Mothering Student Activists

Reflections on Maternal/Feminist Service-Learning Pedagogy

DEBORAH LEA BYRD

I AM A MOTHER AND A feminist, a white, heterosexual, (now) middle-class single woman who grew up in rural West Virginia. I do not leave those facets of my identity at home or in my office when I’m getting ready to interact with students; on the contrary, what scholars of intersectionality call my “positionality” accompanies me into the classroom, inevitably influencing (sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously) both what and how I teach. And since being a mother is certainly one of the most important aspects of my identity, one could argue that to a certain extent, my pedagogical foci, goals and strategies as a professor of English and Women’s and Gender Studies are bound to be in some ways “maternal,” bound to be influenced by the fact that I’m the non-biological mother of a biracial (white and African-American) tenth grader whom I adopted almost sixteen years ago. But when I’m at work—teaching at the small, private liberal arts college where I’ve been employed for close to thirty years—do I practice “maternal pedagogies” in any substantive sense—and if so, in what ways, in what contexts, and for what reasons? The essay that follows addresses these questions.

If I do engage in “mothering” when teaching U.S. college students, it would be mothering of a feminist sort, since being a feminist is as central to my identity as being a mother. And it would be the mothering of an actively anti-racist, anti-homophobic, socialist feminist who believes that a feminist should (both alone and working with others) seek to identify, object to, and eradicate all forms of injustice and oppression. But before I can determine if I practice feminist maternal pedagogies in my professional life, it seems important to identify how such pedagogies operate in my personal life, how they have manifested themselves in my
ever-changing relationship with my “16 going on 21 year-old” son.

For me, to successfully engage in feminist maternal pedagogies within a family context means—in terms of “course content and goals”—that I have tried to teach my son how to recognize both subtle and obvious, both individualized and institutional forms of oppression and injustice, and that I have tried to inculcate in him a feminist desire to dislike and want to put an end to such discriminatory beliefs and behaviors, especially as they manifest themselves in individuals he knows or in institutions (such as school systems or sports leagues) of which he has firsthand knowledge. I also have tried to instill in him a curiosity about and appreciation for people of all sorts of beliefs and backgrounds, and I’ve tried to make him especially eager to support and form friendships with people who belong to groups that often are negatively stereotyped, whether they be kids with disabilities, children of color, classmates who are gay, or young people from low-income families. But the “what” of my feminist maternal pedagogy is much easier to specify than the “how”—as a mother, what is it that I do or say to try to make these lessons “stick”?

Like all teachers, I use a number of pedagogical strategies. When I had a lot of control over my son’s life—and back when he loved nothing more than pleasing and doing things with Mom—I made sure that my son was exposed to lots of texts (children’s books, television shows, theatrical performances, toys, games, dolls, puppet sets) that individually or collectively encouraged him to appreciate all different kinds of people and cultures. And I actively looked for opportunities to teach my son to see and be upset by instances of injustice—whether they occurred in books or in “real life”—as well as drew his attention to and urged him to applaud acts of kindness, fairness, and tolerance. Exposure to such texts and talks no doubt helps to account for the fact that at various times in his life, my son has chosen to do a book report on George Washington Carver, write an essay explaining why the U.S. should not celebrate Columbus Day, and argue in a research paper that the death penalty should be abolished due to the rampant racism within the U.S. legal and criminal justice systems.

But the most important component of my feminist maternal pedagogy, I have come to believe, is my decision to “walk the walk and not just talk the talk,” a commitment that has given my son many opportunities to engage in “hands on,” experiential learning and many occasions to practice and/or test the validity of the views and values I’ve promulgated in a more overtly didactic way. From the time I became a mother, I made a
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self-conscious effort to ensure that my son had regular, intimate contact with people of varying backgrounds. I was already living in an ethnically and racially diverse working-class neighborhood when I adopted my son, and I continued to seek out multicultural spaces for him as I selected a daycare, enrolled him in sports, and supervised study abroad programs in Greece. I took (and continue to take) my son to Passover Seders and Lebanese Heritage Days, and I have actively cultivated friendships with adults whose children are adopted, bi-racial, and/or of a different race than their parent(s). I have tried to lead by example, modeling for my son what it “looks like” to engage in a daily struggle to promote social justice and showing him how to build and sustain what bell hooks calls “beloved communities,” communities comprised of culturally and physically diverse individuals who share a commitment to improving the world in which they live (264). I don’t by any means intend to set myself up as a paragon of virtue; what I’m trying to emphasize is that to the extent that I’ve succeeded as a practitioner of feminist maternal pedagogy, I believe that it’s because I’ve consciously placed my son in situations where he doesn’t just read and talk and think about multiculturalism, but actually has regular, firsthand contact with “Others.” My son’s “inner circle” of friends is consistently comprised of a half dozen youth of varying races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds, and his concern for and loyalty to these friends sometimes make him an activist, such as when he confronts rich kids who speak negatively of, ignore, or condescend to their less wealthy peers.

