THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

KNOT YET: THE FUTURE OF MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASKINS: Good morning. Welcome to Brookings. My name is Ron Haskins and I'm a senior fellow here and along with Belle Sawhill, who will be on the second panel, we run something called the Center on Children and Families.

We'd like to welcome you all to Brookings and we're here to analyze a report called "Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America." I have never had so many questions about the title of a report and almost everybody thought how clever it was and then somewhere in the conversation say did you think up the title? And it took all the self-discipline I had to say no, I didn't, it was probably Hymowitz who did it, but what a great title, "Knot Yet," K-n-o-t.

So, the report is written by Kay Hymowitz who we'll hear from in just a minute and Jason Carol, Brad Wilcox, and Kelleen Kaye and it was sponsored by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. We could save five minutes in every event if we never used that whole title, and the RELATE Institute and the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia.

So, here's our plan for how we're going to proceed. First, Kay will give us an overview of the report and with a PowerPoint and all kinds of interesting things. Many of you probably know Kay. She's quite a well-known writer. My favorite of her -- actually, she has so many, I probably shouldn't pick a favorite, but she wrote a book called *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women has Turned Men into Boys"* She never met my wife, but I would be a prime example of how wives can turn men into boys. But, so, Kay, thank you so much for coming.

Then we're going to have comments from panel of three people. Jamelle Bouie, who's a writer for "*The American Prospect"* and a Knobler Fellow at the Nation

Institute and has written many things, especially about political issues at *The American Prospect.*

And then my old, good friend Andy Cherlin, who's come here from vacation, flying all the way up from Miami. What a great thing for him to do.

He's a Griswold professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins and the author pertinent to this event of *"Marriage-Go-Round,"* which I think it gets my nomination at least for the most thoughtful critique of those of us who are somewhat apoplectic about the problems with marriage in our society and totally unbalanced and Andy brings some balance in. I think he'll do that here today.

And then we're quite fortunate also to have Ross Douthat, who's a writer for the *"New York Times"* and famously wrote a book called the "*Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream*." They didn't listen to him. (Laughter) I think it's not true the rumor that he was the author of Romney's "47 percent" comment. I think it's probably not true. (Laughter)

So, they'll each have a chance to talk and then they'll sit down and I'll try to stir up some trouble between them and then we'll give the audience a chance to ask questions and that will be followed by a panel and I'll introduce the panel in due course when they come here. And, so, we'll start with Kay Hymowitz.

Kay, thank you so much.

MS. HYMOWITZ: All right, I wish I could claim credit for the title of this report. Unfortunately, I cannot. Bill Albert, who I assume he's here someplace, thought of that. Thanks, Bill. Great title.

Anyway, good morning, everybody, and welcome. We set out about a year ago to look at a very well-known trend that is the trend towards later marriage and I think you'll find some of our factual findings very interesting and perhaps some of our

exploration of the reasons and consequences of later marriage controversial and interesting and a source of a lively discussion later this morning.

So, let's look at that trend. This slide shows you the rise in age, meaning age of first marriage, and you can see that by the early '70s, that age started to rise quite a bit and has been going up pretty steeply ever since. Americans had actually always married a little bit later than people in other parts of the world, but later meant early 20s. This trend that we're looking at here is something historically new.

There was one result of that, of course is an increasing number of single 20-somethings, something that I've written about quite a bit before now. If you look at this slide, you'll see that this is a percent of women who never married by age. The upward tick is pretty clear here as well. The 20 to 24-year-olds, about 80 percent now of women in their early 20s are unmarried. This again historically new and between 25 and 29, about almost half unmarried.

Something similar has happened with men, though they started at a slightly higher point because men tend to marry at an older age than women, but you can see that today, about 90 percent of men between 20 and 24 are single. Again, this is historically new and over 50 percent of 25 to 29-year-olds also are single.

Now, we think it's worth breaking down these numbers by education and I'll be talking quite a bit about this as my talk goes on. Notice that where in 1990, and if the figures went back earlier, it would be even more dramatic, the age of first marriage or around the percentage of singles started to go up for every education group.

Now, I'll just explain "LTHS" for those of you who are not hip to the lingo is Less than High School, so, you can see that among that group, the numbers have gone up quite a bit. "HS/SC" refers to High School and Some College. That group also has gone up and then college grads, that's the blue line.

And the reason we think this is important is because historically, college-educated women have always married significantly later than their less-educated peers. Here, you can see a kind of convergence between college-educated and less-educated women and keep that in mind because, as I said, we'll be coming back to it.

Notice also that there was a big jump at about the year 2000. This is a point that I'll be coming to, as well. That something seems to have happened between 2000 and 2010 at any rate and perhaps continuing to go on now. We don't have the figures. So, something quite important seems to have happened in that decade.

Let's keep going. Now, what we've got then is a large number of 20-somethings who are single and I want to add just a brief note of levity because Hollywood discovered the single 20 and 30-something in the 1990s. Some of you may be also familiar with a show called *"Sex and the City,"* which is another example, the same thing.

I've always had a sneaking suspicion that Hollywood studios have demographers on staff and their development departments, they seem to always figure these things out before a lot of academics do. At any rate, it sounds like a good gig that some of you may want to look into. (Laughter)

By the way, the single 20 and 30-somethings still very much mainstay of the television entertainment these days. I will amaze you with my area. In addition, we have "*Big Bang Theory*," "*Mindy Project*," "*Two Broke Girls*," "*Whitney*," and a little sleeper called "*Girls*."

By the way, one consequence of the later marriage that I want to mention just briefly, though we didn't go into it in the report, but given that I work for a journal called "*The City Journal*," I feel compelled to mention it. One consequence then is that revival of a remarkable number of neighborhoods in cities across America, Brooklyn, where I'm from is now bursting with energetic and sometimes entrepreneurial

singles and who are starting and helping to support all sorts of businesses ranging from nail salons to gyms to bars to tattoo parlors and I know this is true in Washington, as well, although maybe not the tattoo parlors. (Laughter)

So, benefits of later marriage, and they're considerable. We think that later marriage, the delayed age of marriage is leading to lower rates of divorce. Divorce rates have been declining since about 1980. At that point, experts estimated that about half of all first marriages were ending in divorce. Since then, the rate has been declining and they guess that it's somewhere around 40 percent.

Part of the reason that the divorce rate has come down is that there's less marriage among teen and young 20s who are a greater risk of divorce, but I want to just make one caveat which is from our reading of the research, that that doesn't mean the later the better. After about 24 or 25, the benefits of later marriage diminish and the 25-year-old bride and groom are not much greater risk of divorce than the 33-year-old bride and groom.

Another major benefit of later marriage is high earnings for women, especially college-educated women. We have a very interesting chart here showing the personal income of 33 to 35-year-old women by age, at marriage and education again you'll see the 3 education groups that we've talked about, the high school dropout, the high school grad, and the college grad.

For college graduates, women who are college graduates, if they wait until age 30, they are probably going to be making more money, although the cause and effect here is a little unclear. It may be that they've simply put more energy into careers and education than the women who marry earlier.

The benefits for women who are less educated are not nearly as dramatic though among high school grads. There is some benefit to waiting to the late

20s. Notice that never-married women actually make the most in all three categories.

Among men, I couldn't help but put this in because it's so interesting the contrast. Among men, the story is quite different. Notice that men don't gain that much by marrying after 30, anywhere near as much as college-educated women seem to. Their benefits come by the mid-20s. Also notice that the never-married men do significantly worse than their counterparts who are married and that, again, is an interesting contrast with women among whom the never-married seem to make more.

Now, that tells us a little bit about the benefits of later marriage. We want to concentrate a little bit from now to the end of the talk on something we call the great crossover because as you'll see from this chart, as the age of marriage began to rise, the age of first birth did not follow along so closely.

So, by the late 1980s, we see what we call this great crossover; that is if you look at the purple line that is the line showing the median age in first birth. That goes younger than the age of marriage. So, the implications of that are here.

At the age of 25, 44 percent of women have had a baby while only 38 percent of married. That's one of our most astounding statistics, I think. By the time they turn 30, about two-thirds of American women have had a baby, typically out of wedlock. Forty-eight percent of all first births are now to unmarried women and that's a reflection of this great crossover.

It also means that we've been talking for many decades about the problems of teen motherhood. It is still a problem, but it doesn't describe non-marital, childbearing very completely.

As you can see, in 1970, the teenagers made up about 50 percent of non-marital births. Today, it's only 23 percent. The far larger group are the 20 to 29-year-olds, that's 60 percent.

We also wanted to break down the crossover by education because, as I said before, part of what we found here is a story about class and education. Among college graduates, this slide, the bottom line is the age of marriage and the top line, the age of first child. Among college graduates, you can see there was no great crossover. College-educated women continue to have their children at least a year or two after they get married, no crossover there, no big change, although there is some uptick in the percentage of out-of-wedlock births. Among college graduates, it's still quite small.

Let's look at the high school dropouts. They didn't go through a crossover because they've been having children before marriage for a very long time now. But, however, again, if you look at 2000, the age of marriage jumped up between 2000 and 2010 for this group even though they were having children outside of marriage, they were marrying several years after children. That is no longer the case. So, about 83 percent of children to women who are high school dropouts to women who are not married.

Now, here is where the crossover really shows up. This is among women with a high school diploma and some college, perhaps. So, you can see that as of 1970, they were getting married in their early 20s, having a child a year or two later, and that continued until about 1990. Again, the terminology here is a little tricky. We could talk about lower middle class, working class, moderately educated; I think these all describe the group we're talking about here. 1990, they're still having children within marriage. That changes by 2000. So, that's where that crossover happens for this group

and, again, it harkens back to what I showed you before that something seems to have happened around 2000 and these numbers have really taken off since then.

Okay, this is just another slide showing the implications of what we're talking about here, again, the percent of non-marital births by education, the lowest, the blue line is the college graduates. Again, about 12 percent and the green line, high school or some college, that gets us up to over 50 percent and the less than high school, over 60 percent. I'm not sure why those numbers look a little different. Oh, I know, because when I talked before about 83 percent, we were talking about first births. This is all births.

Now, some people may assume well, okay, people don't want to get married, they don't believe in marriage. So, we looked at some of the survey evidence and found that that was not the case. Most young people say that marriage is very important and the vast majority say very important or somewhat important, but there are a number of reasons that we think that this is happened and I can only refer to them very, very quickly because my jailer here is flashing signs at me.

But the point we want to emphasize is that these are mutually reinforcing causes, that is we have economic causes, we have cultural causes, and they work together. The rise of the knowledge economy, the decline of manufacturing jobs has played a big role in later marriage but that has also helped to change our understanding about what the meaning of marriage is. It has become what we call a capstone and Brad will be talking about that a little bit later. Instead of a cornerstone, I'll let him pick up on that as we go on.

So, I'm going to stop there because I have to and hopefully, we'll be able to flesh out some of these ideas when Brad takes the podium. Thanks. (Applause)

MR. DOUTHAT: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming out. It is terribly early. (Laughter) I live not far away from here, but just far enough that it was difficult to come out.

Thank you to the authors of the report for producing the report. Thank you to Brookings for hosting this. I read over it quite a few times, just trying to think of where I was going to approach it since my area of expertise isn't necessarily this arena.

And to that end, I'm going to tell a quick story about myself, a bit of information about myself that will kind of help you see where I'm coming from, illuminate my thinking on the report.

So, my main area of interest in writing about politics and writing about policy is the intersection of race and particularly racism in the early part of the 20th Century and our current public policy choices. I very firmly believe that many of the racial outcomes we see across spheres owe themselves to particular and deliberate policy choices we made in the 20th Century, in the 19th Century.

I'm sure many of you know that officials at all levels of government used, again, particular interventions create a particular racial status quo, one designed to disenfranchise particularly groups of people, African-Americans, Hispanics in a variety of areas of life. Knowing this and more importantly understanding it has shaped my sort of contingent political views in a really important way.

For example, I'm a little uncomfortable with race-based affirmative action. I think it comes with all sorts of downsides that we should want to avoid. It may encourage mismatch among colleges, among low-income students. It may confer a stigma on students who are recipients of race-based affirmative action, and a lot of circumstances that benefits mainly higher-income students of color.

