



Mission: to strengthen marriages, support parents and families, and promote child well-being by raising public awareness, developing sound public policy and advocating for promising practices throughout Florida.

Barriers to Marriage A White Paper Regarding Social, Cultural and Economic Barriers to Marriage in the United States

The context and patterns of American marriage have changed dramatically in the last half century. Though a vast majority of Americans value marriage and openly express an interest in getting married, many couples particularly low-income couples, will never realize this dream. This paper examines some of the economic, social and cultural barriers these couples face and the policy alternatives that may help overcome these barriers so more couples will marry and maintain healthy marriage relationships over time.

Introduction

Marriage is more popular in the United States than in other comparable industrialized countries. Americans are more likely to marry and to identify marriage as an ideal or a lifetime goal (Cherlin, 2005). In Florida, a statewide survey found that 92 percent of Florida residents agree or strongly agree that “a happy healthy marriage is one of the most important things in life” (Karney, Garvan and Thomas, 2003). Still marriage can be a difficult goal to achieve for some couples. Data on low-income, urban couples from the Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study indicates that 86 percent of unmarried mothers and 91 percent of unmarried fathers that were living together at the time their children were born had plans to marry. Among visiting parents, 82 percent of mothers and 84 percent of fathers had plans to marry or move in together. Despite their high hopes, only a handful of parents actually married within a year of the child’s birth. Of those who were in romantic relationships, only 11 percent married while 32 percent broke up within a year (Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, 2003). For many low-income couples, marriage remains an unrealized goal. Research on children and families has increasingly emphasized barriers to marriage facing couples and how these barriers have influenced family formation and living arrangements for American families. Much of this research has been conducted to determine effects on child well-being. While some of these barriers are economic, more of the barriers frequently cited by researchers are cultural and social.

I. Economic Barriers to Marriage

Research has consistently shown that low-income couples hold marriage in higher esteem and often in more traditional ideals than their middle-class counterparts (Edin and Reed, 2005). Still, many low-income couples face economic barriers to marriage.

Low Earnings and Employment among Unskilled Men: Declines in men’s employment and earnings have long been regarded as a primary explanation for falling marriage rates among low-income couples. One researcher blames marital delay among those with low-incomes on men’s delayed entry into full-time, stable employment (Oppenheimer, 2003). In nearly all surveys that have been analyzed, stable male employment and earnings boost marriage rates for the population as a whole, though there is some debate over their effect on cohabiters (Clarkberg, 1999; Koball, 1998; Nock, 1998; Oppenheimer, Kalmijn and Lim, 1997; Smock and Manning, 1997; Sassler and McNally, 2005; Brines and Joyner, 1999). This implies marriage promotion strategies should include the enhancement of earnings and stable employment of low-income couples. In sum, quantitative data show that men’s education, employment, job stability, and income do make a difference in transitions to marriage.

Increasing Employment among Unskilled Women: Over the past 30 years there has been sharp growth in the earnings of women in America. Further, the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and welfare reform lured or pushed a large number of low-income women into the workforce (Lichter and Jayakody, 2002). While some studies hold that women's employment, hours of work, earnings, or potential earnings do delay marriage (Blau, Kahn and Waldfogel, 2000; Cready, Fossett and Kiecolt, 1997; Lloyd and South, 1996), others find no such effect (Manning and Smock, 1995; McLaughlin and Lichter, 1997; Raley, 1996). Sweeney suggests that the differences in these findings may be due to women's economic positions changing over time. She finds that while women's earnings might have reduced marriage rates among earlier cohorts – women now in their early to mid-fifties – they have increased marriage rates among a more recent cohort, those now in their early to mid-forties. Qualitative research offers some clues on why higher employment and earnings among women may promote their marriage rates. In a series of interviews with low-income Philadelphia mothers, Edin and Kefalas found most women would not get married if they had to rely on a man's earnings. Rather, these women wanted an equal partnership with men and to be economically self-sufficient prior to marriage and in case of divorce (Edin and Kefalas, 2005).

