THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

THE 2020 AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY:
ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY, COVID-19, POLITICS, RACE, AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. REEVES: Good morning and thank you for joining us. Good morning for those of us who are watching it in the appropriate time zone, I should say, but welcome to everybody watching us from around the world. My name is Richard Reeves. I'm a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a very warm welcome to this joint event with our colleagues at the American Enterprise Institute and the founders and producers of the American Family Survey who you're about to hear from.

This is their 2020 launch of the American Family Survey. As you can imagine, this has been a particularly interesting year to look at the way in which American families are flourishing and surviving the pandemic, as well as the ongoing pressures that American families face in the modern world and the resilience that so many of those families are showing. So, again, a warm welcome.

I'm going to hand over very quickly now. You will hear from me again later as part of a panel that's going to be moderated by Karlyn Bowman, who is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. But I'm going to hand off now to the editor of the Deseret News, who inspired and founded the American Family Survey, and which I and Karlyn advise. And that's Doug Wilks. Doug is then going to introduce some colleagues who will present the main findings of the survey and then we're into the panel.

So, with that, welcome again, everybody. And Doug, welcome to you.

MR. WILKS: Thank you, Richard. Good to see everybody. I'm coming to you from Salt Lake City. I'll be brief this morning, so we can hear from our scholars and the folks that know what they're talking about.

We are, in fact, going to discuss the findings of the 6th Annual American Family Survey. The Deseret News began publishing in 1850. That was 170 years ago. And the territory of Deseret eventually became the state of Utah. And from our position here in the Intermountain West, we really believe we are the crossroads of the West with a clear view of that which is important to America. Namely, we believe that the family is the strength of a civil society and we're committed to understanding how societal changes are affecting the family and, conversely, how the strength of the family can lead and influence the country for good.

Utah is a leader in upward mobility and its economy continues to be among the best in the country. Interestingly, it has been one of the most resilient states, its economy, during the current

pandemic. And that's interesting to us. We believe it's because of its commitment to and focus on the family -- the men, the women, the children -- the different dynamics facing each as it relates to education, as it relates to their home life. And we have loved exploring that for the past six years.

As Richard said, this year has been tremendous and began formulating the different survey questions in January. And obviously, we had to keep redoing and redoing as we worked through the pandemic and social unrest and now we're into the election, obviously.

I'd like to personally thank Brigham Young University, both Brookings and the American Enterprise Institute, and the scholars we worked with in creating this survey. It's a tremendous effort. They're generous with their time and I think you'll find these findings fascinating.

So, let me turn it over to Jeremy Pope and Chris Karpowitz of Brigham Young University. We've been working them in for the entirety of this survey and they'll present the findings. But from the Deseret News, thank you. Every bit of the survey information for the past six years can be found on deseret.com, and I invite you to joint us there. Thanks. Jeremy and Chris?

MR. KARPOWITZ: Thanks, Doug. It's great to be here with everyone. My name is Chris Karpowitz and my colleague Jeremy Pope and I are the principal investigators for the American Family Survey. We've worked closely with our advisory board, many of whom are on this panel. And we're excited to share some results with you. I think Jeremy's going to share the slides.

And the American Family Survey, as Doug says, this is our sixth year. It was quite an adventure to put this survey together. We have a rich set of findings and we encourage everyone to go to deseret.com to see the full report. We want to highlight just a couple of key findings here and then we'll turn to some further discussion.

Over the last six years, we have surveyed 3,000 Americans about their experiences, and one of the first things that we ask them about each year is their relationship status. And so, we can see that since 2015, the percentage of Americans reporting that they are married has decreased by about 5 percentage points. And the percentage that they are in no relationship at all has increased by about 7 percentage points. Those cohabiting and those in a relationship but not cohabiting, those numbers have stayed relatively flat over the course of these past six years.

But we wanted to start here because I think this really sets the stage for the things that

we're going to talk about. Because one of the things we've seen is that families and relationships are a source -- can be, for many, a source of strength and a set of tools that allow Americans to be resilient in times of challenge.

Family can also help in other ways. One of the things we noticed in 2020 is that we saw a significant uptick in the percentage of respondents to our survey telling us that they were living with extended family members. And so part of what can happen, one way that I think families can be a source of strength is a place to be and a set of people to share a home with. And that can be true of the extended family, and certainly we saw that in 2020.

Each year of the American Family Survey we've also asked a series of questions about people's attitudes about marriage and about families. And I'll just highlight a couple here.

So, for example, we asked whether marriage is needed to create strong families or whether marriage makes families and children better off financially; or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, whether marriage is old-fashioned and out of date. You can see that over time, and including in 2020, there's a great deal of stability in public attitudes about these -- about marriage. On the whole, most Americans have fairly positive beliefs. What we're showing here is the percent of respondents who said they agreed or strongly agreed with these statements.

Over time, again, a lot of stability and mostly positive. We do see some evidence perhaps of a rise in the percentage of Americans saying that marriage is old-fashioned and out of date. And the other thing I would point to is that there are very large cohort effects here. So, older Americans are much more positive about marriage than younger Americans, sometimes to the tune of 20 to 30 percentage points.

