

Public Administration and Private Management: Innovations in Marriage Education?

Dr Elizabeth van Acker, Senior Lecturer School of Politics and Public Policy Griffith University

In nations such as Australia and the United States, governments are becoming increasingly involved in the private sphere as they deal with a rapidly changing social environment. There have been recent shifts in political responses to the social problem of marriage breakdowns. Because approximately fifty per cent of marriages end in divorce, governments are reshaping existing policies to preserve and support marriage. Responding to the challenge of preventing marriage breakdowns, governments have developed policies and established programs in this usually private arena. This paper examines one of the ways in which governments are attempting to tackle the problems of marriage breakdowns. In particular, it broadly describes programs designed to strengthen marital relationships by intervention and prevention strategies. Public policies encourage couples to participate in government-sponsored relationship and marriage education services. While private providers such as community groups and the churches often deliver the programs, this strategy indicates that governments are developing political measures and policy ideas about personal responsibility and marriage.

The paper suggests that governments are encouraging people to take greater responsibility for their personal relationships, yet at the same time attempting to regulate people's preparation for marriage. Administrative strategies recognizing public values of the social and economic benefits of stable marriages, as well as private values of personal responsibility, indicate the connections [and tensions] between the public and the private. Innovative public policies involving non-government organizations offer marrying couples the opportunity to get ready for marriage. The paper presents a comparative study of government reforms to marriage, indicating that while remaining at arm's length, public policies are addressing what goes on in people's most intimate relationships.

In many Western nations such as Australia and the United States, governments are developing policies with the objective of strengthening marriage and keeping families together. The Howard and Bush governments have generally adopted neo-liberal principles, asserting the values of freedom, the market and small government. Protecting the rights of the individual is imperative as they are recognized as the source from which society derives its moral standing. These governments see their role as establishing a framework in which a free society can flourish, while simultaneously espousing a reduction in the role of the government and lessening public funding. This reinforces the notion that the individual should be self reliant, taking personal responsibility for his or her actions. While primacy is given to individual choice, these governments also promote ideals of social harmony within the family. In spite of neo-liberal commitments, private matters such as marriage are not beyond the scope of government intervention. Indeed, marriage and the family have been idealised, resulting in a

paradoxical division between the public and the private. The governments encourage self-reliance and individual freedom, while at the same time showing concern about the success of private relationships.

This paper compares public policies concerning marriage in the United States of America and Australia. It will show that governments in the two countries have similar goals - promoting healthy marriages to sustain a stable and morally coherent society. Both federal governments have always been involved in the institution of marriage, because it is generally regarded as the basic unit and bedrock of society and therefore, a matter of public concern (see Ooms, 2001). Whitehead and Popenoe (2003) argue, however, that many people view marriage as a private issue based on personal feelings and none of any government's business [unless the relationship harms or encroaches on someone's liberties]. People who marry for romantic love do not see the need for marriage preparation: 'the conduct of intimate relationships is a private matter' (2003: 7). According to this view: 'a couple's intimate relationship is nobody's business but the two people involved, unless, of course, their relationship hurts, taxes, or impinges on another's liberties' (Whitehead and Popenoe 2003: 7). The only reason for government involvement is to provide legal assistance with matters such as marriage licenses and divorce decrees. Nonetheless, in both the United States and Australia, policy makers are concerned about the effects of divorce and single parenthood not only on adults and children, but also on communities and the economy. The reason for government involvement, therefore, is to rejuvenate and strengthen the institution of marriage through public policies as well as private action via the community sector.

Marriage and government policies in the United States of America

The US federal government has been involved in the institution of marriage in various ways. Ooms (2001) argues that in recent decades the federal government treated marriage as the "m-word", assuming that because of its private, contractual nature, it was "off bounds" to government policy. By the mid 1990s, however, federal policy makers increased their interest in the institution of marriage. The federal government became primarily concerned with reducing out of wedlock births which it views as a main cause of welfare dependency and other social problems. State marriage initiatives have been more concerned about the effects of high divorce rates and absent fathers (Ooms 2001: 171).