With that said, I am very much aware of the background radiation of institutionalized racism and prejudice that means that if you were to move away from something like race-based affirmative action, there's a fairly good chance you'll end up in a situation where you're replicating the inequalities that we're trying to stop.

In much the same way, like the authors of the report, I think like most people on this panel, am concerned with the great crossover. I generally don't think it's a good thing for people to be having children outside of marriage, and for people to be having children, they don't have the firm economic foundations underneath them. And I would like to find a way to ameliorate this using public policy, using our tools that we have at all levels of government.

But, and this is a very large but, I'm also aware that we have this tremendous background eradiation of gender inequality, of sexism, of very, in some areas, still concerted efforts to limit the opportunities of women in a wide variety of circumstances. And, so, for as much as I would like to see particular policies for particular interventions for this particular problem, you also run into the concern, and this acknowledged in the report, that you may end up reproducing or reinforcing particular inequalities that we've gone some ways in addressing.

Currently, there's, I guess, a big conversation, ongoing conversation over Sheryl Sandberg's book *"Lean In,"* and one of the criticisms of the book when it came out, and this criticism emerged before anyone really read it, which made it a hilarious criticism, but one of the criticisms of the book was that why are we so focused on the concerns and the problems of high-status, wealthy, white women who, that argument goes, don't really have much of a problem? But the fact of the matter is that, as we all know, the higher echelons of business and politics are still not very I wouldn't say unfriendly to women, but they're not well represented. Women aren't well represented.

Which means that we do still kind of have a problem, it is important for girls, younger women to see women in these positions of high status.

So, and I'm sure we will discuss over the course of this morning particular targeted interventions to address the great crossover. But in doing so, I think we should all keep in mind the fact that we're not so far removed from pervasive gender inequality. Gender inequality sanctions by the state. We're not so far removed from that that we can simply not worry about the potential implications of policies that may try to encourage people to get married at a younger age from their late 20s to their mid-20s that may encourage particular patterns in childbirth.

Now, I don't think that means you don't do anything. I'm not one for futility. And I think that the area you go when trying to address these problems, it's not so much particular interventions, but sound macroeconomic policy. As Kay mentioned, at least a chunk of this has everything to do with the collapse of the economy for lower-income workers and lower-end high school graduates. I'm reasonably sure that if today it were possible for a low-status, low-income high school graduate guy to get a job that supported a family or at least supported him and someone else, we would not be looking at the great crossover. At least it wouldn't be as big of a problem as we're currently looking at.

And, so, to that end, I think the focus for policymakers ought to be building sound macroeconomic policy, which is something we haven't really been doing for the last 10 years. It's striking to look at the broad economic mismanagement by both parties, by political parties of all stripes. No attempts to deal with stagnant wages, no attempts to deal with rising income inequality, no attempts to deal with the skyrocketing costs of college, no attempts to deal with the collapse of the manufacturing sector, which is partially a product of trends that are sort of beyond the control of policymakers and

partially a product of the fact that it's not that many people in the policymaking realm were terribly concerned, that they hoped that the gains from global trade would outweigh any loss in jobs in manufacturing in lower-income areas and that simply hasn't been the case.

And I'm willing to bet a lot of money, a reasonable amount of money that the distinct lack of marriageable men on the lower-income side, which the report notes, has everything to do with the fact that we don't have an economy that's designed to help lower-income, low-education men flourish or lower-income, low-education people to flourish. And fixing that, addressing that I think ought to be our primary concern. And once you fix that, once you address that, there, I think, are all sorts of social welfare-y things, to put it in not a very precise term, that can help.

During the State of the Union, President Obama proposed a plan for universal pre-K. I know many liberals would love to see more robust services to help young parents, young families, and these were the kind of things that make marriage easier, that make childrearing easier, and if you have access to better jobs, if you have access to better opportunities and there is a government that is interested in making childrearing and making family-making an easier endeavor, I think you would see people decide that maybe they don't need to wait so long to get married, knowing that there's a fundamental level of support below them.

I'm running out of time. The time thing really when you see it, you just sort of like, okay, I got to wrap it up. (Laughter) Wish there was like a flashing light that said wrap it up.

MR. HASKINS: It gets worse than that.

MR. DOUTHAT: I know, I know. (Laughter)

To wrap this up quickly, there are a few other areas in which we could use interventions ensuring that debt loads for students graduating from college aren't so high, ensuring debt loads for people graduating grad school aren't so high and sort of getting all these things in order I think will go a long way towards addressing out problem.

On the whole though, I think that those are the approaches we should exhaust before moving to anything more particular and anything that tries to encourage particular sorts of behavior, precisely because we have this background of inequality that it's with us and probably isn't going away for a very long time. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. CHERLIN: Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here today.

I'm one of the people on this panel who's supposed to give you a liberal response to the report, but if you expect a fiery, liberal dissent from this report, I'm going to have to disappoint you. Because, in fact, I agree with most things in this report. And I commend it for saying that the issue here is not just a cultural issue, it's a mix of culture and economics. That's as opposed to some other reports and perhaps, for example, Charles Murray's book "*Coming Apart*," which suggests that it's all just a cultural problem. The willingness of these authors to say it's both economics and culture is, I think, forming a basis for some cooperation and consensus in the center of what have been bitter and unproductive family policy debates in Washington for decades. I would like to see us move forward. I think we can move forward if we agree that, yes, there have been important cultural change, but the economic changes have been very important, too.

Now, I want to talk about cohabitation. I want to emphasize demographers think nearly all the growth of childbearing to single mothers over the last couple of decades has been to mothers who are cohabiting. There's almost no increase among what you think of as single mothers, mothers living alone or with a grandmother. It's couples. Now, some of these cohabitating couples are formed after the women gets

pregnant and they decide to live together for a few years because it's better for the child, but without a long-term commitment. Some of my research colleagues have taken to calling these shotgun cohabitations. But the only person holding the shotgun today is the baby and these cohabitations are quite unstable.

The problem though is not cohabitation per se; the problem is American-style cohabitation. We have the shortest duration of cohabitating unions of any western country. After a couple of years, we either breakup or we get married and increasingly the decision is to breakup. Part of the reason then that we have such a high rate of turnover, what distinguishes us from other wealthy countries is the sheer number of changes that children see in their residential arrangements over their lives.

In some Western European countries, there are long-term cohabitating unions that last decades and I don't think those are any worse for children that long-term marriages. So, yes, marriage is very important, but so is stability and sometimes we might be able to encourage stability even if we can't successfully encourage marriage and that might be a worthy goal.

For example, an eight-site random assignment of relationship enhancement programs was just finished, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services called "Building Strong Families." Unfortunately, there were no effects in seven of the eight sites on marriage probability or any other measures of couples in the experimental group who got a curriculum of relationship enhancement and employment assistance information.

But in Oklahoma, there was an effect. In fact, I hear so much about Oklahoma in these forums that sometimes I think I've wandered into a Rogers and Hammerstein musical. (Laughter) Oklahoma had one effect; it was that parents in the experimental group stayed together more so that children in the experimental group were

more likely to live with two parents for a longer time than were children in the control group. There was no effect on marriage, however. Oklahoma managed to encourage stability, but not marriage.

I think we have to pursue what happened in Oklahoma and see if we can replicated it, although I certainly think we have to realize that the fact that it didn't work for seven out of eight sites suggests that Oklahoma, where the wind comes sweeping down the plains, may be a somewhat different place than say Baltimore, my home, which was another site.

Now, I certainly think that the transformation of the American economy is the primary reason we've seen these trends: outsourcing, automation, it's no coincidence that the college-educated Americans who you saw on those charts are waiting until after marriage to have children and divorcing much less than they used to. Those are the winners in our new globalized, automated economy and those are the people who are still marrying and still waiting until after marriage to have children, whereas those with less opportunities are not.

Now, I think economics is tremendously important here, but let me talk about culture and acknowledge that there are important cultural changes. I've seen them. About 40 years ago, I was teaching high school in Boston, and I came home to have dinner with my parents, I told them about my new girlfriend, and they said oh, she sounds nice, where does she live? And I said with me. And they nearly fell off their chairs. Had there been a 911 in those days, I would have called 911. (Laughter) A year later, I married her, it all worked out, but it was a shock to them.

In contrast, when five years ago, my own daughter married, I would have been shocked had she not lived with her boyfriend beforehand. That's the cultural difference that we've seen. One of the cultural differences that's made the phenomenon

that the report talks about possible these days. Another, of course, is the greater acceptance of childbearing outside of marriage.

And but where I get off the cultural train is when a claim is made that the problem here is a lack of industriousness among young men, a lack of a wish to get ahead. This was Murray's argument in "Coming Apart." He goes back to 1960 and says wages were much lower in 1960s, but young men work at a much higher rate. Therefore, it's really a cultural shift.

Well, young men and women don't think like that. They don't go back a half century. They think about their own upbringing and their standard of living and they compare it with what they may be able to do and more and more high-school-educated young people, especially young men, are finding that they will not do as well as their fathers, that the jobs they can get will not replicate their standard of living, and they are discouraged workers because of that, rather than because they are less industrious.

Some say the reason that the divorce rates are falling so fast among the college-educated is that they were the victims of the high divorce rates of the 1980s and are determined not to make the same mistakes of their parents. Perhaps, but working class young adults were also affected by divorce, they also have the same desire to avoid the mistakes of their parents, but they've not been able to do it nearly as much. Divorce rates have not fallen for them nearly as much.

Why? Because they can't actually do what needs to be done which is create the stable marriages they want, not because they don't want them, not because they don't value them, but because they can't find the economic basis for doing them.

Finally, I'd like to mention an important cultural change that's not occurred and that should occur and that's holding back progress and this is the continuing resistance of young men to take the kinds of jobs that in the past have been

labeled as women's work. It's an outmoded definition of masculinity that's holding us back.

For example, between 1975 and 2010, the percentage of physicians who were women increase from 13 percent to 32 percent. A huge increase. The percentage of men who are nurses increased from 3 percent to 9 percent. Being a nurse is a great job, it pays well. It has lots of skills. It's rewarding and challenging, but men won't takes those jobs because it's women's work.

Or take my line of work. College teachers. Over that same integral, the percentage of college teachers who are female has gone from 31 percent to 46 percent, but how about elementary school teachers and middle school teachers? The percentage of men in those jobs has gone from 15 percent to 18 percent.

Now, these are the jobs that are still expanding, that are in the service sector, that pay well, and men must begin to take them in larger numbers if we are to solve this problem, but because of the outdated definitions of masculinity that young men have, they don't take them.

What's happened is that in school and among young adults, it's okay for girls to be like boys now. They can achieve in school, they can be good athletes, that's accepted, but it's not okay for boys to be like girls. Boys who do stuff in middle school that's girl stuff risk being labeled gay by their peers, apparently the worst insult you can say to a middle school boy even though it's not clear that anybody knows exactly what they're talking about when they use the word.

The policing of masculinity, the inability of men to get beyond men's work and take the jobs that are actually there I think is an overlooked facet of why we have such a problem of young men not working and taking the jobs that are there.

So, here's one liberal that agrees that cultural change is important, including the cultural changes that have not occurred. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. BOUIE: Well, thank you so much for having me. Thanks to the panelists. This has been a wonderful discussion so far.

I am actually going to provide a "fiery, liberal dissent." No, I'm kidding. Instead, I'm actually going to start where Jamelle left off saying that he didn't want to offer accounts of futility and talk a little bit about futility because I think it's useful for people involved in these debates and discussions to recognize the reasons why even though stories about changing family structures and so on may end up at the top of let's say the "*New York Times"* most e-mailed list, they don't have a huge impact or at least in my experience they don't have a huge impact on recent policy debates in Washington, D.C., and really cultural discussions more broadly.

And I think that it goes in a sense to Professor Cherlin's point about what is so great about this report and a lot of the work that Brad and others have done over the years is the willingness to acknowledge the intersection of culture and economics in these issues, but it's precisely that intersection that makes our political discussion not really know how to deal with these issues.

