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The Rhetoric of <Family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility

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This article performs an ideographic analysis of the bipartisan political deployment of the slogan <family values> during the 1992 Presidential election campaign. The analysis shows that <family values> talk functioned during that campaign to scapegoat Black men and poor Americans for social problems. However, the <family values> ideograph also is invested with a gendered utopian narrative that makes its scapegoating less apparent and more persuasive. Ultimately, in constructing the family as the site of all responsibility and change, the rhetoric of <family values> privatizes social responsibility for ending poverty and racism.

I want to be able to cite the disastrous consequences that follow when the family supplies not just the only symbols of political agency we can find in the culture, but the only object upon which that agency can be seen to operate as well. Let's remind ourselves that there are other possibilities.
—(Paul Gilroy, "Family Affair" 315)

The current cant about family values, which displays no understanding of the social and economic bases necessary to sustain those values, becomes a shameful kind of political sophistry. . . . As we continue to move into uncertain social and emotional territory, anxieties rise and breed nostalgia for a past when, in retrospect, life seemed simpler, safer, and saner. . . . But it's a discussion in a vacuum. For as the values advocates frame it, the family itself *becomes* the context, as if families were atoms afloat in space.
—(Lillian Rubin, *Family Values* 35–36)

IN THE WAKE OF THE MAY 1992 urban rebellion in Los Angeles, then Vice-President Dan Quayle gave a speech in California blaming the uprising on the rioters' lack of "family values." Quayle's intended

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message was a simple one: We can blame the racial and economic crises of our cities on the personal failures of families. In order to insure media attention to an otherwise obscure speech, Quayle remarked that it didn't help that prime-time television characters like Murphy Brown (a journalist played by Candice Bergen in the CBS situation comedy) were having babies out of wedlock. While cultural critics such as Mike Davis have offered analyses of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion as a political response to racism, poverty, unemployment, and police violence, the rhetoric of <family values> suggests that these problems are not structural features of capitalist society but rather are the product of personal family failures.[1] As popular culture critic John Fiske has observed, the *Murphy Brown* dispute coded a dense array of social and political issues, and turned what seemed to be a trivial comment by Quayle into an important cultural event. Quayle himself has acknowledged that "however unwittingly, Hollywood became the catalyst for a national conversation on family values that continues to this day" (Quayle and Medved 2).[2]

Despite this national conversation, there has been scant writing in our field about the <family values> phenomenon, and only one article has directly addressed Quayle's speech (C. Smith). Perhaps the lack of attention to <family values> rhetoric stems from perceptions that this rhetoric was marginal to mainstream politics or that it was unsuccessful in the long term—a temporary phenomenon that ran its course before the 1996 Presidential election. This article argues, to the contrary, that the rhetoric of <family values> in the 1990s has structured policy discourse across partisan lines and reinvoked a long and deep-running familialist ideological thematic in U.S. culture. Specifically, this essay examines the rhetoric of <family values> in U.S. politics, paying particular attention to political speeches of the 1992 Presidential campaign, which was the context for Quayle's remarks. Based on examples drawn from an examination of a number of speeches and interviews delivered by candidates, their supporters, and their spouses as part of the 1992 Presidential and Vice-presidential race after Quayle's *Murphy Brown* speech, I argue that during the campaign, <family values> was an ideograph that offered a utopian return to a mythic familial ideal even as it scapegoated private families—especially those headed by single parents, racial minorities, and the poor—for structural social problems.[3]

Although racism and poverty were vividly foregrounded by the May 1992 Los Angeles riots, feminists and pundits focused their attention largely on issues of gender roles in Quayle's attack, leaving debate about race and class behind. As Carole Stabile has noted, "The erasure of the L.A. uprising in the 'Murphy Brown' incident moved the debate away from issues of race, from the condition of inner cities, and from the deteriorating economic base in the United States to a much safer symbolic ground" (48). In the current article I return issues of race and

class to the foreground by analyzing the scapegoating and utopian thematics of <family values> rhetoric in the 1992 Presidential campaign. I situate this rhetoric in historical perspective, noting that familialism is a perennial moral panic in the United States.[4] To chart the workings of <family values> as an ideological slogan with a deep history and enormous cultural resonance, I use Michael McGee's theory of the ideograph.

The <Family Values> Ideograph

Michael McGee has suggested that ideological slogans constructing a society's key commitments are powerful tools of political language. Such slogans provide an analytical link between rhetoric—understood as situated, pragmatic, instrumental, and strategic discourse—on the one hand, and ideology—the structures or systems of ideas within which individual pragmatic speech acts take place and by which they are constrained—on the other. The analysis of ideographs is less a critique of how immediately successful a rhetor's strategies are than an account of the ways in which political rhetors dip into, add to, and reshape the shared cultural stock of ideographs; political rhetors and their audiences are used and constrained by this repertoire even as they shape it to particular instrumental ends. McGee defines the ideograph as

> an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It 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 and laudable. (15)

For McGee, ideographic slogans comprise the building blocks of ideology in a system of public commitments; they are persuasive because they are abstract, easily recognized, and evoke near-universal and rapid identification within a culture. Thus, the dimension of social control and coercion in understanding the ideograph is crucial. It is incumbent upon the critic to question the interests motivating ideographic choices, as well as to assess potential consequences of public adherence to a particular vocabulary of motives.

McGee notes that it is easy enough to identify and name a society's ideographs: They are the most commonplace and hallowed terms in rhetorical discourse. Focused keyword searches in full-text computer databases such as Lexis/Nexis can aid the rapid description of the incidence and scope of public usage of key ideographs. Tables 1–6 in Appendix A summarize the incidence of <family values> in speeches and other texts indexed by Lexis/Nexis in several different but overlapping contexts: in exclusively campaign-oriented contexts unrelated to broader issues of race or gender; in the context of arguments about feminist and gay challenges to the traditional family; in the context of arguments about racism, poverty, and the Los Angeles rebellion; and in

the context of a discussion about whether television and other mass media offer "positive" family role models.

In these sites, the <family values> ideograph emerged as a cultural slogan and a prominent component of the American political lexicon. However, to perform ideographic criticism, the critic must go beyond identifying ideographs to first, locate a society's ideographs in historical (diachronic) context, and second, to describe the tensions and clashes in usages in any given (synchronic) moment. Among those rhetorical scholars who have employed the ideographic method are John Lucaites and Celeste Condit. They have given shape to this approach in their work on the ideograph <equality> in the context of movements for American civil rights (see also Edwards and Winkler, Martin, and Moore "Cigarette," "Rhetoric"). In their article "Reconstructing <Equality>" and in their book *Crafting Equality,* Condit and Lucaites have charted the ways in which the ideograph <equality> was invested with divergent (either integrationist or separatist) content. Lucaites and Condit argue that the two rhetorics worked together as a tension requiring management.

Like McGee, Condit and Lucaites describe ideographs as loci of structured tensions, in their meaning representing public contestation over society's key social commitments. They argue that the public is, thus, "ideographically constructed" (xiv) in a rhetorical struggle over the meanings of shared ideographs. Their emphasis on public influence over an ideograph's meaning gives their discussion a somewhat more optimistic tenor than that of McGee's earlier article, which stresses the potentially coercive dimensions of ideographic usage. Condit and Lucaites suggest that ideographs represent the legitimate commitment to actions warranted by the "rhetorical process of public argumentation in which various organized and articulate interest groups negotiate the problems of resource distribution in the collective life of the community" (*Crafting* xiv).

While Condit and Lucaites acknowledge differential amounts of power, ideological constraint, and access to public fora on the part of diverse groups, they do not assess the ideological limits and potentially dominating motives of particular ideographs. However, in a discussion of the use of the <family values> ideograph in the 1992 Presidential campaign, such an assessment is imperative. <Family values> served as such a powerful, conservative ideographic slogan that it constrained rhetors across the political spectrum and became a locus of rhetorical struggle over issues of gender, race, and class (see Abbott and Wallace).