If the central feature of my feminist maternal pedagogy on the home front is combining “discussion and mini-lectures” with experiential learning, how does this translate into my life as a teacher of undergraduate students? It means that in my view, I engage in feminist maternal pedagogy most effectively when teaching service-learning courses, courses in which students are required to interact with, learn about and from, and find ways to support individuals who belong to marginalized or oppressed groups. For me (but not necessarily for others), teaching in a “motherly” fashion has nothing to do with biology; I have no personal experience of bringing a fetus to term, giving birth, or breastfeeding. And it has nothing to do with traditional, patriarchal conceptions of nurturance, nothing to do with open displays of affection and concern for one’s students. I do, of course, care about my students’ well-being, sometimes very deeply, and my classroom demeanor is characterized by warmth, not aloofness. But
for this feminist teacher, what is most maternal about my pedagogy is my
desire to place my students in an environment in which they have regular
contact with and can get to know individuals who are in one or more ways
quite different from themselves, an environment in which my surrogate
children have a chance to test, apply, or enact the feminist ideas they’ve
been exposed to through assigned readings and class discussions.

The course in which I most fully engage in my brand of feminist maternal
pedagogy is an upper-level Women’s and Gender Studies service-learning
seminar entitled “Single Motherhood in the Contemporary U.S.: Myths
and Realities.” This course focuses explicitly on motherhood as both an
institution and a unique personal experience, with special attention to the
challenges faced by teenage and low-income single mothers living in the
contemporary U.S. In this interdisciplinary course, students view films and
read personal narratives and scholarly writings on such topics as the history
and ideological underpinnings of the U.S. welfare state, the various kinds of
government programs available to the poor, the negative cultural stereotypes
of pregnant teens and “welfare queens,” the experiences of single mothers and
their children within the criminal justice system, and the kinds of “Adverse
Childhood Experiences” that increase the likelihood that a young woman
will bear and keep a child as a teenager (for the latter, see Lipper 43-44).

About three weeks into the course, students begin spending time with
and learning firsthand about the goals, challenges, accomplishments and
unmet needs of two groups of women: pregnant and parenting teens at a
large public high school, and single mothers living in subsidized housing
facilities run by local non-profits. Except in unusual circumstances, students
are expected to devote at least fifteen hours over the course of the semester
to such service-learning experiences; most students interact directly with
the mothers and mothers-to-be, but some spend time with the social service
providers that in various ways support these primarily low-income women.
In their reflective journal entries, which count 45 percent of the final course
grade, students are asked to integrate what they’ve learned from course
readings with knowledge gained “in the field”; then they are required to
use this dual-sourced knowledge to individually or collectively design and
implement activist projects. The projects vary greatly; they have included
interactive sessions on ways to prepare for job interviews, handbooks describ­
ing the degree programs and financial aid opportunities at local community
colleges, and “spa nights” at which the mothers receive written materials
on stress management and positive parenting after they have been treated
to dinner, a manicure, a yoga or belly-dancing lesson, and (of course) free childcare. Some projects the students have embarked on offer less direct but more long-term, structural support to our community’s single mothers—indeed, to our community’s low-income families in general. These projects, which are done in collaboration with local non-profit agencies and completed after students in two or three seminars have contributed to the effort, include a manual (both in English and Spanish) that lists free and low-cost health resources available to local residents, and a directory of area childcare facilities that (among other things) maps each facility’s location in relation to public bus routes.

