



# **The Roundtable**

on Religion and Social Welfare Policy

## **Marriage Promotion**

### **Will It Work?**

By Claire Hughes

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### INTRODUCTION

A marriage movement is underway, as efforts to promote marriage, strengthen two-parent families and reduce divorce gain momentum around the country. Every state in the nation, to varying degrees, has made a policy change or initiated an activity to achieve one of these goals since the mid-1990s, according to a new report from the Center for Law and Social Policy.<sup>2</sup> Non-profit organizations and religious institutions across the country are starting marriage education programs or creating the foundations to establish community marriage initiatives. And two years after President Bush proposed his Healthy Marriage Initiative, the federal government is poised to spend \$1.5 billion over five years to jumpstart that marriage promotion program, if Congress approves the measure as part of the bill to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash-assistance program.

And yet, no one can say with certainty how the government should effectively put marriage education and promotion programs into place, or if those programs will achieve their desired goals—including alleviating poverty and improving children’s wellbeing.

When TANF was created with the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (the Welfare Reform Act), the legislation established four goals related to strengthening families and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies.<sup>3</sup> Yet states’ efforts to achieve the aim of moving people off the welfare rolls and into the workforce have been more widely touted and successful—in part because the workforce goals were clearer and a network of job training agencies was already in place.<sup>4</sup> There was no such infrastructure ready to launch efforts to strengthen marriage and two-parent families. Two recent studies published in the journal *Demography* have, in fact, shown that welfare reform has done little to encourage two-parent families: one study concludes that welfare reform may actually have

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decreased the incentives for single mothers to get married;<sup>5</sup> another that changes to the welfare system in the 1990s had little if any effect in deterring women from becoming single parents.<sup>6</sup>

The government has reached out to the faith-based community for help. States like Oklahoma and Louisiana have enlisted the commitment of religious leaders in their efforts to combat high divorce rates. Last year, the federal government launched the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative to address the problem of high divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births in the black community; the initiative has directly appealed to church leaders, as evidenced by a May conference in Chicago that focused on pastors' role in increasing marriage rates.<sup>7</sup> Community marriage initiatives with faith-based partners are being created across the country. And church leaders from coast to coast are working to form coalitions positioned to take advantage of an influx of federal funds, if the current TANF proposal is approved.<sup>8</sup>

But will the efforts work? Will they succeed in bringing and keeping couples together? Will they improve the wellbeing of children as well as their parents?

And how should the initiatives be implemented? Who should provide the training? Who should receive it?

Scholars, journalists and various advocacy groups have raised these questions and a host of others about the government's marriage promotion initiative, including: Is it government's role to promote marriage? Should tax dollars be spent on marriage training programs when government resources are shrinking? Would poor people be better served by other programs, such as those that make them more likely to get a job?

President Bush first announced the federal government's interest in promoting marriage in February 2002. Among groups closely watching the issue, the effort has sparked enthusiastic support and vehement criticism.

In addition, the government's interest in partnering with faith-based institutions to promote marriage poses other concerns: Are faith-based groups effective at delivering marriage education programs? Will the low-income groups targeted for such programs attend them? How far should a government-sponsored program, even one led by a faith-based organization, go beyond teaching secular skills like conflict resolution and parental disciplining techniques?

## BACKGROUND

President Bush first announced the federal government's interest in promoting marriage in February 2002. The Administration's Healthy Marriage Initiative received little public notice until it rose briefly into prominence in January, when

a New York Times piece spawned a series of other articles and editorials. It then was quickly overshadowed by the tempest over proposals to create a Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

Among groups closely watching the issue, the effort has sparked enthusiastic support and vehement criticism. Proponents, like the National Fatherhood Initiative and the Institute for American Values, say marriage creates benefits to both individuals and society, including an improvement in children's welfare and the creation of wealth, that warrant government's involvement. They and other supporters of the initiative rationalize that government becomes deeply involved in a host of ways in the aftermath of failed marriages, so why not act earlier in prevention? Opponents, particularly feminist advocacy groups like the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, argue that marriage promotion could encourage women to stay in abusive relationships and that it disparages single parents who are working hard to raise healthy children despite sparse resources. They and other critics also contend marriage is part of a private realm that the government should not venture into.

**It is widely believed that marriage benefits both children and adults. Despite recognized advantages, the institution of marriage has for decades been on shaky ground.**

Some argue that the Bush Administration's initiative ignores the complexities of life among the poor, urban Americans it is targeting. At a conference on "The Marriage Movement and the Black Church" hosted by the Brookings Institution on June 2, Rev. Leslie Braxton of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Seattle said he believes the president means well, but doesn't understand the scope of the issue.