Poststructuralist and post-Marxist discourse theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Nikolas Rose, and Eli Zaretsky have cautioned scholars not to read familialism as an instrument of unequivocal ideological domination. Indeed, their arguments suggest that the development of a culture of family intimacy opened up an arena for freedom, individual

expression, and lifestyle experimentation. Certainly the rhetoric of <family values> is not an ideological monolith; as I argue below, familialism possesses an intriguing utopian resonance that challenges its scapegoating dimension. However, one irony of the <family values> ideograph is that its use constructs not a *public,* as Lucaites and Condit would have it—but rather a *privatized* set of identifications and commitments. In Kenneth Burke's terms, the rhetoric of <family values> is agent-centered rather than scene-centered; it emphasizes personal responsibility rather than social context as explanation, excuse, or legitimization of otherwise apparently destructive individual actions, such as looting, participation in an underground economy, or violence (*Grammar* 7–9, 11–16). As Burke explains, liberalism's persistent emphasis on agent over scene tends to obscure issues of social structure and collective responsibility (*Grammar* 172–75).

The <family values> ideograph suspends between its two components a tension between an emphasis on agent and on scene, or, put differently, a tension between scapegoating and utopia. For example, Quayle's 18 May 1992 speech acknowledged that poverty and the Rodney King verdict exonerating police officers accused of a racial beating was part of the context of the Los Angeles riots in his "Murphy Brown" speech. However, his speech also used the ideograph <family values> to refocus the debate on individual agency and responsibility and away from scenic considerations. As Quayle put it:

> 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. (quoted in Rosenthal, "After" A1)

The phrase "no excuse" basically sums up an agent-centered approach to evaluating responsibility for particular acts. In contrast, a scenic orientation would admit to some "excuses" or broader social considerations (in this instance, for example, it might interpret "lawless anarchy" as justified protest) that construct a more diffuse social responsibility. In this way, the <family> half of the <family values> ideograph becomes the locus of privatizing discourses that exhort personal responsibility in the face of economic or social crisis.

While <family> itself has been deployed throughout American history as an ideograph, the <values> side of the equation is also significant. The word "values" indicates a rhetorical emphasis on moral, character-based solutions rather than material redress of economic need or the remediation of structural racism. Elsewhere I have argued that idealism is a philosophical perspective that credits consciousness and mind as the driving forces of history, while ignoring or backgrounding the role and significance of technological and economic determinants of historical change (Cloud, "Materiality"). Utopian rhetorics often elide material constraints and determination in positing a set of ideal solutions to structural problems. So, if <family>

contains the scapegoating dimension of the ideograph, as Quayle's speech suggested, <values> invokes the utopian solution; <values> balances out the scapegoating with the image of communities of shared values pulling together for change. Together, the words <family values> code a simultaneously privatizing and idealist approach to social crisis.

Keeping in mind the parallel tensions between scapegoating and utopia, private and public, and agent and scene, in the rest of this article I chart the "interpenetrating systems of public motives" that invest the <family values> ideograph with meaning (McGee 5). While the meaning of this ideograph has been an object of struggle both over time and in particular moments, I argue that in the United States of the modern industrial era, the normative ideological content of <family> has exhibited remarkable continuity and bipartisan concordance. Rather than regarding this concordance as a happy compromise resulting from democratic public negotiation, however, I shall argue that the constant mantra of <family values> has functioned as a conservative ideological discourse that has unfortunately penetrated the rhetorics of both left and right with devastating consequences for public life in the United States.

It may seem to some readers that this article digresses unnecessarily into social theory to explain the long-range motivations undergirding a rhetoric of <family values>. However, both historical breadth and social theory are fundamental to ideographic criticism because earlier uses of ideographs serve as precedent and constraint on subsequent rhetors (McGee 10). Furthermore, the production of ideological discourses is not necessarily a direct and conspiratorial process; more often, ideologies emerge from historical events and therefore are evident only in historical view. As Condit and Lucaites note, "The diachronic structure of an ideograph represents the full range and history of its usages for a particular rhetorical culture" (*Crafting* xiii). Thus their investigation into <equality> charts its usages back to the American revolution, noting that this deep history is necessary to understanding how civil rights leaders struggled over the term. Likewise, I believe it is essential to provide some of the deep history of <family values> rhetoric to show that 1992 did not mark the first time United States history has witnessed a moral panic over the family. After brief attention to this task, I then analyze political speeches and subsequent books published by the disputants of the 1992 Presidential campaign that deploy the <family values> slogan. I argue that in the present historical moment, the <family values> ideograph—in concert with the ideographs <responsibility> and <opportunity>—ultimately encourages the dislocation of attention away from structural social problems and onto private life and personal responsibility.

The Family and Familialism

The nuclear family as a normative ideal is a modern historical development that emerged as the family form of the rising bourgeoisie in the modern era. The modern family was a product of changes in early capitalism, which, over time, separated work from the household, reinforced an oppressive, gendered division of labor, and placed an increasing domestic burden on the family as a private unit. Stephanie Coontz documents the evolution of the American family from native American communalism, through colonial craft and agricultural households, to the modern, industrial nuclear family, which peaked as an ideal during the post-war economic boom of the 1950s. Most historians have long agreed that the family is not a natural, universal, or permanent institution; rather, kinship organizations change form and function both along with epochal shifts in the technological and economic bases of society (e.g., between feudal and modern society) and across cultures and classes at any single historical moment (see Aries; Coontz *Social Origins, Way We Never Were;* Frazier; Gutman; Kain; Laslett; Poster; Rosenberg; Shorter). Furthermore, as Lillian Rubin has argued, the normative familial ideal popularized since the turn of the century completely obscures the historical and present reality of working class family life, which is disrupted not out of choice but out of necessity by long hours, crises of unemployment and poverty, and the various crises they engender (Rubin, *Families;* Schor).

For these reasons, Barrett and McIntosh make a useful distinction between the actual, unstable and varying experience of diverse families at different moments in history, and "the family" as an ideological construct (i.e., an ideograph) that, in contrast, has been remarkably consistent and stable for more than a century. They argue that the ideology of familialism works as "a vigorous agency of class placement and blame" (29). While 19th-century familialism served as ideological justification for increasingly divergent and unequal gender roles in what Barbara Welter has labeled the "Cult of True Womanhood," Barrett and McIntosh remind us that the "imagery of idealized family life" has exhorted the oppressed, the exploited, and the poor to strive to better their private lives, then blamed them when they fail. In this light, it is interesting that waves of familialist panic have occurred during periods of economic or social crisis, that is, during class-based challenges to the rhetoric of personal responsibility and self-blame.

The following analysis reveals the tension between scapegoating and utopia in the rhetoric of <family values> and the divergent ways in which Republicans and Democrats rhetorically managed that tension in the 1992 Presidential race, in which Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and his running mate Al Gore defeated incumbent President George Bush and Vice President Dan Quayle. For the analysis I examined key representative political speeches, interviews, and editorials by both Democrats and Republicans gathered from the more than ten thousand

<family values> texts indexed by the Lexis/Nexis database during the 1992 campaign. The analysis stresses the bipartisan concordance around the <family values> ideograph; both Democrats and Republicans used the slogan in ways that privatized public perception of social experience. However, because there are some differences in inflection between the two political parties' use of the <family values> ideograph, I discuss Republican and Democratic invocations of <family values> in separate sections below. I do not mean to exonerate Democrats from the critical assessment of scapegoating and privatization of social responsibility. Indeed, the article's conclusion links Democratic <family values> rhetoric to the devastating erosion of welfare and other social spending during the Clinton Presidency.

The conclusions I draw below are based on a close reading of the <family values> discourse that occurred during the Presidential campaigns from May through November 1992 (from the date of Quayle's "Murphy Brown" remarks until the national election). In addition, I collected and read hundreds of pages of secondary material invoking the <family values> phrase; the sample included interviews, editorials, news analysis, talk show transcripts, and other mass-circulation texts. Tables 1–6 in Appendix A summarize the various usages of the ideograph and provide further evidence that the selections chosen for detailed analysis below are representative texts. Methodologically, my detailed analysis of specific texts, below, was guided by the tenets of ideographic criticism: I began by reading texts in political and historical context and charted continuities and shifts in the meanings. This reading led to my discovery of clusters of ideographs and their semantic and ideological links. Next, I described the tensions I observed within and between ideographs and the divergent rhetorical usages of ideographs. Although the critique of ideology is as much an art as a method, following these guidelines enables the critic to come to a fuller understanding of how such slogans win adherence and shape our collective life.

