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THE POLITICAL USE OF “FAMILY VALUES” RHETORIC

by

CAROLINE POWELL

Under the Direction of Michael Bruner

ABSTRACT

The bipartisan political slogan “family values,” coupled with discourse surrounding the supposed breakdown of the American family, is a rhetorical move used by political agencies in an effort to excuse the socio-economic failings in America and to reassign responsibility for these failings to the private sphere. This rhetoric tends to promote the idealized nuclear family, while marginalizing the poor and non-traditional family groups.

INDEX WORDS: Family values, American family, Nuclear family, Traditional Family, Welfare reform

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CAROLINE POWELL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Elizabeth Caroline Powell
Master of Arts

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Chapter 1: The Problematization of "Family Values" Rhetoric

I would like to posit that the bipartisan political slogan "family values," coupled with discourse surrounding the supposed breakdown of the American family, is a rhetorical move used by political agencies in an effort to excuse the socio-economic failings in America and to reassign responsibility for these failings to the private sphere. This rhetoric tends to promote the idealized nuclear family, while marginalizing the poor and non-traditional family groups. In this study I examine the ideological patterns found within this rhetoric and show that these patterns are echoed in certain enacted legislative policies that affect families.

The first chapter of my study is a literature review of the history of American family forms prevalent during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how these forms evolved into the traditional nuclear family consisting of the husband, wife, and children. This family form became the basis for family values rhetoric in the latter half of the twentieth century. This study illustrates that the nuclear family model came to be a highly desired family form, but was not the reality for most impoverished or minority families. Yet, this ideal family form came to represent the American family and became the family form upon which American welfare policies are structured. I also discuss the connection between family values rhetoric and ideas surrounding American welfare recipients and policies. This interconnection gains credibility through the frequent use of this rhetoric in conjunction with welfare discourse. Finally, this chapter gives a brief overview of ideographic analysis. The second chapter establishes the ideographic theoretical framework using the concept founded by American rhetorical theorist and

social critic Michael Calvin McGee and backed by studies of ideographic analysis by Celeste Condit, John Lucaites, Carol Winkler, Lisa Cuklanz, Maurice Charland, and Dana Cloud. This chapter explains my methodology of how ideographs are defined and used as tools within our rhetorical culture. I offer various examples of ideographic studies to illustrate the concept of the ideograph and how it is created, defined, and used persuasively. Through these examples the family values ideograph is defined and illustrated in narratives that are divided into themes that operate via other ideographs and labels.

Chapter three looks at the myths surrounding the nuclear family form, comparing these myths to some of the "family" realities. I introduce the idea of the "golden age" thought to be a time in our history when "family values" were valued. Also discussed are the variations of what constituted those values and how those values became linked to ideas about the poor and, consequently, about the welfare system to care for the poor. Starting in the 1920's and moving forward, I document the prevalent attitudes regarding the poor as deserving or undeserving depending upon whatever "values" they are perceived to practice.

Chapter four is the ideographic analysis of varying discourse from the George H.W. Bush and the William Jefferson Clinton administrations. Family values are identified as they operate as labels and characterizations within the narratives on families and values. I provide analyses of specific themes and patterns in which the family values ideograph is characterized in various political texts including excerpts from various political speeches, books, and Congressional hearings. These excerpts are identified as narratives, labels or associated ideographs and are divided into seven themes: nostalgia (golden age myth);

welfare to workfare; the breakdown of the nuclear family associated with societal problems; marriage as a cure for poverty; stigmatization; morality; and how family values are defined. The fifth chapter correlates these characterizations (patterns) found in the rhetorical examples of chapter four with the language found in the Personal Responsibility Work and Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). This legislation was chosen because family values rhetoric dominates the national discourse on welfare (in historic and contemporary times as well). Other representative policies included are the Family Support Act 1988 and the Defense of Marriage Act 1996. Most of the ideographic themes are present within the policies. Finally, my analysis shows that the "family values" ideograph (and associated characterizations) is present in the political and religious narratives on the family and translate into legally binding policy initiatives and directives. As a sweeping welfare reform package, the PRWORA produced negative effects for many marginalized and impoverished families. The last chapter includes my findings, discussion, conclusions, and a look at the PRWORA ten years later.

The problem with the rhetoric of family values in contemporary political discourse is that it points to the family unit as the indicator of the successes or failures of socio-economic power structures. It especially targets those families who do not fall under the traditional nuclear model, such as single parent homes, minorities, and impoverished families. Politicians often refer to the need to return to family values, yet they seem to have no understanding of the social and economic bases that make those values possible. Instead, the populace is persuaded to yearn for some kind of past mythical age when life was safer and better. The rhetoric of family values suggests that our social and economic crises are due to the failures of families rather than any kind of problem with the political

system. When things are going well, we credit our family ideal, but when things are not going well we look to the dysfunctional elements of family life for blame (Coontz, 1992, p. 2). Overemphasizing personal responsibility for strengthening family values encourages moralizing rather than mobilizing in order to find solutions. Values are important to Americans, but not to the extent that scapegoating becomes acceptable. Our values make a difference in our response to economic challenges and political institutions, but those same institutions and social support networks reinforce certain values and exclude others (p. 22).

The problematization of family values rhetoric is necessary in order to unmask the underlying political powers at work by showing how this rhetoric can be disempowering to those it claims to emancipate. By its very nature, capitalism produces the "haves" and "have nots." The flaws inherent in the American economic system assure that the poor will always exist. However, rather than attribute inequities to the system, the tendency is to reassign blame for society's socio-economic problems to the individual. The family values rhetoric tends to promote the idea that financial success and societal inclusion are strictly products of being raised in the "right" kind of families (usually the traditional family because, by association, that type of family practices "family values"). The rhetoric becomes a powerful force that can be influential in the passage of legislation affecting non-traditional families, or those that do not adhere to the nuclear family ideal. This rhetoric has been used extensively in political argument for welfare reform. Thus, this linkage must be evaluated in terms of how the power structure employs such rhetoric to implement welfare policy change. Because the majority of those on welfare include women and children, the discussion necessarily involves the traditional roles of men and

women. Single motherhood, in particular, has been a topic of the family values debate. Arguments against single motherhood often include blaming a lack of values as part of the problem. Most arguments focus on problems associated with single teen mothers due to the interrelationship between teen parents and welfare. Thus, in discussions about welfare, women and poverty dominate the discourse. As we see later, the PRWORA, based on mythological narratives, had detrimental consequences for many welfare recipients and led to more restrictive requirements rather than liberation from poverty.

Congresswoman Pat Schroeder noted that three out of every five persons with incomes below the poverty level are women. Divorce, widowhood, unemployment, low pay, and lack of child support are some of the causes of poverty among women. When programs like Medicaid are cut, aid is denied to female heads of household, ultimately having a negative effect on the children who depend on them (Schroeder, 1989, p. 122). When family values are described as stemming from strong nuclear families, then the implication is that those in non-nuclear families do not provide acceptable family values. When the discourse alludes to the necessity of stable home environments with a woman providing the role as primary caregiver to the children, then the inference is that woman who works outside the home out of necessity is somehow “less” of a mother. This way of thinking creates a paradox for those on welfare. The rhetoric implies that good mothers practice family values by staying home and raising their children, yet welfare mothers are required to find paying work. Thus, the argument for welfare reform to provide more equalization, responsibility, and choices among recipients has actually worked to the detriment of some families by narrowing their available choices and labeling them irresponsible parents.

When family values rhetoric seems to privilege the model traditional family (i.e. two heterosexual parents married to each other with children) over the marginalized non-traditional family, then those outside the paradigm suffer. Coltrane and Adams (2003) completed a study and found that the majority of women on welfare find themselves confronted with lower standards of living after a divorce or separation. They assert that the divorce "problem" has been framed by those promoting conservative family values by using social science to portray children of divorce as victims of the breakdown of the moral order (p. 363). The rhetoric of family values and the debates over divorce always resonate with morality issues concerning the social order and changing gender roles (p. 364). Part of the problem with family values rhetoric is that the traditional hierarchal structure of the nuclear family seems to provide the basis upon which family values emanates. The "ideal" family is represented with the woman at home in the domesticated role. As my research shows, this is not the norm in current day America. Thus, much of the discussion surrounding welfare reform centers on the importance and maintenance of stable nuclear families because of the belief that stronger families that stay together are less likely to find themselves on welfare rolls. Although this is a legitimate argument, legislating family forms based on the nuclear family model is problematic because many families become marginalized. Some critics argue that family values has less to do with morality and concern about the health of our citizens and more to do with specific political agendas. When politicians perpetuate the fiction that the traditional nuclear family represents the normal family arrangement in this country, they indirectly influence the policies that affect families.

In order to determine what constitutes family values and how it functions rhetorically, I chose to analyze "family values" as an ideograph. Through an ideographic analysis, the ideograph's function and form can be revealed to see how it works persuasively. Michael McGee first introduced this concept in his 1980 article called "Ideograph: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology," claiming that certain forms of ideology function as instruments of "political consciousness" (p. 3). His theory states that people will think and behave differently as a collective group than they will as an individual. This collectivity is actually a "voluntary agreement to believe in and to participate in a myth" (p. 2). McGee also states that the political leadership is affected by this same collectivity or "false consciousness." He suggests that the illusion of truth in politics is a result of persuasion. Also, the ideological political language is characterized by slogans, or a "vocabulary of ideographs," that can control and influence reality (p. 5). Narratives, labels, and ideographs serve as cultural markers that become "powerful tools for those wishing to advance various ideological perspectives" (Winkler, 2006, p. 7).

Communication scholars John Lucaites and Celeste Condit (1990) theorize that language is an evolutionary process associated with ideological orientations (pp. 7-8). Rhetoric is a "discursive, ideological practice that is and can be actively affected by both individuals and groups…the role of public discourse in social and political change has ignored the extent to which the very phenomenon of 'change' itself is the function of an active socio-rhetorical process" (p. x). In their explanation of this rhetorical process, they present two important ideas: public argumentation and rhetorical culture. Public argumentation occurs when "competing voices" try to determine the "best course of

action." It is represented by an audience (the public) and rhetor (the leader) wherein the rhetor tries to "craft" the audience's understanding of the public good" (p. xii).

Rhetorical culture includes the linguistic tools available to a rhetor including aphorisms, characterizations, ideographs, images, metaphors, myths, and narratives. Of these, the ideograph operates as a critical element of any rhetorical culture (p. xii). When rhetors use ideographs in public discourse to gain support of a particular audience, they must use them consistently within their collective meaning (p. xiv). By examining how the ideograph's meaning has changed or remained the same over time, we can see how sociopolitical issues are created, negotiated, or abandoned through public discourse. Since ideographs are resistant to change, they provide a part of our public vocabulary that becomes central to the life of a community (p. xiv). Thus, the rhetorical process of public argumentation negotiates the common problems and issues of the community and results in the formation of policies and laws that ultimately govern the community (p. xv).

In order to understand this process, Lucaites and Condit (1990) identify three areas into which public argumentation and rhetorical culture can be separated: narratives, labels, and ideographs (pp. 7-8). Narratives are "public stories that provide coherence and consistency to the scenes, characters, and themes that guide the moral conduct of a society" (Fisher, 1989, pp. 64-65; Winkler, 2006, pp. 9-11). Individuals have their own personal narratives that must interact with the collective narratives if they are to become socially acceptable members of a group (Habermas, 1984, p. 136). These narratives provide a structural framework between labels and create meaning through interrelationships with other narratives. According to Winkler, narratives provide justifications for social change and are also a part of the process of identity formation

(2006, p. 9). Narratives guide behavior, interpret historical events, and define public concerns, thus providing a basis for the collective behavior of a group. Through stories and characters, narratives demonstrate how collective subjects should believe and behave in order to adhere to the community standards by defining acceptable and unacceptable actions and attitudes. Second, they identify interpretations of historical events which are relevant to understanding current issues in the community by re-framing interpretations of the past to moral lessons of today. Finally, narratives give the illusion that individuals are selecting or choosing those behaviors and beliefs they will accept and practice (Winkler, 2006, p. 10; Charland, 1987, pp. 133-150). As narratives change over time, they can become compatible with newer stories or they can require the rejection of one over the other (Winkler, 2006, p. 11). They function to integrate one's existence into a sense of identity.

Linguistic terms can become labels when they are used to describe agents, agencies, acts, scenes, or motives within the public vocabulary (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 1945, p. xv; Winkler, 2006, p. 8; Condit & Lucaites, 1990, p. 7). The terms emphasize certain characteristics and de-emphasize others, such as "the breakdown of the family" rather than "the changing form of the family." One description suggests a negative point of view, the other a more neutral point of view. Thus, labeling becomes a matter of perspective (Winkler, 2006, p. 8). Labels themselves are the product of characterizations surrounding ideological concepts. For instance, family images from the 1950's in the form of television re-runs reinforce the notion that families were stronger and more stable during this era. The images themselves become the characterizations of the nuclear family model. They also appear repeatedly in cultural narratives that have

significance for a community. Taken together, labels within narratives can become ideographs which then constitute a defining cultural term that represents some sort of cultural ideology. According to these criteria, I believe "family values" constitutes an American ideograph that usually occurs in religious or political narratives either as the actual term or through an implied theme.

Family values rhetoric is rooted in religious teachings and doctrine. Most major religions outline specific requirements and recommendations regarding human values and morality. In America, our Judeo-Christian heritage has strongly influenced the values citizens are taught and expected to pass on to future generations. Although the founding fathers laid the groundwork for the political separation of church and state, individual and collective sense of right and wrong and codes of conduct are Biblically-based. As a part of identity formation, our values necessarily become reflected in the policies we put into place. For instance, during debates on the "Causes of Poverty with a Focus on Out-of-Wedlock Births" presented before the 104th Congress, twenty-four witnesses presented testimony regarding what values should be included and excluded from possible welfare reform policy. Of these testimonials, nine represented the views of Christian organizations including the Traditional Values Coalition, the Heritage Foundation, the Christian Coalition, Covenant House, and the Family Research Council (U.S. House of Representatives Committee Ways and Means: "Causes of Poverty with a Focus on Out-of-Wedlock Births," 1996). By structuring the Congressional hearings with groups supporting their platform (including religious conservative groups), the narratives present the rhetorical depictions of welfare recipients consistent with the dominant group's point

of view. Thus, we can see how religious narratives presented in a political arena can make a political impact.

Family values, acting as an ideograph, arguably function as an indicator of cultural ideologies and become a useful rhetorical tool with which to influence public opinion. Thus, I have chosen the ideograph as my theoretical framework to analyze if the family values rhetoric has been used to pass legislation that actually has long-term ill effects on the American non-traditional family. The purpose of this thesis is not to undermine the importance of family and family values and the role they play in policies that legislate right and wrong. A collective consensus of values is the basis of law and order and is crucial to the preservation of individual rights. The purpose of my study is to see if the subject of family values is presented as a universal concept for the greater good and, if so, how is the concept defined and used to influence legislation that may or may not be beneficial to those families it claims to defend. My examination is three-fold: to trace the history of the family and family values rhetoric to see if the perceptions reflect the reality; to analyze excerpts from Republican and Democratic speeches of the George H.W. Bush and the William Jefferson Clinton administrations, as well as historical pieces of welfare legislation to isolate the dominant ideologies related to family values; and finally, to examine the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996 to see if this ideograph of family values is at work within the policy. Ultimately, this study evaluates how “family values” operates ideographically through public rhetoric and argumentation.

The Historical Significance of the Nuclear Family

Historians of the family have documented the existence of the nuclear family structure originating in Western Europe in the sixteenth century, in England and Italy since the twelfth century, and in the United States since its settlement. However, the identification of family with home is a relatively recent idea that can be traced to the late eighteenth century (Hareven, 1991, p. 253). Industrialization ushered in a new economic age as well as a new family ideology. In pre-industrialized society the household consisted of more than husband, wife, and children. Often the make-up of the family unit included extended family members, servants, apprentices, and boarders, as well as those who did not fit into productive society such as the mentally ill, orphans, the elderly, and terminally ill patients who were placed in homes by local authorities. Families were characterized by sociability rather than privacy, and households were generally crowded with little or no privacy (p. 254).

The bourgeois families in eighteenth century France and England introduced the notion of the home as a private retreat from public activities. New ideals of domesticity emerged in association with the modern family. The roles of husband and wife became segregated with the man expected to work outside the home to support the wife and children and the woman expected to work within the home as full-time housekeeper and mother. The world of work became separated from the world of family (Hareven, 1991, p. 255). This sexual division of labor created complementary couples. Each had their assigned roles in establishing and maintaining the social order (Matthaei, 1980, p. 199).

By the nineteenth century, these boundaries between the family and the outside world began to form the basis for the modern nuclear family image. In America the

nuclear family ideal fully emerged during the Victorian era in the 1830's and 1840's. Victorian society raised the cult of womanhood and the idealized home to a religious level. The redefinition and segregation of individual roles within a family also brought about new attitudes regarding childhood. Childhood was re-shaped as an extended period of nurturing with the goal of creating responsible, productive citizens (Ruether, 1975, p. 651). However, this change did not cut across class lines. The ability to create this new family ideal relied on the lower classes that were too poor and powerless to create their own family "retreats" (Coontz, 1992, pp. 10-11). The work contributions of the lower classes in the maintenance and running of the middle-class home enabled the occupants to devote more time to child rearing. Domestic work was primarily reserved for women and children of those less financially fortunate. Cooking, cleaning, and childcare were designated to outside help, thus freeing the wealthy woman of the house to pursue hobbies, friendships, and other leisure activities and to concentrate her efforts on keeping her husband happy (pp. 65-67).

By the early 1900's, the nuclear family was on the move from the cities to the suburbs, making domestic life in the suburbs an idealized escape from the stresses of city life (Hareven, 1991, p. 268). According to the 1920 census, America was undergoing a transformation from a rural society to an urban-suburban nation. This urbanization reflected a change in the economic base and increased the number and size of American cities. Giving rise to unprecedented growth of the middle classes, this transformation played a large role in politics, consumerism, leisure activities, and educational opportunities (Schlereth, 1991, pp. 28-29). However, working class families did not enjoy the same privileges. In addition to holding down full-time work, working class

women still had the burden as primary caregiver to their own families in the maintenance of the home. They also had less opportunity and resources to acquire labor saving technology. Privacy and segregation of roles were less important to the greater goal of family survival. Thus, working class families had little separation between domestic and work life (Hareven, 1991, p. 243). Yet, the significance of the new ideals for "home" and "family" cut across all class lines, although only the middle to upper classes actually benefited from them. The single common factor between the classes was the need for autonomy. The separation of work and home and the increasing belief that the domestic lifestyle benefited future generations became sacred values in American society (p. 259). The home became synonymous with personal success and became a place of relaxation and recreation (Schlereth, 1991, p.95).

The concept of "home" took on symbolic meaning. Before the onset of industrialization, the boundaries between the home and public were at times invisible. After industrialization a preference emerged for making the home the center from which individuals conducted their lives (Matthaei, 1980, p. 199). The private middle-class home of the nineteenth century included only family members and servants. Apprentices, boarders, and dependent community members disappeared from middle class homes. The home was no longer the place of production, the welfare agency, or the educational institution for children. Work was increasingly found out of the home, the state created institutions for the handicapped, the aged, and the mentally ill, and children began attending school outside of the home (Hareven, 1991, p. 255). With this transformation (glorifying the home as the center of emotional well-being) came distinctive roles that

segregated women into the private sphere and men into the public sphere. Home became an important part of identity for the middle class (Welter, 1966, p. 154).

After World War II, American industry catered to a form of consumerism that revolved around this domesticity trend. This industrialization led to the creation of labor-saving technology that would facilitate the operation of the home (the overall idea being that if the home runs more efficiently then mother can give more attention to her husband and children). These new devices (washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners) created new codes of behavior and cast the "home" as an institution of industrial capitalism (Hareven, 1991, p. 257). More importantly, the family was no longer viewed as a community unit, but as a membership of individuals filling specific roles. Emphasis on personal achievement and financial success usurped the more community-centered values. One of the most influential technologies of this era was the television. Consumerism was bolstered further with the introduction of television. Advertisements for products could be delivered straight into one's living room. Both ads and programming portrayed images of ideal families and living conditions, giving the family values ideograph visual affirmation.

As the war ended, soldiers returned home to tremendous job opportunities in a newly emerging economic boom in America. Women were expected to return to home and hearth to tend to the domestic life of nurturing husband and children. Media provided images of idyllic American life and with them new stereotypes were born including that of the American family. Families were depicted with a mother, father, and children dealing with everyday situations common in suburban life. They were usually moralistic or value-centered and their stories always had happy endings. Judith Stacey,

Professor of Sociology at New York University offers a bedtime fable of this idealized time when she wrote:

> Once upon a fabulised [sic] time, half a century ago, there was a lucky land where families with names like Truman and Eisenhower presided over a world of wholesome, middle-class families. Men and women married, made love and (in that proper order), produced gurgling, Gerber babies. It was a land where, as God and Nature had ordained, men were men and women were ladies. As epitomized in the mythic 1950's sitcom characters Ozzie and Harriet, fathers worked outside the home for pay to support their wives and children, and mothers worked inside the home without pay to support their husbands and to cultivate healthy, industrious, above-average children (Stacey, 1995, p. 21).

Although her cynicism is apparent, it is precisely these types of images that, decades later, helped spawn nostalgic notions of idyllic family life which rarely existed except in the minds of citizens.

As the system of needs developed and common ideas regarding "standards of living" arose, the filling of those needs began to necessitate the provision of more capital. While the homemaker filled the family's needs as a consumer of commodities, changes in the economy necessitated her move back into the workforce in order to maintain her family's standard of living. Not only was she still expected to be the full-time domestic "engineer," but she was also expected to be a capital producing family member even in the face of sexual division of labor inequalities (Matthaei, 1980, pp. 200-201). By the latter half of the twentieth century, the so-called traditional families came to be replaced

more and more with blended families and non-traditional families, a move that has required a new definition of family beyond the world of the "Ozzie and Harriet" stereotype (Artlip, Artlip & Saltzman 1993, p. 172). Many children now have family relationships that include step-relatives or even ex-step-relatives. All these relationships have affected lives in a way unimaginable within the nuclear family model. "Family" is becoming more of a feeling than something to be defined (pp. 173-174). Thus, when the rhetoric of family values is alluded to in political venues, the possibility exists that it fails to consider that the idealized nuclear family was only a reality for a select few and a myth for others.

The 1950's nuclear family differed from the Victorian family in its pursuit of autonomy. Servants of the lower classes working for the middle classes were no longer common due to technological advancements that made domestics chores easier and less time-consuming. The nuclear families of the post World War II boom moved out of a productive society to a consumptive one. The values of this era were new as well. Emphasis on individuality, personal happiness, entertainment, and leisure were unprecedented. Gender identities were becoming more influenced by familial and parental roles and less influenced by heritage and professional roles. This time of economic stability coupled with government aid in the form of educational benefits, housing loans, improved transportation, and job training led to unprecedented economic prosperity and new levels of expectations (Coontz, 1992, p. 28).

