

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MAMA SAYS: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF MOTHER'S ATTITUDES  
ON FATHERING

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## PROCEEDINGS

MR. HASKINS: Welcome to Brookings. My name is Ron Haskins, I'm a Senior Fellow here and Co-Director of the Center on Children and Families, along with Belle Sawhill, and I'd like to welcome you to this event. Many probably have followed the literature on mothers and fathers, and I think we could summarize a major part of the literature by quoting Yogi Berra, who said, you can learn a lot by listening.

And we have developed – Kathy Edin, who's in the front row here, has written several books, and there are other scholars who have done the same thing, go in and talk to mothers and fathers and ask them their opinion about all sorts of things and that's what this report is. It's a wonderful report based on what mothers say about marriage and child rearing and fathers and related topics.

And there's a companion report that's on National Fatherhood Institute's website which is an interview study of fathers so you get both sides of the equation. And there's some – lots of interesting similarities between what mothers and fathers say, and there's some even more interesting differences in what mothers and fathers say, and we plan to get into that this morning. Here's how we're going to proceed this morning. As soon as I get through yacking, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead will give an overview of the report, and then we'll have a brief discussion

among the people on the first panel, and we'll give the audience an opportunity to ask questions. We'd like to have questions rather than statements or comments. A very brief comment might be okay, but any time you go beyond 45 seconds, then I might say something like, is there a question in there somewhere, so let's have questions and not long statements.

Then we'll – after you get – after I ask some questions of the first panel and then give you a chance to ask questions, then we'll bring up the second panel, they'll make opening statements, and Roland Warren, who is moderating the second panel, will ask a few questions, then we'll give the audience an opportunity to ask questions.

So let me announce that Sherry Steisel is not here, unfortunately, she had a death in her family yesterday, and she had to leave last night for Arizona, so it's unfortunate she can't be here. Sherry would have talked about something, I hope we'll at least mention this during the conversation this morning, and that is the changes that I think are really significant in state child support enforcement programs, many of which are trying to do a better job of reaching out to fathers and try to involve fathers rather than just simply chase them for the money and, you know, put them in jail if necessary, I mean really very tough practices in child support enforcement program, as many people know, and Sherry is

in the national congress and state legislature, has been directly involved in a lot of these programs, so it would have been a very valuable perspective, we'll try to make up for that if we can.

But we do have Barbara Dafoe Whitehead here, who's a wonderful scholar. Here's a little known fact about Barbara, she's a historian, but she overcame that early disqualification, and she become what I think and have long regarded, and I've not known Barbara personally very well at all, but I have long regarded her as one of the foremost what I think we sometimes call public intellectuals in America.

Her 1993 article in the Atlantic Monthly entitled Improbably, Dan Quail was right, is a milestone in a national – to reduce non-marital births and promote marriage, as our books on divorce and marriage. I was tempted to ask her about her book entitled “Why There Are No Good Men Left”, but I decided I wouldn't because I might not like the answer. Barbara is now head of a project on Thrift and Generosity and Institute for American Values, and as soon as she finishes that project, she's coming to Washington to be the head of CBO and solve the national debt crisis. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead.

MS. WHITEHEAD: Good morning, everyone, and thank you, Ron, for that nice introduction. And thanks to the NFI for commissioning this very rich and suggestive survey, and to Roland

Warren for leading that effort. I want to lead off the discussion today by describing some of the survey's major findings. But first let me just say a word about why a survey about mothers makes an important contribution to helping us understand how to encourage and support responsible fatherhood.

We live in an era of co-parenting, and as a general rule, we expect mothers and fathers to share parenting responsibility for the children they have together no matter what the parents' own relationship is. And further, there's a strong policy consensus, I think it's fair to say, that we should encourage healthy co-parenting relationships. Now, mothers represent one-half of the co-parenting relationship, and I think some mothers would argue that they represent more than half of the co-parenting relationship, but be that as it may, we do know that mother's evaluation of fathering plays a role in determining the quality both of fathering and of the co-parenting partnership.

So what I like about this survey is that it acknowledges the role of mothers and gives us a handle on those conditions and attitudes that either promote or frustrate good fathering and good parenting.

So now let me just make this what really is a mad dash through the survey, which, as I said, is very rich and has a lot of nuance, and I'm going to ignore the nuance and just tell you key findings.

It's a companion survey to an earlier survey of fathers, also commissioned by NFI, and conducted by Norval Glenn, who also did this survey, and so it gives us some opportunity to compare what mothers think and what fathers think, so maybe we can talk about that in a minute.

But the survey report covers four main areas, mother's evaluation of father's performance, their general attitudes toward fathers and fatherhood, mother's views on what they see as main obstacles to good fathering, and mother's perception of some of the resources that might be helpful to fathers. So now let me just again hit on some of the highlights. First, on mother's evaluation of father's parenting performance, mothers were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements that were designed to elicit their appraisal of the father's behavior on a number of measures, including, you know, the overall satisfaction with the father's performance, how much time he spends with the child, how warm and close the relationship might be, whether they thought the father had all the necessary skills to be a good father, and how well father contributed to the mother's ability to balance work and family responsibilities.

So one key finding, a very important one, has to do with the relationship of the mother's co-residency with her satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the father's performance. Mothers who lived with the fathers of their child, whether they were married to the fathers or

cohabiting, had dramatically greater satisfaction with the father's parenting performance on most measures than mothers who did not live with the fathers. And the differences between the living together mothers and the not living together mother's satisfaction levels were huge. Norval Glenn is going to say more about that later on, so I will just say that if you put it in report card terms, you would say the mothers who live with the fathers of the children were given the fathers A's or maybe B pluses, whereas the mothers who were not living with the fathers were giving the fathers probably C minuses or D's on most of the measures of their overall assessment of the father's behavior.

Mothers not living with the fathers were especially unhappy and dissatisfied if the fathers had other romantic marital or step-parent responsibility. And with each additional successive relationship, the mothers reported increasing levels of satisfaction. So this is a really, you know, major finding of the survey.

A second key finding had to do with work/family balance. And here mothers pretty much across the board agreed that fathers could do more to help them achieve a better work/family balance.

As I said, this is widespread among all the mothers, but what was particularly interesting was that the mothers who were overall pretty happy with the dad's performance on most measures were less happy



with the father's contribution to helping them sustain a good work/family balance. So, you know, again, in report card terms, the mothers who were giving the dads A's on most measures were giving them something closer to B minuses or C pluses on how well they contributed to helping the mothers balance work and family.

And the work/family issue also came up in the survey when mothers were asked about their perception of obstacles to good fathering, and here again, work was the number one obstacle for almost all the mothers.

A third key finding was that mother's strong religious beliefs correlated with satisfaction with the father's performance whether the mothers were living with the father or not. Mothers, even those who were not religious, also cited faith communities as the institutions that were most able to help fathers become better fathers. And they placed faith communities above let's say community organizations or schools or other helping institutions.

So now quickly let me turn to another area of the survey, which is mother's general attitudes toward fathers. We asked fathers this in the father survey, or at least Norval did, and we wanted to ask mother the same question about is there a crisis of father absence in the country today, and sure enough, the overwhelming majority of mothers, 93

percent, agreed. And the view of the father crisis was even stronger among African American mothers than for white mothers. So 83 percent of African American mothers strongly agreed that there was a father absence crisis compared to 62 percent of white mothers, it's interesting.

On the question of can dads be – are they irreplaceable or can they be replaced by a mother or another adult male role model. Here a majority of mothers, a somewhat small majority of mothers agreed that fathers can be replaced by a mother or another male role model. But a better measure perhaps is those who strongly agree, and they're about a fifth of the mothers strongly agree that fathers were replaceable by either a mother or a male role model, with twice as many of the mothers not living with the fathers agreeing that fathers could be replaced.

And then the third statement that we wanted to explore was this one, all things being – all else being equal, men perform best as fathers if they're married to the mothers of their children. And here two-thirds of the mothers agreed. And not surprisingly perhaps, married mothers were more likely to agree with this statement compared to cohabiting mothers or mothers who didn't live with the father. So that's my mad dash through the key findings, and there's much, much more. But let me just conclude by saying something about what the implications are for

policies for how we can use these survey findings to inform the work in promoting responsible fatherhood.

Well, the first one is that I think clearly we need to marshal huge amounts of social imagination and energy in order to help mothers and fathers who do not live together to form healthy father/child relationships and good co-parenting relationships, because this population was clearly at much greater risk for dissatisfaction, disagreements, potential conflict in their – both the father, you know, the mother's appraisal of the fathers closeness and ability to be a good father and also presumably in their ability to work together cooperatively.