The Welfare State and the “Marriage Tax”: Though the American welfare state has grown dramatically since 1935, it has also been scaled back consistently since 1996. Research regarding the effects of welfare receipt on marriage varies. Researchers from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study found welfare receipt's effects on marriage to be modest and temporary. Mothers who received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) are less likely to marry following their child's birth, but this effect is confined to the period when a woman is receiving welfare. By the time their children are 18 years old, the proportion of mothers who would marry would differ little by whether they have ever received TANF (Fragile Families Research Brief, 2006). Murray posits welfare as a disincentive for marriage and that a generous social safety net is responsible for low marriage rates among the poor. He also finds that single mothers who marry their children's father lose some of their welfare benefits; working like a marriage “tax” for these mothers. Hence, many single mothers have the incentive to remain unmarried (Murray, 1984). Another researcher, Moffitt, reviewed literature on the disincentive effects of the welfare system. Moffitt found a significant, yet surprisingly small, dampening effect of welfare benefits on marriage rates. Moffitt concludes that welfare does not appear to be capable of explaining most of the long-term trend of increasing numbers of female-headed families in the United States (Moffitt, 2002). McLanahan and Sandefur make similar claims in their 1994 book, *Growing up with a Single Parent: What Helps, What Hurts*. Many low-income persons simply believe they are too far below the economic bar to contemplate marriage (Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Gibson-Davis, Edin and McLanahan, 2005). Mothers and fathers in these studies do not even cite items like the Earned Income Tax Credit as a barrier to marriage.

II. Cultural and Social Barriers to Marriage

Researchers have cited a number of social and cultural barriers to marriage that hinder marriage in a variety of ways.

Relationship Quality: The ability to nurture a relationship is hampered by such stressors as poverty, unplanned pregnancies, criminal histories, substance abuse and other risk factors. When present, these factors hinder couples from having trusting and supportive relationships. Perceived relationship quality – specifically, a partner's supportiveness – and mothers' trust of men are both significant predictors of marriage. Many disadvantaged women have had children in the context of romantic, yet low quality relationships (Amato and Rogers, 1999; Kurz, 1995; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000). Several quantitative studies lend credence to the idea that low relationship quality is a barrier to marriage. Higher relationship quality would boost marriage rates more than would a significant increase in the fathers' earnings (McLanahan, Carlson, and Furstenberg, 2004).

Aversion to Divorce: Some authors have noted that low-income couples are less accepting of divorce than college-educated couples (Edin and Reed, 2005). This occurs even though low-income couples experience higher divorce rates than their college-educated counterparts (Sayer, Wright and Edin, 2003; Martin, 2002).

Still, there is no analysis that directly assesses whether fear of divorce is affecting marriage rates for low-income couples. Other researchers using Fragile Families data found couples with characteristics that make them more likely to divorce are less likely to marry. This is true even if these couples have characteristics strongly associated with their getting married such as higher education and incomes (Gibson-Davis, Edin and McLanahan, 2005). In general, couples are more likely to divorce if they are younger; less educated, and report serious conflict or abuse in their relationships. Other studies conclude that unmarried parents delay marriage when they perceive a high risk of divorce (Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Edin, 2000).

Decline of Marriage as an Institution: Some researchers have expressed concerns that marriage has become just another option and does not hold its previous prestige as an institution (Cherlin, 2004). Though nearly all Americans, whether low-income or well-to-do, hold marriage as an ideal, today marriage is increasingly optional. To a greater extent than ever before, individuals can choose whether to become single parents, cohabit or marry (Cherlin, 2005). Other researchers cite the availability of having sex without a marital commitment as the top reason given for not getting married by a sample of professional-level men aged 25 to 35 (Popenoe and Dafoe-Whitehead, 2004). These researchers also credit the rise in cohabitation with having an effect on the declining view of marriage.

Changing Social Norms and the Separation of Marriage from Childbearing: The 1960s and 1970s witnessed technological and social revolutions in the practice of birth control and what society generally thought of engaging in sex outside of marriage. One researcher suggests that the sexual revolution, technological breakthroughs in birth control like the pill, and the emergence of abortion, had the effect of separating the traditional relationship between marriage and childbearing (Nock, 2005). As an institution, Nock asserts marriage simply could not adapt well to these phenomena. This is reflected in part by seismic increases in the percentage of out-of-wedlock births in the United States. Other authors have cited cultural changes that made it more acceptable to have sex outside of marriage, cohabit without marriage, divorce, and have children outside of marriage (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001).