"He lives in a simplified world that's not simple," Braxton said. "There's more he needs to learn."<sup>9</sup>

Despite these differing views, it is widely believed that marriage benefits both children and adults. The National Survey of America's Families by the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute provides evidence that marriage provides some stability and protects mothers and children from hardship.<sup>10</sup> Various studies have shown that children who live with both biological parents tend to fare better at school and stay in school longer, and are less likely to grow up in poverty, abuse drugs or alcohol, end up in jail or become a teen parent. Children may also benefit from the increased financial stability of their parents. As for adults, research has shown they are more productive on the job, earn more, save more, are healthier and live longer, if they're married.<sup>11</sup> A study released in September 2003 by Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution showed that increasing marriage rates would have more effect on reducing poverty than raising levels of education would—though it would not reduce poverty as much as increasing hours on the job.<sup>12</sup>

Still, despite those recognized advantages, the institution of marriage has for decades been on shaky ground. American families long ago diverged from the norm of the two-biological-parent household to include single-parent and blended families. More than 40 percent of first marriages in America result in divorce within 15 years, according to the National Fatherhood Initiative. One-third of all American children are now born out-of-wedlock.

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Some argue the wider social acceptance of different kinds of households, including the separation of marriage from parenting, is an irreversible trend. Others feel it is the role of the government to step in and attempt to counter the drift from traditional marriage--because it benefits society to do so.

“Government's very much involved in dealing with the fallout from family disruption,” said Don Winstead, Deputy Assistant

Secretary for Human Services Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, in a March interview with The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy. “Many government programs are involved in what happens when there's a failure of families -- the child support enforcement program, certainly the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, and child welfare programs. Government is involved in many ways with what's going on in families and really has an interest in building stronger families.”<sup>13</sup>

## **HOW SHOULD MARRIAGE PROMOTION PROGRAMS BE IMPLEMENTED: CONSIDERATIONS FROM RESEARCH**

Government programs have for decades sought, at best, merely to pick up the pieces of failed marriages, note Robert E. Rector and Melissa G. Pardue of the Washington, D.C.-based Heritage Foundation in a March paper supporting the Healthy Marriage Initiative. At worst, the government has undermined marriage with ill-considered policies, Rector and Pardue state. Family income is often the basis of determining benefits through government programs, including TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, child care subsidies, housing assistance and the Earned Income Tax Credit. That can create a disincentive for a second wage-earner to join the family, researchers have noted.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to eliminating such disincentives, the government must consider other realities of life among the poor, unmarried, primarily young parents it is targeting in its marriage promotion activities. The population may pose specific challenges for implementing successful marriage programs, which are now largely targeted to middle- income people, note Karen S. Seefeldt and Pamela J. Smock of the University of Michigan. Using data gleaned from other studies, they point out that one or more partners in these families frequently have children from other

relationships, and that they are often interested in marriage only after they have achieved some economic security.<sup>15</sup>

Several recent studies have taken a look at the targeted low-income population, with some unexpected results:

- The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, by researchers at Princeton and Columbia universities, has found unwed parents generally have strong bonds at the time of the children's birth—contrary to stereotypes that these couples' relationships are more casual. Most of these parents, however, live at or below the federal poverty level, are generally younger and much more likely to have children by multiple partners than married parents. The researchers' initial findings lead them to suggest that the time around a child's birth may offer a “magic moment”—or window of opportunity—for reaching parents with interventions.<sup>16</sup>

However, the study's examination of children three years after birth shows no initial evidence that marriage has any significant positive effects on children.<sup>17</sup> The study is the first national study of unmarried, urban parents and their children's well-being. Researchers interviewed parents of 4,900 children at the time of birth, then revisit them one year, three years and five years later; they hope to be funded to continue the study until the children are 21.

