

**Redefining Compassion to Reform Welfare: How Supporters of 1990s US Federal
Welfare Reform Aimed for the Moral High Ground***

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REDEFINING COMPASSION TO REFORM WELFARE: HOW SUPPORTERS OF 1990s US WELFARE REFORM AIMED FOR THE MORAL HIGH GROUND

Robin Stryker and Pamela Wald

As the House of Representative prepared to approve the 1996 welfare reform legislation, Representative John E. Ensign (R-NV) said, “[T]oday is truly independence day for welfare recipients. It is the first day to redefine compassion in America.” (U.S. House, July 31, 1996). The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) eliminated the entitlement to assistance put in place by the 1935 Social Security Act, replacing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Once the PRWORA became law, parents no longer were guaranteed cash assistance based on financial need. Instead, eligibility became time-limited and subject to work requirements and other rules. Although the PRWORA eliminated part of the social safety net, its supporters argued that the reform was compassionate and would benefit welfare recipients.

Much has been written about the politics of federal welfare reform (e.g., Bane and Ellwood 1994; Gordon 1994; Quadagno 1994, Katz 1998; Mink 1998; Thomas 1998; Heclo 2001; Orloff 2002; Pierson-Balik 2003; Somers and Block 2005; Steensland 2006). However, the role played by redefining compassion so that this cultural value could be associated plausibly with welfare reform legislation largely has been overlooked. This paper builds on recent research on the role of values, frames and ideas in policy making and institutional change to suggest how and why defining welfare reform as compassionate became part of successfully legislating the PRWORA. In turn, defining welfare reform as compassionate required *redefining* an abstract and general value—compassion—seen as important to welfare policy making and debate in the United States.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review recent research on welfare reform, highlighting enhanced attention to ideas and values as taken-for-granted reference frames structuring policy debate and as strategic resources promoting policy

positions. Second, we tie interest in cultural factors shaping welfare reform to more general interest in the role of culture in policy making, suggesting a path to policy change that capitalizes on redefining core American values. Recent “conservative” welfare reform shares with earlier “liberal” construction of affirmative action, strong incentives to convert apparent cultural constraint on policy change into an opportunity for change by redefining a widely accepted general value embodied in prior policy (Pedriana and Stryker 1997). For welfare reform, this value is compassion. Section 3 briefly discusses methods and data, while the fourth and fifth sections detail evidence making our argument plausible. Section 4 provides historical context for the flow of events in welfare reform, grounding Section 5’s content analysis of Congressional floor debates preceding the 1996 PRWORA. A concluding section emphasizes our findings’ import for debates on the role of ideas and values in policy and institutional change.

The Cultural Turn in Studies of the American Welfare State

Huber and Stephens (2005, p. 589) suggest that the United States joins Britain and New Zealand as one of “only a few cases of large-scale ideologically driven cuts [in state welfare provision].” Rightly suspicious of according a causal role to free floating liberal values, sociologists have attended to how values and ideals, in conjunction with their embodiment in institutions, shaped American welfare reform (Orloff and Skocpol 1984; Quadagno 1994; Amenta 1998; Quadagno 2004; Quadagno and Street 2005; Steensland 2006). Much research highlights relationships between welfare policies and meanings attributed to race and gender.

Early 20th century Mothers’ Pensions promoted female domesticity and acceptability of racial exclusion (Shapiro 1990; Skocpol 1992; Fraser and Gordon 1994; Gordon 1994). Caseworkers could label women “morally unfit” to receive Mothers’ Pensions if they had children outside marriage, lived with a man not their husband, failed to maintain a home meeting white, middle-class standards, or performed paid work considered gender-inappropriate (Skocpol 1992). Promoting domesticity among

immigrant and native-born women, Mother's Pensions largely excluded black women, either because the programs were not administered in areas where blacks lived or because caseworkers deemed blacks unfit to receive assistance (Roberts 1997). Later programs, including Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), and then AFDC, also excluded black women at higher rates than white women (Borris 1999). State-level man-in-the-house, employable mother, and suitable home rules reinforced prior gendered and raced expectations of appropriate behavior, while preventing black women from receiving benefits (Borris 1999).¹

Large-scale exclusion of blacks continued until the 1960s, when welfare rolls expanded substantially and the number of African-Americans receiving assistance increased. Numbers receiving AFDC rose from 3 million in 1960 to 10.2 million in 1971 (Heclo 2001), while the percentage of black AFDC recipients increased from 14% in 1936 to 46% in 1973 (Somers and Block 2005, citing Gilens 1999, p.106; Quadagno 1994). The civil rights movement, the welfare rights movement, and black migration to Northern cities contributed to these trends, as the War on Poverty channeled financial resources to urban black communities (Piven and Cloward 1977; Roberts 1997). During the late 1960s, Supreme Court decisions expanded access to AFDC by invalidating rules that denied benefits to women living with an able-bodied adult man and to new state residents (Bane and Ellwood 1994).²

Expansion of anti-poverty programs fueled stigmatization of welfare recipients, generating opposition to welfare among whites (Edsall 1991). There is some evidence that heightened stigmatization coincided with increased—and changing race composition of the welfare rolls—and that race stereotyping led whites to stigmatize welfare and its recipients. Some attribute welfare opposition to factors other than racial attitudes, but

¹ Likewise, the old-age insurance program implemented by the 1935 Social Security Act excluded agricultural workers and domestic servants, who comprised a large portion of the black labor force (Quadagno 1994; Roberts 1997).

² Relevant Supreme Court decisions were *King v. Smith* in 1968 and *Shapiro v. Thompson* in 1969 (Bane and Ellwood 1964).

others find that welfare opposition among whites is linked to racial attitudes, especially the belief that blacks have a poor work ethic (compare Kluegel and Smith 1986; Cook and Barrett 1992; Wolf 1998 with Gilens 1995; 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996).

Likewise, scholars argue that contemporary welfare policies and debates, including those related to marriage, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the family cap, work, immigration, and causes of poverty are infused with raced and gendered meanings (Lubiano 1992; Gordon 1994; Naples 1997; Roberts 1997; Mink 1998; Thomas 1998; Hancock 2003, 2004; Pierson-Balik 2003). Naples (1997) identified racial and gendered subtexts in congressional debate about the import of work and causes of poverty that preceded the 1988 Family Support Act. Reform policies and debates invoked similar subtexts in 1995-96, including that high poverty rates among blacks are due to black males' poor work ethic and black females' irresponsible reproductive decisions (Thomas 1998; Hancock 2003; Pierson-Balik 2003). Hancock (2003; 2004) argued that otherwise opposing actors in Congressional debates over the 1996 PRWORA *all* assumed that welfare recipients exhibited pathological behavior associated with the "welfare queen" – a stereotype depicting poor black women as avoiding work and having children outside marriage to collect benefits (Collins 1990; Lubiano 1992; Hancock 2003).

Scholars also have pointed out that the PRWORA was shaped by changing gender roles. Welfare policy used to encourage poor single mothers to focus on mothering and domesticity, but now pushes them into the labor force. Policy shifts reflect increases in women's workforce participation and an increasing acceptance of working women (Orloff 2001, 2002). When Mothers Pensions were enacted, it was not thought problematic for poor single women to rely on state assistance. In contrast, the PRWORA embodies assumptions that those receiving such assistance are undesirably dependent on the state (Fraser and Gordon 1994).

Overall, US policies have reflected race and gender stereotypes widely believed when policies were enacted (Gordon 1990). Policies in turn often reinforced stereotypes, but both stereotypes and policies could change as a function of other types of changes. Thus, Mothers' Pensioners were perceived as worthy and deserving, albeit subjected to caseworker scrutiny and not highly compensated for domestic work. In the years immediately prior to repeal of AFDC, its recipients were not seen to deserve long-term state assistance. Factors contributing to heightened stigmatization of welfare included an increase in African-American and never married recipients, racial resentment, increased women's workforce participation, and changing beliefs about gender roles.

Scholarship emphasizing the US welfare state's raced and gendered nature is consistent with arguments for bringing values into policy research "by examining how they are embodied...in social institutions" (Pedriana and Stryker 1997). But much of this scholarship is highly descriptive, failing to address more general debates about the causal role of ideas, values, beliefs and frames in policy formation. Other research does so, suggesting when and how culture may play a causal role in policy making.

Where some scholars highlight especially the strategic uses of culture as a resource for policy making, others emphasize culture's constitutive influence. Quadagno (2004) shows that once stakeholders in American health care delivery, self-interested private insurers strategically used anti-socialist and pro-market choice rhetoric as discursive weapons mobilizing doctors and the public to forestall national health insurance. Quadagno and Street (2005, p. 67) point out that anti-statist ideology is not an invariant, timeless or universal feature of American politics, but does provide "enduring symbols and meanings that have been "available" to support powerful economic interests in health insurance markets." Though "not a causal force in and of themselves" symbols built from an anti-statist cultural repertoire are "strategic weapons to justify inaction" on national health insurance and to recruit allies for inaction, while being countered by alternative values mobilized discursively by supporters of an expanded US welfare state.

Quadagno's (2004) emphasis on cultural ideas, values and symbols as instrumental resources for mobilizing self-interested political action is consistent with the broader "strategic framing" tradition built from Swidler's (1986) idea of culture as a "tool kit" helping to construct action.³ In this view, ideas, values, beliefs and symbols shape social problem definitions, assessments of blame, and policy solutions. To paraphrase George Lakoff's subtitle for his recent book *Don't Think of an Elephant*, "Know your values and [use them strategically to] frame the [political] debate."

Others, however, emphasize especially the constitutive role played by ideas and frames in policy development and debate. Defining frames as "cognitive and moral maps that orient an actor within a policy sphere," Bleich (2003) argues that the different ways Britain and France combat racism cannot be understood without examining how frames constituted actors' policy goals in the two countries. Comparing British and French race policies to suggest when, how and why framing is likely to play a causal role in policy making and how framing fits into a more comprehensive, multi-factor causal account, Bleich (2003) suggests that "power-interest" and "problem-solving" perspectives are better at identifying key actors in policy making, whereas frames are especially important for understanding actors' goals. Frames also are likely to be especially important when they are shared by many actors, because frames then "attain a taken-for-granted quality that closes off potential challenges to them" (Bleich 2003, p. 186; see also Stryker 2003; Campbell 1998, 2002; Béland 2005).

Two recent contributions to welfare state research building on the strategic and constitutive roles played by culture, in conjunction with political-economic interests and institutions, are Steensland (2006) and Somers and Block (2005). Both emphasize

³ See, Snow and Benford 1988, 2000; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Williams 1995; Burstein, Bricher and Einwohner 1995; Zald 1996; Pedriana and Stryker 1997; Stryker, Scarpellino and Holtzman 1999; Ferree 2003; Béland 2005.

distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor. Somers and Block (2005) also touch on the value of compassion.

Steensland (2006, in press) argues that categories of moral worth were implicated in US failure to enact a Guaranteed Income Policy in the 1960s and 1970s in three ways, termed discursive, schematic and institutional. Categories of moral worth refer to distinguishing poor people as deserving or undeserving of assistance and sympathy (Katz 1998; Steensland 2006). The deserving poor generally include those not expected to work, such as senior citizens and the disabled, while the undeserving poor include adults who are expected to work, such as contemporary welfare recipients.

Steensland's (2006) discursive mechanism is the familiar mobilization of culture—in this case categories of moral worth—as a strategic resource in debates over the GAI. Steensland's (2006) schematic mechanism captures the constitutive role of the deserving-undeserving distinction, as it constructs a mostly taken-for-granted backdrop shaping “the range of cognitive perceptions and normative evaluations that people find comprehensible or plausible” (Steensland 2006, p. 1282). Since it was widely accepted that the GAI was about reforming “welfare,” the GAI was (mis)understood and evaluated against a backdrop in which presumed beneficiaries were “undeserving” former AFDC recipients, even though the GAI would have benefited the working poor as well.

Both the schematic and discursive influences of the deserving-undeserving poor distinction became more powerful because they were reinforced by a third type of influence—institutional. Categories were institutionalized in separate programs and benefit delivery to those viewed as deserving vs. undeserving (Fraser 1989; Nelson 1990; Steensland 2006). At the time of the GAI debates, the US welfare state had “two tracks.” One included Social Security and other programs benefiting persons seen as deserving based on workforce participation. The other, including AFDC and Food Stamps, provided stigmatized need-based and means-tested financial assistance (Fraser 1989; Nelson 1990). Because work status was associated with race, class and gender, and beneficiaries

of means-tested programs were disproportionately female, non-white and very poor, whereas those receiving market participation-based assistance were disproportionately white, male and less poor, cultural categories of deserving and undeserving became highly gendered and raced.⁴

Once institutionalized in policies and program, moral worth categories reinforced “symbolic and programmatic distinction between categories of people,” and it became harder to propose or enact new programs blurring boundaries of these categories (Steensland 2006, p. 1285). The difficulty did not prevent government economists from proposing the GAI, but it did help derail enactment.

GAI proposals to jointly serve the working poor and welfare recipients seemed a radical break from the prior two-tiered strategy. Because a common program for the poor who participated in paid labor markets and the able-bodied poor who did not work violated the taken-for-granted, institutionalized distinction between deserving and undeserving, the GAI met—and/or policy makers presumed it would meet—substantial resistance (Steensland 2006). Some actors did not understand GAI; others evaluated it negatively and argued persuasively against it by mobilizing the deserving-undeserving distinction. While GAI supporters claimed the program would reduce reliance on welfare, some opponents framed the GAI as a welfare policy unfairly rewarding the undeserving. Supporters could not signal how GAI policies would benefit those on AFDC or eradicate distinctions between AFDC recipients and the working poor, because this violated generally accepted moral categorization. At the same time, surely in part because work status was associated with race, class and gender, President Nixon alternately could not

⁴ Steensland (2006) argues that cultural categories of worth are not indelibly associated with race and gender. He points out, for example, that because northern civil war veterans received benefits regardless of race, race distinctions did not factor into perceptions of worthiness. However, although blacks got benefits for their work as soldiers, they generally were excluded from Mothers Pensions and from Social Security. The totality of research on the American welfare state suggests longstanding associations among categories of race, gender and deservingness. With respect to events since the 1960s, Steensland (2006) explicitly is sensitive to how racial stereotyping and beliefs about gender roles reinforced the power of what he views as the more fundamental categorical distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor.

or would not work to undermine the traditional moral divide between deserving workers and those who were able-bodied (males) but did not work (Steensland 2006, see also Quadagno 1990 for why Nixon's Family Assistance Plan failed).

