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Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

PANEL TWO: The Future of Children

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MR. HASKINS: Hello, my name is Ron Haskins. I am a Senior Fellow here at Brookings and also a consultant at the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore where I spend a day a week, hidden in a corner somewhere, furiously trying to finish my Brookings work, for which they pay me. That works out pretty well.

I am joined on this panel by Belle Sawhill, my colleague here at Brookings, who is the Vice President for Economic Studies and also a Senior Fellow, Belle is an economist;

and by Sara McLanahan, a sociologist from Princeton, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, she is also the Senior Editor of a journal, *The Future of Children*. This is what the journal looks like. Sara selected the color. There is no other color known in Western civilization that can match this color, but it is not Brookings' and it is not Princeton colors. I think that what it is not is the most important.

MS. MCLANAHAN: It is our joint color.

MR. HASKINS: It is our joint color, yes.

We have a true partnership. I don't know what other activities are ongoing between Brookings and Princeton, but this is a true partnership. Let me tell you how it came about.

In 1991, the Packard Foundation started a journal called *The Future of Children*. I am a Republican. So my view of the journal was a lot of good information, but it was slightly biased in my opinion, in fact, outrageously biased in some cases. It had very little balance. But then Packard, as many of you probably know, ran into financial difficulties, and they decided to divest themselves of their children's portfolio, but their board and their staff loved *The Future of Children*. So they decided they would like to rescue *The Future of Children*.

They hit upon the idea of having a national competition and use the market to get the best possible editors and writers. At this point, Sara found out about it, and Sara wisely called us at Brookings and said, let's go together and let's bid for this journal, which we did after an elaborate process. They went through a fairly elaborate process themselves. I think, in the end, they had it down to two or three possibilities, and we were one of them. We met with them at Princeton, and in the end their board decided to give the journal to the Princeton/Brookings team with Sara as the Senior Editor and with

two other editors at Princeton, Cecilia Rouse, who is an economist who specializes in education, and Chris Paxson, who is also an economist and she specializes in health.

Now if you are doing your math, we have three economists, I am a psychologist, and one sociologist, and that is about the order of things here in Washington. Economists dominate. Their lawyers compete with them sometimes but not on our team. No lawyers on our team.

MS. SAWHILL: We have an Associate Editor. Elisabeth is a lawyer.

MR. HASKINS: Good, okay, I didn't know that.

So we won the competition, and now we have to figure out how to publish this journal. We got together, and we discussed various topics. All of us had some pretty firm ideas about how we should do this. I think at that first meeting, we talked about our first four or five issues. The first issue was on early education; second issue on marriage; third on obesity; the fourth on social mobility, about which we will say some more in a moment; then the fifth one, which is not done yet. Social mobility is not done yet. The other three are done. Social mobility is just about done. It will be out in September. Then the next one after that, about six months later will be primarily on teachers. It is called Excellence in the Classroom. Then our sixth issue will be on poverty and new ideas about how to reduce poverty of which there are lots of interesting ideas, and we will not only present those ideas but describe how they should be funded, which will lead us to recommending all kinds of glorious cuts in the U.S. budget, I am quite sure.

I think that is an example of how we try to be somewhat sophisticated. Most academicians just make recommendations about how you ought to change policy, but you also have to pay for it, and it often raises miserable choices to figure out how you are going to pay for things, and we try to do that.

Really, I think our comparative advantage showed up in the competition, and I think it has shown up in the way we actually do this journal, and that is we try to take the dry, dusty academic conclusions and actually insert them into the policy process. We make a great effort to do this. Many other people at Brookings do the same thing. In my view, that is why we are really a very, very good team. Not only do we have five people who get along pretty well and all of them have their own ideas, but we have been able to meld them. We have great scholarship. Belle and I have pretty good scholarship as well, but we have great scholarship from the Princeton team and the credibility of Princeton University, plus the political knowledge and policy knowledge of the team here at Brookings.

I think we have done very well in actually getting people to pay attention to our ideas. One way that we do that is we publish a 3,000-word policy brief. Now many people think policymakers would never read a journal or a book, which is completely true, but they would never read a 3,000-word policy brief either, but their staff will and their staff will summarize it in a one-page memo. So we have really specialized in writing these 3,000-word policy briefs. We pick out the most interesting and policy-relevant issue from each of our issues and write one policy brief, and then we organize a public event around the policy brief. We have done all our events here in this room. Plus, we have done a couple on the Hill, where we go up and especially try to attract Congressional staff. In all of those briefings, we try to emphasize specific recommendations about how policy should change and in many cases, what it would cost and how to go about it.

We also, by the way, in several cases have emphasized state and local policy. In fact, I think one of our best events and one of our best policy briefs was on obesity which

was focused almost exclusively on state and local efforts. It is really amazing how much state and local government has done, primarily because Washington has basically punted on this issue because the food lobby is very powerful and for other philosophical reasons. The states and localities have really had to focus. That is where we put our attention, on what the states and the localities could do.

