# The Roundtable
## on Religion and Social Welfare Policy

# Panel Discussion Transcript
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# Government Partnerships with Religious Groups to Promote and Support Healthy Marriages

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# GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT HEALTHY MARRIAGES

**JUNE 28, 2004**

**The National Press Club, Washington, D.C.**

## Welcome

DR. RICHARD P. NATHAN: Good morning. My name is Dick Nathan and I am proud to be the director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, which is the public policy research arm of the State University of New York. We're located in Albany. We're glad you could be with us today to discuss a really important, interesting subject: the potential role for faith-based groups -- in this period of Charitable Choice -- in another area that is a hot-button Washington subject: healthy marriage. It's the confluence of two policy streams that are very important for domestic public policy.

The Roundtable project is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Our role is to collect, produce and disseminate independent, nonpartisan research on the scope, scale and effectiveness of faith-based social services and the policy and legal environment in which they operate. Our grant officer Julie Sulc is here, and I want to thank Julie for the Trusts' renewed support. Professor Chip Lupu is also here. Chip and his colleague Bob Tuttle at George Washington University are our key people on legal developments, case law, and legal and regulatory developments in this very delicate faith-based area. Chip, I'm glad you're here, you're doing a wonderful job. And the Roundtable's Project Director, David Wright, is making sure that I follow the script and that we go on schedule, and we have a pretty tight schedule.

I don't need to tell you that marriage is a subject in the news, from courthouses to statehouses and here in Washington, where it was the subject of hearings last week. And the administration, of course, has a proposal in the welfare reauthorization bill for $1.5 billion for the so-called Healthy Marriage Initiative. The president was in the Midwest last week, St. Louis in particular, talking about exactly this subject, healthy marriages.

It's a very delicate area. A zone of privacy. How does government play a proper role? It is an intimate area that involves a culture that makes it hard to have the kind of marriages we think about as critical for child rearing. So there are personal, sexual and very delicate attitudinal relationships that come into play when you get into this area.

Over the past six years, we've been studying the implementation of the 1996 welfare reforms that were put into law under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Much has happened in this area, but there are goals that have not yet been fully met. It's often referred to as "PRWORA" and when I first heard that acronym used while I was testifying on the legislation it too some getting used to. In PRWORA, the preamble of the law says, and I quote, "marriage is the essential foundation of a successful society." Further, "marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of

children." Just a little personal aside, I've been married only 46 years and that's got to be the most important relationship in my life.

Yet it is a hard institution to sustain with the battering that it takes from all of the challenges. And I won't say as much about that as to say, as I did a minute ago, that every state is working and is moving, but not really in to the implementation stage to carry out this purpose of the law: to promote and support healthy marriages. So Theodora Ooms is going to talk about the CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy) report -- I'll hold that up -- about what the states are doing.

With support from HHS and ACF, we did a report on 26 states and how they were dealing with the family provisions of the law compared to the work provisions of the law, where there have been striking and surprising changes in the operation of human service programs in the country. So today what we're going to do particularly is talk about the "how and the who" concerning which kinds of institutions and programs can deal in this terrain.

Another report that I just read with a wonderful title is, "The State of Our Unions," by David Popenoe and Barbara Whitehead. They say in that report that the typical 30-something guy is a marrying guy. Marriage is still a very strong idea and ideal in our country -- not for the young so much, but for people as they mature.

The majority of children in the United States reside in two parent families. Sixty-six percent of the U.S. population under 18 lived in a married household. But marriage as an institution needs buttressing. Half of the first marriages end in divorce, and one-third of our children are born out of wedlock. A lot of these facts and some discussion of the challenge of working in this terrain are in the statement that I'm reading from, the statement that I've prepared for today's conference.

Instead of reading it all the way through I'm paraphrasing, but I want to particularly focus on what I say about the who and the how of the confluence of healthy marriages and the faith-based initiative.

Under Section 104, the "Charitable Choice" section, put in by then Senator Ashcroft, there is the provision that Chip has done an immense amount of study on, having to do with "Leveling the Playing Field." What are the rules? And what is the basis on which faith organizations can and are being encouraged to participate in social programs?

Now, my own view, is that there's a lot of logic in the idea and appeal to the idea, that in a field like the one we're here to talk about today, helping people work on family relationships, marriage and child rearing, that churches -- and particularly neighborhood churches where pastors care about this -- is a logical place to go.

One day when I was in New York City touring welfare centers -- they're now called job centers -- I went into Queens and met with people in a church that were working on a faith-based initiative. I was much struck by the whole different feeling between these big, impersonal, hard-to-love job centers, much as people try, and the caring, feeling relationship of the women that I

talked to, and the pastor from churches I talked to, about how they wanted to help distressed poor families have good families.

Oklahoma and Louisiana have important initiatives concerning high divorce rates. And the Federal administration has launched an African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative. David Wright and his staff keep all of the materials on issues such as these on our website. We also have information about other, related studies. For instance, there's a forthcoming study from Utah studying the "Marriage Savers" program that is referred to here. It shows some positive results along the lines of what I just said, and points out that 86 percent of all marriages take place in a church.

We also have a paper which Claire Hughes wrote. She's not here today. She's soon going to add to her own family, so she couldn't travel. But Claire wrote a very nice paper that goes over a lot of the material that I'm covering with you.

So how do churches operate in this field, and what do we know about this? Our particular interest is in institutional behavior, the "who" and the "how" of government. That's been our emphasis at the Rockefeller Institute for a very long time.

So now what I'm going to do is tell you about the program and then we'll jump right into it. The first speaker is John Bartkowski of Mississippi State. Then I'm going to introduce Assistant Secretary Wade Horn, who will soon be joining us from another event. Our next speaker is Brad Wilcox; I'll introduce him after Wade. Then Theodora Ooms is going to talk as our discussant. She's going to pick up on every point that needs to be embellished or commented upon, and talk about her report. And then there will be some time for discussion, but it is a tight schedule and I want everybody to have their allotted time.

John Bartkowski is a professor of sociology at Mississippi State University. He's a participating scholar with the Roundtable. He's written extensively in this field, both books and articles, including one on "Promise Keepers." I'm anxious to read that, I haven't caught up with it yet. He's written and published in many journals: Journal on Family Issues, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Qualitative Social Science, Social Science Quarterly, Sociology of Religion. He's the author of "Remaking the Godly Marriage," and his presentation today is on "Promising Partnerships or Conflicting Collaboration? Faith-based Organizations, Government, and Family Policy."

So, John, I welcome you and I turn to you.

DR. JOHN BARTKOWSKI: Pleased to be here today. Thank you all for attending.

On the first slide you see the title of my talk, "Promising Partnership or Conflicted Collaboration? Looking at Faith-Based Organizations, Government and Family Policy." I'm leaving the question open-ended as to whether this would be a fruitful endeavor for faith-based organizations to partner with the government, in this specific policy domain, or whether there might be some conflicts, particularly those that might be unanticipated or unforeseen at this time.

Next slide. There's the references to family support found in PRWORA; references to promoting job preparation, work and marriage. There's also a reference to encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. These aren't the only references in the bill to the importance of family as a bedrock social institution, but I've just pulled these out to indicate that that's certainly something that is strewn throughout that bill.

Just by way of introduction, on the Healthy Marriage Initiative, I've seen estimates vary. I rounded them to $1.5 billion. That seemed like a good number. But there would be some matching funds proposed from states, so it's around this amount to strengthen marriages. And this is quoting from the ACF website, "Marriage education would be designed to teach individuals and couples the basic relationship skills and knowledge that researchers have found help couples form and sustain healthy marriages."

