

## More “Us” Than “Them”: Welfare Reform

### According to Congressional Hearings and the Welfare Mothers Voice

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#### 1. Introduction

In 2005, Congress passed and President Bush signed the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) that reauthorized the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which is the federal assistance program for the families with dependent children. TANF replaced the previous program, called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which changed welfare from an entitlement to a temporary assistance, and introduced stiffened work and child support requirements, preventing out-of-wedlock births, a block grant, a five-year time limit of aid, states' flexibility, and denied coverage to many immigrants. The reauthorization was enacted, based on a great deal of assessments of welfare reform of 1996<sup>1</sup> and nine years thereafter.

Feminist analysts point out several issues that have received less attention in other welfare reform literatures.<sup>2</sup> According to Karen Christopher, there are five fundamentals of feminist research of welfare reform: 1) the research questions are drawn from women's lived experiences; 2) the research addresses the influence of social, economic, and political institutions on women's everyday lives; 3) the research uses feminism as a theory of action; 4) the research acknowledges and accounts for women's unpaid work; and 5) the research highlights power differences between women and men (153-154). As Sandra Harding points out, introducing the “subjective” element into the analysis is critically important for feminist analyses, because it increases objectivity and decreases the “objectivism” (9). Therefore, some feminists analyze welfare reform by examining the recipients' experiences and/or articulating single mothers' voices by interviewing them (e.g. Edin and Lein; Naples; Seccombe; Seccombe, Walters, and James). Moreover, there are many literatures that focus on the political discourses of welfare reform from feminist perspectives (e.g. Mink; Hancock).

However, not enough attention has been paid to what the gaps between congressional discourses and welfare clients' discourses indicate about the goals of welfare reform, and how they affect the policy making process, in either feminist analyses of welfare reform or other welfare reform literatures.<sup>3</sup>

If the “facts” in the welfare system are challenged by single mothers, we need to reexamine what are regarded as “facts” and discursive framework itself for more democratic justice, since single mothers are excluded for articulations of “rationality.” DRA and PRWORA rely on what is regarded as “rational” choice in the framework of social welfare policy. However, this “rationality” is no more than what is constructed and confirmed by political discourses in the process of policy making. Nevertheless, this value of what is “rational” or not, controls us to figure out the shape of the “real” world, and endorses knowledge and “facts.” Nancy D. Campbell clarifies it as a mechanism of “governing mentalities,” and claims, this “(d)iscursive framework shapes which facts are considered credible, and hence what policy alternatives are considered realistic” (36). Even if single mothers are not excluded formally, single mothers' voices and situations have been understood in the framework of those who are regarded as

“experts” such as legislators and public officials in the welfare system. When those “experts” claim that they know welfare best, they fail to see single mothers as the “experts” in the welfare system. Who the “experts” are has already reflected on the shape of the “real” world. It links to feminists’ claiming the necessity to look at the women’s lived experiences. Unless we focus on the gaps between the dominant “real” world and the experienced real lives, we cannot find clues to resisting the dominant ideology.

The purpose of this paper is to reconsider the “rationality” of welfare reform by examining the gaps between congressional discourses and welfare clients’ discourses from 1995 to 1996. My data includes the congressional hearings and the Welfare Mothers Voice (WMV), the quarterly newspaper of the Welfare Warriors.<sup>4</sup> I searched for congressional hearings including the phrase “welfare reform” between 1995 and 1996. Then, I narrowed them down to nine hearings which include 54 testimonies, by focusing attention on the hearings regarding parenting and children.<sup>5</sup> In addition, I analyzed ten quarterly issues of the WMV from Spring 1995 to Summer 1997. My data analysis method consisted of coding those two sets of data, based on a grounded theory approach, and then developing concepts and theories by sorting codes of memos into categories.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper, I compare the congressional hearings and the WMV on three key points: characterization of single mothers; the problems they identify that should be dealt with in welfare reform; and their policy proposals for welfare reform. I then articulate the gaps between understandings illustrated by the congressional hearings and the WMV. Next, from those gaps, I analyze three questions. Why is single mothers’ dependency only seen as the problem of “dependency”? Why cannot single mothers take care of their own children? Why and how do single mothers resist their character assassination? By answering these questions, I make it clear that: 1) the “rationality” of welfare reform brought by the discussions in the congressional hearings is only for the witnesses and the privileged because of its partial interpretation of single mothers’ voices; 2) this partial interpretation justifies the witnesses’ context of the myths of dependency; and 3) poverty is attributed to single mothers themselves because of those myths.

Finally, I conclude that welfare reform is an injustice to single mothers. In the policy making process, single mothers explicitly and implicitly lack the opportunities to have their voices interpreted in the context of their lived experiences. Such policy making process enables the witnesses in the congressional hearings to set the goals of welfare reform as enforcing work (at wage labor), not ending poverty. Instead, I suggest my own policy proposal for another welfare reform which includes democratic agenda setting in the policy making process, so that single mothers’ voices can be interpreted in their contexts.

## **2. Characterization of Single Mothers: The Myth of “Dependency”**

The witnesses in the congressional hearings and the Welfare Warriors are at loggerheads with the characterization of single mothers, whether they are dependent or not. While the witnesses regard single mothers as dependent mothers, the Welfare Warriors regard single mothers as independent mothers. Some single mothers in the WMV claim that we are all interdependent (Barrett 6; Gowens “Editor’s Tidbits” a, 2; see Kittay 180). From the perspective of interdependency, we can see the structural settings for dividing people into “dependents” or not.<sup>7</sup> Why is single mothers’ dependency only seen as the problem of “dependency”? Above all, it strongly connects to racism. AFDC was established in such a way that single mothers stay away from work in order to take care of their children

at home. However, they are no longer allowed not to work, because the main populations on welfare came to be seen as not white women left destitute by a husband's death, but instead single, divorced and never-married poor black women (Meyer, Herd, and Michel 165). In fact, the percentage of blacks among AFDC recipients in 1995 was 36 percent (Gilens 105). However, the racialized images of welfare recipients help to create the stereotype of "welfare queens," and even "have played a key role in shaping the ways states set the terms of public relief after 1996" (Soss, Schram, Vartanian, and O'Brien 230).<sup>8</sup> In addition to racism, there is the logically linked distortion between dependency and marital status with motherhood.<sup>9</sup>

## 2-1. The Ideal of the Family Wage and the Normative Model of Motherhood

The ideal of the family wage has regulated the standard of family, a "real" family, and reinforced women's "dependency" on men. In the ideal of the family wage, the man would be paid a family wage, sufficient to support children and a woman as a full-time wife-and-mother, who performed domestic labor without pay (Fraser 41). Based on the ideal of the family wage, "independence" became to be understood as manly independence, economic independence, and wage labor, and it was constructed by determining "dependency" as those excluded from wage labor, primarily women (Fraser and Gordon 127-128). This functions as "ideological code" (Smith 159)<sup>10</sup>, and forces us to take for granted that "women" are "dependent" on "men" and that paid-labor means "independence." It leads to the normative model of motherhood, in which women should be "dependent" on their husbands.