Let me just present you with a few little tokens of what we think is success. First, one of the most frequently used education web sites is called Education World, and they recently evaluated a bunch of books and journals, and they gave our journal, for content and its presentation, its design, as well as our web site, an A Plus. That seems pretty good. I never got one of those myself. That is pretty good, right?

Then also our web site, we have about 50,000 hits a month with lots and lots of downloads, and we have 28,000 subscribers to our newsletter, our electronic newsletter. I think this shows we are having some modest impact, both on the field and on policymakers, both because I think we have selected the right topics and because we are able to bring both a distinguished scholarly background and a knowledge of the policy process and how to influence policy process and brought those things together.

Now we want to hear more detail about two of the topics. Sara and Belle, respectively, are going to talk about two of the issues that we address. Sara is going to talk about marriage and what we did with our journal on marriage, and then Belle is going to talk about social mobility and what we plan to do with our volume on social mobility. Sara McLanahan?

MS. SAWHILL: Actually, I think I am not going to talk about social mobility. I am going to talk about poverty and inequality, and I think it is going to lead into what Sara is going to talk about.

MR. HASKINS: So you want to go first?

MS. SAWHILL: What do you think, Sara? I think it is going to lead right into it.

MR. HASKINS: This is a brilliant example of organization that we are able to follow here.

MS. MCLANAHAN: That is fine — I am just going to talk about the marriage issue — if you think it is going to lead into that.

MS. SAWHILL: It doesn't make any difference to me.

MR. HASKINS: Sara, why don't you go first?

MS. MCLANAHAN: Let me just say one other thing, an add-on to what Ron said, which is that the journal is free. It is on the web. You can download it. If you Google "children," I think we are the second thing that comes up. If you type in "future of children," we will obviously be the first thing that comes up.

We make a big effort in this journal to sort of translate the best scientific research into information that is accessible. If any of you have tried to read academic writings, you know that academics don't often do this kind of thing. So that is a big part of our effort, to find the best research but then to get it written in a way that the general public, policymakers, people can read it and understand it.

Let me talk a little bit about the issue that we did on marriage. "Marriage and Child Wellbeing" was the title.

Why do an issue on marriage? First, many of you are probably familiar with the very dramatic trends in family formation that have occurred in the U.S. in the last 50 years. There has been a delay and possibly a decline in marriage, large increases in divorce, increases in cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing, and basically increases in single parenthood. It is important to note that these changes are much more pronounced

among low income families. This is not about Murphy Brown, despite the popularity of that idea. This is primarily a phenomenon that is occurring among low income people. In fact, the divorce rates have leveled off since 1980 and actually gone down among educated people.

The trends are driven by multiple causes: changes in the economy, changes in social norms and values, and changes in birth control technology. Similar trends are occurring in all Western industrialized countries. I think this is important to know that these trends may be very hard to reverse. They are driven by a lot of things. They are occurring in nearly all the countries.

The U.S. stands out in a couple of respects. First of all, we have more marriage in the U.S. We have both more marriage and more divorce. More of the children born to lone mothers or born to unmarried mothers in the U.S. are born to mothers who are not living with a partner. So you hear a lot about Sweden and the cohabiting couples over there and the high rates of non-marital childbearing, but Sweden is very difficult. Ninety percent of the kids in Sweden who are born outside marriage are born to cohabiting parents. In the U.S., it is less than 50 percent. We have high marriage, high splits, and high rates of single motherhood.

What are the consequences of these trends? First, we know they are related to increases in poverty. They are also related to increases in mental health problems for adults, mothers. They have long term negative effects on children. Children who grow up in single parent families have less education, lower wages in adulthood, more mental health problems, and they have more disrupted families of their own.

The effects on all of these outcomes are modest. These are not huge effects, but the fact is they affect lots and lots of people. So at a population level, they really do

matter. Over half of all children born in the last 10 years, in the last 20 years really, are going to spend some time in a single parent family. This is a very widespread problem.

Why don't low income mothers marry? I am going to focus on the low income mothers primarily because that is where a lot of the policy interest is, and also because, as I said before, this is the group where the rates are the highest and the trends are the largest.

First of all, most low income unwed mothers want to marry. They say they want to marry, but they fear divorce. They actually think that it is better not to marry than to marry and divorce. So they have a fear of failure here.

Children are different. Children for these low income mothers are a necessity, whereas marriage is sort of a luxury good. These mothers have children while they continue to search for a suitable partner. They are, in a way, like middle class or more educated women in the sense that they are searching for the right man and that takes a while to find. What is different is that they have children during the search process. Therefore, they end up having children with multiple, different partners.

