

Constructing the Patriarch in the Personal Responsibility Act
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This paper demonstrates the ways in which American social conservatives have successfully injected their vision of family values into political debate and public policy in the past decade in the United States. And more specifically, the fatherhood movement's vision of fatherhood as embodying the roles of provider, protector and authority of the family has been promoted in the policies and programs of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and its reauthorization in 2005. I will review the welfare changes brought in by President Clinton through the PRWORA as this act was the first significant redesign of welfare policy since President Roosevelt's New Deal (Fitzgerald 2003).¹ As will be seen, social conservative views were written into welfare legislation during President Clinton's Administration and were progressively expanded during President Bush's time in office (Fitzgerald 2003, Smith 2007). This paper will conclude by speculating how core values of the individualization of social policy and the role of the father in the family may survive the transition to the President Obama Administration.

The New Right emerged in the 1970s as a Christian-based social conservative backlash against the feminist, and gay and lesbian movements that had been fighting for full citizenship for women and homosexual Americans. There has thus been a culture war in the United States since the 1970s that revolves around the ideal family, and gender roles, norms and morals. Alarming, the New Right's social conservative definitions and interpretations of gendered moral conduct and family values have widely influenced national social policy innovations since at least the 1980s (Lakoff 1996). Despite their varying definitions of social conservatism, Johnson et al., Lakoff and Cossman agree that social conservatives hold the heterosexual family as the fundamental unit and building-block of society and that national citizens should contribute to society according to their gendered familial roles (Johnson et al. 2007; Lakoff 1996; Cossman 2005). Based on this social conservative ideology, a particular definition of fatherhood has been articulated and become operative within American public policy. The social conservative understanding of fatherhood is reinforced and dependent upon a particular definition of family values which promotes the necessity, power and importance of fatherhood, and the morality of gendered familial roles. The rhetorical power of social conservative family values has been used to promote a particular conception of the American nation since the 1970s in which a citizen is morally strong if he/she fulfills his/her appropriate gender role. For women,

¹ As Smith and Mink argue, the PWRORA was the culmination of twenty years of neoliberal and social conservative welfare reform. The PRWORA is markedly different from its predecessors in three main ways. First, the administration of welfare programs and policies was decentralized as block grants were allocated to the states with few federal regulations. As will be seen, this lead to dangerous state experimentation with legislation and programs. Second, because the PRWORA was decentralized, single mothers' welfare entitlement was discontinued. Third, with no obligation to provide welfare to single mothers, states can and do impose extremely strict and punitive policies, especially toward single mothers and other citizens. The PRWORA imposed strict time limits on welfare recipients: an individual can receive welfare for no more than two years consecutively and five years in their life time. Further, single parents' ability to access and remain on welfare was restricted according to mandatory paternity tests, child support enforcement, and marriage and fatherhood programs (Smith 2001-2; Mink 1999).

this means that they procreate in wedlock, depend on their husbands for financial stability and tend to domestic labour. Men must also procreate in wedlock, and they must be the authorities, providers and protectors of their families (Lakoff 1996). Admittedly, this social conservative vision of the ideal gendered American citizens has been widely contested and criticized by feminist, liberal, and gay and lesbian politicians, activists and academics (Stacey 1996; Fetner 2001). Further, as Abramovitz argues, this ideal citizen is contradicted in the everyday lives of the vast majority of American people. There are few financially independent single-income households. The male breadwinner model collapsed beginning in the 1970s and occurred as a result of a nationally slowing economy, the loss of American dominance in the world economy, cheap foreign labour, and a diminished welfare state that was initiated by President Carter (Abramovitz 2000, 17-18).

Regardless, social conservative groups, politicians (both Republican and Democrat) and individual American citizens have subscribed to this ethos of patriarchal fatherhood (Stacey 1996). Supporters see various ways to effect social change toward the reinstitutionalization of tradition, including influencing media, allying with religious communities, and establishing think tanks (Gavanas 2004, 99-125; Horn 1999, 9-13). But none of these cultural forces are as effective as directly influencing and controlling public policies that can impact the private and sexual lives of citizens. Most obviously, state involvement in and regulation of abortion and gay marriage has allowed various governments, social organizations and political parties to police the sexual and gendered conduct of citizens (Cossman 2005; Page 2006).

As Smith argues, welfare policy has also been a site of sexual regulation because the gendered configuration of a family has been interpreted as either causing or alleviating poverty (Smith 2001-2001, 125). Poor Americans have been especially vulnerable to government regulation because of their financial dependence on the government and community organizations, and this vulnerability has intensified with the advent of the PRWORA. Poor citizens have had to modify their sexual conduct, family configuration and employment situation in order to receive welfare benefits (Abramovitz 1996). The PRWORA is a complicated national policy involving millions of people, fifty different state economies and various demographic situations. Yet social conservatives have reduced the welfare debate to a discussion of proper sexual conduct, family configuration and national morality, and are thereby hinging individuals' civil rights on their ability to assimilate to the national ideology (Johnson et. al. 2007). Ultimately, social conservatives have recognized that welfare policy can be used to impose and advance their particular views of fatherhood onto American citizens.

In an attempt to reduce welfare dependency and reinstate the centrality of paternal authority in the American family, the PRWORA initiated several national programs and policies including paternity testing, fatherhood programs, and marriage promotion. This paper will examine how each of these programs promotes a particular understanding of fatherhood. As will be seen, the PRWORA defines the father, and male citizen, in terms of three fundamental familial roles: provider, protector and authority. Fathers thus become true citizens by taking financial responsibility for their families, by representing their families in the larger society as well as shielding their families from society's most negative effects, and by being moral and disciplinary authorities. Moreover, in assuming these roles, fathers also embody the ideal citizen and personify a specifically socially conservative articulation of the American nation.