The ideal of the family wage and the normative model of motherhood provide the contexts in which I analyze the hearing witnesses' understanding of the welfare system. For example, in the congressional hearings, welfare dependency is linked to father absence (Horn), and single mothers are forced to establish paternity.<sup>11</sup> The witnesses' context is to define the families headed by single mothers as "deviant" fatherless families and it has the implication attributing poverty to "fatherless" families. Deborah Kelly, one single mother, claims that paternity establishment is a hidden law which affects all unmarried mothers and all women ("State Attacks" 18). In its assumption, women are seen as those who cannot and should not create an independent household.

The ideal of the family wage and the normative model of motherhood link not only single mothers' but all mothers' care-giving work to "dependency." This discourse rests on denying care-giving as work, and it derives from sexism. Women are expected to do mother work. However, not all women are mothers, and "mothering as nurturing and caring work is not inevitably the exclusive domain of women" (Arendell 1192). Nevertheless, mothering and care-giving work are intertwined with femininity. According to Pat Gowens, the founder, director, and editor of the Welfare Warriors, care-givers are not recognized as workers, because their work is not paid, so that it is also not valued ("Work Ethic Debate" 9; "Editor's Tidbits" b, 2). Sexism and the unpaid characteristic of care-giving work lead to undervalued care-giving work, motherhood, and womanhood.

Contrastively, the central opinion of the Welfare Warriors is that care-giving/mother work is work. Single mothers already work as care-givers inside the home before they are forced to work outside the home by work requirements. Lucky Jean, a member of the Welfare Warriors, removes gender specific sense from motherhood and redefines motherhood as the job of care-giving (14). She argues that mother work is defined as the job which does not need to be done, because it is done by females (14). Once we regard care-giving as work, we find that the word of "dependents" used in the congressional hearings means "those who work as care-givers" instead of "those who do not work." Therefore, in the

context of single mothers, single mothers can be understood as not “dependents,” but independent workers.

## 2-2. Non-Allowed “Dependency” by Marital Status

Marital status divides women who are allowed to be “dependent” or not. Only in a standard nuclear family, are women allowed to be “dependent,” because they fit the normative model of motherhood. Other mothers are marginalized and their “dependency” is not allowed.<sup>12</sup> Motherhood has long been seen as women’s “natural” function and even duty, but the right to mother is not firmly established in the law (Michel 37). Mothering is considered as a natural obligation for married and widowed mothers, since they are/were “dependent” on their husbands, but mothering is a luxury for single mothers, since they are regarded as mothers who do not want to be “dependent” on men. Those women’s dependency on anything but men is not allowed, and then, only this form of dependency (on the state) came to represent “dependency.” Here, the ideological code of the family wage and the normative model of motherhood justify the double standard that women are supposed to be “dependent” on men, but at the same time, single mothers’ “dependency” is not allowed. In other words, the only problematic dependency became to single mothers’ “dependency.”<sup>13</sup> This discourse, the myth of “dependency,” enables the witnesses in the congressional hearings to attribute poverty to “dependent” single mothers. The problem in the welfare system becomes not poverty but single motherhood.

In the congressional hearings, the witnesses demonize never-married mothers more than divorced mothers (Mclanahan), because “(m)arital status determines whether a woman entering AFDC will become a long-term recipient” (Besharov).<sup>14</sup> In the logic of the witnesses, never-married mothers tend to “depend” on welfare long-term. However, this tendency also shows inequality of distributed resources. We have to consider why never-married mothers find it more difficult to leave welfare compared to other mothers. It is clear that mother’s poverty is disproportionately affected by their marital status. If we reconsider such disproportionality in single mothers’ contexts to regard single mothers as independent mothers, based on the perspective to regard care-giving as work, poverty can no longer be attributed to single mothers’ “dependent” characteristics but the structural outside forces. Kate Williams, a remarried mother, writes in the WMV, “I’m a housewife now, NO DIFFERENT than I was while getting a check. But now, I am assigned ‘dignity’ being this kind of dependent rather than that. Who needs it? I don’t. I like my poor friends best of all” (14). Her story reveals that “dependency” is not a single mother’s “characteristic,” but her marital status decides whether she is allowed to be “dependent” or not. However, due to the framework of the myth of “dependency,” the congressional witnesses cannot take it into consideration that not out-of-wedlock births but poverty stuck to out-of-wedlock births causes fewer opportunities of good education and jobs, and force them to stay on welfare. For example, Patricia Franagan points out that those girls who become teen mothers are at greater risk than the general population to be poor as adults, even before they have children (241).

## 2-3. Women’s Rights to Care-giving/Mothering

Contemporary society has never recognized women’s rights to care-giving. To the contrary, the writers for the WMV claim that care-giving is a mothers’ right. They claim that the right to mothering is based on children’s rights, because mother work “maximize[s] the development of children” (R.B. “Strong-Families” 3).<sup>15</sup> If we give the highest priority to children, mother work should be valued. However, the witnesses in the congressional hearings separate childhood from motherhood. Thus, the conundrum for welfare reform for them is to provide a safety net for children but to promote work for parents (Bane 11; Gueron). In contrast, the writers for the WMV claim the importance of mother work (WMV “Rational

Fight-Back” 21), and assert “the same privilege of motherhood, even if poor and single” (Myers “Find Someone” 7). Therefore, welfare is a child support and a right for both children and mothers for them. The right to mothering is based on women’s rights as well as children’s rights. To value mother work is critically important for regarding women as working individuals.<sup>16</sup> Women (and men also) have the rights to become mothering workers. However, this never means that all women should become mothers. Rather, this assures women the option not to choose mother work among all other kinds of work. Therefore, to affirm single motherhood closely links to women’s rights to become autonomous individuals.