In 1996, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which defined "marriage" and "spouse" in federal law as concerning one man and one woman and also upheld that no state would be required to honor a same-sex marriage contracted in another state. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) replaced the welfare program (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) with the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) program. This welfare reform package included goals relating directly or indirectly to marriage, including the

promotion of job preparation, work and marriage; the prevention and reduction of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and the encouragement of forming and maintaining two-parent families. The package is the first federal law to provide the funds, the mandate and the flexibility to states to strengthen the institution of marriage.

President Bush has proposed federal policy aimed at addressing the breakdown of married families. In 2002, he requested a \$300 million package to promote child well-being and healthy marriages as part of the reauthorization of the TANF Act. Consequently, H.R. 4737, the Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act passed the House of Representatives in February 2002. This Act would have changed the TANF program to encourage states to promote marriage. The bill asked for substantial funds of \$1.6 billion over five years. It included a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) program entitled "Healthy Marriage Promotion Grants" and an initiative "Marriage Research and Demonstration Funds". It also provided for the "Promotion and Support of Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Grants". The Senate Finance Committee passed a bi-partisan reauthorization bill in 2002, but it was not brought to the Senate floor for action. Thus reauthorization of the TANF program did not occur in 2002. H.R. 4, the Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2003 passed the House of Representatives in February 2003. Its marriage provisions are similar to H. R. 4737. However, marriage-related provisions are for six years instead of five. The bill asked for a total of \$1.9 billion (\$1.3 billion in federal funding and \$600 million in state funding). It included the same three programs as the previous bill. The Senate Finance Committee is currently dealing with the bill (see Parke, 2003).

Many organisations that aim to encourage and strengthen marriage cite its benefits. There is consensus in the research that children tend to be better off, financially and emotionally when their parents are married to each other [assuming that there is no domestic violence, major conflicts or unhappiness]. For example, the Institute for American Values (2002) cites a report co-authored by 13 leading American social science researchers, "Why Marriage Matters". According to this report, marriage is an important social good providing positive outcomes for both children and adults. Children in intact, two-parent families tend to earn more and learn more. They also tend to lead longer, healthier, happier lives, avoid alcohol and drug abuse and endure much less physical and psychological abuse. Because of this, they generally require fewer government-paid social services, such as remedial learning, criminal justice, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, depression counselling, and medical, income and housing-aid programs (2002). Thus, building healthy marriages is recognised as a legitimate public concern.

A great deal of activism is evident in relation to marriage preparation, much of which receives government funding in some form. There is no reliable data, however, on the number of couples

attending marriage preparation, as the programs are so varied and not co-ordinated by any central agency. The main types comprise the following four categories.

1. Grass-roots marriage movements

Smart Marriages is a coalition of groups interested in strengthening marriage and actively participating in marriage education. It is an independent, non-partisan, non-denominational, non-sectarian organization. It receives no support grants or money from any source. Its funding relies on the proceeds of its annual conference. This private organisation provides information on a range of courses via its website and a free newsletter. It is up to the public and community groups to access this information.

2. State experiments with marriage strengthening projects

The public/private split is evident in various states such as Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Tennessee and Utah that have experimented with different marriage programs. One of the most extensive experiments began in Oklahoma. In 1999, Governor Frank Keating of Oklahoma announced his goal of reducing the state's divorce rate [the second highest divorce rate in the US] by one-third within 10 years. This led to the establishment of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI). In 2000, the state used \$10 million of unspent TANF funds for marriage programs. The OMI is a public/private partnership which aims to lower the state's divorce rate, strengthen families and reduce dependence on government support. The OMI argues that despite a growing divorce rate and larger numbers of couples cohabitating, 75% of first marriages are conducted in a church, synagogue, or mosque with a religious leader performing the ceremony (OMI, 2003). Therefore, faith sector leaders have been leading partners of the initiative, with hundreds signing the Oklahoma Marriage Covenant. The Covenant requests the faith leader to agree to the following minimum criteria for couples to marry in their religious institution.