The Collapse of Fatherhood and the Emergence of the Fatherhood Movement

For much of the post-World War Two periods broad based social movements including the civil rights, feminist and gay rights movements campaigned to reshape American ideology, political discourse and even legislation. Key to these movements' victories was their challenge to American values by virtue of critiquing the gendered and familial hierarchies upon which, it was claimed, American society had thus far been founded. Specifically, the patriarchal nature of the family was being contested. People were rejecting the traditional gender roles of the breadwinning father and the domesticated housewife. New family forms were emerging which empowered women. According to social conservatives, men's rights groups, and fatherhood movement advocates, women were gaining power and equality at the expense and detriment of men and fathers (Blankenhorn 1995, 16). Men's sense of siege in the face of these social changes and the apparent compliance of the state with the claims of these groups were compounded by a failing economy, a deteriorating welfare state and massive unemployment. The failure of the economy was blamed not on strained foreign engagements, inconsistent economic policy, or a dramatic transformation in global markets, but on the fragmentation and deterioration of traditional gendered social networks and employment roles (Fasteau 1980, 412).

In the face of these political and human rights struggles, a backlash movement began to grow among disenchanted, middle class, white, male Americans beginning in the 1970s. This backlash grew out of a variety of connected sources. Conservative and anti-feminist groups attempted to persuade men that male power could only be maintained within the confines of a hierarchical, traditional, religious and biologically ordered society. Crudely, these groups asserted that men could only assure their power through the 'natural' oppression of women (Fasteau 1980, 404).

The fatherhood movement, an element of the backlash movement, is most pertinent to this study. According to fatherhood movement co-founder Wade Horn, the fatherhood movement exists to reinvent and revitalize gendered identities. Horn has ascribed specific characteristics to each gender. In the fatherhood movement's 1999 Manifesto "A Call to Action," Horn enumerated three core beliefs of the fatherhood movement accordingly:

- (1) responsible and committed fatherhood ought to be a norm of masculinity;
- (2) fathers are different from mothers in important ways;
- (3) the father-child bond is important to the healthy development of children. (Horn 1999, 8)

It thus follows that the fatherhood movement has attacked feminism for challenging the traditional patriarchal nature of the family. Horn blamed the "collapse of fatherhood" between the 1960s and 1990s on the feminist movement's promotion of androgyny, specifically androgynous parenthood. Horn explained that in an effort to gain political and economic equality, feminists sought to eradicate gender difference and promote androgyny as the solution to sexist oppression. In terms of parenthood, fathers were told to be more nurturing and to share domestic duties. Horn warned, however, that fathers were beginning to feel useless, disposable and replaceable because they no longer had a distinctive role in the home. Lacking a dominant breadwinning, authoritative and protective position, fatherhood has been weakened and men have been disempowered. The 'true problem' is that fathers and mothers no longer perform unique roles and that fathers have lost power in the bargain. Horn would have us believe that he is arguing for distinctiveness when in reality he and his fellow fatherhood movement members are demanding status. To this end, the fatherhood movement has been a dominant, vocal and

influential contingent of the social conservative attempt to revalue and promote their definition of fatherhood through and within American public policy. As will be seen, members of the fatherhood movement were able, and continue, to influence public policy in three main ways.

First, the fatherhood movement has directly influenced welfare policy and administration because its co-founder, Wade Horn worked in the Bush Administration (Coltrane 2001, 39). Wade Horn was the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families under the Bush Administration from 2001 until his resignation in 2007 (Office of Family Assistance Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration 2008). Horn thus worked for the Bush Administration during the reauthorization of the PRWORA in 2005, adjudicated which marriage and fatherhood programs received PRWORA government funds, and generally supported and conditioned the Bush Administration's marriage promotion mandate. Consequently, it will be shown, President Bush's reauthorization emphasized marriage as the primary solution to welfare dependence.

Second, the fatherhood movement indirectly influenced PRWORA policies as many fatherhood and marriage programs were started, maintained and funded by various fatherhood movement groups. Wade Horn claims that the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), founded in 1993 by Wade Horn, David Blankenhorn, and David Popenoe is a core organization of the fatherhood movement (Horn 1999, 10). As will be seen, the NFI has created multiple fatherhood and marriage programs and has consequently received substantial government funding through the PRWORA to operate these organizations. Through the NFI, the fatherhood movement has been able to promote their brand of fatherhood on a national and state level (Office of Family Assistance Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration 2008). Finally, the fatherhood movement has influenced PRWORA policies by using a network of politicians, think tanks, and media (Coltrane 2001) to disperse the message to the general public, academia and conservative political organizations, that responsible, moral fathers are breadwinning patriarchs. The fatherhood movement encompasses a large network of right-wing civil society groups and think tanks (Horn 1999, 9).

Beyond the 'Paper Dad': Paternity Tests and Child Support

Beginning with Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the precursor to PRWORA, paternity testing has been used to identify biological fathers in order to compel child support payments. The normative implication of paternity testing and its ensuing financial obligations, is that the primary responsibility of fatherhood is breadwinning. (Smith 2007, 118-20). The PRWORA continued to use paternity testing to impose child support. But the PRWORA has also used paternity testing to identify fathers so that they can be conscripted to marriage promotion and fatherhood programs (Smith 2007, 179). Fatherhood movement advocates claim that they are pressuring the government to pursue marriage promotion and fatherhood programs in order to broaden the role of the father beyond financial responsibilities. I argue, however, that despite their rhetoric, fatherhood movement advocates are deeply concerned with maintaining the breadwinner role of the father. They see the marriage contract as the most efficient and permanent way to assure that financial dependence is privatized, and that men reclaim their civic and familial roles as the providers, as well as the protectors and authorities of their families. Thus, the ends to which paternity testing are used are dependent on the state's definition of fatherhood. As will be seen, the fatherhood movement's conception of the American father and the male citizen have resonated in PRWORA policies.