A Lack of Marriageable Men: In the 1980s a number of researchers began espousing difficulties women, low-income in particular, were having finding men who were “marriage material.” Wilson and Neckerman (1987) speculated that the erosion of low-income Black men’s earnings has made them less attractive marriage partners. This argument has been applied to less educated and low-income couples more broadly, as the earning power of high school educated men has declined from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, with more educated men faring better (Oppenheimer, 2000; Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey, 2003). In a recent policy forum conducted by The Brookings Institution, one panel participant cited the great disparity of available Black females to males and that Black males are more likely to marry outside their race than other groups (The Brookings Institution, 2006). Coupled with disproportionately high incarceration rates, declining male earnings may have led Black women to opt out of marriage. According to a study by Western and McLanahan (2000), the high rate of incarceration of low-income men is one of the factors leading to a rise in single-parent households in economically distressed communities. Without question, increasing incarceration rates are affecting America’s marriages and families. The number of individuals in the nation’s prisons has increased dramatically over the last decade, from 850,000 inmates in 1992 to 1.4 million inmates in 2002. As a result, more and more families are now affected by the incarceration of a parent or a spouse (Elk-Szekely, 2004).

Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Data from the Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study indicate that unmarried, single mothers and fathers have rates of depression significantly higher than married parents. In a sample of 3,489 low-income participants from urban settings, 15 percent of unmarried mothers and 10 percent of unmarried fathers suffered from clinical depression; contrasted with 9 and 7 percent reported for married parents. Further, 7 percent of unmarried mothers and 16 percent of unmarried fathers reported substance abuse issues versus 2 percent of married mothers and 9 percent for married fathers (Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, 2003).

Domestic Violence and Trust: Similarly, researchers have historically reported that violence is much more common among unmarried parents than married parents. Nine percent of the parents surveyed in the Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study reported being hit, slapped, or seriously hurt by the father as compared to only 3 percent of married mothers. These mothers cited this as one reason for not marrying the fathers of their children. In a study of over 130 low-income women in Philadelphia, Edin reported that many women had experienced abuse or poor treatment from the men in their lives. Once idyllic views of marriage have been altered due to bad experiences with significant others. Many of these women did not believe that they would ever find a man who would provide for their families, be loving and respectful to them and their children and remain faithful. The concern was often that a cheating or abusive husband would make the women appear foolish to their relatives, friends, and neighbors (Edin, 2000).

Taken together, there are numerous barriers cited by research which may preclude marriage for some couples and prove costly for those who do marry. These cultural and social barriers have been consistently pointed out in marriage and child well-being literature.

III. Pregnancy before Marriage – The Biggest Barrier?

Perhaps the greatest barrier to marriage is couples having children without being married. Interest in this topic has peaked during the last ten years as out-of-wedlock birth rates have soared over the last five decades. In 1960 the percentage of live births to unwed mothers in the United States was 5.3 percent. By 1980 it was 20.3 percent and in 2003 it was 35 percent. In Florida, 41.3 percent of all child births in 2004 were to unmarried mothers (Florida Department of Health, 2005).

Teenage Pregnancy: While most out-of-wedlock births occur to women in their twenties, teenage women who get pregnant face the most significant barriers to marriage. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school, with only one-third receiving a high school diploma and only 1.5 percent having a college degree by age 30 (Maynard, 1996). This severely limits their future education levels and income earning potential. Nearly 80 percent of the fathers of children born to teenage mothers do not marry the mothers. These fathers pay less than \$800 annually in child support, often because they are quite poor themselves (Maynard, 1996). Research has also shown that one of the major correlates of multiple partner fertility – having children with multiple partners – is having a teen birth (Mincy, 2002). These young mothers face greater potential for becoming reliant on welfare or TANF. Around one-third of teen mothers end up on welfare and one-half who are unmarried end up on welfare only a year later (Maynard, 1996).

Children from Previous Relationships: Men may be less willing to marry women who have had children with multiple men and must care for other men's children as well as theirs. Further, women may hesitate to marry a man who has child support obligations for children other than the ones he's had with her. Fragile Families researchers McLanahan, Carlson and England looked at the effect of children by other partners on marriage transitions. They found that a father's children by other partners do affect transitions to marriage somewhat, while a mother's children by other partners do not (McLanahan, Carlson and England, 2004).

The Relationship between Economic, Social and Cultural Barriers: Though mentioned earlier in this paper, economic barriers play a role in cultural and social barriers faced by couples. Many of the social and cultural barriers to marriage are likely rooted in or influenced by poverty. For example, some relationship quality issues like criminal histories and substance abuse are significantly related to poverty status. Researchers have also found that teenage pregnancy is a symptom of poverty rather than a cause of it (Luker, 1997). Growing income inequality in the United States over the past few decades may also be a factor for differences in marriage rates between upper and middle income couples versus lower income ones.