The second major finding I think drawn from the survey evidence would be that it's really important to promote healthy marriage as the living together relationship that most reliably provides a long term basis for good fathering and good co-parenting.

Now, one question that often arises, and particularly in light of this survey's findings, is whether it's marriage or it's just living together that contributes to good fathering, since most of mothers who lived with the fathers also had pretty high appraisals of the father's performance. But here I think we have to rely also on a very large body of social science evidence to support the idea that marriage is probably the most reliable foundation for long lasting co-residential, high commitment relationships

between the mother and father, and, of course, between the father and the children.

Now, I want to – Norval and I both would hasten to add that we're not suggesting that marriage promotion somehow substitutes for helping parents who are not living together and not married, but rather that it's a compliment, it's a complimentary strategy, and especially to get the word out to younger people who have not yet entered their parenting life. It's a long life, I can tell you, it goes on and on, but – in any event, to make them aware of the social science evidence on the importance of marriage to good fatherhood.

And then finally, but not lastly, extremely important to encourage fathers to do more to help mothers balance work and family, and this is a crucial issue I think to address for all fathers in almost any family circumstance in the future, and especially today, when, as you know, men are losing jobs at a great rate, and very often mothers have become, if they weren't already, the sole earner in the family. So it's extremely important I think to get it right, how both parents contribute to having a good work/family balance.

Norval and I just speculate that balancing work and family probably means more than just doing the fun things with the kids, it probably means helping out with some of the more mundane chores that

we women are familiar with. So I'll conclude there on that happy note and await questions. Thank you.

MR. HASKINS: So I can tell that Barbara Dafoe Whitehead has never been at my house. My wife is a complete slave driver. She doesn't even know what a washing machine is. Last week she asked me, where do you keep the broom. So not every house is like that, but I wish it were.

So now I get to ask some questions. I'll start out with this – oh, let me say, first of all, that Roland Warren, who's the head of the National Fatherhood Initiative that sponsored this study and the previous study I mentioned, is here to my right, only on this panel, otherwise, he's not on my right.

And Norval Glenn from the University of Texas, who actually played a direct role in designing and conducting the study, and a long time, here way before any of us, maybe Barbara, and we were talking about who's the oldest a little while ago, but Norval has been studying marriage and divorce and family relationships for many, many, many years, I – to him kind of the dean of the field.

And let me just mention here that he did a study recently – very – wanting to say that the sky world, which is generally not to the right of either one of us, in fact, far to the left, nonetheless, has really come to

the view that the best learning environment for children is a married couple family.

And Norval did an extremely clever thing, he studied articles in the most prestigious child and family journal over a period of something like 35 years, I forget exactly what it was, and he divided it in two periods, an early period and a later period.

In the early period, most of the articles were written from the perspective about they got a divorce and everybody got better, they remarried, the kids recovered, everything is fine. And then the later period in which a – article said, well, they got a divorce, it's kind of an issue, especially the dad's, you know, had trouble, and it effected the kids, and you can see the kids and so forth. So there was a big change in the – world that you can find right in the pages of that journal and you can see it happening over the years, and by the way, the journal would not publish –

So there might still be some issues here in the – world about the importance of marriage. But let me start with this, the finding that mothers agree that there's a father absence crisis in the country, and 83 percent of black mothers thought that.

Did the people – I mean the sample must have included a lot of people who had babies outside marriage, who live in a household with the kids without the father, and who are divorced. Did they make any

connection between their personal decisions and their personal behavior and this feeling that we're having a crisis of father absence?

MR. GLENN: Well, it's hard to tell. We didn't ask the kind of questions that really would make that kind of connection, but by inference, I would say, yes, I think their personal experience is feeding into these attitudes.

MR. HASKINS: What I'm getting at here is, you know, if we're going to change as a nation and have more of our – have marriages last longer and have more of our kids living in married couple families, individuals are going to have to, you know, understand their responsibilities here. Do you see any evidence from this survey or other information that we are doing that as a country?

MR. GLENN: I think there's a bit of a disconnect between aspirations and reality. And somehow I think, you know, bringing the two together, because women agree there's a father absence crisis, they agree that marriage is the, you know, best circumstance for bringing up children, and yet the trends are all moving in the very opposite direction.

But I think the aspirations are very clear. So somehow we have to figure out through a variety of means bringing aspirations and reality a little bit closer together and helping people realize those aspirations.

But I think – I don't think that people are just making this up, I think it's a firm conviction, such a high percentage agree, and the dads agree, too. In fact, the dads agree on all three of those main measures, pro marriage, terrible problem with fatherhood, and, you know –

MR. HASKINS: Father absence?

MR. GLENN: -- father absence, sorry.

MR. GLENN: I agree; I think these attitudes are real, they're not just what we call responsible, I think they're real attitudes.

MR. HASKINS: -- from the fatherhood survey, Barbara already mentioned that the responses were generally the same; do you see any evidence? I mean I know you're intimately involved in fatherhood groups and advice groups all over the country, do you see any evidence that fatherhood groups are focused on marriage and that they somehow hold out the idea that the best way to have a close relationship with your children and establish, you know, a meaningful life is to be married?

MR. WARREN: You know, I'd say it's probably a mixed bag. I think there are some groups that are focused that way and then some that are not focused that way. And I think one of the challenges in many ways, particularly – depending on which communities that you're working in is that, you know, a lot of times the view is sort of the fatherhood issue and I kind of agree with the strategy in part, that the fatherhood issue is a



way to kind of get the guy on the ramp, sort of the on ramp to get you onto, you know, sort of the highway. So we're going to talk about fatherhood and connect there, and then, you know, then we'll kind of transition into, you know, other discussions around, you know, how do you and mom kind of get along together, and you know, you've living together, and are you married and that kind of stuff.

And I think the challenge, though, is that sometimes that on ramp is just very, very long and it never actually connects to a freeway. And I think that's really where, you know, this research is really important, no, you actually need to connect the dots there because if you're going to keep him on that path, I mean the on ramps are heading in the same direction as the freeway, so if you want to keep him on that same direction that this marriage piece is really important, although it may be difficult for some folks to kind of get their heads around that.

MR. HASKINS: Exactly on this point, President Obama, in 2008, made a very famous speech on Father's Day, probably the most eloquent and moving speech ever given by a president on fatherhood, and he went through all kinds of statements about the problems with fathers not being with their children and the father's responsibility to be with the children, he talked about government programs, and he talked about all

sorts of things, but he never talked about the role of marriage; do you see that as a problem?

MR. WARREN: Well, I see it as an opportunity, because, you know, fathering, from my perspective, is, you know, it's a lot like real estate, it's location, location, location. And so if you really want to make sure that the father is in a place where he's going to be doing the kinds of things that good fathers do, he's got to be in a place where he can do that. And the thing that makes you a father is a man is the fact you have kids.

And, you know, my sense is that there's a real opportunity here, and particularly, you know, with the President and the First Lady and sort of the image that they are, the conversations that they've had about their marriage, and the impact of their marriage on their children, I think there's an opportunity there to really create a broader conversation around this issue and really kind of connect what moms and dads seem to be saying in a big way, but maybe haven't figured out a way to kind of make work in the best interest – in the best interest of our kids.

MR. HASKINS: Were you getting ready to say something –

MR. GLENN: What's that?

MR. HASKINS: I said are you getting ready to say something? You looked like you were.

MR. GLENN: -- to my six minutes.

MR. HASKINS: -- to his six minutes. Okay. Well, let me challenge you on this as an opportunity. We're almost a year into the administration, the President has declared priorities, you know, it seems like dozens of priorities, and this is clearly not a priority, it's definitely coming up in Congress next year if we reauthorize welfare reform, and the President has not given any signal that he sees a government role in marriage; you don't find that -- that doesn't concern you, or you, Barbara?

MS. WHITEHEAD: Well, you know, I'm a pretty big fan of President Obama, but I think you're touching on a point that those of us who have worked on these issues for a long time know that it's very politically delicate to talk about marriage, because it seems, though it should not seem, it seems as if when people hear that -- if you're somehow criticizing or discriminating against people who are married, and this has been a problem for a very long time. So I, however, am somewhat more hopeful now, because we are at a moment in time where things seem very difficult and even bleak, a lot of problems in the country, and it's a time I think for rethinking, recalibrating, maybe taking a different direction. So if we could, you know, take advantage of this moment to talk about marriage, it might work, I mean I'm going to persist. But it's a politically difficult word to say and has been for about 25 or 30 years, and before that it was the norm.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. So the last thing that I want to ask you about is the really amazing finding that a majority of mothers, especially mothers who do not live with the fathers, feel that the father's role could be fulfilled by a single mother or by another man. How do you think fathers who are at – don't live with their children and organizations composed of those kinds of fathers, how do you think they're going to react to this finding?