Somers and Block (2005) link categories of moral worth to "perversity rhetoric." This rhetoric "reassign[s] blame for the poor's condition from poverty to perversity...the logic behind the rhetoric is impeccable—if assistance is actually hurting the poor by creating dependence, then denying [assistance] is not cruel but compassionate" (Somers and Block, 2005, pp. 260, 265). Capitalizing on similarities in discourse preceding enactment of the PRWORA and the New Poor Law of 1834 in Britain, Somers and Block (2005, p. 265) identify perversity rhetoric as "the wedge of [ideational] regime change."

In both these otherwise dissimilar situations, before perversity rhetoric's success, labor markets were thought embedded in other social institutions, with poverty a structural condition for which the under- and unemployed were not to blame. Perversity rhetoric changed the focus from the underlying condition—poverty—to the purported fix—social assistance—and explained how social assistance itself created a state-dependent, undeserving poor who were lazy, saw welfare as the norm and bore illegitimate children to get benefits. Perversity rhetoric both forged a radical break from an old ideational regime and promoted "market fundamentalism" as the replacement. Market fundamentalist ideas—beliefs that all social life, including welfare programs, should be organized according to market principles, then became "causal mechanisms of revolutionary policy change" (Somers and Block 2005, p. 262). Careful to point out that ideational regime change is very infrequent, and that opportunity in the form of a major institutional crisis is a precondition for it, Somers and Block (2005, p. 265) argue that the perversity rhetoric promoting radical welfare reform is one of a rare class of ideas that "can exercise the causal power to undermine, dislodge, and replace a previously

dominant ideational regime.”⁵ Where politicians and policy entrepreneurs in 19th century Britain used the intellectually innovative perversity thesis formulated in Malthus’ *Essay on the Principle of Population* as a discursive resource, their modern day US counterparts relied on Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground* and later Marvin Olasky’s *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, to perform a similar function. In both situations, perversity rhetoric-promoted market fundamentalism, once very marginal to political economy and politics, became increasingly taken-for-granted as the new reference frame for political debate over welfare (see Somers and Block 2005).

In sum, as Somers and Block (2005, p. 261) show how perversity rhetoric draws on categories of moral worth, they, like Steensland (2006), highlight both constitutive and strategic roles of culture in policymaking. We build on the recognition that cultural ideas and frames and operate as strategic or discursive resources for politics *and* as a taken-for-granted backdrop constituting terrain within which political conflict occurs. We approach content analyses of debates on the PRWORA debate sensitized to race and gender-infused categories of worth. But the novelty of our analyses and findings revolves around elaborating the role played by the abstract, general value of compassion.

Who Cares Whether the PRWORA is Compassionate and Why?

Examining how and why the value of compassion provided opportunities and constraints in debate over the PRWORA provides insight into the *redefinition* of compassion, an element of perversity rhetoric necessarily left underdeveloped by Block

⁵ Doing so requires that an idea have the “epistemic privilege” conferred by a combination of “social naturalism,” “theoretical realism,” and a “conversion narrative.” Exemplified in the perversity thesis and market fundamentalism by the claim that markets are natural and subject to laws, “[s]ocial naturalism is the claim that laws of nature govern human society” (Somers and Block (2005, p. 271). Theoretical realism inheres in perversity rhetoric and market fundamentalism in that causality is attributed to unobservable theoretical principles rather than “the misleading illusions of empirical observations” (Somers and Block 2005, p. 271). “In the poverty to perversity conversion narrative, structural blame for poverty is discredited as empiricist appearance while the real problem is attributed to the corrosive effects of welfare’s perverse incentives on the poor themselves...they become sexually promiscuous, thrust aside personal responsibility, and develop long term dependency. This claim enables market fundamentalism to delegitimize existing ideational regimes, survive disconfirming data and to change the terms of debate from social problems to timeless forces of nature and biology” (Somers and Block 2005, p. 260).

and Somers (2005), given their grand scope. At the same time, we examine in a new policy setting a specific hypothesis about the causal import of general values first offered by Pedriana and Stryker (1997), based on their study of policy feedbacks operating through cultural resource construction in equal employment law.

In his oft-cited definition, Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 89) characterizes culture as “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols.” Ideas, values and categories are key aspects of culture, as are beliefs, principles, norms, cognitive schema, and spoken, written or signed language. Material objects are part of culture insofar as they represent, evoke or activate social meaning. Notwithstanding multiple perspectives on culture, the “culture as resource” tradition associated with Swidler (1986) now is prevalent in studies of social problems and social movements, discourse and framing, politics and policy making, and legal doctrine and institutions (Pedriana and Stryker 1997; Stryker 2003). Grounded in the notion of symbols as a “tool kit” that people use to construct “strategies of action,” Swidler (1986, p. 273) proposed the culture as resource perspective to replace the idea that cultural values directed action. But Pedriana and Stryker (1997) showed that the resource perspective *reorients*, rather than replaces, the older view of culture. This is well evidenced in research on the role of values in cultural framing (Snow et al 1986; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Pedriana and Stryker 1997; Stryker, Scarpellino and Holtzman 1999; Bleich 2003; Béland 1995; Ferree 2003).

There is no universally accepted definition of “frame” within sociology or across the social sciences,⁶ but it is well accepted that frames are mobilized instrumentally in politics to promote or contest particular candidates, issue definitions or policies (Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Harrington and Merry 1988; Gamson 2002; Burstein, Bricher and Einwohner 1995; Williams 1995; Zald 1996; Pedriana and Stryker 1997, Snow and Benford 1988, 2000). It also is well accepted that frames have a normative-evaluative, as

⁶ Sociological discussions of framing date back to the work of Erving Goffman (1974).

well as cognitive component. Mark Bleich (2003, p. 25, 29), for example, defines a frame as “a set of cognitive and moral maps that orient an actor within a policy sphere.” [F]rames are the set of interpretations, cognitive schemas, linguistic tools, causal beliefs and normative sensitivities that an actor applies when conceptualizing a policy domain...As cognitive maps, they include definitions, concepts, metaphors, symbols and analogies that crystallize the salient dimension of an issue. As moral maps, they provide value assessments of events, indicating right and wrong policies. Frames help actors specify and prioritize goals, define problems and interpret events. They point actors toward causal and normative judgments about effective and acceptable policies. In this way, frames help to define the terrain of action and then influence action within that terrain.

Where the idea of cognitive and moral mapping captures a broad concept of framing, narrower definitions are employed in many studies of political packaging. “According to Gamson and Modigliani, political issues are *symbolically packaged* as sets of ideas, words and arguments that cluster internally but are externally distinct. ‘At the core of a [symbolic] package is its frame....a central organizing idea providing meaning to an unfolding strip of events’” (Pedriana and Stryker 1997, p. 639, quoting Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p. 143, italics in original). Because packages, frames and the catch phrases used to promote one package and frame over another, help define and legitimate social problems, movements and policy responses, packages and frames are highly contested (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p. 143). As Williams (1995, p. 127) noted, an important “part of every public political struggle is a battle over whose symbolic framing of an issue is authoritative.”

Values enter the picture because diverse, competing frames “can be built around abstract general values that are widely shared” (Pedriana and Stryker 1997, p. 640). Pedriana and Stryker (1997) show that in Congressional hearings on affirmative action, both affirmative action supporters and opponents drew on equal opportunity values to construct their specific, competing frames. As Pedriana and Stryker (1997, p. 640, citations omitted) note:

[P]eople and organizations in the United States do package and market their political goals with words and rhetoric resonating with core American values, including equal

opportunity. They do so in part because such values are culturally available but also because relying on such values is strategic given widespread and enduring public agreement on these values in their most abstract and general form. In chicken and egg fashion, if widespread enduring values are seen as ‘American tradition,’ adherence to them becomes part of what it means to be American. This increases these values staying power and strategic worth because, whether or not a given actor internalizes the values, the actor will take for granted that others support them.

Once a central value is enacted into law, it is likely to exert strong feedback effects, shaping opportunities for and effectiveness of subsequent political and legal framing by elites and social movements alike.⁷ The 1969 Congressional hearings on affirmative action were occasioned by the Philadelphia Plan—the first Labor Department initiative for affirmative action in federal construction contracting. Affirmative action supporters needed to promote race-conscious policy when the dominant meaning previously attached to the concept of equal opportunity as embodied in the text and legislative history⁸ of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was color-blind, merit oriented universalism. This gave substantial discursive resources to opponents of race-conscious affirmative action (see Pedriana and Stryker 1997 for more details). Indeed the Philadelphia Plan hearings are a very early example of opponents framing affirmative action as preferential treatment (albeit not yet reverse discrimination) inconsistent with skill, qualification and ability-based hiring. These hearings also exemplified the equation of numerical targets, goals and timetables with racial quotas and discrimination.

Faced with all this, affirmative action supporters could have de-emphasized equal opportunity values, drawing on alternatives like integration or racial diversity to justify

⁷ Notwithstanding such counter-traditions as, for example, white supremacy, there is widespread agreement among scholars that equality of opportunity is a core, i.e., widespread and enduring American value, helping to define ideals that the US stands for and what it means to be American. Though equal opportunity is given diverse specific meanings over time and persons, it has elicited such widespread agreement at the abstract, general level that, since the advent of public opinion polling, almost all Americans profess to believe in it. Similarly, virtually all prior scholarship agrees that equal opportunity is fundamental to US political culture. See Pedriana and Stryker (1997) for evidence pertaining to the “value centrality” of equal opportunity in US political culture and for suggestions on how to systematically measure more generally *which* general values are more or less central to American political culture.

⁸ Legislative history includes the entire history of an enacted bill in Congress, from its initial proposal through all Committee hearings and reports, to all floor debate, Congressional vote and the signature, including any signing statement, by the President.

the Philadelphia Plan. They did not. Instead, the political cultural centrality of equal opportunity values led supporters to go far beyond semantic arguments, required by legal context, that goals were not quotas. They “highlighted equal employment opportunity values and maintained their unequivocal devotion to them” (Pedriana and Stryker 1997, p. 669). Converting constraint into opportunity, they *reframed* equal opportunity and anti-discrimination to include—indeed require—corrective action to remedy systematic patterns of discrimination (Pedriana and Stryker 1997, Table 4, p. 665).

Pedriana and Stryker (1997) do *not* suggest that cultural factors alone accounted for the initial successful legal defense of affirmative action. Instead, they suggest that redefinition of equal opportunity values incorporated into Title VII was *insufficient*, but probably *necessary*, for both this initial success and later institutionalization of affirmative action policies in employment in public and private employment (see also Stryker 2001). Because affirmative action supporters got their redefinition of equal opportunity enacted into adjudicative law, they could claim to be carriers of traditional American equality values. Supporters of color-blindness had to fight a lengthy, uphill battle to reclaim the meaning of equal opportunity in anti-discrimination law (Skrentny 1996; Pedriana and Stryker 1997, Harper and Reskin 2005).

Based on their analysis of reframing of equal opportunity values to support race-conscious affirmative action, Pedriana and Stryker (1997) hypothesized that, the more central a value embodied in law—and by extension incorporated into prior political debate or policy discussion—the higher its absolute value as a symbolic resource and the harder it is for actors contemplating framing that would sidestep the value by, for example, substituting another value. Those political actors who find that their policy goals are *inconsistent* with the dominant meanings previously attributed to central values embodied in past law or policy will be pushed to turn constraint into opportunity by redefining the meaning of the value.

We suggest analogizing the role of compassion in welfare reform to that of equality of opportunity in anti-discrimination policy. But we do *not* claim that the value of compassion is as central to American political culture either in the eyes of elites or of the mass public as has been the value of equal opportunity. Nor do we claim that the value of compassion, relative to other values, is as central to debates about policies to combat poverty as are equal opportunity values to debates about policies to combat race and gender discrimination. We *do* claim that the value of compassion historically was institutionalized in American welfare policy in the concept of a government provided safety net to which poor Americans were entitled. Similarly, we *do* claim that, when it comes to poverty and welfare, the value of compassion has a large number of adherents in the US public. If we are right, efforts to forestall elimination of welfare entitlements should mobilize the generally accepted or dominant meaning of compassion as requiring a safety net. We also should expect that reformers promoting the elimination of welfare entitlements would perceive the need to *redefine* compassion, so they too could use it as a positive resource promoting their preferred policies.

We ground our hypotheses about the role of compassion in evidence suggesting the importance of compassion as a general value in American anti-poverty policies. Two types of evidence separate from debate over the PRWORA itself suggest compassion's import: first, institutionalization of the safety-net concept through almost 60 years of welfare policies and debate prior to the PRWORA; and second, public opinion data.

Post-New Deal ADC and AFDC were means-tested entitlement programs, with the federal guarantee to assistance in effect for 60 years prior to the PRWORA (Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 663; Gilbert 1998). The PRWORA culminated approximately thirty years of reform efforts to increase work requirements for welfare recipients and devolve more responsibility to the states (Mink 1988; Borris 1999; O'Connor 2001). But eliminating entitlements was a radical break from the previously taken-for-granted assumption that the state would guarantee a safety net, at least for the "truly needy."

President Johnson's War on Poverty exemplified commitment to the safety net. When Johnson's successor, Republican President Richard Nixon, proposed to reform welfare by instituting the Family Assistance Plan, he anticipated promoting work through market incentives. But the FAP also provided a government-guaranteed annual income (Quadagno 1990). In the early 1980s, even the highly ideological Reagan revolution in domestic policy did not seek to eliminate this safety net. Although Reagan "slashed anti-poverty budgets and severely restricted eligibility rules to eliminate aid for all but the 'truly needy,'" he emphasized that his Administration had maintained the "safety net" for the "truly needy." (O' Connor 2001, p. 242-243; Sawhill 198x)

In 1984, Charles Murray argued for eliminating all social welfare programs, save unemployment, for the non-elderly, but "his proposals for ending welfare were considered beyond the pale," even by neoconservatives (O Connor 2001, p. 252). While neoconservatives emphasized "virtues of free market individualism," they also stressed "the need for public aid to the 'truly needy'" (O Connor 2001, p. 252). While the Family Support Act of 1988 increased emphasis on work requirements, the Act also reaffirmed federal government commitment to a safety net by "requir[ing] states to provide AFDC benefits to every family which meets AFDC need standards and whose children are deprived of parental support due to the unemployment of its principal earner" (quoted in Official Summary of The Family Support Act, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 529)

In sum, even as support for big government eroded and reformers increasingly sought to attack welfare for perversely discouraging work and promoting dependency, federal welfare policies in the US—and debates over them—continued to embody the value of compassion through long term institutionalization of need-based entitlement to public assistance as a safety net for the "truly needy." When the Republican-proposed 1994 Contract with America proposed to end welfare entitlement, Republican leaders abandoning both the reality and rhetoric of the safety net, reasonably could have anticipated being attacked for lacking compassion.

