 1.4, as well as 3) according to the skill level and type of previous work experience they had had, if any. According to these particulars, respondents

described the QP as useful and motivating or as pointless, demeaning and exploitative – in other words, as yet another arena for feeling shame or being shamed. For those respondents who had recently come out of difficult times, those were at the beginning of a trajectory back into a normal life, the focus was often less on attaining a job. Many of these individuals had had limited or sporadic work experience. These individuals described the QP, and especially their experiences within the programme's self-help courses, as a life-changing resource.

In contrast to “early trajectory” respondents who described themselves as just beginning to turn their lives around, many of the respondents who saw themselves as employable and who were using the QP in order to find a job found the lack of individually tailored course content or expectations and the tendency toward lump categorization to be demeaning and targeted to a more “needy” or “lower” group, and also had no interest in seeing the programme as a social forum. Many of these respondents had had past professional experience, quite a few in the service sector. Many also used “othering” as a strategy to distinguish themselves from other programme participants in their discussions of their disappointments and frustrations with the QP. Several of these respondents also described feeling disillusioned from having believed in NAV's promise of movement into work life via the QP.

1.5.5 QP activation as context for exploitation

The QP has been described as a way to move those individuals who are furthest from the labour market back in through career-oriented and directed courses and through the use of internships. Many respondents described the sense of satisfaction, pride, and fulfilment they received from their internship work, suggesting that internships simulated the contours of a normal work life and therefore served as a useful and low-stress transition back into work. Internships are ostensibly also to be used as a way to make QP participants a “known quantity” to prospective employers and to open up the possibility for a transition into longer term work at placement locations. While all of the respondents who were in internships noted that they were keen to enter regular work, many also described feeling frustrated and exploited by their experiences. Respondents noted with some cynicism/bitterness that they were “free labour” for local businesses and that their earlier hopes to move into permanent work had been naïve in the face of limited pressure (from the national government and local NAV offices) applied toward businesses to follow up on the expectation that internships might lead to normally paid work. While internships were positive experiences for some (although *only one* of our respondents reported being offered continued employment via the QP), in many cases they also led to a feeling of exploitation, of being demeaned, disillusioned, feeling unworthy, feeling angry and feeling shamed. Respondents reported these feelings, both in connection to having believed in the promise of the QP and to being reminded of their relatively disempowered status. Many respondents also cast shame on both businesses and NAV for perpetuating this situation.

1.5.6 Sectoral experience and QP mitigation of shame – gender dimensions?

One pattern worth noting from the interviews is that while one's experience in the QP seemed to depend in part on where one was in one's trajectory back into "normal" life, the level to which the QP was "successful" in terms of shame mitigation also seemed to be predicated upon one's past work experience and skill set. For example, Thomas and Petter had had mostly positive results with the QP possibly because they had been quickly moved into internship positions in the skilled fields of construction/mechanics where they might have a good chance of finding permanent work. Sverre, Kari Anne, Luka and Pouneh, meanwhile, had had fairly negative experiences in the QP and had entered a stalling pattern in which each had been moved back and forth between what they felt were useless courses or placements into "exploitative" internships they felt would not lead to continued employment. Three respondents – Cecilie, Per Morten and Samira – had had experience in the service sector but had used the QP as a way to transition over to more technical fields – these three respondents described feeling hopeful about their job prospects after finishing the programme. Thus, the sense of shame tied to one's identity as unemployed and the level to which the QP may have mitigated shame must also be understood within the context of labour market possibilities themselves, as well as life trajectories. This may also have a gender dimension as the fields of experience or training in which the QP appears to have had the most "success" are typically male-dominated fields.

2. EMOTIONAL EFFECTS TIED TO RESOURCES/STATUS

2.1 Powerless to redress sexual exploitation – gender dimensions?

As noted in 1.5.5, several of the respondents we spoke with described a feeling of exploitation and shame due to a lack of movement from internship positions into longer-term employment. This feeling of powerlessness mirrored the shame and powerlessness that several described in other arenas, including encounters during the search for secure work and housing.

2.2 Low self-esteem/depression/de-motivation

While several respondents spoke of the negative emotional effects (stress, anxiety) due to constant economic pressure, most emphasized that it was not so much a lack of money, but the inactivity and lack of structure due to joblessness that led to low self-esteem, depression and the loss of motivation.

2.3 Disillusionment: "Giving up"

Several respondents had had long-term difficulties in finding work or in receiving what they felt was necessary help from the NAV system in order to move forward with their lives. These respondents spoke of previous hope that was now gone – their words suggested disillusionment and resignation that they would not be able to

change their lives for the better, as well as an irritation with themselves for having had hopes for more in the past. Most ascribed a sense of shame to their powerlessness to effect change.

2.4 Motivation from new possibilities

In the sections above dealing with the QP and potential for mitigating shame, we discuss the motivation that many of the respondents described receiving from this new possibility for lifting one's status and for normalizing one's activities and the expectations surrounding those activities, as well as to escape an internalized sense of blame. Many of our respondents noted how new possibilities for escaping their challenging situations and the negative emotions connected with these had translated into an increased sense of motivation and purpose to move ahead on the trajectory back to "normal".

2.5 Motivation from role as caregiver/provider

For many of those respondents we spoke with who had families (children), their change in status from single or childless to caregiver/provider had served as the "new possibility" that had generated motivation to build a better life. Many of these respondents spoke of motivation as specifically stemming from their goal of shielding their children from the experience of feeling or understanding the challenging economic situation their parents were experiencing. These respondents often attached a sense of shame to the potential inability to properly provide for their children, noting that their first priority was seeking work or help for the benefit of their children, and that they were willing to sacrifice previous priorities (material goods, reputation, identity, a social life) in order to do so. Several respondents also suggested that it was not just the level of provision and protection/shielding made as parents that contributed to a feeling of motivation, but also the act of *seeking* to provide and shield that served as continued motivation.

3. POVERTY, SHAME AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Many of the respondents connected an experience or feeling of social exclusion with their economic challenges. They described difficulties building and maintaining friendships and many did not have substantial social networks and those they had were "one sided" in the sense that they felt they put in more toward friendships than they received on the other end. A number of respondents were trying to move beyond what they felt had been problematic social networks from the past and had found this difficult to do within the context of a lack of resources to join friends who were "better off" as well as lacking the structure and setting of a job in which to make regular, healthy contact with others. Respondents felt bitter about being caught in a Catch-22 situation of weak social networks and little resources to improve them as well as embarrassed about not having the resources to engage in activities that they felt were "normal" or healthy. Some also felt hopeful that through work they could establish a "balance" in their lives and a better sense of inclusion in society. Finally, many of the respondents who had immigrated to Norway as adults described a sense of social exclusion that was tied, in part, to their economic challenges, but

primarily focused on how the exclusion they experienced was especially the result of cultural alienation or discrimination.

3.1 Social exclusion due to relative poverty

Several respondents described themselves as feeling “alone” within the context of relative poverty compared with local peers. For example, in the relatively affluent Eiketangen, several respondents reported a general expectation that community members were well off. Respondents described feeling *abnormal*/alienated and not an equal part of society due to a lack of job and structure/balance in their lives. It is notable that it was primarily the women we spoke with who focused on how their economic situation had affected their interactions with others in their local communities. For these women, social difficulties came both from not having a “normal” appearance according to local expectations as well as not knowing how to fit into the local social setting in terms of behaviour.

Other respondents emphasized that their economic situations – and joblessness – meant that they had no point of regular, healthy contact with others. The feeling of loneliness seemed especially strong for those who were without supportive extended families or friends nearby.

3.2 Cultural marginalization

Over half of the respondents we spoke with who had come to Norway as adult immigrants described feeling culturally marginalized – professionally, as well as socially. Many noted that this sense of exclusion was either heightened by their economic circumstances or had contributed to their difficulties in entering the workforce.

4. STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING OR REJECTING SHAME

4.1 Shaming others (shaming downward)

Many of the respondents expressed shame or regret in conjunction with their need to depend on state benefits to make ends meet. As suggested in 1.4.1 and 1.5.4, many also engaged in “othering” by distinguishing their identities and actions from their peers in the NAV system. A similar strategy respondents used for minimizing shame over their situation was that of shaming others – inside and outside the NAV system – whom they characterized as overly-dependent or demanding, not accountable for their situations, lazy, or unmotivated.

4.2 Shaming others (shaming upward)

Several respondents also used the strategy of “shaming upward” to direct shame toward those peers and family members who they had experienced shaming from due to what they perceived to be a lack of empathy. The respondents suggested that those who would shame them were financially or socially better off or were of higher status in the community, and thus did not understand their situations.

Several respondents also directed shame “upward” to NAV or the state when describing what they felt were misplaced state and NAV priorities. This strategy recalled the critiques of NAV by those respondents who felt they were in “limbo” or “falling between the cracks” – these respondents maintained that NAV had misplaced its focus on individuals who were less able or less willing and that as a result, the respondents had not received the attention they deserved.

4.3 Mitigating the shame of dependence

4.3.1 Necessity of public assistance to move ahead

As noted in 1.4.1, many respondents attached shame to their status as NAV users and to their dependence on public financial support. At the same time, most respondents we spoke with applied an explanatory strategy when speaking of their status and downplayed much of the shame they may have felt, noting that they had no other choice than to rely on public benefits and services due to personal circumstances or particularities (i.e. abuse, a difficult youth, childcare responsibilities, past drug abuse, bad decisions made in the past). This strategy began with the respondent explaining his or her trajectory into the current situation, then providing a description of the challenges currently or recently faced and finally, emphasizing the absolute necessity of public support to move ahead or beyond these challenges.

4.3.2 Focus on public dependence as preferable to private dependence

Many of our respondents spoke of the shame they associated with the potential of being a financial and personal burden on their friends and families. Most noted that they had consciously chosen to avoid being a burden to those around them and minimized the shame they felt as recipients of public support by focusing on their preference of being dependent on the state rather than being dependent on private sources of support, namely, friends or family. Most explained that this reliance on public support was precisely what enabled them to minimize their burden on personal/private social networks, thus posing less of a risk to the maintenance of these networks.

4.3.3 Providing for children as rationale for state dependence

Public dependence also allowed many respondents to shift their identity from that of burden on family to family provider. Many respondents described the financial support, training and work experience they received as the means by which they could move forward toward autonomy and increasingly provide for their families. Respondents often spoke of the way in which this support also allowed them to shield their children from some of the more difficult realities concerning their family’s economic situation. Some also spoke of public support as a means of enabling them to finance activities that ensured their children’s inclusion in peer-related activities.

4.3.4 Social network mitigates shame of economic difficulties

As described in 3.1, many respondents described the heightened sense of social exclusion they felt by being out of work, a potential site for the provision of a secure social and financial framework. At the same time, several respondents also referred to the ways in which their family or friend networks minimized the effects they might otherwise have felt due this lack of structure. In a sense, a strong family or friend network (even if the friend network was primarily comprised of other social assistance recipients and thus could be said to be a “bonding” network) compensated in part for the lack of structure they may have received through regular work.

4.3.5 Discourse of pride

As noted in 1.2.2, several respondents described their feelings of pride (in their identities as workers/professionals) as the flip side of shame. In other words, with the loss of work, they had lost a valued identity and therefore took special measures to conceal the fact that they were now unemployed. In this sense, pride in a former identity had made their current situation more intolerable. At the same time, many of these individuals also spoke of the pride they attached to how they had dealt with their new economic challenges. These respondents took pride in the frugality and economic discipline they had learned as a result of their current situation. Many spoke of using this understanding to teach their children frugality, discipline and patience. In doing so, many had lessened the possibility for feeling shame through not being able to provide a full range of expected material items.

While many respondents attached a sense of shame to their status as unemployed or relatively economically deprived, several mitigated this shame as they took stock of how their current situation compared to an earlier, more difficult, phase of life. These respondents, who mostly had dealt with long-term substance abuse, took pride in how they had displayed the ability for autonomous action, as displayed by their ability to choose and work toward a better life.

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Appendix A: Empirical Evidence

(Note: for each thematic section main empirical data in the form of interview text is listed first, followed by supporting data in the form of interview/field note number and line number)

1. CONTEXTS FOR SHAME OR SHAMING

1.1 Relative poverty

Living in wealthy community while relatively poor:

Lisa and Kari Anne both lived in Eiketangen and spoke of a lack of understanding from neighbors and parents of children's peers concerning their challenging situations. Both women had experienced a strong focus on social status (large class divisions) in the area where they lived, with many peers focused on cars and the ability to take trips abroad or to their own cabins. Lisa spoke of the snobbery of some of the mothers of her children's peers and noted that because she did not, for example, drive a fancy car that some of the other mothers didn't say "hi". For Lisa, it was a challenge to live among the very rich and not appear different and this challenge was felt especially strongly through her children's activities and schooling:

It's embarrassing that we drive around in an old Saab that we've borrowed from my mom and dad...especially when there are only fancy cars here in Eiketangen...we stand out. I don't remember who it was from [my child's] nursery school, but there was a lady who said to me, "sorry that I didn't say hello, but I didn't recognize you in *that*" and pointed to the Saab....and many moms don't say hi to me, it's just like I'm air. And they are so well-to-do and la di da (Lisa, 1044-1061).