People have talked about a marriage bar. There is a very interesting idea that the low income women have set a very high marriage bar for themselves. They don't want to get married unless they can find a man who agrees to be faithful and who has a steady job. So they are looking to get these two goals accomplished before they marry.

In the journal that we did on this, we talked about two kinds of solutions. We really commissioned two different authors to come up with solutions. The first set of solutions have to do with changes in the income transfer and tax policy, so marriage penalties that exist in those policies. The second set of solutions have to do with marriage programs.

First, let me say a word about the transfer programs. As most of you know, I am sure, most of the programs for poor single mothers that we have in the U.S. are highly income-tested. Therefore, benefits fall sharply as incomes increase. Thus, poor single mothers stand to lose the benefits if they marry, and with the loss of this benefit, they have to weigh the loss of this secure source of income against the somewhat insecure source of income that might come with marrying or cohabiting with a partner.

The solutions for this problem that were suggested by our authors are two. First, we might set a maximum marginal tax rate for low income families, just as we do for high income families. Right now, single mothers, poor single mothers are paying 100 percent tax rate if they marry someone and we count that extra income.

A second solution would be to provide individual-based wage subsidies to low income earners and allow these individuals to keep their benefits if they marry. This would be an individual-based benefit. It would not be looking at the couple income. As long as the individual remained a low wage worker, he or she would retain the subsidy. Therefore, if they marry, they would be able to benefit from the economies of scale.

The second set of solutions have to do with the marriage programs, and there is a lot of interest in these. As many of you probably know, the Bush Administration is planning to spend half a billion dollars on programs to increase marriage and father involvement among low income families. The model programs focus on improving communication and relationship skills among unwed parents, and these are couple-focused interventions. That is what is really different about these interventions. In the past, most of the programs that we have had have focused either on the single mothers, and more recently we have had some programs focusing on the fathers, but the marriage programs are designed to involve the couple. The couple is treated as a unit.

There is pretty good evidence that these programs help middle-class couples. Middle-class couples pay to receive these services. There is some experimental evidence by psychologists that shows that parents who participate in these programs are more likely to be together and to have a good relationship after five years. So they may work for low income families.

I think there is a big “if” here. First, the programs need to be adapted to meet the needs of low income couples. They need to also provide additional services in many cases: mental health services, employment services, the kinds of things that perhaps the middle class couples didn’t need but the low income couples will need to go along with the relationship training.

Finally, offering these services around the time of birth may actually increase the benefit of the programs themselves as well as the service. We have this idea that there is a magic moment that occurs at the time a child is born, and this is the case for unmarried couples as well as for married couples. So we are recommending that whatever programs are provided for these young couples that they start around the time of birth to take advantage of the very high levels of motivation that appear to exist among these couples.

ACF is currently funding evaluations of several model programs, using random assignment. We also recommend that the future funding of these programs should be closely tied to the findings of these evaluations. Pretty soon, we are going to know which combinations of services work, and we suggest that we should be following through on that knowledge.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you.

Let me just make a point about this, and that is the person who wrote the chapter, Gene Steuerle from the Urban Institute with his colleague, I have forgotten his name.

Senator Brownback from Kansas who is the Head of the D.C. Appropriations Subcommittee of Appropriations in the Senate and soon to be a Presidential candidate, we think, is very interested in marriage, and he actually has consulted with Gene and others here at Brookings. He is now writing legislation which will be in an Appropriations bill this year, and he will fund one of the ideas presented in the article, which is that if low income couples get married — all the details are not worked out — for two years or three years, whatever amount they lose from the benefit programs, they will be paid that amount. So there will be a zero percent penalty from the benefit programs.

Since he is the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, it seems quite likely that this thing next year we may actually be implementing in the District, and it will have an evaluation just like we are recommending in the article. He found out about this because his staff had read the policy brief that we wrote. It worked out pretty well.

Now, Belle Sawhill to talk about poverty and inequality.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, I am glad you brought that up because I think that is one of the wonderful things about this partnership, that we are able to translate research into action through our efforts. This is a great example, and we could probably mention some others if we had time.

Ron said I was going to talk about social mobility. I am not, but if you are interested in social mobility, come back in September. We will be having a launch event then to talk about the extent of opportunity in America, the extent to which we are a more fluid society than some other advantaged democracies. Sara and I are working on that together. The journal is in press, and we will have a lot to say about that later, but we don't want to step on our September event by talking about that today.

I am going to go back and talk about anti-poverty policy. I think this is of great interest to many people now in the wake of Katrina, and that interest hasn't been translated into any action in this case, but we have done some interesting research already, and we will be doing a lot more. In fact, we will have a whole issue of the journal devoted to that about a year and a half from now, I think it is.