The importance, power and agency of fathers is evident in the opening statements of the PRWORA which cast fatherlessness as a social problem that needs to be remedied. Section 101 of the PRWORA enumerates the following ‘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) In 1992, only 54 percent of single-parent families with children had a child support order established and, of that 54 percent, only about one-half received the full amount due [...] The number of individuals receiving aid to families with dependent children [in this section referred to as “AFDC”] has more than tripled since 1965. More than two-thirds of these recipients are children. Eighty-nine percent of children receiving AFDC benefits now live in homes in which no father is present. (PRWORA 1996, Section 101)

Gavanas’ “androcentric trinity” of men, marriage and children is evident in these “findings” (2004, 46). Marriage is emphasized, in the first two points, as foundational to society. The focus then shifts to the well-being of children and the necessity of fathers. Discussion of single-parenthood is gender neutral: women and sole parent mothers are absent from this discussion despite the fact that they are the majority of the welfare and child support recipients (Abramovitz 2000, 98-102). Instead, the PRWORA has cast fatherlessness as a major social problem. In this context, men, as fathers, are the agents of change, who are charged with resurrecting American society from its thirty year slump into poverty and moral decay by reclaiming their role within their families.

The PRWORA established Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) as a federal program to partially fund and regulate state welfare programs for low-income families (Smith 2001-2, 123). The purpose of TANF is described in the PRWORA as follows:

- (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- (3) 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
- (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. (PRWORA 1996, Section 401)

Thus in keeping with the PRWORA’s opening findings, TANF focuses on the necessity of marriage and the importance of fatherhood - the latter implied in the focus on out-of-wedlock births, which statistically result in single-motherhood not single-fatherhood (Abramovitz 2000, 41). Ninety percent of child support payees are men (cited in Smith 2007, 97). Fathers therefore became the target of child support enforcement in order to take the burden off the state and assume the responsibility for supporting their families.²

² According to Smith, child support enforcement has been the least contested element of the PRWORA and welfare debate in general. Congressional and media debate about child support often turns to conservative ‘common sense’ rhetoric about forcing fathers to take responsibility for their children and thereby irradiating welfare dependency among single mothers (Smith 2007, 97).

Through TANF, the federal government obliges states to administer paternity tests as the first step toward ending single-parent childbearing and rising rates of welfare dependency.³ The primary function of paternity testing under the PRWORA is to hold the father responsible for the financial needs of his children. Paternity testing is only administered when a poor mother makes a claim for income assistance.⁴ And at that point, paternity is established with the primary goal of child support enforcement⁵ (Abramovitz 2000, 81-83). Ultimately the state, through the PRWORA, is attempting to establish a non-negotiable relationship of dependency between the father and his children and their mother.

According to Cossman, since the 1970s, two different conservative visions have shaped the welfare debate: social conservatism and neo-conservatism. While differing on many points these two strands converge on fatherhood. For social and neo-conservatives, the bottom line is that the state should not have to support the offspring of able-bodied, independent, strong, male citizens. Both wings of conservatism maintain that procreation and child bearing are personal choices. Consequently, children should be a private, individual obligation. Citizens should take individual, if gendered, responsibility for the well being of their offspring. In relation to welfare policy, survival becomes synonymous with economic stability. Economic stability is seen as a “private familial obligation,” in which fathers are held responsible for the economic self-sufficiency of the family (Cossman 2005, 440-443).

But the role of the father is contested among social and neo-conservatives, as they have divergent conceptions of the normative family (Cossman 2005, 442). Neo-conservatives emphasize the financial utility of the family and therefore define fatherhood in terms of breadwinning. This is consistent with the neoliberal individualization of social policy but neo-conservatives go one step further in dictating who in the family should be the rightful breadwinner and authority (Lakoff 1996, 21). Ultimately, neo-conservatives see child support as a means to reduce public spending on income support (Cossman 2005, 441). Conversely, social conservative fatherhood movement advocates such as Horn, Popenoe and Blankenhorn envision a larger role for the father. They want public policy to engage the traditional family and father for purposes of enforcing the values of personal responsibility, discipline, loyalty and self-sufficiency on the nation’s children (Horn and Bush 1997, 39). The patriarchal nuclear family must be revalued, not just for economic reasons, but also to hedge off moral decay, strengthen families, and rebuild the America nation. Social conservatives do acknowledge and promote the economic function of the family but also believe deeply that the family is the political, social and civic foundation of society (Cossman 2005, 441).

In terms of the PRWORA, instead of addressing the father’s financial obligations through child support, some social conservatives prefer to emphasize marriage promotion as a solution to welfare dependence (Johnson et. al. 2007, 147). Horn made this stance clear as he argued that child support enforcement reduces the father to a bread winner. The fatherhood role becomes smaller and men are easily replaced by mothers or the state.

³ Paternity identification is emphasized and enforced by the federal government in the PRWORA as states that do not cooperate with paternity testing and child support enforcement will have their TANF grants cut by five to ten percent (Lurie 1997, 85).