<Family Values> as Scapegoating Discourse

Coontz (*Social History*) notes that utopian discourses of the family emerged in the 1840s and continued until the turn of the century in response to a wave of strikes and demonstrations demanding better conditions and wages for workers. Within this context, familialist discourses not only constructed "True Womanhood" and disciplined women, but also justified and sustained capitalist exploitation by laying social responsibility for caring and community at the domestic threshold. Now, as then, working class families struggle with raising children within the context of long work hours, frozen or declining wages, and few social support services. Now, as then, an anti-feminist backlash demands of middle class women that they shoulder the burden of care—not just for the family, but for the nation. Now, as then,

wage-laboring women and other challengers to the family ideal bear the blame when society goes wrong.

Unsurprisingly, the rhetoric of <family values> has vilified feminists alongside gays and lesbians for disrupting "traditional" family forms. However, the 1992 panic over the "family-in-decline" was racialized by the Los Angeles riots. The <family values> ideograph was then used to explain the crisis and the racism, poverty, and police violence that preceded it. This analysis of the speeches of the 1992 campaign found that these speeches exhibit three recurring themes regarding race and class in the United States: the assumption of existing opportunity and prosperity for American Blacks, the construction of a "good Black"—"bad Black" dichotomy, and the consequent vilification of unsuccessful or angry Blacks who are accused in this rhetoric of personal moral failure.

Agent-centered Vilification of Black Men

Republican campaign rhetoric demonstrates these themes most clearly. For example, Quayle's first <family values> intervention, delivered in San Francisco in May 1992, addressed the Los Angeles rebellion directly and focused public attention on agent rather than scene:

> When I have been asked during these last weeks who caused the riots and killings in L.A., my answer has been direct and simple: Who is to blame for the riots? The rioters are to blame. Who is to blame for the killings? The killers are to blame. . . . In a nutshell, 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. ("Remarks to Commonwealth Club")

We see a strong emphasis on the individual as autonomous agent ("The rioters are to blame") in this passage and a corresponding unwillingness to discuss the complex scenic context of urban problems such as rampant police racism and brutality and unemployment in Los Angeles. Quayle and Bush were under pressure to respond meaningfully to the Los Angeles rebellion of May 1992. Quayle told his speech writers (John McConnell and Lisa Schiffren) that

> he wanted a speech on urban problems to give in California. Quayle had been hearing a lot from Republicans around the country about how weak the Administration had looked in its response to the Los Angeles riots. The speech seemed like the perfect time to put the conservative spin on the turmoil. (Rosenthal, "Quayle's" 32)

Quayle's remarks helped to set up an impending (and now realized) bipartisan assault on welfare, affirmative action, and other social programs. Thus, the battle over words must be understood in the context of erosion of material support for women, minorities, and the poor. The cuts in services depend rhetorically upon racist stereotypes that suggest that the urban poor, figured mostly as criminal and Black or Latino, are largely undeserving of public aid.

Conversely, Quayle attributes success among some minorities and the poor (who are figured as "exceptional") to their demonstration of "positive," "traditional" <family values>. His book *The American Family* (co-authored with psychologist Diane Medved) holds up "model" families such as the De La Rosas of Los Angeles, who, despite their poverty and despite racial discrimination against them, have managed to make ends meet and to instill traditional religious values and a pro-capitalist work ethic in their children. The lesson explicit in all five of the book's case studies is that regardless of material disadvantage or systematic oppression, those who work hard and keep their families together survive. It is no accident that Quayle chose struggling families to represent a mythic success narrative. Yet the selection of only five stories reveals a persuasive strategy common in <family values> arguments: the argument from anecdote, in which cases are selected to obscure the broader picture. This mode of argument bolsters an image of the United States as already providing ample opportunity for minorities to get ahead.

Assumption of Existing Opportunity

In an editorial based on the "Murphy Brown" speech, Quayle ("Great Society") asserted that the United States affords Blacks and other minorities ample opportunity to succeed: "By any measure, the America of 1992 is more egalitarian, more integrated and offers more opportunities to Black Americans and all other minority group members than the America of 1964." Republican Gary Franks (Connecticut) echoed this presumption in his Horatio-Alger-style family narrative, delivered to the Republican National Convention:

> I am here to tell you about an American success story. It's about a family where the father had only a sixth grade education and worked for 40 years in the brass mills of Waterbury, CT. Where the mother worked full-time at a hospital while raising six children. . . . Today, I have three sisters who hold doctorates, a brother who is an Army colonel, and another brother who is a teacher. Black Americans need nothing more than an equal opportunity to succeed. Therefore I strongly oppose any affirmative action programs that would feature preferential treatment or set-asides for minorities. (Franks, "Remarks")

In passages such as this one, the policy implication is clear: Holding proper <family values> means rejecting government programs addressing structural inequality. Franks, like Quayle, assumes, based on his family's particular history, that the "equal opportunity to succeed" is widespread and generalizable to others. While a certain layer of Black Americans have found places in the middle class, The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation has shown in two reports that the number of Blacks living in poverty and the degree of de facto racial segregation in the U.S. in the 1990s have changed little or grown worse (contrary to Quayle's claim) since the 1960s. Today, half of all Black children live in poverty, and well-paying jobs enabling the poor (regardless of race) to leave welfare rolls are scarce. While the national jobless rate is below five percent, young urban Blacks face unemployment rates of over

thirty percent. The child poverty rate in America is four times the average of western Europe, yet the incarceration rate of Black men in the United States is quadruple that of South Africa under apartheid. According to the Eisenhower Foundation Report, in the United States, "The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and minorities are suffering disproportionately" (quoted in Reichmann A7). This scenic context of urban unrest is what the <family values> ideograph works to deny.

Dichotomizing Successful and Unsuccessful Black Americans

The rhetoric of <family values> explicitly sets up a contrast between successful, middle class Blacks and the "culture of poverty":

> [The] culture of poverty—some call it an underclass. The underclass is a group whose members are dependent on welfare for very long stretches and 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 society. We are in large measure reaping the whirlwind of decades of changes in social mores. The intergenerational poverty that troubles us so much today is predominantly a poverty of values. (Quayle, "Great Society")

As Herman Gray and others (see Cloud, "Hegemony," "Limits"; Weiss) have pointed out, middle-class success stories work as morality tales in conjunction with racist portrayals of the Black criminal underclass (constructed as being willfully "disconnected from the rules of society") in a rhetoric that blames the poor for their own plight. As Stuart Hall has argued, such narratives work as a form of "inferential racism" that, while not overtly demeaning, articulates long-standing stereotypes in a meritocratic ideology that implicitly blames individuals for failure in spite of systemic, structural impediments to individual success. The translation of "poverty" into "poverty of values" dislocates attention from a structural to a meritocratic frame in which to interpret Black anger and protest.

Robert Staples and Leanor Boulin Johnson argue against the familialist explanation of crisis, which they label the "pathologization" of the Black family (35–36). They explain that "culture of poverty" approaches blame an alleged lack of appropriate <family values> for racial inequality in American society. "In essence," they write, "this theory is simply an attempt to shift the responsibility for the conditions of racial and class inequality onto the victims themselves" (28). Elsewhere, Robert Staples has argued that previous accounts of Black families in the American context have tended to "shift the burden of Black deprivation onto the Black family rather than the American social structure" (Staples 270).

These three aspects of race-based scapegoating—the assumption of existing opportunity, the "good Black"/"bad Black" dichotomy, and the accusation of personal moral failure—pervaded Republican campaign rhetoric in 1992. Perhaps the most harshly militant version of this

scapegoating came from Patrick Buchanan the first night of the convention. As one observer reported:

> His closing anecdote was about the Los Angeles riots and he wasn't talking about racial injustice in Black and Latino neighborhoods. . . . Describing "19-year-old boys ready to lay down their lives to stop a mob from molesting old people they did not even know" he saw a large lesson, casting domestic politics in martial terms: "As these boys took back the streets of Los Angeles, block by block, so we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country." (Dionne A18)

In his speech, Buchanan chastised looters and rioters, ignoring the possibility that their actions might be a kind of unfocused protest against the scenic conditions of poverty and police brutality. Buchanan went even farther, however, to suggest that the solution to such unrest was the retaking of urban areas by militias of (presumably white) young men. Such encouragement of racist violence and the presumption of the right of white people to take over minority neighborhoods by force are extremely alarming. As Kenneth Burke has noted, symbolic scapegoating can entail real violence against the groups cast as outsiders (*Rhetoric* 255).