Just to remind those of you who don't deal in this subject on a daily basis as some of us do about the trends here, income inequality in the United States has increased pretty steady for the past four decades with a pause during the late 1990s, and it is now as high as it has ever been, at least since we first began collecting data about half a century ago. Poverty rates, especially among children, are also high and have been rising for the past four years, although they did decline in the late 1990s. Again, that period in the late 1990s was a little bit of an exception for what otherwise has been some pretty gloomy trends.

For those of you who don't know what we mean by poverty, the conventional definition and the one used by the Government in measuring poverty is based on what various sized families need to have for a barely adequate diet and a few other necessities of life. For a four-person family, the poverty line is currently around \$20,000 a year, and about one out of every six children lives in a family with an income that is less than that amount. That being the case, many advocates for the poor believe the most effective way to reduce poverty is simply to provide these families with more money. Such assistance is usually called welfare, although it may include in addition to cash assistance, various important non-cash benefits such as food stamps and subsidized housing.

In 1996, thanks to Ron's efforts, he was then on the Hill as a Chief Staffer for the key committee that passed a welfare reform bill. That bill was reauthorized finally this

year. As you may know, the new welfare system as opposed the old one emphasizes work and also emphasizes marriage rather than cash assistance. Put a little differently, a low income mother can now only get cash assistance for a limited period of time, and the results of the reform bill in 1996 — it has just been researched to death — have been a sharp drop in welfare caseloads, an increase in employment and earnings among single mothers, and most families are better off, at least economically better off, as a result because their increased earnings have more than offset their loss of welfare benefits.

That said, the extent to which anti-poverty policy should be based on providing people with more assistance, money assistance versus providing them with help in finding and keeping jobs and supplementing their low wages, remains somewhat controversial in part because many of these single women, of course, also have childrearing responsibilities. Our research suggests that this new emphasis on work, however, is a good strategy. It also suggests that bringing back the two-parent family that Sara talked about would also reduce poverty, although just how we bring back two-parent families and how we encourage marriage remains to be seen, as she emphasized.

Some of our research on these questions about the role of work and the role of marriage in reducing poverty is written up in a policy brief that Ron and I co-authored. If you are interested, we can get you a copy of that with all of the gory details. This is just a small sample of all the work we have done in this area, and certainly a small sample of all the work that has been done at Princeton and Brookings combined. But I don't have time to talk about the entire iceberg, so I will just give you a little bit about the tip.

What we did in this research was we took an actual sample of poor families with children, and using Census Bureau data, we simulated what would happen if they worked as much as non-poor families, which means that most of them would be working full

time. What would happen if they married as much as people married back in the 1970s? Then we got carried away, and we also asked the question: What would happen if every family had completed high school and no family had more than two children? Under those various assumptions, we found that the poverty rate could be reduced dramatically. If all four of those things were done, somehow or another, the poverty rate would decline from 13 percent to well under 4 percent. We would reduce the poverty rate by 70 percent in this Country and get it down to such a minimal level that it would be hard to be horribly concerned about it.

One more point, although all of those factors contribute to a reduction in poverty, we also compared them to what would happen if you doubled welfare benefits. In other words, you made a welfare check twice as big as it is now. We compared that one policy to each of the other four policies: making sure everybody graduates from high school or making sure everybody works full time or getting them to limit their family size. All of those other policies did more to reduce the poverty rate than even a doubling of welfare benefits. A doubling of welfare benefits is not in the cards. It would never be politically feasible in this Country.

You can say, well, is it ever going to be feasible to ask people to work more hours? Is it ever going to be feasible to get people to marry as much as they did in the 1970s? Is it ever going to be feasible to get people to graduate from high school in larger numbers? Those are daunting challenges as well, but the good thing about them, I think, is that they are consistent with American values and with the self-respect and desire of low income families themselves to be part of the mainstream and to earn their own way.

This doesn't mean that we don't need to shore up wages at the bottom of the wage scale, using vehicles like the earned income tax credit or a higher minimum wage. It

doesn't mean we don't need to provide low wage workers with child care and health care. In fact, we could take advantage of the greater employment among single mothers to put their children into very high quality early childhood education programs which, as one of our earlier issues of the *Future of Children* argued, is probably the very best thing you can do to get those children ready for school because there are very large gaps by socioeconomic status and by race between the test scores of children even as young as age three or four. The best way to close those gaps is to reach them far earlier.

The bottom line here is that we think the strategy of encouraging work and encouraging marriage are good strategies, hard to do but better than the old approach of simply providing people with higher welfare benefits. I will leave it at that.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Belle.

Now we have a half-hour to argue with each other. Who wants to start an argument? Yes, in the back there?

MS. GILL: It is not an argument, but I am curious. I am Wanda Gill, U.S. Department of Education, on loan to Bowie State University.

I am curious to know if your population included illegal immigrant children because they fit all those categories and if you looked at diverse language populations as well.