## 2-4. Single Mothers’ Citizenship

Finally, the writers for the WMV claim that motherhood includes activism. Their priorities are for children to be safe and beloved (Myers “Don’t Just Blame” 7), and they believe that children without community support are children in danger (Gowens “Interview” 20). Thus, their mothering includes taking care of their communities. For them, to create and grow children and their community links to their resistance to their status as single mothers (e.g. WMV “(No Title)” 13)<sup>17</sup>. They link mothering to social activism and define themselves as activist mothers. Activism is one aspect of their mothering and it redefines motherhood as political. The political has historically excluded care-giving, and what is the political has regulated who are citizens or not. When the writers for the WMV insist that mother work contributes to society (Gowens “Interview” 15),<sup>18</sup> they argue that mother work is “both individual and universal, both personal and political” (Feeney “No Nation” 18). Thus, mothering/care-giving work is political, “civic work” (Naples 129).<sup>19</sup> It shows that all care-givers, and hence all mothers, are citizens who work for society. “Beliefs that women are natural care-givers and that care is a female way of being instead of every citizen’s social obligation” (Cancian and Olicker 111) are common in the U.S., as is illustrated in the congressional hearings. However, the conception of activist mothering in the WMV discloses that care-givers are citizens who engage in civic work. Thus, the writers for the WMV claim, care-giving is a civil right (R.B. “Moral Choices” 8; Feeney “No Nation” 18). Single mothers are deprived of citizenship by the undervaluing of care-giving/ mother work and womanhood in the congressional hearings.

### 3. The Problems That Should Be Dealt with in Welfare Reform: The Myth of “Welfare Dependency”

The contributors to the WMV define the problems that need to be dealt with in welfare reform as poverty among families headed by single mothers is caused and reproduced by 1) the power structure, 2) “slave jobs” imposed by work requirements, and 3) the lack of “real” jobs that pay a living wage. In contrast, the witnesses in the congressional hearings argue that the main problems that should be dealt with in welfare reform are 1) welfare dependency and 2) out-of-wedlock births, which cause long-term welfare dependency. The witnesses discuss how welfare reform can prevent those, and their most common answer is work requirements. The witnesses focus on child care issues in order to make single mothers available for work outside the home. Then, child care is situated as the essential support service encouraging single mothers on welfare to work (Maynard).

However, the prototypical, white, middle-class, “good mother” is not supposed to work “in a job that take her away ‘too much’ from her parenting responsibilities” (Weingarten, Surrey, Coll, and Watkins 7).

Moreover, mothering for their own children is seen as “natural” as it is taken for granted as unpaid (work). Nevertheless, why cannot single mothers stay at home and take care of their own children?

First, when single mothers hope to take care of their children, this hope is equated with “the lack of their motivation to work outside the home.” This equation derives from denial of both 1) care-giving as work and 2) single mothers’ rights to care-giving. Once we regard care-giving as work, we notice that “mothers’ hope to take care of their children” means “impossibility to work outside the home,” because they already have a job, care-giving work. In fact, the discussions over “child care for work” in the congressional hearings partly admit care-giving as (even paid) work. Someone needs to do care-giving work for children instead of their mothers who work outside the home. Why cannot single mothers hire themselves as child care providers? R.B., who is a member of the San Diego Welfare Warriors, proposes this exactly, to set up her own non-profit business called “the Family Co.” Its purpose is to take care of her own children and she invests the AFDC grant in the business for providing food, shelter and clothing for her children (“Strong-Families” 3). Equally important, unless the witnesses admit single mothers’ rights to care-giving, their mothering is just a luxury, so that bread-winning is prioritized over care-giving, and their mother work is seen as replaceable with child care by others, based on the normative model of motherhood (and the capitalist wage model of labor).

Second, equating “mothers’ hope to take care of their children” with “the lack of work motivation” produces a discourse, the myth of “welfare dependency,” that regards single mothers on welfare as people without desire to work.<sup>20</sup> The witnesses then focus on how to change such behavior in single mothers. Like the discourse of the myth of “dependency,” this discourse also attributes poverty to single mothers themselves. The hidden assumption is that they are on welfare because they do not want to work. Accordingly, the problem in the welfare system becomes not poverty but lack of work motivation. Therefore, the witnesses in the congressional hearings expect that they must force single mothers to work, even if child care costs more than single mothers’ caring for their own children.<sup>21</sup> However, they actually succeed in hiding the need to solve the problem of poverty among single mothers by examining availability of real jobs, working conditions, and hierarchical working structure.

### 3-1. Slave Jobs

Work requirements brought about by this perspective justify what the contributors to the WMV call “slave jobs.” The perspective to see single mothers as “welfare dependents” enforces the positive value of employment by putting the negative value on receiving welfare (see Albelda 88). This negative value on receiving welfare makes the witnesses understand welfare as disincentive to work (Greenberg; Henry). Therefore, the most important point for the witnesses is to increase the participation rate among the recipients of work requirements (Gueron). For this purpose, the witnesses assess the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) Program and states’ various work-related programs after their waivers,<sup>22</sup> especially in Wisconsin, and try to figure out more effective ways to be based on the myth of “welfare dependency.”<sup>23</sup>

If we reconsider the option for single mothers to stay at home to take care of children in a context that recognizes care-giving as work and the rights to care-giving, we can see that this need has no relation to work motivation. The writers for the WMV also assess the JOBS Program and states’ various work-related programs. They argue that minimum wage laws do not apply to them in JOBS Program (Penn 14), and that the purpose of the JOBS Program is “to funnel women into low-paying jobs which have traditionally been held by women, and deny women the opportunity to pursue ‘non-traditional’ professions” (Kelly “Feminist Professional” 20). The most important point for them is not increasing

participation in work requirements but creating opportunities to work at a living wage. In the WMV, Nancy Penn claims, “the one thing that will make me competitive in the labor market is a ‘degree.’ . . . An education is the only viable alternative to a life of poverty and welfare” (14). Desiring education is not the lack of work motivation.<sup>24</sup> What is more, Sharon Holmes, one single mother, points out that workfare programs ignore unemployment rates, pay rate scale, types and numbers of available jobs, cost of living compared to wage scales and income resources available, housing, child care, health insurance, and transportation (2). This is because those programs prioritize requiring work over ensuring real jobs. Penn claims that the programs also force single mothers to leave or “neglect” children (14). “They expect moms to work for no Social Security for no tax breaks, no pay. No one else works that way. It’s slave-labor, you know and no one can deny it if we work for no pay [and] send our children away” (WMV “Just Learn” 12), the Welfare Warriors argues.

The conflicting assessments of the JOBS Program show gaps in understanding between congressional witnesses and single mothers. These gaps are caused by conflicting conceptions of dependency and of the goals of welfare, and the rights of its recipients, as I discussed earlier. In the congressional hearings, requiring work at any job is prioritized over ensuring real jobs that pay a living wage, but conversely in the WMV.