Our nation experienced dramatic economic growth during this period in history. The narrative tendency is to attribute such success to strong families, family values, honest leadership, and divine inspiration. However, modern-day romanticization of this

exceptional time in history does not offer real solutions to complex contemporary problems. In her 1989 book, *Champion of the Great American Family*, Schroeder argues that politicians need to focus on "national policy that reflects the realities of today's family life and not the romanticism of the past" (p.11). When spending cuts force the working poor to be eliminated from much needed social services, then the stress on the family unit becomes even greater. Decreasing welfare and/or social services spending may look good on paper, but it does little to help preserve the families below the poverty level (Schroeder, 1989 p. 161). She refers to the "family gap" in political pontification as the difference between what politicians say about families and what they actually do for them, and she claims this gap is continually increasing (p. 165).

Members of the executive branch in the 1980's and 1990's drew upon the traditional family discourse calling for a return to the days when family values were valued. Much of the discourse implied that families of their own generation were more wholesome and responsible than younger families. Leadership cited low divorce rates, religious faith, and clearer gender divisions as major contributors to stronger family values than those in today's culture. The family values slogan made popular during the 1992 presidential campaign between George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton hit a nerve with the American public. During a time when divorce rates were up and single parent homes were becoming the norm, the rhetoric of family values gained tremendous support and became a powerful ideological construct.

Family values talk can lead subjects to an unrealistic nostalgia. This rhetoric masks itself because it guides individuals to regard this ideal as a normal, commendable, and socially acceptable goal. Thus, there is mass acceptance of this political ideal without

question. This version of the American past is replete with imagery where men worked outside the home to support their wives and children, while mothers tended the home without pay to support their husbands and to raise healthy, civic-minded children. Our neighborhoods were safe from crime and America was the most virtuous, heroic, technologically advanced country in the world. However, the imagery becomes tarnished when divorce, unwed motherhood, fatherless families, gay rights, and feminism shatter the illusion. The current political discussion centers on divorce, remarriage, blended families, single parenthood, joint custody, domestic partnerships, and two-career households. This "memory" of the "good ol' days" creates a yearning for a fairytale family founded on memory that may or may not be based on real-life experience. However, this "memory" becomes a powerful political force (Stacey, 1995, p. 20). For instance, Barbara Bush made a speech during this campaign, stating:

> American family values should be to teach our children integrity, strength, responsibility, courage, sharing, love of God, and pride in being an American. You know, we know that parents have to cope with so much more in today's world; more drugs, more violence, more promiscuity…You know, when George and I headed West after World War II, we already had our first child…we eventually settled in Midland, a small, decent community where neighbors helped each other; a wonderful place to bring up a family and it still is. George always made time for the kids. I carpooled, was a den mother, and went to more Little League games than I can count (qtd. in Cloud, 1998, p. 395).

She paints a rosy picture of an idyllic family. The rhetoric reifies the nostalgia for a kind of utopian time in her life that simply does not exist for many of those who reside outside of the current dominant group.

During that same campaign year, George H.W. Bush made the following remarks in his address to the Republican National Convention. “Well, let me tell you something. We are going to keep on trying to strengthen the American family to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons” (Bush’s remarks to Republican National Convention 1992). The construction of the family becomes the catalyst to change undesirable social problems in the country. The implications seem to be that if we all practiced family values then there would be no poverty, hatred, racism, or inequality.

Both dominant political parties in the United States claim the family values theme as part of their platforms. In 1994 President Clinton addressed the issue of single parenthood saying, “It is wrong. And someone has to say again, it is simply not right. You shouldn’t have a baby before you’re ready, and you shouldn’t have a baby when you’re not married” (Clinton, W. J., *New York Times*, 1994; A1). In his 1994 State of the Union Address, President Clinton spoke of the decline of the family as an underlying cause of criminal activity when he said, “In our toughest neighborhoods, on our meanest streets, in our poorest rural areas, we have seen a stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family and work—the heart and soul of civilized society. This has created a vast vacuum which has been filled by violence and drugs and gangs” (Clinton, W.J., State of the Union Address 1994). The idea that the solution to socio-economic problems resides in an individual’s upbringing is a bipartisan theme that serves to reify the

dominant hegemonic discourse that continually puts the traditional nuclear family as the normative model to which all others should aspire. The ideal nuclear family is considered by many conservatives not only the appropriate standard by which to judge others, but the norm against which all others are measured (Farhadian, 1999, p. 49).

In 2001, President George H.W. Bush nominated Wade Horn, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, to be Assistant Secretary for family support at the Department of Health and Human Services. Horn pushed for reform that would give preference to needy married couples over needy unmarried people saying, "If we want to revitalize marriage in low-income neighborhoods, we will have to reverse the current preference for single-parent households and favor married couples" (Horn, 1997 Hudson Institute). His position allowed him to influence welfare programs in accordance with his conservative beliefs, implying that non-traditional families are somehow less deserving of government aid than traditional ones. Some women's advocates claimed that Horn promoted gender-based stereotypes. NOW (National Organization for Women) Legal Defense and Education president Kathy Rodgers stated if President Bush's intention was to support families (rather than penalizing and judging some forms over others), he should have appointed someone who would express the "pro-family" views that Mr. Bush espoused when running for office (Taylor, Women's ENews, 2001). Other powerful political groups influencing legislation include the Institute for American Values, the Council on Families in America, the Communitarian Network, the National Marriage Project and Smart Marriages, among others. These organizations continually promote pro-marriage and anti-divorce policies, claiming that research supports the superiority of the married heterosexual-couple family (Stacey, 2001, p. 27). The political

influence of such groups helps ensure the perpetuation of the discourse that promotes policies that could be interpreted as discriminatory against non-traditional nuclear families.

In the 1990's, politicians failed to extend programs to support families and instead provoked moral panic about the decline of the family. In 1996, President Clinton signed the "1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act" into law (Lichter and Crowley, 2003, p. 385). This bill effectively helped put almost a million children into poverty by reducing food stamps by $600 for families earning less than $6300 a year. In the first nine months, 11.4 million people were removed from welfare, and by 1997, 121,000 children with disabilities lost their Supplemental Security Income benefits (Children's Defense Fund). Politicians often spoke of renewed belief in the American spirit as a goal for citizens to embrace. Promises of a secure economic future were expressed if only citizens would work harder to make America a better place. In his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in 1988 Dan Quayle said,

> In 1980, they voted for a bold new course for the country, a course that brought us more jobs for working Americans, more security for a peace-loving people, more respect from friends and foes around the globe, more opportunity for women and minorities, and a renewed belief that America is a land where you can make your dreams come true (Quayle, 1988, p. 6).

In closing his speech, Quayle went on to say, "Miracles do happen all the time in America because we live in freedom and because the energy and imagination of our people makes their dreams come true every day" (Quayle, 1988, p. 7). The implication

being that it only takes energy and imagination to become a success story. Issues surrounding the role of the government in aid to the poor or how an individual overcomes economic and social forces beyond his/her control are not addressed. Part of the process of self-formation is the idea that as humans we think we choose for ourselves. However, the reality is our choices are limited to what is available to us.

Discussions of the difficulty in defining the "family" have become increasingly more significant in current family discourse. Sociologists struggle over finding one universal definition. One sociological definition from 1960 defined family as "a structural unit composed, as an ideal type, of a man and woman joined in socially recognized union and the children [produced from this union]" (VanEvery, 1999, p. 166). Obviously, contemporary families do not necessarily conform to this limited definition. As a result, issues of identity construction surface in regard to how people see themselves and their roles within the family and, ultimately, society. According to Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, humans are shaped and defined through our system of differences and according to whatever identity construction processes within which we find ourselves (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, pp. 138-139). As subjects of that process, we are constantly measuring ourselves against "otherness." In the case of family values, marginalized subjects must always measure themselves against the concept of the model nuclear family (as previously described by Barbara Bush). Perhaps this idea is intended for the common good, but is it truly attainable for all families? I would argue that single parent families, homosexual families, and impoverished families do not have the same opportunities available to them that our political discourse suggests. Many families, including traditional forms, struggle with long work hours, latch-key children, and few social

support services. One of the major flaws with the family values dichotomy is that it sets up the marginal groups as always measuring themselves against an ideal that seems to exist only for a small fraction of society. However, the "family values" ideograph makes life more difficult for all types of families because it undermines the very families it intends to support.

Identity construction necessarily includes gender construction. Traditional familialist discourses tend to discipline women by placing the social responsibility for the community in the home. Thus, women are not only expected to shoulder the burden of raising responsible children, but for raising responsible citizens for the nation as well. The anti-feminist attack on the family can be illustrated using the 1994 International Year of the Family in which right-wing conservatives used the forum as a platform to voice their fears that the nuclear family was under threat by feminists and non-traditional family groups (Janovicek, 1998, p. 163). The rhetoric of family values places the role of female at the core of the family. The mother is ultimately seen as responsible for keeping the family together and for instilling the values that we, as citizens, collectively agree upon (honesty, integrity, work ethic, patriotism, etc.). As a result, the category "woman" is essentialized and inevitably undermined by the constraints under which it functions. Due to the "progress" of the feminist movement, women are expected to do it all. While women have raised themselves from the status of second-class citizens, they are now expected to financially support the family while still domestically supporting it as well. Young women are encouraged to believe they can effortlessly combine family life and career and that this is their burden to bear. The question of a man's ability to balance his life is not an issue.

For the last forty years, feminists have encouraged and pushed through laws demanding equality in the workplace so women could have independence from husbands and family. "No-fault" divorce and other sex-blind reforms have instead punished women in the sense that special circumstances no longer receive special consideration. "It is at this intimate level that feminism has failed women, and maybe no group of women more completely than those who became the very models of feminist achievement" (Crittenden, 1999, p. 24). In a sense, the very freedoms demanded by women have also limited them. Although "we have come a long way, baby" (as depicted by a famous cigarette ad of the 1970's), the hegemonic cultural discourse continues to maintain the Victorian demarcation of gender roles.

Dan Quayle brought national attention to the family values debate and the stereotypical biases inherent in much of the discourse when he challenged television character Murphy Brown on her decision to have a child out-of-wedlock.

> It doesn't help matters when prime time TV has Murphy Brown – a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman – mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone, calling it just another lifestyle choice (Quayle, 1992 Address to the Commonwealth Club of California).

Quayle is clearly critical of this fictional character's choices, accusing the character of deliberately promoting non-traditional family forms. Candace Bergman, who portrayed the character Murphy Brown, disputes Quayle's criticism with her own. "Unfortunately, it seems that for him [Quayle] the only acceptable definition of a family is a mother, a father, and children. And in a country where millions of children grow up in non-traditional families, that definition seems painfully unfair" (qtd. in Benoit and Anderson,

1996, p, 77). She went on to say that the Vice President should change his definition to realize that families come in all varieties, and that what defines a family is commitment, caring, and love (p. 77). Quayle returns to the Murphy Brown incident in his book *The American Family* (1996) and credits himself with being "the catalyst for a national conversation on family values" (p. 2). He contends that "Fathers do matter. Families are the basis of our society. We must support the unified model of father, mother, and child. On this, we're all allies. *Strengthening families should not be a political issue"* (italics are his, p. 2). Equating traditional families to family values, Quayle says, "Enemies to our way of life are those who would challenge the model family viewpoint and seek to compromise these values that make us strong" (p. 280). He clearly promotes the traditional family as the only proper family and he is not alone is his opinion. These sentiments are echoed throughout the national conversation on families.

The traditional nuclear family is a highly desirable family form. The problem occurs when this family form is presented to the American people as the normal, acceptable family form. Taken a step further, when this family form becomes the foundation upon which legislative decisions are passed, the implications for other family forms can have negative consequences. When presented through public argumentation, the nuclear family model is associated with those families who practice family values. Conversely, those in other family models are associated with a lack of family values. Add to this idea that the poor generally live in these "deviant" family forms and the connection implied is that non-traditional family forms result in poverty stemming from this lack of values. When the poor are targeted as being indirectly responsible for socio-economic problems that plague our communities, the focus is shifted away from domestic

policy directives and towards personal responsibility. Blaming the poor for their economic conditions, violence, immorality, and a lack of values masks the underlying political power. Political leadership seeks to "solve" the poverty problem, but since poverty is a condition of a capitalistic system, the problem cannot be solved. By defining "good" families, those employing the tools of our rhetorical culture focus public opinion on individual responsibility rather than addressing faults or deficiencies in our power structure.

Although personal responsibility plays an important role in our society, it is not necessarily the site of the socio-economic problems rooted in the power system. Other family forms become objects of discrimination when legislators favor the nuclear family model over all other family forms and, hence, pass policies that have real-life implications for all families.

Although other studies regarding family values rhetoric have been done, this study focuses on the political use of language by the George H.W. Bush and the William Jefferson Clinton administrations and the possible subsequent effects on legislation. Other research on the topic of family values has been done by Stephanie Coontz and Dana Cloud. In her book, *The Way We Never Were*, Coontz documents the history of the family and how the economy and social climate of the times wrought changes to the reality of family circumstances. She debunks myths regarding gender, self-reliance, and civic responsibility surrounding the tradition of family. Dana Cloud has also done extensive research on families. Her article, "The Rhetoric of Family Values: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility," deals primarily with how family values jargon marginalizes the black community and promotes racism in

this country. While gender and race will be factors in my study, I intend to investigate how specific uses of the family values theme marginalizes single parent families, homosexual families, and others that do not conform to the nuclear family paradigm.

Overview of Methodology

As previously mentioned, I use Michael McGee's concept of the ideograph for the framework of this paper. McGee defines the ideograph as "an ordinary-language term found in political discourse that is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable" (McGee, 1980, p. 15). He explains that "ideology in practice is political language" and is "characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of ideographs easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy" (p. 3). By analyzing ideographic usage in rhetoric the "patterns of political consciousness" are revealed. This consciousness has the capacity to influence or even control the shape of an individual's reality (p. 3).

When speaking of ideographs we are looking for specific slogans or words or phrases that connote a gestalt, or rather a one-term sum that is used symbolically to represent a collective belief or behavior. For example, terms such as "equality," "liberty," "freedom of speech," and "religion" are defined according to the beliefs and behaviors of the citizens within any given culture. Humans are conditioned from birth to an entire vocabulary of concepts that function as guides or reasons for certain beliefs and behaviors. Everyone is conditioned to accept the logic of the ideograph without question.

More importantly, ideographs exist in real discourse and function as agents of political consciousness (McGee, 1980, p. 7). These terms are definitive of our society and are conditions of the society which we must accept in order to "belong" (p. 9). The concept "ideograph" is used to represent the social human condition. It is a word or a group of words that represent ideas (p. 6). Celeste Condit and John Lucaites (1990) describe ideographs as "structured tensions" that represent public sentiment regarding society's commitments to its citizens. They argue that the public remains in a state of rhetorical struggle over the meanings of shared ideographs (p. 18).

Ideographs are always understood in their relation to other ideographs. The way an ideograph is understood *now* is mainly determined by what it meant *then* (McGee, 1980, p. 8). Each ideograph has a history diachronically linking current meaning to its past usages. This history is referred to as the vertical structure and is found in media, songs, and classroom textbooks. We are socialized to understand "patriotism" when we learn the stories of Paul Revere or Patrick Henry. People are expected to understand them within a range of acceptable usage. Ideographs can be thought of at any specific moment wherein their relationship to one another produces unity in a particular historical context (p. 12). This theory assumes ideographs exist as cultural ideals, but gain meaning in the collective interpretations of the public and in their operating environment (Condit and Lucaites, 1990, p. 7). If we consider Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad, we can characterize ideographs through agents, acts, scenes, agency, and purposes that provide a move from the experience of daily life to collective cultural connotation (Burke, 1945, p. 43-46). If we view family values as an ideograph, we notice that it is agent-centered and emphasizes personal responsibility rather than social environment. This emphasis of

agent over scene tends to overlook issues of the socio-economic structure (Cloud, 1998, p. 389). After the Rodney King verdict in 1992, when riots broke out around the Los Angeles area, Dan Quayle was quoted as saying, "I believe the lawless social anarchy which we saw is directly related to the breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility and social order in too many areas of our society…There is simply no excuse for the mayhem that followed [the verdict]. To apologize or in any way excuse what happened is wrong" (qtd. in Rosenthal, 1992, p. A1). The "no excuse" clause implies an agent-centered approach to assigning responsibility for certain acts. In this way, we see how the ideograph "family values" privatizes the discourse in the face of social crisis.

Some American ideology can be characterized as transcendent, meaning that not only is the ideology widely believed and defined by the citizens, but by those in power as well (McGee, 1980, p. 5). Politicians may or may not knowingly manipulate the masses. However, they too, share the same ideological beliefs. By defining family values as an American ideograph, I will analyze how this American conception of "home" and "family" has indeed distorted the historical as well as present reality, and has influenced important legislation that has long lasting, sometimes detrimental effects to the very family concept it wishes to preserve. Using the nuclear family paradigm, I determine how this powerful link is present in reforms and programs that marginalize those families that fall outside of the paradigm.

I examine speeches, public comments, and the quotations of the President George H.W. Bush Administrations, the President William Jefferson Clinton Administrations, as well as other pertinent policies and discourse from the 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's. Other

administration, staff, and family comments will also be included as they relate to the topic of family values rhetoric. I chose these documents because of historical importance, widespread audience reception, family values thematic structure, and authorship. Within each text, the speaker alludes to how the erosion of American family values has contributed in part to the socio-economic problems we face. Using this reasoning as a basis for legislative reform, the speakers outline their solutions to the problem. The texts are reviewed to determine what characteristics of the American experience or commonality the discourse tries to evoke within the American audience (the texts assume a certain American experience within the audience that they will understand the family values rhetoric). I then look at certain legislation and policy to determine if the language of the family values ideograph is used to justify those policies. The policies I have chosen are the Family Support Act of 1988, the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). These policies are intended to protect and serve the family unit (as defined by the policy). By isolating dominant labeling techniques and narratives, I isolate the obvious narrative themes that cluster around the term "family values." Looking for ideographic patterns that correlate to the texts previously described, I investigate how these policies actually inversely affect families.

In summary, the myth of family degeneration is that there exists a strong sense that the health of a nation is defined by the health of the family (Jagger and Wright, 1999, p. 10). The salient theme of "family values" is the idea that families are in crisis (p. 33). Based on the definition of McGee's concept of the ideograph, family values rhetoric operates as a tool of our rhetorical culture that appears in family-centered narratives that

later translate into policy decision-making. Once policy becomes law, these families in "crisis" are affected, often with negative consequences. By basing ideas about what constitutes a "normal" family in myths and nostalgia surrounding this concept, "abnormal" families become marginalized from the mainstream and targeted as scapegoats for socio-economic problems inherent in a capitalistic society. Deflecting attention away from the power structure, national leadership successfully places blame for these inherent iniquities in the realm of personal responsibility. Family value supporters are concerned with the promotion of stable marriages, a gender division of roles, fidelity within the heterosexual unit, and support of these patterns through government policy (Jagger and Wright, 1999, p. 1). Social problems are seen as rooted in "negative" family and gender changes when family forms shift away from the nuclear family model.

Using ideographic analysis as my methodology, I frame "family values" as a gestalt, agent-centered, diachronic and synchronic in nature, transcendent, an identity construct, and a factor in the emphasis on personal responsibility. In Burkian terms, the "family values" ideograph moves from scene to agent, removing the focus from the capitalistic nature of society and the problems associated with it to the realm of personal responsibility. Real-life consequences resulting from media-inspired images and persuasive rhetorical speech has lasting effects for generations to come. We need to learn from the past, but not live in it.

Chapter 2: "Family Values" as an Ideograph

This chapter examines the nature of the ideograph, including its political usages and historical significance in America. I specifically look for ways that presidential discourse has incorporated the use of the family values ideograph as a way of promoting a certain American model of national identity.

In his 1996 book *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, Seymour Martin Lipset quotes historian Richard Hofstadter as saying, "It has been our fate as a country [America] not to have ideologies but to be one" (qtd. in Lipset, 1996, p. 18). Historically, because of our cultural diversity, it has not been our cultural similarities that bind us together as a nation, but rather our cultural ideologies. However, if Americans do share a sense of national character from a set of ideals, it is important to know not only *what* these ideals are, but *how* they have become created, defined and negotiated publicly (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. xviii). According to Vanessa Beaseley of the University of Georgia, "United States presidents have routinely associated these ideals with an attendant attitudinal pose, an additional aspect of their definition of American national character that has some troubling implications within the United State's diverse democracy" (2001, p. 170). Using a rhetorical perspective, scholars can explore those ideals associated with American national identity as well as how ideals have been promoted to the American people through our political leadership. In order to attempt to unite the American public to a cause or ideal, United States presidents routinely use "ideographs" among their rhetorical tools to shape or even change our "shared belief" system (p. 170). These ideals tell Americans who they are and how they are different from the rest of the world (p. 175). Beasley's "shared belief" hypothesis posits that

American national identity is a mental proposition stemming from historical concepts that have endured through time to evolve into a national consciousness. This proposition associates American democratic stability to this ideological consciousness that is shared among the American people. If the American people's sense of nationality is grounded not in a common lineage, but in their universal ideas regarding equality, liberty, and self-government, then any immigrants can assimilate as long as they, too, adhere to the proposition of shared beliefs (pp. 171-172). The problem with the Shared Beliefs Hypothesis is that it operates as a hegemonic myth that has worked to privilege some voices while marginalizing others.

As introduced in the first chapter, McGee developed the concept of ideographs, calling them the link between rhetoric and ideology. McGee identifies the defining features of the ideograph. First, it must be ordinary language found in political discourse (p. 15). The language must be common terminology familiar to all Americans regardless of ethnicity, race, or economic status. Second, the term must be a "high order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal" (p. 15). In other words, it functions as a label which is transcendent and flexible while defying absolute definition (Edwards & Winkler, 1997, pp. 12-13).

Third, an ideograph allows for the use of power and guides belief and behavior into recognizable acceptable norms within a community (McGee, 1980, p.15). As Carol Winkler describes in her book *In the Name of Terrorism*, the government has used the threat of terrorism to warrant military action against America's perceived enemies. Invading a foreign country would normally not be considered as acceptable American belief or behavior. However, the political use of the ideograph of "terrorism" warrants

the necessity of this use of power. Military action against those labeled as terrorists becomes totally acceptable to the point that those Americans who might speak out against such use of force are perceived as somehow traitorous to their country.

Ideographs within a culture identify acceptable public beliefs and behaviors. As abstractions, ideographs lack a defined meaning. Public rhetors create their meaning as they use them in public discourse. Each time an ideograph is used successfully, it adds to the precedent of the range of meanings available to a particular ideograph (Condit and Lucaites, 1993, p. xiii). Furthermore, they act as guides for certain beliefs and behaviors that are recognized by the community and can invoke patterns and recognizable formulations. In a sense, these ideographic patterns work to create what Hugh Miller calls "the texture of reality" (2004, p. 470). As changeable framing constructs, ideographs are capable of altering peoples' sense of what is and what is not appropriate. Ideographs are concepts grounded in ideology, myth, symbols, and mental images that create a meaningful symbol system. Miller contends ideographs work as links between connotative concepts and symbolic systems that normalize our reality (pp. 469-472).