Public opinion data suggests that the Republican leadership also reasonably could have expected such attacks by opposing elites to have traction with a mass public. Consistent with Republican rhetoric, opinion polls from the 1970s and 1980s show disenchantment with welfare programs and substantial negative attitudes toward welfare recipients (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Shapiro et al 1989; Gilens 1995, 1999). But the polls also implicitly reflect Americans' compassion for—and desire to help—the poor.

For example, based on in-depth interviews and a short survey of residents in eight suburban communities, Wolfe (1998) found that most of his respondents felt obligated to help the poor, but had concerns about welfare policies. When presented with the statement, “Middle-class people who live in the suburbs can do an awful lot more to help people in the inner city who live in poverty,” about three-quarters of Wolfe's 200 respondents agreed or strongly agreed (Wolfe 1998, p. 184). When asked about welfare, most respondents supported the principle of providing welfare assistance, but many were critical of the form welfare had taken (Wolfe 1998, pp 200-201).

Representative national public opinion data echo this ambivalence, with responses varying depending on question wording. In implicitly endorsing compassion for the poor, 60% of those polled in the 1998 General Social Survey indicated “too little” was spent on the poor, while only 11 percent suggested “too much” was spent (GSS 1998). Between 1984 and 2004, the percentage of GSS respondents indicating “too little” was spent registered a high of 70%, and never dipped below 55% (GSS 1984-2004). In the 2004 American National Election Survey, 57% of respondents said that spending to aid the poor should be increased while only 7.5% said it should be decreased (ANES 2004).

Also implicitly reflecting compassion, in the 1983-1987 GSS, 89% of respondents agreed that welfare assistance helps prevent hunger and starvation, and 83% agreed it helps people get on their feet when facing hard situations such as unemployment, death in the family or divorce (1983-1987 GSS). But respondents were far less supportive of spending more money to help welfare recipients. In the 2004 ANES, eight years *after*

enactment of the PRWORA, 44.5% of respondents agreed that spending for welfare should be decreased. In the 1998 GSS, 43% agreed that too much was being spent on welfare. In 1980, a whopping 81% agreed that, generally speaking, the United States was spending too much money on welfare programs (Kluegel and Smith 1986).

In short, while exhibiting their well known ambivalence—and even outright hostility to welfare and welfare recipients—clear majorities of Americans consistently profess their support for government aid to the poor. At minimum, this suggests that most Americans like to think of themselves and their country as compassionate in its treatment of the poor. As well, this may well reflect Americans’ belief in compassion as an important general value appropriately guiding government anti-poverty policies.

Perhaps the best evidence for our expectation that the value of compassion would play an important role in debate over the PRWORA is the aphorism attributed to W. I. Thomas. “What is perceived as real is real in its consequences.” In the years leading up to debate on the PRWORA, conservative intellectuals and politicians *believed* the value of compassion provided a potential barrier—and important key—to reforming welfare. In the forward to Marvin Olasky’s 1996 book, *Renewing American Compassion*, a sequel to Olasky’s earlier text, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, then House speaker and strong promoter of ending welfare entitlements, Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia), wrote:

“As Americans we can no longer escape this reality: three decades of social welfare policies have failed, condemning too many of our fellow citizens to lives of despair. Nevertheless, Americans want a compassionate society that will help the truly needy... (In Olasky 1996, p ix).”

Methods and Data

We combine historical narrative and content analysis, using the former to contextualize our analysis of legislative discourse to ensure the latter will be maximally meaningful. Data for elucidating context included secondary treatments of US welfare politics and policy making, including the non-partisan summaries of welfare reform bills

compiled by Congressional Quarterly. Aided by the edited volume prepared by Mink and Solinger (2003) containing substantial excerpts of primary documents, including legislative texts, some newspaper articles, results of public opinion polls and speeches by public officials, we consulted primary documents especially for the period between the Family Support Act of 1988 and enactment of the PRWORA. We also examined Congressional documents from the 103rd and 104th sessions, during which Congress held hearings on the Republican and Clinton Administration reform proposals most immediately preceding the PRWORA. Olasky's (1992, 1996) book-length treatments of compassion helped set the stage for the PRWORA and so provide important data.

Data for our content analyses encompass all Congressional floor debate that took place during the 104th Congress between January 1995 and August 1996, when President Clinton signed the PRWORA. Analyzing these debates closely and systematically allows us to highlight the most proximate Congressional discourse framing the PRWORA, its supporters and opponents. Similarly, it allows us to elucidate fully crystallized competing definitions of compassion. Data constraints required that we examine public discourse rather than that away from the public eye. Within public discourse, feasibility required that we exclude hearings, many of which are not available electronically. Neither decision should be problematic, given that floor debates, especially those closest in time to anticipated legislation, are precisely about constructing legislation symbolically for the public. Such floor debates are arenas for rhetorical flourish, in which supporters and opponents of impending legislation cast it as good or evil, at the same time casting themselves as heroes and others as villains in politics and policy making.

We used the legislative history of the PRWORA [P.L. 104-193] available through the *Lexis Nexis Congressional Index* electronic database to identify and obtain the floor debates related to this legislation (Congressional Information Service 1996). After excluding procedural discussions and one floor debate not substantively related to welfare reform, 32 debates remain in the data set. Appendix 1 lists these debates and

their location in the *Congressional Record*. We loaded data into Atlas TI for computer-assisted coding and analysis. Such a program does not diminish the interpretive work of the human analyst. Rather, it facilitates appropriate interpretation, by expediting assignment of codes and helping the analyst devise iteratively more precise subcategories of already assigned codes. It also permitted us to use search terms to locate material, check that all pertinent material had been coded, count the number of times specific words or codes appeared, and compile all quotes associated with particular codes. We explicate further how we constructed content codes in the section reporting results of the content analysis.

Historical Analysis

Through the late 1980s and early 1990s, elites debating welfare reform reprised familiar roles with “liberals call[ing] for more spending,” while conservatives called for “personal responsibility” and “fiscal restraint” (DeParle 2004, p. 131). Conservatives made inroads through spending cuts, but liberals often were able to hold the line, labeling spending reductions “mean” and “punitive” (DeParle 2004). At the same time, elites across the political spectrum increasingly agreed that the welfare system was broken and required fixing (see Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 523-603; Somers and Block 2005). States enacted various policies to encourage more “responsible” behavior in return for government assistance. Wisconsin, under welfare entrepreneurial Republican governor Tommy Thompson, enacted Learnfare, requiring teen mothers on welfare to return to school to avoid forfeiting close to half their monthly grant. Learnfare also docked grant money from families with teen-agers perpetually truant from school (Brownstein 1991 in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 533). As had Wisconsin, Arkansas, under Democratic Governor Bill Clinton, substantially reduced public assistance costs through child support enforcement recovering substantial support money owed to welfare families (Brownstein 1991, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 553).

With conservatives stressing the “personal responsibility” side, and liberals emphasizing that responsibility must be coupled with federal commitment to provide “opportunity” and “government support,” a bipartisan consensus was emerging toward balancing opportunity with responsibility (see Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 523-603). In 1990, two years before he would run for President as a centrist, pragmatic “New Democrat” promising “to end welfare as we know it,” Clinton testified in congressional hearings on the implementation of the 1988 Family Support Act. He touted progress in Arkansas on “welfare reform and prevention” as “an example [of] breaking out of the old, liberal and conservative preconceptions and merging the best of both into a program with common sense” (Clinton 1990, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 540).

By the time he was elected President in 1992, Clinton presented himself as strongly committed to further reform building on the lines of FSA, by providing new resources, but also new control mechanisms to move people from welfare to work. As a former governor, he also was committed to state level flexibility (Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 535). Already in his congressional testimony in 1990, he previewed key elements of what would become the Administration reform plan. Consistent with the “comprehensive, bipartisan” plan supported by 49 of 50 governors in the late 1980s, Clinton argued that “everyone on welfare should sign a contract committing to pursue independence in return for benefits” (Clinton 1990, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 541). Government would support recipients’ efforts by providing substantial additional resources for child care, health coverage, education, training and work placement (Clinton 1990, in Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 541-42). People *did* “have a right to [government] assistance,” but maintained this right in return for “their best efforts” (Clinton 1990, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 542).

In 1991, a Republican working group, the House Wednesday Group, began to focus on poverty, identifying illegitimacy as a major problem and—in its “boldest policy idea” suggesting the end of entitlement (Haskins 2006, p. 27). After a welfare recipient’s

period of eligibility expired, “cash welfare [would be] permanently terminated” (Haskins 2006, p. 27). Between the time the Wednesday Group issued its report in October 1996, and enactment of the PRWORA, “almost every Republican Bill contained some version of time limits” and thus, the end of entitlement (Haskins 2006, p. 27).

While Clinton was promising government responsibility, including enhanced spending, in return for enhanced personal responsibility exhibited by welfare recipients, and Republicans were beginning to focus on ending entitlement, Marvin Olasky (1992) was adding an important component to the cultural resource mix that would facilitate enacting the 1996 PRWORA. Like Charles Murray before him, Olasky (1992) wanted the federal government entirely out of the business of providing cash assistance to the poor. Olasky’s rhetorical vehicle was to link Murray’s (1984) earlier, now more generally accepted arguments about the perverse consequences of federal welfare entitlements to two *different* concepts of the moral value of compassion.

In *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Olasky (1992) praised pre-20th century understandings of the sort that Somers and Block (2005) demonstrate led to the New English Poor Law of 1834. As noted earlier, these distinguished between the moral worthy and unworthy. Returning to 19th century notions that not all were worthy of assistance, Olasky (1992, p. 22) conjured up de Tocqueville’s discussion, in *Democracy in America*, of how Americans “display[ed] general compassion” interacting with neighbors facing personal problems. This highlighted a vision of poverty as a personal problem and also the personal, private and small scale interactional nature of truly compassionate poverty relief. In contrast, Olasky (1992) argued that, in the 20th century, compassion took on a different meaning. Especially in conjunction with Johnson’s War on Poverty and beyond, compassionate relief had become synonymous with expanding *government* assistance.

Citing to media coverage, political pamphlets and academic and popular books of the 1970s and 1980s with titles featuring the word “compassion,” Olasky (1992) argued it had become taken-for-granted that government spending exemplified compassion. “The

notion that compassion toward the poor requires favoring expansion of government transfer programs has achieved the status of revealed truth,” (Olasky 1992, p. 195 quoting Lee 1989, pp. 14-15). “We must be compassionate not just to widows, orphans, and other victims, but to all, even if they had victimized themselves and continued to do so” (Olasky 1992, p. 193). Because the War on Poverty emphasized entitlement rather than need, it led to disaster. But “to suggest that government transfers should be reduced, or even tightly constrained, is to risk being rebuked as heartless” (Olasky 1992, p. 195, quoting Lee 1989, pp. 14-15).

In sum, Olasky (1992) argued that the traditional, morally appropriate definition of compassion had been hijacked for a definition that was neither morally appropriate nor socially effective. By the 1995-1996 floor debates on the PRWORA, many of those in favor of more punitive welfare reform would echo Olasky, *redefining* compassion away from the idea of government-provided entitlement to a safety net, toward Olasky’s putative “original” and correct definition. But first there were multiple failed reform proposals in the 103rd Congress and also the 1994 mid-term elections in which the Republicans ascended to Congressional power.

103rd Congress (1993-1994)

Building on the work of the 1991 House Wednesday group, Republicans introduced multiple welfare reform bills in the 103rd Congress, forming the basis for the Personal Responsibility Act, outlined in the Republican leadership’s 1994 Contract with America. In 1993, House Republicans introduced a bill that would have imposed a two-year lifetime limit on welfare eligibility, a family cap for all recipients and a categorical denial of benefits for parents under the age of 18 (Winston 2002). In November, 1994, Republican leadership introduced H.R. 3500, requiring welfare recipients to work 35 hours per week after at most two years on AFDC—less at the state’s option (Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 590). Another 1994 Republican bill would have made women under the

age of 21 who had children outside marriage ineligible for either AFDC or food stamps (Winston 2002).

Meanwhile, President Clinton delayed introducing his reform proposal, the Work and Responsibility Act, until June, 1994, in large part because the Administration made health care reform a priority (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995). When Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Donna Shalala, presented the Administration's welfare reform bill to the House Ways and Means Committee, in summer, 1994, she signaled that "we can't succeed with sweeping welfare reform unless we succeed in passing health care reform first... This Committee has shown great leadership in moving to the floor... a comprehensive health care reform bill that provides all working families with guaranteed health insurance" (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 581).

While instituting work requirements for recipients born after 1971 who already had received assistance for two years, Clinton's bill did *not* devolve funds through block grants to states and took care to maintain entitlement to government support, albeit *not* support labeled "welfare" assistance (Weaver 2000; Winston 2002; Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 578-586). Shalala presented Clinton's plan as one "about a paycheck not a welfare check" (Shalala 1994, quoted in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 579). She also laid out the balance between opportunity and responsibility—and between government and recipient responsibilities.

To reinforce and reward work, our approach is based on a simple contract. Support, job training and child care will be provided to help people move from dependence to independence... to "make work pay," this Administration has focused on three critical components—providing tax credits for the working poor, ensuring access to health insurance and making safe child care available. We are also proposing to allow states to change earnings disregard policies to reward work and the payment of child support (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 579, 581).