In addition to its privatizing and scapegoating dimensions, the rhetoric of <family values> also contains moments of utopian yearning for a nurturing community of a mythical bygone era. When they hail the "traditional family," politicians and pundits also put forward a compelling, though oblique, scenic critique of a society stratified by race, gender, and class and fraying at its multicultural edges. This critique takes the form of a resonant utopian thematic, which portrays the traditional family as an idyllic haven from a brutish public world. This mythic vision depends upon the construction of women's identity as the keeper of the family utopia and guarantor of national unity and prosperity.

"Back to the Future": Utopian <Family Values>

The mythic family is a persuasive fiction in the rhetoric of <family values>. Coontz (*Way We Never Were*) has noted the mythic quality of nostalgia for an idyllic nuclear family that really never existed as a way of life for the majority of people. Indeed, using census, marriage, birth, and other demographic data, Coontz shows that today's "troubled," "declining" family closely resembles turn-of-the-century families in the incidence of single motherhood, poverty, and premarital sexual activity. The "traditional" normative ideal of family life popularized in the 1950s has been a realistic vision only for some, even then. Some American families benefited from the post-war economic boom that produced cheap mortgages, federal housing and education loans, and other "entitlements" for some middle-class households. In this light, today's crisis of <family values> can been seen as the product of the American Dream in disarray (S. Smith).

Although a fiction, the image of the ideal, prospering family is persuasive nonetheless. Fredric Jameson's classic essay on utopian moments in popular culture argues that ideological conservatism in popular texts is often matched by a utopian moment. In other words, at moments of political crisis or upheaval, cultural texts acknowledge the limits of what exists and gesture toward what could be different. Jameson writes,

> The works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public. . . . Such works cannot manage anxieties about the social order unless they have first revived them and given them some rudimentary expression; . . . anxiety and hope are two faces of the same collective consciousness. (144)

If race-based scapegoating in <family values> rhetoric expresses American anxieties about the social order, then a maternal domesticity offers the hope, or "fantasy bribe," that makes the rhetoric so compelling to diverse audiences and so useful to rhetors across partisan lines. Familialist discourses explicitly acknowledge public discontent with political strife and social fragmentation. At the same time, however, they offer the reconstituted family as haven from the turmoil. For example, George Bush, in a June 1992 address to a national gathering of College Republicans, said, "We've got to ground our drive for change in some things that do not or should not change, things like values and family and faith. And too many Americans now feel that the country's on the wrong track, and how do we get it back on? We take the first step when we put the American family first." This statement acknowledged public discontent: "Americans now feel that the country's on the wrong track," but offered a universalized and de-historicized (suggesting, against historical evidence, that the normative familial ideal "does not or should not change") vision of the normative nuclear family as the solution. Jameson unpacks this contradiction in his analysis of the *Godfather* as a text that acknowledges public yearning for collective identification and community, but offers, instead, the mob as Family—with a capital "F." Such utopian thematics take the meanspirited edge off of scapegoating and make the privatizing rhetoric of <family values> more persuasive and compelling for its audiences.

Women as Keepers of the Utopian Domestic Hearth

The utopian dimension of the <family values> ideograph provides a counterpoint to race-based scapegoating. The successful management of the scapegoating-utopia tension depends upon an image of women as the keepers of the domestic hearth, guarantors of stability and prosperity. In this way, 1990s familialism resembles 19th-century rhetorics addressed to women, which instructed them to "carry out the work of domestic good cheer" (Voss 4) in a domestic sphere increasingly separated from the realms of politics and wage labor (see also Cott;

Scanlon). Then, as today, mythic familialism justified the brutal exploitation of wage labor outside the home and the exclusion of women from political arenas by constructing the domestic realm as utopian space of freedom and authenticity. There is an ember of social critique—suggesting that modern life lacks freedom and authenticity, that the American Dream has fallen short of expectations—embedded in even this conservative vision.

During the 1992 campaign, both First Lady Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle self-consciously enacted the role of domestic woman in support of the <family values> theme. Their performances, in television and radio interviews and in addresses to the Republican National Convention, posed a direct contrast to the persona of Hillary Rodham Clinton, wife of candidate Bill Clinton, who was cast as a "tough-minded," "impatient," and "brusque" woman with a severe image problem (Corcoran; Grove). In contrast to Hillary Rodham Clinton, popular media cast Barbara Bush as the nation's grandmother figure and Marilyn Quayle (also an attorney) as a supportive, family-oriented spouse. Both Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle contrasted their traditional, Christian family histories with the alleged decadence of baby-boom rebels. They filled the <family values> ideograph as icons of maternal care held up as the alternative to the "caretaking state." Yet because the image of domestic stability and harmony presented by the Republican women depended upon a certain economic prosperity, their rhetoric was fraught with contradictions when the utopian vision encountered the reality of struggling families.

Pat Robertson, in his remarks to the Republican National Convention, extolled Barbara Bush as an exemplary family woman: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a First Lady, Barbara Bush . . . she's a gracious lady, a devoted wife, a dedicated mother, and a caring grandmother." Robertson recounted a story about a trip with the Bushes in Sudan, during which Barbara Bush met a starving child: "I will never forget Barbara Bush in the midst of the dust, the flies, and the disease, taking a little boy like that in her arms and loving it as only a mother could." In addition to dehumanizing the Sudanese child (referring to him as "it"), Robertson's account takes to an extreme the lesson implicit in every instance of <family values> rhetoric: The solution to poverty and suffering—even starvation—is not material aid but maternal love.

Utopian Autobiography as Narrative Strategy

Autobiographical narratives were central to crafting this message of utopian domesticity. For example, Barbara Bush, speaking before the Republican National Convention, told the story of her marriage this way:

> As in our family, as in American families everywhere, the parents we've met are determined to teach their children integrity, strength, responsibility, courage, sharing, love of God, and pride in being an American. However you define family, that's what we

mean by family values. 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. In many ways, these were the best years of our lives. George's days in the fields were dusty with long hours and hard work, but no matter when he got home, he always had time to throw a ball or listen to the kids. I car pooled, was a den mother, and went to more Little League games than I can count. We went to church, we cheered at Fourth of July picnics and fireworks, and we sang carols together at Christmas.

From the outset, Bush's biography is a lesson in determination aimed at "American families everywhere." Bush paints an idyllic portrait of small town life—"a small, decent community where neighbors helped each other," "a wonderful place to bring up a family"—during the post-war boom. Her role as den mother was to facilitate wonder and decency, just as her role in the campaign was to facilitate Republican victory on themes of the utopian family.

Yet, even as she chronicled her wonder years, she made it clear that such bliss is difficult to come by today. She noted that "parents have to cope with so much more in today's world," and granted to non-traditional families that "however you define family, that's what we mean by family values." At the same time, she insisted that today's families still should resemble hers in their attempts to instill integrity and responsibility, and claimed that small-town Texas is still "a wonderful place to bring up a family." As in the account of the Sudanese child's plight, difficult realities creep into the rhetoric of <family values>, revealing the rhetoric as pure, but persuasive, nostalgia for a utopia—"no place." This sense was reinforced by George Bush's own account of this life story:

Forty-four years ago, Barbara and I started out in west Texas, in Kermit and Notrees and Andrews, places where parents worried and watched when the kids crossed the streets, the kind of towns that sent those kids halfway around the world from the DMZ to Danang and to Desert Storm.

. . . And we worked hard. But when the work was done, we sat around the table late at night and we talked—talked about report cards; same thing you all do—schoolyard fights, small things, big dreams. . . . And my opponent ridicules or attacks me as we talk about family values. 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. (Remarks to Republican National Convention)

The irony of carefully tending children across sleepy neighborhood streets only to send them to battle is striking in this passage. So, too, is Bush's characterization of the project of strengthening the family as one of "small things" but "big dreams." The dreamy character of <family values> talk ensures that it will provide ground for public identification without ever getting close to dealing with the big problems of modern American society.