SPEAKER: Well, we'll see. But I, you know, I hope that, you know, the fathers also feel this way, that they can be – that other people can substitute for them. And I hope that they're going to be educated to the extent to feel like, well, I really am in Florida and there's no one else out there who can substitute for my contribution, but that's a hope rather than an expectation.

SPEAKER: I do find it quite interesting that fathers would agree that they're replaceable, you know, where did that idea come from, and how recent is it? I can only speculate that it probably just reflects looking around and seeing what the reality is, seeing a lot of single mothers rearing children with fathers on the sidelines and not involved at all and taking that as kind of the social norm.

But it is surprising that men who do say in the fatherhood survey that they value their role as fathers and they think it's an important

part of being a man would think that they could be replaced, very interesting.

MR. HASKINS: Roland, again, you're close to fatherhood groups, how do you think they're going to respond to this finding?

MR. WARREN: Well, you know, again, it presents – I think it presents an opportunity for you in the sense that I think a core part of any fatherhood program is really helping men understand how important their role is. I mean for me it's sort of – I tend to be less political and just more practical. I mean do we really want, you know, sort of a culture or an environment where men's only responsibility to their children is, you know, is to basically get the mom pregnant, and then if we can catch them to get them involved in paying from a financial perspective. I mean every kid has an involved father at conception, right, so I'll let that one settle in.

MR. HASKINS: The stain on your tie would suggest that –

SPEAKER: So the question is, you know, is he going to have an involved father at graduation, and I think there's, you know, there's years between that, and there's a lot of stuff that impacts this, as well. We'll tease out some of this more during the rest of the discussion.

But I mean there's – for me, I kind of see those two things as kind of working together, that guys think of the institution as really important, which is what they reported in the survey, the pops culture survey, very

important, it's off the charts, 90 plus percent said very important role, and these are surveys of dads, not guys who would be dads, but guys that who are dads, but then at the same time have enough perspective that they're replaceable.

And I really think that a lot of that is also linked back to, you know, the focus around skills. I mean the fact of the matter is that, you know, historically, boys have learned to be dads by watching their dads, you know. Now two out of three kids in the African American community, myself included, grew up without a father, one out of three nationally, 25 million kids roughly, so you have more and more boys that aren't seeing fathers doing that, and there's not a whole lot out there, a guy has a deficit around skills in order to make that happen.

So if you say this is something that's really important to me, it's really important to me, but yet I don't have the skills maybe that I need in order to do it, a logical conclusion is, I guess I'm replaceable.

The second thing I would add to that and just close out is, also the importance of media portrayals and the culture and how it – what the culture says about fatherhood has an enormous impact on fatherhood because fathering is more culturally constructive than motherhood is in terms of it being more biologically constructive. And so I think that's the other piece that's there, as well, and if you look at the most media

portrayals of dads, by and large, we're either dumb, dangerous, or diseffective, you know, or the guy reaching for the strychnine instead of the Tylenol, and we grew up from Father Knows Best to father knows nothing. I mean it really is an enormous transition, and that's -- media works, and it has an impact. And so, you know, so that's part of the opportunity there, is to use media and other vehicles in order to really put more hopeful messages so that boys aspire to be fathers, and men who are obviously producing children aspire to be fathers.

MR. HASKINS: So we should repeal the First Amendment; is that -- it's on the list somewhere. Just kidding. All right. So, audience, opportunity to ask questions, and I want to emphasize questions. Yes, in the front row here. Wait just a second until a mic gets -- and then tell us your name, please.

MR. GUESS: I'm Robert Guess from the Economist magazine. I have a question for Professor Glenn. I've read some discussion about the stuff that goes before the question of fatherhood and marriage, which is, you know, the dating game, and I've read African American women complaining that there's a number problem, that if -- because, on average, African American women -- there are more well educated African American women than African American men, and then there's the sort of -- the jail, parole, probation problem which effect

primarily men, so if you're a well educated, solvent African American woman and you're looking for an African American man who have the same qualities, there are a lot more of you than there are of them, which creates a sort of imbalance, it's, you know, I think Debra Dickinson did a back of the envelope calculation and said there's basically sort of two of us for every one of them, and that makes it really hard to pin the guy down, and it means that the guys have the opportunity not to be pinned down because it's so much attention, they can play the field for longer. I wondered if you have any thought as to whether that's true and how big an issue it is.

MR. GLENN: That's a huge issue and that's certainly true. There is a big sex ratio problem. There just aren't enough so called eligible potential husbands, African American husbands for the women who are seeking husbands. And so – reasons for that, one is the high rate of incarceration of African American men. I think if that problem could be solved, I think anything that could be done to reduce that incarceration rate would be hugely beneficial. But that's a huge issue.

MR. GUESS: (off mic) Is there – I think back of the envelope calculation about it – study about – is there empirical study about how big the imbalance is?



MR. GLENN: Yeah, there's quite a bit of data on that actually. I'm trying to think of one of my own publications I could refer you to, but I shouldn't do that for reasons of taste, but yeah. And if you want specific numbers, I can't give them to you straight off of my head, but I can give them to you by consulting the data.

MR. HASKINS: Do you want to say anything?

MR. WARREN: Do I want to say something? Geez, as a black male who's married, the only thing I would add to that is, I do think that one of the things that was new to me when I came to Washington was this term "marriage ability." I didn't – I had never heard that out in the streets.

And I do think one of the challenges, to go to your question, is what that term actually means, and my sense was that here in Washington, when people talk about marriage ability, that they're talking about it as an economic construct, and it's very limited, and I think that when you think about black women and the opportunity to marry black men, there's enough "black men", and the question about marriage ability is really about economics. If that's the way you frame it, I think it's problematic. I think it should be – marriage ability should be framed much more broadly in terms of skills, values, you know, lots of other factors that are important there, and I think that that's going to be a challenge both for African

American men and for African American women given, you know, how, you know, what's happening in colleges versus prisons and things – to redefine what that actually means, because economics is not, you know, going to be the sole driver in terms of whether you're going to have a healthy, happy marriage or not.

MR. HASKINS: I hope you will remind Kathy Edin on the second panel about this question because I think she has a lot to say about it. David.

MR. LEVY: Hi, David Levy on sabbatical from the Children's Rights Council. There's a great body of research from the '70's to now, from Mulstein (phonetic) and Kelly down to Gail Sheehy in a 1998 *New York Times* article about dads and some moms and grandparents who feel dead bolted out of their children's' lives, pushed away from children's' lives by the other spouse, the courts and legislatures, and doesn't this effect marriage, because a dad knows that if he does get married, in five, six, seven years down the road when they may be divorced, as there is in about half the cases, doesn't this – isn't this a disincentive to getting onto that – role into the highway of marriage when you know your rights are not going to be protected down the road should divorce happen, as it does in many cases. Did that figure into any of your research or investigations?

MS. WHITEHEAD: Are you talking about sort of the divorce law situation and how – can you just –

MR. LEVY: Well, the lack of sufficient joint custody, shared parenting, the attitude of many mothers that the father's role doesn't count as you're implying here in some cases.

MR. GLENN: I think this is the toughest way to say it.

MS. WHITEHEAD: Yeah.

MR. GLENN: The laws inevitably – moms get custody unless there's a huge battle and the father has a good lawyer. Fathers – it's almost impossible to escape child support now, the system is so tight. So why would it be -- the father's financial obligation is carefully guarded by the courts or imposed on the fathers by the courts while the custody arrangements are not necessarily, you know, observed very carefully by the courts, isn't this an imbalance? And does that play some role in fathers who – marriage?

SPEAKER: I think it does, I think that's a very important issue. And the fact that man cannot be sure that their relationship with their children can be maintained, I think that's a great disincentive to starting a close relationship with a child, so I think that's a huge issue.

MR. WARREN: I'd just add a point to that. This is the part for me that just kind of baffles me. – still having children, so, to me, I

mean the marriage issue is an important issue in terms of like the basket that you put the children in, but I think the broader issue is that folks are having the children without any discussion about the basket. So I don't know that I would agree that a guy is saying, you know, if I get married, I may lose custody of my children or not have access to my children, therefore, I'm going to get her pregnant and not marry her.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MR. WARREN: No, I know that's not what you're saying, but what I'm saying is, that's the problem. So – but – would a guy have a disincentive to get married because he may view – at some point he's going to lose access to his children.

SPEAKER: Right.