And, so, start with the Republican Party, the conservative movement, conservatism in America writ large. I think it's fair to say that in general conservative interests in these trends is often higher than liberal interests because it's a story that social and cultural conservatives, in particular, myself very much included, are I wouldn't say they're happy to jump on it because it's obviously a story that's problematic and tells a story of family decline and so on, but it dovetails in many ways with a social conservative worldview, right? The idea that once the family was stronger than it is today, then various forces, cultural and economic, but especially cultural, swept through

American society starting in the 1960s and now we're in much more of an unstable mess. The problem is that precisely the fact that that narrative is so attractive to so many conservatives means that it becomes a reason for conservatives involved in politics and particularly conservatives involved in the institutional Republican Party not to talk about the economic side of the discussion.

So, for instance, if President Obama proposes policy X, Y, or Z, that it seems to be targeted at working-class men, working-class America in general, a very commonplace conservative and republican response will be well, this is all well and good, but he's not talking about the real driver of the problem, which is the decline of marriage. And, obviously, I do think that the decline of marriage is a very real driver of social problems in America, but a conservatism that can't talk about the economic component mostly because the discussion of that economic component doesn't really fit into the conversation that conservatives want to have right now, which is mostly about long-term deficits and restructuring the size and scope of government to avoid long-term deficit problems, it means that you end up with the Republican Party just talking about when they do talk about it at all one half of the story here. And this extends to right of center intellectuals, as well.

I have a higher opinion of Charles Murray's "*Coming Apart*" maybe then Professor Cherlin does, but I thought that it was an absolutely brilliant analytic work that ended with Murray throwing up his hands and saying well, here are these trends and there's really nothing we can do about them and maybe eventually the collapse of the liberal welfare state in 2025 or so will lead to sort of rebuilding of community from the bottom up. And, I mean, it's possible that that's the case, but it's not a particularly useful approach for people involved in public policy debates to take and, frankly, I think it's also mistaken, as well, that there are things that policymakers can do at least on the margins

that address some of the drivers of the social crisis that otherwise Murray, I think, does a great job of illuminating.

So, that's the republican half of the story. There's just a deep resistance to talking about any kind of economic component and beyond that, to actually taking concrete steps, including, again, some of the fairly modest steps recommended at the end of this report, and I hope you do read all the way to the end because, yes, I mean, for instance, the case we saw recently in D.C. was the democrats proposing an increase in the minimum wage and you had a lot of conservative policy wonks saying well, here are these different problems with increasing the minimum wage and it can actually discourage employment to some extent among working class men, which is so, the costs outweigh the benefits and so on. What you didn't see was the Republican Party saying so, here's what we should do instead, say increase the Earned Income Tax Credit or pick whatever alternative policy response you want. You just have the critique, you don't have an alternative.

And then on the liberal side, and I think actually Jamelle's points did a very good job of sort of distilling liberalism's reluctance to address the cultural side of the equation because liberalism is invested for good reason in a narrative of female advancement and so on that is very uncomfortable with the idea that we might want to in any way, shape, or form be seen as sort of subsidizing older patriarchal arrangements and so on. There's that going on. There's the fact that more generally, the sort of cultural model of marriage that is working for the upper middle class and isn't really working for the rest of society, this sort of capstone/soul mate model is a model that liberalism is deeply invested in right now, mostly I think because of the gay marriage debate because gay marriage is in a sense the ultimate working out of that capstone/soul mate model.

If you believe that in that model, then the arguments for gay marriage become much more compelling. If you believe in gay marriage, the arguments for that model become much more compelling and it's possible that on the other side of the gay marriage debate because I think we can all sense which direction that debate is going in right now, there may be a liberalism that's more interested in sort of seeing some of the problems for the model. The question then is: To what extent does ratifying that model in public policy make that conversation harder in other ways?

And then there's also an issue of political self-interest where the Democratic Party, and, again, I don't think there's any sort of cynical, conscious, gamesmanship going on, but the Democratic Party benefits from the trends described in this report. It's fairly clear that family instability and sort of the rise of single life, single parenting, sort of people raising kids by themselves without partners and so on increases public support for a more active government, which is completely understandable.

I don't think there's a question of sort of it's not the sort of Mitt Romney, "47 percent," these people are just mooching off the federal government, it's that people's lives are more unstable, more complicated when they're trying to raise children by themselves or with a partner who's sort of in or out, and, so, it makes more sense to, for instance, want a guarantee of universal health insurance and so on. But the fact that the Democratic Party in its general quest for more expansive government programs and so on benefits from these trends makes it in turn more likely that the democrats will tend to support policies that are general rather than particular that say well, we're not going to target these specific problems, we're just going to try and increase government spending on people generally and so forth.

And then, finally, I would say the final reason that these issues don't necessarily seem to rise to sort of crisis level discussion in American politics right now is

that they aren't creating the kind of crisis that a lot of people expected them to create 20 years ago. If you go back 20 years and you look at things that liberals and conservatives, but especially social conservative policy thinkers were writing, there was a huge and totally understandable focus on the link between family breakdown and crime because America was still in the midst of a 30-year explosion in crime rates that was making cities unlivable and ungovernable and it was threatening basic public order.

Over the last 20 years, the trends in family structure have continued, accelerated, whatever word you want to choose, but we've obviously if not solved the crime problem, at least addressed it in ways that people frankly didn't expect in 1991 or 1992 and that has just made the problem seem more diffuse and less urgent. And I think it's a real problem, but this is something I think everybody involves in these discussions has to reckon with that it manifests itself in social immobility.

If you look at some of the charts on -- I don't have the page -- but the charts comparing sort of rates of depression and heavy drinking and so on between married couples versus cohabitating couples versus single couples and so on, it manifests itself in sort of the degradation of ordinary human life, but in ways that don't seem to rise to the level of a crisis in public order, a rise in crime, and so on, the kind of problems that policymakers would tend to leap to address. So, it's more a question of sort of it has a negative impact, you might say, on human flourishing in the United States without sort of dragging us down into the kind of abyss that scolds and social conservatives usually like to use to threaten people with in order to interest them in dealing with problems.

So, I see the stop, so, I'll stop there and say that I'm not as pessimistic about these issues being addressed as that spiel maybe made it sound, but I think those

are realities that everyone interested in these issues should keep in mind. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. HASKINS: I'm going to ask some questions first. I get certain privileges as a moderator. So, thank you to all the members of the panel. All the presentations were fascinating.

I want to start with a question for Kay and then I hope that the other panelists will jump on it.

Will marriage ever resume its former absolvent position as a cornerstone of American family life?

MS. HYMOWITZ: You're asking me to make a prediction.

MR. HASKINS: About the future, too. (Laughter)

MS. HYMOWITZ: About the future, which I don't like to do. I think it's going to have to be some kind of new understanding that won't necessarily be what it was in social and conservative glorified '50s. I think it's going to be something different. But one of the major points that we really wanted to make is that there has been this shift in understanding of what marriage is about and that's why we keep talking about the cultural part of this.

One issue that I didn't get to talk about was that young people really don't see marriage as having much to do with children anymore. They're two separate things. We have significant survey data on this in the report that I hope you'll look at, but I think as long as that is the case, that is that marriage and children are two separate life events that may or may not come together, but really don't have that much to do with each other, we're going to continue to see the trends that we're talking about.

I will say just to add a little controversy here I do believe that the economic piece of this story is a very important one, but I don't think that solving that solves this other problem of rejoining marriage and childbearing.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, go ahead.

MR. CHERLIN: Ron, when we talk about marriage as exalted place in the past, we're explicitly saying thinking back to the mid-20th Century, the 1950s was the most unusual time for marriage and family that we've seen in the last century or two. We're not going to be going back to the 1950s, but we could go to a time when marriage is actually somewhat stronger than it was right now.

If you would have asked me 30 years ago whether the divorce rate would continue to go up or would start plunging among the college-educated, I would have said of course it's going to go up. Marriage is headed toward more divorce; that's the way things are happening. Instead, it has plunged and among the college-educated, we've seen almost a neo-traditionalism. They are waiting until after marriage to have children.

Yes, marriage is the capstone event that comes at age 30, but there's nothing really wrong with that. And, in fact, that seems to us that there's still a strong desire among Americans for a family life that's based on marriage. Should we be able to assist people with less education and having the resources and the attitudes that will get them to be married, we could see something of a revival, I think, even now.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else want to comment? Okay, I was glad to see you bring up -- go ahead.

MR. DOUTHAT: Oh, well, one issue that we haven't really touched on here is the impact of institutional religion. I mean, it was sort of implicit in your parents' reaction maybe to living with your fiancée before marriage, but part of the story here, and,

again, it's very tough to disentangle the economic and cultural components, but part of the story here is that our sort of cliché of working-class America as sort of the pious bedrock of our society and upper middle class America as the decadent secularists and so on just no longer obtains.

And, again, Brad has done a lot of work on this, and you can see it in the data in Charles Murray's book and so on that the link between churchgoing, church attendance and the involvement in the religious community and family stability is sort of obvious explicit, and, again, I don't think it's the weakening of religious interests and spiritual fervor, it's just the weakening of sort of its institutional manifestations that's driven at least part of this decline.

And, so, when I think about sort of forces that could change things more than at the margins, I mean, I think the policy debate, it's all at the margins. If you're looking at social forces that could impact this in big ways over the next 50 or 100 years, I think whatever happens with American religion is probably the biggest force there is and it could go in either direction.

I mean, I think the trend we're on now, the rise of the so-called nones, people with no religion affiliation, I think a lot of people, sort of well-educated people read about that trend and think of somebody, a college graduate in a coffee shop reading Richard Dawkins and sort think yes, he's finished off God once and for all. (Laughter) But in American society, the nones are just as likely or, in fact, more likely to be not sort of militant atheists, but, again, working class men whose dis-attachment from religion is part of just a broader lack of social attachment.

And, so, are there future churches that could reach those men? Maybe. Are churches just going to keep getting weaker in recent -- I mean, are Hispanic immigrants going to continue to drift away from the Catholic church? And, so, you can

imagine the trends going in either direction depending on what happens in trends in American religious life.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, Jamelle, you'll be the first respondent on the next question, okay?

MR. BOUIE: Okay.

MR. HASKINS: Because we want to move ahead here.

I was glad to see Kay mention kids because in this debate, I think kids should be a very prime consideration. I'm going to assert that there's widespread agreement in the academic community which is quite unusual and did not always exist that the best environment for children is a married couple family, and, in fact, some people even went further and say their biological parents married to each other is the best way to raise children and that single-parent families are associated with lots of bad outcome from kids. It does not mean that no single parent can do a great job of raising children, but on average, and social science is based on averages, kids from female head of families are worse off in almost every way. Roughly speaking, if it's something bad, they have more of it. If it's something good, they have less of it.

So, with that in mind, first of all, does anybody disagree with that?

MR. CHERLIN: Well, just to raise a qualification, Ron, I think kids do best in stable, two-parent homes. The way we tend to do that in this country is through marriage. In other places like Western Europe, we can do it through long-term cohabitation. How we get that stability is important and I grant you that in the U.S., that's likely to be marriage and, therefore, marriage is certainly worth supporting.

MR. HASKINS: Right, I would totally agree with your point, by the way, about if couples cohabited and stayed together for 200 years, we wouldn't have a problem. But they don't. I mean, in fact, there's some data in the report, Brad has

published a lot of data, there's all kind of data. If you take kids when they're born and they're in a cohabiting compared to marriage, the breakup rate for cohabiting is something like four times as great. So --

MR. DOUTHAT: But not in Sweden. I mean, it's true that --

MR. HASKINS: No, no, I know. I'm saying --

MR. DOUTHAT: -- the Scandinavian --

MR. HASKINS: Right, but that puts you back --

MR. DOUTHAT: There is a Scandinavian model.

MR. HASKINS: That puts you back on a cultural issue. What are you going to do to make our cohabitation like theirs? So, if it's true with some caveats --

MR. DOUTHAT: Ikea is working on it. (Laughter)

MR. HASKINS: What?

MR. DOUTHAT: The spread of Ikea in American -- sorry. (Laughter)

MR. HASKINS: I'm not talking about furniture here. (Laughter)

Anyway, so, here's the question: If this contributes, if the problems with children contribute in many ways to our economy and to inequality and to mobility in the United States, doesn't that give even more urgency to this issue of kids being reared by married parents?