MS. SAWHILL: To the extent that they get into the Census Bureau's data, they are there. Now are they under-represented? I am sure they are because if you are an illegal immigrant, you don't want to talk to anybody in authority, including a census taker. So there would be some deficits in the sample with respect to that.

MS. GILL: (off mike)

MR. HASKINS: Did you hear that?

MS. SAWHILL: She said some of them are getting social security.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, also in the back?

MR. STATES: David States (?), Policy, American, Virginia Commonwealth University.

A question about bringing young poor men back into the equation, for decades we have subsidized low income women with regard to a variety of subsidies and benefits to encourage them to participate in the labor force, and what are the prospects of doing the same for men of color?

MS. MCLANAHAN: As I said, I think that is part of what the marriage programs are all about. Actually, before, there was a version of the marriage programs that had started under the Bush Administration, I mean under the Clinton Administration, and that was fatherhood programs that would focus on the couple. It was called Teen Parenting. So the old version of fatherhood programs were sort of do something for the men over here. We have been doing something for the women over here. Then they got this idea that if we really want to get the men involved with the children, maybe we should bring the women in, too, because they are living with the mothers. Then, the Bush Administration came in, and the program of Teen Parenting turned into the program of let's get the couples married.

But I think, at the basis, what this is all really about is trying to improve the relationships and the cooperation between these couples. Hopefully, if you start early enough, when many of them are romantically involved, which they are — 80 percent are romantically involved at the time the child is born — you could end up encouraging marriage in that way. If you wait five or six years until after the couple is broken up, that is not going to happen. I think bringing the fathers in but bringing them in around the

time of birth and bringing them in with the mother in the room is a very important new policy change.

MR. HASKINS: Sara mentioned the legislation that just passed that provided a half a billion dollars for marriage over five years. That also includes a quarter of a billion dollars for fatherhood programs. The first response to your question is that fatherhood is very much on the Congressional agenda and has been for probably a decade now. The House passed legislation three years ago with even more money than that. They passed it two different times, but the Senate killed it because there was one particular Senator who didn't like it, so they never got to pass it. But now they have just passed \$50 million a year for five years.

I think the two things that the Congress is most concerned about and I think policymakers, too, number one is employment, that a lot of males are unemployed or out of the workforce. Amazingly, during the 1990s when the work rates among low income women just skyrocketed, never married mothers actually increased their employment rate by 50 percent between 1995 and 1999. During that period, low income minority males actually declined, and as Belle implied in her first set of comments, despite the fact that wages in the bottom were increasing for the first time in something like two or three decades.

Employment is a big part of this issue, and really nothing we are doing now is effective. We have had lots of programs in the past. So there is a lot to do here on employment.

The second thing that we can do something about is child support enforcement. A lot of these guys are completely pushed into the underground because as soon as they start having earnings, we have all kinds of new spectacular ways that Congress passed in

1996 and before — thanks in part to Sara’s husband who is one of the leading scholars of child support enforcement — that we find out about their money and we seize it right out of their paycheck. Sometimes they have arrearages of \$10,000 or \$15,000 or \$20,000. Can you imagine that for a guy who makes \$11,000 or \$12,000 a year? I mean it is just hopeless.

We have got to do something about child support, and a number of ideas have been put forth. Some of them are being tried in experiments now. There is a lot more flexibility at the state level to bend some of the rules in child support enforcement. So I think we will make some modest progress over the near future, but employment is still the most difficult problem.

Other questions? Yes, and tell us your name and where you are from, please.

MS. CAYATANI: Debra Kayatani (?), GKnot Foundation.

My question is on the scope of your study. How much of your studies or your research has been done to include or use statistics from military families? There are quite a few military families on food coupons, social assistance, and that was a big issue in 2000.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, again, they would tend to be in the data sets that we used. We haven’t broken them out and looked at them separately, but they are not excluded.

MS. MCLANAHAN: Probably the ones overseas are not in the data sets.

MS. SAWHILL: Right.

MR. HASKINS: Over here and then there is another one in the back. Okay, go ahead.

MR. KONDRACKE: I am Mort Kondracke from *Roll Call*.

Somehow I missed the reauthorization of TANF. Tell us how much of an

improvement that bill is over the previous status quo and what was provided in the end for child care because that was a big issue when it came up a year ago, and it didn't pass. Would you give us an evaluation of the reauthorization bill?

MS. SAWHILL: I am going to let Ron say more about that because I think he has followed this more closely than I have, but you are absolutely right that the amount of money for child care was a huge sticking point between the House and the Senate. I think we ended up with, what, an extra million dollars?

MR. HASKINS: Billion.

MS. SAWHILL: I mean billion; excuse me, billion, yes. I should know that, having worked in OMB. I used to say billion when I meant million in those days.