There would be a broad target for this bill, as it's envisioned again, as it's proposed at this time. So the idea would be to target currently married couples, as well as couples who are not yet married, or pre-marital couples, as it's referred to. And also not just adults but teens as well. Targeting high school students, in particular, and talking about the importance of marriage, the importance of communication skills in marriage, and other types of strategies to develop strong and healthy marriages.

There is a special emphasis on the non-coerciveness of this program -- if you look at the ACF website carefully -- that marriage education would be an available resource for those who choose to marry or for those who are considering marriage, actually. But they strongly emphasize that this is not a coercive program, this is not designed to force people into marriage, this is not designed to make it difficult for women, for instance, who are abused within marriage to get out of marriage. And it's not designed to be a panacea. So there's some caveats there that they offer.

Healthy marriage is defined on the ACF website as mutual enrichment, by which they mean it's a mutual satisfying relationship that is beneficial to the husband, the wife and the children, if they are present. It's also predicated on mutual respect, committed to ongoing growth, the use of effective communication skills and successful conflict management skills.

Next slide, thanks.

Charitable Choice is interesting. Charitable Choice, as Dick mentioned, would expand the competitive bidding process -- and has done that, in fact -- to include faith-based service providers. So now faith-based organizations have the choice, as indicated in the phrase "Charitable Choice" or the opportunity, we might say, to compete on a level playing field. There are rancorous debates about to what degree the playing field is level. That's something to which I can speak, anyway, in Mississippi, and I'll address that a little bit later in my talk here. But the ideal is that faith-based providers should have a chair at the table or a place at the table, so to speak, and that they should have equal access and opportunity to compete with secular non-profits.

On the other side of the charitable choice continuum is the welfare client's choice, or we might say personal preference, including personal religious preference or a preference of non-religion through the program safeguards. So, for example, charitable choice forbids proselytizing, it forbids giving funds only to members of one's faith community. There are some debates about hiring provisions. I'll set those aside for the moment. But there is an important provision there about the availability of a secular alternative. And I think that's something that's especially important when I consider my own work in the rural South -- having an available secular alternative. If you have a small town and that secular alternative is 30 minutes, 45 minutes away, the next town over, that's something we can talk about a little bit more perhaps later. But the point is the ideal is that there should be an available, secular alternative so that faith is not forced on a welfare client.

So the key questions I'm going to address today are: What are the potential opportunities and the potential challenges associated with the implementation of the Healthy Marriage Initiative, and also what role can faith-based organizations play in the implementation of this initiative?

My analytical approach is to use a 2003 study of family support programs in rural Mississippi that I conducted under the auspices of the Roundtable and the Rockefeller Institute, and use that study today as kind of a lens to highlight the promise and the peril of faith-based organizations' participation in the Healthy Marriage Initiative.

A couple of caveats before I jump in. First of all, there are program differences. Family support programs that I looked at in rural Mississippi focused on parent education, but they did actually -- because they were family support programs and not just parenting classes -- also focus on the importance of sustaining all kinds of family relationships, including marital relationships or relationships among adult partners. So there was that emphasis. There is a connection there between the family support and the Healthy Marriage Initiatives. However, these did have parenting as a primary component of the classes, so that's important to note. And, of course, my study was conducted in rural Mississippi. It's an ethnographic study that compared various organizational cases and programmatic cases, if you will, ranging from secular to faith-based and privately funded to publicly funded.

So the objectives of my study, just to reiterate, is to ask first of all: is this a promising partnership? I want to identify the potential positive aspects of state FBO collaboration in the implementation of the Healthy Marriage Initiative, and then I want to think about to what degree

might this be a conflicted collaboration by asking: what might be some of the negative aspects of collaboration among these actors in the implementation of this initiative?

Okay. So first to promising partnership. The first thing I found in my study -- and, again, using the study as kind of a lens to think about and consider the prospects and potential pitfalls of the Healthy Marriage Initiative – is that religion is a moral resource in a lot of the programs that I study. Certainly in the faith-based programs that I studied, religion was a tool that family educators and parent educators use to talk about the importance of responsibility in family relationships, responsibility to one's children, but also responsibility to one's spouse.

Now, this is an interesting counterpoint to a culture that privileges self-interest and individualism, which some people argue is eroding the fabric of the family as a social institution. So religion is making a moral claim on people, and in faith-based organizations that's certainly the case. There is, again, a focus on connectedness and obligations to others, rather than focusing on, you know, the narrow interests of an individual person.

Religion also surfaced as a problem-solving tool in family life. Often persons in scriptures -- and specifically in the rural South, where I'm from, it would be from the Bible -- are discussed in classes to talk about role models for family relationships. In the religious classes, or the faith-based classes, God is seen as the ultimate role model or the ultimate father, if you will, so that there is a lot of discussion about how God relates to His children. And typically, again, the rural South where I'm from, God was construed as a "Him." So I'm using the language that my subjects and family educators and participants in the program used.

Nevertheless, these role models were used to promote skills that would help strengthen marriages and strengthen parent-child relationships, like effective communication, like mercy, forgiveness, compassion, mutual understanding, these sorts of things. I just want to read a few quotes to give you a flavor of some of the programs that I studied in Mississippi from some of the family educators' perspectives, as well as from some of the participants' perspectives.

The first quote that I am going to read is from a leader in a faith-based parent education program who definitely defines parenting as a moral matter. He focuses on the protection and provision ideas of fatherhood and being a husband that are embraced in many evangelical communities. So he says, "We try to get participants in our program to understand that a child is a blessing from God and that we owe it to the child" -- again, this language of obligation -- "We owe it to that child to be the best possible parent we can be. We try to give them the tools to become the parent that they ought to be. As a race of African American people, we have a history, and I remind them of this quite often, that we have a history of leaving our children unattended and then some tragedy comes and steals them away. It could be a fire, a kidnapper, a rapist, whatever. Part of our responsibility as parents is to protect and provide. Those are the things that we try to get them to understand. We teach them their responsibility as parents is to protect and provide and that we need to bring them up in the way that they should go."

So the idea that children are a blessing from God and that parents have an obligation to protect, provide, bring children up in the way that they should go is plucked almost verbatim from Proverbs 22:6, if you're familiar with that. So here in these types of programs they make a

covenantal, which is to say an ethical and nonnegotiable, claim on participants. This is very different than the logic of government programs, which I argue in my book, is more of a contractual impetus. The covenantal impetus in faith-based programs is somewhat different. So this portrayal of parenting doesn't preclude the learning of practical skills to, you know, better one's relationships with one's children or even with one's spouse. But there is also a moral claim being made on participants.

There are some positive dynamics and effects of faith-based family support programs that I uncovered in my study. For people who worry about these programs as being coercive, I did not find that in my study. In fact -- and I did not invent this terminology, but I borrow it from some other social researchers -- the idea of spirituality a la carte. Like, spirituality-faith is something that's offered in the program, but it's not imposed on participants in a coercive way. So people who feel that public money will be used in a kind coercive manner to force religion on people, that's not necessarily a concern that bore out in my study.

In fact, one of the other parent educators and family educators that I interviewed said, "The great apostle Paul says, I became all things to all men that I may win some. Some young men, they want to hear about God. Some don't. So it's wherever I am teaching and the audience that I'm with, that's what I do. And it's refreshing to them. Being a pastor in the community, one of my goals is to win souls for Christ" -- notice the evangelical language there -- "but it's the way you do it. It's not just telling them about the goodness of God and all this. I'm actually trying to do what Jesus would do because when I go places, I know a lot of them drink and I know a lot of them are, what I would call, living in sin with a woman. I know that, but I can't be judgmental and say, "I'm not going to work with you just because you drink." So my goal is that I don't beat you over the head with a Bible. What I try to show is the love from Christ and that I'm going to accept you where you are."