MR. WARREN: And I – that would work for me more if what we had was a situation where we had very low levels of unwed pregnancies, out of wedlock pregnancies, then I could kind of – in other words, but we don't, we have high levels of out of wedlock pregnancies relative to every country on the planet, and low and declining marriage rates, so that doesn't tell me that a guy is saying – that he's connecting the dots between the two, I think it's much more complex than that, I think it's more an erosion of believing that marriage has anything at all to do with fatherhood, like those two things are just totally – it's, you know, it's

just two totally separate decisions that have nothing to do with each other, don't intersect, one doesn't impact the other, they're just different decisions, and I think that that, to me, more explains sort of why you see those pieces and I think are the challenges, and I'm always hopeful the opportunities present –

MR. HASKINS: In the back –

MR. HASKINS: All the way back on the –

MR. STOKES: My name is William Stokes, I'm with –

America's Care. Our society does not guarantee equal opportunity for all, as our society cannot guarantee full employment with all jobs paying minimum wage for all American citizens. How do you see that relate to what you're talking about?

MR. WARREN: Is that for me? I think so. Norval is dying to answer this question. You know, it's an interesting question because it's kind of linking I think the economics piece to some of this, as well. You know, I – but I think our society gives everyone equal opportunity around choice.

I mean everyone has choices that they can make around these things, and I think maybe part of the fallacy of the human condition is that we believe that actions and consequences are not necessarily

linked in the sense that we can control our own consequences and determine what our consequences will be after we've chosen our actions.

And I do think that, you know, there are lots of things from an economic perspective that are challenges in our culture, but at the end of the day, people have an opportunity to make choices that could impact their legacy.

I was, essentially, you know, a teen father, I chose to marry the mother and stay married for 28 years. My father was a teen father, he chose not to stay married to my mother, well, not my mother. Did I marry my mother? I married the mother of my children, I didn't marry my mother, a great improvement. He chose not, you know, he chose not to stay married to my mother, and there was an impact of that.

So, you know, my son is now married and the whole deal, and neither one of my sons were teen fathers, you know. So I do think that, you know, there's a certain part that you as an individual have control over. You can't control certain things that are outside of you, but you have control of a lot of things that, you know, that can control your destiny and the destiny of your kids, and I just think that that's – this thing for me is a very simple thing because it talks about men and women making decisions, it's just very practical to me.

Here's a guy that has sex with a woman, and the question is, what's their relationship and what will their relationship be to the kid, I mean we know that, they'll be father and mother if there was a kid, but what is their relation – to me, the choice that you make there is just – it just seems to me those are the parts that you absolutely can't control regardless of your economic situation. I think I'll just stop here.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. Right here on – right behind you on the aisle.

MS. BURLEY: Christina Burley from Alliance with Family. I notice that you focus on whites and blacks, but no mention of Hispanic families, and I was just wondering, you know, with Hispanics being such a huge proportion of the population, was there a specific reason for that?

MS. WHITEHEAD: I think that – Norval can correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that Hispanic and white mothers looked more alike on most of the measures, and the big – where we did see differences among the mothers was, some differences between African American and white mothers, except on one measure, which was that I think Hispanic mothers felt very strongly that they did not get much help in balancing home and work, so that was one thing that really stuck out for us.

SPEAKER: Yeah, exactly. And in terms of most of the variables, there was something – no difference between the mom, Hispanic, whites, and the Hispanics.

MR. HASKINS: Okay. One more question. Right here on –

MS. YOUNG: Good morning. My name is Valerie Young and I'm with the National Association of Mother Centers. Fathering is care work, like mothering is care work. If you're going to father someone, it means it's a verb, you're going to be actively involved in looking after them. We live in a society, and I am getting to a question, we live in a society that puts absolutely no public policy support underneath that. We have no national paid sick days. If you have a paid leave policy for paid vacation, paid time off, it's because you're lucky and you just happen to get it where you work.

How can you compare and contrast the importance of marriage, which I've heard a lot about today, but I've heard absolutely nothing about facilitating the opportunity to father or to mother or to parent? You say we live in an age of co-parenting, I think we live in an age of non-parenting, and that's for everybody.

MR. GLENN: I think that's an important issue, and if you look at the report, we do emphasize that work/family conflict is a huge issue, it's very important. Any public policy that can help deal with that I



think is going to help both mothering and fathering, it's going to help parenting. So I agree that that needs attention.

MS. WHITEHEAD: I agree also. It is interesting, though, that government and also professional help rank rather low on the list of resources that people think would be important to good mothering, good fathering, good co-parenting, so in this – in these surveys, so I would support any public policy that helped, including the ones you mentioned, flexible work schedule, mandated parental leave, those are all very important. It's interesting that they aren't – don't, you know, face communities top.

MR. HASKINS: Let me ask you a question about that.

MS. WHITEHEAD: Yeah.

MR. HASKINS: Neither you nor Norval are seen widely as liberals, and yet your whole careers are based on families and government support for families and community support and so forth, and it's obvious here in Washington that the republican party is solidly opposed to the kind of programs that the lady who asked the question favors such as family leave or paid family leave; do you think that's a mistake, do you think the republicans are wrong, would you advise republicans to change their position and we should have governments – programs of this type? I would.

MS. WHITEHEAD: Yeah, I would.

MR. HASKINS: There you have it, two more votes. Do you want to make a comment? Okay, all right. So don't run away, we're going to switch panels right now.

(Pause)

MR. WARREN: Okay. Don't go anywhere, we're going to keep going. All right. Let me just get started for the sort of second half here. Again, thank you very much for joining us today. Let me just start by making just a couple of comments. One of the things that's sort of interesting, people have asked the question, well, why wouldn't National Fatherhood Initiative do a report like this on moms, and it really is, you know, from our standpoint, an important thing for us to do because of our strategy.

We have a multi sector approach to the work that we do, and you know, I've done a number of – shows over the years, and one of the things that's been very interesting about those shows has been talking to moms and talking to dads about this issue, so it's one of the things that gave us the idea to try to do a national survey around this issue. And just to kind of point out a couple of things here, it is a nationally represented sample, we over sampled Hispanics and African Americans so that we could, you know, get more data in that regard, so we really feel it's a very

tight survey in terms of methodology and strategy, Norval can talk to you more about that. But we really felt that this whole notion about mom as a gateway and the impact that mothers have on fathers and the quality of fathering that we get was an important thing, and we wanted to make sure that we were able to find out as much as we can so we could build that into our programming and also build that into the policy discussions and other discussions that are being had here in Washington.

So as Ron mentioned, we did a national survey of fathers called Pops Culture, there's copies of that, you can grab extra ones if you want to take back to share with others, by the way, and asked some similar questions of dads that we did of moms, and you know, sort of give it our approach to programming that we try to kind of focus our work across a number of different sectors in order to reach dads, sort of our strategy.

We thought it was really important to get some of the data that we got. For example, one of the things that came up pretty clearly was that moms reported that they think that the community should be more supportive of dads. Many feel that fathers lack the skills that they need in order to be the kinds of dads that their kids need them to be, and that was a really important finding from our standpoint, how to create

better programming in order to do that, and it's a core part of enterprise strategy.

Faith community program is a key part of our approach, kind of reaching out to people in the faith community around this work. And moms reported that churches and other communities of faith should be the number one source of information for fathers and communities.

And this was even from moms who reported themselves as being not religious or not very religious. They thought that churches and communities of faith should be a place where fathers should be able to learn how to be the best dads they can be.

And when you kind of look out in terms of what's happening in the faith community, programmatically what you find is, there are men's ministries, but there aren't really a lot of supports around fathering. So that was really an important finding from our perspective that came out of the survey.

In terms of health care program, a key part of our strategy is reaching fathers when they're new dads to get them on track right from the start. And the mothers reported that if they had a choice, they would choose a hospital that provided support for the father during her pregnancy. Just think about that. It was off the charts. I think it was like 83 percent of the moms agreed with that.

So if I could find a hospital that was going to also include him and support him during the process, I would be more likely to choose that hospital. We asked the question, well, how many hospitals and medical facilities are really equipped in reaching out to moms in that way to say these are services that we can offer for dads or have program – that's one of the lines of programming that NFI has.

And then finally, to the woman's question here about the business and the work family balance programming aspect of it, as you've already heard to some degree, there's lots of implications of this, and you know, moms clearly report that they want more support for dads in this area. And I think one of the ways to kind of even think about this is, when you're supporting a father balance work and family, you're actually supporting a mom, as well. You know, one of the things that we do is, we call on companies and work with their HR folks to get them to add fatherhood programming into their employee assistance programs, that's a core part of our strategy. And it's interesting, because when we have discussions with the HR folks, we try to help them understand that when you have a dad who is – a mom who's struggling to balance work and family, she's connected to a father, whether she's married to him or not, that has a certain view about his role, either he's someone who provides,

nurtures and guides, or he views himself as someone that just provides, if he's connected at all.