This construction of 1950s family nostalgia serves as a direct contrast with the fractured public of the 1960s and 1970s.[5] Marilyn

Quayle's contributions to this discourse posed <family values> against feminism. Although Quayle worked as a lawyer outside the home, she insisted that "women do not want to be liberated from their essential natures as women. Most of us love being mothers and wives" ("Interview"). In her speech to the GOP Convention, Quayle ("Remarks") said,

> I came of age in a time of turbulent social change. Some of it was good, such as civil rights—much of it was questionable. But remember, not everyone joined the counterculture, not everyone demonstrated, dropped out, took drugs, joined in the sexual revolution or dodged the draft. Not everyone concluded that American society was so bad that it had to be radically remade by social revolution. Not everyone believed that the family was so oppressive that women could only thrive apart from it. The majority of my generation lived by the credo our parents taught us. We believed in God, in hard work and personal discipline, in our nation's essential goodness. . . . And so most of us went to school, to church, and to work. We married and we started families. We had a stake in the future. . . . Our generation's social revolution taught us that family life needs protection. Our laws, policies and society as a whole must support our families. . . . When it comes to rebuilding our families, our communities, the fabric of our society, our goal must be to go back to the future. A future full of promise for all Americans.

There are several notable themes in this passage. First, the language of <family values> used here clearly attempts to discredit and villify the social reform movements—perhaps primarily feminism ("much of it")—of the 1960s, implicitly equating public collective protest and scenic social critique with drug use and drop-out culture. Second, Quayle draws a clear connection between women's role in building families and preserving the nation in its "essential goodness." Finally, the phrase "back to the future" once again evokes a sense of placelessness and unreality, as the hazy past serves as model for some future promise of the prosperous, stable family. Like the 1980s film *Back to the Future,* Quayle's speech attempted to recreate the conditions of American prosperity by invoking the ideological products—traditional gender roles and the nuclear family ideal—in the context of contemporary economic and social crisis and fragmentation.

Invoking the Dream of Prosperity

The cold-war family was, as Elaine Tyler May explains, an expression of both optimism and middle-class affluence on the one hand and cold-war anxieties over the possibility of nuclear war on the other. Undoubtedly, the vision of a prosperous suburban family living the dream of security and harmony amid new appliances and tricycles on the sidewalk depended upon the relative economic stability of the period between 1945 and 1973. David Harvey argues that despite the tensions of racism and the eruptions of social movements during the 1950s and 1960s, the fact that "material living standards rose for the mass of the population in the advanced capitalist countries" enabled the spread of the "benefits" of mass production and consumption to some layers of the working class, even as new assembly-line techniques also regimented and disciplined workers (140). Harvey argues that post-war Fordism—assembly-line mass production on an

unprecedented scale—alongside the geopolitical hegemony of the United States "meant a whole new aesthetic and a whole new way of life" (135). This new way of life was expressed through the proliferation of consumer choices and the celebration of consumption. The family was the site of mass consumption and the expression of the dream of eternal American prosperity.

The recession of 1973 marked an end to that dream. To maintain profitability, capitalists introduced a new regime of what Harvey calls "flexible accumulation," marked by increased internationalization of capital, innovations in production, flexibility with labor and resources, and rapid growth in the service sector. In recent decades, under the banner of flexible accumulation, employers have taken advantage of weakened unions to push for overtime, speedups, wage and benefits reductions, and irregular work hours. Gone are the eight-hour day and the family wage; in their place are multiple part-time jobs, split shifts, and the return of sweatshops, child labor, and home work (Harvey 149–50). Despite these innovations on the part of capitalists and contrary to celebratory postmodernists who claim that capitalism is disorganizing itself without the need for political activism, Harvey maintains that the underlying logic of capitalism and its tendency toward crises that throw millions of people into poverty and joblessness are still present. In this context, conservative familialist rhetorics offer a vision of the cold-war family as a utopian corrective. It is as if the rehabilitation of intimate life could restore the material conditions that generated the 1950s nuclear family ideal.

As a 1992 *Newsweek* article put it, "There is a yearning, nonetheless, for the security associated with the good old days." When shown a photograph of an "ideal" family having a barbecue, one woman commented, "I know the 'Ozzie and Harriet' stuff is impossible, but I miss the *familyness* of it" (quoted in Klein 22). The simultaneous acknowledgment of both the impossibility and desire for "familyness" marks a contradiction in <family values> rhetoric. It claims to want to strengthen families—and gestures toward a time when some families thrived—while telling poor families that they are on their own, sink or swim. The utopian dimension of <family values> rhetoric rationalizes the ongoing erosion of federal material support for struggling families.

All in the Family: Democratic <Family Values>

Among Democrats, the scapegoating-utopia and agent-scene tensions were less coherently managed, a reflection of divergent interests among more or less progressive factions—some invested in a more scenic critique of American society—of the Party. Although they did not fundamentally challenge the privatizing motive of <family values> rhetoric, Democrats did contest the Republican familialism regarding gender, defending working women (including Hillary Rodham Clinton)

against Republican vilification. For example, Senator Barbara Milkulski (D-MD), addressing the Democratic National Convention, remarked, "We must defend family values, not by denying women's rights but by passing family and medical leave. American workers should never be forced to decide between the job they need and the child they love."

Making a similarly progressive gesture in his address to the Democratic National Convention, former President Jimmy Carter stated, "There are some who justify or excuse the harsh lives of the poor with claims that they are lazy, or lack ambition, or care little about family values. These statements are false, either based on ignorance, on racism, or are deliberate attempts to divide Americans from one another for political gain." Carter exhorted the public and his fellow Democrats to remedy the crisis of poverty that he described at length in his speech. This argument reverses the causal reasoning of the Republicans, who argue that poor values and broken families perpetuate poverty, and suggests instead that poverty produces crisis in families. Carter's speech is also notable because he openly indicted the racism of the <family values> crusade. Other liberal Democrats, for example Representative Barbara Kennelly (D-CT), indirectly laid the blame for social crisis on the Republican administrations by noting that economic worry and instability were the cause of family instability, not vice versa (see also Jackson). Kennelly called upon government to "take care of those that can't take care of themselves." However, later in the speech Kennelly commented that the best way to put family values into action is to put American families "back to work so they can earn their own way." Here the rhetoric once again re-emphasized personal responsibility. Such contradictory and sometimes critical voices like those of Carter, Milkulski, and Kennelly were not the dominant Democratic voices during or since the campaign. President Bill Clinton's advertisements and addresses invested the <family values> ideograph with the same scapegoating-utopia tension that marked the Republican rhetoric.

Democratic Scapegoating: <Family>, <Opportunity>, and <Responsibility>

Clinton's stump speeches (for example, one delivered to the National Association of Manufacturers) noted the rise in poverty among working people on the one hand, yet pledged to end welfare in the name of private family responsibility on the other.[6] While he stated that he was "fed up" with being lectured about family values (speech to Democratic National Convention), Clinton repeatedly used the same language of personal responsibility used by Republicans: "I do want to say something to the fathers in this country who have chosen to abandon their children by neglecting their child support. Take responsibility for your children or we will force you to do so—because governments don't raise children, parents do—and you should." <Responsibility> serves as an

ideographic complement to <family> in this passage, suggesting that <family> be understood as the site of personal <responsibility> for caretaking. Clinton's statement also invoked a deep-seated racist stereotype in the popular imagination of Black men who allegedly "choose" to abandon their families. Echoing his Republican counterparts, Clinton rhetorically unburdened government ("governments don't raise children") of responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.

Indeed, Bill Clinton said (in a speech to the NAACP during the campaign), "We want to be the family values ticket," adding,

> This administration found Murphy Brown out in California. But they ignored all those unsung heroes in the Los Angeles riots. You know, most people in Los Angeles did not riot. Most people's children stayed home. They didn't steal, they didn't loot. They did the right thing. Why? Because they believe in the Ten Commandments and the teachings of family values.

This passage is notable not for its difference, but for its similarity to Republican rhetoric; it indirectly echoed Quayle's indictment of the riots as a betrayal of those who did not riot. It indicates that Quayle was allowed to frame the discussion of racism and poverty in familialist terms across partisan lines. However, Clinton's speech also pledges his commitment to racial equality, more jobs, health care, and education, making it somewhat more ambivalent than the Republicans' emphasis on private social responsibility.