The Clinton proposal was not as punitive as competitor Republican bills, but the Administration shared Republicans' convictions that existing programs were a "national tragedy" (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 578). While Shalala told the

House that “President Clinton was the first person to propose national time limits on welfare,” she also made clear that when “welfare ends and people are expected to work,” the government would not abandon its assistance to them (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 580).

We recognize that some recipients will reach the end of the two-year limit without having found a job, despite their best efforts—and we are committed to providing them with the opportunity to support their families if they are willing to work. Each state will be required to operate a WORK program that makes paid work assignments available to recipients who have reached the time limit for cash assistance (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003 p. 580).

At the same time, Shalala echoed Republicans’ view that the current system encouraged dependency and illegitimate births. Beginning her testimony by stating that debates were not “about whether or not we need welfare reform—we all agree on that,” but rather on “how best to go about it,” Shalala ended by emphasizing the Administration bill’s *balance* of values (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 579).

The Work and Responsibility Act is designed to get the values straight. It translates our values about work, responsibility, family and opportunity into a framework for action. It places new expectations and responsibilities on recipients and on federal and state governments alike. This is the message members of this Committee started to send with the Family Support Act. It is time to fully realize that vision, and to build a bold new future based on the core values we all share (Shalala 1994, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 585).

The 103rd Congress ended and the 104th began with no bill to reform welfare passing. But six weeks before the 1994 midterm election, House Republicans issued their electoral agenda—the Contract with America, including a Personal Responsibility Act that Republicans vowed to enact if they prevailed in the elections (Republican National Committee 1994). Similar to GOP proposals of the 103rd Congress, the Personal Responsibility Act included a family cap, a prohibition on welfare assistance for minor mothers, cuts, rather than expansions, in welfare spending, a 35 hour per week work requirement, and *no* requirement that states provide jobs for all recipients who wanted to work but could not find a job in the private sector. It stated that states must move welfare recipients into work programs if they had received AFDC benefits for two

years. States were allowed to refuse families AFDC after the two year time period, assuming the recipient had spent at least one year in a work program. The Contract also contained the 5 year *lifetime* limit on welfare assistance ultimately part of the PRWORA (Republican National Committee 1994; Mink and Solinger 2003, pp. 587-594).

Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress in the 1994 mid-term elections, substantially enhancing the opportunity to enact more (vs. less) punitive welfare reform. Likewise, reform now was receiving more national attention than had the proposals of the 103rd Congress (Winston 2002). For politicians thinking strategically about how policies with which they were identified would shape their future electoral fortunes, public opinion exhibited one disquieting fact. Strongly supportive of the idea that the old system encouraged dependency, the public clearly was on board with requiring that welfare recipients behave more “responsibly” in return for government aid. Where significant segments of the public balked, however, was at rigid and punitive time limits (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, in Mink and Solinger 2003).

Public Opinion and the Push to Redefine Compassion

In 1993, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey of public opinion toward welfare reform. In summarizing the findings, Garin, Molyneux and DiVall (1993) noted that “no significant sector of the American public considers the status quo acceptable...the criticism is politically and ideologically broad-based: 67% of African-Americans, 67% of liberals, and 77% of Democrats say the welfare system is not working well” (in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 565). “In addition, “voters’ primary goal for welfare reform is to move recipients off welfare and into the work force” (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 565). Yet the authors caution: At the same time, a strict two-year limit on welfare benefits is one of the *least* supported reforms of the welfare system tested in the survey. When voters are given a choice between a strict two-year limit and a two-year limit followed by a public service requirement for those who cannot find jobs, they choose the latter by an overwhelming seven to one. If there were a strict two year limit, a large majority of the public would prefer that it be applied only on a case-by case basis.

More than 70% of voters, for example, would make exceptions for mothers with pre-school children and mothers on welfare who work part time at low-wage jobs...The survey finds that fully 88% of the public agrees (including 54% who strongly agree) that many poor children would be hurt through no fault of their own by a strict two-year cutoff (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 565, emphasis in original).

At the same time as “many Americans [said] the welfare system today exacerbates the problem of poverty, because they believe it encourages dependence,” many Americans attributed the failure of existing welfare programs to a “fail[ure] to provide sufficient help for people to make the transition to self-reliance” (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, excerpted in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 565).

This type of nuanced polling data strongly suggests that, in 1993, the American public was more in sync with Clinton’s balancing act between recipient and government responsibility than with Republicans’ more punitive model. Indeed, “dissatisfaction with the welfare system [was] *not* driven to any significant extent by concerns over money and spending. A mere 7% chose saving taxpayers’ money as a top goal of reform” [vs. 52% of voters [who] select[ed] helping people get off the welfare rolls and into the work force...By a lopsided 85% to 4%, voters say the system’s problem is spending money the wrong way, not spending too much. And by better than five to one, Americans would favor reforms that help people leave welfare, even if these changes actually cost a lot more money in the short run than the present welfare system” (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 566, emphasis in original). In fact, ninety-five percent of voters surveyed supported providing child care and 89% supported providing health care for welfare mothers to go to work. In addition, though “an overwhelming 93% of voters [were] in favor (71% strongly) of requiring welfare recipients to work for their welfare checks,” fully “87% [also] favor[ed] (57% strongly) providing public service jobs to poor people who cannot find private sector jobs” (Garin, Molyneux and DiVall 1993, in Mink and Solinger 2003, p. 566). Such findings may well have given pause to Republican leaders favoring the most punitive approaches to reform.

However, if electoral opinion provided a potential barrier to reforms invoking rigid time limits, the solution for Republican leaders would lie not in remaking proposals to achieve consistency with public opinion and the Clinton view. The solution would be to redefine the meaning of strict time limits—with minimal reciprocal government responsibility—as compassionate, rather than punitive.

104th Congress

In January 1995, Newt Gingrich, who became Speaker of the House of Representatives and leader of the new Republican House majority, introduced H.R. 4, a welfare reform bill essentially replicating the *Contract with America* (Winston 2002; DeParle 2004; Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995). Haskins (2006, p. 22) argues that every major provision in HR 4 had appeared in earlier Republican bills. HR 4 cut spending, contained the earlier formulated work requirements and a family cap, and devolved substantial policy making authority to the states, while ending the entitlement to welfare by including the five year lifetime limit provision and permission for states to refuse benefits after two years of continuous benefit receipt (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995; Winston 2002). The Gingrich-introduced bill also prohibited use of federal money to provide cash assistance for children born to unmarried mothers under the age of 18, except in instances of rape or incest, and made most legal immigrants who were not citizens ineligible for SSI, welfare checks, Medicaid, and food stamps (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995).

On January 5, 1995, Speaker Gingrich provided the first testimony in hearings before the House Ways and Means Committee on the *Contract with America*. Praising Gingrich's leadership, welfare reform supporter Representative Clay Shaw (R-FL), sounded the theme of compassion. "I think we have put together a very compassionate welfare reform package...I think the cruelest welfare system is the one that we already have in place, paying people to stay in their place, not to succeed, not to break out..."

(US House, Committee on Ways and Means, p.). In responding to these and other comments from the floor, Gingrich linked himself to Olasky's rhetoric.

I mentioned yesterday Marvin Olasky's [sic] *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. Olasky [sic] goes back for 300 years to how we dealt with people who did not have money and people who needed care and needed help, and the book is so radically different than anything I expected to read. And he describes an America that was more effective at helping individuals in trouble and was constantly blocking itself from creating classes of people who were entitled to money. And when you read quote after quote for 250 years of active philanthropic reformers saying don't set up a class structure where people are entitled to money or they will find a way to get the money and they will change their behavior in ways that destroy them. And it is the most staggering indictment of our current structure. (US House, Committee on Ways and Means 1996, p.)

Democrats proposed two alternatives to HR 4 that came to a vote on the House floor – the Deal bill (HR 1267), very conservative by Democratic standards, and a more liberal bill (HR 1250) sponsored by Representative Patsy Mink (D-HI) (Weaver 2000). While “less sweeping than HR 4,” with school lunches and nutrition programs, a child care guarantee and some entitlement for cash benefits remaining, the Deal bill also contained—with exceptions—time limits on welfare benefits, limits on federal aid to legal immigrants, and work requirements similar to those proposed by Republicans (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995; Weaver 2000: 288).⁹ Meanwhile, the Mink bill reformed AFDC, increasing the earned income disregard and state flexibility regarding recipient participation in work programs, while retaining full entitlement to welfare, with no mandated time limits. It extended the transitional child care guarantee under AFDC, and raised corporate tax rates to pay for more education, child care, and job training

⁹ The Deal bill would have required that 52% of the state's welfare caseload participate in work activities by 2003 (Weaver 2000).

assistance for welfare recipients (Congressional Quarterly 1995, Congressional Research Service Bill Digest). Rejecting the Deal and Mink alternatives, the House passed HR 4 in March of 1995, with the vote proceeding mostly along party lines (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995; Weaver 2000; Winston 2002). According to Weaver (2002, p. 289), that Clinton was willing to support the Deal bill showed that “the ‘zone of acceptable outcomes’ of the President and House Democrats had been pushed substantially to the right.”

Welfare reform then shifted to the Senate, where it moved slowly, partly because moderate Republicans sought a bipartisan compromise rather than approving provisions passed by House Republicans (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995). In May 1995, the Senate Finance Committee approved a bill drafted by Senator Bob Packwood (R-OR) “that followed the general thrust of HR 4 but created fewer block grants, left out some of the behavioral mandates, and eased the restrictions on legal immigrants” (Winston 2002: p 46).” Unlike H.R. 4, the Packwood bill did not mention family caps and did not make teen mothers or non-citizens ineligible for cash assistance. The Packwood bill *did* follow H.R. 4 in eliminating the federal welfare entitlement, contained the five year lifetime limit on assistance, and required individuals to participate in work activities after receiving assistance for two years (Weaver 2000).

In summer, 1995, Democratic leaders in the Senate introduced the “Work First” bill sponsored by Senator Daschle (Congressional Quarterly 1995; Weaver 2000, p 306). Work First kept the federal guarantee of cash aid to the poor, but replaced AFDC with grants conditional on the recipient’s willingness to take steps toward getting a job (Congressional Quarterly 1995). The bill also contained the five year lifetime limit, but with many exceptions, and if adults lost benefits under the bill, their children would receive vouchers providing for their needs. Consistent with Clinton Administration priorities, “Work First” provided Medicaid and child care assistance for two years to

those who moved into work (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995; Weaver 2000). Daschle's bill was defeated on a vote that fell mostly on party lines (Weaver 2000).

Meanwhile, Senator Dole crafted a substitute Senate bill (S 1120) more punitive than that approved by the Senate Finance Committee. The Dole bill ended welfare entitlements and created block grants devolving authority to the states, allowed the family caps sought by H.R. 4, excluded non-citizens from receiving cash assistance, and gave states the option to exclude teen mothers from welfare eligibility (Winston 2002). Democrats sponsored or co-sponsored 31 out of 84 successful amendments to the Dole bill, and the bill passed the Senate by an overwhelming majority with just 12 Senators—11 liberal Democrats and 1 conservative Republican—voting against it (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995; Haskins 2006). The final version of the Senate bill *did* have more child care funding than the original H.R. 4. Likewise, it contained some exemptions to the time limits on welfare that were *not* contained in the original H.R. 4, and it had no mandatory family cap or outright prohibition on the use of federal money to provide cash assistance to unmarried teen mothers. But it *did* give states the option to implement a family cap, to deny cash assistance for children born to mothers under the age of 18, and to deny non-citizens cash welfare and food stamps (Weaver 2000, Winston 2002, Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995).¹⁰

The 1995 welfare reform trajectory ended with two vetoes by President Clinton. In addition to considering and voting on Gingrich's [now amended] H.R. 4 as a stand alone bill, the House-Senate conference committee put forward similar welfare provisions as part of H.R. 2491, the omnibus budget reconciliation bill. In first vetoing H.R. 2791, in December 1996, Clinton explained that the bill "would cut deeply into Medicare, Medicaid, student loans and nutrition programs...[and] raise taxes on millions of working men and women and their families by slashing the Earned Income Tax

¹⁰ Once the mother turned 18, the family would become eligible for cash assistance (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1995).

Credit...the cost of excessive program cuts in human terms—to working families, single mothers with small children, abused and neglected children, low-income legal immigrants and disabled children—would be grave” (Clinton 1995). Once the House and Senate approved the HR 4 conference report, with a vote falling mostly along party lines, Clinton vetoed that bill in January, 1996. Reiterating that the “current system is broken and must be replaced,” and that he “strongly support[ed] time limits” Clinton encouraged Congress to work with him to “produce a bipartisan welfare reform agreement that is tough on work and responsibility, but not tough on children and on parents.” (Clinton 1996). HR 4 did not qualify because it made “deep budget cuts that would fall hardest on children and undermine States’ ability to move people from welfare to work.”

Concomitant with this legislative trajectory, Republican leaders grappled with closing any apparent gap between their approach to welfare reform and the less punitive approach strongly supported by the American public. Jason DeParle (2004) recounts visiting a pollster’s office and observing results of a focus group consisting of self identified Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Participants listened to a Gingrich speech and used dials to indicate approval of specific points. When Gingrich said, “*Caring for People is not synonymous with caretaking for people,*” members of all three groups highly approved (DeParle 2004, p. 131, emphasis in original). DeParle (2004, p. 131) reads this incident and its follow-up, which he also describes, as part of a Gingrich strategy to “redefine compassion” in support of ending entitlement to welfare.

Gingrich set the old arguments on their head. While Reagan attacked poor people for abusing the programs, Gingrich attacked programs for abusing the poor. He didn’t complain, as did Reagan, of high living welfare queens; he reminded the public that poor children were suffering and said welfare was to blame. While Reagan talked of welfare recipients whose “tax free cash income alone is over a hundred fifty thousand dollars,” Gingrich talked of ‘twelve-year-olds having babies’ and ‘seventeen-year-olds dying of Aids (DeParle 2004, p. 131).

Indicating that he presented his interpretation of the events he had witnessed in the pollster's office to Gingrich himself in an interview, DeParle (2004, p. 131) reports that Gingrich responded by saying, "Congratulations! You cracked the code!"