You have the right of first refusal.

MR. DOUTHAT: I'll answer the question.

MR. HASKINS: Good.

MR. DOUTHAT: No, I think it is. I feel a little schizophrenic on the issue in part because I do think that it's very important for children to be raised in long-term relationships. Whether those are marriage or long-term cohabitation, I'm not sure. I don't

think it's that important which one it is, but it needs to be something. It could even be sort of just like a stable extended family, not just a two-parent household.

But I have this sort of basic discomfort with targeted policy initiatives to reach or to fix that problem in part because I have a surprising lack of imagination with regards to it. I just can't imagine how you would do it and structure it in such a way that would avoid the problems I'm worried about. And, so, maybe it's someone far more entrepreneurial than I am when it comes to policy could figure something out, but with the tools that we have and the tools in the current political context we would actually discuss, I'm not sure how you get to that, to point B.

MR. HASKINS: Kay?

MS. HYMOWITZ: I agree actually that policy levers here are few. We're looking for creative answers out there and perhaps somebody here has some, but most of the ones that I've heard of, most of the ones even that we've mentioned in our report have been said before. Are they achievable? There is a big question about that.

I just want though to answer one point that Jamelle made about the gender inequality problem. My reading of what happens to women in the workforce is that they are far better off being married than being single. If you're really worried about gender inequality, then you want to worry about the rise of single motherhood and it's usually motherhood because those women are held back by the fact that they do not have partners. So, and I don't see any way for policy to deal with that. So, just something to keep in mind on that.

MR. CHERLIN: And --

MR. DOUTHAT: But -- I'm sorry.

MR. CHERLIN: Go ahead, Ross.

MR. DOUTHAT: No, no, you go.

MR. CHERLIN: No, no, go ahead. You were --

MR. DOUTHAT: Well, I may be anticipating what you were about to say, but I think one of the things that I'll often see liberals say in response to that point is that yes, sort of women with successful marriages do better in the workforce, but part of what's happening is that because the men that women could be marrying are in some sense unmarriageable, they don't have jobs, they don't have steady work and so on, there's a danger in just sort of encouraging marriage to men who would end up just being a drag. If your husband isn't capable of finding steady work, for instance, that's probably not going to help you in your career. And now I --

MR. HASKINS: If that was --

MS. HYMOWITZ: Can I just --

MR. HASKINS: If that's what Andy was going to say, I guarantee it, he has something new to say.

MR. DOUTHAT: Yes.

MR. CHERLIN: I do, but go ahead, Kay.

MS. HYMOWITZ: Just one point about that. Then the question is: Well, why would you be having children with a man who you don't think is capable of being a husband? And that, again, gets back to the issue I keep bringing up, which is that there's been this divide in people's thinking about marriage. It's okay to have a child with somebody that you don't think you're going to marry or that you maybe will marry or is not ready to get married. So, that's one of the cultural issues that I think we need to be addressing.

MR. HASKINS: Andy?

MR. CHERLIN: Ron, marriages we're supporting, but what are we going to do? I think we ought to pay attention to the results released last November of the

"Building Strong Families" eight-site random assignment test of the idea of relationship enhancement classes, financial management classes as a way to help young adults who've just had a child but aren't married to get married.

I was not a big fan of this experiment, but I found myself very disappointed and saddened that it had no effects in seven of the eight sites, that we were not able to do it. Now, Oklahoma had some effects, good people designed those programs, and I think we should pursue those effects and see if we can get them to work.

And there is a second big experiment that we'll see final results for some time later this year of young married couples who want to stay married, can we help them? We haven't seen that. Nevertheless, the health marriage strategy of relationship enhancement classes where you teach people better strategies about how to manage conflict has unfortunately been shown to be not very good. I would not place it on my list of very large programs to have a lot of money go to right now.

MR. HASKINS: I'm going to ask the second panel that very question. Do you want to make a brief --

MR. BOUIE: Well, I would just say, I mean, I tend to be deeply skeptical of programs that sort of specifically set out to go to individual couples and help them strengthen their marriages mostly just because of a skepticism about scaling up. I'm very confident that a really dedicated team in a particular community could design a somewhat successful program. It's a little disappointing that it didn't work in most cases, but I imagine it's possible. It's just as in terms of national policy, the problem of scaling up exists in almost all these cases. In that case, it seems particularly difficult.

I think what you want is you want basically a welfare state that is work and family-oriented in ways that our current welfare state often isn't and that means that you want to look at things like the payroll tax, you want to look at things like a Child Tax

Credit, you want to look at things like the Earned Income Tax Credit. Places that, again, I think conservatives and republicans should be much more interested in focusing on than they actually are and that liberals, I mean, I think some of the things that the president has done that I've supported have been in that area, but I think the liberal tendency in general is to say well, it's to build sort of universal programs that aren't focused on sort of work and family in particular and those sort of universal programs in general are sort of on an affordable trajectory.

So, I don't know. There's a phrase that I always quote that *"The Economist"* Ed Glaeser likes to use, "Small-Government Egalitarianism," and I think that there's a policymaking sweet spot there that neither party is trying to hit. But, again, I think it's all happening on the margins.

MR. HASKINS: We're almost out of time for this panel, but I want to ask one more question because I completely agree and I think everybody on the panel agrees economics is a big part of this.

So, let me say one thing about welfare reform that I think really illuminates this discussion and that is people think a welfare reform is very tough requirements and forcing people to work and they lose their benefits and so forth, all of which is true, but they don't talk as much about other things that government did to make welfare less attractive to young women and to make work more attractive, namely huge expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit created out of whole cloth. Almost universal coverage of Medicaid, which did not exist until the late '90s, and lots of money for childcare.

So, policymakers almost had vision. I know Americans find that hard to believe, but they created a system that made it a lot easier for young women to work and made it attractive.

In this case, and I do agree with you, Jamelle, probably the best idea is a serious weighed subsidy for young males. We don't have that. We have a crummy little one. But a huge one. You get $5,000 for females or whoever has the custody, and it's in 85 percent of the cases female.

So, the question to the panel is: Are republicans -- I want you to focus on republicans. Can you imagine them spending $25 billion on a big wage subsidy for young men on the theory that if we do this, it's going to increase marriage rates because those young men, it'll change your life and it'll be more desirable and better partners and so forth and the women will not only be willing to have babies with them, but to stay with them.

MR. DOUTHAT: You're asking me? The answer is no.

MR. HASKINS: I'm asking the whole panel.

MR. DOUTHAT: No. Right now, no. No, I mean, I think that, look, there is the idea that has the most traction among conservative columnists and pundits and policy wonks is the idea of focusing on child tax credits, making them refundable against payroll taxes. So, it's linked to children rather that work, but because it's refundable against payroll taxes, it's linked to work, as well. And that --

MR. HASKINS: But that won't help single males at all.

MR. DOUTHAT: That doesn't help single males, no. But the hope is that it helps maybe cohabitating couples make the transition to marriage more successfully, it helps already married working class couples stay together and so on.

But, look, the Republican Party right now, the problem the party has is that the focus on deficits and debt has meant that republicans are willing to cut spending in one area, but they're never willing right now to plow the money into another area. And that's the sort of internal GOP hump that would have to be gotten over. You'd had to

have somebody willing to say okay, look at these cuts in the Ryan budget. We can take $25 billion out of these cuts and do something over here instead of just trying to hit the fantastic target of a balanced budget in 10 years or 5 years or 4 years, we can -- yes.

MR. HASKINS: By tomorrow.

MR. DOUTHAT: By tomorrow.

MR. HASKINS: Who else?

Jamelle, yes.

MR. BOUIE: I'd say that on the other end of things because I can imagine at least that the liberals and democrats I spend time with accept an ideal in part because it's sort of line-drawing division of a guaranteed basic income. It's sort of on that path. But I think I'm not sure.

So, like my broad critique of the American political system right now is I'm not sure that there is much of an emphasis or concern with full employment and I think neither party is particularly interested in trying to pursue solutions that would lead to full employment because when push comes to shove, like moving as closer to full employment and sort of beyond pre-recession levels of unemployment is an A-list policy, we're trying to address a whole swath of social ills that will fester if we sort of remain in this status quo of elevated or even like mass unemployment.

And, so, I would love to see a program of wage support for young men and I would love to see a program for young men coupled with a genuine commitment to getting unemployment down to at least the point where we can being to identify whether it's structural unemployment we're dealing with or it's merely cyclical. At the moment, we've sort of just thrown up our hands and said oh, well, you know.

MR. HASKINS: Andy?

MR. CHERLIN: Ron, I would add that you should expand that credit to women, not just to men. My reading of what happens when you give low-income women more income is it allows them -- say they're single mothers -- to avoid what you might call unproductive cohabitating relationships with a guy you might be tempted to move into our apartment if the lights are about to be turned off and you need some help with the electric bill. Rather you can wait, have a stable, single-parent home, and wait for somebody who might be a better long-term partner. Giving low-income women more income is not only a good thing in itself, but it can, I think, even be pro-marriage.

MS. HYMOWITZ: I'm skeptical about that. I was going to say that not only do I not see it as a possibility the republicans would support such a program, but I'm skeptical that democrats would, in part because I think Andy demonstrates this point, it will be seen as anti-woman. Why should we support men when it's women who are making less money, they're the ones who need the support. So, I think there would be a lot of pushback on that from the left, as well.

MR. DOUTHAT: Well, and can you imagine, I know we're out of time, but, I mean, what doesn't get talked about in these debates is people talk about a child tax credit. If you were really trying to design that policy with marriage in mind, you would say there's a tax credit and it's only available to married couples.

MR. HASKINS: That isn't going to happen.

MR. DOUTHAT: Right, right. Well, right, but the fact that it isn't going to happen isn't going to happen I think underlines the cultural component here, which is that Americans, we don't want to do those stigmas again and there are very good reasons why we don't want to do those stigmas again, but they also mean that when you're talking about public policy, you're sort of leaving what would be obvious options off the table.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, audience. Let me caution the audience we want questions. People came here to hear the panelists, so, let's have a couple of questions from the audience.

Right here in the front.

MS. STAR: Hi, I'm Penny Star with --

MR. HASKINS: Wait, you're going to get a microphone.

MS. STAR: Oh, okay.

MR. HASKINS: Tell us your name --

MS. STAR: Penny Star.

MR. HASKINS: And ask a brief question.

MS. STAR: CNS News. You were talking about stigma and you brought up an important policy point about encouraging single parenthood, et cetera, was well faired in those kinds of programs.

I would say what struck me in this conversation is that it seems to me culture, entertainment, in other words any magazine you look at at the grocery store, having a child out of wedlock is not only acceptable, but it's great. And, so, I would say that culture is perpetuating the single parenthood by promoting out-of-wedlock marriage and also by not saying that it's not a good thing, being very clear on that.

And what struck me really quickly, too, is that I don't see anything in this conversation about people seeing marriage as a religious, not just social, but having to do with God and beliefs.

Thank you.

MR. HASKINS: Kay, do you want a comment about -- I think widespread agreement that our culture is not exactly marriage --

MS. HYMOWITZ: Yes, although I'm using the word "culture" a little more broadly than that. I mean, there's no question that the popular cultures reflects a lot of what we've been talking about in terms of a new understanding about marriage, but I think that popular culture much reflects what most people think as it does drive it, and the reasons that people have subscribed to this capstone model and the idea that children are sort of a secondary consideration in marriage goes far beyond whatever's going on in Hollywood.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, right behind her.

MS. BATES: Hi, I have a question about tax --

MR. HASKINS: Tell us your name.

MS. BATES: Oh, my name is Jen Bates. I'm a resident of Alexandria.

I'd like to know what you think about using the tax code to encourage marriage. We've had for a long time a marriage penalty. Why not have a marriage advantage for low-income married couples with or without children?

MR. BOUIE: I mean, I'm 100 percent in favor of it. I think that, again, right now is sort of right-wing policy wonks have sort of converged around the particular idea of the child tax credit as basically a way of doing that with children, not per se linked to marriage. I think that there are, again, sort of issues in American culture that make an explicit marriage advantage seem potentially sort of stigmatizing and discriminatory and so on.