- I will request a preparation period of four to six months of all couples asking me to preside over their wedding ceremony.
- I will conduct four to six marital preparation sessions with each couple during the preparation period.
- I will use the preparation period to encourage the spiritual formation of the couple.
- I will encourage the training of mentoring couples to assist young couples during the crucial first years of marriage (OMI, 2003).

Oklahoma is using TANF funding to train state workers, community groups and pastors to deliver Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) a curriculum developed at the Center for Marriage and Family Studies, University of Denver [funded by the National Institute of Mental Health]. The communication program is designed to dispel myths about marriage, teach relationships skills

and change a couple's attitudes. It can also be used by workers or within families. Evaluations of PREP suggest their long-term successful effects (see Stanley et al, 2001).

The OMI (2003) provides a clear rationale for why public organisations are becoming involved with private organisations in marriage. It says,

Some may wonder why government should get involved in something as personal a decision as marriage. First, the OMI does not penalize the couple that chooses divorce, nor does it encourage people to remain in violent or unhealthy relationships. What it does encourage is a positive way for government to support healthy marriages. The government's current role as it relates to our families usually occurs after a crisis event or when the family has reached unbearable circumstances. Does a healthy family require child support collections, welfare and food stamp allocations, foster care, court actions, etc? These are all ways that government intervenes in our personal lives, wouldn't it be better to have that interaction on a positive note and before the crisis occurs rather than after? (2003: 3)

Thus government intervention is viewed as an acceptable measure in private matters if it can prevent problems before they arise.

In Florida, a marriage and relationship skills course for high school students is available as a result of the 1998 Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act. In Florida and Arizona marriage handbooks are given to couples when they apply for marriage licenses. These books provide information about building strong marriages, the effects of divorce and the availability of community resources. In Utah, marrying couples are given a video about marriage (see Parke and Ooms 2002 for examples of state activities). While some states are active in marriage preparation, it is important to note that many states are not involved at all.

3. Community coalitions of faith, business and public groups

Various groups, both public and private, are working together to develop strategies for supporting strong marriages. For example, the Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage Policy initiative was set up in 1996. Now known as Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids, this organisation works in partnership with City Vision and West Michigan Christian Foundation. These agencies are working together to improve couple relationships and reduce potential for domestic violence. This is part of a five-year project with the main aim of improving child support enforcement and the financial well being of children from low-income families. The project received \$990,000 in federal funding in May 2003. Local businesses are urged to become involved and include marriage education as an Employee Assistance Program benefit. This is considered to be more cost-effective in preventing marital distress than incurring the costs of counselling and lost productivity involved when workers' marriages break up (Mettler, 2003: 1).

Like the approach adopted in Oklahoma, Greater Grand Rapids mobilizes the resources of many sectors of the community. Government, education bodies, legal service providers, faith-based organisations, businesses and the media are attempting to create a more marriage-supportive culture and to provide new services to promote, support and strengthen couples and marriage and reduce out of wedlock childbearing and divorce. Social workers from the Department of Human Services, psychologists and education facilitators have been funded to promote the virtues of marriage to clients, students and armed services personnel. Public service announcements highlighting the benefits of marriage and the necessary skills for successful marriages have been shown on television and billboards, in newspapers and announced on radio.

President Bush approves of church-based programs using 'mentor couples' who counsel couples intending to marry. Marriage Savers, a national non-profit organization is one of the programs that he supports. Established in 1996 by Mike McManus, Marriage Savers is based on a ministry that works with local congregations. Its aim is to help couples prepare for lifelong marriage as well as to strengthen existing marriages and restore troubled ones. A report discussing McManus's program involved 302 couples who registered for a marriage preparation class between 1992-2000. 222 couples completed the program, married and are still married. 34 couples (12% of couples) broke their engagement before the wedding (2003, 4).