### 3-2. The Power Structure

The writers for the WMV insist that the myth of “welfare dependency” strongly connects to their conception of the power structure. “The power structure” is not used with specific definition in the WMV (e.g. Scott 4). However, WMV writers clearly analyze the strategies of the power structure, and argue that the power structure is benefiting the privileged and exploiting less powerful people, especially the poor, care-giving workers, women, and single mothers. They claim that the privileged such as the rich, corporations, politicians, public officials, and governments secure and enhance their vested interests by blaming poverty on the poor, hiding social and economic inequality that their wealth produces.<sup>25</sup> They point out that Wealthfare (government welfare checks to corporations) (WMV “How Do The Rich” 16), income inequality (WMV “The Earth” 20), and “class hatred of poor women and their children which comes under the guise of welfare reform” (Wink 5) drive changes to welfare policy, not single mothers’ “dependency.” Rather, single mothers are changed into “slave” workers. In this context, one factor to keep them in poverty and on welfare is the power structure, and it relies on the denial of care-giving as work. Therefore, the writers for the WMV describe welfare reform as a form of the “feminization of poverty” (Ray “Oprah Betrays” 19). However, the witnesses in the congressional hearings do not need to deal with the outside forces, because the myth of “welfare dependency” hides the power structure.

### 3-3. Women’s Mothering Work and Mothers’ Work Motivation

Finally, let me clarify whether single mothers really lack work motivation or not. I believe that we do not have a framework to judge mothers’ work motivation, because “work” in the setting of this question only means “work in the context of the male-dominant hierarchical work structure” (see WMV “New Hampshire Mom” 19), which excludes mother work. The meaning of work can be transformed, once we regard care-giving as work. “We will educate ourselves and the masses to understand the meaning of work. Work is raising and educating children. Work is providing a comfortable, cultured life for us all. Work is teaching youth, healing and caring for the sick, rebuilding neighborhoods, harvesting and distributing the food. Work is organizing for social justice” (WMV “A Call for Social Justice” 13). Here, work is no longer a concept that excludes women’s care-giving. It demands a change to the hierarchical

work structure underlying women's "dependent" care-giving work. Thus, at least, the answer to the question whether single mothers lack work motivation or not should be based on the claim that "I am a mother first" (Ray "I'm a Mother First" 19).

Nevertheless, they actually have already had even such "work motivation" because of extraordinary stigmatization of not working.<sup>26</sup> The contributors to the WMV argue that the biggest problem they face in trying to escape poverty is that there are no "real" jobs for them. Single mothers are forced to work despite "a desperate lack of real jobs" (Holmes 2), so that the only actual option for single mothers is to work at "slave" jobs. Gowens claims, "True work ethic is forgotten: the right to work!" ("Work Ethic Debate" 9) The right to work must be separated from whether single mothers should work or not, and guaranteed regardless of it. If the government assumes that single mothers should work, it must assure job availability. But the government shirks its responsibility by claiming the problem is only "welfare dependency," and requiring single mothers to work at any available job.

#### 4. Policy Proposals for Welfare Reform: Difference as Political Resources for Democratic Justice

In the congressional hearings, welfare should be transformed from an entitlement to a transitional/temporary system as a result of the witnesses' judging welfare in their context, the myths of dependency.<sup>27</sup> The myths of dependency enable the witnesses to focus on work requirements as their primary policy proposals. Therefore, their policy proposals mainly consist of mandatory work requirements and child care for work.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, single mothers' ultimate goal for welfare reform is ending poverty.<sup>29</sup> In the WMV, welfare is understood as primarily a means of providing support to children,<sup>30</sup> and a right of care-giving workers. For example, Lucky Jean proposes calling welfare a care giver grant in order to recognize motherhood as a profession (14). Based on children's and care-giving mothers' rights, they propose that welfare should be replaced with a guaranteed annual income (Alice 6).<sup>31</sup> The second main policy proposal of the writers for the WMV is to create real jobs, jobs that pay a living wage, based on a right to work.<sup>32</sup>

To fully understand single mothers' policy proposals, we have to consider why and how they resist their "character assassination" in the welfare system. Carol Feenway, one single mother, claims, "Welfare Reform treats poor, single mothers as the cause of all of our country's woes. This is character assassination. This is violent" ("Open Letter" 13). The character assassination, the denial of single motherhood, is a partial interpretation of single motherhood in the context of the myths of dependency, which leads to the hearings witnesses' policy proposals. Single mothers need to provide the possibility of another interpretation of single motherhood by redefining themselves to resist their character assassination and its consequences. For example, men and women in the National Welfare Rights Organization had different rationales for wanting a guaranteed income in 1960s: "the male staff emphasizing the lack of employment opportunities and the female constituency framing the guaranteed income as necessary because of their work as mothers" (Nadasen 158). This shows that single mothers demand not only a guaranteed income but also the recognition as care-giving workers. Even if they are guaranteed an annual income, they are still "welfare dependents," and their needs are only interpreted as "dependents'" needs. Consequently, their needs are given less priority and welfare is labeled as not a right but a charity. In the same way, even if there are available real jobs, they still do not have the right to mothering. Without recognizing care-giving/mother work, single mothers are still the central targets to be fixed in the welfare system, because the context to understand single mothers' voices is the myth of dependency, based on their character assassination.

However, single mothers' self-defined characteristics and needs never emerge in the congressional hearings. The meanings of their voices are always interpreted in the myths of dependency, and transformed differently from their understandings. It is a partial interpretation and representation of single mothers' voices by the congressional witnesses' "othering" single mothers through internal exclusion. This is an injustice. If we interpret democracy as "a philosophical concept meaning that people are really free and empowered to make collectively the decisions that affect their lives" (Horton 169), we need to use social differences as political resources (see Young *Inclusion* Ch. 3). Single mothers' voices *interpreted in their contexts* are political resources for democratic justice, in order to avoid such unjust partiality.

#### 4-1. Internal Exclusion

When single mothers' voices are represented, their voices tend to be interpreted only within the dominant political discourse, the myths of dependency in the public sphere. As I argued in the previous sections, their hope to do mothering in an independent household is interpreted as a lack of motivation to "depend" on men, based on the normative model of motherhood. Likewise, their preference to take care of their children at home is interpreted as a lack of work motivation, denying care-giving as work and the rights to mothering. Such interpretations intensify the myths of dependency in the congressional hearings. However, if we interpret single mothers' voices in their own contexts, acknowledging care-giving as work, mother work as a women's right, and motherhood as including activism, then the meaning of their voices is interpreted as the indispensable needs of mothering by independent mothers. Nevertheless, their voices are deprived of their own contexts, and are put on the contexts of the myths of dependency. This causes the gaps between single mothers' and others' understandings of single mothers' voices and experiences. Iris Marion Young reveals such gaps as internal exclusion: people "may find that their experiences as relevant to the issues under discussion are so different from others' in the public that their views are discounted. . . . People lack effective opportunity to influence the thinking of others even when they have access to fora and procedures of decision-making" (Young *Inclusion* 55; see Sparks 175).