So, we see stability over time, but differences between older and younger Americans in their beliefs about marriage. No fundamental differences, we think, in 2020, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Okay, so I think we can go on. We also asked Americans to tell us about what identities were important to them. We first asked this question in 2018 and we wanted to come back to it in 2020. And one of the things we see is that a 9-point uptick in the percent of Americans who said that their identity as parents is very or extremely important to them. Now, that particular question was only asked

of people who indicated earlier in the survey that they are parents, but among parents that parental identity, while very important in 2018, became even more important in 2020.

A slight uptick in the percent who said that their identity as a spouse or partner was important to them. So, certainly, the experience of 2020 seems to have primed the importance of these family relationships.

It's also primed the importance of politics and of race and ethnicity. So, those identities are less important to Americans or not important to a smaller percentage of Americans -- or are important, excuse me, to a smaller percentage of Americans than our identities as parents and spouses or partners. We do see an uptick in the importance of partisan identity and the importance of racial and ethnic identity.

And so I think this indicates that we are living in a unique moment, a moment that is priming those identities. It is a politicized moment. But it's also a moment where people are especially cognizant of their family relationships.

So, we also, given the events that occurred in March and April, one of the things we were interested in is to what extent those events are affecting families. And in some ways, many of the rhythms of family life, the activities that families say they engage in, didn't change a whole lot from earlier years.

But one of the things we asked about what discussion of politics and social events. And we saw an uptick over time in the percentage of respondents telling us that they were talking about politics and social events with their partners. And then we drilled down on that a little bit and asked whether or not American families had talked about Black Lives Matter or about police brutality with their families. And you can see that very large percentages of Americans say that they are doing that. Three-quarters of both Republicans and Democrats say they have had these conversations.

Of those who said yes to that question, that, yes, they had had those conversations, we then asked with whom? What family members are involved in these discussions? Most often those discussions are occurring with spouses or partners, but a great deal of the time with children, as well. And so issues of racial equality and issues of police brutality have been on the agenda for discussion by American families across the political spectrum.

Now, we'll see later that Republicans and Democrats disagree about important elements

of issues of racial equality, but they are talking about them in similar ways or at least in similar frequency. It is interesting that Democrats are slightly more likely than Republicans to say they are also having these conversations with extended family: parents or siblings, others with whom they're not necessarily living.

So, certainly, the events of this year are affecting family discussion and what's happening around the family dinner table. But we're also interested in the other events of 2020, most importantly the pandemic. And so I think we can move on to the next slide.

And we're interested in how the pandemic has affected the American family. As I indicated before, in some respects we were surprised at the stability over time. We've been asking for the last six years about a variety of family activities, and we didn't see massive changes in the percentage of Americans reporting each of those activities. But we did see interesting results with respect to other elements of family life.

So, one of the things we asked about, if we can move to the next slide, is whether or not the pandemic had made Americans appreciate their partner more or deepened their commitment to their relationship or whether, on the other hand, the pandemic had increased stress in their relationship or made them question the strength of their relationships. And here I think we see the sort of resilience that Richard was mentioning at the beginning of the panel.

Majorities of those who responded say that -- who are in relationships said that the pandemic experience had made them appreciate their partner more. Only 10 percent respondents disagreed with that statement.

Nearly a majority said that the experience of the pandemic had deepened their commitment to their relationship. And while a quarter of Americans said that the pandemic had increased stress, 45 percent disagreed with that notion and 62 percent said they disagreed that the pandemic had made them question the strength of their relationship. So, we do see resilience in relationships.

We also wondered about the extent to which quarantining and stay-at-home orders had prompted a wave of loneliness across the nation. And we had asked a series of questions that social psychologists often use to measure loneliness about whether individuals lack companionship, whether they feel left out, whether they feel isolated from others. As we summed responses to those three questions into a single index that we recoded to run from zero to one. So, zero means not lonely at all

and one means the most lonely possible given those three questions that we asked.

Interestingly enough, we didn't see any change in aggregate levels of loneliness between 2019 and 2020, despite the challenges of stay-at-home orders. In other years, however, what we saw was that loneliness was highly correlated with the presence or absence of a healthy relationship. People who told us that they were not in a relationship were simply far more likely to tell us that they were lonely than those who were married. And this is another way in which family, I think, can be seen as a source of potential strength and potential resilience in the face of very difficult times. And even in those difficult times, it's relationship status that seems to matter most for loneliness.

So, I'll turn the stage over to my colleague Jeremy to talk a little bit more about other elements of the results this year.

MR. POPE: My name is Jeremy Pope and I am a professor of political science at Brigham Young University. And I want to poke into the question a little bit of who is it exactly that is struggling? Because even though I certainly agree with everything that has been said so far, that largely what we see is resilience, the remaining question I suppose is, is the resilience everywhere or is it the case that there are pockets of people having trouble, having difficulty? I think it's worth being aware of those pockets, where they exist. And that is going to help us think about what policy responses are sensible, what government should be doing, how we should be reacting as a civil society.

One of the questions we asked people on the survey was whether or not they were failing as parents. And up here we put a graph that shows a wide range of different demographic groups to show that about one-fifth to one-third of the public believes that they are failing as parents under these coronavirus restrictions, under the difficulties of dealing with the virus. There's a whole set of things that are affecting Americans right now.