Couples take an inventory, then meet with a mentor couple to discuss the results. The program supports mentor couples who have learned to place the good of their spouse ahead of themselves. Marriage Savers argues that less than a fifth of couples who seek help from professional counsellors are able to save their marriage (2003, 22). Couples also attend a series of lectures, taught from a biblical perspective, raising a common myth of marriage. Lasting marriages, it is argued, are founded on the vows, the commitment to remain together (2003, 12). Couples also complete a work book which researches Scripture on marriage. Kotlowitz (2002, 3) criticised McManus's approach because he is 'given to moralizing, some of which can be alienating' for couples. The Catholic Church is also involved in marriage preparation, particularly in issues such as family planning (see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998).

4. Think tanks and research centres

Centres across the political spectrum conduct research into marriage, marriage readiness and policies. This includes the Heritage Foundation which was designed to formulate and promote conservative public policies; the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) a nonprofit organization aiming to promote a progressive agenda in family policy; and the Institute for American Values attempting to renew marriage and family life. The Fragile Families and Wellbeing Study was a joint project of Columbia and Princeton Universities. The Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver develops marriage programs and the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University is a

nonpartisan, nonsectarian venture that seeks to strengthen marriage through research and analysis to inform public policy.

Both conservatives and liberals support marriage preparation. For example, Fagan from the Heritage Foundation (2002, 2) argues that by providing funds to

educate people on the benefits of marriage and encourage unwed parents to acquire the skills for stable marriages, Congress can jump start the process of rebuilding a culture of marriage in America and improving the prospects for millions of America's most fragile families.

He cites the case of Wisconsin, where reforms tied welfare benefits to work via TANF funding and consequently caseloads were reduced by about one-third. Fagan argues that a similar approach should be adopted for restoring a 'culture of marriage among unwed parents in fragile families, most of whom are likely to be receiving some government benefits' (2002, 5). The Fragile Families Survey found that most unwed mothers wanted to marry the father of their child. The national study found that one-half of unmarried parents are living together, and another third are romantically attached but not cohabiting at the time of their child's birth.

Social conservatives have been criticised for confusing marriage policy with welfare – they would like to replace welfare with marriage policy: the 'get married and stay married and you won't need welfare' argument. Kotlowitz (2002) and other liberals contend that these types of programs stigmatize single mothers and risk being dismissive of children who happen to find themselves in single-parent families. Ooms (2002, 4-7) who works for CLASP, argues for a package of services to offer young families a combination of "soft" services. This would include relationship skills and marriage education workshops, financial management classes and peer support groups and "hard" services – job training and placement, housing, medical coverage and substance-abuse treatment if necessary.

Marriage and government policies in Australia

Programs attempting to reform the institution of marriage are not connected to welfare policy as they are in the United States. There is no particular focus on encouraging the poor to marry as a way of decreasing welfare dependency. Nonetheless, there have been shifts in institutional directions as the government attempts to respond to the social problem of marriage breakdowns, expressing its particular values by reshaping existing policies. The government's establishment of pre-marital education programs constructs the needs of heterosexual women and men intending to marry. Some programs are new, while other private, community based or church organisations receive more government funding than in the past.

To counteract the need for regulating marital breakdown, the government tries to assist the healthy development of marriages. Political strategies have focused on the prevention of marriage breakdowns for decades. In the 1940s the Young Christian Workers – a Catholic youth organisation concerned with social development - handled pre-marriage programs. Harris *et al.* (1992) argue that the catalyst was the changing nature of society at the time: war had shattered family ties, making it difficult for mothers and fathers to pass on the knowledge and skills required to be a good husband or wife. These church sponsored conferences promoted Christian values as a solution to the increasing incidence of marital breakdown. Concurrently, government sponsored marriage guidance and counselling services were expanding. Due to public recognition and financial assistance, organisations began using professionally trained staff for counselling and tutoring couples considering marriage (Harris *et al.*, 1992, 11)

