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The Future of Children

Princeton-Brookings

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO STABLE MARRIAGE

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Introduction: ISABEL SAWHILL

Overview: SARA McLANAHAN

Panel 1: Policymakers

Moderator: RON HASKINS

Panelists: DEL. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC)

SEN. SAM BROWNBACK (R-KS)

Panel 2: Overcoming Barriers

Moderator: ELISABETH DONAHUE

Panelists: JULIE BAUMGARDNER

VIVIAN BERRYHILL

KATHRYN EDIN

RON MINCY

ISABEL SAWHILL

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASKINS: [In progress] —so our schedule will be: I'm going to make about one minute of introduction, then Senator Brownback will speak. Then he'll leave. Then Representative Norton will speak. And then she will take a few questions, and then she will leave and then we'll have the second panel. So that's going to be the order of the day.

Let me put three ideas, I think we might even call facts, on the table, just to set the basic background. The first thing is that every measure of family dissolution, as probably everybody in this room knows, has dissolved remarkably in the last 30 years. So we have high divorce rates, we have extremely high non-marital birth rates, and the marriage rates have been falling. And all of these have affected low-income families and minority families more than majority families.

Fact number two is that since publication of McLanahan and Sandefur's book on single parents in 1994, there seems to be almost but universal agreement in the academic world that being reared in a single-parent family is bad for children. And the publication of this journal today, the Future of Children, entirely devoted to marriage, which we'll talk about more in a few moments when we have a little more leisure time, I think, just puts a stamp of findings that the academic world does in fact agree that the best circumstance for rearing children is the married, two-parent family.

And then the third issue is much more up in the air, and that is, all right, if we have high rates of family dissolution and if marriage would be good for children, could we increase rates of marriage? Because if we could, children would benefit, adults

would benefit, society would benefit, and disproportionately low-income minority children would benefit.

So that is where we are as a nation. Can we increase marriage rates and create healthy marriages that are positive environments for children? And, very fortunately, we have today with us two people who have ideas about how to do this. So without further introduction, I'm going to let Senator Brownback describe his ideas and then, after he leaves, we'll do the same thing with Mrs. Norton and have a time for questions from the audience.

Thank you so much again for coming.

SENATOR BROWNBACK: My pleasure. Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. And my apologies for having to amend the schedule so much, but the Judge Roberts hearing starts at 9:30, and that's the big show. I'm supposed to be there, so I've just really got to bolt to get up to that.

Thank you for doing this, Brookings. Thank you for doing for doing this. I was noting when I came up here, I think this is the first time that I've ever spoken at a Brookings Institution event. I hope it doesn't hurt your reputation in the process. I will use you—you can use me against you or for you, whichever helps you the most in this process.

I want to go very quickly and briefly and succinctly to the issue. I came in as D.C. Subcommittee, Appropriations Subcommittee chairman on the Senate side this year. I think Delegate Norton was scared to death. She knew me, but she also said, "It's one of those pro-life guys; we've got to watch out for him." And, "What else is he going to push on me in this?"

I went and met with the mayor and a number of other people. I'd been the D.C. Authorizing Committee chairman earlier, when we made a number of changes in the tax code to help the District of Columbia, which worked very well. I went to the mayor and said it looks like to me there's two glaring problems—a lot of good improvement in the District of Columbia, things really moving forward and a lot of great places, but it looks like to me there's a couple of really big areas we don't have progress moving forward: the schools—we still don't have the functionality that we need in the schools, the outcomes are not being produced — and the family units.

The mayor said the schools, "I've tried, do you want to try?" Go ahead. God bless you. You know, we're going to do anything we can and we've got some ideas stewing on that. But he said, "The family unit? I agree with you." We just don't have the family unit formation that we need to have taking place. The numbers, the raw numbers are very disconcerting. Fifty-seven percent of the children in the District of Columbia born to a single parent—57 percent. And of that, if you look in the African American community, it's 75 percent. He was going, you're right, we need to have better, stronger development of family units. What do you want to try to do?

So we started kicking different things around and we came up with this idea of marriage development accounts built off of the individual development account idea and thought that had been tried—and is being moved forward—about six, seven years ago. The notion there was let's try to help people that are in a low-income situation to build together a bit of a nest egg to be able to use for key things that they need to have, whether it's the purchase of a car, whether it's getting education or job-training skills. Let's extend that to marriage development accounts for two people

coming together, and let's do it also on pre-marriage development and on marriage development accounts.

And the notion being maybe we can incentivize people, on their choice, to get married, to have children within a marital unit, to be able to help the child and them at the same time. All voluntary, all choice. The government would put in a certain amount of resources; we would require it be matched by private-sector money. It would be run by private-sector entities, a number of which they're doing in the individual development accounts process now. And let's see, and let's try it, to try to incentivize marriage.

And we don't know if this is going to work. We don't have a good idea if it's got a tested model. We can't find a tested model around the country, but let's start trying. Because we know these numbers are not good, we know from the academic world this is not a good situation for children to start out in. We know that. We know from your publications. And so we said let's try it.

So it's passed in the committee of the Senate. It will come out in front of the full Senate. I have no reason to doubt that it won't pass the full Senate. I believe we'll be able to get it through the House and we'll be able to try it.

I want to quote Senator Moynihan, Daniel Patrick Moynihan on this point. I got to work with him some before he left the Senate and has since passed away. But you'll recognize this quote, where he said the principal objective of American government at every level should be to see that children are born into intact families and that they remain so.

Now, I don't know when he said that. My guess is, since he was such a kind of an early leader on cultural indicators and issues, probably some time ago. I think that's got to be a foundational issue for us. What I would ask of you, those of you in the academic, the think-tank community, or in the policy development community, look at this possibility, look at this proposal, and develop a different one. Raise questions about how this one should be implemented. Help us to design what it is that we should measure out of this so that we can look at it, consider it, think about it, see if this is the right way to go, have it well-tested—tested in other places. Do it in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Let's try it in different population pools.

Let's look at the population that has children that are in prison. We'll have out, we hope, in the next couple of weeks the bill The Second Chance Act. It's a bipartisan bill. It's about mentoring and helping people really coming out of prison and back into society.

One of the key population pools we need to study and work on are those who have children. Those children are five times more likely to be involved in crime. They're about that much likely to not get a good education, to be involved in drug abuse. I mean, this is a tough population. But we know the population and we know we should target this to work and to see what we can do that would help. And let's target right into it. And let's say, okay, what would you design? How would you do it? What would you do differently?

I think we need to do these things. I think this is a critical issue, it is a bipartisan issue. Eleanor Holmes Norton and I are both on this—who is a dear friend of

mine, but she thinks I'm wrong on most of the world's tough issues. And I love her.

And I know she's wrong, but—

[Laughter.]

SENATOR BROWNBACK: But on this one we agree. And I'm working on other areas like this. These are things we can agree upon. And something that's so important as marriage and the development and formation of your next generation, why wouldn't we pick this low-lying fruit to work together on and develop a lot of different experiments to see what we can do to make this work?

Our fall has come fast. This is my final point, and then I'm going to leave and Eleanor's going to answer all questions on this. Clean up for my mess.

We have Mary Dietrich here, who's the staff director—Mary, hold up your hand so people can see you—is the staff director on the D.C. Appropriations Subcommittee. If you want to look at the nuts and bolts of the issue, she's much more focused in on that.

Our fall has been fast away from the institution of marriage. I think the numbers you were talking about were 30 years ago. And I just—my own personal example: I grew up in a little town, Parker, Kansas, 250 people. We had a consolidated high school, 60 people in my graduating class. I cannot remember in that school growing up knowing anybody who was born to a single mom or was in a separated family. I can't remember a single one.

You could go to that same place today and the numbers would mirror the national situation. That same small community in rural Kansas, probably as far away

from Washington—not as far away from D.C. as you can get, but it's darn far. We're not in the middle of nowhere, but you can see it from there, is what we always felt like.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR BROWNBACK: But the numbers would be roughly the same as the national numbers. That's in a 30-year time period.

We can climb back. But I think we're going to have to be purposeful—and it's like Moynihan said, we're going to have to be very purposeful that the key objective of public policy is to see that children are raised in intact families. It may make some people uncomfortable at times. We may have to discuss how you do that. We should discuss a lot of how you do that. I really, really hope that we can move it forward on a very bipartisan, left-right-middle, everybody coming together, each either trimming our rhetoric or trimming our sails to be able to work and pull ideas together, because this is a big deal and it needs to be done.

Thanks for inviting me. God bless you all.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Okay, now we're very fortunate to have Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, who has represented the District of Columbia in the Congress since 1991. She's one of the most popular politicians in the history of Washington, D.C., widely known, speaks out on many issues. She was here a little more than a year ago and spoke on this issue, so we're very glad to have you back. I think I mentioned in the introduction that she also has to leave early, but she will have time to answer a few questions, one or two from me and then one or two from the audience.

So, Mrs. Norton, thank you very much again for coming.

DELEGATE NORTON: Well, I don't mind being a serial speaker on this issue. It's been an obsession of mine now for 30 years.

I apologize that I have to get to the Senate, too—not because the District has any senators—

[Laughter.]

DELEGATE NORTON: —but because the Congress requires that its judges in its district courts be appointed by the President and approved by the Senate, and I have to get back, I believe, certainly no later than 10 minutes of 10 in order to get there to introduce two appointees.

I appreciate the focus that Brookings has given to families and especially to African American families; that you have stayed with the issue, because not a lot of other folks have. And the world is going to look very differently to all of us if more of us don't. I get a little tired of the feel-good family rhetoric in the Congress. Twenty-six percent of white families, 35 or more, going up, percent of black families headed by single women. Of course, 70 percent-plus of African American families.