This ambivalence marks the most extended attention Clinton gave to family values, which occurred in his speech to the City Club of Cleveland on 21 May 1992. This speech is extremely significant in the ways that it demonstrates contradictory encodings of <family values>. On the one hand, Clinton acknowledged and identified with the ideograph's force, saying "The President's speech [at the Notre Dame commencement] extolled the virtues of family life, lamented the breakdown of the family, said family life had more to do with what happens in America than Washington. That's probably true, and thank goodness." Although this remark signaled the centrality of the <family values> theme for Democrats, Clinton went on to criticize the Bush administration and its plan. His statement, "It typically offered no agenda and assumed no responsibility," indicated a symbolic break with the privatizing Republican rhetoric, and implied that the Democrats were committed to some level of government-based, public responsibility for the crisis of cities.

The ambivalence is clearer still later in the City Club speech when Clinton stated,

> Family values can't simply be Washington code for Beltway Republicans who really mean you're on your own, or for Beltway Democrats who want to spend more of your tax money on programs that don't embody those values. If family values are going to mean something, we must offer a nation a third way. A nation that guarantees opportunity for every family but a society that demands responsibility from every individual.

In this statement, Clinton established a cluster of ideographs that equated <family values> with <opportunity> and, like the Republicans, <responsibility>. Notably, the Democratic Presidential campaign did not feature the ideograph <equality>, which arguably is a more scenic ideograph corresponding to a potentially more social-justice-oriented platform. The consistent invocation of <family> alongside <responsibility> is further evidence that <family> in these speeches was being used in the same privatizing, agent-centered way Republicans were using the term, rather than in a scenic or justice-oriented way.

Therefore, it is not surprising that later in the (City Club) speech, Clinton, like the Republicans, condemned single parenthood as if it—rather than racism, economic inequality, or other feature of structural reality—were the cause of social breakdown:

> What I tried to speak to today is the need to reinforce the values that are transmitted through families that are working, values of love and self-worth and self-respect and respect for others and a belief in the dignity of work and the reward for it. . . . Children who have to grow up without those values and without the sense of a strong family member and often children who have to grow up without both their parents are often gripped with a terrible sense of loss which affects them throughout their lives. I don't think you can define family in 1950s terms, but I do believe a family in general should be identified as children being raised by people who are either related to them by birth in some way or who have legal custody over them and have taken responsibility for them.

This set of conclusions further emphasizes personal <responsibility> over social caretaking and echoes the Republican line about the dangers of single-parent families. The prior lip service to caretaking is contradicted here and in Democrats' concrete policy proposals that were similar, if not identical to Republican plans: child support enforcement, encouragement of home ownership, a crackdown on teen pregnancy, the formation of urban enterprise zones and, most notably, "welfare reform designed to encourage work and independence." Significantly, the bulk of the speech aligned with the anti-welfare, sink-or-swim ethos forwarded by Republicans.

Utopian Autobiography Redux

As in Republican rhetoric, Clinton's rhetoric matches toughness on personal responsibility with a persuasive utopian moment. In his speech to the Democratic National Convention, Clinton stated,

> Somewhere at this very moment, a child is being born in America. Let it be our cause to give that child a happy home, a healthy family, and a hopeful future. Let it be our cause to see that child has a chance to live up to the fullest of her God-given abilities. Let it be our cause to see that child grow up strong and secure, braced by her challenges, but never struggling alone; with family and friends and a faith that in America, no one is left out; no one is left behind. Let it be our cause that we give this child a country that is coming together, not coming apart; a country of boundless hopes and endless dreams; a country that once again lifts its people and inspires the world. Let that be our cause, our commitment, and our new covenant. . . . I still believe in a place called Hope.

This passage is significant in several ways. First, like Republican rhetoric, it clearly puts the welfare of the nation in metaphorical familial terms, and in extremely personal terms. In other words, the passage encourages audiences to regard social problems primarily as personal problems to be solved in private life. Second, its utopian vision (like that of the Republicans' "boundless hopes and endless dreams" out of time and place) of a new covenant or a "place called Hope" nonetheless is, rhetorically speaking, of a slightly different and more inclusive ilk; in it, "no one is left out; no one is left behind," in contrast to Pat Buchanan's call to "take back our cities" from those failing to exhibit <family values>. Earlier in the same speech Clinton's invitation to those left out of the Republican family (obliquely, gays and lesbians, wage-laboring mothers, feminists, and so on) to join the Democrat family contrasted sharply with the vilification of feminism and alternative family forms by Marilyn Quayle and Pat Buchanan. Even so, although Clinton says that "tomorrow can be better than today," like the Republicans' his rhetoric stresses a privatized route to utopia: "Every one of us has a personal, moral responsibility to make it so." The privatizing familial language warrants what eventually will be the gutting—by Democrats—of social programs benefiting the poor.

In the Cleveland speech, Clinton reiterated this autobiographical lesson:

> I want to talk about these issues today, because family questions are terribly important to our nation and to me personally. As a public official, I have worked on family issues harder and longer than anybody else running for president this year. And I do believe that they are at the heart of our national discontent. And as well as anyone, I know the importance of family values to personal growth. In 1946, I was born to a widowed mother. My father died in a car wreck three months before I was born. Shortly after I was born, my mother went back to nursing school to learn skills that would enable her to support me. Until I was four, I was fortunate enough to be raised by loving grandparents of modest means but great determination, who began teaching me to count and read when I was two. My mother's extended family included great-grandparents and great uncles and aunts, all of whom were poor or nearly so, but they were wonderful, old-fashioned country people, who brought love and joy and values to my life. . . . Every year, I ask all the relatives from all my extended families and my wife's family together at Christmas time. It's an amazing celebration of the different threads of a family, a broad fabric of love and support that raised a child from modest means to a rewarding career in public service and a serious campaign for the presidency of the United States. I know the value of family.

This narrative bears a striking resemblance to the utopian life stories offered by Republicans. It acknowledges personal hardship, but places "family issues" at the "heart of our national discontent." It also takes the form of a Horatio Alger myth in its reinforcement of the American mythos that hard work, perseverance, and proper values can take one from rags to riches (or "from modest means to a rewarding career"). As I noted above, rags-to-riches autobiographical narratives function in the Presidential campaign as morality tales that enable candidate identification with oppressed or impoverished constituents while continuing to privatize social responsibility for their well being (Decker). Despite the

utopian longing for the "wonderful, old-fashioned country people," these narratives blame those who don't succeed for their own failure, exonerating system and structure of obligation.

As in the Republican rhetoric, the utopian autobiography that gestures toward critique was deployed by Democrats in service of a much less idyllic set of policy proposals. Clinton used the <family values> ideograph to warrant policy proposals to increase urban policing and to move people off of welfare regardless of the availability of well-paying jobs, child care, and transportation. He emphasized not government programs, but personal responsibility. In his nomination acceptance address, Clinton condemned parents who renege on child support (stigmatizing so-called "deadbeat" dads, who are often as impoverished as the families they abandon). Furthermore, in this speech, peppered with references to <family values>, he promised, like the Republicans, to end welfare as we know it and to enforce personal responsibility even among those with few personal opportunities. As Dan Quayle gloated during the Republican National Convention, "Now, the Democrats, they're trying to be the 'Me Too' party when it comes to family values. . . . Now we're making real progress in America when Bill Clinton's talking about family values."

"The Solution Begins at Home"?: Consequences of <Family Values>

These themes have persevered into present policy rhetoric. Hillary Rodham Clinton's 1996 book about the family, hailed as a progressive response to Republican family traditionalists, itself reproduces the logic of familialism. On the one hand, she disparages the Republican "nostalgia merchants" who "sell an appealing Norman Rockwell-like picture of American life" (28). On the other hand, however, she writes, "Our challenge is to arrive at a consensus of values and a common vision of what we can do today to build strong families" (14). She goes on to assert that "The American Dream is within reach of anyone willing to work hard and take responsibility" (15). Later, she exhorts parents to teach their children religious faith, self-discipline, and character as the way out of hardship (147). Although Clinton acknowledges that the kind of responsibility she means must be supplemented with support from the broader community and social networks (plus a minimum of government help), she does not take issue with the causal reasoning of familialists that obscures structure and system in favor of personalistic explanations for family crisis. For example, she attributes child poverty to divorce (39), rather than acknowledging the difficulty of keeping families together during times of financial hardship. She approvingly cites remarks by conservative William Bennett to the effect that "divorce is hard on children" and can be blamed for "damage to the children of America" (41). What is missing from her analysis is any acknowledgment of scenic contexts of poverty, long work hours, sexism

in the workplace and at home, and other family stresses that might lead to divorce.