- A study of unmarried parents in Louisiana, however, found that the so-called “magic moment” may be shorter than the national study so far suggests. Fragile Families In Focus, a study of poor, unwed, largely African American couples identified through the state's food stamp caseload, found that although 70 percent of 2,000 poor, unmarried couples had cohabiting or at least exclusive relationships at the time of their children's birth, only 40 percent of the relationships survived the stresses of parenthood five months later. Researchers therefore suggested that interventions aimed at improving children's well-being be directed at individual parents as well as couples. More poor, unwed parents expressed interest in services to help them find employment, increase earnings or get along better with the other parent of their child than in marriage education, the study also found.<sup>18</sup>
- In a study of African American urban youth age 16-20 living in households with annual incomes less than \$25,000, Motivational Educational Entertainment Productions found poor, young people had little hope for their futures and few role models of successful, committed relationships. As a result, MEE reported in “This is My Reality: The Price

of Sex” that young adults were not willing to postpone sex until marriage because they did not see marriage as a reality.<sup>19</sup>

A number of other studies have used the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing data to draw conclusions about unmarried parents in the nation’s cities. Among them were those presented at a recent Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families:

- Rector and Kirk Johnson of The Heritage Foundation concluded that marriage promotion programs often reach participants too late -- after a child is already born. One suggested solution for reaching couples earlier is to introduce marriage promotion programs at the 4,000 Title X birth-control clinics that serve 4 million people annually, Rector said. Marriage education should also be coupled with employment retention programs to improve marriage retention, the researchers determined.<sup>20</sup>
- Cynthia Osborne of Princeton determined that economic factors are critical in parents' making the transition from merely visiting each other to getting married. Other factors influencing marriage among low-income unmarried parents are relationship quality, attitudes about marriage, and distrust between men and women, she found.<sup>21</sup>
- Maureen Waller of Cornell University used the data and her own interviews to determine that parents delayed marriage when they perceived a high likelihood of divorce.<sup>22</sup>
- Research by Marcia Carlson and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn of Columbia University, along with Sara S. McLanahan, principal investigator of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, showed a higher investment of time by the father resulted in lower behavioral problems among children.<sup>23</sup>

For many, marriage remains an ideal, despite the realities of their lives. Nonetheless, expectations of marriage promotion programs should remain realistic.

For many of the couples surveyed in the studies, marriage remains an ideal, despite the realities of their lives. In both the national and Louisiana studies of fragile families, a majority of mothers and fathers said they believe marriage is beneficial to children.<sup>24</sup> In the national study, 74 percent of unmarried mothers and a full 90 percent of unmarried fathers said they had a 50 percent chance or better of marrying the baby’s other parent someday.<sup>25</sup> Nearly four in five young people surveyed for “This is My Reality” said they believed they would marry someday, though they describe that day as being well into future, when they’ve gained financial stability.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, McLanahan cautions that expectations of marriage promotion programs should remain realistic. Despite a stated interest in marriage, only 11 percent of participants in the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study end up married after a year. When researchers made adjustments to give unmarried parents in the study the same levels of supportiveness, low conflict and higher trust as married parents, it turned out only 16 percent of them would have married after one year.

“These programs shouldn't be oversold or people are going to be very disappointed,” McLanahan said. “Most of these couples never marry.”<sup>27</sup>

## **WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMS: ISSUES SURROUNDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

The studies highlight questions not only about the timing of proposed marriage promotion interventions, but also who is most likely to benefit from such training and what organizations would most effectively offer it. Among unmarried parents who expressed interest in relationship and marriage services, the Louisiana study found that they felt least comfortable receiving those services from the most likely points of access—the local welfare office, public health department, hospital or clinic. They felt most comfortable with the idea of receiving them through a faith-based organization or a program identified by a pastor or minister.

**Unmarried parents who expressed interest in relationship and marriage services felt most comfortable receiving them through a faith-based organization.**

Across the country, state- and community-based marriage initiatives have attempted to enlist religious leaders. Some state-sponsored programs, such as those in Oklahoma and Louisiana, have directly enlisted the cooperation of faith-based groups.<sup>28</sup> In some areas, as with New Jerseyans for Healthy Marriages, Children and Families and the Bay Area Healthy Marriage Initiative in northern California, religious leaders themselves are leading coalitions to promote marriage.

In fact, one soon-to-be-published study suggests that community marriage initiatives may be most successful when they include a religious element. Divorce rates have dropped faster in communities that have a Marriage Savers Community Marriage Policy developed by clergy, according to an upcoming report by the Utah-based Institute for Research and Evaluation. Marriage Savers was founded on the premise that religious leaders could do more to strengthen marriage than others since 86 percent of marriages occur in churches.<sup>29</sup>

Several pastors have expressed that the church – not the government – should take the lead in discussions about healthy marriages. But integrating faith-based groups into such efforts – given the lack of familiarity and trust many have with government – can be a challenge.