⁴ According to the PRWORA, genetic testing will be administered in ‘contested cases’ regarding paternity identification. (PRWORA 1996, Section 331)

⁵ To receive a public good, a poor woman must curtail her private life. First, the mother is forced to interact with the father of her child in order to receive social assistance. Second, if paternity is contested by the father, the single mother is obliged to give the state a complete sexual history.⁵ Her sexual behavior is scrutinized and judged. Women’s privacy rights are completely violated. The father, on the other hand, only needs to prove that he is or is not the father of that particular child. Genetic testing clearly affirms that connection and he does not need to divulge his sexual history (Smith 2001-2002, 148).

Establishing paternity and enforcing child support are, of course, not without merit. And a just and good society ought to do all it can to increase job opportunities in low-income communities. But an emphasis on child support ignores the many non-economic contributions that fathers make to the well-being of their children. Indeed, emphasizing fatherhood in largely economic terms has helped to contribute to its demise. After all, if a father is little more than a paycheck to his children, he can easily be replaced by a welfare payment. If we want fathers to be more than just money machines, we will need a culture that supports their work as nurturers, disciplinarians, mentors, moral instructors, and skill coaches, and not just as economic providers. To do otherwise is to effectively downgrade fathers to, in the words of Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, 'paper dads.' (Horn 1997, 14-15)

According to Johnson et. al., social conservatives believe that a united nuclear family is the strongest possible family unit (Johnson et. al. 2007, 147). While forcing men to pay child support casts men in their 'natural' gender roles and thereby assures the survival of the family, social conservatives believe that marriage is absolutely fundamental to the development of full, loyal, law-abiding citizens. Fathers need to be in their children's lives on a permanent, influential basis in order to provide protection, independence, guidance, structure and authority (Lehr 2003, 130). Child support enforcement is a weak replacement for the social conditioning, self-regulation and moral development that is produced through marriage and the nuclear family.

Social and neo-conservatives, from both parties, have agreed that paternity testing is the first step to solving the problem of fatherlessness and welfare dependency. Social conservatives, specifically fatherhood movement supporters, acknowledge that paternity testing is needed to identify the father and hopefully oblige him to participate in fatherhood and marriage programs. In the following sections I will show that the fatherhood movement's welfare agenda has focused almost entirely on marriage promotion and fatherhood programs, and their efforts have paid off. Fatherhood movement members have successfully influenced welfare policy, created numerous fatherhood and marriage programs, and have shifted public discourse toward supporting the productive as well as protective and authoritative father and male citizen.

Fatherhood Programs

Anna Marie Smith states that fatherhood promotion initiatives have received substantial bi-partisan support. Democrats and Republicans alike argued for fatherhood programs during the PRWORA debates in the mid-1990s (Smith 2007, 179). Smith states that fatherhood programs were birthed out of the notion that heterosexual families were the desired solution to poverty and that within those heterosexual families, parents must maintain their traditional gender roles (Smith 2007, 179). As Smith says, traditional gender roles are enforced within fatherhood programs because fathers are seen as the moral, social and economic leaders of the family, and children, especially young boys, need to learn how to respect authority and how to assume authority within their own families when they are adults. Thus the PRWORA is relying on the heteronormative family to instill, promote and reward citizens who adhere to their gendered citizenship roles.

A fatherhood program is defined as a religious and/or community-based not-for-profit program that educates, guides and supports fathers on parenting, child support law, 'healthy' marriages, and job training (Smith 2007, 178). In 1996, the PRWORA set up a \$50 000 minimum annual grant system for each state under the Administration for Children and Families (Smith 2007, 178). The annual grant was intended to support a variety of fatherhood programs.

Some are educational and involve counseling organizations for low-income married and single-fathers; some are essentially marriage promotion programs disguised as fatherhood programs; some are unapologetic in their belief that fatherhood is a divine institution; and some blatantly emphasize the authoritative and protective role of fathers (Mink 2003, 213). Most predominantly, fatherhood programs emphasize fathers' breadwinning, their potential and the necessity for authority, and the functions and benefits of marriage. Regardless of their tactics, these programs target low-income fathers with the goal of returning them to their 'natural' position as the patriarch of the family (Johnson et. al. 2007, 178).

During the PRWORA re-authorization debates in 2003, Republicans proposed to allocate \$20 million to fatherhood programs run by faith-based and community groups to: "encourage and help fathers to support their families and avoid welfare, improve fathers' ability to manage family affairs, and encourage and support healthy marriages and married fatherhood." (Mink 2003, 213) The proposal did not pass, but under the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act, which ultimately did include a reauthorization of the PRWORA, \$50-\$150 million was set aside by the federal government for a fatherhood program grant fund (PRWORA 1996, Section 469B). With regard to the emphasis on fatherhood in the PRWORA re-authorization, John Buntin stated:

a decade ago, when Congress wrote the TANF welfare reform law, nearly all the emphasis was on mothers – how get them off the dole and into the workforce. Fathers figured primarily as a source of child support payments. Now, as welfare reauthorization comes up, state and local governments are concluding that the next step should involve helping low-income fathers become productive partners as a stable family structure demands. (Buntin 2005, 24)

Buntin observes that after the 1996 passage of the PRWORA, state governments began to focus on fatherhood programs that encouraged and taught fathers to become involved in the day to day lives of their children (Johnson et. al. 2007, 158).