Kari Anne provided an example of instances in which her children were invited to the birthday parties of peers and in which her own joblessness and inability to pay for birthday gifts resulted in the parents of these peers both failing to understand her situation and directing shame towards her:

It's really *boring*...I certainly know that if [my children] go to a birthday party, then the parents will know my situation. Work-related and economically. And then I'm excluded again. Because I'm one of those *poor* people. It's very typical here in Eiketangen....it's pretty bad, that one has to set oneself apart because of economic status. And there are many people who don't understand. Those who *have* a job...and have two cars. And have a cabin. And have a boat. And have three children and two dogs and...money to take a trip south and such. And they sit and give me the evil eye because I don't have money to go to a little birthday party (Kari Anne, 365-370, 500-504).

Kari Anne's inability to participate in gift giving was a source of shame both in that it "outed" her as economically troubled, but also excluded her children from participating in social activities.

While Thomas mostly refused to attach shame to his economically challenged status, like Lisa and Kari Anne, he noted that his daughter's school was a site in which the pressure to have material possessions and resources was strongly felt. He also suggested that his and his daughter's relative poverty had grown increasingly pronounced as she grew older. One example he provided was when his daughter wanted to have friends over. The others in the peer group had had each other over to their large, nice houses. Thomas did not want his daughter to be marked as different, but his house was only a simple apartment. Thomas contrasted the pressure he felt as a parent with what he might have felt living elsewhere, noting, "It's...much clearer here than if you lived in a more urban suburb. Where maybe...differences aren't so large" (485-486).

- N9/34-49, 44-45
- 9/342-345, 360-370, 500-504
- N10/44-49, 60-65, 70-81
- 10/512-520, 1044-1061
- N12/39-51, 127-131
- 12/183-186, 485-509
- N14/76-80
- 14/935-942
- 15/308-314, 322-326 (child's perspective)
- N16/32/39
- 16/631-650, 692-696

Living in a small town with identity as relatively poor:

Erik, a recovering addict, suggested the challenge of moving away from his former drug milieu, noting that it was "difficult to find a network away from old friends...in such a little town" (129-130). Anne, who had fallen into a cycle of depression and addiction and was now working her way back towards what she termed a "normal" life, also described this challenge:

It's so difficult, because the town is so small. They *know*, in a way. Maybe not everyone knows for sure how I've lived my life. But there are many who have taken the initiative to talk to me after I had [my daughter]...It's definitely a positive thing, but no one has gone further and been open for me to take more contact and get to know them better. It has to do with confidence - I don't think there are any who want to. How am I supposed to behave with normal people, anyway? (Anne, 343-349).

Erik, whose family had had several generations of economic and addiction difficulties, noted that for him, it had been "pretty normal to go on NAV [benefits]" (687). In contrast, Anne reflected upon her parents' identities as "hard workers" with a strong work ethic, suggesting that as her parents had provided a good model for what she would like to attain, so would she like to do the same for her daughter. Bea Johanne spoke of a friend whose mother and grandmother had received social assistance benefits. She said that this generational pattern meant that the friend did not feel shame when she herself went on social assistance benefits. Bea Johanne

explained that her own focus on finding a job came from having “ordinary parents” and that, as a result, she felt that the shame she experienced provided her with the motivation to change her situation:

It's important for me...that I do things right for [my daughter]...I know from studies and tests and such is that if I continue to be inside the [NAV] system it'll be easy for my daughter to also be there. ...that's why I've said to my partner that we're getting out, out in a good and smart way as fast as possible...that I don't [continue to] receive short term disability money. That that's where my daughter finds out I've gotten my money from (621-632). ...I have an example of two friends of mine. Born and raised here in town. ...They didn't know who their fathers were. The mothers didn't work. And one of them had a grandmother who never worked. ...So we're talking about three generations back. And she thinks it's completely fine (740-745). ...I think it depends on what type of environment and upbringing you have...because for her it wasn't a problem [small laugh] (947-950).

- N1/54-58
- 1/621-635, 740-745, 920-922, 947-950
- 3/319-320, 576-579, 589-590 (schools/peers/bullying)
- 5/267-278 (child's perspective)
- 6/297-300, 343-345
- 7/170-177, 185-186
- 8/129-130, 687-688

1.2 Joblessness

1.2.1 Marginal work history

Focal point for situation:

Sverre, a long-term social assistance recipient, described with regret and self-recrimination how his decision to take a year off after finishing class work at his technical high school, but before completing the work needed to earn a professional certificate had hindered his transition into secure employment:

[I've been on social assistance] since I was 18 years old. Since I was finished with [trade high] school, after which I took a year off. It was the dumbest thing I did....It's stupid to have [the option of taking] a free year, we shouldn't have that. ...Because you think that you'll take a year off, take a break from school and begin again the year after. But there are many who don't do that. You work and get tired and don't care about going back to school again, I liked to work better than to return to school then. So school isn't completed, you don't get any certificates for anything, professional degree for anything and it becomes worse to find a job. A year off is the worst thing someone can do, really (501-516).

Wenche, who grew up in economically challenging circumstances, described how she had “hit a wall” after beginning to take a further education course as a single

mother, with the result that she chose to drop out of school. She suggested that those around her had failed to empathize with her situation, instead shaming her for this decision:

I think in a way that people look down on people who aren't in work - "why don't you work? There has to be a reason for it" - and you have to then have something completely concrete to reply with. Of course, not everyone knows how it is to hit the wall. Absolutely not. ...And therefore, they don't understand that it can take a long time (473-478).

Lack of reason for situation:

Kari Anne spoke of the depression and bitterness that she had attached to her difficulties finding work. Her protective stance and unemotional voice conveyed the alienation, frustration, and sense of hopelessness that she felt. She emphasized the degrading nature of her identity as jobless throughout our interview. One story that she told that highlighted her sense of low self-esteem:

[Hesitates]...I was on my way to the doctor's office...and I walked through the churchyard and looked at the gravestones and such. And in many places they had listed on them which positions each had had...when they lived. And I thought then that if I would die, what would [my gravestone] say? "Jobless – Kari Anne Johannesen"? ...it's damn frustrating. ...I don't understand anything, really...that's what it's all about when you die, it's not enough [that you need to be concerned with it] when you're alive... (466-474).

- 3/531
- 4/501-504, 508-514
- N7/56-57
- 7/473-475
- N9/14-79, 114-116, 123-125
- 9/466-474

1.2.2 History of long-term work

Anne, now on social assistance, described how it felt to have lost her relatively high status in the tourism industry: "I notice it being 11 years without work, I've lost my confidence...because, really, I had a good job and earned good money. And suddenly 40% of my wages were taken away and I had to begin to live more strictly and in recent years it's become even less (71-74).

Sanjay, who had had a long-term position as a cleaner and handyman, described with pride how he had quickly acquired a good job soon after seeking asylum in Norway:

I came to Norway in...2000. And I began to work in July 2001...[after] five or six months. I began to work....I had it very good. I worked...and I earned a good deal of money. And I had a good job....I had that job for more than 7 years. I was happy with that job (294-297).

Sanjay contrasted this pride and happiness to the despair he had felt after losing his job and necessarily relying on the social welfare system:

My economic situation has begun to go down...a bad way [laugh]...It's not going well. ...First, um, I had a job, then I lost my job and received unemployment benefits, as they're called. It was good support from NAV. But, uh, after unemployment benefits end...I was without support for...four five months...So...I didn't know what I should do, what I could do. How I could get back on track again (27-36).

Hiding current status:

Gabriel, who had had a long-term position in the construction/service industry, noted with pride how highly his previous regular employer had thought of him and his working ability. At the same time, he noted that pride for him was both a good and a bad thing - said that pride in many ways had kept him from doing things that would have helped – for fear of seeming needy. In this case, his reluctance to be identified as jobless had kept him from going back to his former place of employment to check to see if there might be openings. Gabriel described how the dissonance between his former and present identities had had an impact on his social network and feelings of self-worth:

I don't hang out with friends...I feel like I can't hang out with people before I've gotten a job. ...Um...I mean, everyone thinks that I have a job. Everyone I know [in town] thinks I have work. When I go out...when I meet some people out...and they ask me where I've been, I say..."I've been at work, I just have to deliver a note to NAV". ...I feel that...I don't want people to see me like that. As pitiful, and such. ...I'm ashamed about not having a job...because in the course of my life, when I've [had] a job, I've set a standard for myself [that] people have gotten used to. ...It's "pride", you know...I fight with it every day. ...I feel that I can't show anything else. I struggle with it...I remember when I was working I was the one...that was very sure that I wouldn't end up at NAV. I was sure that I wouldn't lose my job. I was so sure of many things - I thought I had prepared myself for everything. And then it happened to *me!* (1242-1285).

Per Morten, who had had a long-term position as a manager in the service sector, explained to us that he had not told his partner or their children about his participation in the Qualification Programme, instead telling them that he had a temporary work position and that the benefits he received were his regular wages. He noted that his partner had had full time work and that, while she might understand why he had not been able to find a permanent position due to the economic climate, she might not be willing to understand the fact that he had not been able to find any job at all.

It's got something to do with my own self-esteem...I haven't even told my partner...she knows that I went to a [NAV] class in the winter, of course, but then [thinks that] in the course of that – she knows that I've been to NAV –

But, uh...[as far as she knows] so...she thinks that I started working last year. ...I know that I've pushed the truth. For that reason, I'm working the shit out of myself to make it happen *now* [mild laughter]. Firstly, it has to do with my self-esteem, and secondly it has [to do] with the fact that so many years have gone by since 2006, since I was finished. Uh, [hesitates]...she doesn't completely understand why I don't find work...and I don't understand it either (1421-1453).

While Per Morten noted that it had been difficult to maintain the story that he had a job, this was perhaps not as challenging as would be assuming the identity of “unemployed” with his family. This story both allowed him to save face and served as motivation to keep looking for work.

- 1/528-533
- 2/733-736
- 4/155-162
- 6/70-74, 126-129
- 12/45-46
- 16/27-28, 32-36, 294-297, 391-396
- N20/24-32
- 20/405-412, 692, 1242-1285, 1329-1333, 1360-1362
- N21/39-46
- 21/852-869, 1164-1171, 1446-1453

1.3 Shame over changed status associated with transnational identity

Change in professional status:

Throughout our interview, Olga spoke about her desire to find work, with a focus on her former educational and professional qualifications as an educator in Russia and the fact that she now only had an internship as a nursery school *assistant*: “In Russia one needs more education, I studied harder. I had to learn more and more and more. ...I had attained a certain level, [but now] don't have [breathes in] a high level on account of immigrating. It's a little sad [small laugh]” (622-630).

Whereas Olga expressed shame and regret over her lowered status, Pouneh, who had fled to Norway to take political asylum from Iran, expressed anger and bitterness over her difficulties in attaining secure work – she did not seem to have internalized the shame she had experienced as much as cast shame toward the Norwegian welfare system and potential employers who refused to hire her beyond her NAV internship:

I'm missing a professional certificate. I've had 15 years experience [in my former profession]. I had my own [business] in Iran. I just don't have a professional certificate. NAV says to me “you have to claim disability or rehabilitation, and you can get...your certificate here”. Why [would I do] that? It's not easy...if you don't have formal education from Norway. The

professional expert at my [current internship location] says “you’re just like me – Yes, we see that, you have a diploma” (357-379).

Status lower than anticipated/hoped – difficult to return home:

Suchin, who had come from a poor family in Thailand and moved to Norway after meeting a Norwegian man, described the shame that her lack of economic and personal success might bring to her family back home:

If I move back home, I don’t have a job, and my family – the neighbors know that I’m married, so he [must have] just tossed me back. So it would be very difficult if I went back. With neighbors who would say that I’m not a single lady any more – “and now she was married and has come back without anything, without a job, without...money”...It would [look bad]. ...If I hadn’t met him, I’d maybe have taken a nursing education...but when I met him, I quit that and then married him...and he just got bored with me and tossed me back. ...I can’t live at home [in Thailand], if I were to go back. ...I don’t want my mom and dad to be...that there would be talk about me and such and my father and mother would hear it...I can’t live at home. So I have to travel abroad and work (1207-1265).

Suchin cast her shame both around failing to live up to expectations through her move, but also over regrets at having thrown away the chance of professional respectability back in Thailand. In contrast, Omar - who had moved from western Africa to Norway three decades back in order to live with his Norwegian wife – did not express regret over his decision to move to Norway, but at the mistakes he had made over the years in Norway, leading to the disintegration of his family and economic status. His shame was primarily framed around regrets over these mistakes, as well as the contrast between his relatively insecure status and the more secure status of other immigrants he had met:

You know, I’ve seen a lot of people, from other countries, a lot of foreigners in Oslo, who just came here maybe ten years, twelve years [ago], they’re doing so *well*. *Much* better than – I mean, they’re doing very well. ...They come with, they have their own culture and language and everything. I mean, they are *strong*. Compared to me. ...It feels like you’ve wasted your time. Whereas he’s been here only seven years, he has his career, he’s good, he has a job, his kids are at their school. And you’ve been here for thirty years, you’ve worked many years and paid tax, but now you’re just like... excess. You are.. ugh [sighs] (1421-1453).