Since the 1960s, government-supported schemes such as the Family Services Program have provided grants to Christian churches and secular organisations offering marriage counselling. Services increased in marriage education, family skills and parenting programs. The most important principle was promoting and preserving quality family relationships. By the 1980s there was a significant change in the content of the subject matter. Besides assisting couples to reflect on themselves and marriage, courses began teaching marital communication and conflict resolution. Pre-marital education has become an instructive practice in its own right responding to increasing community, church and government concern for couples, the marriages they enter and the families they create (Harris *et al.*, 1992, 12-3). The Attorney-General's department provides funding in accordance with specifications found in the *Family Law Act* (Section 43 (a) and (b)) and in the *Marriage Act* (Section 9C). These programs demonstrate the development of collaboration between government and community, encouraging the provision of relationship advice and skills to marrying couples and families.

Various reviews of marriage education programs and services have taken place over the past decades, advocating the need for improvements in marriage preparation. For example, the 1992 Joint Select Committee on Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act (para 4.97) stated that,

there is a compelling cost benefit argument in favour of more funding for preventative education, which might help reduce the number of marriages which reach the stage of breakdown. Successive governments have given this field far too low a priority for funding, and the Committee believes that immediate actions should be taken to rectify this situation.

This argument reinforces the need for the government to address the expense of marriage breakdowns. Estimated costs of marriage and family breakdown are more than \$3 billion annually. The figure doubles when adding indirect costs, not to mention the personal and emotional trauma involved (HRSCCLA, 1998, 51).

The latest political reforms stem from *To Have and to Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (HRSC/LCA, 1998). This House of Representatives report recommends educational programs for couples intending to marry, suggesting that the government should increase financial support and provide more relationship advice and skills. It argues that marriage and relationship education and family skills training should be recognized as distinct from programs of therapy, counselling and mediation. This is a pragmatic way of coaching people about marriage practices, far removed from the romantic messages of many cultural representations. Indeed, the report acknowledges that people's values and expectations of marriage are misplaced. It argues that some couples 'often have unrealistic expectations of the challenge of marriage and the media images of blissful relationships contribute to high expectations without necessarily the concurrent skills' (1998, 58). Hence the need for developing pre-marriage programs.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) administers programs designed to help couples to explore their relationship and develop personal skills. This includes Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE) and Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study (FOCCUS) programs which seek to help couples identify their strengths and areas for growth. Courses and activities cover issues such as communication, conflict, balancing work, home and relationships, sharing responsibility, intimacy and sexuality. The Family Relationships Branch, operating within the Department of (FaCS) funds the Marriage and Family Council. Standard topics cover family backgrounds; expectations of marriage; communication skills and conflict resolution strategies. The Department also sponsors the Men and Family Relationships initiative, aiming to break down barriers for men in accessing relationship services.

The federal government funds approximately 100 community organizations across all states in Australia to deliver relationship services, spending about \$4 million annually. Clients pay for professional relationship services delivered by a range of groups such as Anglicare, Centacare or Relationships Australia. For example, the Catholic Society for Marriage Education promotes and supports marriage education, conducts an annual conference, producing *Threshold* a magazine about marriage education and uses Department of FaCS programs such as RELATE and FOCCUS. Think Tanks such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies carry out research on marriage education programs and collaborate with the Department of FaCS, the Office of the Status of Women and various universities.

In 1999, the then Minister for Family and Community Services, Jocelyn Newman, expressed the links between public intervention and education in private matters. At the launch of the pre-marriage education pilot project, she argued that it is important to 'teach people how to talk their problems through' and 'how to listen to each other' (1999, 1).

It means giving people the skills to negotiate conflicts and deal with problems in practical ways. And it means acknowledging the importance and value of *their* relationship, *their* marriage, and *their* family within the broader community (1999, 1, italics in original).