In what is a blatant conflict of interest, the National Fatherhood Initiative was given a five year, \$5 million grant from the Administration for Children and Families, which was under the administration of Horn when the initial award was granted in 2006 (Office of Family Assistance Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration 2008). The grant was awarded to promote marriage and fatherhood programs. The four tenets of the NFI's mission statement focus on re-valuing and re-empowering the idea of fatherhood in culture and the role of individual fathers in their families. The four tenets are:

Fathers make unique and irreplaceable contributions to the lives of children; father absence produces negative outcomes for their children; societies which fail to reinforce a cultural ideal of responsible fatherhood get increasing amounts of father absence; and widespread fatherlessness is the most socially consequential problem of our time. (National Fatherhood Initiative 2008)

The NFI thus seeks to influence media, politicians at all levels, educational programs and school curriculum, and public policy to promote their vision to end single-motherhood and fatherlessness (National Fatherhood Initiative 2008).

The largest NFI fatherhood program is the "24/7 Dad" educational program. Following the mission statement of the NFI, 24/7 Dad was established as a nation-wide community-based program that would teach men to become responsible, strong and valued fathers. To do so, 24/7 Dad teaches men that mothering and fathering are necessarily distinct (National Fatherhood Initiative 2003, 2). The NFI is unwavering in its attempt to stop the feminization of fatherhood. The first characteristic of a "24/7 Dad" is that he is self-aware. A self-aware man is aware of his

unique masculine temperament, aggression, emotions, strengths and limitations (National Fatherhood Initiative 2003, 7). The “24/7 Dad” has developed an understanding of proper parenting skills as a father. He must learn to use discipline as a method to teach and guide his children. The Facilitator’s Guide makes no mention of the disciplinary or parenting role of mothers. This silence recalls Mansfield’s claim that men have a better sense of justice and should therefore make and enforce the house-hold rules (Mansfield, 18). This focus on discipline, implying that the father should assume a position of authority in the family to instill certain expectations, morals and a work ethic into his children (Lakoff 1996, 155).

In addition the NFI’s own fatherhood programs, the organization also funds and promotes several other pro-father and pro-marriage organizations around the country such as the Resource Center for Fathers & Families (National Fatherhood Initiative 2008). The Resource Center is a Minnesota based fatherhood organization that received \$550,000 in 2007 as part of the Healthy Marriage Demonstration Award of the Administration for Children and Families (United States Department of Health and Human Services, #90FE0048). The Resource Center holds that the father-mother-child family is the strongest, healthiest and most moral family model (Resource Center for Fathers and Families). The Resource Center therefore works to reconnect low-income fathers with their families. Fathers, however, must provide for their families. Accordingly, the Resource Center offers job training and opportunities. Intriguingly, the Resource Center also offers legal aid to help fathers reduce or avoid child support, thus encouraging men’s participation in fatherhood programs by reducing their child support payments (Johnson et al 2007, 158; Smith 2007, 180).⁶

There have been debates in Congress about mandating fatherhood programs as part of child support enforcement. Essentially, the proposal is that the biological father would have his child support payments reduced if he attended a fatherhood program. Such a plan has already been introduced in Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Yakima, Washington (Johnson et. al., 157). Most fatherhood programs target the biological fathers of poor children. A welfare mother’s partner is not allowed to access these programs. Only the child support payee may benefit from any of these services (Smith 2007, 180). These policies are premised on the notion that the fatherhood role can and should extend beyond breadwinning. The biological father is pursued with the hope that he will feel a deeper and more long-term connection with the children than the partner of the single-mother ever would. Still, in the context of welfare policy, the first priority should be the financial stability of the single-mother and her children. The mother is being forced to interact with the father of her children while potentially being denied child support payments because the father is attending a fatherhood program. As such, these proposals perpetuate patriarchy because the rights of mother are not considered. The state is effectively deciding how the family is structured and how it is going to function. There are provisions in the PRWORA that allow women to refuse any contact with the father of her children if he was abusive. But even if the father is not abusive the mother should have the freedom to decide when and if a non-custodial father will interact with her children (Smith 2007, 181).

The Resource Center claims that the fatherhood role needs to be defined as more than a breadwinner (Resource Center for Fathers and Families), and in pursuit of this objective, the Resource Center is seemingly prepared to sacrifice the well-being of single-mothers and their children. If the father is working to become a more prominent member of the family, and is ‘rewarded’ through reduced child support payments, the mother may feel compelled to marry the

⁶ According to Johnson et. al., in most states, fatherhood programs are forced upon fathers; often in lieu of jail time or the suspension of state issued licenses (Johnson et. al. 2007, 156).

father in order to regain the financial support that was lost. Horn and Bush acknowledged that single mothers are less likely to marry the father of their children if the father earns less than the mother's welfare benefits or income. With marriage as their primary objective, Horn and Bush resisted the call for reducing the gendered wage gap and encouraging women's employment. In their view, doing so would only make men even less appealing as potential husbands (Horn and Bush 1997, 45). Thus Horn and Bush suggested that the state should focus on getting men, not women, to work. And in an effort to make fathers more than just breadwinners, the Resource Center is helping fathers to reclaim their position as the head of the family. Yet the Resource Center's solution is ill-conceived because if the father even wants to marry, there is no guarantee, much less any supporting evidence, that the father will choose to "work hard" in lieu of making child support payments.⁷

Smith states that fatherhood programs have the potential to aid welfare recipients because the programs could offer personal counseling, job training and placement, and parenting classes. Due to budget constraints in the 2000s, state experimentation, and wavering public support, fatherhood programs have assumed a less prevalent role in welfare policy (Johnson et. al. 2007, 158). Further, the fatherhood programs that remain, as exemplified above, are geared towards marriage promotion, avoidance of divorce and child support policies (Smith 2007, 180). The PRWORA's fatherhood programs reflect the nuclear family model in which the father is the authority and is conditioned to exist in the private and public spheres as the breadwinner, protector and authority. Thus fatherhood programs still exist but the Bush Administration changed the core goals of fatherhood programs toward marriage promotion. The Bush Administration was adamant that the marital form is of primary importance, establishing a contractual and moral agreement obliging the father to support his family. Cohabitation, child support, and fatherhood programs were not comparable to the legal, moral, and social bonds of marriage (Johnson et. al. 2007, 158).