During the 104th Congress, Gingrich emphasized his agreement with Olasky by touting the latter's second book-length treatment of compassion and welfare reform. After Clinton's veto of H.R. 4, House Republicans continued to press reform as Olasky's *Renewing American Compassion* (1996) appeared with a Gingrich-penned forward. Olasky (1996) recapitulated and extended his earlier arguments about the need to reclaim the traditional definition of compassion in the wake of its inappropriate redefinition as a government entitlement to cash assistance. According to Olasky (1996, p. 75), destructive consequences of the New Deal and War on Poverty included redistribution to "the undeserving" who "wished to continue in self destructive pursuits."

Government assistance "emphasized entitlement rather than challenge, bureaucracy rather than personal help, and a reduction of man to material being only," where private charities of the 19th century and pre-Great Depression 20th century had been effective "because they offered compassion that was challenging, personal, and spiritually based (Olasky 1996, p. 3). Government cash assistance should be replaced "with a truly compassionate approach based on private and religious charity" (Olasky 1996, p. 26). Washington should promote the true meaning of compassion "by phasing out federal programs and pushing states to develop ways for individuals and community-based institutions to take over poverty-fighting responsibility (Olasky 1996, p. 98).

In his forward, Gingrich made clear his strong endorsement of Olasky's argument. By doing so while also referencing Americans desire for "a compassionate society that will help the truly needy," Gingrich also implicitly signaled that he recognized the concept of compassion previously institutionalized in government policies and public understanding (Gingrich, in Olasky 2006, p.ix). As well, he implicitly signaled his understanding that redefining compassion was strategic, because it would allow

eliminating entitlement to be framed consistent with Americans' concept of—and comfort with—themselves and a political leadership enacting such policy change.

If we are correct in our assessment that Republican leaders attributed strategic importance to redefining compassion consistent with Olasky's arguments, we should find this redefinition, along with disputes about compassion's meaning, in floor debates of the 104th Congress. We present our content analysis of these debates after completing our narrative of welfare reform.

In May of 1996, despite Clinton's insistence he would veto any bill that gutted Medicaid, Republicans introduced bills in the House and Senate (HR 3507, S 1795) to eliminate entitlement to AFDC and Medicaid. These bills would replace AFDC with a block grant to states, limit individuals' lifetime eligibility to five years, while allowing states to exempt up to 20% of their caseload from this limit, and require that welfare recipients work within two years of receiving assistance (Congressional Quarterly 1996). They also would make it harder for disabled children to qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), ban legal immigrants who were not citizens from receiving SSI and food stamps, and reduce food stamp benefits (Congressional Quarterly 1996). A revised legislative proposal, from which the Medicaid block grants were eventually dropped, became HR 3734 (Congressional Quarterly 1996).

When debate moved to the House floor, Democrats offered the Castle-Tanner bill (HR 3832, formerly HR 3266) as a substitute for HR 3734 (Congressional Quarterly 1996). But the Castle-Tanner bill did not pass, because only 9 Republicans voted in favor (Congressional Quarterly 1996). This bill would have eliminated federal entitlement to welfare, but it provided more funding than did the Republican bill to help the states fulfill work requirements and deal with economic downturn. Likewise, Castle-Tanner required states "to provide vouchers to children whose parents exceeded the time limit if the limit was less than five years" and allowed states to provide vouchers after five years of benefit receipt (Congressional Quarterly 1996, pp. 6-12). Meanwhile, the

Senate rejected a Democratic substitute bill proposed by Senator Daschle, even though Democrats emphasized that the Daschle bill contained a stronger safety net for children than did the Republican bill (Congressional Quarterly 1996). The failed Daschle bill also contained the five-year lifetime limit on assistance, but it differed from the Republican H.R. 3734 in requiring states to provide non-cash assistance to children after the time limit expired (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1996).

The House passed HR 3734 in July, 1996 (Congressional Quarterly 1996; Winston 2002). In July of 1996 as well, the Senate also passed HR 3734, though not without substituting its own version of the bill (S 1956) containing a few revisions making the bill more appealing to moderate Republicans and Democrats (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1996). These revisions eliminated the family cap, prevented states from receiving block grants for food stamps, allowed states to exempt up to 20%, rather than 10%, of able-bodied food stamp recipients from work requirements, and ensured that extant Medicaid eligibility requirements would be retained (Congressional Quarterly 1996). On July 23, 1996, Senator Wendell Ford (D-KY) proposed a last ditch amendment “allow[ing] federal welfare funds to be used for vouchers for families of welfare recipients who exceeded their five year time limits” (Glazer 2001). By very narrow margins (48-51; motion to reconsider tabled 50-49); the Senate rejected this amendment, after Republicans argued that providing vouchers would undermine time limits (Glazer 2001).

President Clinton suggested amending the House bill to require states to continue providing Medicaid to people who would have been eligible for AFDC, and indicated he might sign a version of the Senate bill (Winston 2002). Then, before the House and Senate could vote on the final conference report on HR 3734, Clinton announced that he would sign the bill, fulfilling his 1992 Presidential campaign promise to “end welfare as we know it” (Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1996; Winston 2002). In explaining his decision, Clinton said:

I will sign this bill, first and foremost, because the current system is broken; second, because Congress has made many of the changes I sought; and third, because even though serious problems remain in the non-welfare-reform provisions of the bill, this is the best chance we will have for a long, long time to complete the work of ending welfare as we know it, by moving people from welfare to work, demanding responsibility, and doing better by children (quoted in Winston 2002: p 50).

A few hours after Clinton's statement, the House approved HR 3734 by a vote of 328-101, with half of House Democrats voting in favor (Winston 2002). The Senate approved the bill the following day, 78-21, with 25 Democrats voting in favor and 21 voting against (Winston 2002). On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed the PRWORA into law. The following section shows that the Gingrich/Olasky strategy of redefining compassion in pursuit of the moral high ground in welfare reform reached full elaboration on the floor of the 104th Congress.

Content Analysis of the Floor Debates in the 104th Congress

Content analysis proceeded iteratively, with our main focus and coding evolving as we read the debates and secondary sources. We began the research interested in identifying arguments by welfare reform supporters and opponents. We began code construction by reading existing secondary accounts and analyzing a small set of welfare reform documents compiled in *Welfare: A Documentary History of U.S. Policy and Politics* (Mink and Solinger 2003). As we read the floor debates, we further developed and refined our coding scheme by separating some initial codes into multiple codes, adding new codes, and elaborating on code descriptions to arrive at a final comprehensive coding scheme, with criteria for frame identification that were both meaningful and sufficiently explicit and precise to achieve inter-coder reliability. Complete final coding of frames presented in this paper was done by one of us, then checked and verified by the other, with only a handful of code reassignments required.

In early stages of analysis, we developed codes for a broad range of arguments, including those related to immigration, family, work, and negative aspects of the current

welfare system. As we began finding evidence for the key role of compassion in constructing competing frames about welfare reform, we decided to focus on this issue. We then developed systematic strategies allowing us to make more conclusive, verifiable claims about the role played by the abstract, general value of compassion in discursive framing of the PRWORA. For example, we used appropriate computerized search terms to locate and help count explicit mentions of compassion relative to other values, including self sufficiency, opportunity and personal responsibility, typically argued to be important for welfare reform.¹¹

There are different numbers of speakers represented across the 32 relevant floor debates or “documents” that we coded. A given speaker may make multiple statements in a document. We coded each statement as a separate quote, defining a quote as a continuous utterance by one speaker before interruption by another speaker. If the first speaker spoke again later, we considered this a separate quote. In any one quote, speakers could repeat words and phrases like compassion, self sufficiency or personal responsibility multiple times in proximity, e.g., within a single sentence, paragraph or continuous paragraphs. When this occurred, we coded and counted this as one explicit mention. Thus our total count of 117 explicit mentions of compassion means that the word was contained in 117 separate quotes.

After systematizing and verifying our coding scheme for explicit references to compassion, we made use of our familiarity with the debates to construct systematic search techniques identifying implicit references.¹² As with coding explicit references,

¹¹ More detailed information on coding, including the computerized search commands that we employed in identifying and further categorizing explicit and implicit references to compassion and other values are available from the authors. We were purposively over-inclusive in search commands, relying on further interpretive analysis to eliminate statements that did not represent the value or frame we identified. For example, references such as “I want to take this opportunity to...,” located in response to search commands containing the term “opportunity,” do not reflect opportunity values in debate over the PRWORA.

¹² These are available on request from the authors. In general, identifying implicit compassion required searching on words and phrases such as punish*, punitive, mean, mean-spirited, cruel* heartless*, harm* or protect* or help* the poor or children, care*, caring, etc. Just as they were associated with explicit references to compassion, such catch phrases often signaled implicit references to compassion or its absence.

we used computerized search techniques erring on the side of over-inclusion. We read through each utterance multiple times, discarding those that had been inappropriately included and interpreting all others for inclusion into one or more frames. In addition to checking inter-coder reliability of our final coding, we also worked to verify the conclusions we present about the meaning and theoretical import of our findings. We did this by coming to tentative interpretive conclusions, and then examining these against further analyses specifying and checking whether additional patterns that should hold in our data assuming our interpretations were correct, did in fact hold.

Compassion vs. Other Values

Representatives and Senators explicitly mentioned compassion in 117 separate quotes, as compared to 174 separate quotes explicitly referencing self sufficiency, 151 referencing personal responsibility (also in the title of the PRWORA) and 143 referencing opportunity. Consistent with these counts, we do not claim that compassion was the only or most important general value mobilized in debates over welfare reform. But a count of 117 explicit quotes, coupled with another 650 implicit quotes referencing compassion, supports our conclusion that compassion was an important American value perceived at stake. Similarly, we do not claim that the value of compassion is the only or most important cultural resource mobilized in the debates. Instead, in building our argument about the conditions and import of strategies for redefining compassion, we examine how the role of compassion conjoins or intersects with other discursive meanings in providing cultural resources. Such other resources include perversity rhetoric (Somers and Block 2005), raced and gendered categories of deservingness, e.g., the welfare queen stereotype (Hancock 2004; cf. Steensland 2006) and values of opportunity, work, personal responsibility and self sufficiency.

Competing Frames Built From Explicit References to Compassion

The core of our content analysis centered on identifying and verifying the role of explicit references to compassion in debates on welfare reform in the 104th Congress.

Table 1 provides the universe of frames referencing the abstract, general value of compassion. It also provides coding criteria and exemplary quotes for each frame. Footnotes to Table 1 identify each quoted speaker, his/her political party affiliation, the site (whether House or Senate) and date of the quote. Consistent with distribution of floor debates over time in the 104th Congress, a majority of exemplary statements in Table 1 come from 1995, when, as our historical narrative shows, a large number of reform proposals were debated. But a significant minority of exemplary statements comes from 1996. Consistent with our historical analysis showing that 1996 floor debate was confined to mid-summer, these statements come from the latter part of July.

Table 2 extends analysis summarized in Table 1, showing in column 1 the number and percentage of the total number of explicit compassion quotes (N= 117) represented by each frame. Since a quote may represent more than one frame, the percentages in column 1 do not sum to 100%. In columns 2-5, Table 2 shows the number and percentage of all explicit compassion quotes (row 1 of Table 2) and then of each frame separately (rows 2-9) spoken by PRWORA supporters and opponents, and Republicans and Democrats. We compiled data on the identity of supporters and opponents using final PRWORA vote tallies. Ultimate supporters include some speakers attacking earlier welfare reform bills that they indicated they could not support.

TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 allows us to examine more systematically interpretations of the import of compassion also consistent with evidence provided by our historical analysis. Speakers mobilized the value of compassion to frame the American people as well as US welfare policy, and, as we expected, to construct *competing* definitions of existing welfare programs, welfare reform and reform supporters and opponents.

Starting at the top left of Table 1, the first frame, compassionate identity, invoked in 15% of the explicit compassion quotes, supports the conclusion that speakers in the 1995-1996 welfare debates *did* presume compassion was an important general American

value, at least insofar as constructing appropriate anti-poverty policies is concerned. This is especially well illustrated by the exemplary statement made by Senator Coats (R-IN): “Compassion for the poor is a valuable part of the American tradition and it is also a central part of our moral tradition” (see Table 1). As we expected, Table 2 shows that the compassionate identity frame was almost evenly spread across Democrats and Republicans. It also was spread across supporters and opponents, invoked about 2/3 of the time by those who supported the final PRWORA and about 1/3 of the time by those who voted against the final bill. This is a key finding, without which there would have been no impetus for Republicans, especially supporters of more punitive welfare reform, to perceive a strategic need to redefine compassion.

A second frame identified in Table 2 is that which we term traditional definition of compassion. This refers not to Olasky’s (1992, 1996) putative “original” definition, but to the tradition Olasky attacks, institutionalized in the 60 years between the New Deal and the PRWORA. To qualify as representing this frame, invoked in 20% of the explicit compassion quotes, a statement had to defend the safety net, entitlements and/or the federal government’s historical commitment to protect children or help the poor. Among examples in Table 2, Senator Kennedy’s (D-MA) statement invoking Reagan’s “defense of the national safety net” stands out in drawing attention to institutionalization and the broad, bi-partisan legitimacy of associating compassion for the poor with a government safety net/entitlement. Table 2 also shows that, as expected, Democrats were far more likely to invoke the traditional definition of compassion than Republicans. Ninety one percent of the frame’s invocations are associated with Democrats. In contrast, PRWORA supporters referenced the traditional definition somewhat more than did opponents. This finding, which at first may appear anomalous, makes sense. As shown by other exemplary quotes in Table 2, many Democrats ultimately voting for the PRWORA attacked earlier Republican proposals as failing the traditional definition of compassion.

As shown by Tables 1 and 2, a third frame invoked with the same frequency as the traditional definition of compassion, almost equally by Republicans and Democrats, but 87% of the time by PRWORA supporters, balanced compassion and the values of work, responsibility, opportunity or self-sufficiency. This provides additional evidence that perceived need for reform was bi-partisan, with Republicans, Democrats and President Clinton recognizing and appealing to multiple values presumed at stake. This frame presents the multiple values as distinct, with compassion on one side of the scale to be weighed and balanced against other key values, including personal responsibility.