I think it would be interesting to see how the debate would play out if it were couched in not in the language of here's a tax credit that you get for getting married, but just we're going to eliminate the marriage penalty and have a slight marriage advantage and so on. But I think that the tax code is where the action is. I think the specific question of sort of tax subsidies for marriage as opposed to sort of family just sort

of reflect sort of an uncomfortabilty that Americans have with sort of specific -- saying this particular relationship deserves this particular subsidy.

MR. HASKINS: So, let's have two questions and then we're going to get to the next panel.

Right here, right across the aisle there.

MS. BERGMAN: My name is Barbara Bergman.

I guess this is leading up to a question for Ms. Hymowitz. You have all talked about culture versus economic reasons for this going on, but you've forgotten the technological, namely ten invention of the pill and the Sexual Revolution and there's not going to be any going back from that.

As Ms. Hymowitz admitted, there's very little that government can do to reverse this, and, so, we have to think, don't we, about helping children and they're going to be more and more of them. And, so, the way to help children, obviously, is to turn the country into Scandinavia to have free daycare, to have free college, to have help with housing and so on.

So, as a conservative, would you go in that direction?

MR. HASKINS: Okay, before we answer --

MS. BATES: As someone who cares about children.

MR. HASKINS: All right, before you answer that, Reid, right over here. Let's let him ask a question.

MR. POST: My question is very similar.

MR. HASKINS: Tell us your name.

MR. POST: Todd Post from Bread for the World. My question is very similar, actually. I mean, I just want to make a statement. I sort of see this sort of cloud of nostalgia sort of hovering over the panel and I think I can be as nostalgic as anybody

else, but I think it's also important to be realistic, like that lady was saying. We're probably not going back and she invoked the Scandinavian model.

One of the things that -- I was going to --

MR. HASKINS: You have to be quick here because we're trying to get another panel.

MR. POST: Okay. I was going to ask very specifically about childcare. Somebody brought up earlier that cohabitation rate in the United States is far less than -- raising children is very stressful and if you don't have good support systems, particularly childcare, it only feeds that stress. And I know we do childcare worse than probably -- or at least we invest less in childcare in this country than they do in other developed countries.

MR. HASKINS: So, okay, is there any prospect conservatives are going to turn the country into Scandinavian?

MS. HYMOWITZ: Not in my lifetime.

MR. HASKINS: Not in God's lifetime.

MS. HYMOWITZ: But let me answer the deeper point here.

MR. HASKINS: Yes.

MS. HYMOWITZ: Aside from the name-calling and partisanship, I guess the question in my mind is: Do we have any evidence that in this country the state can compensate for unstable families? We have no evidence for that. Very, very little evidence.

So, we can keep talking about more kinds of government programs like childcare. I think if you look at our school system and the impact of education on inequality, you would have to be fairly cynical about the prospect of government being able to substitute for more stable families. Just I don't see how that's possible.

MR. HASKINS: Andy?

MR. CHERLIN: Yes, we've had the Sexual Revolution. Yes, having children outside of marriage is much more acceptable than it used to be. But notice that college-educated Americans are not doing that.

MS. HYMOWITZ: Right.

MR. CHERLIN: That they're still marrying, that they're still having kids within marriage. Why is that? Is there any evidence that they've suddenly become more culturally conservative? I've not seen it. The reason they're not doing that is because they have a firm economic basis that they can see out in the future as supporting a stable marriage, and, therefore, despite all of this, they haven't changed their behavior very much. Sure culture is important, but this economic basis, this firm economic basis I think crucial for peoples' decision-making today.

MR. HASKINS: Ross?

MR. DOUTHAT: Well, should we just go to -- Jamelle, do you want to say anything and then I'll --

MR. HASKINS: Okay, that's fine, that's fine.

MR. BOUIE: Well, actually I've just lost my main idea. So, you talk and I will remember.

MR. DOUTHAT: So, three quick points.

One, to the Scandinavian point, yes, Scandinavia has subsidized daycare, but as we were saying earlier, Scandinavia also has many, many more intact two-parent families, it's just that for whatever reason, and there are deep cultural reasons there, marriage isn't the glue, it's just couples in Scandinavia stay together even if they aren't married in ways that couples in the United States don't. So, even if you had, and I think there are things you can do on the margin to help people with childcare, you're still

left with part of the divide between Scandinavia and here, that Scandinavian couples stay together more than American couples do.

The larger point on the Sexual Revolution, I do think there is some evidence that upper class Americans are more culturally conservative today. Again, this is in Brad's research, but if you ask well-educated Americans should divorce be harder to get, for instance, legally, the percentage saying yes has gone up. But on a number of questions and even on something like churchgoing, there's now a divide where upper middle class Americans, even though they're not wildly religious, are more likely to be in church on Sunday than the lower-class Americans. So, there is a cultural component.

Then on the broader Sexual Revolution question, I think it's useful in some ways to think of an analogy to the Industrial Revolution here, right? Yes, the Sexual Revolution was in many ways driven by technology in ways that we aren't going to change. We aren't going to go back to a world before the birth control pill was invented, but you don't want to be in a position of saying everything good that happened in the Sexual Revolution depends on everything bad that happened in it because then you're like the people in 1860s England who said look at the great wealth the Industrial Revolution has produced, therefore, we cannot have child labor laws that prevent us from sending 5-year-olds up to clean chimneys. That is, I think, the problem that cultural liberalism has ended up in the United States today and the desire, the admirable desire to preserve the very real gains to women that we've seen over the last 30 or 40 years across a range of issues. Cultural liberals are deeply resistant to the idea that any of the frankly negative social aspects of the Sexual Revolution can be addressed, it's just the world we have to live with because anything else would be a return to female disempowerment and I think that is a big mistake and now Jamelle can tell you why I'm wrong. (Laughter)

MR. BOUIE: No, I actually have a way more pessimistic point from that.

MR. HASKINS: That's all we need, more pessimism.

MR. BOUIE: More pessimism. So, in thinking about policy interventions and tax credits and everything we can do, I feel there is something that people are just reluctant to address and that is to a large degree Americans' attitudes towards distribution writ large have a lot to do with their attitudes towards race.

And, so, part of my pessimism and skepticism have a lot to do with the fact that it's still difficult in this country to propose any sort of targeted intervention that involves large sums of money without also running into sort of Americans' uneasiness with the idea of, to put it bluntly, giving money to brown people. And my broader pessimism about America is that I'm not sure if it's possible to have this sort of "Small-Government Egalitarianism" or working class welfare state in a very racially diverse, but not necessarily cohesive society.

MR. HASKINS: And on that happy note. (Laughter)

MR. BOUIE: That's totally awful.

MR. HASKINS: Please stay where you are. This panel is going to go down and the next panel is going to come up. Please join me in thanking the panel. (Applause)

(Recess)

MR. HASKINS: Okay, we're going to start. Thank you to the panel members. Belle, we're going to start. Thank you to the panel members for coming, and audience, please sit down. Audience in the back, sit down. I'm going to call names. Phil, sit down. Okay. So now, for more comment and I think some different perspectives, we have a wonderful panel. They're each going to make a brief opening statement and

then I'm going to ask them some questions, and then we'll give the audience and chance to ask questions.

We're going to start with Brad Wilcox who is one of the authors of the report. He's the director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, and he's a professor of Sociology there as well. He also wrote a book that I'm very fond of that some of you may want to look at called *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*. Brad was one of the main organizers of both the event and this report.

Belle Sawhill, my sidekick, who runs The Center on Children and Families and is a co-author of *A Great and Opportunity Society*, and Belle's also the president of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Unwanted Pregnancy, which is one of the sponsors of this report, and she's written a lot lately as you can tell by the counter out front on these issues.

David Lapp is a research associate with the Institute and this is -- Jared, this is the order in which we're going speak, so you get the last word. That was my intent for you to be the brilliant, last sum-er up of. For the Institute of American Values. He's also writing a book based on interviews with young adults and tentatively the book is called *Love Like Crazy, Looking for Marriage in Middle America* which, after all, is our issue here.

And then Jared Bernstein who's a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Many of you probably know him. Formerly he was the chief economist for the Vice-President of the United States and also the executive director, pertinent to this issue, of the White House Task Force on the Middle Class.

Each panelist is going to make an opening statement, and we'll start with Brad.

MR. WILCOX: Thank you, Ron. I wanted just to begin by sort of underlining two points that we are talking about here. One is what we call the great crossover, and our term here in indebted to some research that the National Center for Family and Marriage Research has done on this topic.

And the second kind of big concern we have here is the growing marriage divide in American life, whereas we talked about before, the college educated are doing pretty well when it comes to marriage and parenthood, and Americans who don't have a college degree are not doing so well.

But I think a fundamental question that still has been hanging over us, and you probably want to follow up on Andy Cherlin's comments today is well, does it really matter that marriage itself is no longer as powerful an institution when it comes to the rearing and the bearing of kids? Some scholars and journalists such as Kitty Rafee and Judith Stacy would say, "Well, so what. You know, kids can thrive in any number of family structures. It's time to stop wringing our hands 'over the decline of the family' and to celebrate the 'resourcefulness, energy, and intensity' of the new families in our midst."

Now, as the son of single mother, I can certainly acknowledge that many different types of families can do a great job at raising kids. But as a sociologist, I must admit that the odds of other families doing so are lower. We've talked a lot about family stability today, and I think family scholars from the left to the right who don't agree on much can agree that family stability matters for kids.

In his recent book, *The Marriage-Go-Round*, Andy Cherlin talks about how family instability is linked to a number of negative outcomes and says, "Stable, low-conflict families with two biological or adopted parents provide better environments for children, on average, than do other living arrangements." And I could quote chapter and verse on studies that are basically making that point, but I think we have to acknowledge

that the reality is that kids are more likely to experience instability in unmarried households, both in cohabiting and single-parent households, compared to households that are formed first through marriage.

In our report we find that kids born to both single mothers and to cohabiting parents are three times more likely to experience this type of relationship carousel compared to kids born to married parents.

Now, of course, part of the story here is economic, and part of the story here is you've got a different national context in the U.S. than we see in, say, Europe. But even in Sweden, kids who are born to cohabiting parents are 78 percent more likely to see their parents break up compared to kids born to married parents in Sweden. And even in Sweden there's a growing marriage divide between higher educated Swedes who are more likely to have their kids in marriage and less educated Swedes who are more likely to have their kids in cohabiting and single-parent contexts.

And I think what's happening, not just in the U.S. and in Sweden, but also places like Chile, is that there's this convergence of both economic and cultural forces that are allowing well educated and more privileged and powerful Westerners to get and stay married before they have kids, but this confluence of both economic and cultural forces isn't working out for other Americans.

Let me just quickly touch on the economic and cultural pieces for working class and poor Americans that we talked about. So, on the economic front, as Naomi Cahn and June Carbone were the authors of *Red Families v. Blue Families* point out, "for the approximately two-thirds of the population that does not have a college degree, an increasing number of men don't have the steady adequate-paying jobs that would allow them to provide the foundation for successful family life."

And we have a quote from David Lapp's project from an Ohio man, Chris, who is a welder, who, I think, kind of encapsulates nicely with the dynamic here. He said of his recent state of unemployment, "drove the final nail in the coffin of his relationship with a young woman that he was hoping to marry." He said, "I was depressed. I was bored out of my mind. No income, not able to do anything. It was basically just like hell." So, pretty evocative expression, story there, articulates this economic concern.

But there's also some important cultural work that's going on in our culture that I think is embedded here. And first, I want to say the rise of what Andy Cherlin has called the Capstone Model of Marriage, a model that suggests that adults must be capable of achieving a middle-class lifestyle and soul-mate relationship, and which minimizes the importance of connecting marriage and parenthood. This capstone or soul-mate model has made marriage less attainable, but also less necessary for Americans who don't have college degrees. This model sets a high bar for marriage, and minimizes marriage's classic connection to parenthood. It sort of creates a cultural space where it's acceptable to have kids when you're just kind of drifting into parenthood or choosing parenthood outside of marriage.