IV. Married but Still Poor – Does Marriage Improve Economic Well Being for Already Poor Couples

Researchers have long pointed to the economic advantages of marriage for both couples and their children. When couples get married, they gain economically from wage premiums. Specifically, women can maximize their economic situation by moving from a female-headed household into a married household (Becker, 1981). Married couples have opportunities to specialize or share their domestic and income-making responsibilities (Waite and Gallagher, 2000). Still, marriage may not be a passage out of poverty for couples who are poor to begin with. Many couples have children prior to marriage and would remain poor even if they married because of pre-existing economic conditions that would not change greatly with marriage. For one, couples who have children prior to marriage limit their educational and economic opportunities for years to come. In general, less educated couples with lower incomes face greater risks for divorce or separation. For example, roughly 60 percent of marriages among women without high school degrees will end in separation or divorce, compared to one third for college graduates (Raley and Bumpass, 2003).

Marrying Less or Marrying Later. While economic barriers are cited by many couples as a reason for not marrying, a 2004 report conducted for the United States Department of Health and Human Services found that people with economic disadvantages are just as likely to marry as other people, but their marriages are substantially more unstable (Fein, 2004). According to Fein, reporting lower marriage rates for low-income couples often misses an important distinction. These couples are simply marrying later in life. Through their early 30s, economically disadvantaged adults actually are more likely to marry than economically advantaged adults. Similar findings are made when comparing couples who live in low-income versus higher-income neighborhoods. By age 35, other statistics show that the fraction of ever married adults is virtually the same across education groups (Ellwood and Jencks, 2001).

On the whole, two variables that best predict marital stability are the education and income levels of couples. In his report, Fein addresses each variable:

- **Education:** The probability of splitting up in each year after the first marriage is consistently higher for women with lower education levels when compared to their more-educated peers. Some of the differences are racial. At every level of education, Blacks are substantially less likely to marry than Whites or Hispanics (Fein, 2004). Further, at every level of education, Black women have the highest risks of marital disruption in the first 15 years after they marry. In contrast, disruption rates for married Hispanic women are relatively low, particularly for those with low levels of education (Fein, 2004).
- **Income:** Living in a low-income neighborhood affects marital stability. Couples who live in neighborhoods with the lowest 25 percent income (as measured by median income) have a 44 percent chance of their marriages breaking up within 10 years. Couples that live in neighborhoods with the highest 25 percent income, have only a 23 percent chance of marital breakup (Rein, 2004).

Overall, Fein reports the fragility of marriages among disadvantaged couples is a strong rationale for strengthening marriage in low-income communities. A number of policy recommendations can be drawn from this.

Policies and Strategies to Strengthen Marriage

Recognizing barriers to marriage is critical for developing policies aimed at promoting and strengthening marriage. In the February 2005 issue of The Brookings Institution's *The Future of Children*, several participating researchers concluded that marriage promotion alone would not prove effective for strengthening families and couples that have both economic and relationship challenges. These participants included some of the most prominent researchers in the marriage and child well-being literature: Andrew Cherlin, Steven Nock, Paul Amato, Sara McLanahan, Isabel Sawhill, Kathryn Edin and Robin Dion (The Brookings Institution, 2005). More specifically, policy recommendations that could serve to strengthen

families include promoting relationship education, defining healthy marriage, providing financial literacy, enlisting job training and employment referral services, offering other needed services and developing comprehensive strategies.

Promote Relationship Education: Targeting young adults prior to marriage and assisting economically disadvantaged couples early in their marriages with relationship education services would assist them with communication and conflict resolution skills that are inevitably needed in marriage. Researchers have conducted extensive studies surrounding the use of marriage education curricula. While no conclusive studies have shown one marriage curriculum to be better than another (Carroll and Doherty, 2003); one consistent finding seems to be the importance of including conflict resolution and communication building skills (Stanley, Blumberg, and Markman, 1999; Carroll and Doherty, 2003).

Define Healthy Marriage: Relationship education should assist couples to define their relationships and teach them what a healthy marriage is. Lewis and Gossett (1999) summarize eight essential characteristics of a healthy marriage:

1. Both partners participate in the definition of the relationship.
2. There is a strong moral bond characterized by levels of both closeness and autonomy.
3. The spouses are interested in each other's thoughts and feelings.
4. The expression of feelings is encouraged.
5. The inevitable conflicts that do occur do not escalate or lead to despair.
6. Problem-solving skills are well developed.
7. Most basic values are shared.
8. The ability to deal with change and stress is well developed.

