

Study Finds Two-Parent Families Better for Kids
September 26, 2005 - Daily Princetonian by Adrian Ross

A joint project of the Wilson School and the Brookings Institute recently concluded that "children benefit from growing up with two married biological parents." The report appeared in the most recent issue of the journal "The Future of Children."

The report cites occasions when the government discourages marriage through marriage penalties which, they argue, "are a result of policymakers' efforts to achieve the goal of progressivity — giving greater tax and welfare benefits to those with lower income — while trying to keep down program costs."

Elisabeth Donahue, an associate editor of the journal and Wilson School lecturer, explained this phenomenon in more detail.

She said that two unmarried individuals could be on welfare, but as a married couple, their pooled resources would make them ineligible for government support.

This could lead to financial difficulties for the family and destabilize the marriage, worsening the wellbeing of their child, she said.

"All things being equal, kids in two-parent, married relationships do better," Donahue said.

The report recommended that the government implement more policies to promote "stable, low-conflict, two-parent families."

Though the U.S. divorce rate is stabilizing, Donahue said it is still a problem.

"Things are getting better, but you can't get complacent," she said.

"Compared to other Western countries, the U.S. has a higher rate of marriage, divorce and out-of-wedlock pregnancies," she said. This could be partially due to "a stigma against waiting to have children in the U.S.," she added.

The Future of Children project was founded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in 1991 and was purchased by the Wilson School and the Brookings Institute in 2003, Donahue said.

According to its website, the Future of Children "seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policymakers, service providers and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research."

"The Future of Children" journal is published biannually.

The most recent issue focuses on "Marriage and Child Wellbeing."