The first time I first taught the “Single Motherhood” course (fall 2005) I had six students; I have since taught the course four times, with enrollments ranging from 15 to 18 students. Before offering the seminar a second time, I decided to develop an “outcomes assessment” tool that I hoped would help me determine whether students were (1) truly more knowledgeable about the realities of single mothers’ lives at the end of the semester, and (2) whether they were less prone to endorse some of the dominant culture’s negative stereotypes about and misperceptions of teenage and low-income single mothers. In their reflective journals, most students claim that they’ve developed a more accurate and positive view of single mothers, but since the journal entries are graded and students know very well that I want to read such statements, I wondered how genuine such comments were. So I designed a survey (see Appendix 1) that I distribute on the first day of class—before I hand out the syllabus or say anything at all about course content, goals, or requirements. At the end of the semester, students complete the survey again; in both cases, they do so anonymously.

I should note at this point that my doctoral degree is in English literature; I have lots of experience identifying recurrent themes in student (and other) writing and selecting quotations that are typical—or particularly intriguing to discuss. However, my scholarly background does not include any formal training in the design and analysis of surveys; I have relied upon my colleagues in Psychology and a couple of student research assistants to help me analyze the data I’ve gathered.1 What follows is a humanist’s account of ways in which the two-pronged feminist maternal pedagogy she employs in her service-learning seminar seems to not only enhance her students’ knowledge of and respect for teenage and low-income single mothers, but also helps her surrogate children develop or hone their skills as activists.2
The “before and after” survey contains a section eliciting demographic information, then asks students to respond to thirty-nine statements using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 registering strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. Some of the statements measure how knowledgeable a student is; others measure the extent to which a student believes that the U.S. is a meritocracy (see McIntosh 358-60) or endorses false and demeaning stereotypes about the populations studied in the course. As Appendix 1 reveals, for two-thirds of the statements (26 of the 39) there was a statistically significant change in students’ factual knowledge or in their perceptions of single mothers, including those on “welfare” (the word generally used in the U.S. as a synonym for cash assistance the government provides to impoverished individuals and families). Since student responses to questions on the survey did not vary in a statistically significant way from year to year, the likelihood that shifts in opinion are due to chance is very small).3

Greater Familiarity with “The Facts”

As is revealed by Appendix 1 (which notes the degree of statistically significant change in responses to each item) and Appendix 2 (which contains frequency bar graphs), my service-learning students did become more knowledgeable about many issues over the course of the semester. For example, after discussing course readings and interacting regularly with low-income mothers and social service providers, most students knew that it is not true that “The primary beneficiaries of most taxpayer/government social service programs are our country’s most economically disadvantaged citizens” (item 1); they had become aware that such programs disproportionately benefit the middle class and wealthy (Gilens 15). Whereas student responses to item 1 had hovered in the middle of the spectrum at the beginning of the semester, with over 43 percent “somewhat” or “strongly” agreeing with the assertion, by the end of the semester more than 88 percent of the students disagreed with the claim, 32.7 of them “strongly.”

Similarly, at the beginning of the semester only 41 percent of students disagreed with the frequently uttered but false claim that “It is fairly common for women on welfare to have additional children so that they can
increase the amount of their monthly welfare payments” (item 7). By the end of the course, that number had risen to 76.5 percent, with 52.9 percent of the class (as opposed to an earlier 19.6 percent) strongly objecting to this statement. Most students had become aware of the reality: many states do not increase monthly payments by a single cent if a woman on welfare has another child, and as for those states that provide tiny increases, a Georgia welfare director says it all: “anyone who thinks that a woman goes through nine months of pregnancy, the pain of childbirth and 18 years of rearing a child for $45 more a month … has got to be a man” (qtd. in Moody 94).

During the course of the semester, an increasing number of students also became aware that although the U.S. government will pay (indeed is required to pay) foster parents for providing care to a child whose mother is in prison, the government generally does not offer cash assistance to relatives who provide such care (item 20; Ascione and Dixson 279). Initially, only 21.5 percent were aware of this sad state of affairs; four months later, 62 percent were “in the know.” An increasing number of students also came to realize that quite a few teachers and guidance counselors actually discourage teen mothers from finishing high school or pursuing post-secondary education. At the beginning of the semester, close to 90 percent of the responses to item 29 were grouped in the middle of the scale, with only about 37 percent of the students believing that high school teachers and officials might discourage a young mom’s educational ambitions. By the end of the course, almost 60 percent knew that this is often the case.