The subject has generated a lot more controversy than action since the Moynihan report of 1963 that first focused on the growth of female-headed households. At that time, the problem was half of what it is today. I have come to understand why the controversy arose then. It was not only because it was a sensitive subject coming from the lips of a white man, at that point the messenger got killed, even though he became a good friend of mine. And I spoke about how prescient he was often on the floor of the House when I came to Congress.

But even more so, look at the year, 1963. Do you know where I was in 1963? In Mississippi. And then I was up here for the march on Washington, trying to get the first civil rights act passed in the history of our country. And here comes somebody talking about your mama? The timing could not have been worse.

African Americans wanted to see whether the United States of America, for the first time, would pass the first civil rights act, would pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It was my great privilege to enforce Title VII of that act. But do understand this, that we fought the Civil War in order to get equal protection of the laws. And the first enforceable civil rights law ever passed in the United States of America was passed a year after the Moynihan report, when black people were primed with the first truly mass movement in their history to get the ground rules for change in the laws.

So I think that timing and the messenger, my good friend Pat Moynihan, had a lot to do with it. But I take great issue with the notion that black people didn't want to hear it. Ten years after the Moynihan report, Vernon Jordan asked me to give the keynote speech at the Urban League convention, and I ventured an approach to this issue. I just couldn't bear the statistics then. And I think one-third of black children were born to never-married women.

But how to do it? And with the Moynihan controversy ringing in my ears, I decided to do it in the form of a love letter from a black man to a black woman. And this was the only love letter in the world ever full of statistics, I'm sure—

[Laughter.]

DELEGATE NORTON: —about the decline of anything. But it also harked back to what our history had been, a history of keeping families together under

the worst of circumstances. A history of coming north and going west, one by one, and still those families remained intact, first the husband, then the wife, then the children all piled up together and yet there was one family. Of course, why were they coming north? The promised land was not that the North was this wonderful place, but it was a place we could get some work if you had a strong back. And I think we ought to focus on the fact that, I don't care how strong your back is, the good wage that your grandfather earned or your father earned is not available to you today, because those jobs are not available to you today.

In the early '80s, when I was a full-time professor of law at Georgetown, I wrote the first article on the deterioration of the black family. [Inaudible] I'm getting controversy from this article. This article then resulted in a very important initiative by the Joint Center, which brought a group of black intellectuals to discuss major issues affecting the African American community. The first one we put out was on the black family, just telling it exactly like it was. This was done up in a slick form, about 15 or so pages in a little booklet. And the civil rights community, all the major civil rights agencies drank this up like it was water, to pass out this little booklet describing what the problem was. Looking to the government, to be sure, but focusing for the first time on the responsibility of African Americans for their own families. Essentially, we said the white man is not going to put together your family.

We have got to awaken ourselves to this problem, that the society, which has grave responsibility for the deterioration of our families, has to do, but the leadership has to come from us.

I found this small ray of hope in a statistic as I was preparing for this talk, of a slight rise in the black marriage rate. It was 46.1 percent in 1996, 47.9 percent in 2001, after a 40-year downward spiral. I will grab upon any ray of hope. But the bad news continues, frankly. Black married couples are only half the number of white married couples. And the situation keeps getting worse, so those little increments of improvement are not going to help us much.

You know, in 1963, when Moynihan first came forward with his report, more than 70 percent of black families were headed by married couples. You have got to ask yourself why did this happen? And I think all of us have to come to grips with the complicated set of reasons that that has occurred. Nearly 45 percent of black men have never married and 42 percent of black women have never married. But the problems for black women are severe, because the black women who never married have declined, from 62 percent to 31 percent between 1950 and 2002.

Let's look at the array of actors who may be implicated. The Congress has markedly lowered the priority for education and economic opportunity, slashing programs. Particularly do we see this now, in a brutal fashion, for middle-class and poor people and instead doing a huge income shift. When the history of the last few years is written, we're going to see a massive shift—there was already some shift that had been slowed down—a massive shift reinforcing unequal opportunity. Do you think that helps marriage, ladies and gentlemen? Reinforcing unequal opportunity with tax policy alone—leave aside the slashes—tax policy alone, whose major benefits have flown decidedly upward, and that is to put it quite mildly.

However, we passed a No Child Left Behind Act. It was bipartisan; it has a lot of flaws. But it certainly should have been passed. And the fact has to be faced that reading programs and strategies that help a six-year-old must be reinforced at home to produce a whole child. If not reinforced at home—understand what I mean. I really don't mean that a home has to be a place where everybody sits down and says this is what you read and so forth. This is what we want them to do. Remember, most of the children who learned to read, who came from Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, and Florida had parents who were virtually illiterate, because they had been educated in—where they gave you virtually no education—in the South. But they had intact people as parents whose actions did not unravel what they learned at school.

We have to focus on what happens in the home—not so much that everybody has to sit down and read, as important as that is, but how the home actually, with the violence, with the culture of the society that dominates the atmosphere of the home, completely overwhelms what the school is trying to do. Moreover, I understand this to have an economic underpinning and anybody who isn't willing to face it, it seems to me, is hopping over why there's been such a change in the African American community. Yet I am the first to say that decent jobs will not compete well in communities where the culture reinforces high-paying hustles.

The black church, prosperously, builds mega-churches, catering to the already converted, and does not so much as pitch a tent in the heart of the ghetto or of the black community. If you're going to move to Maryland or Virginia to build one of those huge things, which look more like a stadium, then at the very least hark back to your father's time or your grandfather's time when they pitched a tent in the summer to

get to those who would never venture to a church. You have to understand that the people out here hustling in the streets come from profoundly religious families who believe in God, believe in, in the most fundamental sense, in hell and brimfire. And they're out here drugging and shooting.

You can get to those people with whatever goes on in those churches a whole lot easier than the Republicans can talking about faith-based. If you've got some faith, base it where the people need it. You will find that you will hit a note with these young men, who've been brought up in churches and homes where at Sunday they heard the gospel. They were forced to go to church. Or the gospel music was there. But the streets have eaten them up now, and the streets have been left to themselves. The government isn't there. The federal government couldn't be further away. It's not just in Washington. It has distanced itself from the problems of such people.

We don't talk about poor people in the Congress today. Everyone just talks about the middle class. Many of us talk about the middle class; we have a majority of middle class, we have black people who are hanging on to the middle class. The word "poor" doesn't come across many people's mouths. Instead of saying "the poor and the middle class" or "the middle class and those who are disadvantaged"—they don't even get mentioned.

Katrina? Hey, everybody, they were always there. Yes, they were less and less visible. And my own sense of morality, if you want to hear the moral issue here, is the more middle class the country is, the more immoral it is to have poor people. When there was the Great Depression and most of us were struggling, that's one thing. Then you got to the post-World War II period and everybody began to rise. And as it

gets smaller and smaller, you've got to ask yourself, what's wrong with those people? Is it that they're a bunch of degenerates? Or is there something very complicated going on here that needs the intervention of all of us?

I have supported Sam's marriage development accounts, not because I believe they're the answer—and he doesn't necessarily believe they're the answer—but because anything that draws attention to this issue and begins to work on it, you're going to find me with you. In a real sense, it's kind of pathetic. It's such a small way to go about it. But a member of Congress can't find a large way to go about it, and he's doing what he can.

But if I may say so, the same administration that is at pains to talk about how important families are and how degenerate the culture is—on that they could not be more right—is the same administration that not only supports mandatory minimum sentences and sentencing guidelines that disproportionately send nonviolent black men to jail, that part of it they don't see as related to marriage. Of all of the things that have destroyed marriage in our community, nothing has been more important than the mandatory minimums.

If a woman—black women have, for the most part, understood that you shouldn't have many children. We don't have a lot of children. People have one or two children. But never-married women, it looks like they don't want to go through life without having a child, even if they don't have a husband.

But it is interesting to see the change in attitudes in our community. I'm a native Washingtonian. And I tell you, in my generation and the generation after, anybody got pregnant, well, you know, get married even if they don't stay married. The

prevailing attitude in the community is often the parents say, For God's sake, don't marry that Negro. Do not marry him. He got a record. And anybody with a felony record, having a felony record today, is worse than having black skin in my father's generation. Now having a felony conviction and a black skin, and you want to marry my daughter? Well, look, she made one mistake. Let's not make two.

That is the prevailing attitude. Therefore, you talk about marriage; people don't want to marry such people. This is the available pool by whom to have children. This is more complicated, my friends, than we admit.

So what am I going to do about it? I tell you, I can't stand it. I just can't stand it. And so I decided, what do I think is the reason for it? And I bit off what for me is, I think, a big slice to focus on. Not a program—I didn't start a program because I don't think that any of them will matter in the long run. I said, what is the reason for this? And I have concluded that the reason doesn't have to do with black people. We have all these black women, they graduate from high school, they graduate from college, and they cannot find mates.

I have to preface this by saying I regard myself as a big-time, card-carrying feminist who has spent most of the last several years focusing on black men and boys. I want to take a slice of this that matters. And the slice that matters is focusing on the part of this issue that has had almost no focus. Why have we focused on women? Because they have the children. Why have we focused on the children? Because even the most conservative Congress has to focus on children and not allow them to starve. But the men? Almost no focus. Who cares? Men have always taken care of themselves. There was no reason to focus on them.

But I decided that a focus on men and boys was essential, because the symptoms of the decline in family life that we were focusing on were very frustrating to me—how to improve poor performance in school or to reduce juvenile crime, for example, knowing full well that children from intact families are not the ones likely to have these problems. We have centered largely on the symptoms because we have not figured out a way to get hold of what I believe is one of the primary causes, the large and awesome problem of family dissolution at its roots. The problem is particularly frightening because it is global. In American society, family decline is further along in black America, but it is spreading with lightning speed through white and Hispanic families as well.