Fourth, the ideograph is culture-bound. Ideographs become the fabric of how we define ourselves as a nation. A society's members are indoctrinated to a vocabulary of ideographs in order to "belong" to the society (McGee, 1980, p. 15). Members must accept ideographic interpretations in order to belong to the collective group. Pick up any elementary school textbook and the pages will be filled with the ideographs upon which our nation was founded. Schoolchildren are taught that America means "freedom," "equality," "sacrifice," and "honor," to name a few. These concepts defy absolute definition and are often described only through the use of other ideographs.

Finally, ideographs are also diachronic and synchronic in nature. Diachronically, they represent the full historical range of meanings for a particular culture. Synchronically, ideographs depend upon the circumstances of their usage (Condit & Lucaites, 1993, p. xiii). Although ideographic meanings change, they provide a public vocabulary for a community and allow us to observe the historical progress of the social and political movement of that community (p. xiv). According to Celeste Condit and John Lucaites the ideograph is a "culturally biased, abstract word or phrase, drawn from ordinary language, which serves as a constitutional value for a historically situated collectivity" (p. xiii). Thus, ideographs represent the collective commitments of the members of a particular public (pp. xii-xiii). In their book *Crafting Equality* (1994), they argue that ideographs have rhetorical natures that change over time among different groups of people within the same nation (p. 2). As civic leaders, United States presidents "must offer civic ideologies, or these myths of civic identity, in order to foster the requisite sense of peoplehood" (Smith, R.1997, p. 6). Therefore, American leaders must find ways to make these abstractions compelling to the American people in order to define what it is to be American (Beasley, 2001, p. 174). "Americans are Americans because of a certain way of thinking, even if these thoughts themselves can be conflicting" (p. 170).

Condit and Lucaites use two phrases when considering ideographic usage: "public argumentation" and "rhetorical culture" (1993, p. xii). Public argumentation refers to the rhetorical domain through which a community negotiates its common needs and interests. It functions as a competition between differing points of view to determine the best course of action which results from audience consensus (the role of the public)

granted to a rhetor (the role of a leader). To determine policies that represent the interests of the community, successful leaders learn to "craft" the audiences' understanding of the public good. Rhetorical culture includes the language available to those rhetors addressing particular audiences consisting of disparate individuals who share collective commonality. Within this rhetorical culture we find all types of common argumentative forms, including the ideograph, which separate symbolic boundaries within which rhetors must operate. These central organizing elements of a rhetorical culture are its ideographs (p. xii).

Thus, ideographs are common language terms that represent an abstract idea familiar to the collective community. It is transcendent and is often defined in terms of other ideographs. It works as an indicator of "normal" beliefs and behaviors and may warrant the use of power in order to preserve this "normalcy." Ideographs are exclusive to each culture and operate as identity constructs. Although their meanings may change over time, they become interwoven in the public vocabulary having historical and modern-day relevance. Leadership uses ideographs as tools to compel audiences to accept these abstractions as part of our national heritage and identity. As part of our rhetorical culture, rhetors use them to negotiate meaning through public argumentation. Finally, as identity constructs, ideographs operate persuasively on audiences already constituted within similar ideologies or can result in contradictions when the audience identifies with dissimilar ideologies. For example, Maurice Charland, Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, searches for ways that discourse works persuasively on audiences already "constituted with an identity and within an ideology" (1987, p. 134). He defines the rhetorical construction of

“the People” as “a process of identification in rhetorical narratives that presume the constitution of subjects” (p. 134). Following Kenneth Burke’s philosophy, Charland believes “identification” rather than “persuasion” is key to the rhetorical process. Humans are constituted in ideological characteristics that can go beyond the realm of persuasion or even free choice. These rhetorical identifications effectively induce cooperation (p. 133). As a result, a contradiction occurs when “persuasive discourse requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity within an ideology (p. 134).

Because “values” imply moralistic mores, a conclusive definition of what is meant in family values discourse is subjective. Therefore, analysis requires a discussion of commonly held ideas of what Americans have historically valued and if those ideas correspond or overlap to how contemporary political leaders define family values. Within these comparisons, we must also account for other ideographic usages. For example, the value of “equality” meant something different for early twentieth century citizens than it might today. As a white heterosexual patriarchal society, terms such as “equality” did not reflect the reality of life for women, children, immigrants, and racial minorities in America. Thus, although some valuations may be described with the same language terms, the signification of these terms has different meanings to different individuals in different historical moments. Besides recognizing patterns of ideographic usage, a discussion of their usage as labeling techniques is equally important. Labeling shows how rhetoric, when used persuasively and effectively, can contribute to the identification of circumstances and individuals and can shape or influence public opinion concerning them. In this way, ideographs act as identity constructs.

In order to illustrate ideographic analysis, I review the works of several scholars using this method in their studies on other discourses. By reviewing their work, I hope to provide a clearer example of how ideographs are identified and how they function as identity constructs.

In her book *In the Name of Terrorism* (2006), Carol Winkler offers an ideographic analysis model broken down as narrative, ideology, and labeling in order to map the ideograph of "terrorism." She examines specific incidences of terrorism in the context of how they were presented to the public through media and political leadership. She then looks at the ideology that supports these narratives, and finally looks at how this ideograph functions as an identity construct through the process of labeling. All labels functions as ideographs, but not all ideographs are labels (p. 11). Labels can work as stigmatizing agents. For example, after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, President George W. Bush used the word "terrorist" to label those who would seek to harm Americans as our enemies. Because the perpetrators were of Muslim descent, those of Muslim heritage living in America often had to endure the stigmatization of being affiliated with the label "terrorist." As a result, many Muslim people had to endure suspicion, discrimination, and sometimes violence. Labeling can identify unacceptable beliefs and behaviors within a culture through a process of negation.

All American ideographs function at some level as a signifier of American identity and set up "for" and "against" dichotomies. Political scientist Murray Edelman explains how national identity functions on an "us" and "them" level:

To define the people one hurts as evil is to define oneself as virtuous. The

> narrative establishes the identity of enemy and victim-savior by defining the the latter as emerging from an innocent past and as destined to bring about a brighter future world cleansed of the contamination the enemy embodies. (Edelman, 1977, p. 76)

Edelman's observations illustrate this negative process of labeling through dichotomies that identify the "enemy" as those who do not share our foundational values (Condit and Lucaites, 1993, p. 8; Winkler, 2006, p. 12). Like "terrorism," the "family values" ideograph's underlying power as a signifier lies in this dichotomy. No one wants to admit they are "for" terrorism just as no American wants to admit they are "against" family values. The interpretation and language usages of ideographs that become culturally and politically dictated assure wide audience acceptance of these depictions that define what is good and what is not – or as those who would support the American way of life and those who would detract from it.

Just as President George W. Bush publicly denounced all terrorists as a collective group fundamentally opposed to American values (Winkler, 2006, p. 3), so does contemporary political leadership assume that all Americans want a "return" to family values and that these values are universal. Lisa Gring-Pemble (2001) wrote an article on the rhetorical construction of welfare recipients, arguing that some forms of narrative encourage elite discourse and discourage alternate public voices. Focusing on rhetorical depictions (strategic pictures or visualizations that permeate the collective memory of audiences as representative of reality), she argues that testimonies before Congressional hearings present depictions that serve as evidence for audiences of the nature of welfare recipients. These repetitive depictions gain coherency as "good reasons" on which

legislators base their decisions (pp. 341-343). If we consider Walter Fisher's (1989) narrative paradigm, wherein he asserts that all humans are storytellers basing their decisions on "good reasons," then we can examine political speeches as an ontological process that reflects "good reasons" to be ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character. Rationality is determined by the nature of people as narrative beings. Most politicians are adept at using the logic of narration to convey a sense of coherence and truth implied by common sense (pp. 57-84). The logical assumption is that "family values" are the "good reasons" upon which argumentation for policy change is based. Chapter three will examine this idea in more depth as I look at how welfare came to mean public assistance for those "morally unfit," and how many reformers viewed themselves in a savior-type role to the poor and destitute. Part of their ideology included the belief that they could redeem those less fortunate, thus ensuring the children of the unfortunate would become productive "good" citizens.

Another ideographic approach is used by Celeste Condit in *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change*. In her book she focuses on the abortion issue and breaks arguments into areas of public concern, personal history, constitutive values, visual images, and legal vocabularies integrated into popular culture. Finally, she examines the emergence of a new public discourse surrounding the issue (1990, pp. 1-2). Condit used a "units of discourse" framework that she calls "central to the persuasiveness and impact of public discourse." Her first unit is the ideograph, or words "that express public values that provide the constitutional commitments of a community" (p. 13). Although the term "abortion" is not referred to as an ideograph, the accompanying terminology describing abortion such as "right to Choice" or "reproductive freedom" do

qualify as ideographs. The second unit of discourse asserts that public rhetoric is narrative in form. When these stories are frequently repeated they gain credibility and become myths, albeit distorted truths. However, even with limitations, narratives help shape the role of public argument. Finally, narratives consist of characterizations that include stereotypes as well as positive and negative dimensions. Within these characterization, labels are connected to "agents, acts, scenes, agencies, or purposes in the public vocabulary, and integrate cultural connotations and denotations while ascribing a typical and pervasive nature to the entity described" (Condit, 1990, p. 14; Condit & Lucaites, 1990, p. 7). Using ideographs, narratives, and characterizations, Condit maps their appearance and relationship in an historical context.

Condit's method can again be seen in her work *Reconstructing "Equality": Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetoric in the Martyred Black Vision* (1990), co-authored with colleague John Lucaites. They contend that while both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X articulated visions of equality, their differing approaches (labeled as integrationist and separationist) worked together to transform our "shared public vocabulary" (p. 7). As in their other works, Condit and Lucaites again use ideographs, narratives, and characterizations for their analysis. These characterizations led to collective valuations by providing concrete ideas and images regarding the narratives that gain recognition among public audiences. These narratives act as a bridge between the ideal cultural values and ideographs that are constituted in a community (p. 8).

We all have our own repertoire of discourse terminology with which we can refer to certain narratives, characterizations, and ideographs, knowing that others share this

same repertoire with similar understandings and interpretations. This public vocabulary becomes reconstituted when social change requires it.

> Ideographs are not free-floating terms. They are bound for their meaning and significance to other ideographs, to the community's dominant characterizations, and to existing and pervasive cultural narratives. To re-define a key term such as an ideograph thus requires the rhetorical reconstruction of substantial portions of the community's ideological substructure (Condit & Lucaites, 1990, p. 10).

The authors examine the connections between linguistic commitments in discourse to its "material instantiation" in real-life experiences as they trace how the rhetoric of these two leaders eventually evolved into a re-definition of the ideograph of "equality" (Condit & Lucaites, 1990, p. 9).

The following study outlines ideographic analysis using the characterization of ideals as the basis for research. Lisa M. Cuklanz in *Rape on Trial: How the Mass Media Construct Legal Reform and Social Change* (1996) studied how marginal ideas become mainstream. She looked at public discourse surrounding four famous rape trials and set them up as an arena portraying the struggle between misconceptions about rape and a feminist understanding of rape (p. 2). Cuklanz specifically examines how rape victims are characterized in the media and the courtroom and how these characterizations, based in stereotypical myths, work against the victims, often blaming them for their circumstances. Rape law reform grew from specific experiences of rape victims and their subsequent trials. The victim's moral character and sexual history were believed relevant. Cuklanz specifically examines how the dominant power groups or institutions changed

meanings from their original intent towards the creation of new understandings, beliefs, and practices (pp. 5-6). She takes each case and discusses its implications to rape law reform, social change, as news events, and as popular re-presentations to the public. Like Condit, she incorporates the use of narratives, characterizations, and ideographs to analyze how traditional and contemporary views on rape were portrayed in the public discourses of the times.

A final example of an ideographic study is Dana Cloud's article, "The Rhetoric of 'Family Values': Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility" (1998). Although Cloud generally concurs with Condit and Lucaites, she believes the nature of ideographs is intentionally coercive. Stressing the use of Kenneth Burke's pentad, she calls family values more agent-centered than scene-centered because it constructs a "privatized set of identifications and commitments" (p. 389). In other words, the rhetoric of family values emphasizes personal responsibility over social context as an explanation of destructive individual actions (in particular, the 1992 Los Angeles riots). This tension between agent and scene she calls "scapegoating" and "utopia" (p. 389). Her argument is that "the ideograph becomes the locus of privatizing discourse that exhorts personal responsibility in the face of economic or social crisis" and that this deflects attention away from structural social problems (pp. 389-390). Cloud's methodology incorporates close reading of texts in historical and political context, and then reports the tensions she observes between ideographs and the divergent rhetorical usages of ideographs (p. 391). In an examination of narratives and their characterizations she builds her argument that the mantra of "family values" labels racial minorities as the scapegoat for America's societal ills.

Based on these defining features of the ideograph, "family values" can be presented as such a rhetorical element. The words "family" and "values" are common words that are familiar to virtually everyone. The term "value" and the family theme regularly appear in political rhetoric. In 2000, Dan Quayle made a bid for the presidency. In his remarks about his candidacy he says,

> My friends, it is time that we work to reclaim the values that made American great in the first place. Values like respect, responsibility, courage, patriotism, integrity. Respect. Parents should respect their children. And the children should respect their parents. Responsibility. Shoulder the burden of being good citizens. Courage. Have the courage of your convictions. Stand up for what you believe in. Integrity. Always tell the truth. Patriotism. Love your county. Believe in our God. In your hearts, you know that prosperity without values is not prosperity at all. We must have the courage to lead, the courage to change, the courage to believe in ourselves. And I'm here to tell you that I will lead the fight for our values and for our families (Quayle, Remarks Announcing 2000 Presidential Candidacy).

He goes on to explain his interpretation of "values" as though they should be universal for all Americans. He promises to "fight for our values and for our families" as though somehow our "values" and "families" are under attack. He continues his speech to say that the reason America suffers a "poverty of values" is because children are being raised in fatherless homes. He references the TV character Murphy Brown and defends comments he made earlier regarding the media depiction of this fictional character's choice to have and raise a child alone saying, "Remember, Murphy Brown is gone and

I'm still here fighting for the American family" (Quayle, Remarks Announcing 2000 Presidential Candidacy). When spoken together, the words "family" and "values" imply a universal meaning that the rhetor assumes his audience understands.

The term "family values" also functions as a "high order abstraction" that defies absolute definition. Quayle gives his definition of values, yet these are certainly not the only possibilities. The characteristics that Quayle defines as "values" may or may not correspond with other individuals' ideas of "values." The passage implies that Americans should recognize and embrace his interpretation or risk being un-American.

In her book *It Takes a Village* (1996) Hillary Clinton says, "our challenge is to arrive at a consensus of values and a common vision of what we can do today, individually and collectively, to build strong families and communities" (p. 14). For Mrs. Clinton, the consensus of values she alludes to is defined as how well we raise our children. She calls it not only a question of morality but of self-interest. America's survival is dependent on her children. "I want her [Chelsea] to believe, as her father and I did, that the American Dream is within reach of anyone willing to work hard and take responsibility" (p. 15). In these passages, the concept of family values is specifically tied to a strong work ethic. Although Quayle might agree with Clinton, the point is that family values can be redefined or modified to remain in a transcendent state.

Ideographically, the term "family values" guides individuals to accept beliefs and behaviors considered "normal" by the community. In political debates, legislators prefer the traditional nuclear family, or what Representative Amos Houghton (R-NY) calls, "a normal sort of classic family" (U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means: "Contract with America. Overview," 1995, pp. 234-235). While there is some evidence to suggest

that children fare better in these kinds of families, the reality is that only one third of American families can be defined as being of the traditional nuclear type (Fragile Families, 2000). This data shows that the nuclear family is not the dominant family form. Thus, it also indicates that legislative concern should garner more discussion about other types of family structures as being the "norm." However, the political rhetoric centers on the nuclear family as the crux of American civilization. The following are samples of political discourse regarding the "normal" family:

> Throughout human history, a single woman with a small child has not been a viable economic unit; neither have the single woman and child been a legitimate social unit –spoken by Charles Murray (U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, "Welfare Reform Proposal; the Work and Responsibility Act of 1994, Part 2," 1994, p. 847).

> Families are the seedbed of all our skill and attitudes. They teach us our view of work and the importance of moral truths…During countless eras when no other organized unit of society even functioned, the family was the institution that made survival of the cultural, political, economic, and social order possible –spoken by Senator Dan Coats (U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, "Impact of Welfare Reform on Children and their Families,"1995, p. 3)

> Under the current trend, illegitimacy could be the norm and not the exception in America by the turn of the century. I think anybody who is not frightened by this prospect fails to understand that no great civilization has ever risen in history that was not built on strong families –spoken by Senator Phil Gramm (U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, "Welfare Reform Proposal; the Work and Responsibility Act of 1994, Part 2," p. 546).

In other words, the traditional nuclear family seems to bear the responsibility for passing on our nation's core values, which in turn will ensure a productive citizenry. These views help validate marriage as a core "family value" and encourage support for marriage as a possible welfare reform strategy (Gring-Pemble, 2003, p. 481). These views perpetuate the family values ideograph, which includes a focus on the traditional nuclear family as the norm to which all Americans should aspire.

The family values theme also works as a political force within American culture. Sacvan Bercovitch argues that American leaders use the rhetoric of Puritanism to support their claims of shared values in the United States (1981, pp. 7-13). Using this rhetoric, leaders offer their listeners the ability to overcome past injustices by becoming a part of the cultural ideology. Describing the American identity in terms of civic religious principles allows politicians to make ideographic abstractions compelling to the American public (Lott, 1969, p. 16; Beaseley, 2001, p. 174). In his State of the Union Address of 1995, William J. Clinton refers to the Puritan work ethic: "American has always been a land of opportunity, a land where, if you work hard, you can get ahead" (State of the Union Address 1995). Later, in the same address Clinton refers to the work of John and Diana Cherry of Zion Church in Temple Hills, Maryland saying, "Reverend

Cherry…left early to go back to his church to minister to 150 couples that he had brought back to his church from all over America to convince them to come back together, to save their marriages, and to raise their kids. This is the kind of work that citizens are doing in America. We need more of it and it ought to be supported" (State of the Union Address 1995). President Clinton reinforced the notion that part of being American encompasses the belief that heterosexual marriage is an American value for which all should strive.

Finally, the family values theme functions diachronically when politicians use it as a precedent, comparing the quality of American life as being superior in previous decades when families stayed together. Hillary Clinton gives us such a comparison when she writes,

> Those who urge a return to the values of the 1950's are yearning for the kind of family and neighborhood I grew up in and for the feelings of togetherness they engendered. The nostalgia merchants sell an appealing Norman Rockwell –like picture of American life half a century ago, one in which every household was made up of stable parents, two kids, a dog, and a cat who all lived in a house with a manicured lawn and a station wagon in the driveway. Life seemed simpler then, and our common values clearer (Clinton, H., 1996, p. 28).

According to Mrs. Clinton, although the dynamics of the family may have changed, the basic values we hold remain constant. Our village may be physically changing, but our moral fiber and structure remain the same.

Synchronically, this theme of family values operates as an ideal to which we must constantly aspire. In George H.W. Bush's 1989 Inaugural Address (speaking of America's poor) he said,

> There are those who cannot free themselves of enslavement to whatever addiction—drugs, welfare, the demoralization that rules the slums…The old solution, the old way, was to think that public money alone could end these problems. But we have learned that is not so...We must turn to the only resource we have that in times of need always grows—the goodness and courage of the American people (Bush, Inaugural Address 1989).

The implication is that, somewhere along the way, the nation has lost sight of its values and that the solution resides in the individual American to ensure that the less fortunate are somehow "rehabilitated." As Americans, we must constantly aspire to re-validate the values that define us.

In order to map the "family values" ideograph, I closely examine other excerpts from political rhetoric that give meaning to the term "family values." I look for family value themes in examples from political speeches and legislation, both historical and contemporary. Using the categories of narratives, labels, and ideographs, I divide the examples into family values themes including nostalgia, welfare to workfare, the breakdown of the family equated with societal problems, marriage as a cure for poverty, issues of stigma, morality, and family values defined. This categorization helps to identify the rhetorical patterns that accompany the family values ideograph. Finally, drawing on social identity theory, I analyze how this ideograph has been used by political

forces to expedite legislation that have impacted individuals with real-life consequences and how those consequences have helped or hurt families.

This study focuses on how this ideograph operates as a rhetorical and political influence in American culture. The following chapter traces the rhetorical history of family values over the course of the twentieth century by examining the historical make-up of family dynamics and how they have changed, and whether the rhetoric of the times reflected, refuted, or ignored these family changes. Chapter three also sets up my analysis and provides a more thorough understanding of the role family values rhetoric plays in policy-making.

Chapter 3: How the Myths and Realities of the Nuclear Family Set Precedents and Influenced Welfare Legislation

This historical review provides the foundation on which the contemporary narratives and characterizations are based and explains the mindset from which the family values ideograph was born. We cannot know where we are going without understanding where we have been. In this chapter, I review the differing family forms prevalent during the twentieth century and the dominant values and mores of the times (in chapter four, examples that reflect the current mores of the times are presented as characterizations of the family values ideograph). By examining the historical record of welfare beginnings, I provide examples of how the collective discourse surrounding family values was reflected in the creation and proliferation of welfare legislation. Looking at the myths and realities of family life (with a focus on single motherhood) in the twentieth century, I examine how these ideas possibly influenced welfare legislation that provided financial aid to this group, but stigmatized them as suffering from a lack of moral character. As a result, future welfare discussion tended to emphasize the morality and worthiness of its recipients.

The history of the family has come through profound social and economic changes from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Historically, families had unstable boundaries and varying structures, but they are represented as being stable, natural, and morally appropriate. Thus, current family values discourse is aimed at redeeming an "imagined past and colonizing the present and future" (Shapiro, 2001, p.1). During the Industrial Age, most immigrants coming to the United States found themselves in conflict with the American ideal of family values. The nineteenth century ideal that fathers supported the family financially did not correlate with the realities of

economic survival for these immigrants. The collective family effort was the norm for most working class immigrants, thus families had to learn to accommodate economic, ethnic, and class traditions to try to fit in with the values of the American culture (Hareven, 2000, p. 87). Conflicts arose between family needs and American middle class values that frowned upon employment of married women and mothers, requiring major strategy adjustments by immigrant and working class families. Working class immigrants from Europe learned that multiple incomes were necessary to meet the cost of urban living. The view of the family as a collective unit became problematic for those new to United States soil as they tried to adopt their new culture's values. American middle class ideals promoted the father as the financial backbone of the family while mothers worked in the home and children attended school (pp. 87-88).