The fourth and fifth frames appearing in Tables 1 and 2 are distinct variations on the argument that welfare reform or its supporters are not compassionate. As shown by frame descriptions and exemplary quotes in Table 1, the two frames are distinguished by their function – either making or disputing the argument that reform and reformers are not compassionate because they are cruel, mean-spirited, heartless or punitive or because they insist on eliminating the safety net or harming children, the needy or the poor. Table 2 shows that the defensive version of the claim is invoked by 12% of quotes explicitly referencing compassion, with 26% of these quotes charging reform and reformers with an absence of compassion. Such defensive statements acknowledge the charge of lacking compassion, but strongly dispute it. Many of these quotes also are categorized appropriately under the sixth and seventh frames in Table 1. The sixth frame claims that the current system is not compassionate; the seventh claims that reform and reformers are the compassionate ones upholding American traditions and ideals.

As Table 2 shows, when arguments invoke the traditional definitions of compassion to argue that reform and reformers are not compassionate (frame 4), these are made exclusively by Democrats. Exemplifying such claims, Representative John Lewis (D-GA) asked about the impending PRWORA, “Where is the compassion...the sense of decency...the heart of this Congress? This bill is mean, it is base, it is downright low down...it is an abdication of our responsibility and an abandonment of our morality. It is

wrong, just plain wrong” (Table 1). Though 40% of such statements were made by those who, unlike Representative Lewis, voted for the final PRWORA, these were made when criticizing earlier Republican-introduced proposals for being overly punitive.

Meanwhile, those invoking the defensive version of the reform or reformers are not compassionate frame were all Republican. Likewise, they were all PRWORA supporters (Table 2). Representative Rick Lazio (R-NY), exemplified such defensive mobilization by arguing, in March 1995, “We must not be deterred by those who claim that we are not compassionate. We are compelled to help all Americans....” During the same debate, Representative Jon Christensen (R-NE) charged:

[I]n the last few days I have seen an uproar from the friends on the left regarding the restructuring of the welfare system. I hear phrases like ‘lacking compassion,’ ‘mean spirited,’ cruelty to children.’ I am here to tell you that changing a system that does not work has nothing to do with lacking compassion (Table 2).

In explicitly acknowledging and defensively refuting the charge that they lacked compassion, Republican reformers showed that they viewed the charge as tapping into general values on which they were potentially vulnerable. Their debate interventions played a role similar to the oft-repeated defensive refutation by supporters of the earlier Civil Rights Act of 1991, that the CRA was *not* a “quota bill” (Stryker, Scarpellino and Holtzman 1999). Likewise, and as shown by Christensen’s statement, such interventions also tended to claim explicitly or implicitly that it was the current system that lacked compassion.

That the current system is not compassionate is the sixth frame we identified. In this frame, compassion is invoked in conjunction with mobilizing perversity rhetoric of the sort signaled by Somers and Block (2005). Table 2 shows that this frame was invoked in almost 1/3 of quotes explicitly referencing compassion. As we expected, these quotes are identified—though not quite exclusively—with Republicans (91%) and reform supporters (97%). Examples of this frame’s mobilization, shown in Table 2,

include a statement by Representative Gerald Solomon (R-NY), in which he “ask[s] [his] colleagues today now what is compassionate about continuing failed welfare provisions that encourage a second, and third and fourth generation of welfare dependency? I say to my colleagues, ‘You know, and I know, the answer is nothing.’”

In sum, to this point, Tables 1 and 2 provide substantial evidence that, across the political spectrum, Senators and Representatives in the 104th Congress debating welfare reform recognized the importance of compassion as an abstract, general value embodied in American welfare policies. They also recognized that the American public expected welfare reform to embody compassion. Similarly, they understood clearly the traditional meaning of compassion institutionalized in prior policy and discourse. Where Democrats routinely criticized Republican reform proposals as lacking compassion according to that traditional definitions, Republican reformers were concerned enough that such charges would be politically effective, that they explicitly acknowledged them, while also trying to refute them. That 40% of charges that Republican-proposed reforms were not compassionate were made by Democrats ultimately voting for the PRWORA, shows that Democrats who favored major reform also felt it important to continue to be identified with a politics of compassion.

Our argument about conditions for, and import of, redefining abstract, general American values in policy debates is brought home by the seventh frame shown in Tables 1 and 2, that claiming welfare reform and its supporters *are* compassionate. There are three variations on this frame. By far the most prevalent is the redefinition of compassion.

As shown in Table 1, the first variation (frame 7a), argues that reform or reform supporters maintain the safety net, thus reaffirming the traditional definition of compassion elucidated by frame 2. Here, however, the traditional definition is attached positively to reformers, to suggest that reforms are consistent with that definition. because reforms contained a safety net or something signaling federal government commitment or responsibility to protect children or the poor. Unsurprisingly, Table 2

shows that PRWORA supporters are responsible for all of the 15% of explicit compassion quotes referencing this frame. Eighty-nine percent of these quotes come from Republicans. Representative Delay's statement is exemplary in this regard. After repeating opponents' charge that welfare reformers lacked compassion (Frame 3), Delay defended against the charge (Frame 4), claiming "we reform welfare not out of spite but out of compassion." After explaining that welfare reform would "help people help themselves...and give children a greater chance to realize the American dream," Delay also claimed that the about-to-be-enacted PRWORA "still maintain(ed) a safety net for those truly in need" (Frame 7a) (Table 2, US House, July 31, 1996).

Delay's colleague, Representative Fowler (R-FL), similarly straddled traditional and revamped definitions of compassion, insisting that the current system "has become an overgrown bureaucracy which perpetuates dependency...this legislation is about saving hope and saving lives while reforming a broken system" (Statement by Rep. Fowler, US House, July 31, 1996). Meanwhile, earlier in the debate, moderate Republican Senator Olympia Snowe (ME) refrained from wholesale redefinition of compassion hinging on perversities in the current system, while echoing Clinton's value balancing rhetoric and invoking the safety net.

[W]e must...end welfare as a way of life for millions of Americans and their families, while at the same time preserving a safety net for those in our society who need a leg-up rather than a hand out...we must require more individual responsibility, a strengthened work ethic and a sense of discipline and order to the family, all while continuing to maintain our historic and compassionate commitment to those who need our help in those dark times that are part of everyone's life at some time or another (US Senate, September 19, 1995).

As seen in Tables 1 and 2, the second variation on the reform/reformers are compassionate theme is like the first variation in being associated solely with PRWORA supporters. It also is associated solely with Republicans. But it is a very small, residual

category, identified in only two instances in which welfare reform or reformers were depicted as compassionate without any specification of why this was so.

As Table 2 shows, redefining compassion to assert that welfare reform or reformers are compassionate (Frame 7c) was the single most frequent frame associated with explicit references to compassion in floor debates over welfare reform in the 104th Congress. One-third of all quotes that explicitly referenced compassion also mobilized the redefinition of compassion frame. All these quotes are associated with Republicans. None of these quotes are associated with opponents of the PRWORA. Table 1 shows that redefinition signaled one or more of the following themes: that compassion requires reducing welfare rolls, dependency or government spending; that it requires promoting work, responsibility, self sufficiency opportunity, fiscal and personal responsibility; that it requires people to care for their own children; or that the federal government is incapable of compassion and/or that state and local government, religious organizations, individuals or communities are the repositories of compassion. Thus, in contrast to the balancing values frame depicting compassion as distinct from—and to be weighed against—values such as work, personal responsibility and self sufficiency, as it is redefined, compassion is equated with promoting these other values.

Included in Table 1 are a small number of exemplary quotations redefining compassion, including Representative Franks (R-NJ) claim that “we measure our commitment to compassion with our ability to sustain programs financially”(US House, October 25, 1995), and Representative Packard’s (R-CA) rhetorical query, “isn’t it time we began measuring compassion by how few people are on welfare?” (US House, March 24, 1995). But the large number of additional quotes representing redefinition of compassion is striking. It suggests that, as we suspected, Congressional Republicans’ undertook systematically to redefine compassion and that they considered this to be an essential part of their efforts to promote their versions of welfare reform.

For example, Representative Emerson (R-MO) encouraged her “colleagues to start measuring compassion by how few people are on welfare, and not by how much money the Federal Government pours into the welfare system” (US House, March 24, 1995). Similarly, Representative JC Watts (R-OK), stated:

[T]here is a philosophical shift that needs to be made here. We need to make sure that we no longer measure compassion by how many people are on welfare and how much money we throw at welfare, but by how few people are on welfare and how little money we take from our citizens to get those who are down and out addicted to the government dole (US House, March 24, 1995)

Shortly prior, Representative Solomon (R-NY) argued for redefining compassion while also emphasizing the perversity and lack of compassion of the current system.

Members on the other side of the aisle who defend the current system talk in grand terms about compassion. They try to seize the moral high ground in this debate while their feet remain firmly planted against any meaningful change in the current system. What kind of compassion leaves unaltered a monolithic bureaucracy that has the ability to ensnare entire generations in the despair of poverty? What kind of compassion is it that saddles future generations with mountains of debt built on failed but costly programs – debt that harms the poor more than the better off by stifling economic growth, opportunity, and meaningful jobs in the private sector? However well intentioned these programs were at their inception, defenders of the welfare state must face the fact that they have failed, and that it is time for real and revolutionary change (US House, March 22, 1995).

During later debates, Republicans reiterated these themes. For example, one Republican Senator asserted “The index of a compassionate society, J.C. Watts said, and he is profoundly correct on this...the compassion of a society should not be how many people you can get on welfare, but a really compassionate society should have few people

on welfare” (US Senate, September 12, 1995). In November 1995, a House Republican echoed the redefinition of compassion in terms of fiscal responsibility.

As we have tried to make these tough choices necessary to protect future generations, there are those who have attacked us as being mean-spirited and we are going to hear that this morning. But what is really mean-spirited about piling this kind of debt on our children and our grandchildren. Let me tell Members, that is not compassionate, that is a shame (US House, November 17, 1995). Representative Salmon (R-AZ) exemplified those who argued that true compassion required personal responsibility to care for children.

Mr. Chairman, delinquent parents can no longer be allowed to shirk their responsibilities and expect the Government to act in their place...it is time we sent a message if you bring a child into this world that you are going to care for it. This is the compassionate and sensible thing to do for our Nation’s children” (US House, March 23, 1995).

Meanwhile, Senators Packwood (R-OR) and Grassley (R-IA) emphasized that the quality of compassion attached to the states.

I think it is very arrogant to assume that only Federal leaders are compassionate toward the needs of those less fortunate in our society. It is a way of saying that we in Congress have more compassion toward the needs of the people than our state legislators do. I say for each of our 50 state legislatures that I do not think that is an accurate assumption (US Senate, August 7, 1995; see also statement of Senator Packwood, US Senate, August 7, 1995).

Near the end of debate over the PRWORA, Senator Roth (DE) explicitly invoked compassion in his justification of devolution, accompanying his invocation by elaborating, “States will succeed in welfare reform where Washington has failed....because State and local officials see the faces of their neighbors while Washington only sees caseload numbers” (US Senate, July 18, 1996).

Consistent with Olasky's equation of compassion with communities, civil society and inter-personal interaction, Senator Rod Grams (R-MN) asked: "Does anybody really believe that the Federal Government embodies compassion, that it has a heart? Of course not—those are qualities found only outside of Washington, in America's communities" (US Senate, December 21, 1995). Earlier in the debate, Senator Coats (R-IN) redefined compassion while also invoking the compassionate nature of American collective identity

Compassion for the poor is a valuable part of the American tradition, and it is also a central...part of our moral tradition...But a renewal of compassion will ultimately be frustrated if we act on a definition of that virtue which has failed. The problem we face is not only that welfare is too expensive, which it is; the problem is that it is too stingy with the things that matter the most—responsibility, moral values, human dignity and the warmth of community. This Nation, I suggest, Mr. President, requires a new definition of compassion, a definition which mobilizes the resources of civil society to reach our deepest needs (US Senate, September 13, 1995).¹³

At the tail end of Congressional debate over a PRWORA about to become law, Representative Kingston (R-GA) responded to the strong criticisms made by Representative Lewis (D-GA) that those voting for the PRWORA lacked compassion (see above, and Table 1, Frame 4). Kingston stated:

¹³ In his statement, Coats also argued that, "at the very deepest level, we show compassion for others because we are all equally dependent upon the compassion of our Maker." Religious faith and spirituality sometimes were associated with redefining compassion as involving interpersonal interaction, community and civil society. Specifically Christian religious connotations were only a minor part of reform debate in the 104th Congress, but they echoed and reinforced Olasky's (1992, 1996) inclusion of churches and communities of faith as among repositories of compassion and poor relief. Such references were especially likely in connection with debate on the 1995 Dole bill, which contained a "charitable choice" provision sponsored by Senator Ashcroft (R-MO). Under this provision, "churches and other faith-based organizations would be able to compete with government and private sector companies in contracting with states to run all or part of the new welfare program" (Haskins 2006, p. 209). In animating the redefinition of compassion to promote the PRWORA charitable choice and the far broader "return to community" of which it was part, provide a clear bridge to George W. Bush's rhetoric of "compassionate conservatism" in the 2000 Presidential election, and also to Bush's strong promotion of faith-based social service initiatives following the 2000 election (Docka and Stryker In progress).

Nothing is more cruel than having a welfare system that traps children in poverty, that makes children and families break up, that makes them live in housing projects where the dad cannot be at home, where there is a high drug use, where there are teenage dropout rates and teenage drug abuse. I do not see why they think that is compassion” (US House, July 31, 1996).

Overall, our systematic interpretive analysis of frames built around explicit references to the general value of compassion in floor debates over welfare reform in the 104th Congress provides strong evidence that Republican elites promoting welfare reform perceived it strategic to redefine compassion. Republicans and Democrats, reform supporters and opponents alike, presented compassion as an important American value appropriately emphasized in discussions of poverty and US welfare policy. While Democrats mobilized traditional definitions of compassion to attack Republican-proposed reforms, Republicans met these attacks head-on, explicitly acknowledging and repeating them before they offered their defense. Some PRWORA supporters, Republican and Democratic alike, defended against any perception that they lacked compassion by insisting that the reforms they supported still contained a safety net.