Because couples may define their relationships based on their life experiences, there may be much ignorance as to what constitutes a healthy marriage. Children growing up in volatile homes or where they have experienced divorce may define their future relationships based on this reality. Research has shown that children of divorced parents are more likely to end their own marriages later in life (Wolfinger, 2005). Marriage education can serve a significant role in assisting couples to break from a generational pattern, define their own relationships and learn how to have healthy marriages.

Provide Financial Literacy: Many low-income couples struggle with money management or outstanding credit issues. Providing these couples with training on financial planning, investments and budgeting could equip them to handle monetary issues that are often marital stressors. Some entities already exist for this including consumer credit counseling services or other non-profit organizations that can assist couples with budget issues. Further, networks that concentrate on basic needs of clients like rental or utility assistance can be found through state health and human service referral entities like the 211 Network in Florida. One major challenge for getting individuals to access these services is making them more aware of their existence.

Enlist Job Training and Employment Referral Services: Since many couples decide to marry or continue to stay married based on the employment history of the male (Mincy, 2002; Edin, 2000; Edin and Reed, 2005), job training and employment referral services are necessary for promoting stable marriages. When male wage earners do poorly, this has a dampening effect on marital aspirations (Edin and Reed, 2005). While many job training and employment referral services exist, these need to be merged with marriage promotion efforts aimed at low-income couples. Absent these supports, many marriages may be doomed to economic failures, or may not take place at all.

Offer Other Needed Services: Since many disadvantaged couples encounter mental health, substance abuse and/or domestic violence issues, integrating these services or providing referrals from marriage education services may be vital to helping these couples succeed. An important by-product of these services could just as well identify relationships that should not continue given their volatility if these issues persist. Agencies

that serve couples facing these issues must be aware of how these affect relationship dynamics and obtain training with respect to marriage and parenting.

Develop Comprehensive Strategies: Assisting couples in overcoming barriers to marriage and difficulties or challenges in the marriages they start, requires a comprehensive strategy. While marriage and marital practices may be controversial topics to some, research has shown that marriage remains a lifetime goal for a majority of people (Edin and Reed, 2005; Nock, 2005). Hence, overcoming barriers to marriage is of vital interest to society. Nock suggests engaging in a prolonged, sometimes painful and controversial, national discussion on marriage. He believes parties in this discussion will have to include lawmakers, clergy, teachers, journalists, opinion leaders and intellectuals. Additionally, private conversations between and among partners, parents and family members would also be necessary for societal change to be managed and understood (Nock, 2005). In the end however, national and private discussions on strengthening marriage will have to focus on assisting couples interested in marriage and helping them overcome barriers to marriage and the barriers they may face in their marriages. As marriage remains an essential building block for society, it is a task that will have to involve many groups.

Remaining Challenges

As reflected by a recent policy forum at The Brookings Institution in November 2006, there are still severe challenges facing proponents of marriage promotion and relationship education. For example, research on attitudes toward marriage has shown that one of the greatest obstacles to permanent unions among low-income people is not the lack of desire, but the lack of resources. An imbalance of sex ratios (i.e., the number of available males to females), financial penalties for getting married in terms of lost healthcare and welfare benefits, alcohol and substance abuse issues, domestic violence and social norms that undermine marriage given its portrayal in the television media (The Brookings Institution, 2006). Any discussion regarding marriage promotion typically finds itself wrestling with these very issues.

Another remaining challenge is the complex nature of family arrangements and what would be facing a majority of unmarried parent families if they were to marry. For example, many unmarried parents have had children with multiple partners and marriage would mean a stepfamily arrangement for some of the youth involved. Studies of remarriage and stepfamilies mostly show that child well-being does not improve when a parent's marriage results in a stepfamily situation. So even though research shows that children do best when they grow up with both biological parents, the reality of the situation of most unmarried parents and their children is more complicated.