Although immigrant families strove to adopt the nuclear family model, the economic realities made it out of reach for many. In fact, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, family strategies incorporated a reliance on the labor of children to supplement the family income. Taking in boarders was a secondary strategy. Sending mothers into the workforce was usually a last resort (Hareven, 2000, p. 89). Slowly, however, patterns began changing, and families began moving from collective family units to autonomous family units. Interdependence within the family was giving way to independence and individuality (p. 100). Part of this change was due to legislation regulating child labor and part was due to the technological innovations that were replacing workers with machines. A new era was dawning that required new ways of thinking. Planning for future generations became important, and education became highly valued. Women entering the workforce became more acceptable. With the

market providing the necessities of life, insurance, and vocational training, and the state providing education, the family went from a productive unit to a consumption unit (pp. 100-101). This change was vastly significant in the reformation of what constituted family values.

Although American values are subjective, several scholars documented some consistencies in these values that have remained dominant throughout much of the twentieth century. In 1960, Robin M. Williams, Jr. wrote an article entitled *Values and Beliefs in American Society.* He outlined basic American values including personal/occupational achievement with an emphasis on economic success, activity/work developed out of Puritan traditions, ethical cultural orientation, humanitarian mores, practicality, progress, material comfort, equality, freedom, conformity, scientific rationality, patriotism, democracy, and individualism (Williams in McGiffert, ed., 1964, pp. 173-216).[1] Williams defines American values as conceptual abstractions drawn from personal experience that are affectively charged. Values are not goals or actions, but rather are the criteria from which goals are determined (p. 174).

John Gillin (1955) from the University of North Carolina concurred with Williams and added a few more values to the list. His description of American values included the work ethic, pragmatism, thrift, mechanistic worldview (materialism, orderliness, cleanliness, science), mobility, both physical and social, novelty and change as it relates to consumer goods and amusements, optimism, individualism (tempered with

[1] These values reflect those of the white patriarchal society in America during the mid-twentieth century. Values such as equality, freedom, or individualism were not necessarily understood to apply to all classes or races and were gender-biased. When discussing equality, Williams explains, "It is not undifferentiated and undiscriminating equalitarianism, but rather a two-sided emphasis upon basic social rights and upon equality of opportunity" (p. 196).

generosity and social conformity), competitiveness, cooperation, honesty, respect, power (over nature and material things and to be achieved through suasion), recreation, efficiency, love, and inner-regulated morality (Gillin in McGiffert, ed., 1984, pp. 217-223). Cora DuBois (1955) of Harvard University offered a list including that the universe is mechanistically conceived, man is master of the universe, men are created equal, and men are perfectible (DuBois in McGiffert, ed., 1984, p. 224). She also mentioned effort/optimism (work ethic), material well-being (success, prosperity, rewards) and conformity (pp. 224-228). However, she also noted that the viability of a value is not strictly internal, but is manifest within the situational context within which it exists (p. 231). Scholar Lorraine Fox Harding (1993), senior lecturer in social policy at Leeds University, U.K. defined family values as originating from the stable two-parent heterosexual family due to its function as a core element in the formation of acceptable norms (p. 112). This constitution of values was also defined by omissions of that which was unacceptable outside the traditional family norm. By eliminating certain topics from prevalent discourse, the ideal family and the values it provided are upheld.

The 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's brought a repression of the discussion over single motherhood. Marital breakups were described in less moralistic terms. "Desertion" was replaced with "marital separation," and the new term implied shared responsibility in the marital breakdown. Changes in sexual norms that de-vilified men and more often blamed women for sexual immorality and out-of-wedlock births, rape, and marital separation were increasingly absent from the discussion (Gordon, 1994, p. 33). The very absence of discourse during this time in history inadvertently fed the nostalgic belief that these problems and issues simply did not exist. Richard Jackson Harris, in *A Cognitive*

Psychology of Mass Communication, argues that the golden age of the 1950's was not the idyllic age people remember (2004, p. 319). It was a time of unparalleled economic expansion, high birth rates, greater government support, and an increase in the nuclear family model. However, minorities were excluded from this new order. Rates of domestic violence, crime, incest, and child abuse were high, but denied (primarily seen as minority problems), and there were more children living in poverty than in 2004 (p. 320).

In the decade following World War II, the United States underwent extensive economic recovery and rapid technological growth accompanied by mass migrations from rural to urban environments. With the help of government assistance programs, more and more families were able to afford housing (Sidel, 1996, p. 54). Living on the "outskirts" of the city and commuting to work in the city became fashionable and desirable. The introduction of television gained widespread popularity. The new innovation allowed images and messages to be broadcast directly into the home. Television shows and commercials were rife with images of traditional family life and dealt with middle class problems and strategies. Often these images would bear reference to the times in which people ascribe their feeling of nostalgia. However, in reality, the fifties were a time in which twenty-five percent of Americans were poor and sixty percent of those over age sixty had incomes below a thousand dollars a month. Millions of women lost their jobs to returning veterans and teen birthrates soared. In 1957, 97 out of every 1000 females between ages fifteen through nineteen gave birth. In 1993, those numbers declined to 59 out of every 1000 (p. 55). Yet, according to much of the contemporary discourse on teenage parenthood, this problem had become worse (p. 55).

Although most welfare narratives stress problems regarding single motherhood, the facts surrounding single motherhood often differ from the moralistic interpretation by reformers. Because changing consciousness about social problems influences what facts are collected, the collected information becomes structured and shaped by current values and anxieties. For example, most factual accounts of single motherhood feature racial differences, in particular black single motherhood. However, in studies prior to 1930 black and white differences were not examined. Thus, when scholars talk about the history of welfare using racially differentiated facts, they are applying contemporary consciousness of black family patterns that were not even a consideration historically (Gordon, 1994, p. 17). The racial or gender inequalities that existed for many Americans during the post World War II period were often overlooked. One might argue that our historical memory of family values only extends to those within the hegemonic majority. Thus, people of color, non-heterosexuals, and women are not incorporated in this "high order abstraction."

However, by the 1960's and 1970's, civil rights, women's rights, and anti-government sentiments came to the forefront of public discourse. By the late 1970's, a pro-family movement was on the rise as a backlash reaction against perceived sexual permissiveness and liberal legislation (i.e. abortion legislation, no-fault divorce laws, and the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment) of the current times. As the family structure moved away from the nuclear family model, more blame was placed on this shift as a cause for other social problems (Fox-Harding in Jagger and Wright, ed., 1999, pp. 119-120). Conservative family organizations sought to reinstate the ideals surrounding the stable married family held together by a "bread-winning male head of

household" which was the prevalent idealized family form of the 1950's. This movement viewed abortion, contraception, and sexual education as encouraging permissive sex outside of marriage. Increased openness and acceptance of homosexuality further inflamed conservatives to draw correlations that this new sexual permissiveness encouraged or even caused homosexuality (p. 122). As a result, conservative groups called on policy-makers to reverse these unwanted changes through systems of punishment and rewards in order to readjust traditional patterns of behavior (e.g. make divorce more difficult to obtain, to make contraception and abortion less accessible, to discourage mothers from entering the workforce, and yet requiring single mothers to enter the workforce and to actively promote the two-parent family model). In other words, government needed to re-establish the "traditional" patterns of family life (p. 122). This "traditional" pattern was only a reality for select members of the middle and upper classes and was primarily associated with the dominant white majority. From this pro-family movement came a political push to "return to the family values" of previous generations. Voices were raised against a seemingly liberal society that was becoming tolerant of varying family forms. Conservative voices called for a return to the "traditional" nuclear family form in order to combat our country's perceived loss of values. The discourse focused on stable heterosexual marriages as the foundation for the formation of strong values.

This golden age myth becomes highly relevant to the discussion of family values because it is precisely this myth to which political leadership refers when speaking of a return to family values. This collective discourse dictates the public morality and acts as a guide to policy formation and/or change. However, if these changes are based on

previous mythological conditions, then affected policies are not based on facts, but rather on nostalgic memory.

Celeste Condit suggests that collective discourse can act as the source of active public morality (Condit, 1987, p. 79). The practice of public rhetoric can convert individual desires into the moral will of the community. This conversion becomes reality when public language includes linguistic commitments shared by community members. These linguistic elements are ideographs and include shared social myths and characterizations. "Social discourse units carry moral import beyond individual interest, in part, then, because they indicate 'shared' commitments and prescribe what each person as a member of a collectivity is 'obligated' to do within the collectivity" (p. 82). Policies are supposed to endorse the greater good. However, the "goods" themselves are subject to a "duality of communication" (medium and outcome) because they are created and defined by varying groups that wish to identify with the greater good. Public rationale for action is always expressed as general goods, thereby allowing public discourse to create a universal element that constitutes the core of morality.

> The ability to take the perspective of the other is a basic requisite of morality, and the contents of perspective – taking are human needs, desires, values, and ideas. Consequently, the presence of individual desire and even emotion do not disqualify a code from moral status, but rather indicate the possibility of moral valuation (Condit, 1987, p. 83).

Thus, the role of family values and its relationship to society has sometimes been caught in paradoxes that have made adaptation to change difficult. Myths and stereotypes often

become the basis for what is believed to be a normal or deviant family. These myths impact individuals, institutions, and public policy (in particular, welfare policy).

Prior to Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933, most welfare assistance was provided through kinship with families caring for their own in critical life situations. Kin provided welfare functions which now have become functions of the public sector. This kinship reflected values of survival, well-being, and family self-reliance, all of which had priority over individual needs and desires. The autonomy of the family became a deeply ingrained value that was considered essential for self-respect and good standing in the community. However, the Great Depression brought about the realization that hard work did not necessarily translate into financial sufficiency. Born of necessity, the federal government had to come to the aid of its citizens. While the American Puritan work ethic was still highly valued, the Depression yielded the realization that work equated with financial success was contingent upon extraneous circumstances ("Bill of Rights in Action"). The New Deal provided necessary welfare relief along with other federal programs designed to act as a safety net for any who needed it.

The role of family values rhetoric has been to shape, define, and re-define the meaning of welfare over the last century. Currently it refers almost exclusively to assistance programs for the very poor, particularly Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and general relief (Gordon, 1994, p. 1). The modern pejorative meaning of "welfare" stems from values and ideas about how, how much, and by whom the needy should be helped. These ideas influence our welfare system as much as the federal budget, eligibility criteria, and unemployment rates. The values directly influence the national budget and national priorities, yet they are not universal (p. 2).

The debate over mothers' aid at the turn of the century helped shape the welfare state and continues to do so today. Concerns included how to help single mothers without encouraging that lifestyle choice and what criteria should determine eligibility. Mothers' pension laws came into being in 1910 and became the basis for Aid to Dependent Children. The claim was that mothers performed a public service (child-rearing) and should be entitled to pensions. Supporters endorsed it as a way to prevent juvenile delinquency and to keep families together. The important signifying factor in the legislation was that Mothers' Aid was to be distinguished from charity. However, the reality became that Mothers' Aid was, in fact, distributed as charity. States had the right to deny aid to those found "undeserving," and blacks and immigrants were frequent targets of discrimination (*Reader's Companion*, "Mothers' Pensions"). Mothers' Aid advocates such as Mary Bogue believed the passage of this legislation to be a great victory for women. "By the passage of these laws the State acknowledged the inviolability of the relation of mother and child, its own stake in the preservation of the home, and the unique social value of the service rendered by mothers in maintaining their homes when fathers drop out" (U.S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 184, 1928, p. 5). While this legislation did have positive effects in helping mothers, it also reinforced the notion that single motherhood bordered on immorality. In 1935, Grace Abbott, a member of the Advisory Council on Economic Security addressed the House of Representatives, gave examples of the types of individuals that would benefit from the program. She described them as "really nice children and the families are nice families" (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, January 30, 1935). The implication being that the aid would go to "good" families as opposed to "bad" families.

Understandably, Miss Abbott's approach needed to appeal to the lawmakers' moralistic side in pleading her case for aid for mothers because critics of the aid program feared it could encourage immorality among recipients.

Unmarried mothers entered the discussion in the 1920's. Only after mothers' aid laws were passed did discussion concerning "sexual immorality" enter the picture. There were two narratives discussed: one on mothers and one on their children. The mothers' discussion was a moralistic one. These mothers were eventually considered neurotic and in need of moral rehabilitation. There was less concern for their financial welfare than their moralistic failing. By contrast, discussions regarding the children of single mothers were connected to the issues of welfare. If children were to escape the stigma of immorality, they had to be repositioned as victims and not sinners (Gordon, 1994, p. 29). Single mother discourse (widows and victims of desertion) was also contradictory in terms of employment. Even though a single mother was not entitled to a family wage, the sentiments were strong that she should remain at home. Reformers contributed to this double bind by using arguments against mothers' employment to win support for mothers' aid. However, because mothers who worked were stigmatized as neglecting their children, they seemed somehow less worthy of support (p. 31).

The next substantial piece of legislation surrounding welfare and "family values" was the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act of 1921. This legislation became the first federally funded social welfare program in the United States distributing matching federal funds to states offering prenatal care and education measures for new mothers. However, opponents of this bill opposed it on the grounds that it posed a threat to the home and values of decent families. The Act was repealed in

1929 only to be partially restored as part of the Social Security Act of 1935 (*Reader's Companion*, "Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act). Single motherhood was labeled and defined as occurring because of teenage pregnancies, having children out-of-wedlock, female-headed households, and the prevalence of the "underclass" (Gordon, 1994, p. 17). In the 1920's, much of the discourse leading up to the concept of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) was that single mothers "represented both a symptom and a cause of threatening social breakdown" (pp. 24-25). The ADC used a morals-testing process based on the "suitable home" provision in the law. Entitlements became based on a woman's perceived virtue rather than her contribution to society as a mother. Case workers routinely made surprise visits to assure no single mother on their roles were behaving immorally. Male recipients were not exposed to the same morality tests (p. 28). Deserted families were the initial focus of discussion in the early twentieth century. Charity workers were reluctant to offer financial aid to these families for fear of encouraging more desertions and alleviating any remaining sense of responsibility a man might have for his family. As a result, deserted wives became stigmatized because of circumstances often beyond their control. Welfare reformers felt in order to politically win any chance of public aid programs, the stigma of single motherhood needed to be softened to argue against those who would condemn aid for immoral women. This parlaying of "being suspect" to "being virtuous" actually helped further stigmatize non-widowed single mothers. By emphasizing a widow's innocence in her circumstances, it insinuated a non-innocence of others (p. 27). This stigmatization became a defining factor for future welfare reforms and legislation. Whatever its

inequities, the ADC represented a great achievement for single mothers and greatly influenced welfare policy in the New Deal.

By the 1930's, Roosevelt's New Deal became the basis for all future welfare law. In his announcement for Social Security to Congress on June 8, 1934, Roosevelt stated,

> Security was attained in the earlier days through the interdependence of members of families upon each other and of the families within a small community upon each other. The complexities of great communities and of organized industry make less real these simple means of security. Therefore, we are compelled to employ the active interest of the Nation as a whole through government in order to encourage a greater security for each individual who composes it…This seeking for a greater measure of welfare and happiness does not indicate a change in values. It is rather a return to values lost in the course of our economic development and expansion. (Roosevelt, Statements on Social Security 1934).

He reassured the Congress that this law would act as an intervention to help citizens recover, but that it would not compromise American values (the inference to a Puritan work ethic appears in the last two lines of the quote), and that although government was stepping in to provide aid, this aid would not become a crutch nor lead to dependence. He was clear that the welfare law would not compromise our values. Later Roosevelt reiterated the claim that welfare law would be only temporary relief when he gave his 1935 State of the Union Address to the nation:

> The lessons of history, confirmed by the evidence before me, show conclusively that continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fibre. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. It is inimical to the dictates of sound policy. It is in violation of the tradition of America…the Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief (Roosevelt, State of the Union Address 1935).

He likened aid to a "narcotic" and addictive drug that can soothe and relieve short-term pain, but long-term use can have deadly effects. In this sense, government welfare is supposed to be the medicine or cure for poverty. Roosevelt felt that eventually the care of the poor and destitute should return to the jurisdiction and care of local efforts and private agencies, a sentiment finally implemented with the passage of PRWORA of 1996.

However, Social Security did not turn out to be temporary, nor was it the cure for poverty. The Social Security Act of 1935 set up a stratified system of provision. Social insurance (Medicare) programs and old-age pension plans were deemed justifiably worthy and were superior in payout and reputation. Public assistance, on the other hand, was inferior and stigmatized (Gordon, 1994, p. 5). This stratification of Social Security programs became naturalized. Once this stratification was in place, other distinctions arose. Better welfare programs (old-age and unemployment insurance) were contribution-based, federally funded, and served a disproportional number of whites and men over minorities and women. These programs also respected ones' right to privacy. On the other hand, the ADC program was need-based and locally funded, serving a disproportionate number of women, children, and minorities and requiring the

supervision of the State (p.11). Thus, the "better" welfare programs appear as entitlements and the "worse" ones appear as charity.

Although Social Security has worked very positively for many working and middle class families, it has also deepened inequalities and stigmatization. "Those who receive 'nonwelfare' did well; those who receive 'welfare' did badly. Today the 'welfare' class is what many call the 'underclass'" (Gordon, 1994, p. 6). Concern over single mothers and children has always been a major influence on welfare policy. Then, as now, one of the dominant themes was preventing single motherhood through the creation of proper, stable families. The criteria for evaluating what constituted stable families involved values regarding proper male and female responsibilities. This view included the idea of the male in the financial supportive role and the female in the domestic role (p. 7). Then, as now, the idea of marriage as a cure for poverty is prevalent.

By the 1960's, the conversation focused on the idea that the family was in crisis. The family was talked about in terms of brokenness. In 1965 at the Howard University commencement address speaking on the breakdown of the "negro" family, President Lyndon Johnson stated,

> The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitudes, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. When the family collapses it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled. So, unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together—all the rest…will never be enough to cut completely the

> circle of despair and deprivation (Johnson, "Commencement Address at Howard University" 1965).

Presidents and legislators have often used the topic of the "loss of values" as part of their party platform as they stress the importance of families and what we can do to address the issues of "problem" families. In this instance, the breakdown of the family is only equated with the black family. These themes of the marriage as a cure for poverty, the breakdown of families, stigma, and morality become relevant in later discourse and are identifying themes of the family values ideograph.

With the political turmoil of the 1960's and 1970's and the struggle for civil rights, the discourse began framing society's problems as the result of broken homes. Minorities became visible to the rest of the nation and were often seen as a part of the bigger problems in the nation. Calling for a "return" to family values brought a reassurance to citizens and offered a reason for the political upheaval and changes that were occurring. In 1976, Jimmy Carter, on a campaign tour in New Hampshire, reiterated the loss of family values theme. He deplored the "steady erosion and weakening of our families" and promised "to construct an administration that would reverse the trends we have seen toward the breakdown of family and family values in our country" (Carter, 1976, p. 463). Carter reminded the voters of our Puritan ethics, underscoring the belief that civil government's purpose was to maintain the order divinely commanded. Carter said, "The family was the first government…if we want less government, we must have stronger families, for government steps in by necessity when families have failed" (p. 463). The theme that families are responsible for the successes or failures of a society resonates throughout the speech.

By looking at historical welfare legislation, we can see how differing family forms did not always fit the idea of what constituted a "good" family. In reviewing what defined strong family values, there seems to be little correlation between the qualities considered good values and the type of family from which one came. Except for Lorraine Fox Harding's observations of family values, all the others mentioned bore no reference to the type of family important to the structuring of values. When families are talked about in relation to what they used to be, policy-makers respond with rhetoric exalting families that took care of their own while calling for revitalization of family values to put the country back on track (Steiner, 1981, p. 5). Identifying characteristics of strong families versus failing families is inherently difficult. Just because some families remain intact is not necessarily an indication of a strong family. Families move from a private institution to public responsibility when the needs of the individual cannot be met within the family structure. Family policy, then, becomes involved in identifying the causes of this dysfunction. Scapegoating "values" as a reason for failure shifts blame from economic, cultural, or social considerations to that of personal failure (p. 9). Consider Senator Walter Mondale in 1973 when he said, "It all begins with the family. That is the key institution in America. If it breaks down, if it is unable to do what society has assumed it will do, then all these other problems develop. They are symptoms I think of more fundamental family breakdown" ("American Families," p. 123). Again, the pattern of equating successful families with strong values as the cornerstone of civilization was prevalent. The implications were also present that "broken" families were not a symptom of society's problems, but were the cause of them.

In conclusion, in order to understand the family values ideograph, we must look at the foundation upon which it was built. The twentieth century brought about a new view of family life. As families moved first to urban areas and then to suburban areas, families became more isolated from extended kin networks evolved into the nuclear family design prevalent during the middle of the century. However, the changes in attitudes towards the family were more widely accepted among the newly emerging middle class than among the working class and recent immigrants. The mid-1940's to 1950's brought about an era of unprecedented affluence among Americans. With this new wealth and opportunity came a move from a production society to a consumer society. New values emerged including individualism, materialism, orderliness, scientific rationality, leisure, and an emphasis on financial success. Couples began having children in record numbers. This "baby boom" reflected America's new attitudes of optimism and confidence. However, Americans were producing children at younger ages. In fact, teen pregnancies were higher in the 1950's than any other time in American history (West, 1996, p. 174).

By the 1960's, the attitudes began changing again. Young adults questioned their parents' materialistic values and mechanistic world views, criticizing their allegiances. National institutions, religion, education, and standards of sexual behavior were questioned and scrutinized. Civil rights, feminine rights, and political violence added to the mix, creating a countercultural phenomenon that was expressed through public protests and the adoption of alternative lifestyles. The 1970's and 1980's brought about a conservative backlash against this movement including strong conservative political lobbies that successfully promoted their candidates to office in order to re-establish a

public moral consciousness similar to a previous era when families presumably practiced "traditional" family values.

The problem with this motivation lies in the myths surrounding the era and the factually incorrect, nostalgic memories of an imagined past. Consider this statement from Gring-Premble (2001) talking on the rhetorical constructions of welfare recipients in a political forum:

> Once policy advocates understand the complex discursive and social practices that inform current legislation, they can create compelling narratives and depictions to influence policy. For policymakers who desire to perpetuate the status quo, creating powerful depictions means constructing representations that reinforce dominant societal beliefs, complement historical "truths," and uphold socially sanctioned values (p. 361).

In other words, some stories are more powerful than others because they resonate with their audience's experiences and understanding of what constitutes socially acceptable "truths." Within this understanding of "truth" is where the family values ideograph resides and influences the collective mindset of a culturally indoctrinated community to those beliefs and behaviors considered moral, normal, and acceptable.

From early welfare legislation (Mothers' Aid and the Sheppard-Towner Act) to the passage of the PRWORA, the interrelationship between family values rhetoric and the language within these policies demonstrates the power of the family values ideograph and its role as a moral consciousness. Early legislation overtly embraced its role as a moral compass by labeling those worthy of aid and those unworthy of aid. Modern legislation

is less overt, but still retains the power of moral compass through stigmatizing themes characterized by the family values ideograph.

The following chapter reviews actual examples of family values rhetoric from political leadership. The analysis is set up in terms of the ideographic categories and themes under which each example operates. By doing so, we see how the family values ideograph constructs rhetorically attractive depictions of what constitutes family values, their origins, how they uncover the tensions in the discourse, and how they work to sustain the ideal nuclear family model as the normative family model.