Other statements on the survey ask students to make value judgments about the welfare system—to indicate whether they think particular policies of the present or recent past are fair and reasonable. The data suggests that students find memorable the readings and the many discussions (both in the classroom and with single mothers) that focus on the so-called welfare “reform” that began in 1996 when the federal government passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and replaced Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). For example, students learn both from readings and from women who have been on welfare that under the supposedly improved system, single mothers have many fewer opportunities to pursue formal education—often the best route to economic self-sufficiency (Adair, “Fulfilling the Promise”); have to work longer and longer hours to “earn” the right to cash assistance, even when
they have very young children (Handler 38); have their privacy invaded with increasing frequency (Madsen 144); and sometimes are punished quite harshly for minor, even unavoidable infractions of rules that don't make much sense in the first place (Owens-Manley).

As data in the appendices reveals, students were more critical of existing welfare policies at the end of the semester than when the course began. Initially, only a little over a third of the students disagreed with the notion that “Welfare recipients who are caught earning ‘under the table’ money or committing other kinds of fraud should be kicked off the welfare rolls, at least temporarily” (item 4). At the end of the semester, 77.6 percent of the students disagreed with this statement, and the percentage who disagreed “strongly” (36.7 percent) almost equaled the percentage of all those who initially disagreed (37.3 percent). Similarly, students became more critical of work requirements for women on welfare who have children under the age of three (item 14). The first day of class, 68.6 percent thought poor women with young children should not be forced to spend thirty hours or more in the paid labor force to be eligible for cash assistance; 92.2 percent of the students found the policy objectionable at the end of the semester.

The data gathered from the survey is consistent with reflective journal entries in which students claim that course readings and firsthand interaction with low-income single mothers made them more aware of the inadequacies of government-sponsored programs to support these women. Shannon writes that before taking the course,

I didn't know that the welfare checks were not enough for someone to live on, let alone raise a family. I didn't know that once you were on welfare you, in a sense, lost some of your civil liberties like the right to privacy.... Most of the time women on welfare are damned if they do and damned if they don't. A welfare mom can't work late nights because she's neglecting her children but if she doesn't work late nights, then she's also neglecting her kids because then she can't feed and clothe them.

Jemirah makes a similar observation:

I think the most important thing I learned is how convoluted the welfare system is and how hard some women battle each and every day to work through the ever-changing rules to make sure their
children are fed and have shelter. I never realized how difficult it is to get public assistance, and didn’t realize all the struggles people go through with case workers, filling out forms, etc. Learning all these things taught me to reject the stereotype that “people on welfare are lazy.”

Whereas Shannon and Jemirah speak of changes in mindset, Aliyah is ready to take what she has learned and start working for social justice. “I’m both proud and humbled by my experience in this class,” she writes at the end of the semester.

I’m proud because I now have such an important tool at my disposal. I have the knowledge to encourage others to take a closer look at the experiences of single moms, especially those who live in poverty. I’m proud that I can rail against workfare and the state of welfare “reform.” …I’m also humbled that I have had very personal access into the lives of many women, through readings and in person, who shared so openly with the hope of simply being heard…. Because of those women, I can now speak and act with confidence, knowing that when we help each other, we all are better off. Now we just have to make it happen!

From Disapproval and Pity to Respect and Admiration

Quite a few students enter the service-learning seminar pitying teenage and low-income single mothers: “I subconsciously assumed that having only one parent was automatically a disadvantage for a child,” an embarrassed Ellie confesses. Even more common is a belief that many women on welfare are either unmotivated to begin with, or become lazy and complacent after living (quite comfortably, students often assume) “on the dole.” Several items on the survey are specifically designed to measure the extent to which students endorse such notions; in all cases, there was a statistically significant attitudinal shift, with students having a much more accurate and positive perception of the women they were learning about and from at the end of the semester. For example, over half (56.9 percent) of the students initially agreed that “For many recipients, welfare becomes a crutch and leads to the development of ‘learned helplessness’”; by the end of the semester, only 11.7 percent agreed with this assertion (item 35). An equally dramatic shift is evident in responses
to the statement “Most welfare recipients try very hard to find jobs that will allow them to become economically self-sufficient” (item 12); the number in agreement with this assertion went from 58.9 percent to 96.1 percent. And when it came to the idea that the U.S. is a meritocracy in which “Almost anyone … who works hard enough can eventually move out of poverty” (item 22), the number of students who believe that this is not the case rose significantly, from 72.5 percent to 94 percent.