In one sense, I think this graph should be hopeful. Most people do not feel that they are failing as parents. But I think the thing that I'd like to highlight here is that the groups that do feel like they are, you know, a bit more likely to be failing as parents tend to be those that are experiencing either difficult relationships or other economic crises.

You see these top two columns, 35 percent of those who are simultaneously experiencing economic crisis. This is in the nature of being unable to pay a bill or being unable to visit or

doctor or something along those lines. And 33 percent of people whose relationship they believe is in trouble. They're more likely to be seeing this -- well, they're more likely to say that they're failing as parents than are any of these other groups. And I think that's because there are interaction effects for small groups in the -- and sometimes sizeable groups, inside of this coronavirus period. And we need to be taking this into consideration and thinking about these groups of people.

This particular table I want to put up is I think one of the most important in the report for understanding how there are interaction effects between your family life, your economic stability, and just this period. And they're difficult, they're not easy to tease out, but here are a few numbers that will help us put them into context.

A couple of the questions we asked and that Chris already mentioned, first, "The coronavirus pandemic has increased stress in my marriage"; or the second statement in the right-hand column, "The coronavirus pandemic has made me question the strength of my marriage." If you look at people that haven't experienced an economic crisis, it's around one-fifth that have increased stress and only about 1 in 10 that feel like they have questioned the strength of their marriage.

But if you're facing economic challenges, the number somewhere between doubles and triples. And I think this should be concerning to us. Now, not as many people face economic crises we learned somewhat in the past. We decided not to spend a lot of our time today, because we want to get to the panel quickly, discussing government support. But I'm just going to mention in passing people did indicate in the report that they received a significant amount of government support and so that helped.

But the people that were still experiencing an economic crisis of some sort, they're experiencing trouble. They're having difficulty. And that's who we should be concerned about.

Although that it broadly doesn't seem to be strongly connected to income, especially on this left-hand statement, "The coronavirus pandemic has increased stress in my marriage." There isn't much of a relationship between income.

There is a bit more of a relationship here on the right where, "The coronavirus has made me question the strength of my marriage." Lower-income people, that's people making less than, say, $40,000 a year, they do see this at significantly higher rates than middle-income and higher-income individuals.

And the number of people who lost income because of the coronavirus pandemic also show an effect where if you've lost income for yourself on your own or because your spouse or partner has lost income, that increases stress and it increases difficulty in your marriage. And I think this just highlights what seems to us to be going on during this pandemic, which is that most people are resilient, but there are pockets of people that are experiencing trouble and that's worth us paying attention to.

Let me turn now to some of those issues that Chris mentioned earlier, specifically those associated with race. This statement here at the top of this table, "Black families in America face obstacle that White families don't face." We put that statement in the context of families because, of course, this is the American Family Survey, and asked people whether or not they agreed or disagreed with that statement. A little over half of Americans agree with it. Only about a quarter disagree.

It's more interesting when you begin to break it down both by race and by partisanship. Black respondents agree with it about three-quarters of the time. Almost no Black respondents disagreed with it. One of out 10 is an extremely low number in survey research, so it's not a particularly common opinion among Black respondents.

Hispanics and Whites do see the world somewhat differently, but I'm going to skip down to the bottom two rows. I'm particularly going to highlight a just canyon of difference between Democrats and Republicans.

One of the other things that I sometimes write about is partisanship and policy and polarization. And you can find in the polarization world, a topic that everyone is interested in, all kinds of results about how Democrats and Republicans are polarized on some issue. Sometimes these distinctions will be something on the order of like 10 or 12 or even 20 points.

You see here there is, you know, approximately a 60-point canyon between Democrats and Republicans on agreeing with this statement that Black families in America face obstacles that White families don't. And there's just a -- I mean, there is a deep, deep divide on this question.

In a lot of ways, I'm the sort of person that says to people polarization is not nearly as significant or as well understood or as consistent in American life as most people think that it is. But this is definitely an exception to that rule. Democrats and Republicans on racial issues see the world incredibly differently.

You can get another take on this from this graph here that shows concern about race and family. In the left-hand panel we're focusing not on the question I just showed you about the statement, but just is racial inequality one of the most important issues facing the family at this particular time? And as you can see, whether we're looking at non-White respondents or White respondents, about a third of them think that it is. Whereas among Republicans the number is, again, negligible and it's just not a significant concern for them. They don't think that this is one of the most important issues facing families.

If we return to that question Black families face obstacles that White families don't, one of the things you see among Democrats and Republicans is that non-White respondents are actually slightly less likely to agree with this statement than are White respondents, at least among Democrats. Among Democrats, 85 percent of respondents agree with the statement that Black families face obstacles that White families don't; only 74 percent of non-White respondents. Those are still overwhelming numbers and they obviously dwarf anything that Republicans -- any number that the Republicans can come up with that agree with this statement. Again, it shows the gulf, but it also shows that White Democrats are, in many respects, sort of the core constituency for this view.

I want to talk about one final thing before we turn it over to the panel and get their take on both this and lots of other things that are in the survey that you can read about at deseret.com.

Parental concerns about sons and daughters. We've been interested in gender in the American Family Survey for a number of years and we wanted to look at just two things. The first one being how does the institution serve your sons or your daughters? I'm going to focus just on the table there for a second.