I formed a Commission on Black Men and Boys and worked initially with the Joint Center as a way to get hold of the issue from the inside, from the inside of the African American community, and then work our way back out to everybody else. Because I believe that taking on the issues facing black men and boys and work and preparation for work and pursuit of education and motivation to do that and incarceration and reentry from prison and juvenile justice and the perils of street life was a way to at least grab one of the roots instead of dealing with all these things after they have already happened, which means families with children who, only because they were born to single never-married women, have no chance in life the way most of us have.

Now, this is a tall order, and I don't overestimate what I can do in one little commission in the District of Columbia, but I can tell you what already happened. The Congressional Black Caucus, seeing my Commission on Black Men and Boys, devoted last year to hearings on black men and boys and black communities throughout

the United States. But I believe that, hard as it was to deal with one critical actor, the actor who it seemed to me had made least progress since the civil rights movement, was easier than dealing with the devastating consequences to the family itself after it happened and that it was easier than sitting and watching a generation of attractive, well-educated, young African American women who may never marry and have families because comparable young black men were diverted as youths into street life, crime, and ultimately prison. It is easier than tackling the worst effects of all the damage to entire generations of black children, and it's easier than seeing the end of the African American community as we have known it, where mothers and fathers together have forged a better life for their children, notwithstanding the burdens of racism and discrimination.

An important reason for focusing on black males is that family deterioration began with problems that directly affected black men in particular. Look at the dates, ladies and gentlemen, when this began to happen. It was before all of this—it was before drugs, it was before all this cultural outrage and nonsense, it was before crime itself was a major factor in the black community. The rapid flight of decent-paying manufacturing jobs, beginning in the 1960s, correlates almost exactly with—it actually was the late '50s—with black family decline. Men without jobs do not form families. Men without jobs—worse, men without money in the United States do not consider themselves full-fledged men.

You've got to understand that, that black men who've not been treated as men until very recent decades associate manhood with having some resources. And if they can't get them the way their grandfathers and fathers got, because there are no jobs available, and if a boy sees everybody growing up hustling, getting money, and no jobs

available, then the message really does get absorbed as to what you ought to do with your life.

The drug economy, the underground economy, and the gun economy all moved in—moved in—to the African American community and replaced the legitimate jobs of the traditional economy—the steel jobs, the auto jobs. Why do you think Baltimore looks the way it does? I'm a native Washingtonian, but one of my mother's brothers came up from North Carolina. And why does he decide to go off that farm to Baltimore? Good paying job in a steel factory. Nothing comparable today. Today you've got to be from a family that makes you understand that you've got to have some education in order to get a job at all. And that is missing. You will find missing what it takes to raise boys who want to go to school and get jobs of the kind that are now available.

I don't have time to talk about the commission. It's not your ordinary commission, ladies and gentlemen. A major difference is it has an advisory commission of academics. Generally commissions make their contributions through important recommendations. When it comes to black men and families today, I think it's much too late for this. This is an action commission. And the advisory commission advises a number of men from the community. They are men who other men identify with. The chairman of it—well, he's about to be replaced by a new chairman just because he's worked for so long with our commission for several years—was a former Redskin, George Starke. Former Chief of Police Isaac Fulwood came straight out of Ward 7 and rose to be a police chief with whom black boys and men in this city identify. Joe Madison, who's a radio talk show host, whom they all live with. There are several others

of that kind, none of them people like us. They're people like the people black men look to when they want to find out what's going on.

I don't have the answers, but I tell you one thing, the commission showed me that this is an issue in search of leadership. We've had several hearings, and the hearings always have some people who have in fact been involved in a problem and solved a problem. I never had any hearings like this. And all I can tell you is if you say you're going to do something, they will come. These hearings have all been crowded with black people of the kind who I do not see at hearings in my Government Reform Committee. They come—I don't have time to tell you the mind-shattering things these hearings have produced. But they're conducted by the commission, not by me.

I do want to tell you one, so you know we don't skirt the issue. The first one had a man who's now a federal judge. President Bush has appointed him. He was a Superior Court judge before. He was the lead witness. And he talked about his life as a thug before he finally went his way and became a judge.

But at that same hearing there were three families. One was a husband-wife family raising two boys and a girl. Right here in the District. The other was a man raising two sons. And the other was a woman raising two sons. Let them hear it from the people who are doing it every day. Let them hear it from the families and figure out which family you think has the better chance of producing children, which we all have an obligation to do. It can be done, but everybody has to find his way into this problem and we have to admit the complexity of it and virtually assign tasks to everybody—to church, to Congress, the local—it's just got to be done. It's hard to be done. It's not your normal coalition. You're going inside somebody's life. That's very different from

dealing with the consequences after somebody's life has failed. And normally, that's what government does.

My favorite metaphor for this, finally, is that if the water from a faucet at home begins to overflow, you would try to wipe up the water, of course. But you would run upstairs to turn off the water as the best way to stop the leak. We're just letting the water flow. Nobody's dealing with anything but the damage. Public officials, the entire community must do more than control damage. They are not particularly good at going to the source. That's where Brookings can be, I think, helpful to all of us who in our community and in public life need guidance and partnerships at the leadership level and at every level.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

DELEGATE NORTON: I'm past my time limit. It's terrible to speak and run; therefore I'll take a couple of questions, then I've really got to run to the Hill. I'm the one that introduces these judges, and I'm not there. That will be a pretty bad AWOL.

MR. HASKINS: When you ask a question, please make it extremely brief, and state your name and organization. Thank you.

QUESTION: Hello. My name is Josh Goode. I work at Public-Private Ventures in Philadelphia. I just was wondering if you might be willing to nuance a little bit your critique of the Bush administration and the whole faith-based initiative. We are tasked with implementing a \$30 million program with funding from the administration and two foundations that thus far has served 2,900 ex-offenders in 16 cities around the country. And it's largely a faith-based program.

I guess I'm just wondering, sort of, in affirming commissions and your work with the commission here in D.C., if the critique of programs which may or may not last long-term might be nuanced a bit in terms of comparing the practical effect on the lives of people whose situation is improved for the better vis-à-vis commission reports.

DELEGATE NORTON: Well, I'm pleased you raised that because I wouldn't want anybody to think that there was any opposition from me to faith-based programs. Indeed, it's a scandal that the faith-based programs have not been passed. They have strong bipartisan support. The reason they haven't been passed is that the administration's idea of faith-based insists that, in some of these programs, religion itself be a part of these programs. That's the road to ruin. That's the one thing we have not had to abide in this country. You know, your Catholic church got some faith-based, my Lutheran church didn't get it, and I'm Baptist, how—

So as long as the religious component is separated, as has been the case for decades with many programs—they didn't call themselves—Catholic Charities never called itself faith-based. But they did a lot of good work for all people of all kinds.

And the other problem with the administration's insistence in terms of its program is its insistence that these programs be able, with public money, to hire people who are of their faith. Now, I was the chair of the EEOC. We had a very broad latitude if you're a church or if you're a religious organization, you could hire people even to do the typing who are of your faith because you are paying them with your Baptist dime or your Catholic dime. Now, if you got my dime and you're serving my community with a faith-based program, you better not tell anybody in my community that because they're

not Baptists or because they're not Methodists, we don't hire you in this program. And that is the kind of senseless stuff that's holding up getting a broad faith-based program.

Meanwhile, the president is implementing God knows what out there. Some of that, and particularly the reentry programs are the ones I think can do the most good, because I think people coming out of prison are desperate for mentors, and in this city we have found some of the best mentors to come from the churches. But you know, the churches don't send them out there with a cross and say first get on your knees and pledge that you will love Jesus Christ the rest of your life. I mean, you may direct him to the church and I hope you will. But to the extent that you are incorporating that, you are in a very serious trespass in American life, one that has kept us free from the kind of conflict that we see all over the world, the separation between church and state.

So this is a bipartisan bill waiting to happen.

MR. HASKINS: One more question.

QUESTION: Hi. I'm Jennifer Grayson from Legal Momentum, which is the new name of the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund. I first want to thank you for drawing attention to these issues, both in my professional life and as a constituent. But I do have a question about the marriage development program. As you know, four out of five single parents are women, and we're concerned that the exclusion of single parents from that program discriminates against women. I was wondering if you could address that.

DELEGATE NORTON: It's hard for me to believe that would be your concern. Virtually the only programs out here are for single never-married women. This program is—I don't think you would say, for example, that the tax laws and the way

in which they operate sometimes to favor single people, sometimes to favor married people, I don't think anyone has brought a suit, or a successful one, saying that the tax laws are discriminatory. And I believe that if there were—that the notion that every program has to address every constituency, even if the constituency has the bulk of the programs, would seem very selfish and one-sided, to be very frank with you.

The people who can get TANF more easily, the people who can get food stamps, for very good reason have been single women. We're not saying here's something for men, even. We're saying here's something for men and women. How is it discriminatory if a man and a woman together get this? You'd have a hard time with that one in court or anywhere else. And particularly will you have a hard time in the African American community or in our country. I don't think you will find those, including a person like me, who considers herself a leading feminist in this country, buying into the notion that a program which helps married people, who are men and women, is discriminatory in our country. I don't believe it as a lawyer, I don't believe so—and as a policy matter, I think it's one of the things that may give feminism a bad name. People think that we are somehow, we buy into this notion of women and women don't need men. Hey. That's not where, I'm sure, you are. That's not where most feminists are. And I don't believe that a good legal case or a good policy case can be made that, particularly in light of the tax laws—which I think is a preeminent example, an in-your-face example—would favor people, and now more and more based on marriage. I don't think that any case can be made that laws to reinforce the family unit by reinforcing marriage and thereby helping children who are often helpless in single-mother homes, I have no doubt that as a policy matter and as a legal matter our country will receive that.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Thank you very much, Delegate Norton.