Well, nurturing and guiding is another aspect of what you need to do with your kids, so guess whose responsibility that is, it becomes mom, so then she feels like she has a full-time job at work and a full-time job at home. So by helping men balance work and family more effectively, you're also helping working mothers balance work and family more effectively, as well.

So we see this in a very comprehensive way, and it's one of the reasons we think the survey data is really important in a lot of different ways.

We also hope to use the information from this survey obviously to make our programming more effective and our outreach more effective in terms of the work that we do, and NFI's core strategy is a capacity builder. We work with community based organizations, businesses, churches, prisons, I mean any place where fathers huddle in any way, shape or form, whether they're huddling there for good or for real, we try to make sure that we're in that setting in order to reach fathers around this issue.

We also want to identify top policy priorities, because we think that's really important, as well. The government has an enormously

important role both at the state and local level, a role to play around this issue, and we think that this data can help inform some of the decisions around program delivery, quality of programming, and that perspective, and we think that that's critically important.

So I want to encourage you, if you haven't already, visit our website, which is [fatherhood.org](http://fatherhood.org). If you want to learn more about the study, it's [fatherhood.org/mamasays](http://fatherhood.org/mamasays), and there's more data there. You can – you'll be able to download versions of the survey, as well. If anybody is interested, in the press, you know, Vincent DiCaro who's our Senior Director of Public Affairs is here, we can talk more about that, we're happy to chat about this. So let me do this, let me just briefly introduce the folks on our panel. We're delighted to have them with us. First we have Kathryn Edin from Harvard University. She is a Professor of Public Policy there. Kathryn, just raise your hand. She's going to chat a little bit.

Norval Glenn, you've already met, he's from the University of Texas, he's a Professor of Sociology. We have Nisa Muhammad. Nisa Muhammad is the CEO of the Wedded Bliss Foundation. And then we have Tracy Robinson, and he's the Executive Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.

And what we want to do is, we want to give each one of them, you know, five minutes, six minutes or so just to give some brief

remarks, and then we'll ask some questions and continue the discussion and actually tease out some of the things that were brought up earlier with a little more data and a little more discussion around those things. Okay. So why don't we start with Kathryn.

MS. EDIN: Okay. So I'm a qualitative researcher – I go in peoples' homes and talk to them about their lives, along with a team of colleagues and graduate students. I'm drawing my remarks here from studies of low income, non-custodial – mostly from non-custodial fathers, unmarried fathers that we've studied in seven cities. Some of these fathers have been studying in conjunction with the nationally representative – families and child wellbeing survey, which is a birth cohort survey of unmarried dads or of non-marital children who were born in 2000.

And what I'm going to try to do here is to talk about some of the things that I think the report hints at, but does not fully flush out. And then I'm going to draw from findings from these other studies to try to help interpret some of the very important lessons I think that this report revealed.

So first of all, I want to talk about mom's role as gatekeeper, a very unpopular topic. It's very interesting that the report charts how men's' subsequent partnership transitions are consequential for women's'



satisfaction with fathering. But what the report doesn't look at is women's subsequent partnership transitions, which are actually much more consequential to father's involvement with their children.

And – talk and Ron Nimsey (phonetic) with the fragile family survey and with the qualitative data we gathered as a part of that survey effort. We find that mothers – when fathers do transition to new partnerships, these complex family relationships do crowd out the amount of time that father is able to spend with the child, but don't crowd out his livelihood of involvement. When mothers, however, enter into new partnerships, and particularly when they have children in those new partnerships, they see a significant decline in the livelihood of any father involvement and a much larger crowding out of that.

What this suggests is that not only are fathers, you know, capacity stretched by complex relationships, but that mothers are, in some sense, swapping daddies. And I think one of the most important lessons from this report is that mothers believe fathers are replaceable.

Now, if you spend a lot of time talking to fathers, what you'll learn is, they don't really feel that they're replaceable, what they're probably responding to in your survey is the fact that they're fathering other children. And while they think they can replace those other fathers, right, because they're playing social fathers to children. This is Robert

Loraman (phonetic) and Elaine Sorenson's insight from nearly 15 years ago, that these so called unwed fathers are actually fathering all the time, they're just fathering sequentially. So fathers are very involved in fathering and they feel that they can replace another man. But usually they'll say, wait a minute now, I'm not replaceable, okay. So it's interesting to look at how complex families have become and the role that moms might be playing, especially the gatekeeper role with regard to increasing complexity in our own partnering and parenting.

Secondly, I want to talk about something the report just hints at, but it's really consequential for how we interpret the data. Family instability and complexity in the bottom of the American income distribution is at an all time high, it is historically unique in American history, it is also unique among rich nations.

We have very fragile marriage patterns, but this is mostly concentrated now in the bottom of the income distribution as a huge class divide in the likelihood of divorce.

We have extraordinary fragile cohabitation. In the United States -- there's almost no such thing as a stable parental cohabitation. And perhaps most importantly, we have very, very rapid patterns of repartnering. This then leads to another cycle of cohabitation, subsequent child bearing, and subsequent instability in marriage and cohabitation. In

fact, the fragile families and child wellbeing survey now shows that among mothers in that study, only three percent over the five year period, from the child's birth to the child's fifth birthday, are stable, single mothers.

So we look at the findings about marriage in this survey; what we have to recognize is that in our culture, now, this is not true in much of western Europe, but in our culture, it's either marriage, which is relatively stable and is especially stable at the high end, growing more stable, or it's – English children are being exposed to multiple partnerships relatively rapidly.

So in the fragile families and child wellbeing, the average child who is born non-marital will have between two and three partnership transitions, these are relatively serious partnerships, by the time that child reaches the age of five. And on the father's side, there are probably an equal number of partner transitions. Many of these partnerships produce subsequent children.

So that I believe is why marriage comes out so strongly in the study. We don't really have a system where you're choosing between a marriage and a stable single mother. We have a system, because of our particular cultural context, we're choosing between a marriage, which is usually quite stable in America, at least relatively, and a system in which

children are cycling through multiple partnerships rapidly and gaining half sibs along the way.

Finally, I just wanted to say one thing about what this new demographic reality means. You know, we've spent the last 20 or 30 years, I'm a little bit younger than Norval, I've only spent about 15 years studying the American family, and I've only studied low income families and mostly unmarried families, but it really strikes me that most of the research we've done in this area has really kind of assumed the single mother model and ignored this family instability and complexity.

So I just want to make a plea for incorporating this new vision into our work. And I really think the report – the importance of this reality in new ways.

MR. WARREN: Great, all right, great, thank you. Why don't we next go with – let's start with Tracy.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Roland. First I want to thank Brookings for hosting this event and your kind hospitality. Regardless of where one is professionally, once you speak to Brookings, you feel like you've arrived. I also want to thank the National Fatherhood Initiative for their inclusion and their leadership on this issue across the country. Let me take 30 seconds and talk about the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, then I'll take the rest of the time to respond to the findings. The Ohio

Commission on Fatherhood was founded in 2001, when Peter Lawson Jones was the state representative from Cuyahoga County, and he offered the legislation to create the Fatherhood Commission.

When Governor Strickland was elected, he empowered the Commission, gave us \$2.5 million in funding for fatherhood programming, and our work is in the – Leadership is cheap whenever you talk about fatherhood, and our Commission has the highest level of leadership in the state of Ohio.

The Governor sits on the Commission, plus he appoints five members of the public. There are two state senators that are appointed by the President of the Senate, and four members of the House appointed by the Speaker.

There's also an appointee by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, and then five state agencies sit on that Commission.

Our work centers around a number of initiatives, one, increasing the public awareness of the central role that fathers play in children's lives, building the parental skills of fathers, the prevention of premature fatherhood, I will talk about that more, also providing employment related services, particularly to non-residential fathers, and then last, providing services to men who are incarcerated and reentering society.

Three things I'd like to talk about to respond to the report; the first one is, the report talked about the residence of the father, and Roland is right, location, location, location. And my comments will kind of compliment Kathy's and come down a little bit. I think this has been, until Kathy talked, a middle class type discussion about how families are formed.

What I see in Ohio, if we just look at our non-marital birth rates, children that are born in the context of not married. And I brought a few numbers here to share with you. And I'll use 2007 – birth statistics. And I would think Ohio is not any different than the rest of the country, since many companies use Ohio, Columbus in particular, to market new products.

So there were 157,000 children born in Ohio in 2007; 84,500 of those children were born to married parents, or 57 percent. Thirty-three percent, or 62,500, approximately, were born to unmarried parents. So we see that families are being created and they're not married. There's huge ramifications, public policy – And then if you drill down into the unmarried, 42,500 of those were non-married whites, 20,000 of those were unmarried African Americans.