Shame in lowered status affecting family:

While Samira had immigrated with her family from Pakistan to Norway when she was 10 years old, she had moved her family back to Pakistan as a young adult before moving back to Norway again several years ago. While the decision to move to Pakistan had been made in order to help strengthen the family, Samira described

this decision as instead having been the basis for many of the economic and social challenges that she and her children faced:

I have my family here [in Norway], my parents and my siblings and it's going well for them, they're well educated and have good jobs and are doing well, plus my friends are doing so well, um...they all have work and nice houses and it's going well for my family and everyone..It's not so good [for me], it doesn't feel very good, in any case when I'm with them. Especially with family. I feel that.. That when I lived here I had my own apartment, and we sold it when we moved to Pakistan so now we're very far back in contrast to the people I compare with (444-455). ...In Pakistan we had better money when we lived there, but eventually when we moved it wasn't so good, not so good economically either...we're in a situation where we can't buy what we earlier could (900-905).

Samira clearly also regretted the challenges (language and culture acquisition) that her children had faced in their re-entry to Norway and grew visibly upset when describing the change in financial resources that she and her children had had to accommodate to in the move back to Norway.

- N2/55-58
- 2/182-184, 606-607
- 14/444-455
- 18/1450-1456
- 22/357-361
- N23/67-72

1.4 Shame or shaming within a hierarchy of public dependence

1.4.1 Shame of identity as social assistance user

Lowest status:

Kenneth, a long-time social assistance recipient who had begun the Qualification Programme and recently begun an internship position, described the self-conscious embarrassment and shame concerning his identity he had felt when claiming social assistance:

You don't look people in the face. ...Also (small laugh) you hear that, that you're a parasite on society, that kind of thing. That it's other people that work, they pay taxes and it's them that pay your wages. You really get that thrown in your face. But what can you do? You have to live. It is, it's darn depressing to be on social assistance, there you are. You want to work, you definitely want things to work (196-218). ...For my part, I'd like to work. One thing you become from getting social assistance is to become lazy, you know? You watch the clock, you become lazy. You, yeah...that's not what I want to be (251-257).

Kenneth's description both pointed to the shame of being a social assistance client, but he also ended by placing a marker between himself – as someone interested in working – and the typical “lazy” social assistance client.

When we asked Kari Anne, who was almost finished with her frustrating experience in the Qualification Programme and who suggested she would likely soon return to regular social assistance, about how she felt when she was on social assistance, she described the following:

It's definitely shame. I feel. Year after year after year after year, like. It's shame...one has to experience it to say it...I don't need to think it over...that I'm a burden for other people, I can just go to the social assistance office, and get the evil eye there [laughs]. Yeah...can anyone be proud of going to the social assistance office and asking for money? I don't think so. To be dependent on NAV, year after year, is that anything I should be proud of? I don't think so. ...You remember from the old days, that one was really viewed badly. Those who are on assistance generally are those who have some problems. Whether it's either alcohol, or drugs, or something else...some other abuse, it's those people who tend to go to the social assistance office. ...And that's very visible when you say to people “now I want to take care of myself, so I need to get some help.” And then you get a kind of stare. And you get this – “Ohhhh...” [laughs]. You know? ...I've gone to courses, where people are in the same situation. ...The...only people I know who don't agree with this, is immigrants. They think it's some sort of party for them (170-197).

Shame of forced categorization/assumptions:

Kari Anne contrasted herself to other NAV clients, suggesting that she was willing and able to work, but was in a sort of unemployment “limbo”. She described the persistent feeling that her NAV caseworkers treated those considered most “needy” (she provided as examples those that yell the loudest or complain the most, those who are not Norwegian, and those who have substance abuse issues) with more attention and follow-up than those who were, as Kari Anne identified herself, not good enough to find a job, yet not bad enough off to be classified as worthy of help. Kari Anne's description suggested the shame and frustration of not properly fitting into a NAV service category and thus having the feeling that she was slipping in between the cracks. Per Morten echoed the sense of falling between the cracks, noting: I feel in a way that I've fallen between several chairs (170-171). At the same time that Kari Anne suggested that she did not fit well with the profile of the usual social assistance client, she also cast fellow clients further down the hierarchy in her suggestions that some were satisfied with being dependent.

Sanjay, who was on leave from the QP, described his worries over having to lower his and his family's quality of life even lower in order to qualify for social assistance. Sanjay had avoided social assistance when he lost his regular unemployment pay because he was worried about the possibility that the social assistance office would expect him to sell his apartment, car and other possessions in order to qualify. In this sense, he was in a limbo situation in which his wife had a full time job and the

family owned their housing and a car. He described his reluctance concerning being forced to enter a lower economic bracket, explaining:

I think that maybe if I go on social assistance, and the assistance [office] would say, “no you have to sell your car,” for example. You know?...That “you should sit at home without a car.” I have a family, we need to have a car, regardless. For that reason, I never go to the assistance office. I’m a little scared, worry a little [about this possibility] (447-466).

Gabriel, who had just begun the QP when we spoke, described how the former social assistance caseworker he encountered had viewed him with suspicion for not appearing to “need” economic help. He described a common assumption that one could only “earn” one’s right to claim assistance benefits if one were in truly dire straits: “The impression they have of me at NAV is that when I come I’m really nothing – “Gabriel, he doesn’t have any problems,” I feel like. That’s how they see me...”Gabriel, yeah, you’re doing fine...” but I, that’s not how it works (373-377).

The demeaning encounters Gabriel described with NAV as an SA user reflected many of those described by Kari Anne. Gabriel, too, felt that NAV’s SA services were best geared toward those who were considered to be the most needy cases – as an example, he noted that when coming into the office neatly dressed and with an energetic attitude he had been told by caseworkers that he didn’t look like he needed help, and as a result it had been difficult at times to get his SA check. This suggested to him that he needed to force himself to act the part and make the “right” impression for his caseworker: “The more pitiful you look, the more help you receive. ...And since I arrive looking so good every time...they don’t look at me, I feel that they don’t look at me like someone who’s having difficulties. I must almost...play a part...yeah. And that’s not how I am” (1095-1105). Looking “needy” was also to be accompanied by the proper behavior. As Gabriel suggested: I feel like, if I’m mean, then I’ll get what I want” (1030). This recalled Kari Anne’s description of feeling in limbo – not being good enough to get a job or doing poorly enough to not be treated without suspicion/disbelief when claiming one’s benefit. Interestingly, while many of the respondents we spoke with tied their economic challenges and shame to their focus on providing for their children and families, Suchin suggested that she, too, was viewed by the NAV system as not “needy” enough precisely because she did not want the pressure of having to care for or pay for children and thus was responsible only for herself. As a result, she, too, had had difficulty accessing necessary help and follow-up from her caseworkers.

- 1/547-553
- 3/193-200, 207-216, 253-255, 264-284
- 4/181-190
- 9/170-191, 219-223, 399-403
- 20/948-968
- 21/1524-1530

1.4.2 Shame associated with social assistance services and structure

Cycle of low-expectations/follow-up and low motivation:

Thomas, a SA user who had moved into the QP, described how shame and low expectations played a part in this cycle:

You have no rhythm and so you don't move forward. As long as you don't have money it's difficult to search for a job and pick yourself up. Like, the only thing you deal with is economic problems that move around in your head. All the time. You don't see any possibility to fix it, and so there are many that just give up...Who just sit down and think, yeah, I guess that's the way it'll be. ...The killer is to not have anything to go to during the day...as a social assistance client you don't have shit to go to, and that's almost the *worst*. ...You don't get offers or anything...you have to get things on your own...The past year I've started this QP...it's the *first time* I've heard or noticed that they have any interest in helping you find the right direction (586-612).

Thomas, being careful to delineate himself from the *typical* SA user, explained that many SA users, in fact, lived up to society's demeaning assumptions. He suggested that this reality, along with many years of dealing with clients who lived up to these assumptions perhaps created a cycle in which SA caseworkers had also "given up":

They meet so many people who...have given up a little, and who don't have any wishes and dreams...Or they meet people who are totally on a cruise and have a hundred dreams that don't match reality, you know, so they've seen a lot of strange things. So it's probably pretty difficult for them to take everything seriously. And then you finally get a little resigned in your job, maybe (719-723).

Olga, also in the QP, described her frustrating experience with little consistency and follow-up on plans for moving forward when she was a SA user: "Our caseworkers were changed many times. It was a little difficult for us, too. Because the caseworker, for example, said [one thing]. And then another person came and said we had to explain our situation another time and another time, and another time as well, it's a little difficult" (690-697). For Olga, the continual process of seeking help without receiving much was just as demeaning as the attitudes of the caseworkers she encountered. Sverre echoed these frustrations, describing many years of aimless movement through the NAV system:

I've had 8, no – 12 to 13, 15 different [caseworkers] here...throughout. You're moved back and forth through NAV people like a spitball. Back and forth. I'm two weeks with him, and then three weeks with her, and then two weeks with him again. So back and forth, new people all the time and each has an hour of time for you, to talk with you, get to know you, a few hours to know everything from the beginning again. So then I have to go through it again. I said to her who I have now, "if I get yet another new person at NAV, I'll just leave". When I said that to her, she just grinned, so I said "I'm leaving". So I'm giving up. I'm refusing to meet at meetings any more, I said...I'm finished (686-699).

Sverre's resigned and bitter attitude seemed to reflect a long building irritation with the instability of caseworker assignment and follow-up, leading to the feeling that his case was not taken seriously. For many respondents, constant caseworker re-assignment and low expectations translated into the feeling of not being treated like an individual. For Petter, this led to the demeaning experience in which he was treated as a child:

They are very good at doing what they feel is easiest, instead of asking me what I want to do. They try to think *for* me, but they can't do that...The [caseworker] I have now, she's not the best...Um, she's very good at – she's able to talk about things, like, but she's not good at listening. And to hear and understand the issues that me and my partner have. ...And also *she speaks to me* as if I were *three years old* – or really little, when in fact, I'm pretty...big (674-695).

Caseworker discretion and de-motivation:

Kenneth noted one such bad experience:

You become really depressed about things never working, and if you are really unlucky you can also get a nasty caseworker. Then you can really get run over. I've had a sort of "hate relationship" to one caseworker. She hated me and I hated her...But I wasn't able to change the caseworker, I had to just have her. It was difficult, it was like, if she forgot to send out money I had to wait through the weekend, until she bothered to send it out. And then I had to wait two more days until the money was in my account...all she had to do was to send out the money or give me a receipt so I could to to the service counter and get it [myself], but *no*... (219-234).

Luka, a QP participant who also was recovering from long-term physical and mental war-related trauma, had found in his pre-QP experience that the amount of economic support he had received had been caseworker-dependent, according mostly to how that caseworker had perceived his character:

Everything is dependent on the caseworker...[some] like to use the law to punish people. And that's not the intention of the law....It says in one or another place in the law, it says that the law shall be used positively, not negatively. ...Um, but when it comes to a caseworker who – I don't know – is predisposed...because he thinks we're lazy people and I don't know what – that's not the case with me – but I have the impression that they think we're lazy and such, that we don't want to work. Um, without seeing that I have health problems. So they just write a letter where it states, according to [notes legal paragraph], "You've been rejected, we have evaluated your application...we do not see that you have a [difficult] living situation". This is because they don't *want* to see that (305-339).

Luka described his demeaning experience with a caseworker and also separated himself from the *typical* welfare client. His self-proclaimed identity as a hard worker

thus did not jibe well with the suspicions and recriminations he felt he received from several caseworkers. He planned, however, to use caseworker subjectivity and discretion to his advantage. He noted that he had been unable to find work through the QP due to health limitations and planned to file for permanent disability as soon as his term in the QP ended. Knowing that he would be moved back to his “nice” caseworker, who had been on childcare leave, he was waiting for her return before filing for permanent disability benefits.

- 1/414-433, 448-450, 459-460, 473-486
- 2/690-697
- 12/586-590, 597-604, 609-612, 631-640, 719-727
- N16/48-59
- 16/443-450, 465-466
- N17/23-26
- 18/776-782, 1252-1281, 1293-1298, 1317-1344, 1350-1353, 1363-1367
- N20/46-56
- 20/121-133, 154-157, 170-176, 179-181, 193-199, 212-218, 373-377, 878-883, 1153-1165

1.5 The Qualification Programme: a move away from shame?

1.5.1 New status as QP participant: “Not forgotten anymore”

Petter compared his experience on SA to that in the QP, noting the differing expectations and level of follow-up in each: “[With SA] you have the feeling that it’s like, “Okay, you get your benefit, you have a place to live. We’re not bothering with more”. ...With the QP you have people who regularly call you and ask, “How’s it going?” and follow you up a little bit instead of you having to run to an office to get help...it can even be a couple times a week (420-432). Wenche had also had a better experience since beginning the QP. She described the new self-confidence that she felt as a result of the internship she had obtained through the QP, as opposed to the depression and bad self-image she had felt “sitting at home” and receiving SA benefits: “You dare to talk with people...You become a little more happy and glad I think if things are good. And you get out, to where you work. ...You feel more worthy, really. And I’ve gotten so much positive feedback, it’s good to be at work” (421-446).