A second point here on the cultural front is that many young adults have experienced the divorce revolution up close and personal. They've seen their parents get divorced. They've seen their best friends' parents get divorced, and this experience up close and personal with divorce, as Kathy Eden and Maria Kefalas talk about in their book, *Promises I Can Keep*, has left many young adults gun shy about marriage and relationships more generally. This is part of the reason, too, why they are postponing or foregoing marriage, and of course, the divorce revolution, as we know, has hit poor working-class communities harder than it's hit college-educated communities.

One woman also from the Love and Marriage in Middle America Project kind of articulates this sort of growing cynicism about relationships in working-class America. She says "I just never felt that anyone's as loyal to me as I am to them. Even when I feel like I'm in a good relationship, there will be little things that they'll do that will make me start wondering do they really want to have my back?"

I've been struggling to think about her comment here is it's not just the bad guys who are giving her pause about marriage. It's the guys who she thinks are basically good. So, the point here is there's both an economic and a cultural story unfolding, and if you want to address this issue, want to sort of shore up the foundations of marriage in Middle-American life, we need to address both.

So, what concretely can be done? In my view, progressives are right to point to the importance of shoring up the economic foundations of marriage with things like infrastructure projects, better vocational training, and the elimination of marriage penalties. President Obama called, for instance, in his State of the Union Address, to "strengthen families by removing the financial deterrents to marriage for long-term couples." I also would call, as Roth Bell just called, for better child tax credits to shore up the economic foundations of life. And I would say that Republicans need to attend to these kinds of economic questions and to shore up economic opportunities for middle Americans if they wish to shore up not just the economic portions of middle America, but also their electoral fortunes moving ahead.

But culture also matters, as conservatives like Kathleen Parker has stressed. We need kind of a new ethic of parental responsibility for Americans of all incomes and all genders. Becoming a parent for both mothers and fathers is a big deal, arguably a bigger deal than getting married. Young adults owe it to their children to try to bring them into a home with two loving parents ready to support them and one another in

the exhausting, exhilarating, and quotidian adventure that is parented, and that's because at least in the United States, and I'd say also in Sweden, all the evidence points to marriage as the best venue for giving children the gift of a stable and secure home.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Belle.

MS. SAWHILL: Oh, I have so much I want to say, and so little time in which to say it, but let me take a crack. First of all, the big theme of this report was that it's a good thing that marriage is being delayed, but it's not such a good thing that childbearing is not being delayed. And the logic, to me, that hasn't been discussed a great deal so far, and in fact, way too little in my view, is there's an obvious solution to that, which is not that we try to get everybody married at age 22, but we get people to delay childbearing.

And as Barbara Bergman pointed out, we have had a revolution in birth control technologies. It's quite possible now to plan a family. It's quite possible to delay childbearing. You can't delay it forever, especially if you're a woman because there is a biological clock. But all of this discussion about what's the likely or the best response to this situation of the crossover seems to me to be thinking a lot more about how to make sure that people don't have children before they're ready, and we know from the data that most of these births that occur early are not intended. So, it's not like we're telling people don't have babies. We're just trying to align their own preferences better and give them the ability, the motivation, and the means to do that. That's sort of my point one.

My point two, I think, is to reiterate something that's already been said, but I just want to reinforce it, and that is that there is a new class divide in American society, and the fault line is increasingly not just income, not just education, but also family structure. And this means that if you're a less-advantaged kid, you're not only being born into a low-income family and a family whose parents are not very well

educated. That's always been true, but there's a new barrier or handicap that you face, which is you're being born into these families, into these households, where there's all this turmoil, where one parent may be absent. And even if they aren't, because there's all this cohabitation now, and I think Andy's point about cohabitation has been the major driver of this increase, and so it's not just about single parents anymore, but the new problem is turmoil. It's turnover, it's instability in the child's life. And the data on that have absolutely shocked me. You have new step-parents, grandparents, new half-siblings, step-siblings. You have what's called in the literature -- I hate the term, but multi-partnered fertility. And so, this is a new environment for kids.

Next point, it's a puzzle in my mind about economics verses culture. I don't think anybody wants to argue that one is the only thing that's going on here. They do interact in a nuanced way, as Kay and others said. But here's the puzzle in my mind. If the problem is men without jobs, men with earnings who are not growing, or even declining if they're less skilled, if we have a lack of marriageable men, then one solution to that from an economic perspective, and I underscore economic now, is those men need to get married. You know, marriage increases your income by a lot. Most women nowadays are working. A man who gets married is going to be much, much better off than a man that doesn't get married, so we can't say that the problem is just because -- the reason marriage has deteriorated or gone into retreat is just because of this economic reason unless you combine it with a couple of other points which are much more cultural.

And what you have to combine it with is this notion of capstone vs. cornerstone marriages. If marriages were still as they were in my day when I was young, a way that you got ahead in life, a way in which you combined your incomes to make life work, then of course, marriage would still make sense. But if marriage is a capstone,

something you only do once you've already succeeded, then this begins to solve my puzzle.

The other thing that solves my puzzle which was discussed on the earlier panel is this whole issue of changing gender attitudes. Maybe women have to get over this hang-up that they can't marry someone who isn't as successful as they are, and maybe men have to get over this hang-up that they have to always be bread winners. So, if you combine the economics with the shift in gender attitudes, then it begins to make a little more sense. Otherwise, it doesn't to me.

Next point -- I'm trying to think if was Jamelle or Andy. I think it was Andy who talked about outmoded notions of masculinity, and the fact that women are now going into male type jobs. It's okay for a girl to be like a boy, but the reverse is not okay. It's not okay for men to go into what were traditionally female dominated occupations. It's not all right for boys to act like girls. As he said, they get charged with being, you know, not masculine enough.

Now, I just want to add to that point that the other thing that hasn't changed enough is the division of labor within the family. If you're a woman and you're going to get married or contemplate getting married and having children, you know darn well that you're going to get stuck with more than half of the childcare, the house work, the organizing, the trips, the keeping of everybody's -- well, you know what it's all -- even arranging people's social lives. Still seems to be a woman's role, so until that changes, women are going to have a tendency to be cautious about getting married for fear they're going to not have the autonomy that in today's world they want to have.

I'll make one final point since I seem to have one minute or less left. Children cannot be a cornerstone. Children are not something that help you get ahead in life. Children should be a capstone. That means that if we want to move to a better

future, we have to go back to thinking about marriage or at least stable cohabitations as more of a cornerstone and think about children as more of a capstone, something you do only when you're ready and prepared to take the responsibility that, to my way of thinking, is the most important responsibility anyone ever takes on.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Belle. David.

MR. LAPP: Well, thank you. I'm glad to be here, and I want to use my time to reflect more on this question of the question of why. Looking at high school educated Americans who I call middle-Americans, in particular, why are middle-Americans delaying marriage? And I come at this question as a person who Ron mentioned, who along with my wife, Amber Lapp, has been interviewing college-educated and high school-educated young adults in one Ohio town about their views on marriage and their stories on forming families. This is young people ages 19 to 35, and we're writing the results in a book.

And I want to reflect on this question why are middle-Americans delaying marriage by reflecting on the story of one of the young men that I met, Ricky. Ricky, 27 years old when I met him, and one of the reasons that is much discussed for why middle-Americans are delaying marriage is, of course, the economic obstacles, and that is certainly true with Ricky's life. When I met him, he was unemployed. In the past, he had been a manager for Pizza Hut, Dominos, Papa Johns. He was a farm-equipment mechanic, a motorcycle mechanic. He'd worked various jobs in construction. He was working a lot of places.

He did tell me that a year before I met him, he worked what he described as a pretty good job, started out making $12.50 an hour as an Internet technical support advisor. However, unfortunately, he lost that job because he had a DUI incident and a hit and run incident, and he had to serve a couple months in jail.

So, I would add to the -- one of the things that the report brings out is that 46 percent of single men and 41 percent of cohabiting men report frequent drunkenness. Whereas if you're frequently drunk, this is a stronger chance that this is going to affect your performance at work, and you're going to have a higher likelihood of having some brushes with the law. And so that, as well as, I would say, drug abuse, also I think, helps us to understand why middle-Americans like Ricky are delaying marriage.

Nevertheless, despite those obstacles in Ricky's life, when I met him he was engaged for the fourth time, and he'd never been married. From his second engagement, he has one son whom he tries to see when he can, but his son lives with his mother in another state, so he doesn't get to see him very often.

His third engagement started with a co-worker of his at Pizza Hut. It started in a bathroom stall at Pizza Hut. The woman was 3 months pregnant at the time. It turned into something more. He was there in the delivery room for the birth of the child. They went back to his house. They set up the nursery in his house, and he was there for that child, helping to raise that child until the child was 2 years old. And something important you have to understand about Ricky is he loves kids. He told me, he said, "I usually think about kids before anything else."

However, this child-centeredness is not effecting how he thinks about marriage. In fact, he told me that he thinks that it's biased to say that if you're going to have kids, you should be married. Furthermore, he thinks that it's a bad reason to get married if you have kids. In other words, it may be something that's keeping him from getting married because he doesn't want to be seen as getting married just because I have kids.

So, this separation of marriage and children, I think, also helps us understand why young middle-Americans are delaying marriage even as they're starting a family, which was historically one of the reasons to get married.

So, Ricky meets Haley, who has become his fourth fiancé. They meet online, and when I met them they had a date and a venue for the wedding, and they were -- this important. They were going to get married even though Ricky said, "You know, I don't see a point with marriage. I want to get married, but I don't see a point with marriage. Why do I have to put it in paper?" he asks. "If I know that I'm going to be with them for the rest of my life and if I love them." He said it's kind of like contracts, and he said what good ever comes from contracts, really? You end of getting screwed in the long run.

Now, Ricky has good reasons to be skeptical of marriage. As a child he watched his dad, a factory supervisor, in a drunken stupor beat his mom. His parents divorced when he was nine. Then his mom remarried, then divorced, and remarried again. He doesn't know anyone within his extended family or circle of friends who has been married for a very long time with the exception of his great- grandparents and grandparents, old people. But I said, "Ricky, so you're skeptical of marriage and you have good reason to be skeptical of marriage, but you have a date -- you're engaged. You have a date. Why are you getting married?" He said, "I know. It doesn't really make sense, but I like the whole thought of what marriage is about." What's the whole thought of what marriage is about? It's about being there for each other. It's about improving each other. It's about being best friends. It's also, he said, "Living together, you can just get up and leave any time you want. There's no strings attached. Marriage is more of a bond." he said. And he wants that bond.

But I do think it's important that while Ricky, he may say, yes, I think that marriage is important for my life plan eventually, that aspiration for marriage is mixed with a kind of a skepticism because of what he's seen, and I think that's also important in helping us to understand why young middle-Americans are delaying marriage. So, it's not just that he has an aspiration for marriage and there's obstacles standing in his way, it's that he has a conflicted view of marriage. With few marriage models, he's skeptical, but he likes the idea.

So, what happened with Ricky and Haley? Well, I caught up with Ricky a year and a half later after I first talked to him, and they had not gotten married. In fact, they broke up. So, four broken engagements later, Ricky has completely given up on marriage and life-long love. He said, "Love is for suckers. It doesn't last. I'm just looking for a companion with whom I can have sex when I want." He was completely jaded. And, so how is this tough, tattooed, working-class guy taking this? Well, he writes about his pain in poems that he posts on Facebook. He says, "With those I've trusted, I'm disgusted. It feels like my heart is broke and rusted. Why does my heart always have to get broke? Is love some kind of joke?" Why is Ricky delaying marriage?

In addition to the reasons I stated earlier, there is a hidden part of the story here, and it's part of the story that you see when you read Ricky's poems. You see here a crisis of trust. He's been cheated on so many times in his relationships. In fact, his last fiancée, Haley, cheated on him with her daughter's father. And so, what I realized when I first talked to him he was having trouble trusting people, and by the end, he can't trust anyone. So, that's an important part of the story.

And I'll just end on this final note. Ricky never got married. He's 28 and he never got married, but he might as well have gone through several divorces. His

emotional state is the same, and there are children in his life who have seen somebody they started calling daddy disappear.

And so, one of the things that the report brings out is that, yes, delayed marriage is contributing to a lower divorce rate, but I'm not sure that's a good thing for middle-Americans because they're postponing marriage but they're doing everything but getting married. In fact, many of the cohabiting couples we talked to say they're basically married. But the cycle of instability in the breakups, these take a deep emotional toll on these young men and women, and I think we owe it to them to listen. And we owe it to the next generation of 20-somethings to empower them to write a better script, and better poems. (laughter) Sorry. That was mean.