While we set up for the second panel, we'll have about four or five minutes.

[Break]

MS. SAWHILL: If we could get started again. Again, apologies for the disruption of the original schedule, but I think we're back on track now. I think it was wonderful to hear from Senator Brownback and from Delegate Norton, each bringing a very unique and important perspective on these issues and very interesting to see that, on this particular question, they have been working together.

For those of you who don't know, I'm Belle Sawhill. I'm vice president and director of economic studies here at Brookings. I'm also, along with my colleague Ron Haskins and our colleagues at Princeton, very involved in the future of children and the publication of our new journal, which is going to try to put out very high-quality on children in the United States and then work hard to see that that research is communicated well to a broad audience.

Elisabeth Donahue is here from Princeton. You'll be hearing from her shortly. She's an associate editor of the journal. The editor-in-chief is Sara McLanahan. Sara very much wanted to be here today and was going to give an overview of the latest issue of the journal "Marriage and Child Wellbeing," but even though she has been one of the most effective and articulate people in the country on these issues, today she has a terrible case of laryngitis, feels lousy, and couldn't be here.

I know that many of you probably have family or friends who have been affected by Katrina. I think our heart goes out to everyone who suffered so many losses. But I think it's also the case, as our last speaker suggested, that at a time like this families are more important than ever. Government doesn't always respond as well as it might. So it's not irrelevant that we're here today to talk about the issue of the family.

This project on the future of children and all of our work on children and families here at Brookings has a wonderful group of supporters in the foundation world. I won't tell you who they all are, but I particularly want to welcome Mike Larrissy and Bill O'Hare, who are both here from the Casey Foundation today. So thank you to both of you.

Also want to thank the great staff that has organized all of this. Andy Yarrow—do you want to raise your hand or stand up, Andy?—is doing a lot in terms of working with the media and other groups to help on the outreach front. So contact him if you need more information. And all of these people sitting over here in the front row and some that I don't see in the front row right now have done a terrific job of helping to organize this.

I'm going to now call on Ron Haskins, who was one of the editors along with Sara and Elisabeth of this issue of the journal, to give us a little overview of the contents of this latest issue. But before he speaks, one final remark, and that is we will be putting out a new issue about every six months. The first one that we put out was on school readiness and test score gaps between disadvantaged minority and non-minority children. Those gaps are very large when children enter school, and we focused in that first issue on what could be done about that.

The next issue will be on childhood obesity, which has become an epidemic in this country, and the issue after that will be on social mobility or why you need to pick your parents well in the United States.

So that's just a little advance advertising. It's my pleasure to give you now Ron again.

MR. HASKINS: With all the confusion, this has been a very fine morning. I've had several people come up and mistake me for Sara McLanahan. So that greatly enhanced my reputation. I'm feeling quite good about that. As Belle said, Sara is ill and called me yesterday afternoon. I could barely understand her on the phone, so I think she actually spared the audience something that sounds like a frog standing up here giving a talk.

She had prepared her remarks and she asked me to summarize her remarks briefly for you. These points are covered in the introduction to the volume and all of them are covered in more detail in the volume. For those of you who don't have a copy of the volume, it's available on our Web site, if you can get the Princeton Web site through the Brookings Web site. There are some copies outside the door in the back. And also, we've done a policy brief that draws the policy conclusions that Sara and Elisabeth and I did. And those are available in the back, so you're welcome to have any of that material.

A number of the points that Sara wanted to open with have already been covered. The first and most of important of them, and the reason we're here today, is because of the very dramatic changes in family composition. But the one aspect of that that Sara wanted to emphasize is that it's the transitions themselves the children are

subjected to that seem, based on the social science research, to really make a big difference. And part of it has to do with something that many people might not think of, and that's cohabitation. Cohabiting relationships are inherently much shorter, and therefore many, both men and women, get involved in cohabiting relationships that last a very brief time, and they go from one relationship to the next, and the children go through this transition after transition after transition. And it could be the transitions themselves that are really a major problem here.

So the point is that it's the transitions that make a difference as well as a number of other aspects of dissolving relationships, especially conflict. So by having instability in our family structure, we are subjecting children to factors that we know have a negative impact on their development.

There are a few facts that Sara wanted to mention that are quite surprising to some people. One of them is that the United States, despite all the problems, is really an outlier among Western countries, in the sense that we still seem to have at least a public—we place a great value on marriage. The attitudes toward marriage among American citizens, including people who are not married and have never been married, are very positive. Our marriage rates, despite many years of decline—and they've leveled off quite a bit recently—are higher than other nations', but of course, as a result of that our divorce rates are higher. So the American experience with regard to marriage actually stands out from other Western nations.

Another thing is that the marriage-family structure—and we've already mentioned this before, but it's a crucial point, especially for this audience, because most of us tend to be more interested in the development of low-income children than other

children—and all of these negative consequences are disproportionately visited upon low-income children. And therefore, as I mentioned in the beginning, if we could do something to increase family structure and make healthy marriages, rather than marriages of high conflict, as Mrs. Norton referred to, it would have a disproportionately positive impact on children. In fact, Belle has done research showing that the two things that probably would have the greatest impact in reducing poverty, which in turn could be expected to have positive effects on children, is to increase work and to increase marriage. What radical new ideas we come up with here at Brookings. Work and marriage—it's amazing.

There are many important questions in the field. One, of course, is why low-income women don't marry. And a number of the people on the panel are going to address those issues. I think maybe there might be some agreement in the field, and Kathy Edin is one probably who knows the most about this, and I'm going to look forward to her comments.

There is one fact here that I think should be put on the table. It's not a fact yet, but it's a matter of opinion and I want to make it clear because some of you may know that I mostly am a little bit right of center and some of my friends in the Republican Party have been a little resistant to this point, and that is that economics does play a major role. And I think Mrs. Norton was correct when she said that males who do not have income and do not have employment are not necessarily the most desirable males to marry. And it's possible that women realize that, and Kathy Edin is here to talk about that a little bit. So the economic part of this picture is probably a very important part of it.

Then the next question is, and the biggest question, I think, for this audience and people in this town, is what we can do. If we do have a fair amount of consensus now that marriage is a big problem and that children would be much better off if they could be in married-parent families, the question is what should we do. And I think we have to start by everybody agreeing we don't know. We just don't know exactly what to do. We don't have good evidence that any particular thing we would do would have an impact. Probably, ironically, the thing we have the strongest evidence for was already mentioned from the New Hope and also from the Minnesota Family Investment Plan, is that families that have increased income do somewhat increase their rates of marriage. So that is some empirical evidence that family income may have an impact on the probability of marriage, which then in turn might have at least positive impacts on children.

But now there's a great emphasis, as many people in this room know—and Robin Dion is here from Mathematica, who wrote a chapter in this book, and it's just a wonderful chapter that summarizes marriage education, which is probably the thing that's getting the most financing now and, if the TANF legislation were reauthorized, would probably continue to get the most financing. So there's a real question whether marriage education, developing relationship skills, learning conflict resolution skills and so forth, whether that would have the same impact on low-income families and might lead to marriage or reduce divorce rates if we can implement it widely around the country, and of course the churches could be involved. You could combine a lot of the factors that we're interested in here.

And there are, I'm very pleased to say, a number of large random-design experiments going on, one of them in Baltimore, in Joe Jones's center in Baltimore. And two years from now, I think we may actually have some evidence for random-design experiments about whether marriage education and associated services can have an impact on marriage rates and then on outcomes for children.

Another idea, of course, it is explored in some detail in the journal, is the question of incentives. And all of you probably know that both in our tax system and in our benefits systems that we didn't necessarily think carefully about the impacts upon marriage. The tax system has a number of negative incentives on marriage, as do benefits. So those are two areas that public policy can focus on. We have done something in recent years the Congress has passed, like the child tax credit was explicitly an attempt to reduce the marriage penalty.

And then Sara wanted to conclude—Sara, some of you might know, might be a little left of center, where I'm a little right of center, and she wanted to make sure that everybody understands that the people that worked on this journal and the editors of the journals understood very well that even if all of this movement exceeded our wildest expectations and we were able to substantially increase marriage rates, and it did turn out that that had a positive impact on children, that we would still have millions of American children who are going to be raised for the foreseeable future in single-parent families. So it would be a big policy mistake to promote the marriage movement by removing money from programs for single parents that support children being reared in single-parent families in order to promote marriage. So the money should be new.

We should recognize that while we're working on marriage and trying to promote marriage that we cannot forget the kids who are living in single-parent families.

And with that, I am very pleased to turn this over to Elisabeth Donahue, who was one of the editors of this journal. And actually, as all of you know, we run programs, there's always a person behind the scenes that actually makes everything work. And the person behind the scenes on this journal from Princeton is Elisabeth Donahue. So Elisabeth, thank you very much.

MS. DONAHUE: My role is very limited here, I hope, because we have some wonderful speakers to hear from.

What I'm going to do is introduce the speakers now and then they can either choose to speak from their seats—but I've been told by Ron you have to wear your mike, which is clipped to your chair, or you can come up and use the podium. And they will each speak for seven minutes, which is sort of a funny number, but—seven minutes.