Do-it-yourself kits were also available for couples who were unable to attend a pre-marriage education course (Newman, 2000, p. 1). Senator Newman stated that the programs helping to prevent family break-ups are a 'very effective *investment* in family well-being' (2000, 1). She articulates the political tension between marriage as a 'natural' and expected condition and the idea that, despite this, marriage is something for which people need training. Newman says, 'people tend to forget that it is the traditional institutions of family and community, not governments, that deliver the most effective social support' (2000, 2). She goes on to say that 'attitudes are changing and there seems greater acceptance of the idea that we need to acquire the skills for marriage just as we need lessons for driving a car' (2000, 3). This supports the views in *To Have and to Hold* that challenges the perception

that couples invariably move from a state of romantic love to a struggle between them and, if successful to a state of intimacy. Common to the many programs of marriage education is the understanding that it is not compatible views, which are ultimately important in determining marital stability, but the manner in which couples work out their differences (HRSCCLCA, 1998, 142).

This position promotes personal responsibility, while at the same time encouraging people to participate in government-sponsored programs.

Public policy implications of marriage education programs

Increasing the number of participants in education programs before they marry is a difficult policy objective. People may resist government intervention into that most personal area of relationships, as it is *too* private. As the HRSCCLCA report acknowledges,

Many consider marriage a natural, voluntary relationship based on the ideal of romantic love. Love is the cement that binds the couple together and is either present or it isn't. The notion that programs and policies might have anything to do with improving the quality of a couple's relationships or their decision to divorce is viewed with skepticism (1998, 67).

Therefore, it is up to the government to promote the benefits that can accrue to adults and children (in terms of enhanced educational, mental and physical health outcomes) through promotion of and support for satisfying and stable marriage and family life (1998, 141).

Preventive programs suffer by association with therapy and counselling. It is less likely that people will seek education programs if they regard them as relevant only for couples with "problems". Reforms encompassing pre-marital education deliberately emphasize prevention rather than therapy, attempting to challenge two powerful social taboos: relationships are entirely private and natural. Because many people regard their relationships as "private", a common perception is that there is no need to discuss them publicly or openly, except in a very general sense. Marriage, people maintain, is

a natural state and people know automatically and innately how to “do it”. Therefore, education is not required if it comes naturally (HRSC/LCA, 1998, 155). This view is significant, given that one of the barriers to consumers’ participation is this view that education programs invade their privacy.

Another difficulty is encouraging people to attend programs. In Australia, it is compulsory for those marrying in the Catholic Church to complete a course, but not for other marrying couples. There is no advertising campaign highlighting the benefits of the programs. Typically, as many educators pointed out to me, couples maintain that they are too busy planning their weddings to attend classes or regard them as just another expense. Consequently, only about one third of marrying couples attend some form of marriage education. Those who do not participate tend to be from non-English speaking backgrounds, indigenous people, people with less formal education, living in rural or remote areas, couples married in civil rather than religious ceremonies, couples living together, and young people (Halford, 2000, vii). Providing relationship education that recognizes diversity and is culturally appropriate, and is available at different times for married couples will be challenging for any government.

Government initiatives concerning marriage have attempted to publicly administer and take responsibility for personal relationships. Ooms (2002) argues that this had led to a controversy about values. Most people consider marriage, divorce and bearing children as intensely private matters. ‘Any policy proposals that hint at coercing people to marry, reinforcing Victorian conceptions of gender roles, or limiting the right to end bad marriages are viewed as counter to US values of individual autonomy and privacy’ (2002, 3). This also applies in Australia. Other concerns about marriage include the need to think about providing better education, access to decent paying jobs and child care. Supporting marriage programs may actually be an inexpensive “vote-winner”, as governments are seen to be doing something without addressing deeper social problems such as unemployment or childcare. Additionally, proffering marriage as the ideal blames single parents. Ooms (2002) argues that the pro-marriage agenda discriminates against ethnic and sexual minorities and their children, particularly gays and lesbians. Moreover, marriage per se is too simplistic a solution to the complex problems of the poor. Marrying those on low incomes will not magically raise the family out of poverty when the parents have no skills, no jobs, poor housing, and may be struggling with depression, substance abuse, or domestic violence. Ooms (2002) suggests that funds spent on untested marriage promotion activities may be taken away from programs that provide desperately needed services for single parents such as child care.