Thomas also noted the lift he had received in the past year, both from his changed status within the NAV hierarchy and, as a result of this, a better sense of self-worth:

The biggest joy of mine, in the last year, was to go from being a *social assistance client*...the worst time, to come into the QP-programme, and get a *wage* and such. It...was a big step for me, and it was so enjoyable...from not having any self-confidence at all, to like know that you’ve begun to build self-confidence, and feel that you are a person who’s *contributing*, like. You don’t feel that when you’re a social assistance client. You’ve taken and you’ve been taken from...you’ve done little yourself as many have done. I don’t place blame on others, not me. But, it’s like you’re removed of all possibility to be,

or to *participate* in society. That's the worst thing about being a social assistance client, that you're like, everything has been stolen from you, like, you're not a participant in society, you're only a *burden*. Really, like being placed in a hidden corner, that's how you feel then...And it's *frightfully* difficult to get yourself out (571-584).

Per Morten noted that it was not just the increase in economic benefit provided, but increasing stability, higher expectations, and especially, a better level of follow-up that had given him a new sense that, rather than being at odds with his caseworker, he was working *with* his caseworker toward a positive goal:

It's a sort of mutual follow up such that my caseworker, he follows me up and I follow him up in a way also. Among other things, we're required to deliver a sort of time sheet...I think it's okay, uh – in a way I think it's tiresome, but uh, then I have a grasp, and he has a grasp over what I'm doing...You could say it's a sort of "big brother's watching", but it's not that, but then the caseworker also knows what I'm doing...and he then has an overview (650-671).

- N16/10-12
- 3/77-81, 237-247, 607-609, 621-625
- 7/64-67
- N10/38-43
- N7/54
- 7/421-426
- 11/434-438
- N19/55-59
- N20/44-45
- 20/1122-1134
- N21/29-31
- 21/81-96, 648-656
- N22/37-39

1.5.2 Reduced shame due to "normalized" QP benefit format and source

Wenche noted how the difference in *source* and *terminology* concerning the benefit she now received from the QP changed her feeling of self-worth, explaining: "[with the QP] it's the municipality who pays the money. So you receive a certain amount each month like [small pause] a "wage" you could say. So you feel a little more [small pause]...you feel more worthy maybe...yeah, I think it's a little better (147-155). Petter echoed this difference, noting: "when you're [in the QP], you're...a public employee...instead of being a pure NAV-client. And that's pretty good, you feel a little better about yourself, instead of getting paycheck from NAV, you get it from the Eiketangen municipality...It's a little more of a pick-me-up and you have to deliver a tax card and you get a normal pay slip instead of just an A4 printout with a lot of weird stuff written on it (391-402). Thomas also described the importance of paying taxes in relation to social participation, explaining:

You feel that you're doing something for your money, that you're paying taxes, because that's really a part of normal work, is to pay taxes. If you just get welfare benefits, you don't have the feeling that you're doing real work. But if you pay some taxes now and then, then you get that "job feeling", you know. That you're contributing back to society. That's important (679-682).

Building on his theme of the problem of caseworker discretion, Luka had described an arbitrary application of rules by two consecutive caseworkers – in which the first allowed him to take a vacation while receiving rehabilitation benefits and the second punished him (by taking away his benefits) for doing so. He noted with satisfaction, however, that "in this Qualification programme we were exactly like employees – we were allowed five-week's vacation" (166).

Higher expectations motivate further move ahead:

Kenneth noted that additional bills to pay were "surmountable when you received decent wages" (82). Thus, for many participants, it was not the total level of benefits that made the difference, but a different standard of expectations and responsibilities. This was felt by participants to be an especially positive change when they perceived that the programme was helping them to move toward something more concrete (i.e. a secure future in the workforce). Thomas described the sense of autonomy and control he had gained since entering the QP:

Since I began in the QP-programme...I've had a little more regular economy...in relation to payments and such...because [now] I receive a, a wage, a regular wage each month, that I pay taxes on...So, uh, in that way, it's become very straightforward for me, because I receive a certain amount each month that, that I *can* manage if I'm very good with money. And then, it's a little more fun, more fun to be able to be good with [finances] and to manage them, because now...now this is a possibility. ...It gives me like a little more...uh, yeah, will power and determination, in to moving ahead. ...And I know that I can keep things going, like. That it isn't hopeless from the start (146-159).

- 3/33-38, 42-44
- 7/147-149, 153-155, 509-512, 695-711
- N11/28-33
- 11/391-402
- N12/27-31, 97-105
- 12/146-159, 571-579, 678-682
- 14/205-208
- 18/37-43, 60-66, 105-107
- 19/166

1.5.3 QP to de-individualize/internalize blame

Interestingly, Omar, a respondent who had been a long-term alcoholic and was now seeking help through regular Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, described the sense

of solidarity, strength and motivation he had gained from this setting. He explained that the meetings provided a way to see the patterns of destruction that alcoholism played in one's life. As he explained: You find out first of all that you are not alone. This problem is a global problem. Alcoholism. It's not just you. And all those feelings and loneliness, all that desperation, all these people have the same thing (236-242). The QP functioned similarly for several of the respondents – they noted that this setting allowed them the rare chance to network with other people who considered themselves on a forward trajectory, which helped in maintaining motivation for moving forward. As Wenche explained: "You get out and meet people and that's helped me a lot, you know. ...I'm really pretty social, but you don't meet anyone when you've been at home for two years. You try anyway, but it's not the same as when you're working a little and together with people a little as well" (93-98).

Samira described the realization that her problems were shared by others as one of the positive things she had gained from her participation in the QP:

I've learned a good deal [in the QP], I've gotten time to develop myself in relation to how I was when I began it all and I see that it's difficult to get a job, there are many [people] who get tired of it, but before I thought it was just me. Since 2009 I've tried to find a job...but there are many who get tired of it. I talked with other colleagues who say "Samira, don't give up!" They've sought hundreds of jobs, and they haven't gotten one, you know. So you just have to search, and I just "okay – one hundred jobs – okay, alright, a hundred applications [laughs]. So I get a sort of small support, it's just the way it is...so I just have to keep looking (259-274).

- 7/93, 96-98
- 14/259-263
- N18/30-37
- 18/227-242

1.5.4 QP's mitigation of shame: contingent upon trajectory

Early trajectory:

A survivor of long-term domestic abuse and a single mother of three, Lisa had what seemed to be an extremely positive attitude given her situation. She described her participation in the QP in hopeful terms – she viewed the programme as a vehicle to continue to help herself/receive training and, in the longer term, to obtain a job. For Lisa, the programme was a way out of what had been a shameful situation of hopelessness and depression. She described herself as finally (after years of difficulties) moving in the right direction and beginning to come out of a bad period. Her courses in the QP – especially those that helped her to think in terms of moving from goals to action, making a budget, and making good choices – had helped her to learn ways to deal with challenges.

You get out and get positive feedback and you get energy from that, you feel like you're on a path then, dare a little here and dare a little there, I have so

much energy in the day that it's completely insane. Those who saw me before Christmas [beginning of QP] and in comparison to now, they almost don't recognize me. Through the QP I've taken two very good courses that focused on how you deal with things...how to get up and make a decision, how you can choose to a certain degree to take things positively or should I take things negatively, you can't of course manage your whole day, but you can choose..to be positive (356-379).

Later trajectory (seeking job):

Per Morten, who had been in long-term employment before health issues forced him to take a leave from the labour market, did not offer any specific critiques of the programme, he described the sense of stigma that he felt via his identity as a QP participant:

I feel a little like a – yeah...not a *loser* as much as...unlucky, yeah. I'm sitting here in the Qualification Programme. That means that – when you're in the Qualification Programme, you've for the most part used up the opportunities you have at NAV. And additionally I haven't gotten a job...No, loser is the wrong word, but unlucky, yes (1526-1535).

Both Petter and Gabriel emphasized their identities as workers throughout their interviews and highlighted the fact that they had sought the QP because they saw it as a vehicle for quickly entering the workforce. Within this context, they found more foundational courses to be less useful. As Petter explained: "They're eager for you to be sent out to various courses. But I've said plain and simple that I'm not interested in courses, I'm interested in *working*. I want a job as fast as *hell*, I've said" (365-369). Gabriel also emphasized his lack of interest in what he saw as useless foundational courses and his lack of shared identity with many of the course participants, describing both with some derision:

You learn...you learn to motivate yourself, they give you some sort of "motivational pointers" and also [show you] how a CV should look, what type of "posture" you should have...I feel...I've been categorized – a little like – [with] a group of people who I'm really not – I feel the need to advance...I'm not saying that I'm too good, it's not that. But I'm saying that I'm maybe a little more, you know, many of them in the QP are just here...okay, there are many who have been here a long time...who aren't in my situation, it's two different situations...Either put me in an internship, [give me] a job right away, if you know of anything. ...What I really want is a job, a good job, and get me out as quickly as possible (86-110).

Like Gabriel, Petter separated his own identity from that of many QP course participants, noting that he did not "prioritize [getting to know] people who went to [QP courses]" and that he "really wanted to get it over with so quickly as humanly possible and earn wages and instead talk with people who were at work" (452-461, 605-608). Both saw themselves as necessarily having to bear the temporary shame

of being categorized with those they saw as more troubled in order to mitigate their own shame of joblessness by quickly moving ahead into the workforce.

Kari Anne suggested that while she had had hopes that moving into the Qualification Programme would mean a new opportunity to move ahead with her life her experience had proven otherwise. She described her sense of unease at having found herself grouped with individuals who were beset by extreme difficulties.

I've noticed when I deliver my [QP] timesheet. ...The people who are also delivering, I've noted that they look like they have real issues...drug addicts; I don't know what they are. ...And so it's been a little shock because I thought that the QP was all about helping you out, out into *work life*. Helping someone...to go to several interviews. And so, when I meet these sorts of addicts and such...or...the disadvantaged...I wonder, maybe *I* must be that way and such! [grins] *That's* why I don't get a job. You become so damn unsure. Why *is* it...um..I don't know. Am I too tall? Am I, do I stink? ...People who deliver applications to the disability office - they're received in a totally different way than those who become, those who apply at the social assistance office. There are categories, you know? ...[In the social assistance office] it's a little like "tisk tisk shame shame." In [the disability office]...it's because of health and...other reasons (202-223).

In addition to, like Petter and Gabriel, setting herself apart from those she saw as more troubled QP participants, she also contrasted her identity as a QP participant to the "better" identity she might have had had she been receiving long-term disability benefits, where she might have been seen as worthy of more generous help.

Sverre also voiced his frustration with the QP, which he saw as a continuation of the constant disappointment he had had with previous work activation measures. As he noted: "I have a CV that is like this [pretends to show CV], with [work activation] measures listed throughout. Three months here, six months there, three months there. Back and forth. Work measure, home. Work measure, home. I've gone through this since I was 18, it's been 10 years now" (101-113).

- 1/464-466
- N4/51-53
- 4/616-619
- 9/93-104, 202-214, 544-550, 560-565
- N10/13-22, 24-29
- 10/179-195, 279-282, 353-368, 381-384
- 11/365-369, 451-461, 605-608
- N12/80-95
- 20/84-93, 103-104, 106-110, 887-893, 901-918, 931-940, 968-990, 1600-1603
- N25/40-45

1.5.5 QP activation as context for exploitation

Kari Anne was bitter about what she felt were broken promises from NAV, which was where her internship at the time of the interview was located, noting that she had received mixed messages in the past month from NAV about whether or not she might be offered a permanent position:

I currently have an internship [here at NAV]. It ends next Friday. Then I'm done, I've been here three months. And I'm a little [sighs deeply] worried really..I asked about permanent employment. After the internship is over. And one day they said yes, the next minute they say no, and the next week – on Monday he said that I'd be hired permanently..and then about 10 minutes later he said, "no, I have to actually talk with your caseworker and say that..it won't be permanent after all [worried expression] (91-98). ...It is, I've come to understand that internship positions are just pure exploitation...They don't live up to what an internship should stand for either. When you're in an internship, it's the intension that you should be permanently employed after the period is over. And when, when that doesn't happen, indeed, you've been exploited...I really feel that it's a barrier, to say that it's not a regular job...It's in your head the whole time. [A regular job] would mean that you get regular pay...you're an equal [sighs]. Like others (592-611).