First we will hear from Julie Baumgardner, who is the executive director of First Things First in Chattanooga. Then we will hear from Vivian Berryhill, who's the founder and president of the National Coalition of Pastors' Spouses. Next we'll hear from Kathryn Edin, whom Ron mentioned earlier, who's an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. Then we'll hear from Ron Mincy, who's the only male up here, so you'll know who he is. He's a professor of social policy and social work practice at Columbia University. And finally, we'll hear from Belle Sawhill, whom all of you know, who's a leader here at the Brookings Institution, a senior editor on *The Future of Children*, and was one of the authors in this volume. So she's a good person to wrap this panel up.

I then may have a few questions for our panelists, and then I'd like to open it up to the audience.

MS. BAUMGARDNER: All right. It's an honor to be with you this morning. I want you to fasten your seat belts and listen fast because, as you heard, I have seven minutes and a lot to share with you.

Before I get into the meat of this, I want to tell you about a phone call I received yesterday morning. It was from our marriage educator who conducted a class on Saturday morning, and she said, Julie, you would have been so excited. I taught a class and I did my usual curriculum and I talked about communication and conflict resolution and warning signs of domestic violence and emotional abuse and anger and rage and things that people really needed to be aware of before they walked down that aisle. And she said, "Our class ended, I was cleaning things up, and this woman walked back into the room and hugged my neck and said thank you, thank you so much. I was abused as a child. I've already been in an abusive marriage and I was getting ready to enter into a second one. And being here this morning, you have given me the information I needed. I'm not walking down that aisle right now. I'm going to get some help. I'm going to deal with these issues so that I can be in a healthy marriage relationship."

I could give you hundreds of examples just like that one, about how we're promoting healthy marriage and impacting marriage in the Chattanooga community.

First Things First is a nonprofit, values-based organization in Chattanooga, Tennessee, dedicated to rebuilding a marriage culture in our county. In 1997, the city fathers connected the dismal divorce rate and out-of-wedlock stats in

Hamilton County to most of our social and economic problems. They believe that stable, strong, healthy families were the building blocks of a strong, stable community and that marriages were the best and surest way to build and sustain those families.

They established First Things First truly as an experiment, as a bold attempt to change the downward spiral. And I am here to tell you that in the face of tremendous skepticism it can be done. Chattanooga is not an island. It's influenced by all the same larger societal effects that impact all of our communities. The price of bread, the price of gas, the media, all of our TV shows come from the same place that yours do, and by the challenges of gender and race and poverty and politics and the sexual revolution and rap artists, you name it, the list goes on. However, step by step, we have changed the mood about marriage in our community.

And just as there is a snowball effect when things going downhill gain momentum as they head off the cliff, that same effect can work in an upward spiral and build a new spirit of hope for marriage, about mastery and what we can do in our community—what we can do in our community—and I think that's the key. We can be paralyzed by going, "We just don't know what to do." But what we decided in Chattanooga is that we have to do something. We can't just sit by and watch this happen.

In 1997, we began with a divorce rate 50 percent higher than the national average. Fifty percent of the births in the city were out of wedlock. We had a very high rate of fatherlessness. And in less than 10 years, we have seen a 33.6 percent decrease in divorce filings, a 25.4 percent decrease in the divorce rate, and a 26 percent decrease in teen out-of-wedlock pregnancies. We went about this very methodically using baselines,

polls, and statistics. We've tracked efforts over the long haul and we modify and improve as we go along.

So what's working? I often take a couple of days to tell people how we do what we do and what works. But suffice it to say, this truly is not rocket science. The people of Chattanooga, like the people all across this country, rich and poor, churched and unchurched, of all races, tell us they want strong marriages. It's their number one aspiration. And we have simply set out to support them to help them reach and attain their dreams.

Probably the best way to sum up our approach is to say that it is a broad community-wide marketing and educational campaign. We believe that if you can help couples get married and stay married in healthy relationships, they will take care of their own children better than any well-meaning efforts by the village. So our focus is marriage.

Let me address some of the concerns that come to the table. People are concerned that marriage education classes were developed primarily for white, middle-class couples and won't work in poor or minority communities. Wrong. Simply not true. We can tell you that the courses are transportable. They work in the projects, they work in the prisons, and with couples of all colors. The instructors naturally adapt them, just as they would if they were teaching these folks how to diaper their baby or drive a car.

There is concern that this is not what people want and need. Just to check ourselves, we commissioned research to check this out, and we found that across the

board the response was that people in our community believed that marriage was important. It's what they want, and they wanted help getting it right.

Concern that people won't come. Trust me, it is the case of you build something creative, and they will come.

Concern about cost. We have a marriage education approach that is low-cost. And I think that it is a great approach, because money spent upstream that keeps families from falling in the river is significantly better than having to go pull them out and resuscitate them down at the bottom of the river.

So let me just tell you some of the things that we're doing that work and have great impact. This is a multi-level approach. You're dealing with so many different types of people that you have to do a lot of different things to get their attention. Billboards, ads on buses, TV shows, radio shows, newspaper columns, community marriage policies that gather the faith community together. Movies in the park attended by 20,000 people this summer. Marriage education classes for couples at every stage, from dating to engaged to newlyweds to new parents, from step-families to marriages on the brink of divorce. Fathering classes. Mentoring. Classes in the jail. Special African American marriage celebrations and an African American marriage initiative. Black marriage Sunday. Training for trainers. Building capacity in the community. Speakers and dances and banquets. Special rallies for bikers that raise money and consciousness and involvement. Classes in the housing projects. Newlywed retreats where we're going rafting. Creative things, going to where people are.

It is working. I have people come up to me on a daily basis, every walk of life, saying to me, You have no idea what a difference you are making in this

community when it comes to marriage. Thank you for telling us that marriage matters. And not only that it matters, but we can do it, that you have hope and a belief that we can do it.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS. BERRYHILL: Good morning. I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you from the Brookings Institution for inviting me to be a part of this panel discussion today, Overcoming Barriers to Stable Marriage.

One of the great journalists of today, Mr. William Raspberry, penned these words in the July 25, 2005, edition of the Washington Post, page A19. "There is a crisis of unprecedented magnitude in the black community, one that goes to the very heart of its survival. The black family is failing."

The black family is failing.

Even though I knew what was written on those pages was a true statement, but just to see it in black and white forced me to wrap my mind around a very daunting reality and from a totally different perspective.

Mr. Raspberry went on to say in that same article, and I quote: "What is happening in the black family in America is the sociological equivalent of global warming—easier to document than to reverse, inconsistent in near-term effect, and disastrous in the long run."

I applaud the Brookings for having this today. It's good to see the academic community come together, the great minds. But we need to come together

with the faith community, because that's where the meetings of these two minds, the faith community, academic community, can do more to impact this issue.

We have rehearsed it and re-rehearsed it, the litany of reasons for the erosion of the black family, in forums such as this and other public debates across the country. So I'm not going to waste your time re-listing all these problems, excuses. But I will say this: No question about it, low-income individuals face different and more complex issues when and if they decide to marry. And until those issues are discussed with sincerity—and most are of a financial nature—I don't see how healthy marriages in the African American community at that level can be actuated.

As a faith leader with more than 2,500 clergy spouses in our National Coalition of Pastors' Spouses network, and the wife of a pastor of a congregation in Memphis, Tennessee, I think I have a vantage point that many of you may not have. And from where I sit, I contend that the African American faith community, the black church, can do more than it's doing to encourage, promote, and support healthy marriages between men and women. The black church remains the most viable and respected institution in the black community.

Diane Dawson from the Administration for Children and Families, she put it best: "The marriage movement in America will never be fully realized until we have full participation and commitment from the black church."

The day is over for the black church to remain silent about the importance of marriage. To prevent William Raspberry's op-ed piece from becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy, it is incumbent on the black clergy to become more engaged by placing more emphasis on the importance and imperativeness of the institution of

marriage. Black pastors need to hear from you all at Brookings, to go into their churches and help them to host regular marriage-friendly programs directed at youth. Churches need to hear from you so you can help us to engage our singles and married couples into mentoring ministries in our churches.

And it would behoove you to bring in people—it's great to have academic minds and all the brilliant minds that are here, but go out there and find Shanika and Junebug and Bubu and bring them up here on this panel and ask them what it will take in their community, at their level, to have a healthy marriage.

Black leaders, the ones who are married, the congressmen, the basketball and football players, all of these icons in our community, they must be compelled to model healthy marriage practices in the black community. The practice of marriage is difficult, yes, it is, especially on our black leaders. But you know what? When you accept the leadership mantle, you must take the responsibility that goes along with the mantle. So we've got to hold our black leaders accountable. It's time out for our married black leaders to talk one way, preach one way, and live another. If you're married, you ought to stay married. If you got a wife, quit cheatin'. Our youngsters are watching you and they're mirroring your behavior.

Not only do our pastors and leaders have responsibility to bolster the institution of marriage, but it's incumbent upon every one of us, every African American church attendee, to go back to strong beliefs and practices that make marriage the God-established cornerstone and essential building block of the family, and thus our society. Church members—how many of you all go to church? Raise your hand. I'm just going to just—

[Laughter.]

MS. BERRYHILL: But it's your responsibility also to teach our young men and women that the institution of marriage supersedes any and all individual desires that conflict with this issue. Marriage was for one purpose, and that is to produce healthy seed, produce godly seed, and rear godly seed.

Here are some facts, and I'm going to take my seat. Religious effects on married women in urban America: Black women who attend church infrequently [?] are 73 percent more likely to be married at the time they have a child, are 31 percent more likely to have excellent relationships, or say they do, with their husbands. African American unmarried women are 148 percent more likely to marry if they go to church after delivering a nonmarital birth. And lastly, African American unmarried mothers are 62 percent more likely to rate their relationships with the fathers of their children as Good or Excellent.