As students learned from books and real people about the inadequacies of U.S. government-sponsored programs to help low-income single mothers attain economic self-sufficiency, they became even more supportive of increases in government welfare spending, even if it meant higher taxes for themselves. Because this is an upper-division Women’s and Gender Studies courses that enrolls students who to a certain extent have already had “their consciousnesses raised,” most students (60.8 percent) disagreed from the beginning with the statement “Too much taxpayer money is spent on welfare” (item 5). However, by the end of the course 96.1 percent of the students disagreed, 62.7 percent of them “strongly.” Similarly, the number of students expressing a commitment to personally supporting impoverished single mothers increased. With item 9—“I would be willing to pay slightly higher taxes if the money went into the funds available for welfare recipients” [the majority of whom are single mothers]—student responses initially were clustered in the middle, with close to 90 percent selecting (and in almost equal numbers) either “neutral” or one of the two “somewhat” answers. Four months later, the 16 students (31.4 percent of the total) who had been unwilling to experience a small personal tax hike to help those needing cash assistance have magically disappeared. A few students (15.7 percent) remain neutral, but the remaining 84.3 percent are willing—at least on paper!—to support low-income single mothers with their hard-earned dollars, half of them enthusiastically. Again, survey data are in keeping with comments in students’ reflective journals. For example, Donna decided to send a petition to all U.S. senators, explaining in a cover letter how important it is for them to raise the cutoff point for welfare eligibility at the same time they are raising the minimum wage. “The government needs to reassess the regulations and rules that have been set forth by TANF in order to fix and improve the system,” Donna asserts. “The course has taught me that it is possible to make a difference…. I’m not going to stop until I get a response about someone taking positive action. This class has changed my views on welfare and has made me a bit of an activist, which I must say, I’m starting to enjoy!”
Student Assessments of Service-Learning Pedagogy

When asked at the end of the semester to write at some length about the relationship between and the relative value of the “experiential” and “traditional” components of the seminar, students claim that both elements were essential to the learning process. When it comes to assigned readings, they especially emphasize the value of the essays, books, and films we discuss before they have direct contact with teenage and low-income single mothers. Many students argue that had they not had some sense of what the lives of such women might be like before they met the women, they probably, in Kenia's words, would have been “totally unprepared and unsuited for the experience.” On the other hand, many argue that getting to know the single mothers was what made the information they encountered in assigned readings especially meaningful and memorable. Jill writes:

For me it was very important to have background knowledge and statistics and personal stories because then you go down to TSA [the transitional housing facility] having some idea about what these women deal with every single day ... because before I really had no idea. But it's the women at TSA who make the assigned stories and facts come alive. You don't get the full picture of what it's like to be a poor single mom unless you submerge yourself in these women's lives as much as possible.

Serena makes a similar comment, writing

If I were to volunteer at TSA outside the context of this class, I would have absolutely no idea what the women who live there go through and probably not have as much respect for them as I do now. I put a great deal of effort into researching local college scholarships because I've read about other poor mothers who are discouraged from going back to school and I want the women I've come to know to succeed.

Or as Wendy remarks:

All semester long we've been trying to understand poor and teen-aged single moms ... what makes them tick, why they are the way
they are, and why we can’t apply what we see as logical thinking to their lives…. Few of us could survive in the way that these moms have had to. So we learn not to belittle them; in fact, we celebrate their successes.

Marvin writes more specifically about how interactions with the single mothers have inspired him to engage in social justice work—and taught him the importance of persistence and collective action: “I think the service component is a great outlet for the frustration we feel reading the textual information,” Marvin remarks. “However, it’s kind of a double-edged sword … the more work we do, the more work we see we have to do. Working to support the moms keeps us frustrated and challenged and doesn’t make us think the little bit we are doing is just going to make the problems vanish in a week. It makes us see how important sustaining the effort is.”