Chapter 4: Depictions of "Family Values" Rhetoric in the George H.W. Bush and the William Jefferson Clinton Administrations

As previously discussed, family values rhetoric has been a part of the political landscape for most of the twentieth century. The discussion has centered mainly on the idea that family values have changed and come under threat from new attitudes and liberal legislation. Although the dynamics of the family structure have changed, the values that Americans hold dear have not undergone the dramatic changes that policy-makers would have us believe. What has changed is an increasing sense that a loss of family values has become the catalyst for other societal problems including crime, un-wed motherhood, teen pregnancies, and a rise in homosexuality. These issues have always been problematic, but were concealed from public view and absent from the public discourse of earlier times.

According to writers Paige Martin, Don Martin, and Maggie Martin, during the traditional family experience of the 1950's, family roles were defined and expectations for child-rearing were clear. Most men and women adopted the roles of their parents. However, these roles are no longer defined by the societal system, but have become defined by the individual (2004, p. 8). Changing ideas surrounding acceptable family arrangements have become more respected, including single parent families and homosexual families. Due to societal shifts in families, such as single parents or dual income families, young people have had to assume more responsibility at a younger age. According to the Institute for American Values (1995), marriage as an institution is declining. More likely, marriage is still an important value, people are simply postponing it (Martin, Martin, & Martin, 2004, p. 8). Reasons for the decline in marriage include

educational opportunities for women, increased career directives for women, and teaching daughters not to be dependent upon a husband. Although between 1947 and 1980 there was a 173 percent increase of women in the workforce, the focus remains on the negative impact of women's work in society (p. 9).

Political narratives of the Bush/Clinton administrations are filled with characterizations and depictions of nostalgic memory in juxtaposition with rhetoric regarding America's family "crisis." Sample selection criteria included relevance to the topic of family values, the importance of the speech or legislation, widespread audience reception, and the leadership position of the speaker. I have chosen forty examples which are divided according to thematic content. These themes were selected because of their relevance as ideographic building blocks for "family values." Themes include: 1) The Nostalgia Trap; 2) Welfare to Workfare; 3) The Breakdown of the Family Equated with Societal Problems; 4) Marriage as a Cure for Poverty; 5) Stigmatization; 6) Morality; and 7) Defining our Family Values. The themes are categorized according to their function within narratives, as a label, or in conjunction with corresponding ideographs. The narrative category includes the themes of nostalgia, welfare to workfare, the breakdown of the family equated with societal problems, and marriage as a cure for poverty. Political and religious narratives focusing on domestic issues during these administrations are filled with these recurring themes. The labeling category includes stigmatization and morality. The associated ideograph category includes defining family values (although it also touches on the morality theme). Although these themes are not exclusive to each category, this stratification allows the ideograph to be mapped into recognizable patterns that are recurrent in the discourse. Once these patterns are

established, we can trace the significance of their impact upon the legislation under review.

A) Narratives

The Nostalgia Trap

The first rhetorical examples revolve around "how things used to be" and are prevalent in contemporary family values discourse. George H.W. Bush and Dan Quayle often used this approach when attempting to persuade audiences of the need for reform. This view of "if we could only return to how things used to be" might be valid for those who did experience idyllic "Father Knows Best" family life. However, the realities of the 1940's and 1950's were far from idyllic for the majority of Americans. Romanticization of wifehood and motherhood was prevalent in the 1950's, although more women were rejecting domesticity. Women's growing independence contributed to rising divorce rates and increased the number of single mothers. By the 1970's women's nontraditional sexual and public behavior became a consistent theme in backlash movements against the New Deal social programs.

The first examples use rhetorical depictions of "the ways things used to be" scenarios. All talk about better times when values where respected and understood to have meaning to the collective community. Each implies that a return to these ideals would be for the betterment of the nation.

Example 1:

President George H.W. Bush relating his and Barbara's humble beginnings in Texas:

> We lived in a little shotgun house, one room for the three of us. Worked in the oil business, then started my own. In time we had six children. Moved from the

shotgun, to a duplex apartment, to a house. And lived the dream – high school football on Friday night, Little League, neighborhood barbecue. People don't see their experience as symbolic of an era – but of course, we were. And so was everyone else who was taking a chance and pushing into unknown territory with kids and a dog and a car. But the big thing I learned is satisfaction of creating jobs, which meant creating opportunity, which meant happy families, who in turn, could do more to help others and enhance their own lives (Bush, G.H.W., *1988 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address).*

Example 2:

Dan Quayle accepting Vice Presidential Nomination:

I identify with that movie, 'Hoosiers' because it reflects the values I grew up with in our town. We believe very strongly in hard work, in getting an education, and in offering an opportunity to our families…I would have been quite happy spending my life in Huntington in the newspaper business, watching my kids grow up, seeing a community with plenty of opportunity to go around. But I looked around me in the mid-seventies and I saw threats to the future of my family and to the values that could once be taken for granted in our country (Quayle, D., *Acceptance Speech as Republican Nominee for Vice President of the United States.* August 18, 1988).

Example 3:

President Clinton addressing the nation in 1996:

I believe our new, smaller government must work in an old-fashioned American way, together with all of our citizens through state and local governments, in the

> workplace, in religious, charitable, and civic associations. Our goal must be to enable all our people to make the most of their own lives – with stronger families, more educational opportunity, economic security, safer streets, and a cleaner environment in a safer world (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1996*).

Example 4:

Pat Buchanan's presidential announcement speech:

> My friends, we are the heirs of a Great Generation, the generation of our mothers and fathers who brought this country safely through the Depression and World War II. I can yet recall, as a boy, seeing my father go off to work three jobs, to provide for a family that was growing to nine children – every one of whom he would send to college to get the kind of education he had been denied. I can yet recall my mothers' four younger brothers stopping by the house to say goodbye, as they went off to fight Hitler's evil empire in Europe. They made their contribution to America's greatness and glory. And we, too, have contributed. It was our generation, all of us, who stayed the course, persevered, and prevailed in the long twilight struggle against one of the most monstrous tyrannies the world has ever known (Buchanan, P., *Republican Presidential Announcement Speech* 2000).

In example 1, President Bush speaks of his early history with his wife and children and relates the importance of work. He talks of risks and satisfaction. He alludes to living the American dream, an ideograph often found in conjunction with family values. The family values ideograph is linked to the "American dream" ideograph through the Puritan work ethic ideology. Bush also equates his generation as "symbolic of an era" with

“happy families.” In example 2, Quayle equates life in a small town with the work ethic value, implying that perhaps these values were not present in more urban areas. Again, the theme of family values is equated with the American dream through work. Quayle identifies “threats to the future” in conjunction with values we once took for granted. According to Quayle, his family and values were threatened, although he does not define those threats.

On the other side of the party platform, Clinton speaks of an “old-fashioned” way of running government. He refers to less government intervention as being the way to reform welfare. Yet, as previously noted, “old-fashioned” (post New Deal) government included many welfare programs designed to help the middle and lower classes such as the G.I. Bill, Veteran’s Benefits, Social Security, unemployment insurance, housing subsidies, and low interest loans (Harris, 2004, p. 320). So when Clinton refers to an “old-fashioned” way to run government, he alludes to the possibility of changing how welfare gets dispersed.

In example 4, Buchannan calls himself an “heir of the Great Generation,” the generation that made America great. Compare the “great generation” with Bush’s statement, “symbolic of an era.” Both Bush and Buchannan are referring to the same time in history, apparently when Americans practiced family values. Examples 1 through 4 also stress the importance of a strong work ethic as a critical value and imply that this value has somehow been “lost” on the poor. This rhetoric compares a willingness to work hard (as illustrated by previous responsible generations) to a non-willingness to work (as illustrated in contemporary society), and points to this “lack” as a predictor in the number of welfare beneficiaries. Example 4 also refers to the values of hard work,

education, patriotism, honor, and perseverance as though they have also somehow been lost in modern times. These examples, then, offer nostalgic discourse portraying values that were "obviously" present in earlier decades, but that are seemingly "lost" in modern times. The next theme incorporates welfare into the picture. The discussion of welfare has become one of how to legislate families. Welfare becomes an integral issue to the family values ideograph.

Welfare to Workfare

Original welfare was designed to discourage single mothers from working. From the 1930's to 1970's, welfare efforts were concentrated on assistance and the creation of programs that would help the deserving poor, but with built-in adjustments to discourage able-bodied poor from seeking aid instead of employment (Cammisa, 1998, p. 103). When the welfare to workfare theme became the prevalent welfare discourse of the 1980's and 1990's, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) seemed contradictory. The program was designed to give aid to non-working single parents to raise their children and did not mesh with the new philosophies of encouraging and then requiring all AFDC recipients to work. Thus, reformers sought to create programs that encouraged social values. "If the existing welfare programs inculcated a culture of poverty, policymakers reasoned that they could restructure welfare program to inculcate a culture of work and family values" (p. 114).

The 1980's and 1990's also brought about a focus on personal responsibility. Conservatives centered efforts on deterrence and rehabilitation. For them, poverty was a personal problem, not a structural one. To succeed in their effort, they needed policies that would make aid more restrictive and less attractive (such as denying additional aid to

mother's on welfare bearing more children or refusing to identify fathers), and they sought to rehabilitate the poor through job and skill training (perhaps good in theory, but difficult to implement). This viewpoint was criticized by those who thought that much of the rhetoric around personal responsibility reflected a tendency to blame the victim (Cammisa, 1998, p. 104; Cloud, 1998, p. 402). Consider a statement by Newt Gingrich in 1995 to *Newsweek* magazine. He drew upon a statement made by Captain John Smith in 1607 when Smith told his crew, "If you don't work you won't eat." Gringrich called this statement, "the complete opposite of today's re-distribution ethic that subsidizes idleness. Nothing could be less traditionally American than the modern welfare system. It violates the American ethic that everyone should work hard to improve both their own lives and the lives of their children…" (Gringrich, 1995, pp. 26-27). He ends the article by accusing those not shouldering their personal responsibilities as not worthy to live in America. Attitudes such as his played a part in the welfare reforms of 1996 (most notably, the "welfare to workfare" policies).

Family values rhetoric becomes a useful tool when trying to convince the public, the reformers, and the opposition that welfare to workfare is a necessary progression. The cries for a return to family values are filled with images of the necessity of the Puritan work ethic. Distinctions between unwilling to work and unable to work become blurred. Those who would not or could not work do not seem to embrace our nation's family values.

Example 5:

President Reagan's remarks upon signing the Family Support Act:

It [Family Support Act] recognizes the need for a family's breadwinner to

maintain the habits, skills, and pride achieved through work. This work requirement also allows us to expand coverage for two-parent families to all States without dangerously increasing welfare dependency (Reagan, R., *Remarks on the Signing of the Family Support Act of 1988).*

Example 6:

President Clinton addressing the nation in 1996:

> I say to those who are on welfare, especially to those who have been trapped on welfare for a long time: For too long our welfare system has undermined the values of family and work, instead of supporting them…There have always been things we could do together—dreams we could make real—which we could never have done on our own. We Americans have forged our identity, our very union, from every point of view and every point on the planet, every different opinion. But we must be bound together by a faith more powerful than any doctrine that divides us—by our belief in progress, our love of liberty, and our relentless search for common ground (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1996*).

Example 7:

Vice-President Al Gore on welfare to workfare:

> In the Senate and as Vice President, I fought for welfare reform. Over and over again, I talked to folks who told me how they were trapped in the old welfare system. I saw what it did to families. So, I fought to end welfare as we then knew it—to help those in trouble, but to insist on work and responsibility. Others talked about welfare reform. We actually reformed welfare and set time limits. Instead of hand-outs, we gave people training to go from welfare to work. And

> we have cut the welfare rolls in half and moved millions into good jobs (Gore, A., "Remarks to the Democratic National Convention 2000").

Example 8:

Republican U.S. Senator Pete Domenici from New Mexico supporting the PRWORA:

> Mr. President, ninety percent of the children on AFDC live without one of their parents. Only a fraction of welfare families are engaged in work. The current welfare system has cheated the children of what they need most—among these is hope, the necessary condition of liberation from dependency. The key to their success will not be found in Washington but in the timeless values of family and work…This independence begins with living up to one's responsibilities. This is echoed through the legislation [PWRORA] with the provisions on work, time-limited benefits, limits on benefits for noncitizens, and strong child support enforcement reforms (Domenici, P., House Proceedings July 30, 1996).

Example 9:

Republican U.S. Senator Thomas Slade Gorton from Washington state supporting the PRWORA:

> The exercise aims to promote self-reliance by making it harder for people to rely on government. Without the threat of extra suffering, people would have no reason to change. What can't be predicted is how the good and bad will balance (Gorton, T., House Proceedings July 30, 1996).

Example 10:

Senator John Ashcroft from Missouri supporting the PRWORA:

> The real objective of our legislation here ought to be to change the character of welfare. We need to change it from a system which has provided careers and conditions that lasted a lifetime to a system that instead of providing a condition provides a transition, that moves people from poverty into opportunity, that moves people from indolence into industry, that moves people from welfare into work. No longer can we afford a system that not only provides people a condition or a career, but goes beyond trapping individuals and goes to trapping generations. (Ashcroft, J., House Proceedings July 30, 1996).

Examples 4 through 7 deal specifically with the value of hard work. Again there is the connection between the work ethic and the American dream philosophy as previously discussed in examples 1 through 4. Example 6 refers to the "welfare trap" in conjunction with "undermining the values of family and work." This example also uses the "dream" rhetoric that ties the work ethic to the American dream ideograph. Example 7 refers to being trapped in a welfare cycle, citing work and responsibility as the means to that end. Although Gore refers to millions with new jobs, there are no statistics to reinforce his claim. However, this is not the point. He uses the language to influence constituents that the reform efforts were hugely successful. Whether he can substantiate the claims become irrelevant in the minds of the collective. The direction of this discourse is to encourage the need to move welfare dependents into the labor force, a continuous theme that has been prevalent in recent history. Example 8 links the ideograph of hope with

values as a “condition of liberation from dependency.” Responsibility is the key to success.

Example 9 favors the PRWORA, but actually calls it a “threat.” According to this speaker, without threatening the poor with extra suffering, they have no incentive to change. The derogatory nature of the statement implies ignorance that the poor are simply incapable of seeking self-improvement without the threat of punishment.

In example 10, Senator Ashcroft refers to the “character of welfare.” This term is often seen as interchangeable with the phrase the “culture of poverty.” Both are used in a negative sense to marginalize the poor. He refers to welfare as a “condition,” as though it is a sickness and says that those on welfare are “indolent” and “trapped.” Ashcroft sees welfare as a government hand-out that leads to laziness, greed, and dependence. By referring to welfare as a “condition” and a “career,” Ashcroft implies that welfare recipients can become financially successful because they take advantage of the system.

Important questions regarding the ability for an impoverished family to attain financial independence in times of economic turndowns seem inconsequential. The reality is that a family of three or more can hardly be self-sustaining on minimum wage. However, instead the discussion remains focused on social pathologies that become equated with welfare families. For example, by advancing causal arguments that point to single motherhood resulting in welfare dependence, political rhetors successfully and continually promote the normalcy of the traditional nuclear family. From this depiction, non-traditional family forms become labeled as broken or dysfunctional. These families are portrayed as threats to the American dream and the American way of life. Welfare is seen as systematically undermining the family because the government becomes the

"breadwinner" or "head of the household." Thus, these next narratives are painted with depictions of the breakdown of the family as a cause of social problems, directing attention towards individual responsibility and away from economic, social, and political causes.

Breakdown of Family Equated with Societal Problems

Much of the discourse I researched dealt with the theme of the breakdown of the family structure as key to societal problems such as drug dependency, crime, teen pregnancies, unemployment, and low wages. The implication is that those who fall outside the paradigm are somehow defective and at the root of society's economic and moral failings.

Example 11:

George H.W. Bush referring to local leadership of the National League of Cities speaking of the need to strengthen families:

> And they came and they said the one thing that united them in terms that they all agreed on was that the fundamental problem that the decline of the American family is causing in the cities – the prime cause of much of the unrest, the problems of crime, whatever, comes from the dissolution of the American family (Bush, G.H.W., "Remarks at a Bush-Quayle Fundraising Dinner in Philadelphia 1992").

Example 12:

President Clinton addressing the nation on his New Covenant for the country:

> And far more than our material riches are threatened; things far more precious to us—our children, our families, our values [referring to decreasing wages and job

> insecurity]…Our civil life is suffering in America today. Citizens are working together less and shouting at each other more. The common bonds of community which have been the great strength of our country from its very beginning are badly frayed…the values that used to hold us all together seem to be coming apart (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1995).*

Example 13:

President Clinton on the need to re-build family life in American:

> For thirty years, family life in America has been breaking down…For too many families, even when both parents were working, the American dream has been slipping away…This spring I will send you a comprehensive welfare reform bill that builds on the Family Support Act of 1988 and restores the basic values of responsibility. We'll say to teenagers, if you have a child out of wedlock, we will no longer give you a check to set up a separate household. We want families to stay together (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1994*).

Example 14:

Dan Quayle on a "poverty of values," referring to the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King verdict:

> The intergenerational poverty that troubles us so much today is predominantly a poverty of values. Our inner cities are filled with children having children; with people who have not been able to take advantage of educational opportunities; with people who are dependent on drugs or the narcotic of welfare. To be sure, many people in the ghettos – struggle very hard against these tides – and sometimes win. But too many feel they have no hope and nothing to lose. This

> poverty is, again, fundamentally a poverty of values…I believe the lawless social anarchy which we saw is directly related to the breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility and social order in too many areas of our society. For the poor the situation is compounded by a welfare ethos that impedes individual efforts to move ahead in society, and hampers their ability to take advantage of the opportunities America offers (Quayle, D., *Address to the Commonwealth Club of California.* May 19, 1992).

Example 15:

President Clinton on the need to reform welfare because of its supposedly self-depreciating nature:

> A long time ago I concluded that the current welfare system undermines the basic values of work, responsibility, and family, trapping generation after generation in dependency and hurting the very people it was designed to help (Clinton, W.J., *The White House Office of the Press Secretary: Statement by the President.* The Briefing Room, July 31, 1996).

Example 16:

Bob Dole's addressing concerns of family breakdown:

> What enabled us to accomplish this has little to do with the values of the present. After decades of assault upon what made America great, upon supposedly obsolete values. What have we reaped? What have we created? What do we have? What we have in the opinion of millions of Americans is crime and drugs, illegitimacy, abortion, the abdication of duty, and the abandonment of children. And after the virtual devastation of the American family, the rock upon this

> country – on which this country was founded, we are told that it takes a village, that is, the collective, and thus, the state, to raise a child….I am here to tell you that permissive and destructive behavior must be opposed, that honor and liberty must be restored, and that individual accountability must replace collective excuse (Dole, R., *Acceptance Speech for the Republican Nomination for President* August 15, 1996).

Example 17:

Statement of the Honorable Tim Hutchinson, Arkansas Representative citing the breakdown of the nuclear family resulting in societal problems including crime and poverty:

> We have replaced mothers and fathers and, for that matter, we have replaced the village and put in their stead an all-encompassing welfare state. We have done this in the name of compassion, and I do not doubt the motivation that it has been one of compassion. What we have ultimately done is to encourage the breakdown of those families that are so important…Out-of-wedlock births, illegitimacy is at the core of most social pathologies—crime, drugs, illiteracy, and poverty. To claim that we are going to address welfare reform and not make the problem of out-of-wedlock births the primary focus is to repeat the failed reforms of the past (U.S House Committee on Ways and Means, "Causes of Poverty, With a Focus on Out-of-Wedlock Births," 1996).

Example 11 unequivocally relates societal problems with the family. Bush calls the problem a decline of the family, not a re-structuring of the family. The American family is understood to mean the traditional nuclear family. The implication is that without

traditional families there are no values, and no values leads to criminal activity. Example 12 equates suffering in civil life to a breakdown of our community structure which necessarily includes the family structure. Example 13 blames the breakdown of family life to the loss of the American dream. Clinton talks of restoring the value of responsibility through the maintenance of traditional family life. In the next example, Quayle goes so far as to say that poverty is caused by an erosion of values. He even equates welfare to a narcotic, likening it to a drug-addicted state of being. Like example 11, example 14 squarely puts blame for "social anarchy" on the "poverty of values" supposedly plaguing our nation. Example 15 refers to the "welfare trap," a popular perspective that says once people experience welfare benefits, they do not try to become self-sufficient.

Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition describes welfare programs as "enslaving the very people [they] promised to protect" (Sidel, 1998, p. 8). However, there is no evidence that ADFC and other aid programs are responsible for an increase in poverty, out-of-wedlock births, job shortages, or low wages (p. 8). Example 16 points to victim blame, citing "individual accountability" for "social pathologies." Dole calls for a return to personal responsibility instead of excusing unacceptable behaviors as a result of the power system. He also talks about traditional values as "obsolete" and that "values of the present" differ from those of the past. Furthermore, the change in values has resulted in societal problems ranging from "crime…to the abandonment of children" resulting from the "devastation of the American family" (still referring to the traditional nuclear family). Example 17 blames welfare for the destruction of the family. Representative Hutchinson further explains the lack of values attributed to illegitimacy as the cause of most "social

pathologies." Hutchinson goes so far as to say that welfare has replaced the family and that we, as a nation, have encouraged this change. This type of dialogue perpetuates the belief that the poor are unworthy and aberrant. Interestingly enough, much of what was afforded to many Americans after World War II was a result of government programs intended to promote economic recovery. Thus, many benefited from government programs and "hand-outs." Yet, these same beneficiaries today argue that government intervention acts as a contributing factor in the breakdown of families.

In a likely progression, the theme of marriage enters the discussion as a possible solution to poverty. The marriage as a cure for poverty theme is based in traditional sociological gender divisions. The following examples validate the gender norms of father as economic provider through the depiction of marriage as a way out of poverty. These narratives also illustrate how labels are used by legislators to discuss welfare "problems" including out-of-wedlock births, single motherhood, never-married mothers, and female-headed households (Gring-Pemble, 2003, pp. 486-487). Thus, in a faulty causal argument, the single-mother scenario becomes a primary predictor of poverty.

Marriage as a Cure for Poverty

Although economically stable and healthy marriages are desired by a majority of Americans, they are not always possible. Nevertheless, marriage operates as an important family value and becomes a directive when it becomes seen as a way out of poverty. By linking the two ideas together, the message comes across that those who lack a healthy marriage become part of the problem of poverty.

Example 18:

The following quotes (Examples 18-23) are from the United States House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means: "Causes of Poverty with a Focus on Out-of-Wedlock Births." Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources 104th Congress, 2nd Session 1996:

> Today's hearing will explore consequences of this surge in out-of-wedlock births. The sad truth is that the fastest ticket to poverty is to have a child without being married…Sixty-four percent of children born to single parents live in poverty, while only eight percent of children born to two-parent families live in poverty…the best thing we can do to fight poverty is to encourage marriage… House Republicans are now challenging the conventional wisdom by trying to end the use of Federal dollars for cash payments to aid and food stamps and States can provide the mothers with vouchers to help care for the children's needs. States would be barred from providing minor mothers with cash, the biggest incentive for unacceptable behavior (Chairman E. Clay Shaw, Republican, Florida, House of Representatives).