Conclusions

Cultural, social and economic barriers facing many couples in the United States will not be remedied by marriage promotion and relationship education alone. While marriage education assists couples with their marriage relationship, addressing economic and social barriers is critical as well. Educating couples in what a healthy marriage is and helping them to develop skills for communicating, resolving conflicts and showing mutual respect is necessary. Research has demonstrated that couples with lower incomes, lower education levels, and social issues like depression, substance abuse and domestic violence face higher rates of marital disruption and may choose not to get married given these barriers. Marriage education should be comprehensive enough to help these couples with their relationships and help them face economic and social stressors that put their relationships in jeopardy. Given the high and symbolic value marriage retains among low-income couples, assisting them in achieving healthy marriages should be a major goal of public policy. While the current debate on policies concerning marriage, family formation, and welfare reform can be contentious, there is widespread agreement that children growing up with both of their biological parents who are married fare better than children in divorced and single-parent families (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). Hence, strengthening marriages may prove to be an effective vehicle for improving child well-being. Clearly, if relational, social and economic barriers to marriage can be addressed, society would benefit as a whole.

Primary and Secondary References

- Axnin, W.G., and A. Thorton. 2000. "The Transformation in the Meaning of Marriage," in Michelle Hindin and Arland Thorton (eds.), *The Ties That Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, pp. 147-65.
- Becker, G. 1991. *Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Blau, F.D., L.M. Kahn, and J. Waldfogel. 2000. "Understanding Young Women's Marriage Decisions: The Role of Labor and Marriage Market Conditions," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 53: 624-47.
- Bramlett, M.D. and W.D. Mosher. 2002. "Cohabitation, Marriage and Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States," National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Health Statistics, Vo. 23, No. 22.
- Brookings Institution. 2006. "Marriage in the African American Community." A policy forum conducted in Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C.
- Brines, J., and K. Joyner. 1999. "The Ties That Bind: Principles of Cohesion in Cohabitation and Marriage," *American Sociological Review*, 64: 333-56.
- Carlson, M., S. McLanahan and P. England. 2004. "Union Formation in Fragile Families." *Demography* 41: 237-61.
- Carroll, J. and W. Doherty. 2003. "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Premarital Prevention Programs: A Meta-Analytic Review of Outcome Research." *Family Relations* 52: 105-118.
- Cherlin, A. 2005. "Marriage in the 21st Century," in *The Future of Children*. Vol. 15:No.2, pp.33-55.
- Cherlin, A. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66: 848-61.
- Cherlin, A. 1992. *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clarkberg, M. 1999. "The Price of Partnering: The Role of Economic Well-Being in Young Adults" First Union Experiences," *Social Forces* 77: 609-34.
- Cready, C., M. Fossett, and J. Kiecolt. 1997. "Mate Availability and African American Family Structure in the U.S. Nonmetropolitan South, 1960-1990," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59: 192-203.
- Edin, K. 2000. "How Low-Income Single Mothers Talk about Marriage," *Social Problems* 47: 112-33.
- Edin, K. 2000. "Few Good Men: Why Low-Income Single Mothers Don't Get Married." *American Prospect* 11: 26-31.
- Edin, K. and M. Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Edin, K., and L. Lein. 1997. *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Edin, K. and J. Reed. 2005. "Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged" in *The Future of Children* Vol. 15, No.2, pp.117-130.
- Ellwood, D. and C. Jencks. 2001. "The Growing Difference in Family Structure: What Do We Know? Where Do We Look for Answers?" Unpublished Paper Prepared for the New Inequality Program, NY: Russell Sage.
- Elk-Szekely, A. 2004. "Marriage and Family Strengthening for Incarcerated Individuals," Welfare Information Network, Vol. 8, No. 8. The Finance Project.
- Fein, D. 2004. "Married and Poor: Basic Characteristics of Economically Disadvantaged Married Couples in the U.S." Working Paper SHM-01 Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation. Abt Associates report for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, D.C.