Broadly, I would say there is satisfaction with the judicial -- I'm sorry, not the judicial system, the education system, friend networks, and, to a lesser degree, sports or other clubs. People tend to be more satisfied than not with those things. There are differences for sons and daughters. Americans do believe that the educational system serves their daughters better.

With criminal justice, churches, and sports and other clubs, things of that nature, there are gender differences that I think are interesting, but just overall the numbers are lower. Certainly, sports is the area where people think that those institutions serve their sons well. And churches, not an enormous difference. People tend to think those serve their daughters well.

I'll close on this slide, which is looking at the criminal justice system by saying only about a third of the public thinks that it serves their children well. For Whites, if we look at the number that think that it serves their family or their children poorly, Whites think about 9 or 7 percent for their sons or their daughters, respectively, the criminal justice system serves them poorly. The numbers essentially double for Blacks, 17 to 14 percent.

And now I'll just show one final thing before I conclude. One of the things that we did on the survey this year was ask people a simple experiment. Are you worried or concerned about boys or girls? And we put people into three bins. We asked some people just are you worried about boys? We asked some people just are you worried about girls? Then we asked some people if you're worried about both.

And I think the experiment here is quite revealing that there is a latent concern about boys in the public that can only be accessed if you are, well, willing to ask the question in this way. People that were only asked about girls, 3 in 10 of those people are concerned about girls. People that were only asked about boys, the number is 45 percent. When we asked about both, you do see higher levels of concern than when we only asked about girls, but the norm of gender equality kicks in and you get essentially the same number across both. But when you ask the question in a nuanced way, one of the things that you quickly learn is that there is concern about boys out there.

I'll just close by expressing my thanks for being able to participate in this project and be able to work on it. I want to get to the panel.

Karlyn asked me right before the panel to just mention some of the results about how people want their kids to go into politics or if their kids could become President. I'll mention just that people are not interested in their kids doing that. Only about 12 percent of people would want their sons or their daughters to choose politics. There isn't a big gender difference on that particular question. But politics is clearly not something that people want their kids to go into.

One of the reasons Chris and I have done this survey for the past few years is to get political scientists to be more interested in the question of family and politics. And at least right now, that question about whether or not you want your kids to go into politics suggests people don't see as many, I don't know, good connections between politics and their family. But I hope that this survey can help, I

don't know, help us explore some of the ways in which politics and family interact. Thank you.

MS. BOWMAN: Thank you, Jeremy and Chris, for a wonderful, thoughtful, and concise presentation of this very rich survey.

We're now going to turn to our panelists and each of them will speak for five to seven minutes. We're going to begin with Brad Wilcox, a colleague of mine at AEI, a visiting fellow at AEI, and also the director of the National Marriage Project at UVA.

Then we'll turn to Richard Reeves, who you just met. Richard is, as he said, a senior fellow in the Economics Studies department of Brookings. He also directs their Project on the Future of the Middle Class and the Center on Children and Families.

And finally, we'll turn to Camille Busette, who has three appointments in Brookings: in Governance Studies, in Economic Studies, and also in the Metropolitan Policy Program. And she also directs the Project on Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion.

As I said, each of them will speak five to seven minutes. We want to be able to take your questions and you can do that by sending them by email to events@brookings.edu or using the Twitter hashtag #FamilyStudies.

Brad, we'll being with you.

MR. WILCOX: Thanks, Karlyn. I'm going to be sharing my screen here.

So, I think we've all been wondering about the ways in which COVID has affected marriage and family life in America. And this morning I'd like to just reflect on some of the ways in which this new survey, the American Family Survey, is giving us a kind of initial perspective on the impact of this pandemic on our families.

And before I begin, I want to also just say I think some people are wondering, you know, why marriage matters today. I mean, why is there a concern about the state of marriage, per se? And we've seen actually new work from John Iselin about the way in which actually marriage seems to matter even more in recent years financially for Americans. And I suspect as we kind of move out of the pandemic and the fallout of the pandemic sort of that financial piece will become even more important.

We see that, too, when it comes to life satisfaction from data from this survey we're talking about today, that kind of a gap between marrieds and unmarrieds is increasing in their odds of

being completely satisfied or not. So, again, as to why it's important to think about marriage in particular, I think that there is both a financial piece and a psychological piece that suggests that for Americans in general marriage matters and may be mattering even more and more as we kind of move out of this pandemic.

So, given that, how has COVID itself affected marriages today in America? Well, I think as we just heard from Jeremy and Chris, there's clear evidence from this survey that a substantial minority of American couples have been stressed out by this pandemic. And this stress is most likely to be registered by people who are afraid their financial fortunes have kind of gone down in the wake of COVID. So that's sort of one piece of bad news about marriage in America coming out of COVID.

I think the second big piece of bad news coming out of COVID is that we've seen a marked decline in weddings, an obvious decline in weddings. In 2020 so far, it's down overall about 10 percent in the states where we have data, states like Rhode Island, Florida, Arizona, Hawaii, et cetera. So, we have good initial evidence, not surprising evidence, that marriage has come down in 2020.