Marriage as All Encompassing

The PRWORA was conceived according to the belief that marriage is a sacred, privileged and necessary institution for the survival and strength of the nation and society. Yet, membership in the American nation is gendered according to the patriarchal model of the nuclear family. The nuclear family has been cast, through family values rhetoric, as a self-sufficient unit in which its members are provided for and protected (Stacey 1996, 65). Social conservative fatherhood movement advocates, such as Blankenhorn, Popenoe and Horn, see marriage as the primary solution to fatherlessness – and by extension – welfare dependence. With fathers leading, protecting and supporting the family, the government would be relieved from supporting welfare dependent single-mothers. These social conservatives and fatherhood movement advocates believe that government policy needs to refocus and honour the biological facts of fatherhood: that fathers do not feel an innate biological connection to their children, that men need to be coerced into caring for their children and the mothers of their children and that within a marriage, men want and need to express their manly honor by protecting and providing for their families (Blankenhorn 2005; Popenoe 2005; Horn 2006). Haney and March say that many

⁷ Also, as Smith warns, solutions such as this proposal of the Resource Center forces women to remain economically dependent on the father regardless of the abusive or violent nature of their relationship. Many mothers leave their relationships precisely because their partners are abusive. Sixty to eighty percent of women on welfare have been in abusive relationships. Women therefore risk becoming financially unstable to escape a potentially deadly relationship (Smith 2001, 312).

fatherhood movement advocates believe that if the form of fatherhood is promoted through marriage, then men will eventually fulfill the function of fatherhood (2003, 447).

The PRWORA was centrally devised around the idea that responsible, heteronormative behavior was the cure for poverty. Accordingly, the PRWORA allocated \$20 million annually for four years to the five states that are most successful in reducing illegitimacy, and have a lower ratio of live births to abortions than they did in 1995 (PRWORA 1996, Section 401). State governments have tried a variety of tactics such as birth control, the morning after pill, abstinence education, adoption promotion, family planning programs, family caps on welfare benefits, paternity testing, and marriage promotion to reduce out of -wedlock births (Smith 2001-2002, 136-180). Since the passage of the PRWORA, however, marriage promotion continues to be many social conservatives, fatherhood movement advocates and politicians' preferred solution to single-mothers' welfare dependence.⁸

During the 2001-2003 PRWORA reauthorization, Senators Hillary Clinton, Joe Lieberman and President Bush all made proposals that promoted marriage as a solution to welfare. In fact under the 2005 reauthorization, states were allowed to cut funding to anti-poverty programs such as childcare and cash benefits if they reallocated that money towards marriage promotion programs (Smith 2007, 177). Specifically, President Bush proposed to redirect \$100 million from the 'illegitimacy bonus' to fund marriage promotion research projects. He proposed to allocate another \$100 million in 'high-performance bonus' funds to support state-level promotion of marriage (Mink 2003, 207). Evidently, the Bush Administration took a marked interest in marriage promotion as a solution to welfare dependency.

I know that the welfare bill, the reauthorization, needs to encourage marriage and family [...]It is also important to understand that a more hopeful society is one in which we encourage strong marriages and families. (Applause.) I understand building and preserving a family is not always possible; I know that. But it should be a national goal. We ought to aspire for what's best. And what's best is for our families to remain intact. (Bush, July 29, 2002)

Through speeches, debates and press releases, the Bush Administration made it clear that families, marriage and an end to fatherlessness were a major focus of their welfare strategy. Accordingly, during the 2002 PRWORA re-authorization debates, the Bush Administration proposed to allocate \$300 million of the TANF budget for marriage promotion programs (Bush, July 29, 2002).

Wade Horn, speaking on behalf of the Bush Administration, tried to argue that the Administration was not pursuing a policy that would coerce poor people to get married or encourage them to stay in violent or destructive marriages (Horn 2002, 2-6). Yet, the Bush Administration set a national goal of saving 70% of America's "very troubled" marriages that were experiencing "severe marital problems" including alcoholism, infidelity and gambling. Thus a portion of the \$300 million was devoted specifically to marital counseling to encourage couples to stay together despite severe or dangerous marital problems (Bush, February 26, 2002).

⁸ The federal government does not give states guidelines on how they can or should reduce non-marital births. The government does suggest, however, that states focus on promoting marriage, adoption, long-term contraceptives, and abstinence. The states are given the freedom to experiment with ineffective and dangerous tactics to reduce illegitimacy and often end up focusing on marriage promotion (Dye and Presser 2007, 144). Using aggressive tactics, Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee devoted TANF funds to a high profile media campaign to promote marriage and discourage divorce (Smith 2007, 174). More alarming still, is that Huckabee worked with religious leaders to change churches' policies to make it more difficult for couples to get divorced. In Florida, high school students cannot receive their diplomas until they have completed a marriage and relationship skills course. Several states such as Utah and West Virginia are giving a marriage bonus of between \$100 and \$350 to couples who got married when both members were on welfare (Smith 2007, 174-175).

Horn even argued that many low-income couples want to marry but lack the financial incentive and do not have access to marriage programs as do their wealthier fellow citizens. Horn stated that 80% of low-income parents are in an exclusive relationship and 50% of these want to get married (Horn 2002, 5-6).