MR. HASKINS: It was somewhat accurate though.

MR. LAPP: There was a lot of pain in there.

MR. BERNSTEIN: So, let me begin by being a little self-referential which is that I spend all my life these days talking about economic and social policy, very much in the spirit of all the big debates that everybody in this town knows very well. But the only time I ever talk about culture is when I'm on this stage with Ron and Belle and others. I think the last time I talked this much about culture and its impact on social policy was when I did a little bit of road trip debating Charles Murray which was actually really fun.

But my point is that I don't believe that the cultural side of these debates is at all alive and well in our social policy debate, although you certainly will find it on the op-ed pages and in some of the work that very accomplished scholars are doing like the folks we've heard from today. And I've come to the conclusion that culture is not very amenable to social policy. It's just not, at least in this country.

And I thought that Andy Cherlin's report on some of the largely failed interventions that he described, except for Oklahoma, just kind of amplified that belief for me. So, it doesn't mean that -- I could easily be wrong and it doesn't mean that we shouldn't talk about it, but I do find that to be a constant over decades, with one really important critical exception which some of the people on this stage have played a very important role in, and that's in reducing the teen birth rate which I'm sure is partly cultural, as well. And those interventions appear to me to have been uniquely successful and tremendously important because if there was almost one variable I'd want to bring down in this space, in this debate, it would be the teen birth rate because it's so bad for both the moms and the kids. So, I guess the picture isn't totally dark if you consider that, but it's largely, I think, pretty fruitless to think about using policy to manipulate culture.

Everything's been said. It's just that we all haven't had a chance to say it, so I'll try to be very brief because I'm just going to be repetitive and I don't like to do that, and it would be better to hear your questions.

But I think just one, of all my points, I think there was just one that hasn't been explored that much although David really kind of got into it in a really interesting and microscopic way. By the way, again, as I was listening to David's stories about Ricky, I had -- it seemed to turn up the volume on this thought that I just shared with you. I don't see where social policy obviously fits into that story. I just don't. I see where maybe therapy and I don't know, a lot of other things that you can think about that people like me don't maybe think enough about.

But reading the report, I was struck by this. Reading the report and looking at the trends, the head scratch for me is why so many people still get married. And I say that as someone who's happily married in case my wife ever hears this. But

when you look at why people have -- I'm not a historian of marriage and there are people in the room who are, so my view is why get married?

Well, historically, scale economies played a role. They got married, had a family, the helped till the farm and all that. Obviously, that's by the wayside. You got married so you could have a sexual partner. That's no longer relevant. Expectations? Very larger role of expectations, which has been very much diminished. Again, in the spirit of David's comments, these things can have generational accumulation, so expectations are that you follow your parents role, and as those roles kind of diminish over time, those expectations are significantly diminished. For commitment and bonding, and those are still probably real. And the other reason you get married is to raise kids together, and that seems to me to be still very alive. Of all the things I listed, that seems to be alive and well, although obviously, not a requirement.

Once you get married, why stay married? Well, lots of people didn't and divorce rates, I guess, have come down from something in the 50 percent to something in the 40 percent range, so perhaps there's some improvement there. But you stay married in part because the transition costs out of marriage can be steep, the contract. And if anything, those costs may have gone up a little bit. We're doing a little bit better, I think, of enforcing child support, for example. But I think if you sort of just write out a bunch of reasons why people get married and stay married, you might be more surprised at some of those trends that the paper is, at least, somewhat upset by are rising more quickly, and I guess I would ask the authors to think more about kind of a model for why we get married and stay married.

And finally, why do we care if people get married and stay married? And I think in the context of our discussion today, it has to do, of course, with the kids, and I'm totally signed on to Ron's point earlier that kids do do better with two parents.

And then I was just going to go into a whole shtick about marriage verses cohabitation, but that point has been made so much is all I'll say is I was pretty influenced by a paper by the Fragile Family Researchers. It was already now about 7 or 8 years old, but I remember reading this paper and I dug it up again for today. And it showed two things that I wanted to leave you with. One is there is a huge selection bias between married and cohabiting couples. If you simply just look at their characteristics, they're hugely different. The earnings of married couples, the share with earnings above $25,000 is 28 percent. The share for cohabiting couples was 6 percent. The share with less than high school education among married couples was 15%. Among cohabiting couples, it's 37 percent, and I could go on.

And that's why Belle made this point earlier that when you get married, your income goes up. I'm not so sure that's right. I think the kind of people who get married are the kind of people whose income goes up. So, you have to be very careful about selection bites. That's also been a critique of your and Ron's work, which I think is generally right, but you kind of go into the data set and you find the "success sequence," and my view is a lot of those folks would have followed that sequence anyway. So, I think you have to be careful about the selection -

MS. SAWHILL: My point, Jared, is much simpler. It's simply that you add a second income.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Well, that definitely is true. That -

MS. SAWHILL: That's all.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Okay.

MS. SAWHILL: That's all.

MR. BERNSTEIN: I cannot argue with that arithmetic. So, we care about people, about marriage, how they raise the kids, and the behavioral aspects, which

again, I thought the paper just kind of just blew by this a little bit. It's as if you have two parents and they're married, the behavioral outcomes are better for kids.

Well, actually, if you look at some of the statistical analysis -- this is one study, but I think there have been a few others that are showing the same thing. It is true that behavioral outcomes for kids are worse for married couples than cohabiting couples, but when you control for demographics, some of the differences I mentioned in selection bias, a third of it goes away. When you control for the economic differences, it all goes away. So, this just emphasizes the point that Andy and others were making, that the issue isn't marriage versus non-marriage, it's family stability and everyone said that, and I'll just underscore it. And I suspect that's where a better kind of bang for the buck in terms of outcomes would be given my cultural biases that I mentioned earlier. We should focus less on marriage and more on stable cohabitation.

MR. HASKINS: All right, so a couple of questions for the panel. I want to start out with this. Listen to this. United States should consider a comprehensive approach encompassing economic, educational, civic, and cultural initiatives to help 20-smething men and women figure out new ways to put the baby carriage after marriage. This is the conclusion of the report.

So, here's my question. This suggests something akin to all-out warfare that there's a huge national problem, and we would be much better off as country if we could address it. So, the first question is, do you agree with that? That this is a major national problem and that both public and private policy, communities and so forth, should address it? And if so, what would be the single-most important policy to do so? I'm going to start with you, Brad.

MR. WILCOX: Ron, obviously I agree with you that this is a -- and I'm not saying it's the most important challenge facing the country, but certainly one of the

most important challenges is sort of bridging this growing marriage divide in American life. And I would also agree with Jared that a lot of the challenges that we're addressing are not ones that can be directly handled by the instruments of public policy. So, this is a challenge that's sort of policy related, but it's also related to the culture and the civil society, and we have to think about it in a more holistic sense.

On the policy front, I think what I would want to do is to begin by addressing the marriage penalties embedded in many of our policies that are targeting low-income families. And this is something that President Obama himself has articulated as I mentioned before, and to do so for two reasons. One is that I think there might be some real material benefit for long-term couples and long-term families to doing this. But the second thing I think is, it would help us to begin to address this cultural question/issue in a way that debates about public policy often do. So, even though public policy in terms of just as a lever can have sometimes only a limited impact on families, our discussions and our debates about public policy related to the family I think can be enormously productive in helping to shape norms and expectations about American family life.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else want to weigh in? Jared?

MR. BERNSTEIN: I'll just say very briefly, I don't know if I would call this as large a problem as that paper suggests because I think it's a symptom of the economic problems that people have talked about so far this morning, particularly having to do with the quality of jobs, the availability of earnings, and employment for non-college educated workers. I would say, and I was talking to my friend, Gene Steuerle, and I asked him about to what extent do you think the marriage penalty is playing a role here? And Gene talked about the cliff effects in many of our low-income programs, so I think we're on a similar page there. But of course, if you want to extend phase-out ranges, then you're invoking budgetary costs.

MR. LAPP: I would just add that I agree that any discussion of policy solutions is really a discussion about what's happening on the margins because I think the big thing that we as a society have to confront is yes, about 80 percent of young people say that they aspire to marriage, but people's confidence is marriage is eroding, has eroded, and is eroding. And why should that not be the case given the kind of -- especially working class America given the high divorce rates and so forth? And so, I think that's one thing that our leaders in America, we have to realize the reality of this is that it's not just about moving some levers here and there so they can get their aspiration. It's that they want marriage, but what if it doesn't last?

MR. HASKINS: Belle, you want to add anything?

MS. SAWHILL: Yeah, first thing I want to say is I'm really in favor of all these economic policies that would improve life for those at the bottom. Everything that Jamelle talked about in terms of creating jobs and supporting low-wage work and child care and all that, all of that. I just don't believe it will have a big impact on marriage rates. I guess I don't think it's -- I think it is more cultural than economic. In fact, I could even argue that we don't even know the direction that will have, to the extent that people at the bottom, which includes a lot of women, by the way, are doing better than they actually just decide they can afford to live on their own. Andy mentioned this when he said sometimes when women get into economic trouble, they move in with people they shouldn't move in with.

Second point, I want to give you a shout-out, Ron. Ron did a debate with Stephanie Coontz in the *Economist* magazine which is one of the best short debates I've ever read. And I don't think we had it out on the table this morning, but we should have, and so I'm giving --

MR. HASKINS: I thought you'd be ashamed of it, so I didn't want to put in on the table.

MS. SAWHILL: So, I want to give a shout-out for it. I mean, as Ron knows, but some of you know, when we wrote our book together, *Creating an Opportunity Society*, this was the one chapter where we didn't agree and we had to say upfront why we didn't agree, and -

MR. BERNSTEIN: I'm sorry. What specifically is the argument here?

MS. SAWHILL: Oh, in the Economist magazine, it's a debate about the effects on children, of being married or being a single-parent family, and all the related issues.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Sorry.

MS. SAWHILL: That's all right. You brought up selection effects, Jared, and since you did, and I know that's an academic word, but this report I think is a great report. But this report doesn't sort out cause and effect, and they go in both directions, and I think all of the researchers who were involved in this know that, but we do need to be cautioned about that. And I've already told you what my main solution is here. I have nothing against reducing marriage penalties -

MR. HASKINS: Okay, don't give that solution.

MS. SAWHILL: Doing a whole lot of other things -

MR. HASKINS: Don't give it because I want to come to that right now. I want to make this a major question here. I want to end on something that we actually know a lot about, and we could do something, I think.

So, if you look at the numbers, if you look at the teenage pregnancy, the numbers are wonderful. Every year except two since '91 they're going down, down,

down, down. Now, let's look at the 20-somethings, and they're going up, up, up, up, up. And we, as Jared pointed out, wisely, we have a lot of programs. We have random assignment evidence for teenagers that they reduce pregnancy. Twenty-somethings, not so much. If we're going to do what you said, Belle, we need policies or something, a change in the civic culture, to what Brad said, that is going to reduce the births out-of-wedlock among 20-somethings. So, what are we going to do to reduce the birth rate among 20-somethings? Let start with you because you were the first to bring it up.

MS. SAWHILL: Well --

MR. HASKINS: You had some policies in mind.

MS. SAWHILL: Just to state the obvious, let's make sure that Medicaid is available, up the income scale to cover birth control. I think the most effective forms of birth control (a) are not very well known amongst these 20-somethings. We know that from data that the National Campaign has produced. They don't know about long-acting reversible contraceptives. They don't use them. They and their partners are still stuck on what I would say are the old-fashioned forms of contraception. But it's expensive. You've got to go to a doctor, and so first thing to do is reduce the access and the cost barriers. That's just a no-brainer to me.

Now, there's still a motivation piece. And I think that is more cultural and does require civic organizations to be involved and the rest of us, but I'd start there.

MR. HASKINS: That's just fine because Brad knows the solution for that. Tell us what it is, Brad.