And my suspicion is that given all of the financial and social turmoil, given the fact that dating has been difficult during the lockdown, that we'll see sort of the net pattern for 2020 and 2021 in terms of marriages or weddings will be down compared to what we would have otherwise expected. And that's noteworthy because, of course, the marriage rate has never been lower in our nation's history than it has been in recent years. So, this, I think, is also a piece of bad news coming out of this pandemic.

But the news is not entirely bad. And we see looking at married Americans ages 18 to 55 is that a majority of them reported their marriage has become stronger, that they have a greater sense of appreciation for their spouse, that their sense of commitment has deepened. So, again, kind of in the face of times of trial and tribulation, we're seeing that for many Americans who are married they're kind of turning not away from their spouse, but towards their spouse for support, for counsel, for a sense of solidarity in these difficult and in some ways, you know, trying times.

And then when it comes to divorce there's been a lot of breathless media coverage around some cases of divorce kind of emerging out of the pandemic in the more affluent precincts of Manhattan and elsewhere. I've seen pieces in the New York Post, for instance. But whey you kind of look at people in general based upon this new survey, what it seems to suggest to us is the share of

married Americans who are saying that their marriage is in trouble has declined in 2020, in this pandemic.

And so, I suspect we'll see not only divorce coming down in 2002 when, of course, it's been more difficult to get divorced practically, but I think as we kind of look at the overall impact of this pandemic on divorce we'll see overall a decline in divorce. And we saw in the Great Recession is a decline in the middle of the Great Recession and then a slight uptick as that -- as people kind of sought divorces that they had sort of avoided in the middle of the last Great Recession. But then divorce came down again in 2013. So, I think kind of as you look over the next few years, we'll see that divorce is down overall compared to where it might have otherwise been.

So, you kind of put all these things together and I think the big picture here is that for Americans who are already on the marriage track, formally educated, the affluent, the religious, we're going to see marriage emerging stronger. And I think we're actually also going to see a greater share of babies being born in married unions just because of some of the dynamics of fertility and dating and whatnot, you know, amidst this pandemic and its fallout.

So, that's kind of the good news, big picture. But the bad news, I think, is that we're going to see a large minority of Americans, particularly the poor and the working class, finding marriage and family life harder to grasp amidst the financial and social fallout of this pandemic. And so I think only time will tell how much COVID's fallout will deepen the American marriage and family divide that many of us have been talking about in recent years.

So, that's my set of comments. And for those who'd like to see more on sort of this question, I'd encourage you to go to familystudies.org to get more commentary on this new survey and what it has to tell us about family life in America today. So, thanks, Karlyn.

MS. BOWMAN: Brad, thank you very much. And now we're going to turn to Richard Reeves. Richard has been very interested in one of the themes of this survey being a thing that Jeremy mentioned in his presentation, and that is how boys and girls are faring.

Richard, we'll turn it over to you.

MR. REEVES: Thanks, Karlyn. I'm also going to share my screen. I'm breaking one of my own rules, which is never us slides on a panel, but I'm inspired by Brad. I'm really hoping Camille doesn't have slides. Otherwise we're just killing people with slides.

You don't have slides, Camille? Okay, fine. So, I apologize in advance. Are these being shared okay? I do this so rarely that I want to check.

So, as Karlyn said, I'm actually working on a book-length project on issues around boys and men, especially boys and men of color and those from less advantaged backgrounds. And I was very interested in the gender module. There's lots in what's already been said that I hope we can get into, including Brad's idea that there'll be more babies because that's actually against what a lot of social scientists are suggesting, so maybe we'll get into that.

But I just want to focus my attention in the few minutes that I've got on the very interesting questions that are asked in the American Family Survey on how people feel boys and girls are doing, or rather what their prospects are. So, one of the questions is, this one, "I'm worried about girls or boys in the United States in general becoming successful adults." This is a general prospect question, how worried are you? And here and throughout most of the presentation here of the data I'm putting together those who either strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statements that I put in front of them.

So, you can see here that generally there's somewhat more worry about boys in the U.S. becoming successful adults than girls. It's not a huge gap, so please pay attention to what I've done with the axis here. But it's like a 7 percentage point gap. I think one of the most interesting things is that all of these general questions go the same way. In none of the questions does it really flip except for some subgroups.

But then you can do this interesting work where you can break by partisanship here. And here I'm using the question not about party, but about how you describe your politics. And I put together those who are conservative or very conservative, liberal or very liberal, and ignored the people are neither, and here you can see very big differences. You can really see that that overall story of more worry about boys in general is driven by conservatives. Half of self-identified conservatives are worried about boys in general becoming successful adults; much, much less concerned about girls. Whereas among the liberals the gap actually is much, much smaller and goes the other way. So, the liberals are slightly more worried in general about girls becoming more successful adults than about boys, whereas conservatives, it goes the other way.

And then you can also break by gender. I should say, of course, that these questions are only -- they're coded for those who have -- when we come on to the sons and daughters, those who have sons and daughters. But here we can also break by gender. And you can see that men are considerably more worried about boys than girls and more worried about boys than women are. There's not much gap among women. So, you're seeing these subgroups showing kind of differences. So, the overall story here is in general conservatives and men are pretty worried about boys by comparison to girls.