And so what I'd like to do is, expand our thinking about the father absence problem to put a multi cultural face on that problem,

because in the state of Ohio, there are more non-marital white births than African American. And our work is – received in the Appalachian County, as well.

I want to talk about the work/family balance. Once again, I guess that supposes that a man has a job if he's having trouble balancing those two things. But let's talk about the man who are not employed, because that is a problem and a crisis.

If a father cannot finance his opinion, he really doesn't have a moral standing in the family. And we believe that all men should make a – all fathers should make a financial and emotional investment in their children, but if they're not working, now they fall into – if they're non-resident fathers, not married, into our child support system. And since our member of the State Council is not here, I'll talk about child support for a moment. You can get a felony for not paying child support. As we sit here, there are 800 men in prison in Ohio for one reason, one reason only, they have not paid their child support. They have not killed anyone, they have not raped anyone, they did not create a crime with a weapon.

We pay \$25,000 a year to incarcerate that man. And so what we do is, we encourage, we also usher men out of their children's lives, because when they're in prison, the clock continues to tick. So when they come out of prison, they have a \$15 or a \$20,000 child support

debt. And I generally ask an audience like this, is there anyone who would like to take that bill or could handle that bill, no hands.

So how do we think a person who's incarcerated, so when they get out of prison, they participate in underground economy, let's say it's not even illegal, but it kind of pushes them out of their children's lives because they don't want to hit the radar.

We have a bill in Ohio, Senate Bill 22, which will make a – recommendation for judges to be able use an option of community correction rather than removing those individuals from society. Another recommendation that we're making in the area, and I noticed a mother said that the issues of faith based communities, and we include that to mean churches -- synagogues, that make a big difference in father's ability to parent. And we partner with faith based organizations because they have trust with fathers that the government may not have.

As well as, there are values such as kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, honesty, as well as those fathers can receive hope and encouragement, many times in a very challenging situation. So I want to thank you for the opportunity.

MR. WARREN: Thank you, Tracy. I'm sorry, I should have given you the opportunity to applaud, I apologize, I was a bad moderator.



All right. Why don't we go to Norval and end with Nisa? All right. Go ahead.

MR. GLENN: It's hard for a college professor to say anything important in six minutes. We're very good at taking six minutes worth of material and expanding that into 15 minutes, but if you have to do it the other way, it's difficult. So I'll get straight to the point. There are several – well, a couple of points that I want to emphasize. First, the survey by itself seems to indicate if you don't – if you're – in interpreting the data, it would indicate that the fathers who are cohabiting with the mothers, but not married to the mothers, are doing extremely well. In fact, we really didn't find any difference between the fathers – the mothers' attitudes towards the fathers according to whether they were married or not if they were living together.

But you have to take into account that these cohabiting relationships, while they may be good while they last, are very unstable. The probability that these cohabiting couples who are doing well, who are co-parenting now, will be doing that two years or five years or ten years down the road, are very small. So I would introduce that as a word of caution in interpreting the data.

The second major point I want to make is that I've been interpreting survey data for a long time, I'm not going to tell you how many

years, but it's been a long period of time, and there's one relationship in here that is the strongest relationship that I have seen in all of my years of interpreting survey data, and that's simply the relationship between whether or not the mother was living with the father of the focal child and her reported satisfaction with the parenting of the father. I don't want to get too technical here, but we tend to measure the strength of relationships by what percentage in the variance in one variable is explained statistically by another variable. In this case, it's 41 percent. By contrast, the second strongest predictor of satisfaction with the father is race. The explained variance there is two percent, quite a difference.

In fact, I went back through my publications and files of data, of analyses that I've done over the years, and I simply could not find a relationship as strong as this one, in which one variable explains 41 percent of the variance in another.

If you're talking about human individuals being the units of analysis, you do research in which states, or countries, or counties are units, you can get some very strong relationships. But when you're talking about human individuals, you rarely get more than four or five or six percent of the variance in one variable explained by another.

To give you an example, I looked at some data from the general social surveys about the relationship between years of school

completed and personal income adjusted for inflation, and the – I looked at the prime years of 30 to 49, and the percentage of variance in income explained by years of school completed is seven, and that's considered a very strong relationship. So I went into the data and tried to find something else, a case where one variable would explain 41 percent of the variance in the other; I did find one.

In the presidential election of 2004, if you look only at the people who voted either for Kerry or Bush, political party identification accounts for 41 percent of the variance, exactly the same.

So this is an extremely strong relationship. And you could say, well, a lot of these mothers who are not living with the fathers are ex-husbands, ex-boyfriends, and they have issues with these men that probably have nothing to do with fathering, and this spills over into their attitudes about the quality of the fathering of these men, and certainly that's true.

But at a minimum, these data indicate that here are people who are not successfully co-parenting. If the mother has this kind of negative attitude toward the father, they're not doing very well at parenting together. So I think this indicates just the extreme importance of good marriages, promoting good marriages, promoting good fatherhood. I'm not saying that you can't do anything else, promote good fatherhood, I certainly don't

want to neglect those fathers who are not living with their children, I think there are things that can be done to enhance the quality of their parenting certainly, but the number one issue here is promoting stable, high quality marriages.

MR. WARREN: Okay, great. I appreciate that. Nisa.

MS. MUHAMMAD: Thank you. I want to thank Brookings and the National Fatherhood Initiative for this opportunity, and Roland Warren for being able to come before you and speak this morning. We are very excited about the data of these results because they highlight what we see daily in the work that we do at Wedded Bliss Foundation, and that is to help couples create healthy relationships and healthy marriages to better the outcomes for children.

And the key thing is that marriage does matter. Marriage allows – creates benefits that cannot be duplicated in any other relationship. There are unique benefits for men, unique benefits for women, and also unique benefits for children. Marriage connects fathers to their children in ways that cannot be found in other types of relationships. The thing is that husbands make better fathers, it's very key and very simple, husbands make better fathers. The challenge is how do we help couples achieve their own range of wedded bliss? How do we

help them make marriage – how do we make marriage look alluring, sexy, the thing to do so that more couples can, in fact, consider marriage?

How do we help low income families who could dominate single parent families, how do we help these couples reconsider marriage? How do we help couples achieve the romance, the excitement, the passion, the intimacy and the closeness that they want and that they crave for, how do we help them to get this? That's the challenge before us.

Out of wedlock parenting has become an increasingly moving choice. Mothers parent and provide at the same time; fathers pay child support enforcement and lack of access and visitation; children live divided lives.

At Wedded Bliss Foundation, we do the groundwork of helping couples to strengthen their relationship, consider marriage, and obtain wedded bliss. We provide classes here in the D.C. area, and we recently graduated, believe it or not, 103 couples out of our program November 13<sup>th</sup>, with – Youth and Family Services. These couples are now inspired to become marriage magnets in their community. We have helped them to understand that marriage does have benefits and marriage changes things in their lives and they want to take this information back to their community.

People want healthy marriages, they don't want to avoid, they just want to be able to avoid another failed union, and they don't know how to do that, and that's what we have to offer in communities, not just in the D.C. area, but in communities around the country. And it's not only that adults want this, teens want this, as well.

We do our program at Kelly Miller Middle School, it's an inner city middle school, and when we first started working there, we sent out announcements that the children took home, and our first night of classes, we had these teens that came, and they had their strollers and they had their babies, and we were like what are these kids doing here.

And so, you know, I took them outside and I said, you know, this program is for parents, and they said we're parents, and I started thinking, well, okay, you ought to avoid that program, we want healthy relationships also, we have children, we're parents, and so as a result of that, we have to now begin a program for teen parents called Better Together, to help teens understand the value of staying together as a couple and giving them the skills to co-parent successfully so that when they are ready for marriage, they consider each other as opposed to the two to three parent transitions that Kathryn talked about, because they want the skills, knowledge and information to be able to do it also.

So, in conclusion, you know, our message is that wedded bliss can be yours and we can show you how. We have to begin to create a culture that strengthens marriage, that promotes marriage, that helps people to understand that marriage does matter and it can make a difference. Thank you.

MR. WARREN: Great, thank you. Well, I've got some questions for the panel. I'm going to go through some slides and just kind of use that data as a basis for some of the questions, and some of the information we've covered, so I'm going to skip over some pieces.

I want to just focus on this question about the performance, mom's satisfaction on a father's performance, to kind of spring off of what Norval was talking about to some degree and how that's sort of related to living arrangements. Here's the data from the survey here. The percentage of moms that were very or somewhat satisfied with the father's performance, married, cohabiting, and then living together, and that's the statistical aspect that he was saying that's very unique for you to find in surveys, and frankly, we didn't find anything like this in the father's surveys in any of the questions that we asked, this kind of relationship.