Kari Anne's experience with her NAV internship had clarified for her that, indeed, her status was below that of a "regular" worker. Pornthip, who was in an internship at a local health care facility, felt that the money she received for the work she did was not enough, especially as she was working weekends and not earning overtime pay as did the other healthcare workers with regular jobs:

It's a shame...[I get] just a small amount of money from...from NAV. Because sometimes I work extra, when it's Sunday and such. And then they take money from me. ...When I work these extra Saturdays and Sundays, they've taken 30 kroner per hour, when I work. It's such..it's a shame, it's not really okay. Really, I work on Saturday and Sunday, you know? It's all the money I get. I want to work, I don't want to sit at home, you know. I want to work, but when I get to work...I'm not very happy with this job, because they take my money. ...[It makes me] think "why should I work?" (584-596).

Like Kari Anne, Pouneh had had a series of internships in the local service sector around town. She noted with irony that while she had received praise from her most recent internship sponsor, this placement like the others had failed to translate into longer term work. Pouneh was bitter and cynical over the fact that she was free labour for these employers and suggested that it clearly was not in their economic interest/need to hire her:

The whole time I've only gotten internship, internship, internship through NAV. NAV has never helped me to move any further at any of the places via dialogue with the employer. Why have I not been hired? ...I'll show you an example. In [the service business] where I work, I received an award because I'm a very skilled worker [shows award for best employee], but she says, the employer says, "No, sorry, but we have a bad budget" – but every

day they have a million [kroner] budget, extra budget. But they won't hire me – “you're very good, you have a full overview over [our products]”, but still they won't hire me. They just say that it's only a seasonal job..and they'll have another internship for us. So the employer offers me another internship. I never get hired, I've worked like a slave and worked each and every day...They need me, but I only work as an intern, [because] it's free for them (68-116).

Pouneh's description of her status as a “slave” and “free labour” suggested the powerlessness and shame she associated with her situation. Due to her inability to negotiate for continued work, she suggested it would take someone from NAV or the government to place pressure on internship sponsors to change their ways, but that this did not seem to be a priority. Thus, she felt deeply exploited by NAV. This sense of exploitation was compounded by the fact that she had a good deal of leadership experience in the particular service sector where she was working (in her home country of Iran) and stood by while younger, much less experienced workers were hired for longer term positions instead of her. She took this personally and felt that she was not considered worthy of keeping for the longer term.

While Per Morten had greater hopes for continued employment through his current internship in the technical sector, he described a scenario similar to Pouneh's of having felt exploited by broken promises of being hired by a former sponsor. He noted that afterward this internship had ended without continued employment he had been so ashamed by his naïvete that he had pretended to his family that he had, indeed, been kept on. While Pouneh placed blame with NAV for what she felt to be a continued charade, Per Morten acknowledged that NAV, like him, was operating from a fairly powerless position: “It's pure and simple free labour power...There are many down the hall [at NAV] who [small laugh]..who know it! And surely other NAV offices also, who are not too happy about it” (678-681).

- 2/157-160
- N9/46-57, 117-119
- 9/84-85, 287-293, 592-597
- N13/33-34
- 13/584-591
- 21/678-704, 733-742, 1479-1490
- N22/35-36, 40-42
- 22/68-118, 144-152

1.5.6 Sectoral experience and QP mitigation of shame – gender dimensions?

2. EMOTIONAL EFFECTS TIED TO RESOURCES/STATUS

2.1 Powerless to redress sexual exploitation – gender dimensions?

Kari Anne and Pornthip described scenarios in which they had received unwanted sexual overtures and had been unable to properly respond due to a lack of power or

status. Kari Anne described previous job interviews that she had found to merely be a pretense for sexual overtures and her difficulty in knowing what she could do to redress this situation:

There was [a potential employer]...He uh..really just wanted to hire me to have sex. He began by talking badly about my husband. And um..[said] that I had stupid kids and uh..it was that sort [of talk]. And I sat there in total *shock*. And didn't understand what I could say or do...Ewww. He then called...the next day, and admitted that he had maybe made a mistake, that we'd had a bad interview and wondered if we could meet in the city over a drink..So it's like that, and that's not the first time. ...I get really tired of it. Then [frowns] I also don't know how to handle the...next job interview...When you're messed with like that, should you start to shout and yell and [say], "Who do you think you are to talk like that about my husband and such" – What, what do you do then? (295-309).

Kari Anne's reaction to the incident seemed to stem both from dashed hopes, inability to deal with the situation, and a feeling of powerless to be carried forward into future interviews. Pornthip, a single mother of three who lived in a small apartment, described a similar feeling of powerlessness to redress unwanted sexual overtures. Pornthip described how she and her children had been targeted by her current landlord, who had made sexual advances toward her and had refused to allow her children to play in the shared yard as a consequence of her refusal to service him sexually. Pornthip explained how her lack of resources meant that she had not been able to escape this situation:

I have looked a lot, but very expensive...I just want NAV to help me with guarantee for the deposit. But it's difficult. Sometimes I've been to see an apartment, but there are some who don't want to have NAV as the guarantor for the deposit...Some say this. But I, I don't have money to pay the deposit [myself] (320-331).

Thus, Pornthip was prevented from avoiding this exploitative situation because of the stigma that NAV carried and of her inability to make the payments herself in her current economic situation.

- N9/58-64
- 9/119-124, 295-303
- N13/54-62
- 13/304-312, 325-327, 424-431

2.2 Low self-esteem/depression/de-motivation

Sverre, who was in the QP but had not been connected with an internship, noted that he had refused to take part in the courses that the QP had to offer and ascribed his current lack of motivation to the lack of success he had had through NAV in terms of securing employment. Throughout our interview with him, he continually looked down and refused to make eye contact. Throughout, he spoke of "having

given up,” “feeling completely empty,” and “not caring any longer”. When we asked him what he had found most difficult about his situation he noted: “Getting up in the morning and not having anything to do. [I] get up and all I do is to go to the TV and sit there. It’s boring. The most difficult is not having anything to do. Have way too much free time” (281-283). When asked what he thought would help him to feel motivated again, he said: “A job possibility. If I had the chance to find a job somewhere, if I had one possibility. That’s enough for me to get my hope back, and to have the desire again to try” (666-667).

Wenche, who grew up without many economic resources and as an adult had found it difficult to transition into work, described how economic difficulties and a bad conscience about her situation had come together to lead to a cycle of de-motivation:

Um, I’ve had [experience with] this type of downward cycle the whole time, you know. I’ve had this sort of constant slap in the face the whole time. That’s what does me in all the time and I never completely recover. I can imagine having complete peace for a moment just to think about things, to be able to pick myself up again...You get a bad conscience due to everything. I go around with that all the time, constantly, no matter what I do I go around with a bad conscience. So that’s what really does me in. I never have the peace to just sit down on my own and consider my life in a way. Not without having all these thoughts in my head the whole time. I think that’s why I’m not able to move forward (535-551).

Cecilie, who was in the QP and had good hopes for a job in the IT sector following her training courses, also described the psychological effects that could lead to bad self-esteem, emphasizing how important it was to take action to prevent a slide further downward:

It starts to dig in to the mental part of people..In a way, you start asking the sort of questions like “Aren’t I good enough?” You start to have doubts...You just have to, if you start to have these thoughts, you just have to brush it off [brushes off shoulders]. Because it destroys so much for you [otherwise]. Regardless, anyway, it’s definitely enough to be unemployed. You don’t need to pull yourself even further down (925-937).

- 1/407-404
- 2/127, 606-607
- N4/48-50
- 4/278-283, 665-667
- N6/48-49, 64-66
- 7/535-536, 543-549 (cycle of de-motivation)
- 9/108-113
- N16/60-64
- 17/919-930, 1010-1023
- 20/321-328 (strategy to deal with), 357-366, 386-397, 1216-1221

2.3 Disillusionment: “Giving up”

Kari Anne, who had been continuously applying for jobs with no success for the past eight years, described the cycle of hope and disappointment that had led to her feelings of disillusionment:

It's, uh, it's one..one rejection after the other...really. Job rejections. I've applied for many...around four hundred jobs now. And uh..it's everything from nursery schools to..waiting tables..to washing and such, driver, taxi driver, everything, really...And I [sighs deeply]...*don't know why* I get rejections really. I..try to keep my spirits up and such..give a good impression..at the next..interview [short laugh]...really, I'm just not able to do the “Yes! Tomorrow's a new day!” [laughs]. I'm not especially good at doing that, [laughs] and I feel like uh..yeah, there's been enough rejection in those four hundred...jobs I've applied for (20-30).

Sverre, whose words and attitude mirrored Kari Anne's disillusioned demeanor, also described the effects of continually searching and hoping to find work without any success:

There's no point any longer. I've given a lot of thought to finding myself a job, and thought I'd find a job. I've been positive about it and happy about it, but I've only received noes each time. So I'm disappointed every time...I'm used to receiving noes now...It's a habit now for me. I haven't received any yeses, just no or no answer. So I'm used to it, but I need to look for work to get money from NAV...so I have to continue even though I don't have any trust in it (389-400).

Sverre's disillusionment seemed to stem both from a continued search without success and from the necessity to keep looking for work despite feeling that he would not succeed, a “pointless” activity.

- N4/150-151
- 4/86-88, 272-275, 389-390, 412-419
- N7/50-52
- 9/20, 25-30, 42-46
- 18/134-138

2.4 Motivation from new possibilities

Kenneth contrasted his long-term joblessness with his current possibilities and noted that his new internship (which he described as a “job”) had given him renewed hope, explaining: “It's the first time I've, in fact, received full pay that NAV didn't pay out so [small laugh] I've begun to look forward to things” (16-18).

Anne spoke of new possibilities and motivation that could arise from the trust and confidence that one could find in a NAV caseworker who challenged his clients to have higher expectations:

I had a caseworker...who I was really pleased with. He was known for having [clients] who managed things, and it was because he drove them a little: “you have to prove yourself to me and then I’ll do what I can to help you” and it works and I think he had most of those who managed to make it throughout the years [small laugh] (533-539).

Thomas also spoke of new possibilities in the form of a caseworker. Here, he emphasized the importance of the caseworker’s expectations for his client and of finally “being taken seriously” in terms of building self-confidence and moving ahead:

I’ve been approached well [lately], I think. Without, like, so much scepticism and like “can you manage this?” and..So much of that. That you’re not taken seriously. I was taken seriously right away...And in that way it’s been very positive...It’s very important. To be taken seriously and feel that [your caseworkers] take you seriously, what you say and what you think and...how we’d like to change our lives. So if we’re not taken seriously about that, you don’t gain any confidence either, in those you’re cooperating with (701-712).

For Thomas, higher expectations from his caseworker and the new challenges that came along with these expectations had made it easier for him to handle difficulties that he faced more proactively:

Before I would maybe get irritated and show more opposition. I knew that I didn’t like it and tried to turn away and such..[now] I have more determination that I just want to get things in order and move further. So it’s a lot easier to get a handle on things. I see that if I receive an extra bill and such, before I would’ve just tossed it in the trash and it would’ve just snowballed. But I don’t do that now, now I get a handle on it and sit down and think “how can I pay this without going completely bankrupt” and then I find a solution to it rather than *creating* more problems for myself. So...I definitely think differently..and have a different strategy for handling things than I had before (826-835).

- 1/753-754
- 3/16-18
- 4/313-316 (giving up hope vs. giving up trying)
- 6/533-535
- 7/79-83
- 12/85-86, 249-250, 701-712, 765-769, 782-786, 822-835
- 16/489-497
- 18/315-319

2.5 Motivation from role as caregiver/provider

Anne, who had lost her long time job before spiralling into drug addiction and long-term unemployment, had sought to change her life after her daughter was born. She described prioritizing her child and how her changed priorities had also increased her motivation to seek work:

[My daughter] comes first. It's nothing that she feels, she doesn't notice any of this. But it's become so I put myself last...there's really nothing to it. I'm very good at hiding it, you know. I decided that I'd [make an effort] to get a job again, and that I'd do what NAV wanted me to do. And I've made the best out of it, because I want [my daughter] to be able to have what she asks for, in a way. So I have a completely different focus now as a mom than I did before (104-108).

Like Anne, Olga, who'd experienced a period of unemployment since moving to Norway from Russia in 2006, also tied hers and her husband's goals of providing for their children and shielding them from her economic difficulties to their intense desire to find work:

We don't tell our children when there are problems. My husband and I, we *must* find work, and we do everything for our children...We just tell [them that] we just have to wait a little, we have to find work, permanent work...And the children wait and just ask, "When? When?"» We do everything for them [laughs a little]. We don't want our children to know about it (425-437).

Hassan, one of the youths we spoke with whose mother received SA and father was out of work said that it was clear to him and his siblings that his parents set their children first and tried to shield them from any economic challenges, noting that he and his siblings did not have to think about these things because his father did the worrying. Hassan had not noticed a difference between his family's and his friends' family's situations for this reason and, in fact, noted at one point that his parents' unemployment had perhaps had a *good* effect on him because they were able to spend more time with him and his siblings. While Hassan's father did not have a job, Hassan did not assign blame to his father, perhaps because his father protected him from the reality of his difficulties, but also because, as Hassan noted, his father *tried* to find work: "He's really tried to get a hold of work many times, so..you can't blame him that he doesn't have work. If he wants to work all the time, it's not his problem then that he doesn't find it. So I don't think too much about it, then. I'd understand if he sat at home and didn't *want* to work. But he's looked for work and hasn't found it" (430-439). As Hassan made clear, his parents' intentions were just as important as their success – it was their motivation to succeed that was more important than success itself that seems to have been the driving impulse.