But then there's always an issue about how do you feel about things in general and how they feel about things in particular. And so I realized the fact that the survey also asks, "I'm worried about my daughter or son becoming a successful adult." Very often in the survey you'll see very different local and global results. Some years ago, this survey found that people thought that marriage in general was really weakening, but that their own marriage was getting stronger. And so there is this very common global/local issue in surveys, as I think most of us know.

And so I really like the fact we dig in here and we say, okay, what about your son, your daughter? And again, this is coded for those who have a daughter and/or son. So, some have one, some have both. And again, it's really strongly agree and somewhat more worried about my son becoming a successful adult than my daughter becoming a successful adult. Not quite as big a gap as we saw for general, but nonetheless, in the same direction. People are more worried about their sons.

But, again, you can break this by subgroup. And here I've picked out where the sort of interesting stories are. And again, by people's self-declared political affiliation, we see some differences again, but not necessarily perhaps the ones we'd expect. So, what we see is the conservatives are less worried in general -- less worried about their own daughters and sons; liberals more worried about their daughters and sons, and particularly worried about their sons, less worried about their daughters.

Remember, I'm going back up now, the liberals were more worried about girls in general, but they seem more worried about their own sons. In fact, half of liberals are worried about their sons becoming successful adults, which is exactly the same number of conservatives who are worried about boys in general. So, there's very interesting relationships. And actually you can really dig into that a bit further.

So, I'll skip ahead to the next subject which does this. This asks -- these are just liberals

and they're asked about girls and boys in general and then your own daughters and sons. And so you see this reversal. Whereas you ask liberals generally, they say I'm a bit more worried about girls, but you ask them specifically, they're quite a bit more worried about their own sons. And I think that's quite an interesting finding and it probably speaks a bit to this question that was addressed earlier about just how these questions are framed.

And my interpretation of this is actually there's quite a lot of liberals who kind of generally think there's a lot to do still around gender equality and a lot more to do for girls and women, which is true. But actually at a much more private level they're really worried about their own boys. And there's something of a dissonance perhaps between the kind of overall political commitments to continued work that needs to be done for girls and women, and their own really pretty deep concerns about their sons. But that was interesting.

And this question gets to resilience. So, again, the scales changed, so watch for that. And this is a question that's trying to get a grip on resilience. I mean, we're asking people about, again, their own sons and daughters. Is this like them, very much like them? And what we basically see here is a pretty consistent pattern that people think the girls are grittier to use the shorthand, that they don't give up as easily, they're not as discouraged, and so there's a lot more worry about boys on that front.

And then the last question I'll just dive into just to help get this conversation going is this question that Karlyn mentioned, which is, "I think my son or daughter could become President." Now, there are other, as Karlyn knows better than I, there are questions which -- would you like your son or daughter to become President? That's a slightly different question. This is could they become President?

And here we coded those who agree or who strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement that "I think my son/I think my daughter could become president? And they're reasonably low. You know, we're down to kind of one in four slightly more likely to say that their daughter could become president than their son, which is consistent with everything we've seen so far in the survey. But also striking given that the U.S. has never had a female president. But nonetheless, people think their daughter is a bit more likely.

But here we do some interesting gaps. I'll just do two, one by political affiliation.

Conservatives basically don't see any difference between their sons and daughters. Liberals more likely say their daughter is going to become president. And that's consistent with what we saw about liberals' worries about their son and liberals in particular saying that their daughters are more resilient, but also worried about girls in general. So there's this kind of interesting tension here.

And then there are some pretty big differences by race. So the same question, my son or daughter, and what we see here is that Black Americans are much more likely to agree that their son or daughter could become president, followed by Hispanics, followed by whites. In the case of white and Black respondents, more likely to say their daughter. These are not huge gaps, 4 or 5 percentage points, so I don't want to overstate them, but the trend is clear. Actually Hispanics goes the other way. So, Hispanics seem to be the only sizable racial group where they're more likely to say that their sons could become president than their daughters.

So, I want to thank Amber Smith for helping me pull all that together. And I'll stop sharing my screen now and hand it over to Camille.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thanks.

MS. BOWMAN: Camille, your turn.

MS. BUSETTE: Thanks, Richard, and thanks, Karlyn. It's just a pleasure to be here and to comment on this very, very interesting set of questions and results.

I found all of it incredibly fascinating, particularly given the fact that COVID is really such a stress point for families. So, I wanted to focus on a couple of things beyond what my fellow panelists have already focused on. And those are, first, this discussion about identities and principal identity. And then secondly, I wanted to move to this discussion about different attitudes about the hurdles that Black families face.

So, first, what I think is really interesting about this particular survey was that despite what we saw about the slightly increasing sense that marriage might be old-fashioned, parenting is increasingly very important to the respondents. And as we saw in the initial presentation, very high among Blacks and Latinos in that order, and high among Whites, as well, but not as high as among Blacks and Latinos.

You know, what I think might be happening here in particular for Blacks and Latinos is

that now that we are very deeply into the COVID era, parents are really being asked to fill a number of roles, and one of them is to be an educator. So, education during COVID has become very much a parental responsibility. And we know that for Blacks and Latinos they have been disproportionately affected by COVID and certainly disproportionately affected by the recession. And so their ability to be in there and also be an educator with their children is probably a source of stress, but it's also a sense of, you know, they have an obligation to really focus on that.