In closing, I applaud the attention of the Bush administration that they give to the plight of marriage, but \$1.5 billion in financial incentives on marriage programs will not cure this ailment. We need to take that money, redirect it to jobs, because it's true—a black man with a job will marry and stay married better and longer than a man without a job.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS. EDIN: My name is Kathy Edin. I'm, I guess, one of the three academics kind of over on this side of the room.

In 1995, I did something a little bit unusual for an academic. I moved my two children and my husband to America's poorest small city, Camden, New Jersey. I decided that I wanted to write a book about why low-income single mothers put motherhood before marriage in increasing numbers, a phenomenon, of course, that's true not only for African Americans but for whites and Latinas as well. And since lots of other brilliant minds had tried to answer that question, I thought I might want to do something a little bit special, and so relocated my family to this very poor neighborhood in East Camden.

Since then I've convinced lots of foolish people to give us lots of money to study this issue, and we have gone into the homes of over a thousand unmarried men and women who are parents of young children, and had the opportunity to talk to them, to get their life stories, to observe their neighborhood, to follow them around in their daily routines.

So what I bring to you today is not an expertise gained from numbers or statistics, but really from the lives of the poor families I've had the privilege to know over the last 10 years in Charleston, South Carolina, Philadelphia, Camden, New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Austin and San Antonio, Texas.

So what can we glean from all of these conversations that my colleagues and I have had the privilege to have over the last 10 years? First of all, and we've heard it before today, the aspirations are there. You know, academics, anyone could have written—I just wrote a book with Maria Kefalas called "Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage." And I always laughingly say anyone could have written this book. People just forgot to ask the questions. And indeed, I

think academics for years were so busy focusing in on other aspects of poor families' lives they forgot about the family part and were not asking the questions that we were lucky enough to kind of stumble upon.

And what we found was absolutely astonishing. In family after family after family, men and women—in fact, men a little bit more strongly than women—the aspiration for marriage is there and it's strong. And most relationships start out not cynically, but hopefully. So the aspirations aren't the problem.

Second, and this is probably a profound cultural change, marriage and child-bearing among low-income men and women, white, black, and Hispanic, are no longer seen as decisions that necessarily go together. Here there are comparative ethnographic studies with middle class 20-somethings. And middle class 20-somethings almost never even consider having children outside of marriage. It's not that they're especially moral, they just literally can't imagine being able to sustain it, given all of the other things that fill their lives and make their lives so rich.

When we talked to our core families, no matter what city we were in, we were really struck by the fact that when the discussions of marriage occurred, they almost never referenced children. So marriage and children aren't necessarily seen as decisions that do or even ought to go together.

Third—and Ron mentioned this; I really appreciate that he did—the poor are going to hold hard to beliefs about what is a suitable standard of living for marriage. We had one young couple we'd been following for four years in Chicago who didn't have a stable living situation and weren't economically stable and who had wanted to marry, finally go down to the justice of the peace and get married. On their way back,

they stopped at a grandmother's in [inaudible] and were chided roundly for not marrying the right way. Because what these relatives want to see is marriages that last. This is a very powerful norm in low-income communities. You may like it, you may not. But as public policy makers, we've got to deal with it. The poor are going to hold to standards of what strong marriage means. These standards don't wane over time. And when people meet their economic goals, our research shows that up to 80 percent will eventually marry.

Fourth, the poor also have a very strong sense of what a suitable standard of relationship quality ought to be for marriage. When their relationships break up, it's not merely because of money. Usually it's because of a pattern of domestic violence, infidelity, crime and incarceration, and drug and alcohol addiction. These are serious problems that deserve serious policy attention.

Fifth, there is a strong aversion to divorce in the low-income communities that we studied. And in fact, one woman told us—I love this quote—"I don't believe in divorce. That's why none of the women in my family are married." In low-income communities, the stigma of a failed marriage is worse than the stigma of a nonmarital birth. And in fact, at the heart of marital hesitancy is a deep respect for the institution of marriage. A poor but foolish marriage, one that's almost certain to end in divorce, is the marriage that ought not to have happened in the first place.

And finally—and this is something, I think, that we, even as feminists, those of us that would claim that title in this room, haven't fully recognized—it's not just his earnings that matter for a marriage, it's her earnings as well. Virtually every woman we talked to, with the exception of some of our immigrant women, felt strongly that they

needed to be economically set in their own right before they would enter into marriage. This is partly because couples hold a relatively high economic standard for marriage. They want economic stability within marriage. They think it's crucial for marital survival. And they believe that it will take both their incomes and their husbands' to make ends meet. But secondly, there's a very high degree of gender distrust within these communities, partly spawned by the high rates of domestic violence and infidelity.

So women want some insurance going into marriage. They're mistrustful. And at the same time that they're hopeful about marriage, they're also insisting on hedging their bets. They want power within marriage. They don't believe that it's reasonable or wise to just be left "depending on a man." And so there's a bit of a war of the sexes going on around this marriage decision, and women feel that it's very important for them to be economically set as well as their husbands before they'll enter into marriage. And there's evidence that actually suggest that women's employment and earnings promote marriage at the bottom of the income distribution, rather than discouraging it.

So just to repeat, the aspirations are there. But marriage and children are not seen as decisions that go together. There are strong economic standards and strong relationship standards that poor couples hold and that are reinforced by the community. There's a strong aversion to divorce. And finally, don't just focus on his job; focus on her job, too.

[Applause.]

MR. MINCY: Good morning. I'd like to thank Brookings for putting on this important panel and for the invitation. I was trying to figure out how I could comply

with Ron's seven minutes. So I could sit down after this: I celebrate my thirtieth wedding anniversary next Tuesday—

[Applause.]

MR. MINCY: —but I've never been unemployed since I was 16 years old.

So. The return to concern about family structure and poverty is long overdue; because I think what the Healthy Marriage Initiative will help us do is to prevent poverty that is associated with single-mother households. There's much research evidence that earnings and employment, especially among men, is positively associated with marriage. And so what I would like to speak to, then, is particularly the Building Strong Families Initiative, which will attempt to provide relationship enhancement skills to couples that have had a child born out of wedlock to see if that can increase their transitions to marriage.

Now, our understanding from, oh, now a decade or so of research based upon the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey, which is a survey of nonmarital births, children that were born between 1998 and 2000, that many unmarried fathers have sufficient employment and earnings to marry, especially if they cohabited at birth. And so there appears to be a real dichotomy in this large population of unmarried parents—those who are cohabiting at birth and those who are romantically involved at birth—and for the cohabiters, there are good prospects of marriage. Moreover, it appears that improvements in relationship skills could help these couples transition.

In a chart that I have distributed, what I've shown is—these are based upon some work that we're undertaking looking at the possible gains to men's earnings

as a consequence of marriage. And what we've done is separate these two groups into those who are cohabiting at birth and those who are in visiting relationships—they're romantically involved but not living together. If you look at the cohabiters, about 73 percent of them were employed, the fathers were employed at three years, and though all of them were unmarried at birth, about 20 percent of them married three years later. If you look at those who were visiting, only about 68 percent were employed at three years and only about 8 percent of them married.

So that we can expect real differentials in the sort of success rate among the Healthy Marriage Initiative when we look at those couples who are cohabiting at birth and those couples who are not, assuming everybody that we were talking about was at least romantically involved.

We also have done some estimates on the earnings of these romantically involved or cohabiting men and women. We see that, through the next chart, on average the earnings of the cohabiter men were about \$20,000, but those who had married, who had moved from cohabitation to marriage within three years, exceeded about \$25,000. Whereas all of the other groups—the cohabiters who didn't marry, those in visiting relationships who didn't marry—their earnings of the men were about \$20,000 per year.

So large point, I think there is good reason to hope that we can increase the transition rates from nonmarital births to a marriage, particularly among those who were born in cohabiting relationships. But I have some real questions about the other ones.

Now I would just like to summarize quickly three studies based upon the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey looking at the effects of employment and earnings on marriage.

First of all, there is good evidence that some of these fathers, unmarried fathers, faced important employment and earnings barriers to marriage. I have a study with colleagues Shoshana Grossbard-Schechtman and Chien-Chung Huang that looks at the probability of marriage at 12 months among all couples in the Fragile Families Survey. We find that the odds of marriage versus all lower alternatives—cohabitation, visitation, and no relationship between the father and mother at all—are 80 percent higher for fathers who were employed before the birth of the child. — we find that the sex ratio, the ratio of men to women in the metropolitan area, if we increased the number of men, if we have 10 more men per 100 women, it would increase the marriage rates by 14 percent.

There's a study by Carlson, McLanahan, and Paula England looking at union transition among unmarried couples. They find that, as compared with unmarried fathers with no earnings, fathers with earnings of \$25,000 or more are more than twice as likely to marry.

And then finally, there's a study by Harknett and McLanahan that was published in the American Journal of Sociology, and they find that sex ratios have an important implication for marriage. If you increase for 10 extra men per 100 women is associated with a 16 percent increase in the marriage probability and that there are real sex ratio differences in the African American community and in white and Latino communities. There were 46 employed men per 100 women in the black community;

there were 70 to 80 employed men per 100 women in either the white and Hispanic community. So there were many more employed men per women, and this has a big impact on their marriage rates.

They also point out that there is a huge difference—whites are twice as likely to marry as are blacks when you do not control for these sex ratio differences, but when you do control for them, you completely obliterate the differences in the likelihood of marriage. That is to say, when you control for the fraction of incarcerated men to women and when you control for the fraction of employed men to women, there is no difference whatsoever in the likelihood that black and whites marry.