- Florida Department of Health. 2004. *Florida Vital Statistics Annual Reports*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Health.
- Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study. 2006. "Effects of Welfare Participation on Marriage." *Fragile Families Research Brief*, #36.
- Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study. 2003. "The Retreat from Marriage among Low-Income Families." *Fragile Families Research Brief*, #17.
- Gallagher, M., and L.J. Waite. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. New York, Doubleday.
- Gibson-Davis, C., K. Edin and S. McLanahan. 2003. "High Hopes But Even Higher Expectations: The Retreat from Marriage Among Low-Income Couples," Working Paper, 2003-86-FF. Princeton, NJ: Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University.
- Karney, B., C. Wilson-Garvan, and M. Thomas. 2003. "Family Formation in Florida: 2003 Baseline Survey of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Demographics Relating to Marriage and Family Formation." Gainesville, FL: University of Florida.
- Koball, H. 1998. "Have African American Men Become Less Committed to Marriage? Explaining the Twentieth Century Racial Cross-Over in Men's Marriage Timing," *Demography*, 35: 251-58.
- Lewis, J., and J. Gossett. 1999. *Disarming the Past: How an Intimate Relationship Can Heal Old Wounds*. Redding, CT: Zeig, Tucker and Theisen, Inc.
- Lichter, D., and K. McLaughlin. 1997. "Poverty and the Marital Behavior of Young Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59: 589.
- Luker, K. 1997. "Does Pregnancy Trap Girls in Poverty? Does Poverty Trap Girls in Pregnancy?" California Wellness Foundation and Planned Parenthood Los Angeles.
- Lloyd, K.M., and S. South. 1996. "Continental Influences on Young Men's Transition to First Marriage," *Social Forces* 74: 1097-2119.
- Manning, W., and P. Smock. 1995. "Why Marry: Race and the Transition of Marriage among Cohabitors," *Demography* 32: 509-20.
- Martin, S. 2002. *Delayed Marriage and Childbearing: Implications and Measurement of Diverging Trends in Family Timing*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Maynard, R.A. 1996. *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*. New York: Robin Hood Foundation.
- McLanahan, S., and G. Sandefur. 1994. *Growing up with a Single Parent: What Helps, What Hurts*. Harvard University Press.
- McLaughlin, D., and D. Lichter. 1997. "Poverty and the Marital Behavior of Young Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59: 589.
- Mincy, R. 2002. "Whom Shall Marry Whom?: Multiple Partner Fertility Among New Parents." *Fragile Families Working Paper* 2002-03. Princeton, NJ: Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University.
- Mishel, L., R. Bernstein and H. Boushey, 2003. *The State of Working America, 2002/2003*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Moffitt, R. 2002. "Incentive Effects in the U.S. Welfare System," *Journal of Economic Literature* 30: 56-57.
- Murray, C. 1984. *Losing Ground*, New York: Basic Books.
- Nock, S. 1998. "The Consequences of Premarital Fatherhood," *American Sociological Review* 62: 150-63.

- Nock, S., 2005. "Marriage as a Public Issue.": in *The Future of Children*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 13-32. www.futureofchildren.org//information2827/information_show.htm
- Oppenheimer, V.K. 2003. "Cohabiting and Marriage during Young Men's Career Development Process," *Demography* 40: 127-49.
- Oppenheimer, V.K., M. Kalmign, and N. Lim. 1997. "Men's Career Development and Marriage Timing during a Period of Rising Inequality," *Demography* 34: 311-30.
- Popenoe, D. and B.D. Whitehead. 2003. *The State of Our Unions 2003*. Rutgers University: National Marriage Project.
- Raley, K. 1996. "A Shortage of Marriageable Men: A Note on the Role of Cohabitation in Black-White Differences in Marriage Rates," *American Sociological Review* 61: 973-83.
- Raley, K. and L. Bumpass. 2003. "The Topography of the Divorce Plateau: Levels and Trends in Union Stability in the United States after 1980." *Demographic Research* 8: 245-259.
- Smock, P., and W. Manning. 1997. "Cohabiting Partners' Economic Circumstances at Marriage." *Demography* 34: 331-41.
- Sassler, S. and J. McNally. 2005. "Cohabiting Couples' Economic Circumstances and Union Transitions: A Re-Examination Using Multiple Imputation Techniques," *Social Science Research*, 32: 553-578.
- Stanley, S., S. Blumberg, and H. Markman. 1999. "Helping Couples Fight for Their Marriages: The PREP Approach." In R. Berger and M. Hannah, (Eds.) *Handbook on Preventative Approaches in Couple Therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Sweeney, M. 2002. "Two Decades of Family Change: The Shifting Economic Foundations of Marriage." *American Sociological Review* 67: 132-147.
- Thornton, A., L. Young-DeMarco. 2001. "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63: 1009-1037.
- U.S. Congressional Office, 2006. "Changes in Low-Wage Labor Markets Between 1979 and 2005." Washington, DC: The Congress of the United States.
- Western, B. and S. McLanahan. 2002. "Incarceration and the Bonds Among Parents Brief, No. 12. Princeton, NJ: Center for research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University.
- Wilson, W.J. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wolfinger, N. 2005. *Understanding the Divorce Cycle: The Children of Divorce in Their Own Marriages*. Cambridge University Press.