In addition, where you have school districts that are poorly serving students, and that, again, will likely be -- a lot of Blacks and Latinos will have experienced that they're having probably to make extra effort. So, this added to their parental responsibilities and so I don't think it's that surprising that they are really feeling like this is a really important part of their identity at the moment.

So, I did find this very interesting in general overall, like just the fact that parenting is increasingly important to respondents, because I think when we think of the concept of the family, the concept itself has changed over time. And we have families of all sorts and all sizes, all different kinds of compositions, you know, some married and some not. But there is a strong and enduring sense of the importance of being a parent, and I think that is certainly important for the well-being of all children and certainly for their economic prospects based on work that we've done at Brookings and that you have done at AEI. So, that's topic number one.

Topic number two is the different views of the hurdles that Black families face. And I thought it was particularly interesting that there was such a stark difference by party identification. And what struck me as interesting is that if you also look at some other polls that have been done around whether people think Blacks in general -- not Black families, but Blacks in general -- face hurdles that Whites do not face, just right after George Floyd's murder the number of Republicans who thought so was actually pretty high relative to where it had been before. But within two months, that dropped. And so that suggests that there was an elevation in the importance of that issue and sort of identification with that issue, concern for that issue, but then a drop off.

And what I think is really interesting in this particular study is that we're seeing kind of the consistency, particularly for Republicans, of not thinking that this is a particularly difficult problem for Black families or families. Black families do not face different hurdles necessarily. And so there's a lot of

conversation about that across parties, but I do think it'll be interesting to see how this issue ages over time, particularly because we assume they're going to be episodic moments of interest and popularity and incidents.

But for Black families, this distinction between what Republicans feel on this issue and what Democrats feel on this issue means that there are, you know, continued constraints to policy approaches to improving the well-being of Black families because policy tends to lag public opinion. And lots of implications for the racial wealth gap, particularly concerning given -- which I think is particularly concerning given the disparate impact of COVID and the ensuring recessions on Black families.

I'm going to stop there and go back to Karlyn.

MS. BOWMAN: Camille, thank you very much. We're getting some questions in and please send them through by email to Brookings Institution.

And we'll start with the first one. And I'm not sure that the survey spoke directly to this, but I wonder if each of you could speculate on the long-lasting effects on children due to the coronavirus pandemic. What are you seeing?

MR. REEVES: Well, I'm happy to go first. I think it depends on which children we're talking about. I think what we're going to see is that the pandemic will deepen already existing divides. And you can already see, I think, in some cases there are families who have been brought together by it, who have the resources, time, availability to really invest in their children, and, as Camille said, maybe take pride in that. I mean, the flip side of the position from some women, particularly mothers, to actually perhaps do less-paid work is to invest more in their kids. But they may have the luxury of being able to do that, which others don't have.

The schools districts that have gone remote only are disproportionately Black and Hispanic. And so I think -- and we know the kids who learn remotely, that the ones who go into it pretty strong academically do okay. The ones who go into it a bit weaker academically do even worse.

And so I think the -- I can easily imagine that for some young people they're going to emerge almost unscathed in some ways from this and others it will be life-definingly bad. And so I think I'm going to quote Camille from another event, which is I think from an equity point of view this is currently a disaster. So, I don't think we can generalize about kids actually.

MS. BOWMAN: Brad, your thoughts on that question?

MR. WILCOX: No, I think Richard is exactly right. And there's some new work we're doing here that's just said, you know, a majority of teens reporting their family has gotten closer since COVID. And we'll have that out later next month, but I think that's sort of in line with what Richard was saying. But I think, obviously, equity issues run in the opposite direction.

I wanted to clarify, in terms of births, what I am saying is that I think births are going to be down this year and next year, but I think the decline is going to be much more sort of marked among working class or maybe minority moms compared to more educated, affluent, White and Asian American moms. So, what that means kind of when you net it out, at least short term, is that I think we're going to see yet again a modest increase in the share of kids who are being raised in intact and married households, which is good news.

But my concern here is that sort of both COVID and the fallout is going to, at least temporarily, lead to a decline in both marriage and childbearing for working class, poor, and perhaps Black and Hispanic young adults. And that's -- as someone who thinks that generally speaking marriage and parenthood are good things, that is sort of cause for concern for me.

MS. BOWMAN: Camille, do you have anything additional to add to what Richard and Brad have said about this point?

MS. BUSETTE: No, I would just, you know, underscore Richard's point that sort of the equity impacts will be very differential depending on who you are. And I agree with Brad that, you know, for some families it's definitely -- for kids, it makes them much closer to their families. For others, you know, those experiencing violence, et cetera, within the household, it actually could be far worse.

MS. BOWMAN: Another question. This emailer asks whether or not the difficulties faced by families during the pandemic will spur Congress to work together to pass any pro-family policies, such as a fully refundable expanded tax credit, such as the American Family Act or federally funded parental leave? Are any of you optimistic about that prospect given the coronavirus?

MS. BUSETTE: I am actually. And, of course, this is very dependent on the makeup of Congress after the November election, but I do see paid family leave, the Child-Family Tax Credit as being candidates for some reform and some updating.

MS. BOWMAN: Brad or Richard, are you optimistic?