Although Bush's 2002 reauthorization proposal was not accepted, the federal government was able to divert 25 percent of a \$2.2 billion child support enforcement program to marriage promotion initiatives (Smith 2007, 173). The 2005 TANF reauthorization devoted \$150 million annually in grant funds to states in creating and supporting "Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Programs" (Administration for Children and Families 2007).⁹ According to the Administration for Children and Families, Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Programs must adhere to six core goals: to increase the percentage of children raised by two parents in a healthy marriage; to increase the percentage of married couples in healthy marriages; to increase the percentage of premarital couples who have the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage; to increase the percentage of youth and young adults who have the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about healthy relationships and marriage; increase public awareness about the value of healthy marriages; encourage and support research on marriage and marriage education; and to increase the percentage of women, men and children in homes that are free of domestic violence (Administration for Children and Families 2007).

In 2006 the Heritage Foundation held a conference to discuss the state of the PRWORA ten years after its establishment. Wade Horn was one of the keynote speakers and directed the conference to focus on marriage promotion as a solution to poverty. As Assistant Secretary for Children and Families under the Bush Administration, Horn oversaw the PRWORA's shift towards marriage promotion.

Just 10 years ago it was impolite to even use the word 'marriage,' and now we have a dedicated \$100 million funding stream to not only mention the word, but to promote and encourage marriage [...] I oversee \$46 billion, part of a \$2 trillion federal budget, and \$100 million for the Healthy Marriage Initiative out of my \$46 billion is not a lot of money. So a much more important task is to integrate the idea of marriage into all of the social programs that support low-income families. (Horn 2006, 6)

Arguably, \$100 million is a substantial amount of money to put towards marriage promotion, especially when that money is being diverted from other welfare programs such as child support enforcement (Smith 2007, 176) Still, Horn felt that marriage promotion should become an even more important tool in the fight against welfare dependence. Accordingly, I will now discuss several marriage programs across the United States that have won substantial grants from the Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood fund since 2005. I will analyze the degree to which these programs promote a social conservative and fatherhood movement definition of American fatherhood.

Based in Modesto, California, the Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition (SCHMC) works to: "Preserve marriages, increase marital happiness, increase marriage among singles and to help build public awareness on the value of marriage." (Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition) In 2006, the SCHMC received a \$50,000 grant under the TANF (United States Department of Health and Human Services). The SCHMC reports that those funds will be used according to the mandate of their organization: to promote that communities are stronger if mothers and fathers are involved in the lives of their children; to prevent out-of-wedlock births;

to advocate for the strong, healthy, life-long marriages between “one man and one woman.” (Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition) Ultimately, the SCHMC holds that a two-parent heterosexual marriage is in the best interest of children, the family and the nation. The nation will be stronger, they say, when fathers are present in the home to provide for their families. The SCHMC has proposed the following goals to be achieved by 2016:

Reduce the number of divorce filings by 30 percent; increase the marriage rate by 30 percent (decrease cohabitation); reduced the number of out-of-wedlock pregnancies by 30 percent; increase father involvement in the community. (Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition)

As with the opening statements of the PRWORA, there is no discussion of women’s agency or power in the goals of the SCHMC. Marriage and fatherhood are cast as the solutions to the morally and financially bankrupt single-mother families that are depending on welfare. The SCHMS sought to disseminate traditional values of family and fatherhood through advocacy, communication and collaboration with other community and religious organizations (Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition).

In 2007, the National Association of Marriage Enhancement (NAME) received a \$250,000 grant from the Administration for Children and Families as part of President Bush’s Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood program (United States Department of Health and Human Services). While organizations such as SCHMC allude to the strength and form of the nation through their propagation of the value of the family for a strong society, and of the need for fathers to be authorities, providers and protectors, NAME draws a direct connection between the nuclear family, fatherhood and the nation. NAME presents the following mandate:

NAME is committed to our nation. America was founded on godly principles set forth in God’s Word. The deterioration of the family has weakened the moral fiber of the nation—politically, economically, and spiritually. Now, our nation is seeing a gathering of leaders from every sector, every denomination, every race, and every culture who are tired of watching our society’s moral foundation crumble before their eyes. NAME is leading the way in networking groups, organizations, and leaders to rally for righteousness in the context of biblical truths. Myths about God are being dispelled, visions are being birthed, and opinions once set against God are softening to a realization that we can make a difference in our nation, that society can be transformed for the better, and that we can see God glorified in America’s homes. (National Association of Marriage Enhancement)

NAME claims that the nation is crumbling politically, economically, and spiritually because families have been devalued and weakened. First, in terms of American politics, America’s leaders are immoral, un-authoritative and irresolute in their spiritual vision for the nation. Second, America is becoming a spiritually bankrupt nation. According to NAME, God deemed that America was to be the religious and moral example for the world. American leaders were to act according to God’s example. This can be connected to Blankenhorn’s belief that men, specifically fathers, can be likened to God because fathers are the creators of life (Blankenhorn 1999, xv). And by extension, men must assume a fatherhood role, a Godly role, as creators, protectors and moral or religious authorities over the nation (Nast 1998, 191-193). Third, the economic survival of the family is dependent on the breadwinning capabilities of a father. The nation, according to NAME, is built on economically self-sufficient, male-headed families.