The other issue was how strict the work requirements should be and particularly the issue of whether people who are on welfare should be required to work while they are on welfare and what proportion of the caseload should have to be involved in work and what would be defined as work. Would, for example, getting some kind of vocational education count? Basically, the Administration and particularly the House held out for quite a strict definition of work and quite high work rates.

Ron, what else should we say about this?

MR. HASKINS: First of all, the bill contained the marriage money and the fatherhood money which, at least in my opinion, is crucial. From that perspective, it is a good thing they finally passed it. They did cut the money way back because they had to finance as part of a reconciliation bill. They cut funds elsewhere. It used to be \$300 million a year rather than \$100 million, so they cut it by two-thirds, but they still passed the marriage and fatherhood part of it.

Secondly, on child care, child care was really, as Belle points out, the major issue

that held things up. The Democrats started way back in 2002 in the first year of reauthorization. They wanted as much as \$16 or \$13 billion dollars. It depended on different members of the Senate. They were primarily in the Senate that wanted different amounts. At that point, the Bush Administration was willing to compromise at \$3 billion but could not work out a deal. So it was not reauthorized in 2002 or 2003 or 2004, and finally it was reauthorized in 2005, although technically it passed in February of this year, as Belle said, and child care held it up.

There is a billion dollars in child care which I think most people would consider to be not enough, although I would point out to you that the amount of money for child care has more than doubled since the mid-1990s because of Federal policy and state policy. Those two things are important.

On the work requirements, it is quite fascinating. What actually finally passed is essentially the 1996 deal. I don't want to go into all of it. It is kind of complicated. Roughly speaking, what it means is that every state has to have half its welfare caseload in some work program for 30 hours a week and they can use some education, but it is limited, the amount of education. They have to be in a work program. I think most people think it is going to be very, very difficult for the states to meet that 50 percent requirement. Probably only a few states will be able to meet it, and there are heavy financial penalties.

Stay tuned. There is going to be a lot of fighting over this. The governors, including Republican governors, I think, are definitely going to give some kickback on this, and you will hear a lot more about this issue over the next two years as it is implemented. I think 50 percent is a good standard, but the problem is the states probably can't meet it. That was, as Belle pointed out, one of the points.

MS. SAWHILL: A lot of Democrats argued, correctly in my personal view, that the emphasis should be on getting people into jobs in the private sector and to the extent that you divert resources into having to keep people in jobs while they are on welfare, that is actually not a constructive way to achieve what should be the ultimate goal. There should have been more credit given to getting people off of welfare as opposed to keeping them working while they are welfare.

Now, you may want to dispute that.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, but I am not going to.

MR. KONDRACKE: In the child care funding, to what extent was there emphasis on early childhood development?

MR. HASKINS: Go ahead.

MS. SAWHILL: I don't think there was any.

MR. HASKINS: Right. The compromise that was reached in 1990 in the Congress was that you would run the Head Start, that which is Head Start. You would keep running Head Start during the Clinton years, funded at ever higher levels. Republicans have never cut the funding. In fact, they have given it roughly an inflationary increase very year, so we have roughly the same number of kids in Head Start. That is the high quality early childhood education answer from the Federal Government.

In 1990, the deal on day care was that it would be left up to the states and parents, and there would not be strong Federal regulation. There are dinky little Federal requirements for quality child care, and there is money in there. Four percent of the block of the money for day care has to be used to be devoted to quality improvement. There is some little piece in the Federal legislation. It is mostly up to the states. We have

lots of very good data that shows that most child care is not of a high enough quality that you would expect it to boost child development, but it does serve the purpose of taking care of kids while mothers work, and that increases family income which does have impacts on children's development.

I think in a perfect world, it would be better to spend \$8,000 per child per year on high quality care that is even better than Head Start, but we are a long ways from that and given the Federal budget crunch, I don't think it is in the cards.

MS. SAWHILL: Although it is happening at the state level now.

MR. HASKINS: States are spending a lot more money. States are now spending at least \$4 billion of their own money, not just on child care but exclusively on these high quality preschool programs. Evaluations seem to imply that their programs are producing better results than Head Start. I am sure that is not true of every state, but for the ones that have had good evaluations like Oklahoma and Georgia, they are producing, it looks like they are producing better results than Head Start. The states are really stepping in here.

All the way in the back row, he had his hand up several times.

MR. BORDEN: Thank you. I am David Borden, Director of StoptheDrugWar.org and Editor of the *Drug War Chronicle Newsletter* and Princeton Class of 1988.

We have an incarceration rate in our Country that leads the world and, in terms of our own history, is unprecedentedly huge. I don't think that is an exaggeration to say. Has work been done, is there work being done at your center or elsewhere on the impact on families and children of incarceration in our minority communities and lower income where it is most targeted? Has work been done on the impacts on families and children of removing so many people from the communities into jail or prison for shorter or

longer periods of times, on the effects economically for families when people come out, having criminal records that may affect their employment?

