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Sommario/riassunto	Why do some welfare states provide income support for mothers to care for their school-aged children at home while others expect them to find employment when their youngest child is six months old? This study, a fundamental contribution to social policy and social welfare theory, compares recent efforts to restructure social programs for low-income mothers in four countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. While these countries are sometimes classified as

liberal welfare states, this book demonstrates that they vary considerably in terms of benefit development, expectations concerning maternal employment, and restructuring processes. The authors examine changes to income security programs, discuss the social, political and economic conditions affecting these programs, and analyse the discourse promoting reform. Using a feminist and political economy perspective, they conclude that recent, often expensive, efforts to make beneficiaries more employable have not always enabled them to escape welfare or poverty. While full-time employment opportunities are becoming scarcer, governments are requiring beneficiaries to enter the workforce, often with little social support or improvement in income. Regardless of the impact of employability initiatives on poverty levels, the study concludes that these policies are important ideological instruments in tempering demands on contemporary welfare systems. The result is a more residual welfare state, in which social provision is increasingly presented as a meagre last resort.

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