Again, when you ask the question, the percentage of mothers who said that time the father spent with the child was adequate or

more than adequate, again, you can see married, cohabiting, and then you see not living together.

And the percentage of mothers who said that the relationship between the father and the child was moderately or very close and warm, married and cohabiting versus not living together. So you can see, you know, the relationship there is pretty dramatic, and so, you know, it's sort of one of those things – this is a discussion around what mom is thinking, the marriage issue has come up quite a bit and it's sort of the elephant in the living room, you clean up after it, but it's still there when you get done. So it's just self-evident that this is a factor that is there and it's impacting a mom's perception of a dad's performance. And so what I wanted to do was just ask the panel, I just want to kind of tease that out a bit, and anyone can sort of jump in on this, to talk a little bit about, you know, this performance question and what you think that means in general.

The other question that I have related to that is, you know, there's some policy implications related to this, and specifically when we look at the Office of Child Support Enforcement and other groups like that, particularly that office, it has started to focus much more on sort of connecting the hearts of fathers to their children as opposed to just the wallets of fathers to their children. Does that make more sense now? I



mean what do you see when you see these kind of data in terms of the mom's perceptions of performance? Kathryn.

MS. EDIN: Well, one of the major differences that I think Tracy was alluding to earlier is the way in which families are formed when you look at non-marital births and marital births. Your typical non-marital birth is a birth that flows out of an accidental pregnancy. And the couple usually doesn't know each other very well, they've dated for six or seven months, if the fragile families data is any guide, and they really try to build that relationship around the fact of an unexpected birth, so they're kind of trying to rise to the occasion of this birth.

Your typical marital birth, on the other hand, is, you know, involves all the planning in the world, because you had to plan the marriage, and then there were three or four years, even five years between the marriage and the first birth and so on. So you have two very different ways of entering into parenthood.

One key thing that fathers, white, black, and to a little lesser extent, Latino, will tell you is that when they enter into these relationships, they firmly believe that their relationship to their child is not contingent upon their relationship to that child's mother, and they'll tell you that even when they're in that relationship with the child's mother.

So they are thinking that whether or not the relationship survives is not related to whether or not the relationship with their child will survive, and they are – remain very committed to that relationship with the child, more so, in fact, than to the relationship to the mother. So this leads to sort of, I guess the social scientists call an interesting selection problem, in that you're not being very selective about your partner because, in some way, you don't think that that partner is very important to a long term relationship with your child.

Unfortunately, as this survey I think really eloquently illustrates, this is not the case. The barriers to father involvement for these dads are tremendous. In part, this is about mothers gate keeping, in part, this is about other barriers fathers' face, logistical difficulties of not living with your child and so on.

But this mishmash between what fathers believe and the reality they face later on is, I think, something that policy might want to focus on.

MR. WARREN: I put this chart up because it sort of reflects that you were saying, Kathryn, to somebody. This is a – question says percentage of mothers satisfied with the parenting of father by the father's family situation, and it just drops off a cliff if you look at that from, you know, unmarried, no relationship, unmarried, in a relationship, married to

another woman, no step – it's like the further he gets down that path, from a relationship standpoint to the point when he has other kids, her view of his performance drops. And it just hard for me to believe that going from sort of married to and not living with a guy and then being unmarried, that he would be that different, that dramatically. So there's something that's going on there in terms of the perception piece, which I think is pretty dramatically, and obviously has an impact on how important that mom will feel is – for the dad to be engaged, and how supportive she will be in that process.

The maternal gate keeping piece I think is an important one, too, and I just want to make one point about that that I think is really important, and sort of analogy I use is that moms have the opportunity to either be facilitators or, you know, or people that are kind of referees.

And as you know, if you watch any NBA basketball, you know, referees are more concerned about rules than relationships, and facilitators are more concerned about relationships than rules. And it just seems to me that there's something that's happening here once that relation breaks up where the mom may have been sort of the facilitator in terms of access to the child, making sure dad's doing the kinds of things and providing that environment, even supporting dad when he's not there, on trips or away or whatever it is, even if he's incarcerated, but when that

relationship breaks, then, you know, it seems to me that there's an opportunity to move into sort of the referee role, which becomes a bit more difficult. I think, Tracy, you had something you wanted to say?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes; I wanted to talk about the prevention of premature fatherhood, because Kathy said many of these births are occurring, and pregnancies, accidental, I may add irresponsibly, and much of our public policy is geared toward talking to females. Even in Medicaid, it talks about policies, prevention of premature pregnancy, that's interesting, men don't get pregnant.

And what happens is, we need to shape our messages toward males, to tell them to either wait, abstain, or protect. I have two teenage sons, Jacob is 18, Jonathan is 15, so I have – and wait seems to work well, because if I say you can't, it's like pouring gasoline on fire.

And so what we must do more in the area of the prevention of premature fatherhood, to allow men an opportunity to become at a place where they're more mature to make a financial and emotional investment in their children's' development or assets.

MR. WARREN: Thank you. Norval.

MR. GLENN: Yes; in regard to this gate keeping issue which is very important, in the survey of fathers, the most frequently given

obstacle to good fathering given by those who weren't living with the mothers was the mother.

MR. WARREN: Yeah, great. I've got two more topics that I want to cover in the short time that we have. I want to transition now to questions around race. And to kind of go back to – we don't have Hispanic here because the Hispanic data was essentially the same as the Caucasian data, but what moms – when you look at the data here, it says the percentage of mothers who were satisfied with the performance of the fathers, you can see a fairly substantial difference between white mothers and black mothers on the performance.

The percentage of mothers who said that the father spent adequate time with the children, again, a fairly dramatic percentage. The percentage of mothers who were satisfied with the father's performance based on their living arrangement, and what you see here is that married black moms and married white moms essentially have the exact same data, and that non-married black and white moms were very, very close, as well. So it's an interesting – I thought it was an interesting sort of data point when you look at these issues.

I want to throw that out to the panel. You know, some of this is sort of obvious, but I want to put that out there in terms of, you know, what your thoughts are about this data and race and how we think about

this issue and talk about this issue, particularly when we're talking about fatherhood and talking about marriage, do we nuance the way we talk about it with African American couples and Hispanic couples or white couples, I mean does that make sense, or I mean what would you say from that? I want Nisa to start with that.

MS. MUHAMMAD: I think in the work that I do, I speak about the value and benefits of marriage, regardless of married or single, and I think what I have found is that generally the couples that I work with, the couples that I see, they want to be married, they want a stable relationship, they don't want the here today, gone tomorrow, they want the stability for themselves, they want the stability for their children, and they're looking for opportunities to achieve that. They watch Oprah, they watch Doctor Phil, they see the researchers that are out there are people who have money and influence, but they don't see it in their community. Easy to find a liquor store or a beauty supply then to find some place that's offering help in speaking of relationship and help them to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

And we talked about what the church offers, marriage ministries – every church, but the marriage rates are still just as low as – not involved in marriage ministries. And so they're looking for some place, they're looking for someone to be able to provide them the resources to be

able to form and sustain a healthy marriage, and the problem is that it's not there, and with the low marriage rates in the black community, high out of wed child birth rates, it's just more enhanced of a significant –

So in these couples, they're middle – led, they're like we're coming to you or there's nothing, and so we work with couples and families all around the country, trying to help them achieve the – that they so desire to have, the romance, the passion, they want all of this, they see it on TV, they hear about it, they read about it – they want this, but they can't find any kind of resources in the community to help them achieve it.

MR. WARREN: Got you, great, good. All right. The last section, I want to tease out the work/family balance aspect of this as we close out. This video works well.

(Playing video.)

MR. WARREN: This is a clip from an Oprah show that I did some years ago called the secret thoughts of fathers, and they pulled together a panel of, you know, 12 – 13 fathers, asked them a bunch of questions, and kind of a punch line that the moms were just blown away that the guys really actually cared as much as they did, and you can see it reflected in the comments that are here.

And that's also reflected in the data from our survey. When we asked men about this as an institution, I mean, you know, it's off, you

know, it's 90 percent, it's off the chart, so it is something, and that's where the hope is, from my perspective, men really, really, really care about this issue, when they become a father, that getting to there to what we need becomes an issue.