MR. WILCOX: Well, I think part of the story here, too, is that we've had a very successful public campaign around teenage pregnancy, and people have gotten the message. It's not a good thing to do for both for themselves and for any kids that they might have in that context. And they've changed their behavior as a consequence of this

national campaign around teen pregnancy. And so, I think we need to have a similar campaign around unmarried, 20-something, child bearing because of the instability and the negative outcomes associated with this new demographic pattern that we're seeing emerge in our country.

MR. BERNSTEIN: So, I'm just -- you know a lot more about this than me, and I hope you're right, but I'm skeptical only because I just don't believe it's as simple as saying we're raising the age for our campaign. Our campaign used to stop at 19 and now it's 23, and -

MS. SAWHILL: Although we have.

MR. BERNSTEIN: I don't think it's shown much pay dirt.

MS. SAWHILL: Oh, give us another 10 years.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Ah, good. No, I want to be wrong about all this. I have only one -- more of a question than a point on this, and it's only tangentially related. I'm surprised, and again, you're a scholar of this work. So, you probably are speaking from things I -- well, I'm surprised that you argued, Belle, that so little is known about the impact of this kind of unmarried, less marriageable male phenomena. The impact of increasing, say, male earnings or employment opportunities on marriage, on the kind of outcomes we're talking about today. And I'm not saying you're wrong, but I think it would be really good for people to do research on that using longitudinal data.

MS. SAWHILL: Right.

MR. BERNSTEIN: To actually see if there is a relationship between men improving their economic status and the kinds of outcomes we're talking about. I thought there was more proof in that direction. Let me just finish --

MS. SAWHILL: We can have a longer conversation about that, but –

MR. BERNSTEIN: At least the fine line was well established. So, my dissertation's already, like, 3 decades old, and I did that, and I found that the sign went in the predicted direction, and it wasn't a tiny effect.

SPEAKER: And Bob Lerman's were good. (inaudible) Institute suggests that it goes both directions. That men's earnings predict their entry into marriage, but then also controlling for their earnings, men who get married make about 18 percent more than their similarly credentialed peers, so it's a chicken and egg kind of question.

MS. SAWHILL: Here's the confusion, very briefly, about that. If male earnings are not going up or are stagnating or declining, and women's earnings are continuing to go up quite strongly, and you don't look at the one relative to the other, you miss the story here.

SPEAKER: I had both in my work.

MR. HASKINS: David, you want to add anything to this?

MR. LAPP: Yeah, I would just add that there is -- I think the report points to this, that underlying middle-American and poor Americans, the fact that they don't consistently use contraception and so forth, underlying that I think is an ambivalence about -- I mean, I think a lot of them do. I mean, the work by Katherine (inaudible) and (inaudible) shows us that a lot of them do derive meaning from motherhood. And I know a lot of women that my wife, Amber, has talked to in Ohio, that they want -- having a family is something that is important for them eventually. And so, I think that no matter how much we put the contraception message out there, I think we're still not getting at, I think, an underlying kind of desire, and it's a very human desire. And it's desire. If you're young 20s, you're beautiful, you see a sexy guy and you want to have a family.

MS. SAWHILL: Take off your glasses and you'll be even more beautiful.

MR. HASKINS: That's not always true. That's not always true.

MS. SAWHILL: I couldn't resist.

MR. HASKINS: It's getting steamy up here.

MR. HASKINS: Let's get away from the panel here and go to the audience. Same cautions. Let's have quick questions, and we'll have several of them. Go ahead, right here on your left, yeah. There you go.

MR. CROUCH: The first panel mentioned this, but I know some of you all probably are experts on it, too, and can talk about it. By the way, my names John Crouch. I'm a divorce lawyer or, I guess, more accurately a busted cohabitation lawyer, and I'm with the Coalition for Divorce Reform. The HHS study that found no effects from relationship education programs, I was wondering (a) was it just that there programs don't help promote marriage and get unmarried people to marry, or do they also fail to increase marital quality and stability? Because for 15 years, I've been hearing about studies that say that programs like this moderately but consistently do help with marital quality and stability, and where does this new study fit in? Does it discredit everything before it? What's it mean?

SPEAKER: Well, Amy's right. I mean, there's most of the evidence for these programs that were designed to strengthen both unmarried and married relationships, primarily in communities that were inaugurated under the Bush administration have not worked out well, and the primary exception to that larger narrative is in Oklahoma. And so, the question that Ross raises is: can we scale these at the national level?

And frankly, I think the question is an open question, but of course, this same debate on the other side of the aisle happens around Head Start. There are some small targeted programs that work wonderfully for pre-school education and preparation, but as a whole, Head Start hasn't worked out all that well for kids across the country.

And so, I think if you're skeptical about these programs, you should be equally skeptical about the success of Head Start. But the bottom line response to your question is that the record is mixed, and I think we should have a certain degree of skepticism about the possibility of scaling these types of programs at the national level as we continue to kind of look at how they're playing out year after year for these couples.

MR. HASKINS: You can bring a little bit better resolution to your question by saying that most of the previous research and it was a large literature. It was reviewed by HHS in a very nice review paper with middle-class couples, and there, there were effects. They weren't huge, but across the studies, there were effects. This was the first time it had really been applied to low-income couples who generally can't afford this kind -- because most of the middle-class couples bought it themselves. So, the news on low-income couples is not encouraging with the exception of Oklahoma, but the previous literature on middle-class couples is marriage education and all, financing and all, that does appear to have some effect. Next question in the back, all the way in the back. Got to be quick.

MR. STEUERLE: Gene Steuerle from the Urban Institute. I want to re-engage this issue about whether economics matter, and sometimes signals combine. So, government sends a signal, there are hundreds of billions of dollars of marriage penalties on low-income people. There are hundreds of billions of dollars of marriage bonuses for higher-income people and older people, which is sort of a strange way to set up a system. Now, if five signals matter and you take away one, you might not find that changing the government's signal makes a huge effect, but do we still care about it?

And also, just related to this, do we care about it for equity reasons? If marriage is optional, and I can opt into the system when there's a bonus and opt out when there's a penalty, don't I have an advantage over people who believe in marriage

vows and might we also care about government policy for that reason, even if we're not sure of the economic effects?

MR. HASKINS: Jared, that was an economist speaking. What do you think?

MR. BERNSTEIN: I agree with that. I don't know how much, and maybe you know, I don't know how much research has really revealed that changes at the margin -- a one out of five -- has had the kind of impact that your question would suggest, but I think the logic is sound. And I will say, you and I testified recently on this whole issue of cliffs and the marriage disincentive and work disincentives in these programs and I thought the attitude of, at least most of the panel, especially the right leaning and the more Republican folks, it was like, yes, we think there's work disincentives and marriage disincentives in these programs, and we'll be damned if we're going to spend any more money to smooth out the phase-down. So, it does seem like a bit of a cul-de-sac there.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, over here.

MS. MORSE: Hi, I'm Jennifer Roback Morse from the Ruth Institute and I'm based in California. I just happened to be here for the day, and of course, we're all concerned about children. And at least in California, it's sex that makes babies, so if -

MR. HASKINS: We have that here, too.

MS. MORSE: Is that so? Good, I was just checking. So, I wanted to ask this panel and any of the panelists from the previous panel, if they're still in the room, do we have anything to say about the underlying sexual culture that's in the background of all of the things that we've talked about this morning? And do you have an opinion about whether the underlying sexual culture, whether it's contracepted or not

contracepted, is the underlying sexual culture a good thing or not a good thing? Anything anyone would care to say about that, I'd be interested in.

MR. LAPP: I think I was startled to see a bit of data, and it's from the national campaign, and it was -- I hope I'm getting this right. I think it was high school seniors, 87 percent of high school senior said that they wish that their parents would encourage them to wait to have sex at least until after high school. Now, here are teenagers saying, hey mom, hey dad, tell me to wait to have sex until I'm older. Jeepers. I think that there is a lot of -- I think there's more pain than we know because of the number of partners that people are cycling through. And many of the young adults that we're talking to in Ohio, they say, oh, yeah, well, of course, I think it would be best if we would have waited to have sex until marriage or something, but that doesn't happen anymore.

SPEAKER: I find that statistic impossible to believe, but I'd love to see it. I mean, when I try to talk to my 13-year-old daughter about that kind of thing, she just gets disgusted and doesn't want to have a conversation. But I actually think the question is a very good one and I worry a lot about the messages we're sending and the reluctance of parents to talk to their kids about it.

MR. WILCOX: I think that one thing I would add to this discussion is I think that some 20-somethings of the popular culture to the 20-something times is kind of almost kind of a Vegas period, like what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas and doesn't bleed over into your 30s, your 40s, and thereafter. And what I would like us to think about is when it comes to sex and relationships, to sort of say to 20-somethings, it really is a time when you should be serious, not when you should be getting married at that point, but you should sort of take your relationship seriously because they're consequential, not just in terms of having kids, but also in terms of your own future. And

if you're going to treat them well, take them seriously, your odds of forming and sustaining a strong marriage over the course of your life is going to be much better whereas if you kind of just treat it as a Vegas period, you're probably going to have a higher risk of having some difficulties later on down the road.

SPEAKER: Yeah, that's good.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, last question. Go ahead, right here.

SPEAKER: Okay, I'm trying to ask the question again. I think marriage was fundamentally a religious institution as it began. I'm struck by how that has not been a part. I have not read the study, but I'm struck by that not being a part of the conversation today. Would anyone like to respond to that?

SPEAKER: I just, very briefly, is that, Ross, I thought you talked about that in ways that seemed very resonant with precisely what you're saying, and was scratching his head about what the future holds in that regard, so I don't -- I'm not saying -

MR. HASKINS: He said it could go either way.

SPEAKER: I would say it is the case that we've talked a lot about the limits of public policy in this regard and the importance of sort of social signaling, parental signaling, and so on. And it is very clear that the most obvious source, historically and still at the present day, for that kind of signaling are religious communities and a sort of religious ideas about marriage. Now, it is the case that there are areas and regions, mostly in Northern Europe where it seems to be possible to have greater family stability without religious institutions providing that signaling, but we haven't, and to some extent in upper-class America, but we haven't achieved that in the country as a whole. I mean, I think it's useful. I'm sure Kay watches a lot of reality TV for her cultural commentary, but it is actually really useful to watch shows like *Teen Mom*, to watch shows -- there are all

these shows now like *Jersey Shore* geared to sort of the Vegas idea, and to compare them with sort of shows like *19 Kids and Counting*, the Duggars and their 19 kids, which are obviously sort of the two extremes of sort of attitudes toward those things. But I think in those extremes, you can see the incredibly different roles that sort of religious and cultural institutions and beliefs or the lack thereof can plan in 20-something lives.

MR. HASKINS: Brad, you've written a lot about religion. I'd like to hear your answer to her question.

MR. WILCOX: There are two important points to make here. One is when we talk about marriage, people often think it's just a religious thing. It's important for us to remember, this is sort of -- I would say it's a human thing. It's a civilizational thing. We see marriage in China, in India, in Egypt, in many different cultural and religious contexts. I think marriage emerges in these very different societies because it does provide a kind of stabilizing influence that connects parents to their kids, so it's an important, I think, qualifying point.

But in terms of our context and religion, both Amy and I have written about this. We are seeing kind of this wholesale retreat from institutions among working-class Americans. And I think that this is partly for economic reasons in both --

MR. HASKINS: Wait, wait, wait. When you say retreat, you mean that they're not willing to say marriage is the right thing and so forth?

MR. WILCOX: I'm just saying that for, I think, a number of reasons, working-class Americans, Americans who got a high school degree, for instance, particularly men, are becoming disconnected from institutions of work, religion, marriage, and civil society more generally. And this sort of crisis, working-class America, particularly working-class men, I think is partly about economics and partly about some major cultural changes in the last 40 years.

MS. SAWHILL: May I may one point about this? You know, there's a red/blue state divide on your question. The red states tend to be more religious than the blue states. Think south versus northeast. The red states have a lot more problems, if you will, single-parent families and so forth, unwed child bearing, than do the blue states. So, the blue states have basically secular, liberal attitudes, and more conservative behavior. And the red states have the reverse. It's kind of interesting.

SPEAKER: Yeah, goes the other way.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, and with that -- I don't know if that's optimistic, but thank you all for coming and joining us.

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