However, only Republicans *redefined* compassion and then mobilized the redefinition as a positive resource for radical reform. Among statements that welfare reform and/or reform supporters are compassionate—a frame invoked in 50% of all explicit references to compassion—the redefinition of compassion was by far the most prevalent theme. Invoked in one-third of all explicit references to compassion, compassion is redefined in two-thirds of all claims that reform and/or reform supporters are compassionate. In this redefinition, compassion was equated with such other values as personal responsibility and self sufficiency. This is in contrast to the balancing of values frame, in which compassion was assigned its traditional meaning and weighed against other values, including personal responsibility and self sufficiency, regarded as distinct from compassion, though also key motivators of welfare reform. Explicit references to

compassion conjoined with perversity rhetoric in framing the current welfare system as lacking compassion. This frame itself was almost always mobilized by Republicans and by PRWORA supporters.

Given patterns evidenced in our data, we conclude that, among rhetorical weapons facilitating the PRWORA, Congressional Republicans systematically constructed and strongly mobilized a coherent symbolic package organized around redefining the abstract, general value of compassion. That package combined a framing of the current welfare system as perverse and therefore lacking compassion, with an explicit reframing of compassion itself.

Redefining Compassion over Time

For additional insight into diverse roles played by the value of compassion, we examined prevalence over time of both explicit and implicit references to compassion and also of specific frames among explicit compassion references. Table 3 presents results.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 aggregates individual debates/documents into document groups guided by our knowledge of individual bills and the chronology of debate, and takes advantage of clear break points in the debate. Table 3 shows that explicit and implicit references to compassion are similar in their relative prevalence over specific document groups and thus in their timing within the chronology of debate. Overall, the first and third groups of documents, representing respectively House debate on HR 4 in March, 1995 (D1-D4) and Senate debate on the Dole bill, in September 1995 (D9-D16) are especially rich in total explicit and implicit references to compassion. In a group by itself, the final document, representing House debate most proximate to enactment of the PRWORA, also is quite rich in references to compassion.

With respect to individual frames among explicit compassion quotes, we are dealing with small numbers, cautioning against over-interpretation. It may be meaningful that defensive repetitions that welfare reform supporters are not compassionate are

located disproportionately at the very beginning of floor debates and also in the final document prior to passage of the PRWORA. Consistent with institutionalization of the safety-net concept of compassion in prior policy and policy debate, Republicans no doubt were primed at the outset to play defense, as well as offense, with the value of compassion. They expected Democrats to attack them for lacking compassion and sure enough, they were right. This time, however, this Democratic strategy that had helped maintain welfare entitlements in the past, would not work. Almost one third of Democrats' charges that Republican reforms and reformers lacked compassion occurred during the first group of debates. But such charges are more spread out over the entire debate trajectory than are Republican defenses, clustered more tightly at the beginning and end of welfare reform floor debate in the 104th Congress.

As Table 3 shows, the compassionate identity frame is most prevalent in the first and third document groups and in the final document, such that the debate trajectory begins and ends with the consensual backdrop assumption that compassion is a general American value. Statements that welfare reform supporters are compassionate because reform continues to maintain a safety net are overwhelmingly located in the final document, at the end of Congressional debates over the PRWORA. In contrast, the *redefinition* of compassion frame maintains presence throughout the trajectory of floor debates, while figuring especially prominently at the beginning of these debates. It appears that, although PRWORA supporters continued through the final day of debate to justify welfare reform and themselves by redefining compassion, they also hit the ground running. That is, at the beginning of floor debates in the 104th Congress, Republicans were strategically committed to converting perceived constraint on ending welfare entitlement—by instituting strict time limits without any corresponding federal guarantee of work to former recipients or vouchers to protect their children—to opportunity to enact this type of radical reform. Our interpretation likewise is consistent with Gingrich's

invocation of Olasky's *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, in the House Ways and Means Committee hearings, in January, 1995.

Targets of Compassion and Attributions about Welfare Recipients

A final portion of our content analysis links the role of compassion to previous literature on the role played by attributions about welfare recipients. We compared attributions about welfare recipients and also which persons or groups were targeted as appropriate recipients of compassion in statements mobilizing the value of compassion for *competing* frames.

[Final paper will have a Table 4 summarizing these results. We are still completing and verifying this part of the analysis.]

As we expected—and as consistent with the perversity rhetoric it mobilized—statements framing the current welfare system as lacking compassion especially emphasized the concept of dependency, attributing an absence of work ethic and/or personal responsibility to welfare recipients. Explicit mentions of such aspects of Hancock's (2004) “welfare queen” stereotype as having babies to get more benefits and receiving handouts or money for doing nothing were present but much less frequent. When we coded these statements for persons or groups that speakers emphasized as appropriate targets of compassion, by far the most frequent referenced category was children. That the current system did not help *children* or that it hurt *children*, was a charge made more often than that welfare harmed the poor or families. This is understandable, given that speakers mobilizing the competing frame, attacking welfare reformers or reform for lacking compassion, overwhelmingly focused on children, rather than recipients themselves, as appropriate targets of compassion and also as those who would be hurt by welfare reform.

Conclusion

Our historical and content analyses have provided strong evidentiary support for concluding that debates over the PRWORA were shaped by the abstract, general value of

compassion. Motivated both by prior literature on the role of cultural factors in welfare reform and by scholarship suggesting that policy feedbacks work in part through mechanisms of cultural resource construction, we have shown that the general value of compassion played a key role in constructing competing frames of appropriate welfare policies, and of supporters and opponents of welfare reform. Building on Pedriana and Stryker's (1997) research on the role of equal opportunity values in facilitating "liberal" affirmative action policies, we anticipated an approximately analogous role for the value of compassion in facilitating "conservative" welfare reform. That our findings strongly support this hypothesis is consistent with the idea that redefinition of widespread and shared, abstract American values is a more general cultural strategy promoting policy reform. As for conditions making it more (vs. less) likely that reform supporters will mobilize this strategy, results of our historical and content analyses are consistent with those of Pedriana and Stryker (1997) supporting the hypothesis that redefinition of general values occurs when definitions of that value institutionalized in prior policies and policy discourse are easily portrayed as inconsistent with desired policy reforms.

There is much evidence supporting the claim that compassion is a widespread American value when it comes to anti-poverty discourse and policies, that it had a previously well-institutionalized meaning within prior welfare discourse and policies and that this meaning was well understood across all parts of the political spectrum, and among elites and the mass public alike. However, compassion can not reasonably be argued to be on a par with equality of opportunity in degree of centrality to American collective identity or to broad, politically bi-partisan understandings of American tradition over a great number of policy domains. Thus, our analyses of welfare reform suggest that turning apparent constraint into opportunity, by redefining general values embodied in prior policy, may be a more frequent and more generalizable strategy than anticipated by Pedriana and Stryker (1997).

Our analysis also built on prior research on American welfare reform emphasizing categories of moral worth and perversity rhetoric (Steensland 2006; Somers and Block 2005; Naples 1997; Roberts 1997; Hancock 2003, 2004). Republican supporters of more punitive reform proposals felt compelled to defend themselves head-on against the charge that they lacked compassion as compassion traditionally had been defined. Likewise, many Republican reform supporters defended the final PRWORA by mobilizing the more traditional, safety-net concept of compassion.

However, wholesale redefinition of compassion so that the value could much more plausibly be associated positively with welfare reform, could put Republicans on the moral high ground, and could be used as a strategy on offense, occurred over twice as frequently as did defending the PRWORA by invoking the traditional definition. Indeed, such wholesale redefinition was the single most prevalent frame identified among explicit references to compassion. Finally, explicit references to compassion conjoined with perversity rhetoric to frame the current welfare system as lacking compassion, and attacks on the current system for lacking compassion likewise conjoined with redefining compassion. Thus, the totality of evidence suggests that constructing a logically consistent symbolic package mobilizing perversity rhetoric and redefining compassion was Republicans' central discursive strategy.

Our theoretical conclusions are made more compelling because we conducted our content analyses within broader, historical analyses of welfare reform. Conclusions emerged from both analyses considered in tandem. Content and historical analyses provided mutually reinforcing evidence showing prior institutionalization and bipartisan agreement on the safety net/entitlement concept of compassion in US welfare policies. Historical analyses showed that, on the one hand, Clinton came to the Presidency strongly committed to further reform building on the 1988 Family Support Act, and that Clinton himself helped promote an increasing, politically bi-partisan consensus that a seriously broken welfare system required a major fix. On the other hand, Clinton's policy

preferences were not as punitive as those offered by Congressional Republicans. Clinton and Democratic reformers called for retaining more elements of a federal government-guaranteed safety net for the poor and especially for blameless poor children, while also drawing on what they regarded to be, for able bodied adults, the separate values of work and personal responsibility. Nuanced public opinion polling shows that the bulk of the American electorate did *not* favor the most punitive versions of welfare reform.

Democrats, Clinton among them, insisted that responsibility belonged to the federal government, not just to welfare recipients, that work be guaranteed as well as required by the state, and that more, rather than less funding, be devoted to child support, training, education and health insurance. Congressional Democrats drew on the traditional definition of compassion in attacking Republican reform proposals. Meanwhile, as Democratic supporters of reform defended their preferred bills by invoking the traditional definition of compassion, Speaker Gingrich publicly associated himself and his political party with the redefinition of compassion offered by Marvin Olasky. DeParle's account of the focus group he witnessed provides some back stage evidence also supporting the conclusion that Republican elites perceived they were politically vulnerable to charges of lacking compassion, and therefore perceived that redefining compassion would be strategic.

All this said, what causal role, if any, for the value of compassion in successful enactment of the PRWORA, do our findings support? Consistent with Somers and Block's (2005) emphasis on causal roles for both perversity rhetoric and institutional breakdowns, redefining compassion certainly strongly promoted welfare reform, but would not, by itself, have been sufficient to produce the end of entitlement. Was such redefinition necessary for successfully ending welfare entitlements, as our evidence suggests the Republican architects of redefinition may well have perceived it to be? Given substantial endogeneities between cultural and political-economic dynamics over time, we can not know with certainty.

However, given broad, bi-partisan elite consensus that the welfare system was seriously broken, Republican victory in the 1994 mid-term elections, and Clinton's subsequent support of the 1995 Deal bill, showing his own willingness to move some distance to the right, perhaps redefining compassion would not have been necessary for successfully legislating the PRWORA. At the very least, however, redefining compassion certainly was strategic in promoting this success. Given that the late 1990s were relatively good economic times, and that the direst human suffering scenarios predicted by those on the political left did not follow welfare reform in the late 1990s, neither Republicans or Democrats voting in favor of the PRWORA are likely to have had their votes punished at the polls, even if there had been *no* redefinition of compassion justifying reform.

Still, it seems quite likely that Republican elites in the early 1990s *believed* that ending entitlement required redefining compassion. What was perceived as real was then real in its consequences. Consequences included redefining compassion and the role played by such redefinition in facilitating radical federal welfare reform. These consequences in turn helped pave the way for the further flowering of what George W. Bush, candidate for President in 2000, would call "compassionate conservatism."

TABLE 1: FRAMES, FRAME CRITERIA AND EXEMPLARY QUOTES

Frame	Frame Criteria	Examples
1. <i>Compassionate Identity</i>	Americans value compassion, the American people are compassionate, compassion is an American value, or we are a compassionate country/society.	<p>“I remember the deep conviction of the American people and their compassion for the less fortunate. I urge my colleagues to continue that tradition”¹⁴</p> <p>“Compassion for the poor is a valuable part of the American tradition, and it is also a central part of our moral tradition.”¹⁵</p> <p>“This Republican budget does not speak to the American values that I know and the ones that I cherish, values that I see every day in my fellow Nebraskans. The greatest of these values are shared sacrifice, fairness, and compassion for our neighbors.”¹⁶</p>
2. <i>Traditional Definition of Compassion</i>	Must <i>defend</i> current safety net, entitlements, government benefits/assistance, or government commitment/responsibility to protect children or help the poor. May reference history of helping those in need through government benefits.	<p>[I]t is unfortunate to see the National Government backing away from a responsibility toward our Nation's children—a responsibility embraced by the Democratic alternative which was tougher on work and more compassionate toward children. I will work in the future for adoption of that kind of commonsense welfare reform.¹⁷</p> <p>A "survival of the richest" plan is not what makes America</p>

¹⁴ Rep. Payne, D-NJ, House, March 24, 1995.

¹⁵ Senator Coats, R-IN, Senate, September 13, 1995

¹⁶ Senator Exon, D-NE, Senate, October 25, 1995

¹⁷ Sen. Boxer D-CA, U.S. Senate, September 19, 1995

		<p>America. President Kennedy said in his Inaugural Address: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." And in defense of the national safety net -President Reagan said in 1984: "We can promote economic viability, while showing the disadvantaged genuine compassion."¹⁸</p> <p>“[B]ecause this Republican legislation also is very tough on kids and basically takes away almost all the protections for children that exist in the current system, the Castle-Tanner substitute would at least provide sufficient or at least more resources to get people to work and, also, I think, protect that safety net for children.”¹⁹</p>
<p>3. <i>Balancing Compassion and other Values</i></p>	<p>Welfare reform is compassionate and promotes work, responsibility, opportunity, or self-sufficiency. The American people are compassionate, but also value work, responsibility, etc.</p>	<p>“This landmark piece of welfare reform emphasizes responsibility and compassion.”²⁰</p> <p>“Americans are a compassionate people, eager to lend a helping hand...but Americans also are a just people, expecting everyone to contribute as they are able and to take responsibility for themselves & their families. It is the balancing of these two</p>

¹⁸ Senator Kennedy, D-MA, U.S. Senate, December 21, 1995

¹⁹ .Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., D-NJ, U.S. House, July 18, 1996).