Conclusion

Many people view marriage as an intimate relationship between freely consenting adults that does not merit the development of public policies. Intruding into the private domain of marriage may be offensive to some, but so are the courts when settling divorce and child support agencies when attempting to resolve payment problems. This paper has considered the policy approaches of

governments to marriage preparation. It has described the ways in which governments are involved with various non-government and non-profit organizations in delivering marriage education programs. In America, the federal government is particularly interested in strengthening marriages and some state governments are very active in this area. In Australia, governments are providing small amounts of funding, but service providers often have great autonomy to conduct programs as they see fit. While it is compulsory to complete marriage preparation for couples marrying in the Catholic Church, it is not for couples marrying elsewhere. In both countries there is some reluctance to force people to participate in pre-marriage education. In a climate in which governments have been less interventionist and retreating from social and welfare matters, this is not surprising. Perhaps there is a perception that there is something a little Orwellian about public agencies offering "marriage-skills training" rather than viewing this as sensible policy in a complex area of the private sphere.

References

- Anderson, M. (2001), 'Welfare and Marriage Issues' [Congressional Testimony Serial No. 107-28] 22 May.
- Attorney-General's Department (1999a), *Discussion Paper. Property and Family Law: Options for Change*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Attorney-General's Department (1999b), *The Role and Responsibilities of Marriage Celebrants*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Attorney-General's Department (1999c), *A Code of Practice for Marriage Celebrants*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995), *Marriages and Divorces*, Cat. No. 3310.0
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998), *Australian Demographic Statistics*, Cat. No. 3101.0
- Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (2000), 'Attorney General's Proposal for Marriage Celebrants Unworkable, Misses the Main Point, and is Invasive of Citizen Privacy', *Media Release*, 30 October.
- Bush, G. (2002a), *Working Toward Independence*. Washington D. C.: The White House
- Bush, G. (2002b), 'President Urges Senate to Pass Compassionate Welfare Reform Bill.' 29 July. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/07/200207296.html>
- Child Support Agency (2003), *Child Support Agency: Background*, <http://www.csa.gov.au>
- Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (2000a), 'Fact Sheet: What is the Pre-Marriage Education Voucher Pilot?', Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (2000b), *To Have and To Hold: Final Response*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- DeParle, J. (1999), 'The Welfare Dilemma: A collection of Articles by Jason deParle. New York Times.' www.nytimes.com/library/national/deparleindex.html
- Disney, H. (1999), 'Relationships Australia Celebrates 50 Years of Service', in *Relationships Australia, Papers to Celebrate 50 Years of Relationships Australia*, Relationships Australia, Deakin, pp. 9-16.
- Donovan Research, (2001), *Pre-Marriage Education Pilot Project: Final Report to Department of Family and Community Services*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.
- Edgar D. (2000), 'Families and the Social Reconstruction of Marriage and Parenthood in Australia', in W. Weeks and M. Quinn (eds.), *Issues Facing Australian Families: Human Services Respond*, (3rd ed) Longman, Melbourne, pp.19-31.
- Fagan, P. (2002), 'Restoring a Culture of Marriage: Good News for Policymakers from the Fragile Families Survey'. *Backgrounders*, No. 1560: 1-7, The Heritage Foundation: Washington.
- Gallagher M. (2002), 'Marriage and Public Policy: What Can Government Do?' Institute for American Values: Washington.
- Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage Policy, (2003), *Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids*, <http://www.ggrcmarriagepolicy.org>