In her book, Clinton glowingly recounts anecdotes of poor children who made good as a result of growing up in strong families, and stories about more affluent children who suffered because of growing up in a "broken" or untraditional family. Democratic complicity in the privatizing and conservative rhetoric of <family values> is clear when Clinton writes, "As always, the solution [to racism, poverty, and other structural crises] begins at home" (188). "The solution begins at home" is the bipartisan lesson of the 1992 Presidential campaign. This lesson was developed across party lines in response to racial unrest and designed to answer scenic critiques of the racism and poverty characteristic of urban areas such as Los Angeles.

An important implication of this critique is that the Republican loss in the Presidential election of 1992 did not mean that a conservative familialist rhetoric was unsuccessful. In his book, Quayle writes, "Bill Clinton, then a candidate for President, attacked the [family values] speech. . . . Today, as president, he frequently punctuates his speeches and comments with the term *family values*" (*American Family* 2). Indeed, the Republican sweep in the Congressional elections in 1994 suggests that the <family values> ideograph—and its associations with traditional gender roles, race-based scapegoating, and exhortations to personal responsibility—was infused with meaning in ways that were compelling for large numbers of Americans across partisan lines.

On 22 August 1996, President Clinton signed the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act" into law. The use in the title of the bill of the key ideographs <responsibility> and <opportunity>, both rhetorically and ideologically linked to <family values>, signaled that the bill rested on the justificatory rhetoric of familialism sparked by Quayle and the Republicans in 1992. The bill is now in the early stages of being enacted and enforced. At the time of its passage, the *New York Times* warned that the bill's provisions threatened to

> hurl more than a million children into poverty. It will slice food stamps by an average of $600 for families earning less than $6300 a year. It has stripped legal immigrants, including some elderly, of health insurance. It has, for the first time ever, told workers who lose their jobs after years of steady work that they cannot collect food stamps for their children. ("Mr. Clinton's Duty" A22).

The Children's Defense Fund, surveying the bill's first year, has summarized its effects: In the first nine months, 1.4 million people were removed from welfare. By August 1997, more than 121,000 children with disabilities had lost their Supplemental Security Income benefits, and many families were losing assistance because of new red tape. Further, the majority of families whose benefits were terminated have not found work, because there are not enough entry-level jobs in

most of the nation to employ parents seeking to leave welfare. The federal law makes qualifying for job training more difficult than before, and the new law has not substantially improved states' performances in moving families from welfare to work.

Although welfare programs before the 1996 bill comprised only one percent of the federal budget, and those hit hardest by such "reform" are poor children (Children's Defense Fund; Pear A21), Democrats and Republicans alike justify such draconian measures in terms of a persistent rhetoric of personal familial responsibility. The claim of these politicians that they "value families" is contradicted outright by the threatened institution of such harsh material cutbacks in aid to poor and working class families. The rhetoric of <family values> justifies such cuts in its emphasis on personal responsibility; its utopia of shared values rather than shared resources offers little in the way of material aid for struggling families.

Of course, personal responsibility is at times a salient concept when attributing credit or blame. However, as I have noted elsewhere (Cloud "Hegemony"), liberal ideologies in capitalist society tend to assume that individuals are unconditionally responsible for themselves even if there are structural barriers to personal success. Cultural critic Michael Dyson condemns liberal, meritocratic theories of race for reducing structural racism to "personalistic explanations" that blame the victims of racism (138). Other critical race scholars have paid careful attention to race scapegoating in contemporary culture (see, for example, Guillaumin, Gilroy, hooks, Reeves and Campbell). Gilroy discusses the familial metaphor as a limiting, privatizing one even when it is used in the context of resistant black nationalist politics (as it was during Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March in 1996).

American political discourse is both imbalanced and selective in its overweening emphasis on the individual or private family as source of all private responsibility. It is imbalanced in emphasizing private responsibility to the near-total exclusion of considering system, state, corporate, or other collective responsibility in the face of social problems. As childhood expert Penelope Leach has observed, the United States provides so little state-based support for children and families that it can be regarded as "inimical to children" (xiii). Leach, contrary to <family values> politicians, proposes that the United States should prioritize spending on reforms benefiting ordinary families who are struggling not for utopia, but for survival: Her suggestions include shortening the work week for ordinary people and expanding federal resources for and commitment to nutrition programs, education, public health care, sanitation, and housing. She writes,

> Post-industrial countries certainly could afford practical measures that would revolutionize all children's lives. In fact, they could easily afford them for every child in the world. . . . What would it cost each year to control major childhood diseases, halve child malnutrition, bring sanitation and safe water to every community, provide basic education for all children and make family planning and maternity services universally

available—*worldwide?* Twenty-five billion dollars. Less than Americans spend each year on beer. (172)

This perspective—emphasizing broader social responsibility for families who work long hours at low wages without an adequate social support system—is a helpful corrective to the privatizing emphasis of the rhetoric of <family values>. Rather than blaming ordinary people for their failure to measure up to some abstract ideal of familial prosperity, Leach calls our attention to the meager aid provided in modern society that, if increased, might enable more families to approximate the ideal.[7]

In this article I have described how 1990s politicians, rather than extending programs to support families, have reinvoked and extended the perennial moral panic about the alleged decline of the family in ways consonant with the <family values> ideograph's past. I have argued that during the campaign, <family values> was an ideograph that offered a utopian return to a mythic familial ideal even as it scapegoated private families—especially those headed by single parents, racial minorities, and the poor—for structural social problems. Despite the potentially critical tension between scapegoating and utopia with which the <family values> ideograph is invested, the slogan's ultimate motive is the privatization of social experience and responsibility. In this regard, contemporary invocations of the value of <family> ideologically resemble prior uses of this discourse in contexts of social, political, and economic crisis. In the 19th century, as today, rhetors invoked the decline of the family as explanation for protests, strikes, economic failure, and racism. Then, as today, rhetors offered maternal care as a substitute for broader social caretaking. The coding of social disputes as familial problems has been perennially a way for the system to dislocate collective, political anxiety, discussion, and action into less threatening, private venues.

In these ways, <family values> discourse conceals the reality of widespread economic inequality and structural racism in favor of personalistic explanations of hardship and failure. Democrats and Republicans alike have used <family values> to warrant devastating cuts in an already-meager social welfare system and to undermine the possibility of genuine public discourse about the collective, rather than the familial, good. As Lillian Rubin puts it, the discussion about <family values> has been "a discussion in a vacuum . . . as if families were atoms afloat in space" (35–36).

In a society marked by a fundamental class divide,[8] and in a society in which gendered and racialized sets of "shared values" are used to justify the perpetuation of that divide, we must challenge the privatizing force of the <family values> ideograph. The antidote to <family values> lies in reconstituting public, collective, progressive social movements,[9] including the labor movement, that can challenge scapegoating and false utopia and offer real material gains alongside new hope for political understanding and activity in the United States.

NOTES

[1]Henceforward I will enclose the phrase in carats—<family values>—to follow the conventional notation style of ideographic criticism.

[2]Recently even "Murphy" joined the <family values> bandwagon. In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, Candace Bergen admits about Quayle's attack, "[It was] the right theme to hammer home . . . family values . . . and I agreed with all of it except his arrogant, uninformed posture, but the body of the speech was completely sound" (quoted in Michaelson F1). At the time of the 1992 speech, Bergen was widely regarded as a feminist influence on popular culture and as a defender of marginalized communities and their families. Bergen's retraction is evidence of the profound effects of the family values conversation and the depth of its influence.

[3]A full consideration of the role of mass circulation magazines, television, and film in constructing an ideological, normative ideal of the white, heterosexual, middle-class family is beyond the scope of this essay. Obviously, however, the campaign rhetoric existed in a densely layered cultural context of full-blown cultural panic over the alleged decline of the nuclear family, as the Murphy Brown example demonstrates. For more analysis of familialism in popular culture, see Coontz *Way;* Fiske; Cloud "Family Values"; Taylor. For a rare discussion in the mainstream media of how <family values> discourse deployed strategies of veiled racism, see Rivera.

[4]See Stacey for an overview of the 1990s moral panic, called variously "familialism" or "familism."