MS. SAWHILL: I can say a couple of things about that. First of all, in the study that I described a few moments ago, we discovered that for African-American younger mothers, there was a scarcity of African-American males that we could match them up with. When I first saw that, I thought, well, that is because the Census Bureau doesn't do a very good job of reaching and interviewing those men. But I talked to people at the Census Bureau, and they convinced me that these days they are doing a reasonably good job of sampling those men. And so, I think there really a scarcity of young African-American males. Where are they? They are either dead or they are incarcerated, as you are suggesting.

The second brief point is we are beginning to do a little bit of research here at Brookings that is looking at the criminal justice system from the standpoint of what happens when people try to reenter society after serving a term in prison and what can be done to facilitate that transition. Our colleague, Hugh Price, has written an op-ed and plans to do more work on this. He recommends that we provide a transitional jobs program for young men before they come out of prison in order to give them a track record and a job record that will then have some meaning in the private sector when they come out of prison. And he points out that that need not cost anymore than what we are spending now on the incarceration itself and that you would select people based on their good record in prison. I think that is an interesting idea.

MR. HASKINS: Sara?

MS. MCLANAHAN: At Princeton, we have a study called The Fragile Families, a child wellbeing study. If you Google "fragile families," you will find it. It is a study of

unwed parents. We start with birth, when the child is born, and we follow the parents and the children until the children are five years old now. One of the big shocks of the study has been that 50 percent of the unmarried fathers have been incarcerated, not in jail at the time but at some point. The average father is about 24 years old.

If you think about it, not only do we know from research that incarceration lowers earnings after getting out, there is certain discrimination against people who were incarcerated. We have another study at Princeton that shows that. But if you think about it, the kinds of skills that a man has to learn to survive in jail are exactly the opposite of the skills that they need to be a good partner or father. And so, I think the two policies of this incarceration which is very much a result of changes in legislation about how to deal with drug laws and three strikes and you are out policy. If you think about it, that policy which locked up so many men is in complete contradiction to a policy that says we should be trying to strengthen families and build good relationships.

Actually, there is a new RFP that just came from the Administration for Children and Families that is going to focus on the relationships of these men coming out of prison and what can we do to strengthen the family relationships there.

MR. HASKINS: Let me just add, as Sara is suggesting here, that in the last, I would say, three years or so, there has been just a dramatic increase in interest in this field and especially in the process of men coming out of prison and reintegrating with society. Last week, there was a big meeting of researchers and practitioners at the University of Michigan. HHS had a meeting about three weeks ago. The Joyce Foundation is going to spend a lot of its money on incarceration in the Midwest, and they are doing large, random sample studies to see techniques for getting males back in the workforce. Nothing that we have researched so far is very hopeful, but perhaps in the

next decade or so, we will learn a lot more and be able to do a better job.

Other questions? Up here?

MS. JOHNSON: Hi, I am Jennifer Johnson, and I am from Virginia Commonwealth University. I am a sociologist there.

It is interesting that his question actually does tap into the question I have about, from the perspective of the women, they are making rational choices about marriage and a lack of marriage partners. One of the things that consistently runs through, even if we think about the model that you used to test the effectiveness of doubling the welfare payments versus marriage, is the assumption of stability, that there would be some sense of stability throughout the child's life under that model assumption. If we look at some work by even Wilson or some of McLanahan's work, stability becomes a key factor. I am not sure how you can policy-make stability, but it seems to come into terms with early childhood education. Even schools, longer term school issues, neighborhood issues, geographical issues, but even coming down to, as Wilson argues, the quality of jobs that are available, that the 1996 Welfare Reform Act pushes women to get jobs, but that it can be an unstable family, unfriendly job that doesn't necessarily lead to a stable kind of middle class stability lifestyle there.

Is there anything that is done that is focused on the issue of stability? This is kind of just a general comment of the issue of stability, but it seems to run through all of that. I don't know if you can policy-make that, but it is certainly an issue with the stability of male breadwinners, the stability of neighborhoods, and things like that.

MS. MCLANAHAN: Well, I think you are absolutely right, that it is not just getting people married or in relationships; it is keeping them there. I think that the marriage programs or at least the model programs that are being evaluated now are

working on exactly the same thing that would lead to stability. In fact, there is a set of programs for unmarried parents called Building Strong Families, and they are aimed at improving relationships. There is another set of programs for married couples, and that is called Strengthening Healthy Marriage. Those are, again, aimed at keeping the couple together.

The main point is that all of these programs are about improving the relationship quality between the parents. In all of the research that shows benefits for children growing up with two biological parents, there is a big caveat there. If the relationship between the parents is very conflictual, it doesn't benefit the children. Just to march everyone down to the courthouse and get them all married is not going to really help the children in the long run.