²⁰ Rep. Linda Smith, R-WA, House, July 31, 1996

		concerns that makes correcting our welfare system a challenge, but a challenge which must be met.” ²¹
4. <i>Welfare Reform or Reform Supporters are Not Compassionate – Offensive Claim</i>	Welfare reform/reformers is/are not compassionate because cruel, mean-spirited, punitive, eliminate(s) the safety net, or harm(s) children, needy, or the poor.	<p>“Where is the compassion, where is the sense of decency, where is the heart of this Congress? This bill is mean, it is base, it is downright law down...it is an abdication of our responsibility and an abandonment of our morality. It is wrong, just plain wrong.”²²</p> <p>“But the American people are also compassionate. They do not want innocent children punished for the behavior of their parents. They expect us to protect poor and vulnerable children. And that is the most serious flaw in the legislation before us-innocent children are not guaranteed protection.”²³</p>
5. <i>Welfare Reform or Reform Supporters are Not Compassionate – Defensive Claim</i>	Disputes argument that welfare reform/reformers is/are not compassionate because cruel, mean-spirited, punitive, eliminate(s) the safety net, or harm(s) children, needy, or the poor.	<p>“Mr. Speaker, in the last few days I have seen an uproar from the friends on the left regarding the restructuring of the welfare system. I hear phrases like "lacking compassion," "mean spirited," "cruelty to children." I am here to tell you that changing a system that does not work has nothing to do with lacking compassion.”²⁴</p> <p>“We must not be deterred by those who claim that we are not compassionate. We are compelled to help all</p>

²¹ Representative John S. Tanner, D-TN, House, July 31, 1996

²² Rep. John Lewis, D-GA, House, July 31, 1996.

²³ Sen. Dorgan, D-ND, U.S. Senate, September 19, 1995.

²⁴ Rep. Jon Christensen, R-NE, U.S. House, March 23, 1995.

		Americans, particularly our neighbors struggling to survive in the poorest neighborhoods”. ²⁵
6. <i>Current System not Compassionate</i>	Use of “perversity rhetoric” to say old system creates dependency, illegitimacy/out-of-wedlock childbearing, poverty, unemployment, harms recipients or children, does not encourage responsibility, or is not fiscally responsible.	<p>“I ask my colleagues today now what is compassionate about continuing failed welfare programs that encourage a second, and third and fourth generation of welfare dependency? I say to my colleagues, "You know, and I know, the answer is 'nothing.'”²⁶</p> <p>“We are ending a welfare system that is not compassionate and replacing it with hope and opportunity. We are ending a failed system and encouraging personal responsibility.”²⁷</p>
7. <i>Welfare Reform/Supporters is/are Compassionate</i>		
7a: <i>Welfare Reform/Supporters Maintain(s) the Safety Net or Entitlements.</i>	Applies the traditional definition of compassion to welfare reform and/or welfare reform supporters. Thus, a statement must mention the safety net, entitlements, government benefits/assistance, or government commitment/responsibility to protect children or help the poor in conjunction with welfare reform or reform supporters. May include claim that reform provides more funding for child care, Medicaid, or health insurance than current law.	“Some well meaning people will once again make the claim that welfare reform is mean-spirited. Well, I disagree. We reform welfare not out of spite but out of compassion. We change this system not because we want to hurt people, but because we want to help people help themselves. And we change this system not to throw children into the streets, but to give children a greater change to realize the American dream and still maintain a safety net for those truly in need.” ²⁸

²⁵ Rep. Rick Lazio, R-NY, U.S. House, March 24, 1995.

²⁶ Rep. Gerald B.H. Solomon R-NY, March 21, 1995.

²⁷ Rep. Seastrand, R-CA, House, March 23, 1995.

²⁸ Rep. Delay, R-TX, H. July 31, 1996.

<p><i>7b: Depicts Reform/Supporters as Compassionate without Specifying Why</i></p>	<p>States that welfare reform/supporters is/are compassionate without specifying a reason. Does not invoke the traditional definition of compassion. Does not redefine compassion.</p>	<p>“We have created a truly compassionate reform. This reform effort has been assaulted. We have often as individuals been assaulted, all too often with language that is neither kind nor gentlemanly”²⁹</p>
<p><i>7c: Redefinition of Compassion</i></p>	<p>Depicts welfare reform or reform supporters as compassionate for one of the following reasons. Compassion requires reducing welfare rolls, dependency, or government spending. Compassion requires promoting work, self-sufficiency, opportunity, fiscal and personal responsibility or requiring people to care for own children. Federal government is incapable of being compassionate. State and local governments, charities, religious organizations, communities, or individuals are better at being compassionate than federal government.</p>	<p>“For 30 years we have been measuring compassion by how many people are on welfare. Isn’t it time we began measuring compassion by how few people are on welfare.”³⁰</p> <p>“For 30 years we have been deficit spending. We have lost sight of our fundamental responsibilities to make certain that we measure our commitment to compassion with our ability to sustain programs financially.”³¹</p> <p>“Does anybody really believe the Federal Government embodies compassion, that it has a heart? Of course not – those are qualities found only outside Washington, in America’s communities.”³²</p>

²⁹ Rep. Arme y, R-TX, House, March 24, 1995.

³⁰ Rep. Packard, R-CA, House, March 24, 1995.

³¹ Rep. Franks, R-NJ, House, Oct 25, 1995.

³² Sen. Grams, R-MN, Senate, Dec 21, 1995.

TABLE 2: NUMERIC COUNTS IN EXPLICIT COMPASSION QUOTES ⁱ

FRAMES	Number and Percent of Explicit Compass. Quotes that Reference Theme	Quotes by PRWORA Supportersⁱⁱ	Quotes by PRWORA Opponents	Quotes by Republicansⁱⁱⁱ	Quotes By Democrats
<i>All Explicit Compassion Quotes</i>	N= 117 (100%)	N = 92 (75%)	N =23 (19%)	N= 72 (62%)	N = 44 (38%)
1. Compassionate Identity	18 (15%)	12 (67%)	5 (28%)	9 (50%)	8 (44%)
2. Traditional Definition of Compassion	23 (20%)	13 (57%)	10 (43%)	2 (9%)	21 (91%)
3. Balancing Compassion and other Values	23 (20%)	20 (87%)	3 (13%)	12 (52%)	11 (48%)
4. Welfare Reform or Reform Supporters are Not Compassionate – Offensive Claim	30 (26%)	12 (40%)	17 (57%)	0	29 (97%)
5. Welfare Reform or Reform Supporters are Not Compassionate – Defensive Claim	14 (12%)	14 (100%)	0	14 (100%)	0
6. Current System not Compassionate	35 (30%)	34 (97%)	1 (3%)	32 (91%)	3 (9%)
Welfare Reform/ers is/are Compassionate					
7a.Reform/reformer Maintain(s) the Safety Net or Entitlements	18 (15%)	18 (100%)	0	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
7b. Depiction of Reform/Supporters Compassionate without Specifying Why	2 (2%)	2 (100%)	0	2 (100%)	0
7c. Redefinition of Compassion	40 (33%)	39 (98%)	0	40 (100%)	0

- i. The first cell in the first column indicates that there are 117 total explicit compassion quotes. The other cells in the first column indicate the number and percent of the explicit compassion quotes that mention each frame. For example, 18 (or 15%) of the explicit compassion quotes were also coded as compassionate identity. The first cell in the second column indicates that PRWPRA supporters articulated 92 (or 75%) of the explicit compassion quotes. The second cell in the second column indicates that PRWORA supporters articulated 12 (or 67%) of the quotes coded as compassionate identity, the third cell indicates that they articulated 13 (or 57%) of the quotes coded as traditional definition of compassion, etc. The columns for PRWORA opponents, Republicans, and Democrats should be read in the same way. A quote may represent more than one of the frames listed. In a few cases, explicit references to compassion were idiosyncratic, mentioning none of the systematic frames we identified.
- ii. PRWORA supporters include Democrats who ultimately voted for the PRWORA, while critiquing earlier Republican reform proposals. The number of quotes attributed to supporters and opponents does not add up to the total N of 177 because, in a few instances, a person who remained in Congress did not cast a vote for or against the PRWORA. This happened because he/she was a delegate who did not have the right to vote or did not cast a vote. In addition, a few speakers were unidentified in the database. Senators Dole (R-KS) and Packwood (R-OR) who left Congress before the final vote on the PRWORA, but clearly supported Republican welfare reforms, are coded as supporters.
- iii. The number of quotes attributed to Republicans and Democrats does not add up to 117 because one speaker was unidentified.

TABLE 3: COMPASSION CODES GROUPED BY DOCUMENT AND TIME ³³

CODES	D1-4	D5-8	D9-16	D17-20	D21-23	D24-25	D26-27	D28-31	D32	Total
Compassion explicit	N=29 25%	N=9 8%	N=25 21%	N=8 7%	N=4 3%	N=10 9%	N=9 8%	N=4 3%	N=19 16%	N=117 100%
Compassion implicit	N186 29%	N=35 5%	N165 25%	N=29 4%	N10 2%	N=62 10%	N=57 9%	N38 6%	N=68 10%	N=650 100%
Compassionate Identity	N=5 28%	0	N=5 28%	N=1 6%	N=1 6%	N=2 11%	0	0	N=4 22%	N=18 100%
Traditional Definition of Compassion	N=7 30%	0	N=6 26%	0	0	N=4 17%	N=3 13%	N=1 4%	N=2 9%	N=23 100%
Compassion balanced	N=3 13%	N=1 4%	N=7 30%	0	N=1 4%	N=1 4%	N=3 13%	0	N=7 30%	N=23 100%
Current system not compassionate	N=10 29%	N=3 9%	N=6 17%	N=3 9%	0	N=2 6%	N=2 6%	0	N=9 26%	N=35 100%
Reform/ers not Compassionate – offensive claim	N=9 30%	0	N=8 27%	N=1 3%	N=1 3%	N=4 13%	N=3 10%	N=1 3%	N=3 10%	N=30 100%
Reform/ers not Compassionate – defensive claim	N=8 57%	0	0	N=2 14%	N=1 7%	0	0	0	N=3 21%	N=14 100%
<i>Welfare Reform/Supporters Are Compassionate</i>										
Maintain safety net	N=3 17%	0	N=1 6%	N=1 6%	0	0	N=3 17%	0	N=10 56%	N=18 100%
No reason given	N=1 50%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N=1 50%	N=2 100%
Redefinition of compassion	N12 30%	N=4 10%	N=8 20%	N=4 10%	N=2 5%	N=4 10%	N=2 5%	N=1 3%	N=3 8%	N=40 100%
Total No. Quotes in Each Group ³⁴	273 28%	52 5%	231 24%	49 5%	20 2%	89 9%	N=82 8%	N45 5%	N129 13%	970 100%

³³ See below, Timeline Description of Documents and Document Groupings, for more information on each document and document grouping. See Appendix 1 for full information on all documents in the dataset. We formed document groups guided by the chronology of debate over the bills and taking into account break points in the debate.

Timeline Description of Documents and Document Groupings

Group 1: Documents 1-4

D1: Mar. 21, 1995 U.S. House
D2: Mar. 22, 1995 U.S. House
D3: Mar. 23, 1995 U.S. House
D4: Mar. 24, 1995 U.S. House

Group 2: Documents 5-8

D5: Aug. 5, 1995 US Senate
D6: Aug. 7, 1995, US Senate
D7: Aug. 8, 1995, US Senate
D8: Aug 11, 1995 US Senate

Group 3: Documents 9-16

D9: Sept. 6, 1995 U.S. Senate
D10: Sept. 7, 1995 U.S. Senate
D11: Sept. 8, 1995 U.S. Senate
D12: Sept. 11, 1995 U.S. Senate
D13: Sept. 12, 1995 U.S. Senate
D14: Sept. 13, 1995 U.S. Senate
D15: Sept. 14, 1995 U.S. Senate
D16: Sept. 19, 1995 U.S. Senate

Group 4: Documents 17-20

D17: Oct. 25, 1995 US House
D18: Oct. 25, 1995 US Senate
D19: Oct. 26, 1995 US House
D20: Oct. 26, 1995 US Senate

Group 5: Documents 23-23

D21: Nov 17, 1995 US House
D22: Nov 17, 1995 US Senate
D23: Nov 20, 1995 US House

Group 6: Documents 24-25

D24: Dec.21, 1995 US House
D25: Dec.22, 1995 US Senate

Group 7: Documents 26-25

D26: July 17, 1996 US House
D27: July 18, 1996 US House

Group 8: Documents 28-31

D28: July 18, 1996 US Senate
D29: July 18, 1996 US Senate
D30: July 19, 1996 US Senate
D31: July 22, 1996 US Senate

Group 9: Document 32

D32: July 31, 1996 US House

Appendix 1: Floor Debates Pertaining to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Congressional Information Service 1996).³⁵

141 Congressional Record, 104th Congress, 1st Session - 1995

- Mar. 21, House consideration of H.R. 4, p. H3343.
Mar. 22, House consideration of H.R. 4, p. H3436.
Mar. 23, House consideration of H.R. 4, p. H3581.
Mar. 24, House consideration and passage of H.R. 4, p. H3742.
Aug. 5, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S11575.
Aug. 7, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S11735.
Aug. 8, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S11803.
Aug. 11, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S12428.
Sept. 6, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S12680.
Sept. 7, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S12757.
Sept. 8, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S12873.
Sept. 11, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S13143.
Sept. 12, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S13315.
Sept. 13, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S13481.
Sept. 14, Senate consideration of H.R. 4, p. S13558.
Sept. 19, Senate consideration and passage of H.R. 4 with amendments, p. S13770.
Oct. 25, House consideration of H.R. 2491, p. H10781.
Oct. 25, Senate consideration of S. 1357, p. S15599.
Oct. 26, Senate consideration of S. 1357, p. S15707.
Oct. 26, House consideration and passage of H.R. 2491, p. H10853.
Nov. 17, House agreement to the conference report on H.R. 2491, p. H13148.
Nov. 17, Senate agreement to the conference report on H.R. 2491, with an amendment, p. S17227.
Nov. 20, House concurrence in the Senate amendment to the conference report on H.R. 2491, p. H13379.
Dec. 21, House agreement to the conference report on H.R. 4, p. H15317.
Dec. 21, Senate consideration of the conference report on H.R. 4, p. S19086.
Dec. 22, Senate agreement to the conference report on H.R. 4, p. S19154.

142 Congressional Record, 104th Congress, 2nd Session - 1996

- July 17, House consideration of H.R. 3734, p. H7745.
July 18, House consideration and passage of H.R. 3734, p. H7784.
July 18, Senate consideration of S. 1956, p. S8070.
July 19, Senate consideration of S. 1956, p. S8329.
July 22, Senate consideration of S. 1956, p. S8395.
July 23, Senate consideration of S. 1956, consideration and passage of H.R. 3734 with an amendment, and return to the calendar of S. 1956, p. S8493
July 31, House agreement to the conference report on H.R. 3734, p. H9403.

³⁵ We give the starting page for each of the referenced documents/debates.

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