Example 19:

> I suggest to you that if you want kids to get married they [ghetto children] would not even understand the concept. People who talk about marriage, homes, a picket fence, and IRA, their children's and their grandchildren's future; they are the ones that have hope (Honorable Charles B. Rangel, Democrat, New York, House of Representatives).

Example 20:

Mr. President, ninety percent of the children of Aid to Families with Dependent Children live without one of their parents. Only a fraction of welfare families are engaged in work. The current welfare system has cheated the children of what they need most—among these is hope, the necessary condition of liberation from dependency. The key to their success will not be found in Washington, but in the timeless values of family and work (Senator William Roth, Republican, Delaware).

Example 21:

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the growth in illegitimacy is the single most important change in our country in the last generation. It is a fact so powerful that it annihilates all other facts…Girls raised in single-parent homes on welfare are five times more likely to give birth out-of-wedlock. Children born to a single mother are seven times more likely to be poor than those born to married couples (Senator James M. Talent, Republican, Missouri).

Example 22:

The simple fact of the matter is that marriage in the United States is dying and the very survival of our society is at stake. By large, it is the current welfare system that is killing it. I would emphasize that if, even once you have had an out-of-wedlock birth, the best way to reduce welfare dependence is to get the mother to marry subsequent to that birth…We see that marriage reduces welfare dependence either way it is measured, it cuts it in half, just by having her marry. It is a much more effective strategy than simply stressing getting her employed…What

> welfare does is that it serves as a substitute for marriage. It teaches people that it is acceptable and possible to have children without the necessity of marriage. It undermines marriage as a norm, and it facilitates what is, in essence, a terribly self-destructive choice (Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation).

Example 23:

> Growing up in a single-parent family, a stepfamily and, indeed, virtually any family type other than an intact two-parent family is associated with poorer health, lower achievement, and an increased incidence of conduct and emotional problems in children (Dr. Nicholas Zill, Vice-President and Director Child and Family Studies, Westat, Inc.).

Example 24:

President Clinton addressing the nation on welfare with a focus on single motherhood as a leading factor in poverty-stricken families:

> People who bring children into this world cannot and must not walk away from them. But to all those who depend on welfare, we should offer ultimately a simple compact. We'll provide the support, the job training, the child care you need for up to two years. But after that, anyone who can work must—in the private sector, wherever possible; in community services, if necessary. That's the only way we'll ever make welfare what it ought to be—a second chance, not a way of life (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1994*).

Example 25:

Dan Quayle's comments on TV's sitcom *Murphy Brown:*

> It doesn't help matters when prime time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who

> supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, profession woman—mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another 'lifestyle choice'. I know it is not fashionable to talk about moral values, but we need to do it. Even though our cultural leaders in Hollywood, network TV, the national newspapers routinely jeer at them, I think that most of us in this room know that some things are good, and other things are wrong. Now it's time to make the discussion public (Quayle, D., *Vice President Dan Quayle Addressing the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco,* 1992).

Example 26:

President Reagan comments on signing the Family Support Act:

> Single-parent families also share in the message of hope underlying this bill. They, too, will know that there is an alternative to a life on welfare. To ensure that they get a better start in life, young parents who have not completed high school will be required to stay in or return to school to complete the basic education so necessary to a productive life (Reagan, R., *Remarks on Signing the Family Support Act of 1988*).

Example 27:

> To strengthen the family we must do everything we can to keep the teen pregnancy rate going down. I am gratified, as I'm sure all Americans are, that it has dropped for two years in a row. But we all know it is still far too high (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1996).*

Example 18 clearly equates single parenting with poverty with an emphasis on marriage as a financial solution. Providing minor mothers with cash apparently leads to

unacceptable behavior. There is no mention of the number of single mothers who do not live below the poverty line, nor is there any mention of those recipients who are working hard to better themselves and their families. Such broad generalizations lend credence to the negative stereotypes regarding single mothers. Example 19 suggests that children of the ghetto have no concept of marriage and healthy families, thus no family values and certainly no hope for their future. Example 20 echoes these same sentiments, adding that only through liberation from welfare will people discover the "timeless values of family and work."

Example 21 offers statistics, but no reference as to where they came from. This speaker believes illegitimacy to be the most significant problem for our country. Example 22 charges the welfare system for destroying marriage. His point is that marriage is the best way to reduce the welfare roles. His phrase, "It undermines marriage as a norm," reflects traditional Judeo-Christian values. Lastly, the rhetoric calls unwed parenthood self-destructive, again scapegoating single mothers through negative connotations.

Example 23 makes assertions that growing up in any other family type besides the "intact" family results in more physical, emotional, and behavioral problems for the children involved. However, he offers no references or studies to support his position. Example 24 is directed at single parents dependent upon welfare. Again work is named as a primary directive, although it appears to be in conflict with the family value of domestic motherhood. While politicians praise the important role mothers play in child-rearing and talk of their traditional family role, they also insist that they enter the workforce. According to Gwendolyn Mink, policies that ask women to "surrender their

economic personhood" to husbands are using marriage directives that can create dependency rather than independency (Mink, 1998, p. 19).

Example 25 is a highly quoted and inflammatory comment made by Dan Quayle that sparked a much heated debate on the topic of single parenthood and its relation to family values. Quayle uses the TV character Murphy Brown, who purposely elected to have a child out-of-wedlock, as an example of the deteriorating family values in our society. His point was that media encouraged morally poor choices, including having children outside of marriage. Because much of the current discourse had centered on problems of single mothers on welfare, Quayle implied that media exacerbated the problem by promoting and glamorizing unwed motherhood.

Example 26 illustrates Reagan equating single-parenting with a lack of education. Young parents are discouraged from leaving home and encouraged to continue their education. However, I am unsure what the proposed solution was for young parents who were expelled from their homes by their own parents. In example 27, Clinton connects strengthening the family with reducing the teen pregnancy rate. While most Americans would agree teen pregnancy is a problem, the correlation between that and strengthening families seems unclear unless the implication is that if teens came from homes practicing family values, they would not get pregnant in the first place.

With this concentration on marriage as a solution, policymakers may not consider strategies to allow other family forms to be successful. Discussions about increased wages (particularly the minimum wage), subsidies for childcare and healthcare, and increased job training opportunities are pushed to the background and often receive less attention from policymakers and the public. The prevalence of ideographical evidence

within the family values theme in the George H.W. Bush and the William Jefferson Clinton administrations is illustrated through political discussions on domestic policy.

Narratives demonstrate, through stories and characters, what community members should believe and how they should behave. Narratives also identify those historical events that are relevant for the present by reframing interpretations of past events in a way that is consistent with the moral focus of the story. Finally, narratives create an illusion in which individuals believe they are choosing the stories they will accept or reject. However, once subjects identify with the narrative, the plotline determines what is relevant to the concerns of the public (Winkler, 2006, p. 10 and Charland, 1987, pp. 133-150). Examples 1-27 demonstrate how political leadership uses the four narrative themes (nostalgia, welfare to workfare, breakdown of the family leading to societal problems, and marriage as a cure for poverty) to create ideas and visualizations of what life would be like if we all practiced family values. They reiterate the work ethic and importance of marriage as acceptable behaviors. Family forms associated with poverty (all non-traditional forms) are a drain on society and encourage unacceptable beliefs and behaviors. The narratives often refer to a time in history when these "acceptable" behaviors were supposedly more prevalent and highly valued. Once the audience agrees with the narrative, then families become divided as inclusive (nuclear families practicing family values) or exclusive (non-nuclear families not practicing family values).

The next theme revolves around the lack of family values among the poor and unfortunate. Thus, the discussion necessarily focuses on welfare, its policies, its need for reform, and its "addictive" nature. In discussing welfare recipients, labels are often used

to separate the groups into “more deserving” and “less deserving.” The most common label associated with poverty victims is the “underclass.”

B) Labeling

Stigmatization

Labeling occurs when judgments are based on imagined knowledge from stories and preconceived ideas that resonate with the collective values and prejudices held by the community in which they are used (Gans, 1995, p. 11). Labels are generally used to designate those deemed “deviant” or different (in a negative sense) because those individuals are believed to reside outside of mainstream values (p. 12). Labels and labeling operate in similar ways as stereotypes and stereotyping. Theoretically, stereotypes can be positive or negative. Labels, however, tend to be used negatively. In addition, negative labeling does not only refer to behavior, but becomes magnified into “character failing” (p. 12). Ironically, labels assigned to the poor as undeserving may actually hinder their attempts at self-improvement. Gans states, “Labels may be only words, but they are words that can become powerful sticks and stones” (p. 13).

One of the contemporary labels assigned to the poor is the “underclass.” The connotations of the term may include the homeless, beggars, panhandlers, poor drug and alcohol addicts, street criminals, high school drop-outs, poor young unmarried mothers, illegal immigrants, and teen gang members. The very flexibility of the term gives it power as a stigmatizing label. The “underclass” is a behavioral term invented by social scientists and perpetuated by the media and political leadership to describe the group of impoverished people that fail to behave in mainstream ways prescribed by the dominant middle class (Gans, 1995, p. 2). Gans says that historian Michael B. Katz calls the

"underclass" an umbrella label or rather one label that covers a multitude of faults. He calls this process "the interchangeability of defects" (p. 18). Katz examines how the term "underclass" works ideographically as the contemporary euphemism for the poor, helping to reinforce the idea of victim fault through stigmatization.

> By the late 1970's, the specter of an emergent underclass permeated discussion of American's inner cities…The word *underclass* conjured up a mysterious wilderness in the heart of American cities; a terrain of violence and despair; a collectivity outside politics and social structure, beyond the usual language of class and stratum, unable to protest or revolt…They are the unreachables: the American underclass…Their bleak environment nurtures values that are often at odds with those of the majority—even the majority of the poor (Katz, 1993, p. 4).

Katz differentiates between the underclass and the poor. The underclass is not only poor, but lacks moral consciousness in a socially acceptable way. Other scholars and authors also make this distinction, but claim that oftentimes political discourse uses the term interchangeably with the nation's poor. Paradoxically, the intention of the discourse is to create delineation between groups, but instead the "poor" become thought of as the "underclass" in the community's collective consciousness.

Ken Auletta in *The Underclass* describes members of this class as excluded from society and depicted as rejecting societal values. Because of this rejection, they suffer from behavioral and economic deficiencies producing a disproportional number of juvenile delinquents, drug addicts, welfare mothers, and adult crimes. "They are not only poor, but their behavior is aberrant" (1983, p. xiii).

William Julius Wilson (1987) claims there is a distinction between the "poor" and the "underclass." The critical problem with pervasive use of the term "underclass" is that all poor people are seen as undeserving, despised, and feared. He argues that this perception has driven policy changes based on stereotyping all poverty-stricken individuals as part of the underclass (p. 8). In her book *Keeping Women and Children Last: America's War on the Poor*, Ruth Sidel says,

> The assumption that virtually all poor people are members of the underclass is a shorthand way of saying that their behavior is the central factor in their poverty, that they are dangerous, that they do not share mainstream values, that they are the "other" who must be brought into line, must be re-socialized with the stick rather than the carrot, and must be punished for their aberrant behavior (1996, pp. 68-69).

However, these assumptions cloud the issues and circumstances that put women and children into poverty in the first place (the majority of welfare discourse focuses on women and children), and they overlook the many welfare women taking part in the labor force trying to get off of welfare.

The poor are regularly dichotomized into two groups, those worthy of help and those unworthy of help. The old, infirmed, mentally ill, handicapped and "working poor" would constitute the first group. The poor unmarried teen mother, addicts, the underclass, and able-bodied, non-working poor would be examples of the second group (Gans, 1995, p. 14). The idea of not measuring up to societal expectations prevails throughout examples 28 through 32. As the following excerpts show, labeling the poor as the underclass can further stigmatize them as undesirables.

Example 28:

Dan Quayle speaking on the need for tax cuts to create jobs:

> Why not harness the prosperity we have today and grow it even more? Because some people are being left behind. Many in the middle class are being left behind. The poor are being left behind. The underclass is being left behind (Quayle, D., 2000 – *Remarks Announcing Candidacy: The Battle for our Values Begins Today*).

Example 29:

President William J. Clinton speaking on the Middle Class Bill of Rights and tax relief:

> I know that a lot of you have your own ideas about tax relief, and some of them I find quite interesting…My text for all proposals will be: Will it create jobs and raise incomes? Will it strengthen our families and support our children? Is it paid for? Will it build the middle class and shrink the underclass? If it does, I'll support it (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1995).*

Example 30:

Dan Quayle addressing the Commonwealth Club of California after the Rodney King riots:

> [W]e have also developed a culture of poverty – some call it an underclass – that is far more violent and harder to escape than it was a generation ago…But the underclass seems to be a new phenomenon. It is a group whose members are dependent of welfare for very long stretches, whose men are often drawn into lives of crime. There is far too little upward mobility, because the underclass is disconnected from the rules of American society. And these problems have,

> unfortunately, been particularly acute for Black Americans…For the government, transforming underclass culture means that our policies and programs must create a different incentive system. Our policies must be premised on, and must reinforce values such as: family, hard work, integrity, and personal responsibility (Quayle, D., *Address to the Commonwealth Club of California,* May 19, 1992).

Example 31:

President Clinton talking of the underclass:

> In our toughest neighborhoods, on our meanest streets, in our poorest areas, we have seen a stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family, and work—the heart and soul of a civilized society. This has created a vast vacuum which has been filled by violence, drugs, and gangs (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1994*).

Example 32:

Mrs. Clinton's remarks to the Child Welfare League:

> Yet today, poor children and families are viewed less as objects of concern than as culprits for everything that is wrong in society. Drugs, violence, illegitimacy, and abuse are viewed as afflictions only of the poor and, in turn, it is poor children and families who are singled out for punishment.

She compares this treatment of the poor to the scapegoating parable found in Leviticus:

> This is an apt parable for what is happening in America today. In today's society, the goat is poor children and their parents. And somehow we think we can rid ourselves of all our social problems by scapegoating children and exiling them to

a wilderness of greater poverty and hopelessness (Clinton, H., *Remarks by the First Lady to the Child Welfare League* March 1, 1995).

Examples 28 through 30 specifically use the term "underclass" as a label for deviant behavior of some of the poor. Although the use of the term was intended to make a distinction between this aberrant group and law-abiding poor, the result was an overall impression that underclass equates with welfare recipients. Quayle used "culture of poverty" and "members dependent upon welfare" to describe the underclass. He even went on to say the underclass was a predominantly black problem. In example 31, President Clinton correlates the emergence of the underclass with the breakdown of the family.

Example 32 points out that the poor have been scapegoated by American society for societal problems including economic downturns and crime. By scapegoating "values" as the reason for failure, blame shifts from social or economic considerations to that of personal failure (Steiner, 1981, p. 9). With the exception of this example, the idea that a loss of traditional values has played a primary role in the emergence of the underclass is reiterated. Economic factors and social situations are not alluded to as possible contributors to this problem. Public contempt for the current system develops because of the perception that the system operates in arbitrary and unfair ways. The "underclass" is associated with violence and immorality and is often used as a racist label. Reform must deal with these irrationalities as well as issues of self-sufficiency (Bane & Ellwood, 1994, p. 125).

Moral judgments about people lead to the creation of stigmas, thus the issue of morality necessarily stems from the breakdown of the family theme. In family values

discourse, morality is historically a women's or minority's issue. This historical precedence is still prevalent among modern discourse.

Morality

The idea that public policy should reflect shared mores regarding morality is a tenet of American democracy. Problems arise when people have differing views of right and wrong. Joel Handler in *The Poverty of Welfare Reform* says Americans treat the dependent poor as being in need of moral reform. The Judeo-Christian idea that still prevails is that if you were living right you would not be living in poverty. Handler actually sees reform as proof that Americans tend to blame the victim by stigmatizing them and punishing those in poverty (qtd. in Lynn, 1996, p. 307). Whereas once welfare meant the preservation of human well-being, it now implies government hand-outs to undeserving people (Gordon, 1994, p. 2; Lynn, 1996, p. 309; Mink, 1998, p. 133). George Smith (1998) says "moral values are the obligations, responsibilities, freedoms, and rights which arise from the social contract all individuals have within their government." Laws, then, become "the officially sanctioned moral dictates of the state" (p. 7). There is a tendency to believe that only those families with Dad in the workplace and Mom at home are deserving of value (Nelson, 1992, p. 6).

Moral panics arise when a society feels their values are threatened. When Americans become apprehensive about their economic and social well-being, personal safety, and the ability to care for themselves and families, then people look to the political leadership for explanations and reassurance (Sidel, 1996, p. 27). In the case of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the discourse pointed fingers at the breakdown of the family as the cause of the violence. Once the threat is defined, it is presented stereotypically to

the public. Sometimes the panic is resolved or forgotten, but sometimes it can produce legal or social changes influenced by a process of scapegoating (p. 27). The discourse regarding the state of American welfare has tended to portray welfare recipients as part of the problem with society. However, people are not always poor due to character defects; therefore, poverty should be dealt with through social and economic change, not necessarily ideological change (Mink, 1998, p. 134).

Example 33:

Pat Buchanan 1992 Convention speech speaking out against Bill and Hillary Clinton and their "radical" politics:

> Friends, this is radical feminism. The agenda Clinton & Clinton would impose on America – abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat – that's change, all right. But it is not the kind of change America wants. It is not the kind of change America needs. And it is not the kind of change we can tolerate in a nation that we still call God's country.

On standing with President Bush against homosexual unions:

> And we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women (Buchanan, P., *Republican National Convention Speech 1992*).

Example 34:

Former Vice President Dan Quayle at the Republican National Convention 1996:

> Is it radical to try to reform the legal system and make it more efficient for all of us? Bill Clinton vetoed legal reform. Is it radical, in the seventh or eighth month

> of pregnancy to protect the baby? Bill Clinton supports partial birth abortions. And how about my favorite, is it radical to ask Americans to live the family values that make our nation strong? My friends, you're right. These are not radical positions. These are American values. Our values. And they are values we need to move America into the twenty-first century. Strong, free, and proud (Quayle, D., *Speaking Before the Republican National Convention 1996*).

Example 35:

President Clinton on unwed teen mothers:

> I want to work with you, with all of you, to pass welfare reform. But our goal must be to liberate people and lift them up, from dependence to independence, from welfare to work, from mere childbearing to responsible parenting. Our goal should not be to punish them because they happen to be poor…We should -- we should require work and mutual responsibility. But we shouldn't cut people off just because they're poor, they're young, or even because they're unmarried. We should promote responsibility by requiring young mothers to live at home with their parents or in other supervised settings, by requiring them to finish school. But we shouldn't put them and their children out on the street (Clinton, W.J., *State of the Union 1995*).

Example 33 specifically names threats to our family values and assigns blame to women's rights as a catalyst for other "undesirable" changes. Notice the use of the "feminist" label in conjunction with the word "abortion" referring to immoral changes in American values. Buchannan makes reference to homosexual unions as undesirable and morally wrong, invoking the name of God to back his moral position. Again, example 34

places the family values ideograph and its demise against a backdrop of immorality and un-Christian beliefs. Example 35 reiterates welfare work initiatives, but also claims reform should not "punish" the poor. Clinton's main point is to promote responsibility, yet this comment is followed by the comment that young unwed mothers be required to live at home under supervised settings. Disciplinary welfare reform stems from the idea that mothers' poverty comes from moral failing, directing the debate away from economic and social factors that contribute to unwed motherhood and towards a discussion about morality.

Stigmatization and morality can become interrelated. Our judgments of one another are sometimes based on preconceived ideas or descriptions of certain groups. Just as one might stick a label on a product to define that product, so do people stick labels on each other in an attempt to define one another. Although labeling is often used interchangeably with stereotyping, they are not necessarily the same. Stereotypes usually contain a grain of truth although overall, they are generally false. They survive because people want to believe them. Labels, however, generally transform behavior and appearance into a failure of character or lack of integrity. One of the purposes of labeling is to strip labeled persons of other qualities (Gans, 1995, p. 12). A single mother on welfare may be a good mother, but when she is labeled as deviant, unwed, or the mother of illegitimate children, then her other qualities become irrelevant. Labels may also become self-fulfilling. If the welfare child is labeled delinquent and he/she is expected to act in aberrant ways, then that child can conform to stereotyped beliefs or has the added burden of changing expectations about them. The labeling process within the stigma and morality themes exemplifies how this process degrades and devalues those within the

welfare system. The poor become equated with the underclass and the audience is told repeatedly that this underclass threatens our values. Thus, in translation, the poor bear the stigma as the primary source of violence, illegal drugs, gangs, and other aberrant failings in society.

The next group of examples deals with how families and values are defined in political discourse. Gring-Pemble states that public policies become powerful vehicles for signification of American values. Public discourse surrounding relationships between family values, political arguments, and policy formation construct depictions of potential problems and solutions (2003, p. 474). Murray Edelman (1977) claims that language and symbols function in the public consciousness to justify acceptance of public policy that can result in on-going tolerance of chronic social problems (p. 2). Consider a statement by Gring-Pemble when she said, "Depictions accurately reflect the lived experiences of some American families, select the experiences of others as normative and ideal, and deflect the lived experiences of others" (2003, p. 476). With the case of welfare, ideas about the normalcy of the traditional nuclear family become the acceptable standard by which to judge other family forms, while the "other" is stigmatized as the "underclass."

C) Associated Ideographs

<u>Defining our Family Values</u>

The overwhelming majority of discourse I reviewed emphasized an erosion of values causing a decline in the work ethic resulting in an increased number of people on welfare. In defining important American family values, the following rhetors routinely employ ideographs associated with family values. Remember, that ideographs are often

defined by their relation to other ideographs. The following examples define some of America's values and how these values translate into working citizens.

Example 36:

Dan Quayle on family values:

> Don't forget about the importance of the family. It begins with the family. We're not going to redefine the family. Everybody knows the definition of family. [Meaningful pause] A child. [Meaningful pause] A mother. [Meaningful pause] A father. There are other arrangements of the family, but that is a family and family values (Quayle, D., "Remarks to *Esquire* Magazine," August 27, 1992).

Example 37:

President George H.W. Bush speaking to older generations about passing along their values to future generations:

> And parents, your children look to you for direction and guidance. Tell them of faith and family. Tell them we are one nation under God. Teach them that of all the many gifts they can receive, liberty is their most precious legacy. And of all the gifts they can give, the greatest is helping others (Bush, G.H.W., *State of the Union 1990*).