At recent national conferences focusing on the involvement of black churches in promoting healthy marriages, several pastors expressed that the church—not the government—should take the lead in this discussion.<sup>30</sup> But others also cautioned that religious leaders should not assume they can address the problem of high divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births on their own, however. In a recent interview with the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, Rev. Dion Evans, who has led the Bay Area Healthy Marriage Initiative in Oakland, Ca., said some churchgoers are reluctant to receive marriage education services through their houses of worship due to a desire to protect their privacy among their peers.<sup>31</sup>

Integrating faith-based organizations into community-based initiatives can also be a challenge to marriage initiatives, according to Mike Fishman of The Lewin Group, a Virginia-based human services consulting firm. In many regions, faith-based institutions and other nonprofit organizations have little experience working with each other, Fishman told attendees at the Welfare Research and Evaluation conference.<sup>32</sup>

Lack of familiarity and trust between faith groups and the government can be another challenge, especially in black communities where some African American pastors have grown wary of partnering with the government, according to Robert M. Franklin, professor of social ethics at Emory University. Many of them, believing they have not always fared well from government intervention, are looking for assistance in promoting marriage, but on their own terms, Franklin told attendees of ACF’s Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference in late May.<sup>33</sup> Rev. Michael Nabors of the New Calvary Baptist Church in Detroit told attendees at the June 2 conference on The Marriage Movement and the Black Church that African American churches must maintain their identities primarily as spiritual entities.

“We’re not responsible for running social programs,” Nabors said. “We’re responsible for making sure the people who run those programs do it right.”<sup>34</sup>

In a 2002 paper, W. Bradford Wilcox, an assistant sociology professor at the University of Virginia, argues that it is religious institutions themselves that need to more vigorously reach out to unmarried parents who are attending services each week.<sup>35</sup> Using data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, Wilcox notes that urban mothers who attend church are much more likely to be married than those who don’t, and that unwed mothers who attend church are more likely than others to be married within a year of their children’s births. While acknowledging a likely selection effect in the findings—women who believe more strongly in marriage may be more likely to seek out religious institutions that reinforce their beliefs—Wilcox maintains nonetheless that lack of

support for marriage from churches would only further contribute to a decline in marriage rates.

The federal government, on the other hand, should not mandate specific marriage programs for the states or be directly involved in offering programs that promote marriage, Wilcox concludes, because it is poorly equipped to cultivate virtue among citizens. Instead, it should work to reduce economic factors, like joblessness, that contribute to a decline in marriage and leave marriage promotion experiments to state, religious and other civic initiatives.

Other organizations would also like government to leave marriage in others' domain. The NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, a feminist group that is one of the most vocal critics of the Bush Administration's Healthy Marriage Initiative, opposes marriage promotion as a part of TANF for several reasons: First, according to NOW, it diverts funds from more direct efforts to combat poverty, including helping people to find jobs. Second, despite the government's assurances that there are safeguards in the system to prevent programs from encouraging women to remain in bad relationships, NOW argues that government pressure could coerce women into even dangerous marriages through powerful incentives. Third, the initiative reduces states' flexibility in how to spend TANF dollars, NOW claims. Fourth, it encourages women to be dependent on men.

In addition to concerns over entering the politically sensitive arena of private relationships, program implementation was hampered by state and local policymakers' lack of knowledge as to what works and what doesn't in marriage education.

## **WANTED: MORE INFORMATION**

Challenges to program implementation are not limited to whether and how the religious community should be involved. Lack of information has been a hindrance to government-sponsored programs since the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. In a study for the Rockefeller Institute of Government that showed wide divergence in the degree to which states had implemented the family formation policies of the 1996 welfare reform legislation, Deborah A. Orth and Malcolm L. Goggin found that in addition to concerns over entering the politically sensitive arena of private relationships, program implementation was hampered by state and local policymakers' lack of knowledge as to what works and what doesn't in marriage education.<sup>36</sup>

There has, in fact, been little experience in the area to help answer their questions. In a survey of current programs, Washington, D.C.-based Mathematica Policy

Research found none serving low-income families with unwed parents that addressed the couples' relationship. Instead, programs tend to focus on the mother's or the father's role in a child's development.<sup>37</sup> The institution has been funded by ACF, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to identify factors important in designing, implementing and evaluating programs targeted toward strengthening unwed-parent families and to encourage the development of these programs.

Noting a number of challenges to implementing marriage programs for low-income people, Seefeldt and Smock of the University of Michigan argue that further research must focus on the low-income population targeted for such programs, including studies on the role low-income men play in family life, and the influence race and ethnicity have on family formation.<sup>38</sup>

Several projects to evaluate marriage education and promotion programs are underway. But it may be some time before anyone can say definitively whether marriage programs are working.