As discussed above, the National Fatherhood Initiative is also involved in marriage promotion initiatives. The NFI’s official mandate, goals and philosophies are shrouded in the language of fatherlessness, family breakdown, and child well-being (Office of Family Assistance

Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration). Interestingly, and perhaps strategically, the NFI makes little mention of marriage promotion, but it is clear that the organization is deeply invested in this project. For example, the NFI's research initiatives have addressed topics such as "Religion, Race, and Relationships in Urban America," "Marriage and Mental Health in Adults and Children," and "The Other Marriage Penalty: A New Proposal to Eliminate the Marriage Penalty for Low-Income Americans." (National Fatherhood Initiative 2008) The first two research initiatives focus on how marriage can aid low-income families in urban centers and outline the mental, emotional and financial benefits of marriage and in-home fathering. While the NFI claims to be chiefly concerned with the well-being of children, their research interests, policy initiatives, and high-profile and pro-marriage political advocates all point to their belief that American welfare policy should promote marriage as a primary solution to welfare dependence.

All of these marriage promotion programs that have won grants from President Bush's Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood program reflect Horn, Popenoe and Blankenhorn's pro-marriage and pro-fatherhood ethos. Horn stated:

it is important that we win the rhetorical debate on this issue. It was not too long ago that we were in danger of losing the idea of marriage as an important social institution in America. Marriage is important not only as an expression of the love and affection that two people have for each other, but also because it is critical to the common good in our culture and society. (2006, 6)

The connection that Horn draws in this quote between marriage and society is suggestive of the metaphorical power of the patriarchal family for the nation. Accordingly, politicians from both political parties used the PRWORA to enforce the morals and lifestyle of the patriarchal family as its favored solution to welfare dependency but also as an object lesson for all Americans. As was seen through an analysis of PRWORA debates, fatherhood initiatives, and marriage promotion policy, the institution of marriage is being used as a public policy tool to force fathers to become state-like authorities and take social, moral and financial responsibility for their children and the mothers of their children/wives. Men's natural tendency towards aggression and productivity will thus be appropriately channeled into the strength of the nation. The state and the nation will then reciprocally benefit as families become self-sufficient and strong foundations of society.

Conclusion

The PRWORA was conceived according to two core social conservative beliefs: that the family rather than the state is core unit for the wellbeing of individuals, and that a nation should be grounded in certain gendered morals and modes of conduct. Individuals and moreover fathers should thus be both self-sufficient and responsible for their dependents. If someone is poor or dependent, it is because they lack the work ethic, moral resolve and discipline that are necessary to survive in a free market economy. To eradicate welfare dependency, the state must implement policies to change social behavior and reinstate foundational national values.

Each of the four PRWORA policies discussed in this paper was designed, in part, to contribute to the fatherhood movement's rejuvenated definition of fatherhood in relation to the American nation. Paternity testing identifies the father so that he can be held responsible for his children. In the PRWORA context, paternal and financial responsibility are synonymous. Yet for fatherhood movement advocates, child support enforcement is a weak and damaging replacement for the economically dependent relationships that are guaranteed through marriage.

Fatherhood programs were implemented to expand the role of fatherhood beyond the breadwinner. In order to prevent the family from slipping into anarchy, fathers must assume an authoritative role as the head of the household. Accordingly, fatherhood programs are being used to teach, motivate, encourage, support and even force fathers to assume that position. As the leaders of the family, fathers are then able to teach, condition and regulate their children's behavior. Under the rule of the father, children learn to respect and yearn for authority, and to be loyal, disciplined, moral and self-sufficient citizens.

But as Blankenhorn, Popenoe, Horn and President Bush argued, marriage assures that fathers exhibit all three of the vital father characteristics: protector, provider and authority. The influence and power of these fatherhood movement advocates is obvious as the Bush Administration has invested, both rhetorically and financially, in marriage promotion. Consequently, the fatherhood movement's ideal male citizen has been revalued and empowered, at least in policy discourse. Once the father agrees to legally enter a marriage, social conservatives hope that he will feel culturally and socially compelled to fulfill fatherly functions.

This paper has focused on the intricate interrelationships between welfare reform initiated in the Clinton years and its subsequent embroidery with social and neoconservative values in the Bush years. The election of President Obama may seem to challenge the social conservative hold on moral, national and familial values. Obama's book, *The Audacity of Hope*, is quoted and referenced on the Administration for Children and Families Website (Administration for Children and Families 2009). The final chapter of the book is devoted to Obama's understanding of the state of American families and his vision of the government's role in regulating the sexual and familial conduct of Americans. He assures the reader that marriage is not declining, and it is certainly not a fragile institution. He firmly believes in the institution of marriage, and publically supports Clinton and Bush's initiatives to strengthen marriage through the PRWORA and the expansion of tax breaks for married couples. Their policies were justified, he states, given the statistics regarding single-parent families: their disposition to produce criminal, sexually promiscuous, deviant, and economically irresponsible children. (Obama 2006, 332-4). All this said, Obama is adamant that he does not support social conservative attempts to use the government to impose sexual morality. Still, Obama does use the social conservative and religious right language of the ideal father. He concludes the book by reprimanding his father for abandoning his mother. Obama says that he was driven to be the breadwinner for his family after being effected by his father's selfishness and neglect (Obama 2006, 346-7). Yet in the recent economic downturn, more men than women have lost their jobs (New York Time, February 5, 2009). The postwar male breadwinner model is being not only collaping, as it did in the 1970s, but is being reversed as more women are assuming sole breadwinner status which may indeed intensify the insecurity and alienation felt by men. Despite its inconsonance with changing economic and familial realities, Obama's idealization of the father, his advocacy for marriage promotion, and his Administration's commitment to the PRWORA, indicate that social conservative family values have been successfully normalized within and through American domestic policy and political debate.

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