MS. JOHNSON: Or even the neighborhood context where a lot of instability, a lot of change, a lot of even violence, or weak school systems, weak neighborhoods, all of those seem to factor into maintaining a stable, healthy marriage that you can give counseling to the relationship. But if the context within which it operates or lasts is unstable in and of itself, then no amount of counseling, it seems to me, would help in that way.

MR. DRISCOL: Rick Driscol (?) from Senator Kennedy's office. I had a question about — we see a spike in housing prices and the cost of housing. Do you think that has a strong or a weak impact on marriage rates?

FEMALE VOICE: I do think that the availability of housing is associated with couples' ability to live together. I don't know about the pricing right now of the housing because I'm not sure how many of these couples are actually owning their own

homes. But I have seen some research that suggests that cities with high rental, that there is less doubling up.

There's also policies in public housing that forbid a man to be in that apartment if he has a criminal record. So if you think about 50 percent of the fathers have been incarcerated and these women are trying to get into public housing. But if he were to be on the rent or on the list, she wouldn't be eligible for that house. So I think this is an interesting area for more research.

FEMALE VOICE: There's a program you might or might not be familiar with called Jobs Plus. It's been a demonstration program that's been carried out in a number of cities.

You know, Ron?

MR. HASKINS: I think four or five.

FEMALE VOICE: What they do in this demonstration is they target typically public housing projects or very poor neighbors, and they try to get everyone in that neighborhood to get a job. But what they do as part of that is in addition to giving them all of the usual help with job search and so forth, they also have a special waiver from HUD so that the rent assistance that those families are getting is not reduced when people go to work. That has made a big difference.

The program has been evaluated using random assignment. It's a very rigorous evaluation and found to be really very, very successful at increasing employment in those neighborhoods. So if you don't know about it, you might want to look at it. We could give you some sites.

MR. HASKINS: I think we have time for one more question.

MS. CRAVITZ: Katherine Kravetz , American University.

A few years back, I heard some folks from Oklahoma talking about their marriage initiative program, which was an independent-state-sponsored marriage initiative program. And I wonder if you have any information on how well it was working. The folks there said the main reason they had started it was because they had very high divorce rates, and people were getting married at very, very young ages, people who were not prepared for marriage, and they were trying to initiate counseling. So I wonder whether that program has been evaluated and what the results have been. This is about five years ago.

MR. HASKINS: When Keating (?) was governor, he did a study, because they had such high poverty rate, to explain their high poverty rate. I forgot who did the study, but they came back and said the reason is that so many babies are born outside marriage and your divorce rate is so high.

So Keating decided — and, remember, welfare reform gave states a big block grant of money, and they had tremendous flexibility in what they could do with it. So Oklahoma took a lot of its money from the block grant because their welfare rolls were going down, and they utilized that money to initiate what clearly is the biggest marriage initiative in the country.

They have worked in churches. They just have so much going on, it really is amazing. They have weekends for couples. I think Oklahoma might be one of the few states where you can sponsor a marriage weekend and all kinds of couples will go to it. They get very good attendance at these meetings, even when they're overnight meetings. But nothing has been evaluated yet, so if anybody makes claims about what they're producing, I don't think the claims are justified.

As Sara mentioned, and I think Bill might have mentioned this too, there are large random-assignment studies going on there of marriage education, and there will be a random assignment study in the district of both subsidies for marriage in the form of this check to replace welfare but also of matched savings accounts.

So there is some random-assignment work going on, and over the next five or eight years we'll learn a lot about whether these interventions work, but right now I don't think we know if they work.

FEMALE VOICE: Can I say one more thing?

MS. HASKINS: Sure.

FEMALE VOICE: It's triggered by your point that in Oklahoma, they discovered that people were getting married at very young ages. I think they had the lowest average age of marriage of any state in the country. And we know that that's very predictive of instability, of a later separation or divorce.

I think one of the things we need to think about in that context is where the right place to intervene is. Do you intervene, as Sara has discussed, after the baby is born, and you have the magic moment, and you hope you can get those two people who are romantically involved to marry, or do you try to prevent that birth in the first place?

I think that when you think about very young people, you don't necessarily want them to marry. Most of the increase in single-parent families these days is driven not by divorce. Divorce rate is actually trending down slightly. It's driven by non-marital childbearing. And half of those out-of-wedlock births begin in the teenage years. We don't really want teenagers to get married. They're too young. They should be finishing their education.

I'm all for evaluating these programs; I hope they will do some good. But if I were a policymaker, I would put a lot more emphasis in preventing those early out-of-wedlock births, encouraging women to delay until they're in their mid twenties. Hopefully they find a lifelong partner at that point that they can raise children together with.

Many times when they're still very young, their relationship isn't very strong, and it's going to break up one way or the other. I think we have to think hard about both of these strategies.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Sara and Belle, and thank you for being such a fine audience.