At the June 2 Brookings Institution conference on "The Marriage Movement and the Black Church," participants called for more research to be done on the strengths of African American marriages, including military couples, who have higher marriage rates than their civilian counterparts.

Several projects to evaluate marriage education and promotion programs are underway. MDRC, for example, is leading a nine-year, multi-site project launched by ACF to measure the effectiveness of programs aimed at improving relationship skills among low-income people. Researchers are currently defining the study's parameters, and have yet to

begin formal site selection, according to project director Virginia W. Knox. RTI International and the Urban Institute are heading a study of seven sites where ACF has approved Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives through Section 1115 child support demonstration waivers. Researchers intend to look at the impact of such programs on marriage, child wellbeing and child support among low-income families.

In addition, HHS has announced a \$4.5 million, five-year grant for an organization to create The Healthy Marriage Resource Center. The center is envisioned as a clearinghouse for storing and disseminating education, information, and research related to the topic of healthy marriage.

But to date, the lack of information on which marriage promotion programs work and why has left the government's healthy marriage initiative open to criticism. In arguing against the government's involvement in marriage, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund points to the fact that there is no marriage promotion program proven to help alleviate poverty or improve marriage rates. Isabel Sawhill, president of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and a senior fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institution, has also voiced concerns about spending billions of dollars on programs without a proven

track record. She has argued before Congress in favor of working to reduce teen pregnancy rates before putting resources into marriage promotion.<sup>39</sup>

It may be some time before anyone can say definitively whether marriage programs are working. Mathematica's work in helping to develop and then evaluate emerging programs is scheduled to continue through 2011. As researchers there concluded in a November progress report: "We are only at the beginning of learning what works to help unwed parents reach their aspirations for a healthy marriage and family."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Hughes is a writer for the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, a project of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. The author acknowledges Roundtable Washington Correspondent Anne Farris for her contributions in reporting on presentations at two national conferences, which are included herein; Rockefeller Institute Director Dr. Richard Nathan for his advice in framing this paper; and Roundtable Project Director David Wright for his comments on earlier drafts.

<sup>2</sup> Ooms, Theodora, Stacey Bouchet, and Mary Parke (2004). *Beyond Marriage Licenses: Efforts in States to Strengthen Marriage and Two-Parent Families* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy).

<sup>3</sup> See Orth, Deborah A. and Malcolm L. Goggin (2003). *How States and Counties Have Responded to the Family Policy Goals of Welfare Reform* (Albany, NY: The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government). The four goals are: (1) Provide assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; (4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

<sup>4</sup> Orth and Goggin.

<sup>5</sup> Bitler, Marianne, Jonah B. Gelbach, Hilary Williamson Hoynes and Madeline Zavodny. "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Marriage and Divorce." *Demography* 41.2 (2004): 213-236.

<sup>6</sup> Fitzgerald, John M. and David Christopher Ribar. "Welfare Reform and Female Headship." *Demography* 41.2 (2004): 213-236.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) conference: "Why Marriage Matters: The Role of Faith Based and Community Organizations." Chicago: May 14-15, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> As gleaned through presentations and interviews at the AAHMI conference, Chicago: May 14-15, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> From remarks during a panel discussion at the Brookings Institution's "The Marriage Movement and the Black Church" conference. Washington, D.C. June 2, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.urban.org/content/IssuesInFocus/MakingMarriageWork/Marriage.htm> for a summary of the Urban Institute's work on marriage and links to research papers.

<sup>11</sup> See National Fatherhood Initiative, Institute for Marriage and Public Policy and Institute for American Values, *Can Government Strengthen Marriage? Evidence from the Social Sciences* (released February 17, 2004) for a summary of some of the research supporting marriage.

<sup>12</sup> Haskins, Ron, and Isabel Sawhill (2003). *Work and Marriage: The Way to End Poverty and Welfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution). Policy brief available at [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu).

<sup>13</sup> See an edited transcript of the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy's interview with Don Winstead at [www.religionandsocialpolicy.org](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org).