- N1/44, 58-59
- 1/157-161
- N2/62-63
- 2/167-169, 267-270, 421-426, 440-447
- N5/49-50 (child's perspective)
- 5/290-298, 430-439, 446-448 (child's perspective)
- 6/104-108
- N10/75-76, 86-88
- N12/33-35
- N14/55-60

- 19/650, 697-710, 810-826
- 20/25-26, 562-570

3. POVERTY, SHAME AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

3.1 Social exclusion due to relative poverty

Kari Anne noted that there was little opportunity for subsidized or less expensive activities. Moreover, the contrast between her situation and those around heightened this feeling of marginalization. As she explained:

I'm very much on the outside [of Eiketangen society]. Because I don't have money to shop with them. I don't have money to go to the city or to restaurants either...those things. I can only meet for coffee at home. I don't have money for anything else really. Um..and [the women in town] have a much higher status higher than others, than most people, really. Um, they have husbands who run their own businesses and uh..various CEO positions and such. So they go home with their children and..do nothing. [Pause] like, really. I go home and I [laugh]. They do their own thing....they have their own children..their own kind they'll mix with, so...(148-166).

Petter also noted difficulties in maintaining friendships. While noting that he was “dependent upon the friendship network he had” he also described these relationships as uneven in nature, noting: “there are some weeks that..I hardly hear from anyone. Or never. And it becomes pretty much one-way communication, so that's boring. ...You start to wonder if you've done or said something wrong and you go around and mull over these questions and wonder what [the other is thinking]. It can be difficult” (117-136). Gabriel suggested that his pride and concern with his lower status also contributed to the one-way nature of his friendships, noting: “Friends with said false intensions, that's how it is...People call especially, people really call me just when they need something. And I *never* call people when I need something” (743-748).

Sverre, living in the small town of Lillefjord, noted that he had considered moving elsewhere in order to begin again with a blank slate. He also described his social network as mostly uni-directional, suggesting that this was due to the fact that he was the lowest on the status hierarchy among his friends: “They're all working [small pause]. Job and a lady, kids, house, car, cabin, boat and the whole package. They have them (269-270). It's become a habit that they work and I don't work. That's how it's developed in our gang. That I'm the one that doesn't work and who always has free time. Always free” (355-356). For Kari Anne, Sverre and Gabriel, their own sense of relative poverty seemed to limit the identities that they were able to set in relation to their peer networks, resulting in a marked feeling of being of “lower” status.

Abnormal appearances and exclusion:

Both Lisa and Kari Anne described having neighbours who did not say “hi” due to their economic status. Anne, a former addict who was trying to fit in with other

mother's in the local community, described how she stuck out, both due to her clothing fitting what she described as her former way of life (a hooded sweatshirt and jeans) and to her unease in making casual conversation with other women her age. As she described it:

I don't look like a 37-year old. I need to get with the styles, but I find that it's difficult because I feel like I don't have help with that. I need to be a little more "motherly" in my clothes...there's really no [chance for] development [in this area], though, so long as I don't have extra money to buy nice things. So I'm looking forward to moving into work, at the same time as I dread having to build up my self-confidence (324-334). ...I don't really see myself as worthy enough, I don't know what I can say, it has to do with self-confidence or self-image maybe. What is it that [people] talk about? Wow, I get scared, too. I have to try to practice a little (361-363).

Anne's social difficulties were also located in her unemployed status, in which she felt that she did not have the resources to buy the things necessary to maintain an appearance that fit better with local expectations.

No healthy point of contact with others:

Omar, who had recently stopped drinking after years of alcoholism, noted that while he had many friends, all were from his drinking milieu and none had the same goals in mind. He described how having a job would help to restore "balance" to his life:

I like working. Yes, I do. It gives life meaning. Especially if you live alone and you also don't have a job? Jesus Chrissst..it's terrible..Well, you're lonely! You have no job. Your network is like [demonstrates with hands] miniscule. It's a miniscule network. If you're not strong, you'll go mad. You'll go and hang yourself (115-126). ...You see, work is important because it also gives you a network. Even if you're lonely at home, fine, but you have *colleagues* at work. It's something. You meet people, you talk with people, not just with the TV (169-175).

Both Sverre and Omar offered suggestions as to how NAV programmes such as the QP could help to relieve some of the difficulties associated with social marginalization and exclusion. Sverre noted that extended work measures would help to establish social networks, as it was difficult to develop relationships with colleagues given the limitations of working at one location for a several month period. Throughout our interview with Omar, he emphasized the motivation and stability that clients might find from being provided with activity and support groups with people in similar circumstances and similar goals.

- 1/374-378
- 2/342-349
- N4/61-64
- 4/355-364
- 6/324-334, 347-349, 360-363, 396-398

- N8/48-49
- 8/305-312, 316
- N9/91-97
- 9/148-157, 458-463, 605-611
- N11/34-38
- 11/117-132, 499-502, 511-513
- N12/153-156
- N18/6-14
- 18/115-126, 169-175, 360-363, 370-400, 534-547, 571-579, 757-767, 792-800. 892-903
- 20/743-748

3.2 Cultural marginalization

Suchin, who had moved from Thailand to Norway to join her Norwegian husband, had had difficulties fitting into Norwegian society after her marriage had ended:

It's difficult here with society, language, friends and much less – very little society for me. I can't go – I mean that I feel little in Norway. I can't get to know Norwegian people, I don't know how to keep..I feel a little stiff? I can only talk with other Thai people.. It's not easy to be with Norwegian friends because they maybe think, "No, you're a foreigner". Yeah..maybe if I had had a job, then we could become friends. But for now I feel like I'm outside Norwegian society (678-695).

Suchin described feeling overwhelmed by Norwegian society and customs as well as the rules and regulations of the NAV system. Throughout our interview, she returned to the fact that she had perhaps obtained fewer services and benefits through NAV than other clients because she had had trouble navigating the system, no one to help her with this process and a feeling of reluctance to push too much in the search for information. Thus, like those who spoke of "falling in the cracks" of the system, Suchin also appeared to be doing so, here for reasons to do with lack of cultural familiarity.

- N2/59-60
- N13/26-30
- 19/486-491
- N22/10-16
- N23/25-31
- N24/25-29

4. STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING OR REJECTING SHAME

4.1 Shaming others (shaming downward)

Anne, who was receiving SA and turning her life around after many years of drug addiction, explained why her experience with NAV may have been more positive than that of her peers:

I strongly emphasize that you have to show something yourself. That builds a little on needing to do things yourself, and there are many who count on receiving and receiving and it doesn't work like that. I'm a very duty-bound person and so to have set requirements is I think just right. That's why I think I've been a type of [small pause] "happy outcome" - [NAV] has been willing to take care of me (47-56).

Anne's explanation suggested that because she had shown more initiative than others she knew in the NAV system she was perhaps more "worthy" of good treatment from her caseworker.

Pornthip, a QP participant who was keen on finding work, applied a similar strategy and compared herself favorably to friends who had faced similar challenges and decided that given these challenges they would not be able to take on regular work. In contrast, she emphasized her desire to find permanent work and used this goal to distinguish herself in a positive way. This contrast and goal allowed her to frame the public support she received as something necessary to allow her to move in a better direction:

I want to move [into work] really quickly, if I can. Because I want to have my own [things]. There are some who say to me..."Just come to school and get the signature from the teacher and collect your money". That's what many people do. I said, "Why don't you look for a job and daycare [so you can work] since you can?" [They respond], "No, I can't work, I can't this and that." [I say], "You can *try!*"..Yeah, there are many who say that, "I can't do it..this and that". There are many..like that. But not *me*. I want to move really quickly [laughs], yeah (617-626).

Per Morten had kept the fact that he did not have a job from his family, offering as a partial explanation that his older son berated him for past economic decisions and debt that put the family's economic situation at risk. He turned his son's shame on its face, however, suggesting that while he had been looking for work and had agonized during this process, his son's behaviour reflected a generation that was lazy and expected things to come to them without an effort:

No, I don't know, in any case, when I was 20 it would have been *unthinkable* to give up a permanent job just because it was *boring!* That's when I think, "What the heck is going on with much of our youth?!" It's not strange that some look down on some of them then. [Addresses remarks to a student interviewer in her 20s] I see you, then, you're 26 now, right, and you've surely gone to [university] and done your duty...why can't they all be like that? [small laugh]...Do you know anyone who anyway is the same age who say, like, "No, I won't this and I won't that, and no, I'll live for free at home?" (1322-1338)

Per Morten's tactic appeared to be a combination of "shaming downward" – those individuals from the next generation who he characterized as demanding

and lazy – at the same time that he appealed to and empathized with one of our interviewers, thus distinguishing her from this shameful category.

- 6/46-52
- 7/518-520
- 9/195-197 (immigrants have no shame)
- N13/39-41
- 13/621-626
- 21/1233-1268, 1290-1303, 1322-1328 (young generation lazy)

4.2 Shaming others (shaming upward)

Shaming peers for lack of empathy:

Lisa, who noted several times feeling put down by the wealthier women in her local community also described her outraged reaction to what she felt was a particularly pointed case of social shaming: “Why do people have to be that way, why can’t they just be nice or...smile and laugh instead of going around using all their energy to be snobs. That’s what I think. And how good are they really, what’s lying behind [their behaviour]? That’s what my mom always says, that “there’s a wind in every door” (1065-1073).

Hilde, a single mother of two sons – her older son, 44, had an autism spectrum disorder that had prevented him from finding work and living independently from his mother. Hilde noted that she had two sisters who lived in the area and whom she saw only periodically – on birthdays and holidays – and who refused to acknowledge that her son might have a condition that prevented him from seeking work. She described with pronounced irritation how her siblings continually asked why her son did not have a job. She explained that this experience both made her feel worse/less worthy, but at the same time left her wishing that they had to experience a similar situation so they could understand what she and her son were dealing with.

I have a small problem with..it has to do with my oldest son. And getting questions like “you should go find work” and “you can’t just stay at home” (1123-1132). [It makes me feel] defeated. I feel like I wish that they could experience my situation. Then, given the problems they’d have, then maybe they’d have more understanding for my situation and what I really deal with and why I can’t do everything they can (1320-1335).

Hilde’s sense of shaming from her family came from their inability to empathize with her difficult situation as her son’s caretaker as well as to recognize the severity of her son’s health situation. She noted elsewhere in our interview that she had faced a similar inability by the state/NAV to recognize her son’s situation for what it was – thus, she had not yet been able to secure a longer term disability pension for her son and he was forced to continue what Hilde described as a “pointless” and “demoralizing” search for stable work.

Shaming the state for primary focus on the “needy”:

Kari Anne and Gabriel both spoke of those who yelled the loudest receiving the most attention. Gabriel, however, also framed NAV's misplaced priorities within the larger context of Norwegian society, for what he perceived as a persistent preference to focus on those who were most in need, as opposed to those who could benefit from smaller amounts of help:

Here in Norway, we're like, we want to be helpful to everyone. And I understand that. When there's a catastrophe we're [among] the first to give millions, and that's very good, that's not what I'm saying. But we should also concentrate on those who have had, those who have had small – who have had some bad luck in their lives, like. Like me, a little unlucky with this and that. Give me a little push, like, and I'll manage again, that's the only thing I need (1001-1008).

- 10/1065-1073
- N14/36-38, 41-42
- 19/634-648
- 21/873-879, 988-993
- 20/1001-1008
- N25/33-39

4.3 Mitigating the shame of dependence

4.3.1 Necessity of public assistance to move ahead

Kenneth noted that he refused to feel shameful about going on SA because he had not had any other choice. He explained that when he'd been in elementary school he had been a victim of intense bullying which had led to social angst and with the result that he dropped out of school. His lack of education had made it difficult to find work. Within this context, he described economic support along with the training that the QP provided as the only way for him to enter the labour market. He explained to us how it was that he felt less shame than he might otherwise: "After a while when you begin to understand your own situation and that there's not much else that could be done it's less shameful. In any case for my own part. I'm not personally ashamed because there's not much else I can do. But I can absolutely see that it could be shameful" (536-542).

Interestingly, Lisa, who had come out of a long-term abusive relationship and was now caring for three children on her own, attributed her trajectory into economic difficulties to her own parents' lack of discipline during her youth. Given this, she explained, she had not transitioned into adulthood as securely as she might otherwise have done. She compared her stronger attitude toward life now that she was in the QP with her timidity earlier, noting that she now "dared" to ask for public support in order to move ahead:

I think I should have understood things a little earlier in life, I've sort of been pretty angry with my mom and dad that they didn't say that it was important to do homework...every day...But it wasn't like that when I grew up. Unfortunately,

[laughs] so that's something I've had to bear my whole life really. Because I think in a way that in society's eyes there's a lot of pressure to succeed. I haven't succeeded, and, of course, things have been pretty tight. But now I think that I have a choice and can do something with that and so I'm working with it and am very glad that I've taken this choice. I wouldn't have dared to make this choice half a year ago...But it's fine – you get really what you're willing to have and so you're allowed to make some mistakes. It's allowed – no one's died from making a few mistakes (656-687).