The writers for *the WMV* suffer from similar internal exclusion. For example, Lillian Hanson, a member of the San Diego Welfare Warriors, describes the gap that she felt between her internal understanding of herself and her case file's description of her, when she attended Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program<sup>33</sup> and looked at her case file:

A strange feeling emerged as the dates, events, and encounters blended into one long continuum, gauging a comparatively small portion of my life—by GAIN's standard. It was disconcerting to view my life through the eyes of GAIN caseworkers: a bland colorless summary of a subject under constant scrutiny, like that of a lab rat. For a brief moment an involuntary thought stirred, 'So what have you been doing all these years?' as if I were holding myself in contempt. Reality crept back in—what about the years devoted to the love and care of two precious children, which no one of this world has deemed worthy? The endless rounds of maintaining a home, nurturing two important lives, and the character, values, and resources needed to perform those tasks were not noted anywhere in the sheaves of papers before me. . . . By day's end, I met two other moms and I gave them a lift home. As they chatted and I drove, I returned to the real world where I was a vital part of caring, sharing, doing for others. And no case file could attest to that. (1)

In the arenas of policy decisions and implementations, single mothers' care-giving work is interpreted only through the myths of dependency. The writers for the WMV unveil that such discourses amplify stigmatizing and stereotyping single mothers as "welfare dependents" by mainstream media, cause prejudice and jealousy, keep people from uniting to fight for justice in their community,<sup>34</sup> blame and punish mothers, and treat mothers like criminals.<sup>35</sup> In fact, many single mothers themselves believe the myths of dependency,<sup>36</sup> feel isolated, and are deprived of dignity and self-worth. They are forced to see themselves through the myths of dependency, and to fix themselves to comply with the dominant social culture.<sup>37</sup>

Internal exclusion not only perpetuates the dominant discourses but also attributes the problems to the oppressed, single mothers. According to Campbell, "The translation of the self into an object of knowledge—or of an identity into an object of study—is central to the 'deflection dynamic' that assigns blame or cause not to social-structural conditions but to the character and behavior of individuals who embody those conditions" (116). Similarly, since the characteristics—the self—of single mothers is the object of knowledge in order to assess the welfare system, "truth"—their self-defined needs—is translated into the dominant cultures as "dependency." Thus, single mothers' characteristics that do not fit such cultures become problematic. Consequently, the problems—staying on welfare—are attributed to such characteristics—"dependency."

#### 4-2. "Othering" Single Mothers

Internal exclusion in the welfare system derives from "othering" single mothers. "Othering" is to differentiate the self from "others," and hence is based on self-definition. In other words, self-definition is to understand the self and also "others," in one's own contexts. Accordingly, "otherness" itself is one contesting interpretation, because self-definition always includes the definition of "others" and the border between them is not self-evident. In "The Future of the Past: Jane Addams and the Social Work of Politics," Sanford F. Schram analyzes the concept of the "other" in Addams' feminist theory of democracy. He insists that encountering "others" leads us to "the possibility of appreciating 'otherness' on its own terms" (Praxis 42), since recontextualizing "otherness" in "others'" contexts is critically important for reconfirming the border between "us" and "them." If the witnesses in the congressional hearings encounter single mothers' "otherness," it requires the witnesses to reconsider why "we" (the witnesses) regard single mothers as "others." It can lead the witnesses to reexamine the border defined by them between "us" and "them."<sup>38</sup> As long as the witnesses take this border based on the myths of dependency for granted, unless they interpret single mothers' voices in single mothers' contexts, they cannot inspect and reconfirm their "values" and "facts." Encountering "others" is to value "otherness" on its own terms, and importantly, "more about 'us' than 'them'" (Schram Praxis 41, 45), because it requires "us" to inspect what determines "us."

I insist neither that single mothers' voices interpreted in their contexts and the self-definitions of single mothers are immediately correct, nor that the witnesses in the congressional hearings should not define single motherhood. Rather, the witnesses may also define single motherhood as a reverse side of their self-definitions. However, the problem is the partial interpretation of single mothers' voices. When the witnesses deny single motherhood in the congressional hearings, the negative images/positions of single mothers inevitably supports and reproduces the affirmative images/positions of the privileged witnesses. The witnesses negatively define single motherhood as if they were not connected to such representation at all. In reality, only the witnesses can affirmatively define themselves by using single mothers as their foils, "othering" single mothers. Such one-sided "othering" preserves power for the privileged who can do "othering" in the public sphere.

To avoid such partiality, democratic justice demands that the privileged interpret the voices of those who have less privilege, in those people's contexts. According to Young: "Those in structurally superior positions not only take their experience, preferences, and opinions to be general, uncontroversial, ordinary, and even an expression of suffering or disadvantage, as we all do, but also have the power to represent these as general norms. Having to answer to others who speak from different, less privileged, perspectives on their social relations exposes their partiality and relative blindness" (Inclusion 116).

In the welfare system, the myths of dependency function as "general norms." For example, in the congressional hearings, the witnesses discuss how they can "improve" the welfare recipients' "dependent" characteristics by welfare reform. In the WMV, Steven P. Barrett claims, "Folks on welfare don't need the rich folks or more 'successful' people lecturing them on the work ethic. Dreams, support systems and loving friendships will do far more to spur folks out of poverty than a chorus of bootstrap lectures" (6). To force single mothers to follow such "successful" ways means to impose single mothers on "the norms," which construct single mothers as "welfare dependent" "others" of the privileged witnesses, who can interpret single mothers' voices in the witnesses' contexts. In this case, what is "successful" rests on the witnesses' "othering" single mothers, namely, the denial of single motherhood. Terri Farrow insists, "My success will be measured by my love for my children. I want to be my definition of 'a real woman' for awhile" (8). However, the witnesses never encounter single mothers' voices in single mothers' contexts, and can keep their normative status. Thus, I argue not that single mothers' voices interpreted in their contexts are necessarily more correct, but that it is an injustice that single mothers' voices have never been interpreted in their own contexts.

Once the witnesses in the congressional hearings completely separate themselves from their own contexts, and encounter single mothers' voices interpreted in their own contexts, the witnesses should notice the existence of another interpretation of single mothers' voices, and what could make it invisible, the myths of dependency. Then, when the witnesses return to and reconsider the witnesses' own contexts, these contexts are reexamined from a new perspective. This provides a possibility to create the contexts to unite both congressional and single mothers' discourses, "our" new contexts, which introduce more democratic justice.