<sup>14</sup> Rector, Robert E., and Melissa G. Pardue (2004). *Understanding the President's Healthy Marriage Initiative* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation). Available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/family/bg1741.cfm>

- <sup>15</sup> Seefeldt, Kristin S., and Pamela J. Smock (2004). *Marriage on the Public Policy Agenda: What Do Policy Makers Need to Know from Research?* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: National Poverty Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan). Available at [http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/working\\_papers/](http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/working_papers/)
- <sup>16</sup> McLanahan, Sara, Irwin Garfinkel, Nancy Reichman, Julien Teitler, Marcia Carlson, and Christina Norland Audigier (2003). *The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Baseline National Report* (Princeton, NJ: Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University).
- <sup>17</sup> See an edited transcript of the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy's interview with Sara McLanahan at [http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/interviews/interview\\_with\\_Sara\\_McLanahan.html](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/interviews/interview_with_Sara_McLanahan.html)
- <sup>18</sup> Mincy, Ron, Hillard Pouncy, Dana Reichert, and Phil Richardson (2004). *Fragile Families in Focus: A Look at How Never-Married, Low-Income Parents Perceive Marriage and Relationships*, Executive Summary (Baton Rouge, La.: State of Louisiana TANF Executive Office Division of Administration). Available at <http://www.state.la.us/tanf/fragfam.htm>
- <sup>19</sup> Motivational Educational Entertainment (2004). *This is My Reality: The Price of Sex, An Inside Look at Black Urban Youth Sexuality and the Role of Media* (Philadelphia, Pa., MEE Productions Inc.).
- <sup>20</sup> Rector, Robert, and Kirk Johnson. "Why Low Income Couples Marry: The Role of Attitudes, Skills and Income," presentation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference. Washington, D.C. May 26-28, 2004.
- <sup>21</sup> Osborne, Cynthia. "Do All Unmarried Parents Marry and Separate for the Same Reasons? Union Transitions of Unmarried Parents," presentation at the ACF Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference.
- <sup>22</sup> Waller, Maureen, and Elizabeth Peters. "Perceptions of Divorce as a Barrier to Marriage," presentation at the ACF Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference.
- <sup>23</sup> Carlson, Marcia, Sara McLanahan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. "Fathers' Investments and Children's Behavior," presentation at the ACF Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference.
- <sup>24</sup> McLanahan, Garfinkel, Reichman, Teitler, Carlson, and Audigier, p. 7. Mincy, Pouncy, Reichert, and Richardson, p. 11.
- <sup>25</sup> McLanahan, Garfinkel, Reichman, Teitler, Carlson, and Audigier, p. 8.
- <sup>26</sup> Motivational Educational Entertainment, pp. 59-60.
- <sup>27</sup> See Roundtable interview with McLanahan.
- <sup>28</sup> See Ooms, Bouchet, and Parke for a state-by-state description of marriage programs.
- <sup>29</sup> Birch, Paul James, Stan E. Weed, and Joseph Olsen (forthcoming). "Divorce Rates in Community Marriage Policy Counties: Assessing the Impact of Community Marriage Policies on County Divorce Rates" accepted for publication in *Family Relations* (Blackwell Publishing for the National Council on Family Relations).
- <sup>30</sup> Based on presentations and interviews at the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) conference in Chicago, May 14-15, 2004, and the Brookings Institution's "The Marriage Movement and the Black Church" conference, June 2, 2004, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>31</sup> See the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy's interview with Rev. Dion Evans at <http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/interviews/interview.cfm?id=63&pageMode=featured>

<sup>32</sup> Fishman, Mike. “Implementing and Supporting Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives,” presentation at the ACF Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference

<sup>33</sup> From remarks at the Opening Plenary Roundtable on “Low Income Families and Marriage Policy,” at the ACF Welfare Research & Evaluation Conference.

<sup>34</sup> From remarks during a panel discussion at the Brookings Institution’s “The Marriage Movement and the Black Church” conference.

<sup>35</sup> Wilcox, W. Bradford (2002). “Then Comes Marriage? Religion, Race, and Marriage in Urban America” (Philadelphia, Pa.: Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania).

<sup>36</sup> Orth and Goggin, pp. 18-23.

<sup>37</sup> Dion, M. Robin, Barbara Devaney, and Alan M. Hershey (2003) “Toward Interventions to Strengthen Relationships and Support Healthy Marriage Among Unwed New Parents” prepared for *Vision 2004: What is the Future of Marriage?* National Council on Family Relations 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Nov. 2003, Washington, D.C.

<sup>38</sup> Seefeldt and Smock, pp. 25-31.

<sup>39</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, “Issues in TANF Reauthorization: Building Stronger Families,” (released May 16, 2002), Statement of Isabel V. Sawhill, testimony before the Senate Finance Committee.

<sup>40</sup> Dion, Devaney and Hershey, p. 12.