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COUNSELING AND
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SINGLE MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THEIR LIVES
AS THEY TRANSITION FROM WELFARE TO WORK (159 pp.)

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In 1996, President Clinton signed into law new welfare policies in which families are permitted to obtain and maintain welfare benefits only as long as they meet specific criteria as established by both state and federal governments. These new guidelines promote rapid entry into the workforce by including a 60-month lifetime limit for receiving benefits as well as mandating that individuals who receive federal benefits be involved in state defined work related activities. Currently, there is minimal research based on the welfare recipients' views and their assessment of their personal needs and barriers in regard to the welfare state. Furthermore, single mothers present with additional and unique concerns and issues related to transitioning from welfare to employment.

Using Q-methodology, this study examined the unique, subjective perspectives of single mothers currently receiving welfare benefits. Through individual interviews and an interview group of single mother welfare recipients, a 44-item Q-sort was compiled. Forty-one single mother welfare recipients then completed individual card sorts as guided by the question: What do you perceive as important in your life in assisting you as you transition from welfare to employment?

Upon completing the data analysis, three unique factor groups emerged: The Importance of Extended Funding and Tangible Resources, Urgency and Immediacy Stimulated by the Time-Limit and the Paradox, and the Helpfulness of Long-Term Planning and Inner-Guidance. Discussion and interpretation of the three factors was provided. Individual follow-up interviews were also conducted to gain additional insight or clarification regarding the uniqueness of each of the factor groups.

The implications of these findings were discussed with regard to interventions and policy change. Recommendations for additional research included securing a broader base of diversity, as well as examining the perceptions of those who have recently moved off the welfare roles into employment.