#### **4-3. A Policy Proposal for another Welfare Reform**

Obviously, there are partial settings of communicative arenas in the congressional hearings as for both external and internal exclusion, which ensure the partial interpretation of single mothers' voices between single mothers and the witnesses in the congressional hearings.<sup>39</sup> For example, among 54 testimonies in the congressional hearings I examined, there are only two (former and present) welfare recipient single mothers. Most of the witnesses are those who are regarded as "experts" in the welfare system such as public officials, policy analysts, and researchers. There are some witnesses from the organizations such as the National Governors' Association, the National Fatherhood Initiative, and children's rights organizations, but no witnesses from welfare rights organizations like the Welfare Warriors. Furthermore, there are almost no frameworks other than "welfare dependency" to communicate with single mothers' voices in the congressional hearings.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, my policy proposal for another welfare reform is to create democratic settings to use single mothers' voices interpreted in their contexts as political resources in the congressional hearings. Spaces for transforming values must be assured to protect diversity and justice (see hooks). In addition, I suggest increasing the number of recipients among the witnesses in the congressional hearings. If there

were democratic settings in the decision making process, the myths of dependency would be exposed. With this exposed the goal for welfare reform could be to end poverty, not to enforce work.

As one example of such democratic settings, I want to propose to set “Walk a Mile in Your Sister’s Shoes” for all legislators engaging in welfare policies. Before welfare reform in 1996, in Washington D.C., 21 government officials participated in the month long “Walk a Mile in Your Sister’s Shoes,” paired with AFDC single mothers (off our backs 17).<sup>41</sup> In this setting, the legislators can find the gaps between the dominant political discourses—the myths of dependency—and single mothers’ discourse, and single mothers’ voices can be more interpreted in their own contexts. Moreover, single mothers also can encounter their “others” in government-related meetings. In addition, the legislators must “not only see the world through the eyes of those who are marginalized, but also come to see how they themselves are seen by those marginalized” (Schram Praxis 45), because the welfare problems should be “more about ‘us’ than ‘them’” for the legislators.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper attempted to reconsider the “rationality” of welfare reform by analyzing the gaps between congressional discourses and welfare clients’ discourses from 1995 to 1996. We can use such gaps to provide opportunities to encounter “others” for democratic justice. However, only congressional discourses are currently represented and adopted in the process of policy making. This partial agenda setting justifies the myths of dependency, attributes poverty to single mothers, and sets the goals of welfare reform as enforcing work. Thus, “rationality” in welfare reform creates welfare reform that causes an injustice to single mothers, in spite of an irrational process for democratic justice.

It was found that single mothers’ voices interpreted in their contexts are political resources for democratic justice. Thus, future research is needed to clarify their voices in their contexts specifically with their diversities, because single mothers are not able to be assimilated into one category. Their circumstances are highly varied especially in regard to their races and classes. As Dorothy Roberts claims, the U.S. inadequate welfare system stems from a racist refusal to include Blacks to full citizenship rights (243). Stereotyping welfare as a Black program links to limiting variation of motherhood, and such welfare systems perpetuate racial and gender inequality. However, if we place the experiences of women of color to the center of theorizing motherhood and welfare systems, it should lead to recontextualizing those and “point us toward feminist theorizing that embraces difference as an essential part of commonality” (Collins 62).

Encountering “others” is the experience to find commonalities, differences, and the self in “others,” and urges us to reconsider the position of the self and the relationships between “us” and “them” (Nakatani). There is no one who does not connect to the oppression of single mothers. This also means that we can reform welfare for social change which all people regulated by this society can have.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>One important aspect of welfare reform is expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the EITC. See Strach and Sullivan as disclosing that the EITC was already began to expand before the 1996 welfare reform passed.

<sup>2</sup>To assess welfare reform, caseloads advocates of welfare reform mainly focus on 1) the decline in TANF, 2) the increase in employment rates of single mothers during the 1990s, and 3) the decline in child poverty during the 1990s. In contrast, the opponents of welfare “reform,” those who view welfare reform of 1996 as welfare “destruction,” mainly focus on 1) the recent increase in child poverty, 2) the decrease in employment rates among single mothers since 2000, 3) increasing the number of people receiving neither work nor welfare, and 4) the steep decline in TANF participation among eligible families (Nathan 369-385).

<sup>3</sup>See Jimenez; Gring-Pemle as feminist analyses of the congressional hearings of welfare reform.

<sup>4</sup>The Welfare Mothers Voice is the quarterly newspaper of the Welfare Warriors. From the issue of Winter 2002, the Welfare Warriors changed the name of their newspaper from the Welfare Mothers Voice to the Mother Warriors Voice. The Welfare Warriors is a nonprofit organization of mothers and children in poverty, established in Wisconsin in 1986. The newspaper consists mainly of the letters from mothers from around the U.S. in addition to the world, and includes a part in Spanish.

<sup>5</sup>Nine hearings include: 1) Implementation of Welfare Reform and Child Support Enforcement; 2) Welfare Reform; 3) Causes of Poverty with a Focus on Out-of-Wedlock Births; 4) Teen Parents and Welfare Reform; 5) Impact of Welfare Reform on Children and Their Families; 6) Child Care and Development Block Grant: How Is It Working; 7) Child Care and Child Welfare; 8) Child Care and Child Welfare; and 9) Child Welfare Programs.

<sup>6</sup>I coded them by focusing on four conceptual frameworks: 1) dependency, 2) care-giving as work, 3) politics of difference (Young Justice), and 4) self-definition.

<sup>7</sup>For example, fathers doing wage labor are not regarded as “dependent” on mothers doing care-giving work. Care-giving work is linked to “dependency,” because women do it and it is unpaid labor.

<sup>8</sup>For example, “(b)etween 1997 and 1999, the percentage of TANF families that identified themselves as white dropped from 42 to 33 percent, while percentage that reported their race as black rose from 34 to 46 percent” (Soss, Schram, and Fording 18). Sanford F. Schram reveals that “the prejudices of the culture not only reinforce negative views of welfare-taking by person of color but also necessitate the greater frequency with which persons of color are forced to rely on public assistance” (“Putting Black Face” 215).

<sup>9</sup>Pat Gowens unveils it and claims:

Moms who depend on the man (welfare) instead of a man, for our dependent minors’ child support are criticized for being ‘dependent’ and not ‘self-sufficient.’ That is not true. Over 90% of moms receiving AFDC are single mothers. And we are some of the most independent mothers in the nation. We not only raise the children alone, we also bring in all or most of the money for the entire family (whether by welfare, work, studying, or a combination of all three). Few parent[s] in the country, even white males who earn more than all other adults, manage to support an entire family on one income. Few mothers support children solely on their own earnings. The work of child rearing takes time away from paid employment, and women’s wage[s] are not enough to support a family. Married mothers depend on a husband to help support the children. Widowed mothers depend on the government to help support their children. Divorced mothers depend on a former husband to help support the children. Only welfare mothers are held to an impossible standard and expected to do it all alone. (“The Myths of Dependency” 13).