And, you know, this work/family balance piece has been a really important one, and I think in many ways we just have not addressed in a big, big way. You know, when women started coming into the work force, we changed the work force, but we didn't really change the home very much at all, and so there's really a lot of work that still needs to be done there. The number one obstacle to good fathering from Pops Culture Survey, when we surveyed moms, the percentage of moms who agreed with the statement, the father of my child effect – balances work and family, again, you see that same kind of relationship there between married and cohabiting and those not living together; percentage of mothers who agree with the statement, I could achieve better work/family balance if I had additional support from the father of my child, you know, the majority of the moms surveyed said that even the ones that seem to be overall pretty satisfied there, so there's a lot of work and opportunity there, and we're hopeful that this data will help inform businesses, government and the culture at large, but there's work that needs to be done in earnest because it's having an impact on the quality of our



marriages, relationships, and the quality of our parenting, and we haven't done as much there as we possibly could.

So to kind of close out, I'd like to kind of put that – put this issue to the panel to chat about a little bit. You know, what, from your perspective, what are some of the policy implications of these findings, are they consistent with the kinds of things that you're seeing, and frankly, just anecdotally, are they consistent with what you're seeing out in the public square? Go ahead, Kathryn.

MS. EDIN: You know, this didn't initially resonate with me, and again, I only really know about lower income folks, because what's really going on among men in the lower part of the income distribution, white, black, and Latino is, they're really claiming a larger role for themselves in saying I don't want to just be a paycheck, in fact, I'm rejecting that model of fathering, I want to be involved, and if I can't be involved, frankly, I may not be that interested in paying.

MR. WARREN: Right.

MS. EDIN: Right; so initially I was kind of puzzled by this result, but it did occur to me that, in these couples, it is the woman who's really struggling with work and family balance, because often she's the more gainfully employed, particularly in this economy, so his help is all the more critical.

So there might be a real opportunity here in that fathers want to really be claiming the new father role and mothers might be needing their fathering whereas they hadn't previously.

MR. WARREN: A very good point. And probably my observation doing this work for nearly ten years now is that there really is sort of a tale of two cities with fathers, and we're more absent fathers than we've ever had in the history of this country, certainly in terms of us tracking it from a data perspective, but the fathers who are engaged are more engaged than fathers in previous generations.

So I really believe that that kind of new model perspective is really important, and that guys that want to be engaged are more engaged. And I think there have been studies that have looked at access and visitation and the child support payment, and the more access and visitation, the more child support he pays, go figure, and it's one of the reasons why there's not a federal program that's really designed to get married fathers to pay for their children, no government institution for that, because, you know, he's already connected heart to heart, and it's a very short reach from the heart to the wallet, ask my wife. Was that taped? My wife makes plenty of money, believe me, I'm reaching for hers. Anyway, so any other comments related to this particular piece that we're – yes.

MR. ROBINSON: I will add, in Ohio, all the fatherhood programs that I find must have a partnership with a child support office, and many of them give incentives that, for men who join the fatherhood program, they can immediately reinstate their driver's license. It gives the fatherhood program an opportunity to work with them and to recalibrate with them. And they also try to link visitation with child support through mediation. Those are two separate systems.

A man could be paying child support and never have an opportunity legally to have access to his children. So linking those do increase child support payments and gives the fathers more access to their children.

MR. WARREN: Great; I've got time for two questions or so. Does anybody have any questions? Yes.

MS. LEWIS: Hi, I'm Latasha Lewis from the Consortium of Social Science Association, and my question is about welfare reform. A lot of times what women – evidence shows that a lot of times why women don't get married or don't even cohabit with the father of their children is because they will get welfare benefits severely cut, their food stamps, their – their Section 8 housing. If we're talking about how to have government help create healthy families and bringing these people together either in healthy cohabitation relationships or marriage, I think

one of the things we need to talk about is how do we change welfare to stop it being a penalty for these women and men to get together in a relationship. So I just wanted to hear more about what you thought about that and what you would suggest.

MR. WARREN: Ron, do you want to – I know that's – anyone?

MS. EDIN: Well, you know, the welfare penalty probably doesn't have much of an effect on marriage, I think the evidence is pretty clear, but it still, you know, just sort of doesn't make sense. There are bigger penalties in the tax code, we can debate whether or not those are, you know, those actually effect families, but even if they don't, it seems unfair that married couple families would be penalized as compared to single parent families.

I think the larger point is that we need to change our whole service delivery system to recognize that 80 percent of the time, as new survey data show, an unmarried child enters the world with two romantically engaged parents who think there's a pretty good chance they're going to stay together and get married and raise this child together. So our service delivery system is way too focused on single parents, instead should be focused on fragile families.

MR. ROBINSON: I think you raise a very good question, because we incentivize non-marital births economically. And I think our country needs to have a discussion on how do we incentivize marriage and highlight the benefits of marriage, because if a young lady gets pregnant, she can receive Section 8, receive a place to stay, now she's out of her mother's house. She also has WIC, women, infant and children, cash assistance, and other benefits.

And so people demonstrate that they understand benefits. So if we put benefits and incentives on other health choices that contribute to marriage and healthy families, we might get better outcomes.

MR. WARREN: And this is – it's not just the welfare reform aspect, I think your point is a very important point, it's also in other areas, as well, like with HUD, for example, we're starting to do some work there in terms of trying to put fatherhood programming as part of residential services in housing developments and we think that's really important, because, you know, frankly, if you're not on a lease, then you're not eligible for any other services. That could be important services that can be offered around a variety of different things, but if you're not on a lease, you're not able to do that, but there's a disincentive for him to go on the lease as a husband or anything else, because it's going to reduce the

benefit that they get, and it doesn't reduce his child support judgment, from what I understand, as well.

So there are a lot of different factors that are there that I think are, to Tracy's point, are making it a disincentive for couples to marry, be they high income or low income, and I think that ultimately, from my perspective, it really is impacting kids in a big, big way, and we have to take a look at that. One more question, anyone have anymore? Okay. Oh, she shot it –

SPEAKER: We've talked about the private nature of relationships, marriage is a private decision, whether or not to continue a pregnancy is less a private decision than it was, but it's still supposedly a private decision. I think if fathers want to expand and enhance their role, we have to look at where the private and the public meet each other, because if they're going to make any progress at all, they have to come along together. And our public decisions, our policy decisions as a country are the foundation of our private actions as citizens. If fathers want to have a greater role in their children's lives, absolutely, they have to support their mothers, but they have to also undertake the work that disproportionately has fallen to women, which is the actual work of the compassion and the kindness and the honesty that you were talking about, which requires their physical presence. And in order to get their

physical presence there, they have to not be in low income jobs with no benefits and no paid time off.

So I think while it's important to think of the private decisions and private actions, it's an indication how much we have privatized the act of care giving that they'll go to their religious institutions because it's not seen that public policy has much of a role to play at all. So I think we can all be more effective in all the different kinds of ways we're trying to tackle this issue if we look for the common points where we can move forward in bringing the private domain into sync with the public domain.

MR. WARREN: Yeah; I think that's a very good point. And my view is, you know, where the private domain meets the public domain is in the bedroom. You know, it's a private act that has very public implications. I mean one of the things that really, from my perspective, brought that home was the whole octo-mom situation. I mean there was outrage about what happened, but at the end of the day, what happened?

The public came and supported her, why, there are children involved. So you may not like what she did, you may think whatever, but at the end of the day, it was a private act that she chose, but it had public implications on all of us.

And I think that that's part of the shift that has to happen, and goes back to my initial comment about choice, do you really think about that

when you're, you know, engaging in sex, that there are public implications of this because one of the consequences for this can be children. And as a result, you know, we as a collective have responsibility for the children, they are the future that we'll, you know, that we'll never see, and so we all share that responsibility. I don't know that people think that way about it, and maybe it doesn't sound very romantic, candidly, so it's probably not a great pickup line, but it's the reality that exists. And so we think that this work is very, very important, and I appreciate you coming out and being a part of this. As I said before, there are more surveys that you can pick up. Oh, was somebody going to say something else? Oh, sorry.

SPEAKER: I just wanted to quickly respond to your point. You know, I think I'm – liberal on this panel, and it does need to be said that we have been hammering the economic process of low skilled men for 40 years in this country, and we cannot move forward with a single strategy.

I don't think anyone on this panel believes this, although we haven't talked about that economic piece as much as we might. It is absolutely critical to low income couples; they have some hold on the American dream or they're not going to feel stable enough to marry.

And if you look at the rising divorce rates among very low skilled men and women, which are astonishingly high, it does absolutely no good



to get people married just to see them divorce a couple of years later. So healthy marriage and healthy stable two parent families requires a two-pronged approach. So I just didn't want us to leave without being reminded of that.

MR. WARREN: I concur 1,000 percent. Okay. Thank you to the panel. Claps all around. Thank you to Brookings, thank you to Ron Haskins, and thank you to all of you for coming out. Remember, pick up more surveys in the back if you would like those. Thanks again.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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