MR. WILCOX: Yeah. Well, I do certainly think that there is more interest among at least younger conservatives in both paid parental leave and in some kind of new child tax credit or child allowance. And we do see, I think, some support from Senator Romney's office, obviously, on that score. And I think potentially other senators, as well, like Josh Hawley, for some of these kinds of measures, Senator Ernst, as well. So, there's at least some, I think, push in some parts of the Republican Party to be more practically pro-family on the policy front. We'll see what happens next Congress.

MR. REEVES: I think the salience of it has just become so much greater that the odds have to be greater, right, if not now after all this.

But, Karlyn, do you mind if I just go back to Camille on one other point briefly?

MS. BOWMAN: Please do.

MR. REEVES: I think this point about race and the attitudes towards the barriers, particularly for Black Americans, is interesting. And I just wanted to run this past you, Camille.

So, my sense is that there was a moment when the issues facing Black Americans in particular kind of temporarily depolarized a bit. Right? There was a kind of a sense it'd become a bit more mainstream. It's sort of like, you know, Black Lives Matter and (inaudible). And I think some of the visceral nature of what we saw, it's a sense of you know what? Like, this is not a radical idea. Right? This is -- you know, a lot of just people of color in the centrist -- center, yeah, okay, hmm.

Even I can think about my own family, right, just we're an extended family going, yeah, okay, hmm, yeah. And then it repolarized again, almost to the point now where it's probably as if that -- it's become one of those issues where if you are a Republican, you have to think that way. And if you are a Democrat, you have to think -- it's almost -- is that a fair summary of the recent history of this, Camille?

MS. BUSETTE: You know, I think it is. And I think what it demonstrates, too, is, first of all, there was, as you mentioned, that visceral reaction, obviously to seeing somebody being murdered right in our very -- you know, in front of our very eyes. And I think most Americans were just like I don't really want to live in a world that looks like that. Right?

But then the implications of that from a policy perspective, which were I think spun differently, depending on what party you were in, I think led people to recognize that improving that

situation is going to require changes and that those changes might be changes that they are not certain they support. Right? And then at that point, you start to get, I think, the kind of schism that we are seeing, that's evidenced in this survey, but also evidenced in other surveys. They don't exactly ask exactly the same question about Black families, but talk about the hardships and challenges that Blacks face more generally.

So, I think when it starts to become real and you have to think about, you know, policy solutions and we all have had to address that, when we're talking about different reforms for police departments and that sort of thing, it becomes real and then people, I think, revert to their original opinions.

MS. BOWMAN: Thank you, Camille. We have only a very few minutes left and I want to thank the panelists for being so disciplined in their initial remarks. But I'd like to ask each of them if they have a final comment about the survey.

And as someone who's been an advisor on this survey from the beginning, I want to say how invaluable this survey is. It's just been a pleasure to work with Jeremy and Chris over the years and with the *Deseret News* on this project.

But final comments? And, Brad, I'll turn to you first and we'll go in the same order, and that will be the end of the program. Brad?

MR. WILCOX: Thanks, Karlyn, for helping us navigate this last section. I would choose this one basic, I think, insight that strikes me in looking at this most recent survey. And that is there's kind of a fundamental paradox unfolding from my vantage point, and that is that the share of Americans who are married, the share of Americans, particularly younger adults, who record kind of symbolic or practical importance to marriage has come down. And yet, I think practically, as I said before, the evidence from others that I've been reading lately is that marriage is mattering even more financially and then from this survey mattering even more potentially emotionally for Americans.

So, we're kind of in this sort of paradox moment where marriage has less purchase both symbolically and practically in our lives, and yet it seems like it may be mattering more, particularly coming out of a time when we're facing a great deal of economic and social and I think, unfortunately, political turmoil ahead of us.

MS. BOWMAN: Richard?

MR. REEVES: I partly agree with Brad here, but maybe extend it a little bit. I think that the survey shows the need for and hunger for a good relational quality of life, the centrality of relationships. As I think this is a cliché know in this moment, but this survey really turns that into a fact.

And so I do think that the things that people probably associate with marriage and family are being more valued. But that's true with, you know, extended families coming together, people having to spend time, as Camille said, with their children. It's the quality of your relationships.

And so I think that those things are traditional, you know, that people associate with marriage, but I think can obviously occur outside of marriage and don't necessarily occur in marriage. So, there's a kind of, to use your language, Brad, a familialism, just a general sense of like families, parents, people mattering is strong.

So, I think that that's kind of, in some ways, that's uncertain how that will play out. But if there's a kind of piece of hope, maybe it's that we're -- a broader recognition of how much our relationships matter.

MS. BOWMAN: Camille, I'll let you have the last word. But I want to remind everyone that you can see the results that we've talked about here today, the new survey, at deseret.com/afs.

Camille, the final word.

MS. BUSETTE: I would agree with my colleagues. And also, this is just a fascinating set of results. But I think what -- the picture that's clear here is that families are very resilient, particularly during COVID. And I think the fact that they have been so focused on their families means that there is an interesting foundation upon which to pursue pro-family policies in the next few years.

MS. BOWMAN: Thank you very much. Thank all of you for tuning into this program. And please read the full report. It's a wonderful survey. Thank you very much.

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