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy E. Smith focuses on the language of typification of “man” and “woman” set in the Standard North American Family (SNAF) (159).

<sup>11</sup> Surely, in the WMV, the writers also claim that “the person who is actually ‘on welfare’ is the absent parent” (Briarmoon 12) and criticize the ignorance of fathers’ responsibilities in the welfare system (Proctor 11). However, the context of single mothers claiming fathers’ responsibilities is obviously different from the context of paternity establishment claimed by the witnesses in the congressional hearings in the point to regard the families headed by single mothers as independent households.

<sup>12</sup> This is one way of marginalizing mothers in relation to other mothers. “Those at the center tend to be mothers with economic resources, social and community support, and a view of themselves and mothering that fits the dominant ideology” (Weingarten, Surrey, Coll, and Watkins 6).

The marginalization of single mothers has been partly practiced through public policies. Until the late 1960s, “Social policy [Aid to Dependent Children and AFDC] aimed at women has been designed to benefit them in their capacity as wives and mothers only in a limited sense. Its intention has been to enable them to care for their families and not, by and large, to provide for them in the sense that is expected of a breadwinner” (Sapiro 45). Because the women “covered” by this policy were those at the center, married or widowed mothers, who fit the dominant ideology, the policy re-inscribed the normative model of motherhood. In so doing, welfare policies came to deny single mothers’ care-giving work.

<sup>13</sup> “Post industrial culture has called up a new personification of dependency: the black, unmarried, teenaged, welfare-dependent mother” (Fraser and Gordon 139).

<sup>14</sup> “Forty percent of never-married mothers will receive AFDC for 10 years or more, compared to 14 percent of divorced mothers” (Besharov).

<sup>15</sup> “Children cannot survive without mothers. Mothers are not a luxury for children, but a right. Mothers must be respected, honored, and paid. Mother work must be acknowledged and valued” (“Are the Warriors” 13), Adele McCrank, a member of the Welfare Warriors, writes.

<sup>16</sup> According to Schram, even attempts to shift from welfare to assured child support will not address “the resistance to supporting mother-only families that is grounded in the prevailing cultural anxiety about women acting in autonomous fashion, . . . for they tie assistance to the needs of children rather than legitimate and support women in the important work they do as mothers and nurtures in the realm of reproduction” (Words 159).

<sup>17</sup> The Welfare Warriors claims, “Remember, as mothers under attack by our government, we must survive and resist. But we must also continue to create and grow” (WMV “(No Title)” 13).

<sup>18</sup> See Naples; Sapiro 41; Mink 151, as feminists’ analyses claiming that care-giving is a contribution to society.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy A. Naples also suggests the concept of “Activist Mothering.” She points out that community workers’ care-giving in Community Action Programs (CAPs) brought the concept of “civic work,” which means “doing just what needed to be done to secure economic and social justice for their communities” (129). For those community workers, political activism is a central component of mothering and community caretaking of those who are not part of one’s defined household or family (11). Therefore, it connects the concepts of care-giving and mothering to paid work, the public sphere, and the political. Rather, it redefines those concepts.

<sup>20</sup> The myth of “welfare dependency” also persists in the discussion over work incentives in the congressional hearings. The witnesses can focus on not solving the problems of the working poor, no real jobs, and minimum-

wage jobs, but giving work incentives to single mothers due to the myth of “welfare dependency.” In other words, single mothers on welfare are required to become the working poor by welfare reform, in the congressional hearings.

<sup>21</sup> For example, in the graph of income distribution with all benefits for a family of three in New York City, we can see NYC spends much more money on child care than Temporary Assistance, and also the huge cliff of child care when earned income reaches \$32,180 (NYS Division of the Budget)

<sup>22</sup> In 1988, Congress passed the Family Support Act (FSA), and work requirements had been provided by the JOBS Program instead of the Work Incentive (WIN) Program. The purpose of the JOBS program is “to assure that needy families with children obtain the education, training, and employment that will help them avoid long-term welfare dependence” (Codified at 42 U.S.C. 481(a)). However, because of highly increased caseloads, many states initiated more restrictive policies under waivers, especially approved by the Clinton administration.

<sup>23</sup> For example, in the congressional hearings, Mary Jo Bane, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, admires the Wisconsin Works Program and claims “the concept of the Wisconsin waiver request, which is to replace a welfare check with work, to require welfare recipients to work and to ensure that they have the supports to do so, is a concept that this administration enthusiastically supports” (21). However, the Representative Pete Stark questions her about 1) its legal implications; and 2) job availability and unemployment (36).

<sup>24</sup> Kahn and Polakow insist that, without a postsecondary education, recipients and those leaving the welfare rolls are employed in jobs that pay on average \$6.61 per hour, do not raise families above even the poverty line, and do not provide health insurance (159).

<sup>25</sup> “When did the welfare rolls begin to soar? It began when millions of Americans lost their jobs as the ‘Fortune 500’ companies shipped our jobs overseas for slave jobs. . . . It began when one salary could no longer support a family and mothers were forced to work outside the home” (1), Holmes argues. The wealthy classes need “slaves” to work for them also in the U.S. In the WMV, John Cassella claims that the corporations keep the people fragmented and divided for their two goals: to make money and to keep the people under control (5). Then, the power of propaganda (Gowens “Editor’s Tidbits” b, 2) spreads welfare myths. Moreover, people’s own difficulties paying their bills enable society to blame single mothers as welfare dependent tax-receivers (Lercher 7). However, as McCrank writes, “for every \$100 we pay in taxes, \$1 goes for AFDC. Of this \$1, only 33 cents gets to poor moms and their children. The other 67 cents goes to administer ineffective programs” (“Punishing” 9). This 1% in taxes supports 5 million moms and 10 million children (WMV “Ten Facts” 13). Furthermore, the Welfare Warriors points out that AFDC costs taxpayers \$15 billions a year, while rich corporations receive \$104 billion a year in government welfare (WMV “Ten Facts” 13). Nevertheless, single mothers are blamed and punished for “welfare dependency,” and “politicians can avoid creating jobs for dads by attacking and forcing moms to support families alone” (WMV “Not All Dads” 7). Then, corporations can hire single mothers at lower than minimum-wage through workfare programs. Finally, the privileged succeed in controlling the poor instead of ending poverty. Therefore, the goal of the writers for the WMV is to stop “the war against the poor” (WMV “Nationwide Day” 1) and to bring families out of poverty.