So I will conclude where Sara concludes this paper. One of the key—this is quoting from a policy brief on the paper by Harknett and McLanahan, since I've been saying this for 20 years and no one will pay attention to me. One of the key components of marriage promotion programs is to build relationship skills. Our research—Harknett and McLanahan—our research suggests that in order to strengthen African American families, policies will need to focus on structural and community-level barriers as well. The importance of marriage markets in explaining low African American marriage rates following nonmarital births highlights the need to curb high mortality and incarceration rates for African American men and the need to improve the urban labor markets for African American men. Such policies may seem more challenging than smaller-scale relationship skills programs. However, without addressing these structural barriers, relationship skills programs may make little headway in strengthening African American families.

Let me close finally—I'd like to add a postscript. I don't think this means that we need to throw the baby out with the bathwater with respect to the Healthy Marriage Initiative. Six of the seven Building Strong Families sites are focusing on African American and Latino communities. Given that African American families have high rates of nonmarital birth, low rates of cohabitation at birth, and low probabilities to marry after birth, what I think this means is that Healthy Marriage Initiative in working with African American communities is going to have to think about increasing the prospects that a marriage will occur to someone other than the biological parent of the child. I think that's going to be on the table as we look at these initiatives.

Secondly, they're going to have to worry about the research that suggests that children raised in married blended families don't get all of the benefits that children raised in two biological families.

And finally, I think they're going to have to look at the impacts of the degree of visitation and informal child support paid by the biological father of the child on the likelihood that the mother goes on to marry someone else.

Hopefully, there will be opportunities in questions and answers to clarify.

[Applause.]

MS. SAWHILL: Well, I guess I get to be the cleanup here, and this is a very impressive group to have to follow up on. I think that in light of the seven-minute rule here, I'm going to have to be very constrained.

I am all for marriage as the best environment for raising children. I think the research is quite clear on that, as we've said all morning. And in fact, a chapter that I co-authored with Adam Thomas, who is a Ph.D. student at Harvard for this issue of

Future of Children, showed that one of the very most effective ways that you can reduce childhood poverty is simply by encouraging or being successful in getting people married.

In fact, what we did was we simulated marriages between current single parents and unattached men that looked like them in terms of being good marriage partners. And after we did that and we got the rate of marriage back to where it was in the 1970s—so we weren't saying, you know, we're going to accomplish some miracle here, we're simply going to return to where our society was 25 years ago. I mean, we've been there. We've done it. And if we could get back to where we were 25 years ago, the child poverty rate would drop by 3 or 4 percentage points. That's about a 20 percent drop in child poverty in the United States. That's a huge drop. I ask you to consider any other way that you could get that kind of progress.

Now, that said, the real question is how do we get more people to marry. And that is what, I think, is the big struggle. And although I greatly admire Julie's passion about what she's doing, and I'm sure she's having some success, and I totally agree with the importance of getting the black church more involved, it just seems to me that's absolutely critical for all the reasons that Vivian has said, and because of what Kathy has said and taught me, I have had a whole new way of thinking about this issue, and Ron as well.

But let me focus on a strategy that we might use to encourage marriage that hasn't come up yet. For those of you who know me, this will not surprise you, that I think we need to put more emphasis on reducing out-of-wedlock childbearing. That really is what's driving the problem here. That's what's caused the growth of single-

parent families and those are the families that are most disadvantaged and that are struggling the hardest in our economy.

Now, seven reasons in my not-quite-seven minutes remaining why I think we ought to focus more attention of preventing out-of-wedlock births.

First of all, half of out-of-wedlock births begin in the teenage years. Half. I'm talking about 16-, 17-, 18-year-olds. And even if you got all of those teenagers to marry the fathers of their children, the biological fathers of their children, those relationships, I would argue, would be very unstable. In addition to all of the problems that Kathy has alluded to, if you add a very young age to everything else, it doesn't work. And in fact, the statistics or the research shows that divorce rates are much, much higher when you get married at a very young age.

So if we can't delay having children, we're talking about having a solution that is, to me, problematic, which would be a whole lot of people married who are really too young to be married.

Third, as Kathy emphasized, the norm has changed. Marriage and child-bearing are no longer seen as linked, particularly in lower-income and African American communities. In the meantime, we have all of these very young mothers, and that's not a good thing.

Fourth, once these young women have had a baby, it's a lot harder for them to get married. We have very rigorous research on this that shows how much their marriage prospects drop once they have a baby, but common sense will tell you about this anyway. Because what man wants to take on another man's children? The fathers have usually not stuck around and may not be the kind of people wants to marry anyway,

but by the time she's found this man that she can feel is a good marriage partner, he may not want to get married because she's already encumbered. And Ron has done a lot of thinking about this.

Fifth, if we could encourage women to delay child-bearing, they'd have more opportunity to finish their education and become self-sufficient, get some work experience, et cetera.

And finally, if they were a little—or I guess I'm on six—if they were a little older, they'd be better mothers. Again, I think the research is very strong that one of the most important ingredients in being a good mother is being mature enough to handle the responsibility of raising kids.

So seventh and finally, if we could succeed in reducing teenage pregnancy and early out-of-wedlock child-bearing, it would be one of the most effective ways of producing not only more healthy marriages later on, but also families that, even if they don't marry, would have a greater chance of succeeding in our economy.

Thanks.

MS. DONAHUE: Thank you. I'd like to open it up to questions from the audience. I have a few of my own, but I'd like to start, actually, with the audience, if that's okay, Ron, to see where we go. I'm sure there are a lot of questions.

QUESTION: Hello. Good morning. One of the common threads that I think I heard through most of the presentations here today was the importance of earnings or the lack of earnings in terms of being a barrier to marriage in low-income communities. And I would agree, I think, with your point, Kathryn, that feminists would

say that earnings is important only for men, but probably even more important for women because they have the extra burden of raising children.

But given that fact, we know that prior to Katrina hitting, Congress was poised to cut things like food stamps, to cut things like Medicaid, to cut things like TANF. In fact, the only so-called anti-poverty programs that I could see that they were willing to fund were marriage initiatives, which were framed as sort of anti-poverty programs, but I have a big doubt about that contingent.

So I'm wondering, what do you think would be a wise investment in terms of these communities? Does it make more sense, which I think—I'm sorry, I've forgotten your name—but I think that our second presenter was saying that perhaps it makes more sense to invest that \$1.5 billion—and I would argue probably even more—into addressing the issues of poverty and perhaps some of the issues that Ron was talking about in terms of the incarceration of black men and all of those other issues that would make more black men possibly available, increase job opportunities for both men and women, instead of promoting marriage skills or even public service announcements, because obviously there is no need to do that if there's already a strong respect for and aspiration to marriage in these communities.

Anyone can answer. What are your thoughts about what would be a better investment in terms of that money?

MR. MINCY: Well, my own view is that we do need to take the long view. I think the Healthy Marriage Initiative, in a way it's a return to a decision that was made in 1962 to being to—the AFDCU program extended welfare benefits to two-parent families. And because welfare rolls grew so rapidly after that, we decided that we

needed really to focus on the growth in single-parent families. And in a way, the concerns about the earnings and abilities of low-income men to be part of families, we haven't visited them for 30 years, or 40 years.

So my own view is that we need to take the long view in public policy, and the Healthy Marriage Initiative is very important. I do not think it's a mistake, a distraction, a poor use of resources. If you ask married couples, unmarried couples, they want more information about their relationships, and as a consequence, again, there are many couples who are cohabiting unmarried parents. And the evidence does suggest that if they improve their relationship skills, it would hasten their transitions to marriage.

I think some of those need to get out of the social service caseload. And if marriage initiatives, which are lower-cost, can move them out of the way so that we can then focus—I hate to use this, but, you know—I don't mean to be cynical—the poor will always be with us. And as a consequence, if we move some of those folks who are easy to move at lower cost out of the caseload so that we can focus on the "truly disadvantaged," I don't think this is a poor or unwise expenditure of resources, given the long view of where we've been on public policy on families and the like.

MS. BERRYHILL: I'd like to say, when you look at the faith community, and I believe we need beautiful houses to worship in, but I think we could take some of the money from the faith community and redirect those funds to support programs, and let's take the federal dollars and let's put those dollars to work to create jobs and other income-generating opportunities for African American men. So I think if the faith community and the government could work together, we could see, I think in the next five years, Dr. Ron, what outcomes that you are advocating here.

MS. EDIN: You know, we've been following a cohort of fragile families in depth. We've been practically moving in with them over a period of four years since they had their child together. And what's keeping couples from marrying is largely economic, but what's breaking them up in the meantime is largely a series of very serious relationship problems. Over half experiencing domestic violence, infidelity, incarceration. And criminal activity is huge, and drug and alcohol addiction. These couples are really hungry for help with their relationships.

You and I can afford to go and get help from our communities. We can pay for it. They can't. So in some ways, I see this as an equal access issue. Why shouldn't poor folks, who have all of the pressures of being disadvantaged to deal with, not have the same kind of access to the sort of skills that have proven—some of them have been proven, many of them have not—to keep middle class relationships strong?

So I really think we need to do both. I think what bothers a lot of people is taking money that's supposed to go to poor children and putting it into a marriage initiative. Wherever the money comes from, I think that we really need to think now about a two-part solution: finances and skills. And by emphasizing both of those at the same time, I think that's how we're going to make headway.

QUESTION: I have a question primarily directed at Dr. Edin, but any of the other members of the panel I'll be happy to hear from.

A lot of the research that I've heard today, and research in the past, has talked about marriage markets; that is to say, subgroups of the population that you could assume, based on observations or at least maybe stereotypical observations that, well,

these are the people that would marry each other. In other words, low-income black people will marry probably low-income black people.