[5]American society was, of course, fragmented during this time. Cultural scholar and former activist Todd Gitlin has also bemoaned the fragmentation of American publics during the period of the New Left. Gitlin's answer, unlike Quayle's return to nowhere, is to rebuild common cause and solidarity in struggles for social justice.

[6]Of course, audience made a difference in how Democrats invoked the <family values> ideograph. While Democrat addresses to national audiences, business, or other moderate constituencies showed remarkable similarity to Republican speeches with regard to personal family responsibility, Democrat addresses to more traditional liberal voting blocs such as labor or civil rights audiences demonstrated more of a scenic point of view. For example, in a 25 October 1992 address to workers in Saginaw, Michigan, Clinton stressed the loss of 125,000 manufacturing jobs in Michigan and the need for a new administration to create jobs so that the next generation of children will not be worse off than their parents ("Address at Campaign Rally"). This emphasis on jobs marks this speech's adaptation of the familial motif for a working class audience. Likewise, Clinton's address to the AFL-CIO's general board in September stressed health care and the need to address the overall decline in working families' incomes, and pledged government "commitment to the working men and women, and their children, and their parents, [of] the opportunity to dignity, to equality, and most of all, to the forgotten middle class" ("Address to General Board"). Note the rare use of <equality> in this context and the complete absence of <family>, which has been replaced by the more specific "working men and women, and their children."

[7]Furthermore, the <family values> debate has been selective in attributing private responsibility to ordinary people while rarely holding corporate entities responsible for their actions. While poor people, single mothers, and black men are scapegoated for social problems, corporations are rarely penalized for unsafe workplaces, industrial accidents, and the production of dangerous consumer products—all of which are responsible for tens of thousands of deaths yearly—and the concomitant devastation of the affected families. Nor are corporations any longer expected to provide a living wage, transportation, health care, or child care—all of which would demonstrate a real social commitment to families rather than lip service to <family values>.

[8]For statistical evidence of that divide, see Economic Policy Institute.

[9]Space does not allow a full discussion of social movements here. However, in valorizing public, collective, and political interests as the basis of movements, I follow Habermas and Fraser. Fraser's notion of "multiple subaltern counterpublics" is a useful formulation based on historical examples of movements in which people came together to challenge privatizing rhetorics and punitive social policy. See also Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen; Fraser and Freeman.

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APPENDIX A: INCIDENCE OF <FAMILY VALUES>

Methodological note: This set of tables represents the results of focused keyword searches in Lexis/Nexis in various categories. In order to find out with what topics <family values> was linked most often (e.g., mere campaiging, race, gender, poverty, or gays and lesbians), I conducted searches that excluded texts that did not explicitly make that connection. For example, asking Lexis/Nexis to search for the string <family values> or black or Los Angeles or riots" generates a rough idea of how often the thematics of <family values> and questions of race and racism occurred together in a speech or news article. Another purpose of these charts is to give readers a sense of the sheer magnitude of the <family values> phenomenon, which exploded during the 1992 campaign.

Although such data can only give us a broad picture of the emergence and prevalence of <family values> talk during these periods, we can draw from them a few descriptive conclusions: First, talk about <family values> peaked during the 1992 election campaign, with the phrase occurring at a rate not matched since the election was over. However, the incidence of articles specifically mentioning <family values> did rise during the 1996 primary season, which indicates that campaigning around themes of personal character and <family values> held over into 1996 as a defining feature of the new elections. Second, the figures confirm my claim that although many critics and pundits focused on the gender dimension of <family values> rhetoric, in all periods race linkages were much more prominent in the popular media than were gender linkages or references to feminism or women's roles in the context of a discussion about <family values>. From this one may suggest that nationally, the media used the phrase <family values> to code a set of disputes about race, racism, injustice, and poverty (although, interestingly, <poverty> itself as an issue is most often elided, and is mentioned rarely in direct connection to <family values>). Contrary to what one might expect given recent religious vilification of gays and lesbians in mass media, the intensity of the national conversation about <family values> did not increase specifically in response to the

large gay rights marches of 1993 and 1994. However, the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family" did spark a slight flare-up in a general discussion of <family values> issues. The ideograph was still in prevalent usage during the 1996 Presidential race.

TABLE 1
Incidence of <Family Values> by Thematic Category: 1992 Campaign

Category	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
All Instances of <Family Values>	7,739	42.3
"family values and date is after April 30, 1992 and date is before Dec. 1, 1992"	Including transcripts of talk shows and speeches: 9,230	50.4
Pragmatic Campaigning	5,472	30.0
"family values and campaign or Clinton or Bush or Quayle not racism not Los Angeles not women's roles not gender not feminism not gay not lesbian not role models and date is . . ."		
Race as Context	2,974	16.3
"family values and racism or black or Los Angeles or riots and date is . . ."		
Poverty as Context	663	3.6
"family values and poverty and date is . . ."		
Gender Roles/Women's Rights	753	4.1
"family values and women's roles or women's rights or feminism or gender and date is . . ."	If "Murphy Brown" added to search terms: 1,137	9.6
Gay/Lesbian Issues	1,137	6.2
"family values and gay or lesbian and date is . . ."		
Media Role Models	872	4.8
"family values and television or media and role and date is . . ."		

Source: National magazines and major newspapers as indexed by Lexis/Nexis within the context of the 1992 Presidential Election Campaign and Vice-President Dan Quayle's "Murphy Brown" speech during the period of 1 May 1992 through 30 November 1992 (214 days).

TABLE 2
Incidence of <Family Values> by Thematic Category: Post-Election

Category	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
General: All Instances of <Family Values>	23,060	17.2
Pragmatic Campaigning	8,951	6.7
Race and Racism	9,044	6.8
Poverty	1,638	1.2
Gender/Women's Roles	2,041	1.5
Gay and Lesbian Issues	3,566	2.7
Media Role Models	347	0.3

Source: National magazines and major newspapers as indexed by Lexis/Nexis within the context of the post-1992-election period from 1 December 1992 through 24 July 1996 (1332 days).

TABLE 3
Incidence of <Family Values>: Gay and Lesbian Rights

Event and Range of Search	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
Gay Rights March on Washington		
April 26, 1993		
Search March 1 through May 31, 1993		
All Instances of <Family Values>	965	10.5
<Family Values> with Gay or Lesbian	174	1.9
Gay Rights March in New York City, Stonewall Uprising 25th Anniversary		
June 26, 1994		
Search May 1 through July 31, 1994		
All Instances of <Family Values>	1,532	16.7
With Gay or Lesbian	253	2.8

Source: Major newspapers and national magazines as indexed by Lexis/Nexis in the context of large national gay rights or pride marches in 1993 and 1994.

TABLE 4
Incidence of <Family Values>: Republican Congressional Sweep

Category	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
All Incidences	3,034	19.7
With the Phrase "Contract with America"	143	0.9
Race/Racism	686	4.5
Poverty	259	1.7
Gender/Feminism/Women	217	1.4
Gay/Lesbian Issues	398	2.6
Media/Television Role	26	0.2

Source: Major newspapers and national magazines as indexed by Lexis/Nexis in the context of the 1994 Congressional elections and the Republican unveiling of the "Contract with America" on 22 November 1994 and covering the dates 1 August 1994 through 31 December 1994 (153 days).

TABLE 5
Incidence of <Family Values>: Contract with the American Family

Category	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
General/All Incidences	1,071	17.6
Ralph Reed/Christian Coalition Contract with American Family	44	0.7
Race/Racism	282	4.6
Poverty	56	0.9
Gender	86	1.4
Gay/Lesbian Issues	140	2.3
Media Role	92	1.5

Source: Major newspapers and national magazines as indexed by Lexis/Nexis in the context of the unveiling of the Christian Coalition's Contract with the American Family, May 17, 1995 and covering the dates 1 May 1995 through 30 June 1995 (61 days).

TABLE 6
Incidence of <Family Values> by Thematic Category: 1996 Presidential Primaries

Category	Number of Articles	Articles Per Day Average
General: All Instances	2,971	19.8
Campaign References to <Family Values>	1,368	9.0
Race/Racism	76	0.5
Poverty	196	1.3
Gender/Women's Roles	202	1.3
Gay/Lesbian Issues	486	3.2
Media/Television Role	33	0.2

Source: Major newspapers and national magazines as indexed by Lexis/Nexis in the context of the 1996 Presidential primaries and covering the dates 1 January 1996 through 31 May 1996 (152 days).

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