- Halford, K. (2000), *Australian Couples in Millennium Three*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.
- Hansard (2000), 'Family Law Amendment Bill' (second reading), *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, 17 August.
- Harris, R., Simons M., Willis P. and Barrie A. (1992), *Love, Sex and Waterskiing: The Experience of Pre-Marriage Education in Australia*, Centre for Human Resource Studies, University of South Australia.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (HRSC/LCA) (1998), *To Have and to Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Institute for American Values (2002), 'Why Marriage Matters', <http://www.americanvalues.org>
- Joint Select Committee on Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act (1992), *Certain Aspects of the Operation and Interpretation of the Family Law Act*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Kotlowitz, A. (2002), 'Are the Conservatives Right?', *Frontline*, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/marriage>
- Mackay, H. (1999), 'Is Marriage Going Out of Fashion?' in *Relationships Australia, Papers to Celebrate 50 Years of Relationships Australia*, Relationships Australia, Deakin, pp. 47-53.
- Mettler, P. (2003), 'Three Organizations in West Michigan will use Federal Grant of \$999,000 to Develop a Child Support Demonstration Project', Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, Grand Rapids.
- National Organization for Women (2002), *Executive Summary, National Council of Women's Organizations Domestic Priorities Task Force Recommendations for TANF Reauthorization*, <http://www.now.org/issues/economic/welfare/principles.html>
- Newman, J. (1999), 'Launch of Pre-Marriage Education Pilot Project', *Media Release*, 16 October.
- Newman, J. (2000), 'Pre-marriage Education Kits Launched', *Media Release*, 21 June.
- O'Connor, J., Shola Orloff, A. and Shaver, S. (1999), *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge University.
- Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, (2003), 'Workshops.' <http://www.okmarriage.org/marriageworkshops.htm>
- Ooms T. (2001), 'The Role of the Federal Government in Strengthening Marriage', *Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law*, Vol. 9: 1: 163-191.
- Ooms T. (2002), 'Marriage-Plus.' Center for Law and Social Policy: Washington.
- Parke, M. (2003), 'Marriage-Related Provisions in Recent Welfare Reauthorization Proposals: A Summary.' Center for Law and Social Policy: Washington.
- Parke, M. and Ooms, T. (2002), 'More Than A Dating Service? State Activities Designed to Strengthen and Promote Marriage.' Center for Law and Social Policy: Washington.
- Parker, R. (1999), 'A Framework for Future Research in Premarriage Education', *Australian Family Briefing No. 8*, available at <http://www.aifs.org.au/institute/pubs/briefing8.html>
- Relationships Australia (1999), *Papers to Celebrate 50 Years of Relationships Australia*, Relationships Australia, Deakin.
- Sawhill, I. (2002a), 'Is Lack of Marriage the Real Problem?' *The American Prospect*, 13: 7, 1-3.
- Sawhill, I. (2002b), 'The perils of early motherhood.' *The Public Interest*, Winter.
- Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee (1995), *The Family Law Reform Bill 1994 and the Family Law Reform Bill (no 2) 1994*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Stanley S. and Markman H. (1997), *Can Governments Rescue Marriages*, University of Denver, Center for Marital and Family Studies.
- Stanley S., Markman H. and Jenkins N. (2002), 'Marriage Education and Government Policy: Helping Couples Who Choose Marriage Achieve Success', *Smart Marriages*, <http://www.smartmarriages.com>
- Stanley S., Markman H., Prado L. Olmos-Gallo A., Tonelli L., St. Peters M. Leber D., Bobulinski M., Cordova A. and Whitton S. (2001), 'Community-Based Premarital Prevention: Clergy and Lay Leaders on the Front Lines', *Family Relations*, 50: 1, 67-76.
- Stone, L. (1977), *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1998), *NFP Forum Diocesan Activity Report*, 9: 1 & 2.
- Whitehead Dafoe B. and Popenoe D. (2003), *The State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America*, New Brunswick, NJ: The National Marriage Project at Rutgers University.
- Williams, D. (1997), *Discussion Paper: Civil Marriage Celebrants Program*, November.
- Williams, D. (2000a), *Marriage Celebrants are Important to Long, Healthy Marriages*, News Release, 1 November.
- Williams, D. (2000b), *Proposals Paper: Reform of the Marriage Celebrants Program*, Parliament House, Canberra.
- Zedlewski S. and Loprest P. (2001), 'Will TANF work for the most disadvantaged families?' in *The New World of Welfare*, eds. R. Blank and R. Haskins, Washington D. C.: Brookings Institution.