Interestingly, these programs focused on change from the inside out: change people's values and you change the way they parent and you change the way they relate to a spouse or a partner. The idea in secular programs, incidentally -- and I'm not going to touch on this other than saying this brief aside -- is more focusing on change from the outside in. Give people the skills that they need to be competent parents and then they'll basically use those skills in their parenting and in their family relationships. Communication skills, timeouts for disciplining kids, things like that, are much more focused on technical expertise, whereas faith-based programs focus more again on changing values and then those changed values, changed hearts, actually, in the language of some of the people in the study, then kind of emanate out from the individual and affect his or her relationships.

Just one other point -- on network integration and accountability. One of the things that both programs had to offer, both faith-based and secular, privately funded and publicly funded, is that they integrate people into social networks that then hold other people accountable for

particular types of behavior. So whether it's a parenting class that's secular or faith-based or one focused on enriching a person's marriage and the parents' own relationships with one another, the idea is that meaningful relationships are established in these programs, skills are taught, values are changed, if you're focusing on the faith-based programs, and then people are held accountable for changing their behavior. So at subsequent meetings, for instance, people talk about, "well, how did you do in implementing this new technique or this new principle?" Or other people would talk about, in faith-based programs, "well, I feel like my heart has changed in this way, but my practices toward my child or toward my spouse haven't changed as much as I would like. I'm still working on that." And there would be encouragement from other group participants to do so.

Now I'd just like to spend a few moments talking about conflicted collaboration. And here I'm going to move away from quotations and talk a little bit more generally. There are several points at which I think conflicted collaboration could occur: in other words, tensions or potential points of difficulty between faith-based organizations and states if the states are providing the funding. First, I think that there could be some adverse competition among religious providers, and even more broadly, frankly, between religious providers and secular nonprofits.

Let me just lay it out this way first of all. Among faith-based organizations, if we're to include congregations as a type of faith-based organization -- and I know that I've been at conferences where people debate about how legitimate that is. In my view it's very legitimate. I was hearing Dick talk about a state in which at every corner, every intersection, there seemed to be a church. I thought you were talking about Mississippi, but you weren't. It's joked that in Mississippi there are more churches than there are people. Basically, though, among faith-based organizations there could be a competition between congregations which run family ministry programs and have for decades and decades, and professional faith-based organizations that, you know, have greater government access, but do what they do in a kind of different way.

Let me just say this. When I tried to find privately funded faith-based organizations that taught family support courses, that had family support programs, it was very difficult for me to find privately funded ones, probably because -- I suspect anyway, and calling around did actually lend legitimacy to this interpretation -- because a lot of the family ministry programs in congregations were crowding out privately funded faith-based providers. So the publicly funded had a kind of niche that they filled and then the congregations were filling another niche.

Now, one of the faith-based providers to whom I spoke, the director of a program, said that she was actually quite critical of what was done in congregations because she said congregations catered to their own adherents, so that they didn't reach out and tap into people from other denominational backgrounds or people who were not affiliated with a particular faith tradition. So, it's all to say that we have to keep in mind that there really is a kind of complex landscape of faith-based providers out there, some of which have greater access to government resources, some of which don't, but all of which seem to be doing something to fill a particular niche that is necessary for family support. So we need to be mindful of that, I think, and probably particularly mindful of giving congregations and smaller faith-based organizations the

training and opportunity that it would take to compete with their more professionalized counterparts.

Next would be the problem of pluralism. In my study in the rural South, nobody was reading the Koran. If you're talking about a faith-based program, it was biblically based and it was actually evangelical. Baptists have a strong market share in the rural South, and, in particular, in rural Mississippi, to say that faith isn't imposed on anyone and that there's kind of "spirituality a la carte" is one side of the equation and that's wonderful from a civil libertarian standpoint. But really the primary avenue for faith to be provided through these programs is evangelical Christian, and that would raise some concerns, I think, for people from outside of that tradition.

Thirdly, there could be a lack of secular alternatives. There certainly was in Mississippi. And here is where I think welfare reform has a kind of urban-centric bias potentially; people think of proximity and closeness as something that will automatically provide a secular alternative. That wasn't the case where I did this research.

Very quickly, gauging effectiveness, I'll just say that measuring relationship quality, which is a perception, is very different than measuring economic outcomes. So we're going to have to be very, very careful about how we do this because measuring outcomes through pre-test/post-test, the standard instrument, is dangerous because in parent education and family support, some people come in with unrealistic expectations, and then they realize, later in the program, they're not as good parents as they thought they were, or they're not as good a spouse as they thought they were. So their expectations of themselves go up. And if you just do pre-test/post-test, the emphasis on the program seems like they actually are poorer parents, when in fact their expectations have been made more realistic.

I'll just conclude here then with the last slide. I think FBOs can be a valuable ally in the implementation of the Healthy Marriage Initiative. There's a pro-family character of religion that can be a great asset in this initiative, but I think very special care is needed in implementing the initiative, particularly with regard to equity issues and performance measurement. These are among the greatest challenges.

Thanks.

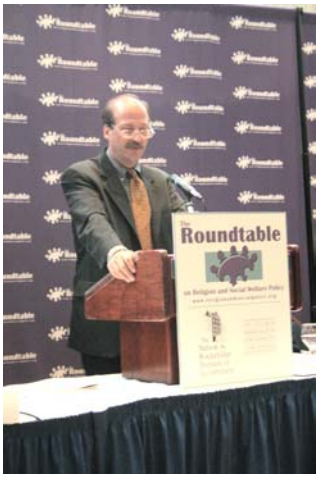
(Applause.)

DR. NATHAN: Thank you very much, John. We are honored today to have with us Wade Horn.

Wade Horn, as everybody here knows, is a very important person in this field. He is the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families in the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He was appointed and sworn in July 2001. He's had interesting and very pertinent experience both in government and out. Wade was President of the National Fatherhood Initiative, an area in which he's very well known and he's very committed. In the Bush I Administration he was Commissioner for Children and Youth in

the Children's Bureau, a presidential appointee to the National Commission on Children. He is a classic "inner and outer," influential and a scholar in his areas of special interest.

Before his appointments in government he was Director of Outpatient Psychological Services at the Children's Hospital and National Medical Center in Washington, and an Associate Professor of psychiatry and behavioral studies at George Washington University. He's had appointments also at Georgetown. His Ph.D. is in child psychology from Southern Illinois University. He's written widely. I note, in particular, his "Fatherly Advice" newspaper column. It's easy to get, it's important to have. So it's our honor today to hear from Wade on the subjects that we're addressing.




Wade, thanks for coming.

DR. WADE F. HORN: Thank you very much. I must admit that this is the first time I've ever been described as an "inner and outer." (Laughter) It's always a pleasure to be with Dick. And for those of you who are not on his mailing list for his famous summaries of books that he has read, it is a must-read, not only because it helps to summarize some of the books I know I'll never get to, but also it helps to winnow down the books that are worth reading.

Anyway, it's great to be here.

And, John, I appreciated and enjoyed your presentation.

Brad is a good friend and a great scholar.

And, Theo, it's always a pleasure to be with you.

I've been asked to talk about the President's Healthy Marriage Initiative and I will do that in a moment. I have discovered in my many talks that it is important for me to begin by not telling the audience what the president's Healthy Marriage is about, but rather telling them what it is not about because despite almost three years now of talking about the president's Healthy Marriage Initiative, there still seems to be some confusion as to what it is that the president is trying to accomplish and how he would like to accomplish it. And so I've discovered that it's important to say what it is not about.

