



It's Not Like I'm Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World

Sarah Halpern-Meehin, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, Jennifer Sykes

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The world of welfare has changed radically. As the poor trade welfare checks for low-wage jobs, their low earnings qualify them for a hefty check come tax time—a combination of the earned income tax credit and other refunds. For many working parents this one check is like hitting the lottery, offering several months' wages as well as the hope of investing in a better future. Drawing on interviews with 115 families, the authors look at how parents plan to use this annual cash windfall to build up savings, go back to school, and send their kids to college. However, these dreams of upward mobility are often dashed by the difficulty of trying to get by on meager wages. In accessible and engaging prose, *It's Not Like I'm Poor* examines the costs and benefits of the new work-based safety net, suggesting ways to augment its strengths so that more of the working poor can realize the promise of a middle-class life.

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