Wenche framed her trajectory as having started after she “hit a wall” – the result of seeking an education while facing the everyday pressures of being a single mother. She described her strategy of being open about the reasons for her trajectory when meeting people who would otherwise try to shame her for not working:

You feel a little looked down upon. I don't know. “Goodness, you're not working, what do you do then?” I've always been open about having «hit a wall» because I think it's okay to say that to people. Instead of having them start to speculate about and think that “goodness, she's so lazy and doesn't bother to go to work!” So I think it's important to say, really. I've said it to everyone who's asked, I've been open, and said that I hit a wall and unfortunately haven't managed to recover yet (463-460).

- N3/48-53
- 3/155-158, 539-541, 655-672
- 6/65-69, 132-144, 311-315
- 7/359-365, 453-462
- 8/288-294
- 10/648-661, 674-687
- 11/70-73, 524-531, 584-588
- 12/287-289
- 13/195-197, 465-475, 548-555, 572-576 (single parenting)
- 16/424-429
- 17/727-728
- 18/1038-1045 (lack of parental direction)
- 20/495-514, 529-538 (difficult youth)
- N21/9-12 (children with health issues)
- 21/1172-1175
- N22/16-18, 19-22 (left abusive relationship)
- 22/34-43, 170-179
- N23/7-13 (left abusive relationship/immigrant)
- N25/10-24

4.3.2 Focus on public dependence as preferable to private dependence

Kenneth described the shame he associated with being a personal burden to the people he knew. He explained how the “anonymity” of his dependence on public support was less destructive to his sense of identity and self-esteem:

I have a sort of inner pride, really. I dread asking my mother for money. And I've never asked my buddies, but they've offered, but I've only [reluctantly] accepted. I've seen how it can go for others, you quickly lose friends on such premises. You have to be careful not to accept really because you never know when you'll get money...and if [your friends] are really desperate for money themselves and you don't have it. Suddenly arguments begin and then things go crazy...no, [pride has] not [prevented me from seeking help from] the public sector. But among friends, those I know, yes – it's not something I do. Also, the thing is that you don't *know* the public...it's just something you deal with. You don't know them. They aren't people you have daily dealings with. It's less pitiful, really [small pause], or a little more anonymous you might say (497-527).

Thomas also emphasized the ways in which over-reliance on personal support networks could damage the very support that he counted on. In this sense, his use of public support allowed him to minimize this damage. As he explained:

It's important not to burn out friends and families even if you have a problem. I've been very conscious of that. And haven't, haven't gone around doing drugs and loaning money and..stealing and doing that sort of thing. I've been a different sort of abuser, it's something that's concerned me in many ways, that I [breathes deeply] have always worked for my money and, even when I took drugs, I worked in construction and would rather take extra jobs and that sort of thing to generate the money I've needed...That's helped me in many ways, for then I've had to hold a certain standard in my life the whole time...I couldn't just let everything go and let it happen, like. Like many do, when end up on the outside (292-302).

- 3/497, 513-524, 527
- 7/367-368, 372-374, 566-572
- N10/38-43, 318-338, 353-368
- 10/290-312, 1021-1034, 1100-1108
- 12/292-302
- N13/71-77, 97-100
- N14/43-50
- 16/424-429
- 19/800-808

4.3.3 Providing for children as rationale for state dependence

Thomas, who had half-time visitation rights with his daughter, noted that he did not feel bad about receiving aid from the state, especially within the context of using public economic support to create a better life together for him and his daughter.

[My daughter] has never thought of us as, shall I say, *poor*, or not having money for things. Because, uh...she comes before everything. It's like, I, uh, I write off a lot of other things in order to..uh..do things for her, or..give her what she needs and has need for. So she won't lack anything or feel

excluded (166-172) ...I think it's best to..when it concerns my daughter I think it's fine [to receive state support]. Because she shouldn't have to suffer anyway, so it's important. But when it concerns myself and taking care of things on a daily basis, I'd rather take care of myself (218-220).

Thomas emphasized his preference to be self-reliant at the same time as he mitigated any shame he might have felt from accepting state money based on his role as a father and provider for his daughter. Hassan, 16 years old, spoke similarly of his own father's role as provider, noting with some pride the financial sacrifices his father made in order to buy things for his children: "He takes the money he has and gives it to us, really, so we can have it good. Yes, he puts us first, like...he prioritizes us" (233-239).

Wenche, who had an 8 year old son at home, described how her feelings about one NAV provision – an activity card used to pay for activities geared toward children - were more positive due to the card's function. By emphasizing the priority she placed on providing for her son, she was able to mitigate the "demeaning" feeling she might have otherwise experienced:

It's pretty nice, it's positive...They could do more of that kind of thing for those who have difficulties, I think. Because it's often [the inability to pay for activities] that drives children outside..the system in a way. Because they can't go to things. Yeah, I've been to the movies...I don't [usually] have the money for that, it's a little demeaning maybe, so I think it was a good thing. So the priority is placed on the kids, that's how it often is...That's how it is..I think the kids should come first...If you've brought kids into the world they should come first, I think...I feel all is well as long as I manage to pay my bills, buy food and give my son in any case what he really needs (312-354).

Like Thomas and many other respondents who were parents, Wenche framed her use of state support around her decision to prioritize her child.

- 5/231-239 (pride in father)
- 7/322-325, 336-338
- N12/24-28
- 12/166-170, 218-220
- 13/284-288
- 15/489-496, 511-517
- N16/44-47
- 20/574-584

4.3.4 Social network mitigates shame of economic difficulties

Lisa described herself as finally moving in the right direction and beginning to come out of a bad period. While she noted that she still had many self-esteem issues after a long period of difficulties, she also emphasized that her parents and siblings – living nearby – were supportive, both financially and emotionally as a resource network. As one example of how her family's support had prevented the exclusion

that her financial situation might otherwise have meant, she noted how her brother had set up a bank account for her with a small amount of money for her to use to buy her children things they needed and so she could buy gifts for her children. Lisa described the effect her brother's support had meant for her:

If it's very secure and good, I refer to my brother [because] he has an insane amount of work to do, but nevertheless I know he's there when I need him...when there's something I can go to him and he's always there. It's very good to have in the back of my mind...[Also], I have a father who comes down every morning at 8 and sits on the steps and sees that the girls are ready for school..he's there every morning just to see that everything's okay and asks if we need anything from town and yeah..makes sure that things are fine. So I really have a family that provides help (484-497).

One discussion between Inthira, 13 years old, and her mother, Pornthip, suggested how their close connection helped to minimize some of the anxiety that Inthira might feel at not having the economic resources to join friends at every planned social event:

Inthira: Uh, one thing I'd like to do, is to...use my weekly allowance on [meeting friends out]. But if I don't have money then..I can't do anything about it. I just relax...and wait until next time...But I usually don't have much desire to go to things that..other's want to go to. Because..they're a little..strange...Because [my friends and I] like different things,...but we're still good friends and such. [For example], sometimes we go...to the movies, and we don't want to see the same move and then it just becomes an argument and...Hmm. I'd rather see movies at home with someone. Much easier.

Pornthip: It's better to see [movies] together with mom and eat popcorn.

Inthira: Yes. That's much cozier [laughs] (300-326).

Throughout our interview, Inthira and Pornthip consistently referred to the quality time they enjoyed sharing together. This particular network helped both mother and daughter to feel a sense of secure companionship.

Kenneth, who did not have regular work experience, described his friends as having been his most important resource in dealing with his difficult economic situation over the years. He explained how it was that he had been able to maintain a positive attitude:

It's definitely been my social network...If it hadn't been for that, I would have in any case been depressive and not gotten out of the ditch...I can say that in any case half of my social network are also social assistance clients. So we find things [to do] that don't need to be so expensive. That's very good. And those who do have work, they understand the situation. So if we go out to a restaurant, we don't go to the most expensive (330-343).

Kenneth's network – consisting mostly of other individuals with similar economic challenges - was a source of support and consistency and, because of the similarity of the situations, also did not appear to heighten the feelings of relative poverty that several other respondents experienced.

- 1/126, 255-259
- 3/330-333
- 5/457-459
- N10/29-30, 93-97
- 10/30-36, 410-418, 445-466, 441-498
- N12/9-14, 16-23
- 12/205-211, 272-281
- 15/185-189, 238-239, 300-303
- 18/1516-1518, 1544-1547

4.3.5 Discourse of pride

Pride in frugality/discipline/creativity:

Cecilie noted that the Filipino/Asian influence of her upbringing had been useful in her current situation – she described a strict Asian parenting philosophy, noting that within this cultural tradition the emphasis was in not giving in to children's demands, but rather, encouraging children to live frugally. She described having taught her young son not to flaunt the possessions he had when they were economically better positioned when living in the Philippines and that this strategy had also been useful upon their return to Norway and to tougher economic circumstances. Her 6-year old son had learned not to demand material things from her and to ask for things in the *correct* way – i.e. rather than asking for a bicycle, asking instead that when “mommy had extra money perhaps then they could think about buying a bicycle”. She explained how this strategy had helped to protect her from the constant feeling of strain of providing material things: “I've seen worse, children can just lie on the ground and stomp [their feet] and roll around and – it's difficult, if I had, as a mother, if I had had that situation and not managed to control my child in that way..and at the same time your economy is a little “ehhh” ...you get mentally tired” (344-364).

Thus, Cecilie was able to use this strategy to build a sense of pride in raising an economically responsible child at the same time as she was able to mitigate the economic pressure of constantly buying things for her child.

Like Cecilie, Gabriel was proud of his frugality and creativity in dealing with his situation, noting that this way of living had encouraged both he and his daughter to value creativity as much as material things:

I use my head, I don't use money, you know...I'm not like everyone else, I'm not satisfied by money. Me and [my daughter], when we go to birthday parties, we make things. We make and give. Some give 50 kroner, for example, at birthdays and such. But we, I have, I try to show her something completely else, you know, so that's how we are, when there's a birthday

we'd rather make something, if not a card, then we make something productive...I think that's better, and they value it. No, in the last years we've made this sort of origami-stuff and such, lately...Yeah, we make, we've made lots of small things and – It's important to show your children early. I think. That it's not just about money (800-818).

Pride in autonomous action:

Erik, who had grown up under challenging circumstances and who came from a family rife with drug addiction issues, described the hard work he had done to move out of old habits and networks:

I'm pretty proud of myself for having escaped the environment I came from and gotten back on my feet and to begin to take life more seriously, because I know how easy it is to suddenly not be alive any longer. I have a good deal of buddies and friends who aren't living any more [small pause] because of drugs. So I'm pretty proud of myself. I'm beginning to feel much more self-assured and I know that I'll get things [in life] if I just pursue them, like. So that's really how I see myself (330/342).

Like Erik, Thomas took pride in his decision to give up drugs and has worked hard to choose a "better path": "Sometimes I really wanted to give up, but I couldn't do that. In the years before I would have gone and taken drugs, but now, I think completely differently. There's no other alternative. And for that I'm, I'm very glad for that, that I know that deep inside I don't want to follow that path. That that [way] is completely excluded" (126-129).

Bea Johanne, who had also been a long-time drug addict, also took pride in her ability to move forward with her life, but in contrast to Erik and Thomas, she emphasized her pride in her identity as an autonomous decision maker. In this sense, Bea Johanne suggested that she had merely had to make the decision to quit drugs. As she explained: "Yeah, it was okay when I used drugs and stuff. But [small pause] I've always been determined that when I have children that life is over...For me it's been very, very important. It's was never a problem for me to get out of that environment after I became pregnant" (361-366). Thus, Bea Johanne emphasized her autonomy in order to underscore the priority she placed on her daughter and on her role as a parent. For all three respondents, however, the pride in having made and kept to a decision for a better life was what seemingly allowed them to maintain a positive attitude about their circumstances.

- 1/364-366
- 8/234-236, 330-333
- 12/125-129
- 13/169-178
- N15/55-60
- 15/97-99
- 16/552-557
- N17/28-32, 36-38

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- 17/317-332, 353-367, 434-440, 602-611
- 18/509-513
- 20/39-42, 800-818, 827-833, 856-859, 1498-1505, 1643-1652
- N24/30-35

APPENDIX B: METHODS

Respondents (total 28 interviews)

Ethnic Norwegian = 12

Raised in Norway (moved to Norway before 17) = 6

Adult immigrant (moved to Norway after 17) = 10

Male = 11

Female = 17

Youth (under 17) = 3

Participant Selection – Poverty defined according to income is low in Norway, and it can therefore be more useful to apply a relative definition in order to select participants experiencing poverty. Those individuals and families receiving means-tested social assistance benefits can be a useful means of selecting individuals experiencing poverty in Norway (Hagen and Lødemel 2003). The “poor” in this report were therefore defined as those individuals 1) currently receiving social assistance benefits, or 2) were or had participated in the social assistance recipient targeted Qualification Programme, who were or who had been in receipt of the Qualification Benefit or 3) were youth living in families receiving either benefit. Many of these respondents also lived in circumstances that resulted in joblessness and social marginalization. We used criterion sampling to select interview participants and family members (over the age of 10 and residing at home).