Example 38:

Hillary Clinton in Sydney, Australia talking about families under stress:

> It's about developing among democratic nations what I call 'an alliance of values' that withstands tyranny and terrorism, an alliance based on the shared values of freedom, opportunity, responsibility, community and respect for human

> rights…The village of which I wrote is not a geographic location, but a community of shared values and relationships…Will individual women be respected for the choices they make about family, work and personal growth—and will they be able to make those choices free of burden of other people's and society's expectations? Will we stop pigeon-holing women and invoking stereotypes that limit their potential? Will we admit that there is no formula for being a successful or fulfilled woman in today's society? That one can choose full-time motherhood and homemaking? Or be committed to work outside the home without marriage or children? Or, like most of us today, balance work and family responsibilities? And that each of our choices will be supported and respected? (Clinton, H., *Remarks by the First Lady to the Women of Australia* November 21, 1996).

Example 39:

Dan Quayle announcing his presidential candidacy:

> We are coming to the end of a dishonest decade of Bill Clinton and Al Gore. My friends, it is time that we work to reclaim the values that made America great. Values like respect, responsibility, courage, patriotism, integrity…I ask you, what is the greatest challenge facing America today? Is it jobs, or is it values? It is values; of course it is (Quayle, D., *Remarks Announcing Candidacy: The Battle for Our Values Begins Today*, 2000).

Example 40:

Remarks by G.H.W. Bush Cabinet member Louise W. Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services on program "Healthy Start:"

> Indeed, we need to cultivate in our nation what I call a 'culture of character,' a recognition that so much of the mortality and disease in America today is the result of our own choices and behaviors. We need to support one another, through our families and communities, toward healthful behavior choices and productive lives. Infant mortality is recognized as a telltale of broader health status. It is, equally, a measure of our commitment to some of the most fundamental of human values—our willingness to invest in our children, our readiness to bend our lives and institutions to their needs, and our confidence that we can shape the future positively through our efforts on their behalf (Sullivan, L., "Healthy Start" Press Conference 1991).

Example 36 gives Dan Quayle's definition of family. He clearly states his belief that a family is defined as the traditional nuclear family and offers no mention of other acceptable family types. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the nuclear family consisting of the working father, homemaker mother, and minor children represented only 7 percent of husband-wife families (U.S. Department of Labor: *Working Women,* 1978, p. 1). Examples 37 through 39 name specific values that are often ideographs themselves. Thus, they illustrate McGee's claim that ideographs are identified in relation to one another. Liberty, love, faith, education, respect, responsibility, courage, patriotism, integrity, freedom, opportunity, and human rights are all present in the aforementioned examples and can all operate as ideographs in and of themselves. Although these are defined as American values, the implication is that they are values that originate within the family structure. Thus, family values are necessarily the building blocks for American values. Example 40 coins the phrase "culture of character"

to create a link between personal choice and infant mortality rates. This particular statement also bears reference to the idea that poverty is primarily a woman's issue. In the same speech, Sullivan called on the promotion of fatherhood initiatives in the promotion of strong, loving families. Sullivan goes on to identify "fundamental human values" with the welfare of American children, a value upon which America's future is dependent.

As previously discussed, ideographs work in association with one another. One might define "equality" using other high order abstractions like "liberty" or "democracy." "Family values" is also discussed in terms of other abstract ideas. Examples 36-40 all talk about families in conjunction with terms such as "faith," "liberty," "alliance of values," "freedom," "opportunity," "responsibility," "respect," "courage," "patriotism," "integrity," and a "culture of character." All the ideas are positively associated within the collective who willingly accepts the interpretations of these terms. Thus, when paired with other positive thought-invoking ideographs, the family values ideograph operates persuasively within the vocabulary and becomes a powerful indicator of the laudable beliefs of a community.

Summary

In trying to cope with the on-going challenge of creating a sense of continuity, the culture propagates the myth of families of the past as being more stable and united than families of the present (Gillis, 1996, p. 18). In the nostalgia examples, the speaker is always alluding to a different era when values were part of the fabric of life. The stories seem to imply that values are no longer significant in modern times. The in-group

(traditionalists) creates a common thread (memory) in order to unify the collective into agreement that life was better in earlier times.

In her book, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap,* Stephanie Coontz remarks, "For most Americans [of the 1950's], the most salient symbol and immediate beneficiary of their newfound prosperity was the nuclear family (p. 25). During this time, men and women were encouraged to discover their self identities and images in familial roles (p. 27). The trend in domesticity was the indicator of middle class status and middle class issues were measured in an individual's ability to create harmonious gender roles in the home (p. 28). However, the realities for many Americans, particularly minority groups, were far more complex than nostalgic memory suggests. These minorities, especially black families, were excluded from the privileges accorded to white middle-class families. Often through harassment, unfair job practices, or even violence, the black family was thwarted from seeking the American dream (p. 30). Women, too, were unfairly victimized, often lacking a freedom of choice for their lives. Although they were in demand in the job market during the war years, pressures to retreat back into "gender-appropriate" roles later prevailed (p. 31).

This "golden age" of family contentment is presented as simpler, united, stable, and honorable (Gillis, 1996, p. 3). When rhetors project an image of a particular ideal family in a particular ideal time, then changes to that ideal are talked about in terms of decline (p. 4). Gillis says,

> Summoning images from the past is one of the ways we generate the hope and energy necessary to strive for better communities and families in the future. But when the remembered past becomes an end in itself, becoming 'mere

> nostalgia,' it degenerates into a terminal bubble of the past that closes one off from the living spontaneity of the present and denies the possibility of a future. Either way, the notion of the traditional family is a myth many families live by (1996, p. 5).

Considering these suppositions, the family values ideograph plays an important role in sustaining this myth. As shown in examples 1-4, political leadership routinely associate family values with the mythic family ideal. All these examples refer to an earlier era as being a time when families provided homes that created productive, honest citizens as though to infer that modern families fail in that endeavor. The presence of other ideographic terminology within the rhetoric alludes to ideas such as the American dream, equality of opportunity, a safer world, the Great Generation, and American greatness and glory. All these ideas can be translated into values that when used in nostalgic rhetoric can help generate images, real or imagined, in the collective consciousness of the public.

The second narrative, welfare to workfare, concentrates on the value of self-reliance. However, the reality is that the middle-class was built on government support programs. Americans tend to overestimate what they have accomplished independently (Coontz, 1992, p. 69-70). As a result, self-reliance itself becomes a part of the myth. In fact, the middle-class has benefited from more public assistance and subsidies than have the poor (p. 72). The Federal G.I. Bill offered educational and job opportunities to servicemen; the National Defense Education Act subsidized industry and education; and the Federal Housing Authority provided incentives for banks to require lower down payments and offer lower interest rates to home buyers (pp. 77-78). None of these subsidies were said to induce dependence, destroy the work ethic, demoralize families, or

lead to family breakdown. These criticisms were reserved for the welfare subsidies designed to help the impoverished (p. 79).

The examples under this section infer that welfare undermines family values and the work ethic. Welfare is referred to as a "trap," and "hope" is necessary for independence. Senator Gorton's statement is the most inflammatory, insinuating that the threat of suffering is the key to self-reliance. Negative depictions or connotations within the rhetoric are associated with welfare, while positive ones are associated with work.

The "breakdown of the family" theme operates by presenting the traditional nuclear family as the moral, righteous, value-laden family form. By implication, other family forms must be immoral, value-lacking family forms. Using in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, the discourse successfully exaggerates the negative characteristics of marginalized family groups and makes the traditionalist's group seem superior in an effect called enhanced group differentiation (Greene, 2004, p. 138). Favoritism or derogation can be causal factors in reinforcing attitudes that suggest that traditional gender divisions are best-suited for raising children, welfare recipients lack a strong work ethic, the breakdown of the traditional family structure leads to societal pathologies, or those below the poverty line fail to practice family values.

Examples 11-17 equate the dissolution of the family with welfare. Example 17 specifically says that welfare has replaced the family. All the examples imply or state that family breakdown is a result of a lack of family values (or as Dan Quayle calls it, a "poverty of values"). Bob Dole goes so far as to say the "devastation" of the family leads to crime, drugs, illegitimacy, and dereliction of family responsibilities. Restoring honor and liberty (two more ideographs) are the way to accomplish personal accountability. All

refer to family breakdown or crisis as leading to undesirable and unacceptable mainstream behavior. Terminology used in this narrative also acts as labels such as "illegitimate" and "out-of-wedlock," thus strengthening the negative connotations attached to those on welfare. When causal arguments point to unmarried parents as being a major cause of welfare dependency, marriage initiatives as a solution became a potent discourse.

Marriage as a way out of poverty is a powerful argument because the facts remain that most individuals on welfare are unmarried mothers with children. However, reviving the "traditional family" will have little effect in solving the "crisis" facing families today (Coontz, 1992, p. 257). Calling for a return to the traditional family model in today's times simply does not cohere with today's family realities. Instead, newer family patterns have emerged based on dual incomes, pluralism, increased tolerance, and the rise of informed choice (p. 185). While Americans still attach a high value to marriage, there is a new tolerance for alternate life choices (p. 186). The marriage examples encompass several themes, but overall equate unmarried mothers with poverty. Representative Rangel says that "ghetto children" (the implication being black children) do not understand the concept of marriage. Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation says the decline in marriage is threatening the very survival of our country. He further explains that welfare is "killing" marriage and that out-of-wedlock births are an exercise in self-destruction. Dan Quayle, in his famous speech speaking out against Murphy Brown, says that we know her choice is wrong. Other examples set requirements for unwed teens to remain in adult supervised settings (example 26) if they do not marry. Example 23 states that any other type of family (besides the nuclear family) will only lead to increased

emotional and behavioral problems with children. These depictions of dying families and ignorant unwed mothers strengthen the position that marriage, as a family value, must be considered as a poverty solution. Again, the ideograph works through negation. Those in society who embrace marriage and family ideals will be more successful and acceptable than those who, by circumstance or choice, reject these ideals. If marriage is a cure for poverty, then marriage dissolution or rejection leads to broken families. The marriage narrative also works as a labeling tool, stigmatizing non-nuclear families as dysfunctional.

The process of labeling leads to a discussion on stigma and stereotypes. Labeling can be particularly powerful in a political context (for example, rhetoric that stigmatizes the poor as the underclass leads audiences to negative associations). Although the intent of the underclass label was to differentiate between the worthy impoverished and the dishonest, criminally-minded impoverished, this differentiation is likely lost on the public. The dichotomy between "deserving" and "undeserving" become the same in the collective consciousness. Three of the five examples in this category mention the word "underclass." Narratives involving the underclass carry the assumption that the underclass is primarily a black issue. When referring to the underclass, the rhetorical depictions center on inner-city inhabitants, gang members, ghetto children, drug dealers and addicts, and generally depraved people. Negative labels can have detrimental effects for those stigmatized by them. Trying to overcome labeling and stereotyping only adds to the burden of being poor.

Morality rhetoric also operates in stigmatizing ways. A major consequence of moral labeling is guilt (Coontz, 1992, p. 6). Those on welfare victimized by labeling

suffer from feelings of inadequacies and low self-esteem. The discourse points the finger of blame at them for their own circumstances causing feelings of marginalization or "not living up to" societal expectations. When non-traditional families are targeted as lacking family values, then those marginalized are made to feel guilty for being unfit parents and unfit citizens. Family values rhetoric has been elevated into the defining features of the "golden age" morality in an effort to urge poor families to adopt virtuous values. Instead of discussions of social reform and political or social activism, private morality and appropriate family life are substituted as the measuring stick for other socio-economic problems.

Finally, the analysis shows how other ideographs work in conjunction with the family values ideograph to advance the traditional nuclear family model as the foundational concept upon which poverty solutions are promoted. The "defining family values" theme uses other high order abstractions to define itself. Collectively, the public has ideas and images associated with each abstraction that translates into a unified goal. These abstractions defy universal definition, yet retain enough flexibility that most people understand their meaning. Throughout this analysis there is a recurring pattern of ideographs and ideographic ideals that are a part of the family value ideograph such as the American dream, personal responsibility, individual accountability, the welfare trap, liberation from dependency, self-reliance, equality, hope, culture of poverty, culture of character, alliance of values, and honesty. These ideographs work to equate nuclear families with financial and emotional well-being, while disparaging other family forms as failures.

Evaluating this analysis ideographically (Condit and Lucaites, 1993, p. xii), we can see how public argumentation in the political arena presents the case for welfare reform using family values rhetoric. The underlying power of the family values ideograph lies in its ability to guide audiences to accept narratives, labels, and associated ideographs based, in part, on mythological stories or romanticized memory. Rhetorical history not only describes the role of past discourse, it also acts to reconstruct a past (real or imagined) that actively impinges on current discourse which has real-life effects for the community (Condit and Lucaites, 1993, p. 217). Thus, through our rhetorical culture, both the past and the present are constituted, ultimately affecting the community's future (p. 218). In order to persuade audiences who may have differing values, rhetors must find and present "super-ordinate" values, narratives, and characterizations that will frame proposed policy changes in terms that represent a high degree of desirability for community members (Condit, 1990, p. 200).

In light of these finding, the next chapter will examine legislation that led up to, and included, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which radically changed America's welfare policies. There we see how family values rhetoric is incorporated into legislative policy. Furthermore, it will show how social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Hogg and Reid, 2006) offers a framework that helps us understand how the ideographic construction of family values rhetoric translates into policy formations that have very real effects on people. Composed of three elements (i.e. categorization, identification, and comparison), this theory seeks to understand why individuals identify with certain social groups through a differentiation of "otherness." The theory states that individuals possess several different "selves" and act or behave

according to their desired group membership. The first step is categorization, where we separate ourselves or categorize ourselves according to which group(s) we belong to (or wish to belong to). Second, we identify with these groups on the basis of an "us" and "them" dichotomy. Last, we evaluate ourselves through a comparison to others similar to us and we are motivated to see "us" positively and to see "them" negatively. In this study, I have already shown how family values discourse works to create a sense of collective identification between the in-group (traditionalists) and the out-group (everyone else). Within the context of social identity theory, we can see how these seven themes of nostalgia, welfare to workfare, the breakdown of families associated with societal problems, marriage as a cure for poverty, stigmatization, morality, and defining family values, become important identity constructs. According to the rhetorical examples given, we reminisce about the myth of returning to the values of previous generations and "ending welfare as we know it," thus significantly decreasing immoral attitudes and behaviors.

If social identity theory explains how group membership affects social perception and attitudes, then we can apply these principles to political partisan membership. Although I have argued that both dominant political parties (Democrats and Republicans) have used the family values platform, differences do arise in how best to meet the needs of the community. The discussion of family values culminates, however, in welfare reform discourse. Politicians from both sides employ strategies of social identity theory, either intentionally or unintentionally, in an effort to set up "us" and "them" dichotomies. In the case of family values, the differences are not drawn so much along party lines as among their intended voter audience: the "us" referring to those who long for a return to

family values (whatever they may be) through the implementation of welfare reform, and "them" being those who do not conform to this ideology (non-traditional family groups) or would disagree that the state of our welfare system is a probable result of a lack of values.

Although social identity theory might be better suited to analyze partisan membership, I believe that it is also useful in evaluating a political leader's relationship with the voting audience. The two parties may seemingly be unified on the family values subject, but through a process of categorization and comparison, they create identification factors within their constituencies that lead to a consensus that welfare reform is the necessary solution.

Chapter 5: Legislating Families: Family Values Rhetoric in Welfare Law

Family values rhetoric has been used extensively to argue for changes in our welfare system. Therefore, I chose to analyze the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) in conjunction with family values rhetoric because it was the most significant welfare reform legislation to ever be implemented in this nation. As supporting policies, I also looked at the Family Support Act of 1988 and the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 due to their impact on the PRWORA itself.

Again, using the same categories and thematic structure as in the previous chapter, the following legislative examples are divided accordingly. We see in the opening findings of the PRWORA several of the family values ideograph themes at work including welfare to workfare, marriage as a solution to poverty (including fatherhood initiatives), the breakdown of family as a contributor to societal pathologies, morality (government sanctioned codes of moral and correct behavior), issues of stigma ("single parenting," "unwed mothers," and references to the "underclass"), and the definition of values (for example, "marriage," and "fatherhood").

A) Narratives

Welfare to Workfare

The Family Support Act of 1988 was signed into law by President Reagan, but acted as a precursor to the PRWORA. This law made it mandatory for able-bodied welfare recipients to join the labor force. However, it stopped short of addressing the issues of single-mother households and how to best move mothers into the workforce without undue harm to their children or without pushing them deeper into poverty.

While this law required all states to establish a Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Program offering training, work opportunity, and guaranteed childcare to participants, it did not address the appropriate recourse for them when there was a lack of job opportunities due to economic turndowns. Upon signing the Act into law, President Reagan said,

> It is fitting that the word ``family" figures prominently in the title of this legislation. For too long the Federal Government, with the best of intentions, has usurped responsibilities that appropriately lie with parents. In so doing, it has reinforced dependency and separated welfare recipients from the mainstream of American society. The Family Support Act says to welfare parents, ``We expect of you what we expect of ourselves and our own loved ones: that you will do your share in taking responsibility for your life and for the lives of the children you bring into this world" (Reagan, R., “Remarks on Signing the Family Support Act, October 13, 1988).

The welfare to workfare theme is further bolstered through the implication that personal responsibility plays a large role in welfare reform. The idea that poverty-stricken people can change their economic circumstances through work seems a logical premise. However, when many on welfare are low-skilled or are without higher education, the types of jobs available to them may not improve their economic condition. Such policies fail to address the structural sources of family poverty while setting the stage for more punitive restrictions found in the PRWORA. Reagan points out the difference between “us” and “them.” “We” take care of our children in acceptable ways. “They” do not. Establishing the premise of “otherness” further stigmatizes welfare recipients as lazy or unwilling to provide for their families.

This important piece of legislation re-defined requirements for family beneficiaries and set the groundwork for future legislation to mandate work requirements. It was also the first time that the theme of welfare to workfare became an important building block for welfare reform.

In the PRWORA, the welfare to workfare theme is an integral part of the reform package. The legislation removed the responsibility of welfare from the federal government to that of the state. Through block grants and performance bonuses, states now manage their own programs (as outlined in federal requirements) and must follow directives for moving people from welfare to work (or risk losing their grants). As the title indicates, personal responsibility goes hand in hand with the work ethic. Although the poverty rate has fallen in the last ten years, it has increased among working families, particularly female-headed households (Boushey, 2001, p. 3). Poverty has not been significantly reduced among those families most affected by welfare reform (mostly single mothers). Among those eliminated from welfare rolls because they have found work, most do not earn enough wages to lift them above the poverty line. Other issues, such as the "gender pay gap" (women earning the same as men for comparable work), are not a consideration of this policy (p.3). While the statistics may show a decrease in the welfare rolls, caseload reduction is not an adequate measure of the success of this reform bill. A more important measure of success would be to evaluate the quality of life for those former welfare recipients.

Example 41:

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

Part A – Block Grants to States for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Section. 401. Purpose:

The purpose of this part is to increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to—end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families (PRWORA, p. 2113).

Example 42:

Part A – Block Grants to States for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Section 407. Mandatory Work Requirements.

It is the sense of the Congress that in complying with this section, each State that operates a program funded under this part is encouraged to assign the highest priority to requiring adults in 2-parent families and adults in single-parent families that include older preschool or school-age children to be engaged in work activities (PRWORA, p. 2134).

Example 43:

Part A – Block Grants to States for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Section 402. Eligible States; State Plan.

General provisions – A written document that outlines how the State intends to do the following: conduct a program…that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient; require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to

> engage in work (as defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work…(PRWORA, pp. 2113-2114).

Example 44:

Title VI—Child Care. Section 602. Goals.

> The goals of this subchapter are—to allow each State maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within such State; to promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions on the child care that best suits the family's needs; to assist States to provide child care to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance (PRWORA, p. 2279).

In the purpose statement, the PRWORA clearly states its initiative is to end government dependency through job training, work, and marriage initiatives. Example 41 continues with a commitment to reduce unwed motherhood and increase the formation of the nuclear family. The welfare to workfare theme and the marriage as a cure for poverty themes both appear in these opening lines. This passage also works as a stigmatizing label, singling out unwed motherhood as undesirable behavior. The idea that the state of unwed motherhood can be circumstantial, rather than behavioral, is not addressed. Example 42 reiterates the same work ethic theme by "encouraging" mothers of young children to seek employment. This concept seems at odds with traditional family values logic that implies stay-at-home mothers are more desirable for the welfare of their children. Example 43 repeats the goal of self-sufficiency and the requirement for caregivers/parents to seek employment. Example 44 uses positive terminology in connection with the goal of independence including "to best suit their needs,"

"empower," and "parental choice." The use of this positive language gives the impression that recipients are in control of their destinies through the actions of personal responsibility.

The PRWORA's foundational principles present the traditional nuclear family as the most desirable and acceptable family form and stresses this ideal through negative consequences of single parenthood. Remember, as an identity construct, ideographs can gain meaning through what they are not. The next narrative theme gives a litany of negative consequences that connect single parents with a sense of "otherness." Single parents, then, make-up the "others" that do not conform to societal standards.

The Breakdown of the Family Equated with Societal Problems

Because much of welfare reform centers on those in non-traditional nuclear families, the discussion also equates the breakdown of the family with societal problems. In the following examples, we see how this theme used in previous political narratives appears within the law as a labeling tool.

Example 45:

Title I – Block Grants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Section 101. Findings.

> Negative consequences of out-of-wedlock births on the mother, child, family, and society include: those 17 and under spend longer stretches of time on welfare assistance; children born out-of-wedlock are at higher risk for low birth rates, abuse, and neglect; children born out-of-wedlock are also more likely to experience low verbal cognitive attainment, have lower chances of experiencing an intact marriage themselves, and are three times more likely to end up on

> welfare rolls as adults.
>
> Negative consequences of raising children in single parent homes include: forty-six percent of children living in female-headed households live below the poverty line; children of single parents are three times more likely to fail a grade in elementary school than children from intact two parent families and are four times more likely to be later expelled or suspended from school; neighborhoods with higher percentages of single parent households and larger percentages of youth aged 12 through 20 have higher rates of violent crime.
>
> In light of the crisis facing our Nation, it is the sense of this Congress that preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancy and a reduction in out-of-wedlock births constitute important interests of this Government and which this policy is intended to address (PRWORA, pp. 2110-2112).

The policy refers to the nuclear family model as an "intact" family. Families not "intact" are considered broken and constitute a family "crisis." The rhetoric could be interpreted as equating non-intact families as contributors to the "underclass." Other factors are not presented that might contribute to these findings, such as life circumstances, environment, peer pressure, or family dynamics. The wording explicitly states that the breakdown of the nuclear family leads to increased problematic behaviors in children. The verbiage throughout includes "out-of-wedlock pregnancy," "female-headed households," and "single parenthood" all in connection with unacceptable, illegal, or below moral standard behaviors. Out-of-wedlock births are associated with longer stretches of time on welfare rolls, poor cognitive skills, abuse, neglect, and an increased chance that these children will not experience a fulfilling marriage and will end up on

welfare themselves. Interestingly enough, the consequences of single parenthood are far more detrimental than the consequences of out-of-wedlock births. Children of these types of families are more likely to do poorly academically, to become juvenile delinquents, to engage in criminal activity, and to become a part of the welfare "problem" themselves, yet the Congress found that out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births posed a greater threat.