Sandra also credits experiential learning as the component of the course that most enlightened and motivated her; she confesses that:

As much as I wish I could say I was more influenced by the numbers and the graphs and the figures, it’s the personal accounts that have really brought issues home to me. I wanted to get to know the mothers we worked with not to compare myself and tell myself how lucky I was, but to educate myself, so that I could in turn educate others and be a better example in the way I talked about poverty, welfare, and single motherhood. Through their own sisterhood, these mothers taught me the importance of ‘working together’ when you’re trying to address a problem. For welfare to be reformed, legislators and policy makers have to work with single mothers and people who are poor—not just throw rules, regulations, and arbitrary opportunities at them. So, besides learning how to carry an infant and chase a toddler at the same time, I learned one major thing from this course: never assume that just because a given course only occupies one semester on your transcript, the ideas and issues it has raised need to stay there.

A fair number of my “surrogate children” are pursuing social justice work as graduate students or in their professional lives; many of them email me with some regularity, sharing their accomplishments and challenges and/or sending me information about resources I might find useful when teaching
my service-learning seminar. I may have nudged some of these students to make activism a central part of their lives, but others were probably headed in that direction before they were exposed to my particular brand of feminist maternal pedagogy. This pedagogy grows out of a conviction that the knowledge students gain from “doing feminism”—and equally importantly, subjecting that “doing” to intellectually rigorous analysis—is likely to be deep knowledge, knowledge that stays with students and guides and informs their future behavior.

I’ll let Melissa, an extremely shy senior who took the “Single Motherhood” seminar a few months before entering the corporate world, have the last words on the deep learning that can result when students have a chance to learn with and from—not just about—individuals who are marginalized and oppressed. “I don’t usually do this,” Melissa writes,

but I just wanted to tell you how your course has affected my life…. During Thanksgiving I felt tested as my family brought up the welfare system and made comments as naive as mine before I had taken the class. A woman was talking about a service project she was part of where they bought … cribs and toys for low-income single mothers. In the midst of her story, a man interrupted with “I’m sorry, but those women should either close their legs or the government should make it a law that they are religious about taking their birth control.” (Prof. Byrd, you know that I do not do well with speaking in large groups, but I was appalled and after a semester of learning what we had, I felt compelled to speak up). So to everyone’s surprise, I went on a (about 20 minute) rant about how ridiculous a comment he had made and how a low income mother might not be able to afford birth control or make appointments for birth control since not many of them would have cars to get there and how unrealistic and sexist his comment was. He rebutted with “well, most of the women on welfare have as many babies as they can so that they can get money for each child.” The conversations from our classes (especially the class where young moms in the Nurse-Family Partnership program came to speak with us) came rushing to my head. Last year I would have listened to this conversation and nodded in agreement. However, I just want you to know how much your class has changed my perspective on these issues. Because of the
knowledge that I obtained, I felt confident enough to stand up to a man twice my age and speak my opinion.... I could tell the man was embarrassed and he said "well, I've never thought about it like that." THANKS AGAIN!

Thank YOU, Melissa, for demonstrating the value of a feminist maternal pedagogy grounded in service-learning.

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I use the word "seems" because I cannot prove definitively that the increased knowledge of and respect for teenage and low-income single mothers that is recorded in the outcomes assessment instrument is due solely or exclusively to these students having taken my service-learning seminar. Because I'm new to this kind of research, it didn't occur to me to establish a comparison or control group by having students not enrolled in the course also take the survey. However, the fact that the same trends occur all four years makes it highly likely that course readings and activities had a great deal to do with the statistically significant changes in students' responses to many of the questions.

The statements for which there is no statistically significantly change in student responses tend to be of two kinds: (1) statements about topics that ended up receiving very little attention in readings and class discussion, and (2) factual information that students seemed to know before beginning the course.

Works Cited


Appendix 1

Statements on the “Before” and “After” Survey

Note:
* means that the P < .05
** means that P < .01
*** means that P < .001

If no asterisks are attached to the statement, there was not a statistically significant change in students’ responses from the beginning to the end of the semester.

1. The primary beneficiaries of most tax-payer/government social service programs are our country’s economically disadvantaged citizens. (***)

2. Before the 60-month lifetime limit was established in 1996, many adults who went on welfare were not motivated to find paying jobs and remained on the welfare rolls for many years, even decades. (***)

3. Almost all of the girls who become mothers as teenagers are either ignorant about sex or careless about using adequate birth control methods.