Our adult (over 17) participant sample was selected from among a population of social assistance recipients and Qualification Programme participants in three study sites (a small, coastal Norwegian town; a wealthy city suburb; and an industrial city suburb), two of which were located in or near to Oslo.⁵ Adult interview respondents were recruited through social worker interlocutors at the local labour and welfare (NAV) office in the chosen sites. Respondents were recruited through a process in which they were provided with a form containing a written introduction to the study, study logistics, and a summary of relevant ethical protections and rights. Individuals agreed to participate by signing an attached informed consent form and we were then sent relevant contact information. Respondents who had children at home between the ages of 10 and 17 were asked for their permission for the study team to interview these youth.⁶ Along with signed permission from parents, we provided young respondents with a modified informed consent form to sign showing their willingness to be interviewed.

⁵ Our three sites represented “extremes” as far as economic health, level of social assistance recipient and demographic profile. In addition to this rationale, sites were chosen for their proximity to Oslo (given the time constraints of the project) as well as because there were already established networks within these sites that enabled more ready access to the study population. This allows for the inclusion of a larger city (Oslo or surrounding towns) in addition to focus on a smaller town. This strategy also enabled an investigation of differential experiences of poverty in industrial versus farming or fishing towns.

⁶ For ethical reasons and purposes of methodological rigor, detailed notes were maintained concerning the recruitment process and will be offered in expanded reports of the research as the issues of access and recruitment, especially in studies on “vulnerable” populations, may affect the experiences relayed and the outcomes generated (Rapley 2004).

Interview Methods – In-depth interviews were conducted in order to produce “thick descriptions” of participants’ general experiences with poverty and descriptions of related shame, shaming, social exclusion, and stigmatization (Geertz 1973). Attention was paid to the ways in which participants managed, reacted to, and actively redressed their situations and these experiences. Interviews also focused on participants’ descriptions of their experiences with- and participation in- Norway’s anti-poverty programs and policies. A semi-structured interview guide was used to encourage interviewees to produce elaborated and detailed descriptions of their lived experiences (Rapley 2004). The guide provided pertinent topics for discussion, rather than a highly structured protocol for how the interview was to unfold. This particular method was especially suitable for our methodological framework, as we were interested in both the experiences our respondents relayed as well as *how* they talked about these experiences. The content of the interview guide was developed according to the themes noted above and informed by the relevant academic and non-academic literature. Each interview lasted between one to two hours long (interviews with children lasted approximately 45 minutes) and took place in private conference room at the local NAV office.⁷

Ethical Concerns in Selection and Interview Process - The very process of asking individuals to take part in an interview concerning their experiences with poverty, as well as the questions and interactions generated during the interview, had the potential of being experienced by interview participants as a stigmatizing event. For example, stigmatization might have been generated through the very process of respondent recruitment. Additionally, those individuals (street level bureaucrats/front line workers) who identified potential interview participants may have already developed a particular relationship with these individuals imbued by certain power dynamics – it would be naïve to believe that this would not then affect the type of interview interaction we had with our “poor” participants.

Furthermore, it was possible that participants felt stigmatized and/or shamed during the interview process: our interview participants may have resisted being categorized as “poor” or “stigmatized.” While it was never possible to do away with the asymmetrical power relations that took place, we took care to design the interview process and interview guide in such a way that respondents felt that they were subjects relaying their experiences as opposed to categorized objects to whom we had affixed the label “poor”.

Interview (Topic) Guides – Our primary research aim in this work package was to explore what it means to be poor; more specifically, we investigated how interview participants talked about their identities, relationships and actions as they discussed their situations in the following areas: difficulties/challenges faced; the views and perceptions of others about their situation; the types of interventions/support that helped their situation; the sorts of interventions/measures that made things worse for

⁷ While the NAV office as location for the interviews may have shaped the quality and tenor of the interviews – i.e. respondents may have been more hesitant to take a critical stance on their experiences with the welfare system – most respondents noted their preference to be interviewed within this setting over interviews conducted within their private homes. Many respondents spoke of the embarrassment and shame when inviting people in to their housing situations. There is no reason to think that these feelings did not extend to the interview setting and so the NAV office may have been the “safest” and most convenient for this group of respondents.

them; and their experiences when accessing (or reasons for not accessing) various types of available assistance.

Additional data – At the end of each interview, respondents were asked a short series of demographic/economic profile questions on household composition (number of people; age; ethnicity); work experience; and other relative markers of social inclusion such as length of time residing in the local area, existence of broader family network in town, etc. Additionally, observational field notes were kept throughout and after the interview session and were used to contextualise the analysis of data.

Analysis of Data – Each interview was transcribed and coded to draw key words and phrases from the data. We conducted basic content- and discourse- analyses (DA) of transcripts from interviews using discourse analysis as our primary methodology. Our analysis will emphasize the use of broader discursive categories, as suggested by Gee (1999). In so doing, we focused on how respondents used language to describe “specific social activities and social identities”, as well as “memberships” in various social groups, cultures, and institutions” (Gee 1999, 1).

Gee suggests several “building tasks” to analyse how language is used by individuals as they place social phenomena within certain cultural worlds, situate these phenomena with related identities, and draw political connections between these phenomena and others. We focused on those building tasks that attended to how social and personal identities were linked to varying systems of power. This strategy fit with our aim of exploring how poverty and the poor in Norway attach themselves and are attached to various social hierarchies, normative systems, and shaming/ stigmatizing activities. Gee’s (1999) suggested analysis of social activities translated here to an analysis of how our interview participants described their current and past activities and situations. Those living in poverty may also characterize themselves and be characterized by particular identities and relationships. As we analysed the transcript data from interviews, we drew from Gee’s “socio-culturally situated identity and relationship building” task to discuss the identities, roles, and relationships that participants assumed as they carried out, negotiated and characterized these activities and situations. This task helped us to illuminate the values, beliefs, and ways of knowing that contextualized respondents’ behaviours and interactions. Finally, we focused on how interview participants assigned value to certain social goods and perspectives and applied Gee’s “political building” task to analyse and discuss how social networks, status, and power shaped their discursive treatments of poverty and shame. Discursive categories and themes were coded and analysed by hand.

Appendix C: Participant profiles

(Note: organized by location and alphabetically, by name. Each name followed by participant's coded interview number –**STUDY SITE 1: LILLEFJORD (SMALL TOWN, COASTAL)**)

Anne (6)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1974. Single, with one daughter (4) at home. Long-term SA recipient. Previous long-term, full time work history in upper level service sector. Noted that trauma after effects from childhood abuse led to depression and former drug addiction, with resulting move out of workforce.

Bea Johanne (1)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1986. Live-in partner, with one daughter (2) at home. Long-term SA recipient. Previous short-term work history in service sector. Noted status as adopted child with substantial abuse before adoption led to former substance abuse issues.

Erik (8)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1984. Live-in partner met in LAR (methodone) program, no children. Long-term SA recipient. Previous short-term work history in service sector. Has ADHD and comes from family with multi-generational drug addiction issues, former long-term addict. Left school early.

Hassan (5)

Algerian parents, moved to Norway as a baby. Born in 1995. Mother on SA, father unemployed.

Kenneth (3)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1981. Single, no children. In QP internship in education sector. Previous short-term work history in service sector. Noted bullying in school led to early drop out and difficulty transitioning into labour market.

Olga (2)

Born in Russia in 1970, moved to Norway in 2006. Married with two children at home, two adult children outside home. In QP internship in education sector. Former long-term work experience in education sector in Russia, but noted difficulties with spoken Norwegian and having credentials recognized in Norway.

Sverre (4)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1983. Single, no children. Almost finished with QP. Short-term work experience in construction sector. Noted mother also receives NAV benefits and that back pain limits his job search.

Wenche (7)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1963. Boyfriend, one son (8) at home, one adult son outside home. In QP. Work history unclear. Notes she “hit a wall” while pursuing education and being single mother that prevented completion of education and

transition into work. Grew up in difficult economic circumstances.

STUDY SITE 2: EIKETANGEN (WEST OSLO SUBURB)

Dania (28)

Born in Kazakhstan in 1996, moved to Norway as a child. Mother (“Sara”) in QP.

Farrah (26)

Born in Iraq in 1979, moved to Norway as an adult. Married, with two children. Soon in QP internship, husband has full time job, so noted no specific economic difficulties.

Inthira (15)

Born in Thailand in 1998, moved to Norway as a young girl. Mother (“Pornthip”) in QP.

Kari Anne (9)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1974. Married, with two children (7,9) at home. Limited, short-term work experience in service sector. In multiple QP service internships, noted almost finished with QP with no job prospects.

Lisa (10)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1969. Single, with three children (3, 9, 11) at home. Limited work experience in private childcare sector. One year into QP. Noted had escaped long-term abusive relationship. Didn’t finish high school.

Petter (11)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1978. Live-in partner, no children. Limited short-term work experience in mechanic/industrial sector. 1.5 years into QP – has internship in mechanical sector. Has dyslexia. Noted grew up in youth institution, limited parental support, some bullying.

Pornthip (13)

Born in Thailand in 1976, moved to Norway as adult. Single, with two daughters (13, 15) and one son (8) at home. Limited short-term work experience health care sector. In QP - receiving health care education and in health care internship. Notes health issues makes schooling/search for work difficult.

Samira (14)

Born in Pakistan in 1970, moved to Norway when young, moved back to Pakistan as adult for 10 years and returned to Norway in 2009. Married, with four children (?, 15, 17, 19) at home. In QP. Limited work experience in service sector. Has high school degree, noted family troubles and diffuse health issues.

Sara (27)

Born in Kazakhstan in 1975, moved to Norway as an adult. Married, with three children at home. In QP – has received a temporary position in welfare sector.

Sanjay (16)

Born in Iraq in 1979, moved to Norway on asylum in 2005. Married, with two (soon three) children at home. On leave (health reasons) from QP. Former long-term work experience in service sector. Has high school education – noted left long-term position due to issues with business contract.

Thomas (12)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1965. Single, shared custody of one daughter (9). Former long-term work experience in construction sector. In QP internship – construction/public sector. Former long-term drug addict, noted possibility for job after internship in construction/public sector.

STUDY SITE 3: SMELTBY (INDUSTRIAL EAST OSLO)

Cecilie (17)

Born in Philippines in 1982, came to Norway as child. Single, one son (6) at home. Former work experience in service sector abroad, but little in Norway. In QP – taking IT education. Noted took some higher education in Norway before move abroad. Recently returned to Norway.

Fiido (24)

Born in Somalia in 1979, moved to Norway in 2004. Married, with six children (1 mth, 4,6,7,11,13) at home. On family leave from QP. No work experience. Husband not employed, noted cultural barrier to finding work in Norway.

Hilde (25)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1957. Single, with one son (44) at home and one son (20) living with ex-husband. In QP. After some years work experience in administrative sector, left labour market to raise children - needed to find work after divorced in 2000. Both sons have motor-physical/social disorders that prevent them from entering labour market.

Gabriel (20)

Filipino ethnicity, moved to Norway as a boy. Born in 1978. Single, with one daughter (10), shares custody with ex-partner. Had just begun the QP at the time of our interview. Former long-term work experience in the service/construction industry. Noted difficult youth of no parental oversight and moving to new family every two weeks. Left job after painful relationship breakup and subsequent depression.

Luka (19)

Born in Slovenia in 1958, sought asylum in Norway in 1991. Single, with one son (20) at home. Just finished QP. Former long-term work experience in service/cleaning industry – left work for health reasons. Caseworker noted survivor of Kosovan War (has received mental health treatment). High school education. Noted will seek long-term disability pension.

Omar (18)

Born in Gambia in 1954, moved to Norway in 1994. Single, with four children between the ages of 20 and 30 (ex-wife is ethnic Norwegian) who do not live at

home and with whom he's in limited or no contact. Long-term SA recipient. Recovering alcoholic (sober 4 months). Former long-term work experience in printing industry. Noted left work after painful divorce and due to increasing use of alcohol.

Per Morten (21)

Ethnic Norwegian, born in 1963. Live-in partner, with two sons at home (13, 20) and one adult daughter outside home with whom he's not in contact. In QP for one year, in internship within IT sector. Former long-term managerial experience in service sector. Noted left work due to health issues and that health concerns limits job search.

Pouneh (22)

Born in Iran in 1963, sought asylum in Norway in 1998. Single, with one son (12) in foster care. Almost finished with QP, on QP internship in service sector. Former long-term work experience (ran own business) in service sector in Iran. Noted left abusive marriage and husband forcibly returned to Iran. High school education.

Suchin (23)

Born in Thailand in 1982, moved to Norway several years ago. Single, no children. No work experience. Finished QP, now on SA. Noted moved from difficult economic circumstances in Thailand when married a Norwegian - escaped abusive marriage. Had internships in QP, no work found.