So, for the 150th time, it is not about coercing anyone to get married. It is not about the Federal Government wagging its collective finger in the face of people who are single and telling them they ought to be married. It is not about government getting in to the matchmaking business. It's true we have a Healthy Marriage Initiative website, but if you go there and explore a while you will not find any online personal ads and I certainly have no interest in running a Federal dating service. It is also not about implementing policies that will, intentionally or otherwise, trap anyone in an abusive relationship.

It is not about promoting marriage by withdrawing support for single parent families. It is not about promoting marriage as a one-size-fits-all solution or a cure for poverty. I'm very fond of saying that marriage is not the Bush Administration's solution for poverty. Work is the Bush Administration's solution for poverty. If you take two people who are either unemployed or underemployed and get them married, you now have two people who are unemployed or underemployed except they are now married and still poor. So this is not about promoting marriage as the cure for poverty.

It is also not about providing marriage education services in a vacuum. Low income couples, in particular, face a variety of different challenges and barriers to marriage, and also a variety of different barriers and challenges regarding economic self-sufficiency. And so we are not trying to substitute marriage education and marriage services for the panoply of services that we already provide to low income couples, but rather as an addition, not as a subtraction. So that's what it's not about.

What is it about? First of all, the Initiative's goal is healthy marriages. We believe that promoting healthy marriages can be an effective strategy for improving the well-being of children. This is not because of an ideological commitment to marriage in doing so, but because the research is very clear: children who grow up in the context of healthy marriages do better than those who grow up in dysfunctional and unhealthy marriages. Now, I'm a psychologist and I wasn't convinced of that until we saw studies to show that abusive and dysfunctional marriages are not good for kids, and functional and healthy marriages are.

But the point is that what we are trying to do is to grow the proportion of children who, if the household they live in is married, the marriage is a functional and healthy one, and shrink the proportion of children in married households in which the marriage is a dysfunctional or abusive one. So this is not about changing marriage rates. It's about increasing the number of kids in healthy, married households and shrinking the number in unhealthy, married households.

Second, government should not, we believe, simply seek to be neutral about marriage. You know, government is not neutral about lots of things. It is neutral, for example, about the flavor of ice cream that you choose. Whether you enjoy vanilla or strawberry ice cream is not something that the government generally cares all that much about. Why? Because there isn't any research to show that your preference for vanilla versus strawberry ice cream has much of an impact, if any, on your well-being, the well-being of others or the well-being of the nation. So we don't subsidize strawberry ice cream eating. We simply say that's a choice that's outside of the realm of government.

But government is not neutral about lots of things. It is not, for example, neutral about home ownership or charitable giving. Why? Because it can be shown that communities in

which there is a large percentage of home ownership show fewer sociopathologies than those which have low levels of home ownership. And that doesn't mean that we go around stigmatizing renters, throwing them in jail, withdrawing their support. What it means is that government provides some mild incentives and supports for home ownership because home ownership is correlated with other social goods.

We primarily subsidize it through the Tax Code in terms of the home mortgage interest deduction, and we also provide low interest and subsidized loans to low income individuals and families for the purchase of their first home because we believe that low income individuals and families have an additional barrier to home ownership. And given that home ownership is a social good, we try to subsidize the entry into home ownership for low income individuals and families.

The same thing is true for charitable giving. We know where there is lots of charitable giving, we have stronger societies than those that do not, and so therefore, we provide mild incentives for it through the Tax Code.

In much the same way, government, while not coercing anyone to get married, can and, in our view, should provide supports for healthy marriages precisely because it can be shown that healthy marriages contribute to the common good. Third, while we don't know as much as we would like to know about how to promote healthy marriages, that shouldn't be used as an excuse to do nothing.

You know, people in 1965 didn't say we haven't done the definitive studies yet on early childhood education so let's not make a national commitment to helping low income children until we've done two decades more of research in order to do something in this area. We said, there is such a compelling need, in 1965, to do something about the fact that low income children show up at school already at a disadvantage, compared to their more economically advantaged peers, so we made a national commitment to do something.

Did we get it precisely correct? No. If we made any mistake in 1965, it's that we didn't commit ourselves as strongly as we should have in terms of evaluating early-on the impacts of Head Start so that we could improve the program. But we didn't use that as an excuse to say, "oh my goodness, we don't want to make a national investment in this area until the researchers tell us it's okay to go ahead."

But the fact of the matter is we know a lot about how to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages. While we don't have perfect knowledge, we do know, for example, that what separates healthy and stable marriages from unhealthy and unstable marriages is not the frequency of conflict, but rather how the couple manages the conflict. If the couple either avoids conflict or escalates conflict, that is correlated with high rates of marital dissatisfaction and high rates of divorce. But if couples are able to negotiate conflict in healthy ways, research tells us that's correlated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and even evidence that it leads to lower rates of divorce.

The really good news is we've got studies from the marriage education field that shows we can teach these kinds of conflict resolution skills, we can teach listening skills, we can teach communication skills, we can teach problem solving. When we do so, couples report they're able to, in fact, implement them and there is evidence that that leads to higher rates of marital satisfaction, and even some evidence it leads to lower rates of divorce.

New research is constantly shedding more light on our path. You know, it wasn't too long ago that the standard collective wisdom was that the problem with marriage education provided in low income communities is nobody in low income communities wants to get married, that they're not contemplating marriage, that marriage is a lost ideal in low income communities. Well, it's interesting that that stereotype was based, not on research, but on suppositions. And we've now got research from Sara McLanahan at Princeton and Irwin Garfinkel at Columbia that show that, in fact, a lot of low income community couples, particularly at the point a child is born out of wedlock, are actively contemplating marriage.

In fact, 80 percent of them at that moment are involved in an exclusive romantic relationship with each other and half, when asked the question "What's the likelihood you're going to get married? Not some day to somebody, but to each other," half report the answer being certain or near certain. Yet, a year later only 11 percent of those couples, in fact, go on to get married. Why? Because we have constructed a public sector service delivery system which has decided that marriage is a dirty word, that we should not speak it in polite company, and we certainly shouldn't speak it in low income communities. Yet, if we actually ask low income couples whether they think marriage is a dead idea, they tell us, no. In fact, they are contemplating it.

Yes, we have much to learn, but government ought not be paralyzed by incomplete knowledge. In the words of English writer Samuel Johnson, "Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome." And I fear there are some who don't want to get started until every possible objection is first overcome.

So what are we doing? Well, first, as many of you know, we have proposed within the pending legislation to reauthorize TANF -- and I see Becky Shipp here, who is ably negotiating this through a very interesting process in the Senate. But the President has proposed setting up two funds of money: a $100 million annual fund primarily to support research, healthy marriage demonstrations, research and technical assistance, and the other for a competitive state grant program.

But rather than waiting around for Congress to legislate, we've taken a number of initiatives already. We have, for example, awarded grants to integrate local marriage promotion and education services in child welfare programs. We have awarded grants to add marriage education into the curricula of schools of social work. We've given waivers to seven states to

innovate by integrating support for healthy marriages into the range of services currently being offered through child support enforcement.

We have targeted funds to particularly vulnerable populations, including $1 million in grants to faith-based and community-based organizations to offer marriage education to refugee families, to add marriage education as an allowable activity under the grants we administer, that support families with members with developmental disabilities. We've launched an African American Healthy Marriage Initiative under the able leadership of Diann Dawson, who is here. And we're about to launch an Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative designed to reach out to the nearly 39 million Hispanics that are citizens of America.

In each of these, this is a problem of addition, not subtraction. We are not subtracting, but adding. We are adding another arrow into the quiver of social services that are available through the public sector.

So what's faith got to do with this? Well, first and more broadly, the President wants to remove any existing barriers so that government can partner with faith and community-based groups to address the country's most pressing social needs. Rather than seeing faith-based organizations as only relevant on Saturdays or Sundays, President Bush sees them as an avenue to help Americans with a variety of problems: with drug and alcohol addiction, with gambling addiction, with homelessness, with poverty, with hunger and, yes, even with strengthening and supporting healthy marriages.