<sup>26</sup> “Many women have work histories and/or they work while receiving benefits” (Sparks 223). Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein measure the material hardship of groups of welfare-reliant single mothers and wage-reliant single mothers under AFDC, and reveal that “wage-reliant mothers reported experiencing more material hardship than welfare-reliant mothers” (Edin and Lein 7). Nevertheless, the virtue of “self-sufficiency” force single mothers to opt for working outside the home in addition to working inside the home, and to sacrifice some of their standard of living on welfare in order to live by the mainstream credo (Newman 111). Single mothers try to work outside the home in order to emerge from the strong stigmatization as “dependents” despite their working as care-givers.

Moreover, Seccombe, Walters, and James point out that “work requirement reform received overwhelming support among the welfare recipients interviewed” (201). Differently from the writers for the WMV, most single mothers interviewed by them in 1995 in Florida endorse work requirements. However, this is because “(m)any were visibly delighted by the prospect that that the government would help them find a good paying job” (Seccombe, Walters, and James 202). Thus, this shows not their supports to “slave” jobs, but their work motivation.

<sup>27</sup> In fact, all of the witnesses no longer regard welfare as an entitlement, except Audrey Rowe (Rowe), the present and former recipients Tamara Elser (Elser) and Gladys Marisette (Marisette).

<sup>28</sup> For example, Lawrence E. Townsend Jr., the director of Department of Public Social Services of Riverside County, Calif., proposes requiring all able adult AFDC recipients to participate in the JOBS Program, to set clear performance standards, based on outcomes rather than processes, and to secure AFDC recipients paid employment as quickly as possible (Townsend). The witnesses in the congressional hearings never focus on the job availability, except only one witness, Sister Mary R. Mcgeady, the president of Covenant House, who claims the need for real jobs (Mcgeady). Additionally, only one witness, a single parent recipient, Elser, focuses on educational programs (Elser) in the congressional hearings.

<sup>29</sup> The Welfare Warriors claim that most of welfare reform legislators do not want to end poverty and that they are only interested to ending welfare support to mothers and children in poverty (WMV “Ten Facts” 13). Accordingly, welfare reform bills are depicted by the writers for the WMV as destroying the safety net for vulnerable children and families (WMV “Just Say” 15), describing this as “character assassination” (Feeney 1996, 13), “economic and social violence” (WMV “Nation Divided” 8), and punishment of children for being born (poor) (WMV “Just Say” 15), that takes race in the welfare system.

<sup>30</sup> “AFDC is a necessary child support program. It supports 9 million children and 4 1/2 million mother workers. Without the assistance, most would receive NO other child support” (WMV “Our Children’s” 2). All dependent minors should be guaranteed adequate support, whether their mothers are in the workforce, the home, or remarried (WMV “Make Politicians” 12), the Welfare Warriors argues.

<sup>31</sup> One of their main policy proposals is to extend the Social Security Program to all single mothers and their children. “Single mothers whose husband/partner has died get guaranteed government child support (Social Security) till their children are 18. They do not lose it if they work outside the home nor are their children taken from them if they don’t” (McCrank “Punishing” 9). As I argued earlier, the writers for the WMV believe that there is no reason to divide the rights of mothers and their children by mothers’ marital status.

<sup>32</sup> For them, the crucial need is to “REFORM the business community to create safe and sane, full-time, family-supporting jobs” (WMV “Make Politicians” 12). In addition, the Welfare Warriors proposes “legislation to require that all caregiving jobs ( . . . ) MUST pay family-supporting wages” (WMV “Make Politicians” 12). The devaluation of care-giving work connects not only to the devaluation of mother work but also their low-wage employment conditions.

<sup>33</sup> In 1985, California adopted a major welfare-to-work program called GAIN Program, “(o)ne of the programs often referred to as a forerunner of JOBS, GAIN called for a large state funding commitment and, initially, a five-year period for phasing in the program for all mandatory participants across the state” (Sherwood and Long).

<sup>34</sup> “The tendency to view oneself as an atypical recipient, disassociating oneself from other recipients, was identified as a coping mechanism for dealing with stigma” (Seccombe 78).

<sup>35</sup> We must pay attention to that racism affects the stigmatization of the recipients. “Young African American women are actually more likely to be blamed for their economic circumstances than are their white counterparts, and they are considered less worthy of government assistance” (Seccombe 33).

<sup>36</sup> For example, Anna Dillane writes, “You [the Welfare Warriors] finally freed me of the belief that I am a lazy drain on society” (Dillane 5).

<sup>37</sup> This is one way of cultural imperialism, one face of oppression, which Young points out (Young Justice 58-59).

<sup>38</sup> For example, the witnesses can consider “why ‘we’ (the witnesses) believe that ‘we’ are ‘independent,’ while single mothers on welfare are ‘dependent.’”

<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the partial interpretation of single mothers’ voices in the congressional hearings also derives from gender inequality in articulating rationality. “The feminine character was ontologically defective; she could not be trusted to observe, recollect, or narrate the truth of her experience” (Campbell 115). In the WMV, Jean Backmann discloses that “(w)omen speak, argue, persuade differently than men—which doesn’t by any means make it ‘less than’ men’s” (4). It is not coincident that most of the legislators making welfare reform bills are white middle- or upper-class men. Single mothers’ voices are discounted partly because they are women. Therefore, for gender equality, single mothers’ voices also should be interpreted in their contexts, in women’s lived contexts, in the public sphere.

<sup>40</sup> One witness, Kim Bell, although she is not a single mother but a mother of a disabled child, claims, “Language is pretty important in politics, and I have not seen language I am comfortable with yet that assures me” in the congressional hearings (124).

<sup>41</sup> The officials fed their families for one month on \$274, the food stamp budget for a typical family of four, talked on the phone weekly and discussed the past week’s events, and participated in at least one joint welfare-related activity. Moreover, politicians took their partners to at least one government-related meeting. The Representative, Suzette Cooke, who sponsored a welfare reform bill which outlined timeline goals for leaving welfare, learned that “when you need to concentrate on just surviving, setting long-term goal[s] is nearly impossible,” and said “(t)he whole experience made me wonder why we don’t deliver our services in a way that confirms individuals self-worth” after experiencing sitting in the welfare office for hours with 150 people (off our backs 17). Also, “Rep. Julia Patterson witnessed how embarrassed and humiliated her 3 children felt shopping with food stamps and eating on \$274 a month” (off our backs 17).

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