4. Welfare recipients who are caught earning “under the table” money or committing other kinds of fraud should be kicked off the welfare rolls, at least temporarily. (***)

5. Too much taxpayer money is spent on welfare. (***)

6. When calculating the amount of federal financial aid a single parent can receive, financial aid officers should be able to take into account the amount of money the parent must spend on the children’s food, clothing, and daycare. (*)

7. It is fairly common for women on welfare to have additional children so that they can increase the amount of their monthly welfare payments. (***)

8. About 25% of single parent families headed by women live in poverty. (*)
9. I would be willing to pay slightly higher taxes if the money went into the fund available for welfare recipients. (***)
10. The U.S. leads all industrialized nations in the percentage of its citizens in jail, in prison, or on probation. (***)
11. The amount of cash assistance a welfare recipient receives is the amount that the government estimates is needed to move the family slightly above the poverty line.
12. Most welfare recipients try very hard to find jobs that will allow them to become economically self-sufficient. (***)
13. The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is about the same as that of other industrialized democracies.
14. Able-bodied women with children under the age of 3 should be required to work 30 or more hours a week in order to receive welfare payments. (***)
15. About half the women in the U.S. find themselves living in poverty after getting divorced.
16. The majority of welfare recipients are African-American. (**) 
17. The percentage of females becoming mothers as teenagers has increased dramatically from 1950 to the present. (***)
18. Welfare recipients should be able to earn their right to be on welfare by taking high school, college, or job training courses rather than by working at a paying job. (***)
19. Any benefits that accrue from being a teenaged mom are almost always outweighed by the disadvantages of becoming a mother at a young age.
20. The government will provide childcare subsidies to relatives of female prisoners so that the women's children do not have to go into foster homes. (**) 
21. Children are the primary beneficiaries of our welfare system.
22. Almost anyone in the U.S. who works hard enough can eventually move out of poverty. (***)
23. Most teen mothers come from low-income families.
24. Most welfare recipients are genuinely in need of financial help. (*)
25. The U.S. spends about the same amount of its Gross National Product on social services as do other industrialized democracies. (***)

26. White teenaged mothers graduate high school at a higher rate than black teen moms.

27. If one earns a salary while on welfare, the amount of one's earnings should be deducted from one's monthly welfare payments. (***)

28. Given that about a third of welfare agency employees once were on welfare themselves, it's not surprising that they tend to be knowledgeable about welfare regulations and very supportive of their clients. (***)

29. Most high school teachers and guidance counselors encourage teen mothers to finish high school, then pursue higher education or good job training programs. (**) 

30. About 1 out of 20 (5%) of Pennsylvania residents live below the poverty line.

31. Many teen mothers were physically or sexually abused as children. (**) 

32. A full-time day care worker earns a salary just slightly above the poverty line. (*)

33. Few welfare recipients have held full-time jobs before going on welfare. (**) 

34. The males who father teenaged girls' children are generally teens themselves. 

35. For many recipients, welfare becomes a crutch and leads to the development of "learned helplessness." (***) 

36. Teenaged girls are becoming mothers at a much faster rate than U.S. females in any other age group. 

37. When adjusted for inflation, the salaries of most U.S. workers have declined over the past thirty years. (*)

38. About 25% of America's poor are black. 

39. When welfare recipients receive Section 8 vouchers for subsidized housing, they generally have to wait about a year before such housing becomes available. (*)
Appendix 2

1. The primary beneficiaries of most tax-payer/government social service programs are our country's economically disadvantaged citizens.

4. Welfare recipients who are caught earning "under the table" money or committing other kinds of fraud should be kicked off the welfare rolls, at least temporarily.
5. Too much taxpayer money is spent on welfare.

7. It is fairly common for women on welfare to have additional children so that they can increase the amount of their monthly welfare payments.
9. I would be willing to pay slightly higher taxes if the money went into the fund available for welfare recipients.

12. Most welfare recipients try very hard to find jobs that will allow them to become economically self-sufficient.
14. Able-bodied women with children under the age of 3 should be required to work thirty or more hours a week in order to receive welfare payments.

22. Almost anyone in the U.S. who works hard enough can eventually move out of poverty.