Indeed, the Healthy Marriage Initiative is a perfect example of how government can partner with faith-based groups. The mission of the Healthy Marriage Initiative is, therefore, this, quote -- for those of you who don't work for me, who have this memorized -- "To help couples who have chosen marriage for themselves gain greater access to marriage education services, on a voluntary basis, where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage." Notice it doesn't say "to the exclusion of other kinds of services that these families may need." It doesn't say "as our cure for poverty." It doesn't say "and, of course, we're insensitive to issues of domestic violence." It doesn't say "and we're going to wag our finger in the face of those couples who don't want to get married, and say they ought to." It doesn't say any of that. It's very simple. It's about increasing access to marriage education services for those couples who want it.

Now, why do we focus on low income couples? Two reasons: first, they're less likely to be able to afford marriage education services. The fact of the matter is if you have to choose between your rent payment, your car payment, your child care provider, and marriage education services, it is not an illogical choice to pick your child care provider, your transportation or your housing needs. But, secondly, even if they could afford marriage education, even if marriage

education was provided at a relatively reduced rate, they have less access to it because marriage education services tend not to be located in low income communities.

It doesn't really do anybody very much good in Anacostia to say we've got a cheap, perhaps even free, marriage education service out in Potomac, but to get there on Tuesday evening you have to take six buses and, oh, by the way, when the marriage education course is over at 9:00, two of those buses will no longer be running. What we need to do is try to ensure that low income couples have greater equity of access to services that we know can be helpful to them.

Now, religious groups are, in fact, playing an integral role in providing these services. Brad Wilcox, whom you'll hear from in a few moments, has done some really groundbreaking work in this area and I'll leave it to him to talk to you about that. But the bottom line is that churches and synagogues and mosques are places the people turn to when they're in trouble. It's also a place that many people go to get married. And so there is an intersect between those who may be in need of marriage education and where it is that people turn to in order to access help.

But if faith-based organizations are to partner with the government in providing marriage education services, they need to understand that there is a deal and the deal is binding. The deal includes two very important "no's." First, you cannot, if you accept a direct federal grant, use that grant money to proselytize. You can't use a curriculum if that curriculum is being supported by federal dollars or state dollars or local government dollars in a way that one could see it as proselytizing. Now, if a group is unwilling to do this, if a group believes that proselytization is one of the things that is important in their ministry, then what I tell those groups is, this is not for you because the deal is binding. You can't use the money to proselytize.

Second, there can be no discrimination in the delivery of social services. If someone from a different faith or a person of no faith seeks help from a faith-based organization that receives directly government funding to provide social services, including marriage education, then those services must be delivered.

It's interesting. We've discovered we really have to make this very clear to faith-based organizations so they don't step over the line. Some believe for example, falsely, that all they have to do is set up two rooms: faith-based or proselytizing, marriage education, and non faith-based education, and they can fund both of them with federal dollars as long as the individual has a choice which door to walk in. That's not true. That is, with federal dollars they must only be able to support the non-proselytizing and nondiscriminatory service.

There is, however, another avenue of funding for faith-based providers and that is vouchers. And with vouchers comes a very different deal. As the Supreme Court has ruled, vouchers are an aid, not to the provider, but to the consumer. That is to say, what the Supreme Court has said: when a voucher is provided to an individual, or in this case a couple, and as long as there is a free choice among religious and nonreligious providers and that is a true choice -- not a false choice -- but a true one, that if the person uses that voucher and accesses a faith-based provider there is no need for the faith-based provider to secularize their activities.

Now, that may come as a shock to some in this room. Some of you may even react to that with horror. But you should know we've been running a voucher program for the last 10 years or so and it's been running pretty well and it does exactly this: providing a voucher and then individuals pick providers, including faith-based providers. And nobody that I know has ever said, "oh, my goodness, we should never do this kind of voucher program, ever." I happen to know that voucher program because I run it. It's a $4.8 billion voucher program. It's called Childcare. We provide vouchers to individuals to seek child care and, if in fact, they use that voucher to purchase child care from a kinder care center or a family group home, that's fine. But if they also choose to purchase childcare from a faith-based provider there is no obligation that the faith-based provider change the way they deliver the service.

Now, by removing barriers to faith-based providers the President is not just helping more Americans receive the social services they need. He is also giving them more choice in where to receive those services. Millions of Americans do look to faith communities for guidance and support in matters of family and marriage, and so therefore the faith-based community has an integral role to play in strengthening healthy marriages in our nation. But we do have to make sure they understand as they get direct aid from the Federal Government, through this initiative, there is a deal, and the deal is binding.

As President Bush has said, "Renewing marriage depends on renewing the inward things of the heart, mutual respect and cooperation, support and affirmation, love and emotion. Healthy marriages are not always possible, but we must remember they are incredibly important for children. Our hearts know this and our nation must recognize this." I couldn't have said it better myself.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

DR. NATHAN: Thank you very much, Wade. Both speakers are helping us get inside this subject matter in a very good way. I will introduce our third speaker and then Theodora as the discussant -- and try to keep this on schedule so there'll be Q&A time and comment time.

Our next speaker is Brad Wilcox. He's an Assistant Professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, a fellow at the University of Pennsylvania Center on Research on Religion. He's published in American Sociological Review, Social Forces, other journals, the Washington Post, the LA Times, CBS News -- this man gets around. Brad is the author of "Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands." His research interests include the influence of religious beliefs and practice on marriage, cohabitation, parenting and fatherhood. He received his Ph.D. from a place I have experience with, Princeton University, so he's got to be really smart.

Let's hear from Brad.

DR. W. BRADFORD WILCOX: Thanks, Dick. And thanks also to Wade Horn for helping to fund the research that I'm talking about this morning.

As all of you know, the last four decades have witnessed a dramatic retreat from marriage in the United States. Now, this retreat has been driven both by economic developments, things like de-industrialization, and cultural developments, things like the sexual revolution. And these developments worked in concert with one another in the 1960s and the 1970s to weaken two central pillars of marriage: the economic resources and the moral norms that sustain marriage as an institution.

Now, the poor, the working class and minorities have paid the biggest price for the weakening of these two pillars, and slide two indicates the consequences of this retreat from marriage. The data here is from the Fragile Families survey, which Wade mentioned just a moment ago, which comes from Princeton and Columbia Universities, and it's focusing on 20 cities in the U.S. and it's representative of all new parents, parents who have just had an infant in the U.S. in a city of 200,000 people or more.

What we see in slide two is that a large minority of mothers, 44 percent to be precise, in our nation's cities now give birth to children outside of marriage. And to put this another way, we're seeing enormous fragility now in one of the most important social institutions in the lives of urban children, especially among African American kids, as the slide makes clear.

But urban churches remain an important source of social order and meaning in urban America. As slide three indicates, about one-third of unwed mothers attend church frequently, that is several times a month or more, as do 47 percent of married mothers. These are all women who have given birth basically between 1998 and 2000. We can also see from the slide that church attendance rates are higher among, obviously, married mothers and also among African American mothers. So in spite of the fragility of urban family life, churches continue to play a central role in urban American communities and among urban parents.

What about the nexus of church and family? In the nation as a whole there's a fairly strong relationship between religious practice and marriage as an institution, and my research is trying to figure out if this relationship still holds in urban America. Well, it turns out that basically it does. As the next slide here indicates, we can see that mothers who are regular churchgoers are 73 percent more likely to be married at birth compared to those who are not regular churchgoers. We can also see that among married urban mothers, those who are regular churchgoers are 20 percent more likely to report that they have an excellent relationship with their husband. And I give you just some baseline information, here too, that we see before -- 56 percent of urban births are to married mothers and 30 percent of the married mothers in our sample report excellent relationships.