I guess the question I have is, is there any sense, is there any research that suggests that perhaps the marriage markets are changing significantly? Not a small percentage, but— Is there any research being done that might suggest marriage markets are not seen the same way? In particular I would say if you are a black low-income woman, and you are faced with a dearth of marriageable black men, is there any action that you would take? Is there any movement in culture that you would see over time that make perhaps black women at least more likely to seek out non-black marriage partners?

Similarly, I would say to the professor, or to anyone, it would no longer be a matter of researching just low-income communities, but obviously the flip side of non-low-income communities to if the marriage markets on that side had changed.

But I'm just curious and I'd throw it open to anyone, is there any research on those things? Because as long as we're looking at marriage markets the way we define them, it doesn't look terribly bright, at least in the near term.

MS. EDIN: A lot of people that have read our book say why did these women, you know, get together with these men anyway? And the problem is that, as demographers point out, the better-off men are already going to the better-off women. So there are none left over for the lower-income women. I really feel passionately that we can't throw half the human population away at the low ends of the income distribution. I am passionately interested in the lives and fortunes of low-income men and fathers. I'm hopeful, as many women that I've talked to are, that they can be, quote-unquote, fixed up.

What's happened to low-income men in all of our racial and ethnic communities, but particularly among blacks, is devastating and horrible. And many of you have been involved in, heard about, or funded research. We've just finished a study where we interviewed 600 of these low-income fathers in four different cities—white, black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican. And we're trying to now tell that story. But I think that's where we need to focus. We've got to fix up these guys, because the other guys are going to women who also have more advantages.

MS. BERRYHILL: What I'm seeing in the South, a lot of professional college-graduated women, they're marrying men who work at the post office who just are common laborers. Because I hear you saying that the high-end men are going to the high-end women. Sounds good on paper. Women are marrying people who are going to appreciate them, love them, and they may not always be the high-end men. That's just—I don't want to be [inaudible], but that's just what I'm seeing.

MR. MINCY: I guess on the question of intermarriage rates, you know, I know that in the Fragile Families data, where the couple is not of the same race—so we have parents who have had a child but they're not of the same race—that actually reduces the likelihood that they transition to marriage. So I think over time it is the case that we've—

But, you know, the larger point I want to make is that I think the issue of marriage that is at the center of the Healthy Marriage Initiative is not one that is centered in the low-income distribution of the population. It just isn't. That's wrong-headed. That it's coming out of TANF money makes us think that way, but this is sort of a bigger problem. And so in that context, though rates of intermarriage have increased

nationally, I don't think it's the case that marriage markets are opening up and putting aside former boundaries by educational attainment and the like. And these estimates of the marriage markets, they do tend to be racially confined, but they contain very broad groupings of educational attainment and the like. And I trust those numbers about how marriage markets are affecting marriage rates.

QUESTION: My question is aimed at those of you familiar with the programs to maintain marriages. The studies that have been done of housework show that women put in far more hours per week in housework and childcare than men do. And they do this even when they are employed full-time outside the home and they do this even when you include the traditional male chores like cutting the grass of whatever.

In fact, the studies show that having an adult male in the household increases the time costs to a woman roughly the equivalent of having an extra child.

[Laughter.]

MS. BERRYHILL: You're right.

QUESTION: Every married woman here knows exactly what I'm talking about.

[Laughter.]

QUESTION: So my question is this. In these programs to encourage marriage and teach relationship skills, is there any effort to encourage men to do more housework and childcare and teach them how to do this, because their mothers probably didn't?

MS. BAUMGARDNER: We actually have a class called Boot Camp for New Dads. It's taught by men, for men, no women over two feet tall allowed. And that's

exactly what I have heard that they do in this class, since I'm not allowed in it. We do teach how important that is to not only be engaged in the life of your child, but to also be very actively involved in the household. And we get extremely specific about household chores and really paying attention to the needs and not being identified as the other child. Because that is jokingly how women often refer to their husbands, as the other child.

QUESTION: This is a topic that probably won't get a lot of laughs, but my question is when you talk about the marriage market, one side is the employment side, and I assume you're talking about formal employment. But what about the underground market and the whole issue of crime?

The reason I raise this is I know that a number of cities have had very different experiences in terms of their crime rates and even the timing of when the crime rates came down. Has anyone looked to see whether proactive efforts to bring crime down can have a spillover effect in terms of marriage rates.

MR. MINCY: Again, if you look at the study that I refer to by Harknett and McLanahan, when they incorporate incarceration rates, the marriage market looks worse. So you're right. The high rates of incarceration—and this is something that is very interesting—when we look at these data and looked at men who are unmarried by three years, if you look at men who are unmarried at three years and not romantically involved with their partners, the incarceration rates of young white men are about the same as the incarceration rates of young black men. So I think we've had a tendency to sort of racialize this issue to the extreme.

Less-skilled men throughout this country, less-educated men, are going through these crises having to do with employment, earnings, and incarceration rates. It is happening among white men as well. And so I think it is the case that incarceration lowers marriage prospects, and we have to include that as part of the equation.

What are alternative strategies to deal with less-educated young males who grow up to be older males that don't siphon them off to prison and, as a consequence, reduce their marriage prospects?

MS. BERRYHILL: Can I address that also? I was in Chicago last week meeting with some pastors' spouses, and one of the things that they were sharing with me, a teenager at 17 years old who gets a record or gets arrested, that arrest record stays on his record for the rest of his life. He's 17 years old. He was in the car with somebody, he made a mistake, and at 25 his record's not expunged. He can't get a government job; he can't get a lot of the benefits that he could get that would help to better his condition. We've got a situation there where he's not going to be able to be marriageable to women that are looking for someone that can take care of them.

So we are looking at laws that can expunge these boys' records if they didn't do a crime that was just really atrocious, so they can then have a second chance at society and benefiting society.

MS. DONAHUE: Andy, correct me if I'm wrong. It's 11:15 and we have down that this was going to end at 11. Is that right? Where's my gatekeeper? Ron?

MR. HASKINS: That's right. That's right.

MS. DONAHUE: So I think I'd like to wrap it up. I'm actually going to ask one question, because Ron Mincy had mentioned this when he was talking and we

haven't taken it on in some of the questions that were asked, is the role of step-families and the fact that in many of these programs—and I don't know if you want to address this as well—the truth is, if we're encouraging marriage after a baby is born, A) we don't know if the benefits to the family are the same as if they married before the baby was born; and secondly, a lot of times we are creating step-families. Even if they're marrying the biological parent, there may be other children in the family.

So I didn't know if any of you wanted to take that on, because, as you'll see in the research that's in the journal, the outcomes for children in step-families are not quite the same as the outcomes for two-child biological families. And it leads me to the bigger question of who should our target audience be for these programs?

MR. MINCY: Well, you know, let me just—brief comment. So I looked at research over the last 50 years or so. There's been a lot of studies on the effects of remarriage on the likelihood of visitation. But I could not find one citation on the effects of visitation by a biological father on the likelihood that a mother goes on to marry somebody else. So we have a big "we don't know." And again, for many of these couples, if they're not marrying the present other parent, healthy marriage actually means re-partnering.

And so I think this is a big area of unknown. I would suspect that you have in these classes couples whose current relationship is with someone other than the bio-dad or bio-mom. I teach in the School of Social Work, and I also know that generally in our Family Services, step-families are just out of the picture. So I think the Healthy Marriage Initiative broaches this. It comes right up to the line. And as we get

more real about what we're actually doing, we're going to have to fill in this information gap as well.

MS. DONAHUE: That's why I think that Belle's point is so important, about preventing out-of-wedlock teenage child-bearing. Because these young women have a pretty strong view that any father will do and that if a bio-father isn't looking good, they can substitute another man into that role and, in some cases, gatekeep the father out when those two relationships conflict with one another. So I think this is a point of information that needs to get out into low-income communities, that bio-dads are special to kids and they confer unique benefits if the situation isn't dangerous and violent and so on. And if we got folks to wait to have their first child until they were in their 20s, it would be viable for them to think about solidifying that relationship with a marriage in a way that it's not viable when they're 17.

MS. BAUMGARDNER: I was just going to add to that, we've encountered several things with this and we're really watching to see what happens. One, in the classes in the prison, many of the men have children by several different women and then they're married to another one. I mean, it's very complicated. Not to mention the people that we're dealing with in our classes who are preparing for remarriage and who really recognize the complicated factors and they want to figure out how to do this and do it well.

There are so many issues hanging out there that we're trying to deal with, and the whole issue, the one that you brought up, I think is huge and we do need to pay attention to it.

MS. BERRYHILL: I was a single parent. My husband, who I've been married to now for 21 years, when he married me I had a 10-year-old daughter. Step-parenting was a very dif—it was a challenge in our house, he being a pastor and of course the other issues that we had in the family. So that would be an excellent, I think, an excellent root for you all to study. Because I can write a book about step-parenting.

[Laughter.]

MS. DONAHUE: Okay, so we have the next journal volume. I think we're going to have to—

QUESTION: I have to ask this question. [Off microphone, inaudible.] I work for [inaudible]. And so my question is what happens to these initiatives and the Healthy Marriage Initiative that promotes marriage [inaudible]. In many cases, that is what happens, is that men are destroying women physically, emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes killing them. And even the situation of how very programs are for men to deal with their issues of violence. How effective are those programs? Because there aren't enough and because of a variety of issues, that those percentages of men being violent with women are not decreasing. How are we going to address that for women?

MS. DONAHUE: I think this is one of the areas in which the Healthy Marriage Initiative has been most sensitive. Robin Dion is here, and she would be a good person to address that question to. But I think this is something that has been taken very seriously, and the evaluation effort needs to track it as well. But thank you for bringing it up.

Okay, well, thank you everyone for coming to our presentation.

[Applause.]

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