Marriage as a Cure for Poverty

In a likely progression, marriage as a cure for poverty becomes an important directive of this policy. If single parent homes and out-of wedlock births are the underlying causes of unwanted or illegal behavior, then promoting marriage would help alleviate these problems by providing a better home environment and more disposable income. One important piece of legislation that should be mentioned here is the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 (DOMA). This law was passed as a reaction to states allowing same-sex marriage. DOMA defined "marriage" and "spouse" for the purposes of the Federal law and provided that "no State shall be required to give effect to a law of any other State with respect to a same-sex marriage." The bill also sought to amend the U.S. Code to make explicit what has been understood under federal law for over 200 years: that a marriage is the legal union of a man and a woman as husband and wife, and a spouse is a husband or wife of the opposite sex. DOMA defines "spouse" only as a person of the opposite sex (U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, "Summary of DOMA" 1996).

Proponents of the bill contended that the institution of marriage was threatened by the homosexual community clamoring for the equal right of marriage to be recognized by

federal law. The policy was quickly enacted to ensure that homosexuals and other groups that did not practice acceptable family values would not be able to benefit from with the traditional and sacred value of marriage and all the rights and privileges thereof. Thus, when marriage is discussed in the PRWORA, there is no need for clarification on the exact meaning of "marriage." There can be no misunderstanding that any arrangement outside of this definition does not fall under acceptable or normal beliefs and behaviors.

Example 46:

Title I – Block Grants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Section 101. Findings.

(1) Marriage is the foundation of a successful society.

(2) Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.

(3) Promotion of responsible fatherhood and motherhood is integral to successful child rearing and the well-being of children.

(4) Individuals receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has tripled since 1965 with more than two-thirds of those being children. Eighty-nine percent of those children live in fatherless circumstances (PRWORA, p. 2110).

Example 47:

Title III: Child Support. Section 331. Subtitle D - Paternity Establishment.

Procedures Concerning Genetic Testing.—

(i) Genetic Testing Required in Certain Contested Cases--

> Procedures under which the State is required, in a contested paternity case (unless otherwise barred by State law) to require the child and all other parties (other than individuals found under section 454(29) to have good cause and other exceptions for refusing to cooperate) to submit to genetic tests upon the request of any such party, if the request is supported by a sworn statement by the party—‘‘(I) alleging paternity, and setting forth facts establishing a reasonable possibility of the requisite sexual contact between the parties; or ‘‘(II) denying paternity, and setting forth facts establishing a reasonable possibility of the nonexistence of sexual contact between the parties (PRWORA, p. 2227).

The “marriage as a cure” theme is echoed throughout the opening section of the PRWORA. In the statement, “Marriage is the foundation of a successful society,” “successful society” is left open to interpretation. Does it include economic success, social success, or political success? The ambiguity is intentional to avoid definitive arguments on the validity of the statement. However, the audience’s vocabulary is laden with enough ideographic constructions that “successful society” creates a compelling idea. From an individual perspective, “successful society” is highly subjective depending upon whether you are the poster child of an American success story or whether you are part of the underclass problem that undermines society’s success. Marriage is further promoted as integral to the well-being of children which then leads to findings that are meant to support this conclusion and reinforces the theme of marriage as the foundation for a successful society.

Fatherhood initiatives are mentioned as integral to raising well-adjusted children. Because the majority of welfare recipients are women and children, this idea of father

involvement as part of the solution seems a logical deduction. However, issues of abuse, neglect, and desertion by fathers are not discussed as possible components of this picture. Although the PWRORA set requirements for paternity testing and child support, this requirement can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, the government's interests are served by finding and making absentee fathers financially accountable. On the other hand, often welfare women and children have been victimized by delinquent fathers and want no financial or emotional ties to them. So while making fathers responsible seems a noble goal, the realities sometimes require family situation evaluations. If there is no flexibility in the law, the fatherhood solution could actually put some women and children at higher risk for domestic violence.

B) Labeling

Morality

Legislating moral order and conduct is necessary to any civilized society. However, in the case of family values, forms, dynamics, and moral codes of conduct mean varying things within the populace. One of the biggest problems with family values rhetoric is the supposition that one type of family is superior to another type. Legal definitions of what constitutes a moral or immoral family can result in harmful consequences to those outside the definitions. This next example's overriding theme is morality, although it touches on almost all the other themes discussed.

Example 48:

Title IX -- Miscellaneous. Section 912. Abstinence Education.

The wording of this section includes such phrases as 1) "…with a focus of those groups which are most likely to bear children out-of-wedlock," 2) "…sexual

activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school age children, 3) "…teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity," and 4) "…teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity." (PRWORA p. 2353-2354)

Phrase 1 is vague when referring to "those groups." Is the inference within a racial, ethnic, gender, social, or economic context? The lack of definition leaves open numerous possibilities for interpretation. Based on the PRWORA's previous findings, "those groups" most probably refer to less educated minority groups associated with the "underclass" and the "breakdown" of the family. Phrases 2 and 3 reinforce the marriage as foundational to society premise and explicitly state that marriage is the expected universal government-sanctioned norm for sexual behavior. By defining the norm for sexual behavior only within a marital context, the bill also promotes its morality ideology. Phrase 4 reasserts the importance of personal responsibility in developing a positive work ethic.

Stigmatization

Morality and stigmatization themes are interrelated. Moral concerns necessarily establish "right" and "wrong" codes of behavior. However, the language in the previous examples (41-48), label "wrong" codes of behavior through terms such as "unwed mother," "single parents," and "female-headed households." This type of labeling has been prevalent in welfare discourse since the inception of Mothers' Aid. The original designers of ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) sought to create a special category for the controversial group that made up single mothers. However, the decline in youthful

widowhood and the rise in the "wrong" kind of single mother made poor single mothers a suspect group (Gordon, 1994, p. 281). The morals-testing used in the ADC program (the "suitable homes" provision) created a new definition of dependency that included laziness, greed, and female sexual promiscuity (p. 282). These ideas still remain powerful in modern welfare legislation when unwed motherhood remains a focal point of the discourse. The marriage initiatives foster the notion that if only this group would marry, they would be better off financially and their children would behave in morally acceptable ways.

C) Associated Ideographs

Defining Family Values

Examples 41-48 also exemplify the values set forth by the PRWORA. Although the actual term "family values" does not appear in the document, the characterizations and themes of the family values ideograph are present. The values assigned by the PRWORA include marriage as the foundation for a successful society; the importance of fatherhood in the financial and emotional stability of the home; the Puritan work ethic that equates work with success and achievement that is available to everyone; the important role that personal responsibility plays in the maintenance of civilized culture (if we all practiced personal responsibility then societal problems would be greatly diminished); raising children in the "right" moral atmosphere will lead to an increase in personal responsibility for future generations; and welfare teaches dependency and encourages unacceptable behavior. Welfare is discussed as a cycle perpetuated through non-traditional family forms. Thus, in order to break this cycle, policy-makers set goals and initiatives based on the premise that the formation of nuclear families will alleviate

the “problem.” As I have previously discussed, this “normal” family model is not the “norm” for a significant faction of society.

Summary

Ideographic concepts translate into policy through a process of social identification. Discourse on the importance of values in our culture, and the apparent individual and societal problems related to the lack of these values, culminated in the passage of the largest welfare reform initiative since welfare’s inception. All the laws under review initially categorize family values into areas of Judeo-Christian morality, welfare to workfare, labeling techniques, and defining marriage. Once these categories are in place, the audience can identify with those ideological premises most salient to them. Finally, the rhetoric invites dichotomous comparisons between those who would be “for” or “against” family values as defined by the legislation.

In these examples, the crossover from the political argumentation to actual law can be seen in the thematic ideographic pattern of family values. We see the recurrence of the themes (with the exception of “nostalgia” which is reflected through the idea that by re-creating family forms of the past we will create a better future) as they operate within narratives, labels, and other ideographs translated into a law based on myth (made up of fact and fiction) rather than present day realities. The question remains, does the PRWORA help or hurt non-traditional families?

The family values discourse during the 1980’s and 1990’s can be seen at work in the passage of the PWRORA legislation. The themes previously discussed can be seen in the context of this bill. The major purposes of the legislation were to “provide

assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; to reduce dependency by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "PRWORA").

The most fundamental change was the establishment of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), which eliminated welfare entitlement, thus bringing an end to federal responsibility for anyone who fell into poverty. This development signaled a change in the attitudes about the causes of poverty (Cammisa, 1998, p. 119). The nation's welfare system now requires wage work in exchange for time-limited cash assistance. It replaced AFDC, JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training), and Emergency Aid with TANF. The law caps spending and states receive lump-sum payments rather than open-ended entitlements (Cammisa, 1998, p. 118; Meyer & Sullivan, 2000, p. 2-3).

The PRWORA stipulates that recipients must find work after two years of assistance. Single parents must participate in twenty hours per week of work the first year and thirty hours per week thereafter. Recipients are also required to participate in unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, twelve months of vocational training, or provide childcare services to individuals who are participating in community service. PRWORA also imposes a five year limit on families receiving assistance making them ineligible for cash aid after this time limit.

States have the flexibility to design their own programs and determine how their funds will be dispersed. Restrictions include: TANF money must be spend on families with children; no assistance will be given to families who have received up to sixty

months of assistance; and unmarried teen parents must remain in an adult-supervised setting and remain in school in order to qualify. The Food Stamp program was also put under tougher restrictions and the law denies cash aid, Food Stamps, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to legal immigrants who are not United States citizens. According to the Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness, the Act has been successful in some areas, but at a cost of forcing some families and disabled individuals to fall deeper into poverty because of the gaps in the safety net. They claim that changes in the welfare legislation were not based on sound research, but on the myth that welfare recipients have little incentive to find work (SourceWatch, 2004, p. 3). A one-size-fits-all approach to work is ineffective. Welfare families must contend with a nationwide lack of affordable housing, a lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the difficulty finding childcare, as well as increasingly rigid requirements for public aid (Blank, 1996, p.1).

The negative effects of PRWORA such as cuts in the Food Stamp program and eligibility changes for SSI will affect nearly twenty-two percent of children who previously qualified under the old program (Katz, 1996, p. 269). Work provisions for welfare applicants create a paradox for mothers wishing to raise their children at home. The old philosophy of the importance of domestic motherhood is replaced with the work ethic philosophy. While both have a place in family values discourse, they can conflict. Gwendolyn Mink raises the question of government recognition of the monetary value of motherhood and, thus, how to pay a fair wage to poverty-stricken mothers who raise children. Since they are supposedly providing a “service” to society by raising future citizens, they should be recognized as active contributors to the economic greater good (Mink, 1998, pp. 18-20). This idea was, of course, the philosophy behind women’s aid

programs for most of the twentieth century. However, research indicated that the system was abused and needed major reform. Consequently, the 1996 welfare reform became law.

Mary Jo Bane (Assistant Secretary for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Resources under the Clinton administration) said, "I believe the new welfare law poses serious danger to poor children and families…My fears about what would happen to poor children when states were no longer required to prove the modest assurances and protections we insisted on in waiver demonstrations led me to resign after President Clinton signed the welfare bill" (1997, p. 1). In our search to slash budget deficits and shore up the American economy, the poor have been unfairly victimized. In all the talk of family values, the ultimate losers are the poor families who apparently are in such a condition due to their own unwillingness to practice those values Americans hold so dear.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Family values discourse reached a high point in the 1980's and 1990's as a reaction against the perceived liberalism of the 1960's and 1970's. Fueled by the civil rights movement, a rise in feminism, and anti-government sentiments, conservatives began a campaign to return to the family values that were seemingly lost. Conservatives then looked to the welfare rolls as a measurement of family values. Increases in divorce rates, single parenthood, absentee fathers, and the overall breakdown of the nuclear family model were associated with increased immoral behavior, school failure, drug and gang-related activity, and other criminal offenses. Perceptions of government aid going to undeserving members of the populace quickly overshadowed all aid programs intended to help the poor. Thus, "reforming" welfare became a central theme of domestic policy.

The biggest change in the conception of welfare has been the move from structural to personal responsibility. In its early days, welfare was created to help those impacted by economic factors beyond their control. The problem was not with the individual, but with the nature of a capitalistic economy. However, the perception that welfare was a form of "relief" that would be temporary became one of permanence due to the inherent nature of capitalism itself. Policymakers recognized that if poverty was a result of a structural problem, then the solution would be to change the system or deal with poverty through necessary government assistance. Changing our economic system was apparently not feasible, so policymakers were "forced" to find other options. However, instead of merely accepting the inevitability that capitalism necessarily creates a class distinction between the "haves" and "have-nots," policymakers decided on a goal of rehabilitation (Cammisa, 1998, p. 101). This change marked the ideological move

concerning welfare from an inherent structural process problem to that of a lack of personal responsibility. Thus, the discourse of the later decades centered on a loss of family values associated with poverty-stricken families, which in turn were blamed for a host of problematic attitudes and behaviors. The result was the passage of legislation leading to an increase in personal responsibility, work initiative programs and requirements, time limitations, and decreased benefits to those on welfare rolls. When Reagan first suggested optional welfare block grants to give states flexibility in spending federal funds (implemented in the Family Support Act of 1988 and a fundamental tenet of the PRWORA in 1996), conservatives and liberals found a middle ground upon which to agree. Although, both sides agreed on work initiatives, there was lingering debates on how to best assist the poor through financial support services. Liberals continued to promote these supportive services, while conservatives focused more on plans of deterrence and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation efforts were aimed at increasing personal responsibility which critics believed reflected a "blame the victim" mentality (Cammisa, 1998, pp. 102-104).

In order to trace the progress of family values dialogue, I presented a history of family forms prevalent in the twentieth century. The family form moved from a productive extended kinship form to a consumption nuclear model that became the paradigm for normality after World War II. Improved transportation modes made suburban life highly desirable as families moved out of urban areas and settled on the outskirts of towns. Media also became influential during this era. The invention of television brought idyllic family images into our homes with such shows as *I Love Lucy, Leave It to Beaver, Father Knows Best,* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet.*

Although these family shows were a small sampling of the programming of the 1950's, the images of traditional family life with moral messages become ideographic in nature themselves. The implementation of the New Deal, coupled with the end of World War II, brought about an unprecedented period of economic growth. Beneficiaries of the New Deal were separated into those who were "entitled" to government aid and those who required assistance. Over the years, however, welfare became associated with the undeserving, non-working individuals living off government hand-outs while entitlement programs were viewed as reward-based and given to deserving, hard-working individuals.

To demonstrate the correlation between the doctrine of family values and the policies it induces, I chose an ideographic approach first introduced by Michael Calvin McGee in 1980. As an ideograph, "family values" operates as an ill-defined normative goal. As demonstrated through the "defining values" section, we see that there are many definitions of values, yet we are presented with discourse treating them as a unified set of conditions (McGee, 1980, p. 15). The community at large finds the concept as overwhelmingly acceptable. However, these values have been used to guide policy initiatives that are not always beneficial to the family structure, whatever it might be. Family values are also described through the use of other ideographs that are equally ambiguous and undefined (McGee, 1980, p. 8) including the American dream, equality, integrity, responsibility, opportunity and respect, among others. As we can see, the words "family" and "values" as well as other associated ideographs are common ordinary language forms familiar to all ages of the populace. Next, family values can be construed as a high order abstraction that defies absolute definition. Family values can mean

different things to different people, but have an overall commonality to which all citizens can relate. Remember the words of Dan Quayle when he defines a family as a child, mother, and father, "There are other arrangements of family, but that is a family and family values" (Remarks to Esquire Magazine, August 27, 1992). Used as labels, narratives, and ideographs, family values rhetoric helps guide beliefs and behaviors into what is constituted as "normal" for the collective consciousness of the American public.

Finally, the rhetoric has operated diachronically to establish new concepts of family values. These new concepts have initiated concerns about government aid entitlements and spawned much discussion on the family "crisis." These concerns, consequently, become mirrored in welfare policies. In analyzing the family values ideograph synchronically, I presented narratives, labels, and other ideographs that provided dominant themes around which the ideograph functions. Family values operates as an agent-centered versus a scene-centered philosophy taking the responsibility for national problems out of the realm of economic and social inequalities inherent in a capitalistic society to that of personal responsibility for these iniquities.

For my analysis, I chose several speeches from the George H.W. Bush and William Jefferson Clinton administrations, including Congressional testimony from representatives of both parties. Using excerpts from these speeches, I illustrated how the family values ideograph depicts our nation in crisis through themes of nostalgia, universal definitions of values, stigmatization, the work ethic, the breakdown of the traditional family, morality, and marriage. Each theme, acting as a part of moral public argument, played a part in welfare reform discourse. Using social identity theory, public rhetoric is linked to legislative policy-making through categorization, identification, and

comparison. To explain why individuals identify with certain social groups, social identity theory examines how individuals compare themselves to others through a process of differentiation. Individuals possess several different "selves" and act or behave according to what group membership is sought. Thus, by establishing "us" and "them" dichotomies, family values rhetoric creates categorizations, identifications, and comparisons between those who would be "for" family values and those "against" family values. The result is how political pundits paint depictions of welfare families and how these depictions ultimately influence the law-making process.

Findings

First, this study demonstrates how "family values" operates within an ideographic framework that translates into powerful rhetorical depictions that, when presented in Congressional hearings, debates, or public speeches, contribute to how the collective consciousness interprets socio-historical discourse. For example, the Congressional hearings reviewed contained witness lists that included mostly conservative and religious viewpoints, yet lacked testimony from actual welfare recipients. By strategically stacking the witnesses holding ideographic ideals of family values that complemented the conservative view, chances for the probable passage of the reform package were greatly improved.

Second, the nuclear family paradigm serves as the foundation for the PRWORA, yet this family form is not the reality for the majority of Americans. Issues of race, class, and gender are ill-addressed. Instead, lawmakers opt for a "one size fits all" philosophy. Using declining caseloads as a measurement of poverty, some studies indicate an overall decrease in poverty rates for single female-headed households, although the causes for

this decrease have not been proven. Single mothers forced into the workplace in low-paying jobs may be off the welfare rolls, but still live well below the poverty line. They have become the working poor versus the welfare poor. Paradoxically, family values rhetoric implies that the domestic or stay-at-home mother is the most desirable for quality child-rearing.

Third, the family values ideograph contributes to our on-going identity construction through a process of differentiation. As subjects of that process, individuals measure themselves against "otherness" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, pp. 138-139). Tajfel and Turner (1979) expounded on this theory, explaining how rhetoric translates into policy implementation through a process of categorization. Individuals possess many identities according to whatever group membership is salient. In the case of family values, individuals choose which presentations of realities conform best to their own ideologies. Ideographs operate as rhetorical depictions that are representative of an individual's beliefs and a community's values. Regardless of whether the ideograph functions within varying definitions, it evokes a certain commonality which most individuals understand. Once collective memory is evoked, the intended audience becomes unified to the cause of "returning" to family values. When the family values ideograph is used in conjunction with negative depictions of welfare recipients in the context of public argument, the result is a distinction between those who embrace our values and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the perpetuation of those values and those non-traditionalists who end up on welfare as a result of not practicing family values.

Fourth, the family values ideograph's influence is found is several legislative bills concerning the family and culminating in the PRWORA. This legislation sought to

legislate families using the nuclear family paradigm as a measuring stick. The Act's overall moral message was that only responsible, married, heterosexual parents should have children. Several provisions uphold this premise, including enforcing tougher child support laws, paternity identification requirements, abstinence education, requirements that teen mothers live in supervised settings and remain in school, and marriage initiatives. The Act even offers bonuses to states that could decrease their out-of-wedlock birth rates. The PRWORA is also gender-biased. Legislating a woman's reproductive choices or sexual behavior is problematic and invites criticism that poor women living under the poverty line are necessarily targeted and scapegoated.

Much of the discourse reviewed showed a simplified, generalized, almost universal point of view in regard to "family values." Yet, our nation's issues are far more complex than simply whether or not our parents did their jobs in creating worthy citizens. The debates surrounding "family values" imply that the American family has lost their moral bearing. This loss is attributed to the "breakdown of the family." I would argue that the family is not suffering from a breakdown, but rather is undergoing re-construction. This re-structuring has not necessarily led to a decline in values, but rather the perception that non-traditional families lack family values. However, politicians realize that recognition of other family forms as viable and valuable would not necessarily set well with a majority of the conservative voters who need someone to blame for our real or perceived problems. Politicians also fall into the trap of perpetuating the myths without ever totally understanding the underlying causes.

Our collective fears for the future of our nation are woven into a myth of "family crisis and decline." This myth is nothing new and has been discussed as problematic

throughout the twentieth century. This myth is indicative of the changing roles surrounding class and gender and how the government legislates social life (Jagger & Wright, 1999, p.33). The family is far from extinction. It is simply under continual reconstruction. Its transformation will always be inspired by, influenced by, and navigated by our ever-changing, ever-constant "family values."

Implications for Future Studies

Causal arguments regarding the effects of public persuasion on social change are difficult to assess. However, qualitative rhetorical studies have provided a window into how language can shape the fabric of our lives. Future research might include studies that argue for a better standard by which to judge American family values than whether or not one comes from a nuclear family. Has the quality of life for those forced off welfare by the PRWORA improved or declined? Does the practice of family values figure in to this improvement or decline? How do the values of non-traditional families compare to the values of traditional families? What are some ways that political leadership could use our rhetorical culture to re-define family values in non-marginalizing ways? This study falls short of answering these questions. It also fails to identify how family values rhetoric is used positively in public argument and it does not address any other form of legislation besides welfare. Investigations into other types of family law and the implications of the family values ideograph on such laws would add to the knowledge of our unique communicative process. Better understanding of this process is the key to improving it.

Afterword: Visiting the PRWORA Ten Years Later

The drastic negative effects that critics feared PRWORA would cause did not materialize. In fact, the welfare rolls reached record lows during 2004. States have done a reasonably good job in managing their funds and creating productive programs aimed at putting clients to work. Stricter child support enforcement tactics have increased collections by forty percent (Administration for Children and Families Fact Sheet, 2006). Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which replaced the old system of cash assistance through AFDC, has been renewed by Congress and is currently under consideration to be made permanent (Urban Institute, 2006). Supporters claim that welfare rolls have been cut in half since 1993, more single mothers are working, fewer children are poor, and money saved on reduced caseloads have translated into more money for support services.

Critics, however, contend that caseload reduction is a poor measurement of reform success, the poorest one-fifth of single-mother families are worse off, childcare subsidies are inadequate and long waiting lists impede a mother's ability to find quality work (Tepperman, 2006). There is truth to both sides of the argument. Possibly the biggest disappointment of the PRWORA is its failure to adequately address the issues of single-motherhood. While more single-mothers may be working, they are often in low-paying, low-skilled jobs that still do not pull the family out of poverty. TANF does not recognize the value mothers provide in raising children. Ultimately, poverty hurts children, not welfare. Maybe the proverb, "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime" sounds like a good philosophy, but implementing such a reality will take more than the PROWRA currently provides.

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