Welfare Reform and Post-Secondary Education in Maine: A Supplemental Bibliography

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In the September 2005 issue of the Journal, Charles Price authored an article entitled “Reforming Welfare Reform Postsecondary Education Policy: Two State Case Studies in Political Culture, Organizing, and Advocacy” (Volume XXXII, Number 3: 81-106). It is a timely article; the issue of access to postsecondary education for women on welfare is a crucial one. Not only did the 1996 welfare “reform” law heighten the already harsh and punitive attitudes toward poor women raising children on their own, newly incorporated restrictive elements severely hampered, and in some cases eliminated, these women’s ability to move off welfare and into stable, well-paying jobs and careers. And while higher education is clearly a key element in attaining those stable, well-paying jobs and careers, it is precisely this pathway, access to and participation in postsecondary education, which was drastically restricted by the 1996 law and subsequent modifications.

Dr. Price’s article focuses on the experiences of two states – Maine and Kentucky – as they come to terms with “shaping welfare policy,” specifically as it relates to access to postsecondary education. While Dr. Price’s article contributes to the literature developing in this field, and for this I am grateful, I would like to supplement his references with primary source citations which will prove useful to other scholars pursuing this area of study. First, is Stephanie Seguino’s Living on the Edge: Women
Working and Providing for Families in the Maine Economy, 1979-1993 (Orono, Maine: Margaret Chase Smith Center, University of Maine). Hers was the first report to describe who in Maine was receiving welfare and why; it was a seminal work that armed advocates with data and information necessary to approach and persuade legislators to attend to postsecondary education opportunities.


Additional references which Dr. Price would not have had timely access to include SHUT OUT: Low-Income Women and Higher Education in Post Welfare America, V. Polakow, S.

Higher education is a promising route out of poverty for some women on welfare: it can make a substantial difference in their lives and the lives of their children as well as address deep-rooted issues of poverty. Increasing the number of scholars working in this area, and working together on this issue will give us greater ability to influence policy and policymakers as they begin to debate welfare "reform" once again.