Now, what about the effect of religion on unmarried mothers in urban America? Well, here also we see a link with both marriage and higher quality relationships. So comparing

unmarried mothers who attend church infrequently or not at all to those who attend regularly, those who attend regularly are 70 percent more likely to marry after a non-marital birth. This is within the first year of a non-marital birth.

Now, as Wade noted earlier, it's important, though, to note the benchmark here and that is that only 11 percent of unmarried mothers marry a year after a non-martial birth. So we're talking about a boost of about four percentage points. So, for instance, the marriage rate would be about 8 or 9 percent among those who do not attend church regularly, and about 12 or 13 percent among those who do attend church regularly. So it definitely is a big boost. In fact, in the models that I run, it's one of the biggest boosters in terms of other factors. But we're still talking about a small percentage of unmarried mothers who are marrying within that first year.

We can also see that churchgoing, unmarried mothers are 70 percent more likely to rate their relationships with the fathers of their children as excellent. But here, once again, only 11 percent of unmarried mothers are reporting excellent relationships with the father of their children, so it's a fairly small percentage once again and this is three years after the birth of their child.

I should also mention here that there are some variations by race and gender in my research, and this is research that's ongoing, as we speak, this summer. First of all, the effects tend to be stronger for African Americans. And I think what's gone on here is the black churches play a particularly salient role in the lives of urban residents, especially more Evangelical or Pentecostal churches like the Church of God and Christ.

I also find the effects tend to be stronger for fathers. That is, when I include the religious attendance rates of fathers into my models, those effects tend to be stronger. And I think we have to acknowledge here that in general -- this is across all of American society -- men tend to have weaker ties to their families, to women. And unlike work, television, the local football stadium and the like, religion is one of the few institutions that pushes men in the direction of their families. And so I think what's happening here, and I argue this actually in my book too, is that religion "domesticates" men in ways that make them more attentive to the ideals and aspirations of their families.

So just another word on trying to explain the effects that I'm seeing in my research. And there are a couple of things I think you can associate with regular religious practice. The first thing to note is that there are a certain set of behaviors and norms that are often encouraged in a religious context. The first one is that we're seeing higher levels of support and sacrifice on the part of religious fathers. This helps to explain some of the effects that we're seeing. We also see less conflict over sexual fidelity, which is also a big issue in many urban relationships. And, thirdly, we see more commitment to norms about marriage. For instance, churchgoing mothers

are much more likely to report that marriage is the ideal setting for the rearing of children than mothers who do not attend church regularly.

I also think -- and I haven't actually been able to test this yet in my analyses, but just looking at the literature on religion, and this goes with remarks that John made earlier -- that attendance provides social and spiritual support to adults -- to parents in this case -- which can help buffer against the stresses they encounter in their daily lives, particularly things like poverty, racism and community disorder. They have a sense that their brothers and sisters in the local church or that God is behind them. That can help them deal with the challenges they face more readily. Of course, that has positive implications for how they approach their intimate relationships.

The second point that I would make is that attendance helps urban parents and others to reject what sociologist Elijah Anderson calls "the code of the street." By that, he means a code where drug use, where self-assertion, where violent conflict are often the name of the day. And, of course, this code of the street is not conducive to good relationships. Instead, as he argues, urban churches often uphold a host of, quote, "decent," unquote, norms and behaviors: things like hard work, delayed gratification and charity. And these norms and behaviors in turn promote good relationships rather than fractious ones.

So what we've seen here thus far is that religious participation is associated with transitions into marriage and also with better relationships. But it's important to note that other work I've done indicates that only a minority of congregations actually have formal marriage programming, things like couple retreats, marriage classes, support groups and the like. The National Congregation Study, for instance, indicates that 18 percent of congregations have some type of marriage or parenting program. So only a relatively small minority of congregations in urban America actually have a formal program. Now, this is not covering things like sermons, informal counseling. We're talking about formal programs, so we're not capturing the whole spectrum here. But it is interesting to note that currently only 18 percent of urban congregations have a formal program.

But there is interest in relationship programs. Now, this data comes from the Fragile Families Study, once again, of parents in urban America, both married and unmarried, and we can see that about 55 percent of mothers are interested in a generic relationship program. And the way the question is phrased suggests that it's probably a secular one. They are also asked about whether or not they'd be willing to attend or are interested in attending a religiously-based relationship program. We can see here that about 66-67 percent of both married and unmarried mothers would be interested in attending such a program.

I should also note that this interest in the religious programs is higher among African American mothers, and the interest for both the secular and the religious programs is slightly lower among the fathers in the survey. So women, African Americans, are more interested in these programs than are men and folks from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

So my work suggests that churches are moral and social bulwarks of marriage in communities where the institution of marriage faces serious challenges. They foster virtues and

values and offer the social and communal support that sustain countless good marriages in urban communities. These marriages often get lost in our focus on urban problems, of course. But this research also suggests that there is more to be done. A majority of married and unmarried mothers report they would attend a religiously-based relationship program if they had the opportunity to do so. But these programs are currently rare.

My own hope is that churches, with the help of private and public funding and other support, can meet this interest in marriage with a range of creative programs. Such programs will not be a silver bullet, given the array of economic and cultural challenges that urban parents face. But given the central role that religious institutions have played in the collective life of urban American, churches could play a key role in stemming and perhaps reversing the retreat from marriage that has devastated all too many urban communities.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

DR. NATHAN: Thank you very much. When you said that 18 percent of the churches have marriage programs, I whispered to Wade, well, he's got a lot to work with. You said that's a low number and it strikes me the same way.

What we're going to do now is I'm going to introduce our discussant and then Wade Horn is going to have to leave probably before we get into the discussion time.

So, Diann, listen up. What Wade said is that if there are questions about the Healthy Marriage Initiative that Wade talked about, you could come up and join the panel for that. So pay really close attention.

And I'm now going to call on our discussant and we'll march ahead. Theodora Ooms is senior policy analyst for the Center for Law and Social Policy, CLASP. She joined CLASP in September 1999 to work on couples and marriage policy, providing information, education, consultation and technical assistance to federal, state and local public officials and others about emerging policy and program strategies to strengthen couples and marriage. In particular, Theodora maintains a special focus on low income and welfare populations. She began her career as a social worker, family therapist and mental health administrator working with children and families and community agencies at the ground level in New Haven and Philadelphia.

For 18 years she was executive director of the Family Impact Seminar, a nonpartisan policy institute with a reputation for providing balanced and timely information on a range of family policy topics. She's done a lot of work on much neglected family policy issues, has edited books and articles. She received a B.A. from Oxford, a Master of Social Work from the University of Connecticut. So Theodora is going to make comments about what we've heard and what she thinks we should have heard, and then there will be time for discussion.

And if Wade has to leave, Diann, we'll ask you to join the panelists to respond to questions.

Theodora, thank you very much.

MS. THEODORA OOMS: Very glad to be here. It's fun to be the final person in a way because I wrote a long series of comments and I've been cutting them all out because some of the other panelists have said many of the things that I thought needed to be said, they probably would say, and they've said them very well. So I'll try and pick out some things that I think they haven't said, I might add, before we get to discussion. Two small points, picking up on two of the panelists, though, before I forget them.

John, I just wanted to mention that you make this distinction between the faith-based programs tapping into the moral values, and the secular, more the skills. What's interesting in the marriage education field is that many of the leaders are now talking a lot more, not just about skills, but about what I would call "secular morality," or attitudes of commitment and faithfulness and how without those two values in a relationship, skills are really irrelevant. So I think there is an interesting point.

And the thing I've always wanted to ask you, Brad, because I love your data is, do you have the data on the fathers', men's church attendance, because I think that's one of the big issues facing the FBOs is how to get the men and fathers, particularly in the inner cities, but in general, into the church and into the services? But maybe you can answer those later.

Okay. We've heard a lot of good reasons, which I won't repeat, about why the faith-based sector, which we're talking about very loosely as meaning a lot of different kinds of organizations, has a special opportunity, a special responsibility towards this strengthening marriage agenda. And the expectation, I think, is that they would be in the vanguard of this marriage movement. I actually like the phrase that Brad uses, which is the "renaissance of marriage" more than a movement. But whatever is going on, you would think that the faith-based organizations are out there in front.

One of the surprises I had in trying to study what is going on here, and I have also been out doing some consulting in the real world, put it that way, in states and communities, is that on the whole they have not considered strengthening marriage to be part of their mission. Churches do not, and that was a surprise to me. There is very little systematic information, I think all the panelists would agree, about what churches are actually doing in this area. We have a lot of good stories and anecdotes and individual examples of churches, particularly, doing some very wonderful things in this area: innovative premarital preparation, marriage enrichment weekends, marriage couple mentors, crisis counseling, divorce counseling, stepparent counseling. There's clearly a lot of exciting examples of programs going on in churches. But I think it's fair to say that they are the big exception. In many communities, there is none of this going on; in many churches, there's none of this going on.

You quoted a study, Brad, 18 percent. Somewhere I saw similar data, maybe it was just about marriage preparation, that it's an even smaller number, only about 7 percent, of Catholic and mainline evangelical Protestant churches offering formal marriage preparation. And in African-American churches, it's even smaller. So I think we find that, with notable exceptions, we're talking more about the promise and the potential than we are about the actuality.

The second surprise to me, perhaps, was that, as I've been tracking this, it's actually the government sector which has assumed the main leadership role. And that's a focus of this study that you have out there. We tried to describe what we could find out about what government-related activities are going on in the states. That could be government as funder or as sponsor or partner. And really quite a lot of different things have been going on since the mid '90s at the local and state level. Most recently, largely because of the leadership of Wade Horn and his colleagues, the Federal Government has taken an enormous interest and clearly a tremendous leadership role.

Why I say this is surprising is that, until recently, marriage was the "M" word in policy circles. And those of us who are interested in it, and people have been interested in marriage for a long time, had a very hard time getting it on the public agenda. Marriage and government were considered strange bedfellows. So now you suddenly find that the government is taking a big role. There are still many people skeptical about this, some actively opposing it. And I think some of the folks, at least on the progressive side -- and that's the side that I work with much of the time -- are worried that this really is a movement of the conservative religious evangelists who are trying to impose their version of what marriage should be on others. And I hear that said over and over again, and Wade keeps saying, it's not. And you should be saying it's not, because it's not, what we are saying it's not that. But it is a fear and I think you have to acknowledge that over and over again.

I think John Bartkowski has done some very interesting work on this whole issue about internal debate within the faith community of gender roles within marriage and how the faith community itself is having discussions about that. I should also say, we haven't mentioned it, but I do feel that this debate about same sex marriage is sort of drowning out this other discussion that we're all having, and certainly I think that's true in the faith community. I'm not going to talk about it, but I just wanted to put it out there as something that you're all probably aware of.

The third surprise is, I think, the recent efforts to develop stronger partnerships between government and faith-based efforts are actually so far having quite a limited impact. Now, it could be because it's very new. The Charitable Choice legislation, although it removed many barriers, aimed at leveling the playing field. I think your own Rockefeller report last fall said there's not been a significant difference in the participation of FBOs in the social service sector since 1996, even in those states that have embraced Charitable Choice.

So I think we still have a long way to go. But, in my cursory scan I was trying to find some of the states that have funded faith-based organizations to do charitable under Charitable Choice and it does seem that the FBOs are much readier to apply for funding to deliver non-

controversial services to help the homeless, set up food pantries, provide child care, do youth programming, than they are to strengthen marriage. I actually couldn't find any examples; I'm sure there are some, but they're not obvious.

It's important to note, though, that marriage was listed as one of the topics that could be addressed in the new round of proposals for the Compassion Capital funding -- I thought it was worth mentioning. And I assume we're going to see some marriage proposals coming out this year, and my sense is that there are a number of people who will be applying to that program.

Seven of the states in our report are doing the most on marriage -- Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia – and only two, Oklahoma and Michigan, have actually reached out to significantly involve the faith sector in the marriage initiatives. Someone will probably quickly say, "what about Louisiana and the common marriage law," and I didn't really count that because although it happened largely as a result of the passionate feelings of two very religious people, Representative Tony Perkins and Katherine Spaht, a family lawyer, the initiative was -- and it has a very strong faith component to the law in the sense that it's a covenant -- initially opposed, very strongly opposed by the Roman Catholic Church. Since then, Louisiana has done a number of other things which are not at all faith-based.

However, having made those rather broad statements, there is quite a lot going on in the faith community sort of behind the stage or in the wings, most of which at this point are independent of government, but I think they're getting ready to get more connected with government. I have to say that in 200 communities -- Michael McManus isn't here -- he would cut my throat. (Laughs.) But I must say in 200 communities, religious leaders have gotten together to sign these community marriage policies, in which they pledge to require serious marriage preparation before they will perform the marriage ceremony, to strengthen their marriage ministries overall.

FBOs are also becoming involved and, with the encouragement of the ACF, becoming part of community healthy marriage coalitions. And a small number of these are receiving Federal funding, and I won't go over the other ways. Wade already mentioned that some of the funding that they've already been putting out does have some faith sector components to it. The refugee services would be a strong one too.

I wanted to mention briefly some of the reasons why I think there hasn't been an easier connection and some of the barriers between churches and the government on this issue. And I want to also acknowledge the help of Dr. Robert Franklin of Emory University who has been particularly interested, with the support of the Casey Foundation, in trying to understand the perspective of the African American clergy and I'll try to give a couple of examples from what he's been learning.

Don Browning has said, I think, in the past, that one reason he thinks the mainline Protestant denominations have not been doing much in this area is that since the 60's their kind of dominant ethic was what he calls "expressive liberation," an ethic which encouraged the FBOs to focus on social justice issues and encourage greater acceptance and tolerance of multiple lifestyles and family structures. I think we've seen that in America overall.

As has been said, marriage is a controversial and sensitive subject. It's talking about private personal behavior, so it's not surprising, perhaps, that across faiths and denominations, religious leaders are afraid that talking about the importance of marriage or decrying divorce or out of wedlock childbearing from their pulpits or in other ways, this will stigmatize and alienate the increasing numbers of separated, divorced and single parents in their congregations. Hence, there is what people refer to as a widespread conspiracy of silence about these family issues among many in the faith sector. This reluctance seems to be particularly strong in the African American community.

Another issue often cited is that pastors and ministers are overwhelmed by all the relationship and marriage crises in their congregation, and they feel quite inadequate to respond to them appropriately. Another surprise to me was that in seminary they get very little training, even in one-on-one counseling, but they certainly learn nothing about marriage preparation programs or marriage support programs and things that many of us are now trying to encourage. And pastors, particularly in the smaller churches, absolutely don't have the time or energy or resources to set up some of these new marriage support programs.

Again, an often repeated observation is that many pastors' own marriages are quite troubled. It's a profession that, not surprisingly, places great stress on the pastor's own family. After all, he's never there at the weekends and he's often helping his members of the congregation in the evenings and he's not at home -- he or she. Thus, it's difficult for them to set themselves up as a role model for healthy marriages for their congregation.

In the African American community, particularly, I've learned the church has a uniquely high status, and the pastor's often put on a pedestal, so it's difficult for them to admit that they need help or further training, and -- this is interesting -- to delegate responsibilities to members, to lay members, which may happen in some of the other churches such as running a marriage education program or a mentoring program.

And in the focus groups Bob Franklin conducted, several of the African American pastors pointed out that there were a number of historical reasons for the communities' initial distrust of a government-driven marriage agenda. And some said they were tired of the government turning to the faith community to fix society's problems and also were alienated by the marriage issue being used in the sort of partisan political battles.

That being said, what is really encouraging in many of these meetings, the African American leaders present, the pastors and other leaders, Eleanor Holmes Norton was very eloquent about this the other day, she said, we are and we need to address this issue in the black community. And they have had some very thoughtful and interesting ideas about how to do this.

And you have a great resource, Diann Dawson, who had a meeting, I think in Chicago, of pastors on this subject as part of the African-American Healthy Marriage Initiative. So when I put out some of these reasons for barriers, I don't mean this is discouraging, it's just, let's be honest and frank about some of the barriers that we need to overcome. But I sense, within the African-American community, that we have to get into this and start working with each other as well as start working with the government.

While the voices of the African American community are now being more openly expressed, I haven't heard very much on the national level from the Latino community. I'm very glad that the government is beginning to work on the Latino Initiative, because you certainly hear from the community level that a lot of Latino leaders and pastors are very, very disturbed about what's happening to the marriage institution in their communities, and they need help.

I wanted to mention two other things that perhaps weren't mentioned before I try to give you two or three examples which you can look at, I think, for some promising models of how this collaboration could work. I think one of the reasons why the faith-based community might be reluctant to go for federal funding is that they're inexperienced in writing grant proposals, many of them, reluctant to submit to the strings that come along with government funding -- all the layers of bureaucracy they have to deal with, the additional work, complying with the government budgeting, accounting and auditing requirements -- these are all familiar, but they're particularly true, I hear, for these FBOs, who for the first time are contemplating getting government help. Evaluation requirements that might threaten the privacy of members of their congregation, and the constant oversight and intrusiveness that creates some barriers for them. Certainly they have to think about how to work through them.

The faith sector and the government sector represent two very different cultures, and they're learning to work together. And it can be really challenging. I think there are some frustrating experiences out there, but there are also some real successes.

I just wanted to give you one small example. It's very benign, but one of these FBOs which has government funding says, we're constantly being overseen by different people in the government who want to find out what's happening. In one week, they had 15 government officials visiting their project to find out what was happening. That was exciting, in a way, to get all that attention, but you could see it's hard to get the work done and it's also hard to maintain the trust of the community. So these are one of the things that have to be worked out.

I'll just mention that in my report I think three of the very interesting new initiatives that are working have slowly begun involving FBOs in their strengthening marriage initiatives, but without direct government funding of the churches. It seems to be another way to do it using intermediaries or doing other things.

The Greater Grand Rapids Initiative -- and I could talk for a long time about that -- the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and also Families Northwest. They haven't gotten government funding yet. Families Northwest is in the state of Washington, and you can read about in our report; it brought up another cultural issue here. Jason Krafsky heads up the Families Northwest technical assistance and training effort to work with groups of churches and communities where

they have said, they've signed a community marriage agreement, we want to do something to strengthen marriage. He says, as we work with them to implement this commitment, we find that they have to fundamentally develop a new paradigm for how to work themselves.

Generally, churches operate pretty autonomously. They're isolated from other churches, they develop their own programs and they're very focused on meeting the needs of their congregation. What the Healthy Marriage Initiative is asking them to do is to not be competitive. And they are often competitive, for members of the congregation. They're like entrepreneurs, in a way, and it's unusual for them to work together. Now, there are broad generalization there are exceptions, but this is the kind of dominant thing that he finds. What Families Northwest has to do -- and it takes a long time -- is to first bring the churches together to agree that this marriage crisis, if you would like, they all have a stake in this marriage crisis.

They can't work on it one-by-one in their isolated environment. They have to start developing a new paradigm and stop being competitive and isolated and start working together. And that requires doing things like strategic planning. Let's look at what kind of resources we have in our community. Where are the gaps? How can we not duplicate each other but really complement what's going on?

One church in a couple of the communities offers a program for step parenting that members of other churches can come to. Another one will focus primarily on programs for youth. And I think it's that kind of bridging of the walls between the churches that is really exciting and has potential, and I think anything that the government can do to help understand that it takes a long time for churches to change their system and their culture, but they can do it and I think it's beginning to happen.

Nice to talk to you.

(Applause.)

DR. NATHAN: I think all four of our speakers did themselves proud. And I'm going to ask them to stay at the microphones, and I'm going to ask Wade, because he has to leave in just a few minutes, if he would like to make any comments about things he's heard or other things he'd like to add, and then I'll ask Diann to come up and take his place, and invite everyone to join in the discussion. We have about 30 minutes or so and we want to use it to best advantage.

Wade?

DR. HORN: Well, thank you very much. I do apologize for having to leave. I came here from a Head Start conference talking about the future of Head Start, and I'm talking about marriage, and I've got to catch a plane and go up to New York to give a speech at the United Nations on eradicating poverty among the least developed countries. My life is full.

First of all, I want to thank Dick for putting this roundtable together. I think it's really quite important. I think it's important as a forum to both move the agenda forward while sort of

clarifying what the agenda is about, both from the government's perspective, and also from the perspective of faith-based organizations.

We have discovered in our work over the last two years with coalitions of faith-based organizations, much of what Theo talks about -- that getting faith-based organizations to come together in community coalitions -- is not easy work. It's not impossible work either, but it's not easy. And it takes a while to go through a strategic planning process to help them understand that this is an issue that a concerted effort, as opposed to isolated efforts, is probably better suited for.

But also, Dick, they need a lot of help in understanding that the President's Faith-Based Initiative, outside of the president's Healthy Marriage Initiative, is not simply about providing money to faith-based organizations to do faith-based work. And that is to say that they often have an idea that what this is about is giving me more money so I can just do what I'm already doing.

That may be fine, that may be accurate, so long as what they're doing is providing social services in a way that doesn't violate those two no's that we talk about -- no proselytizing and no discrimination in the delivery of services. And I think that some of them, it's not that they're trying to skirt the issues of church and state, they're not trying to be clever, they just need a lot of help in understanding where that line is. And so we spend a lot of our time helping them understand where that line is.

The final thing I'd say is that one of the lessons we've learned in the last three years, whether it's with faith-based organizations or not, is that this really is new work. And, you know, we're all kind of learning together, again, not from zero knowledge but from less than perfect knowledge.

One of the things we've discovered is giving three year grants doesn't work in this area, because it's not like if you give someone a three year grant they can pull a curriculum off the shelf; they have the models out there on how to put this all together. It often takes them a year and a half to two years just to get going. And with a three year grant, suddenly they're in sort of phase-down mode.

You know, after two years, you get into the middle of the third year and now you're worrying about shut-down mode. So what we've discovered is that it makes more sense to provide longer time periods, probably five years, as a more optimal grant period. Again, not just for faith-based, but secular work as well.

But we also find that in our community coalitions you have to pay attention to the referral network. This isn't a "Field of Dreams" sort of activity where if we build it they will come.

That what you have to do is make sure that in your coalition are groups that have natural contact with and the confidence of those that you want to intersect with. And so we have discovered, for example, that partnering with Head Start programs is a very effective way of reaching out to young families that may be interested in these kinds of services. And in those areas where we've done that, for example, we see lots of referrals.

In other areas where they've concentrated just on developing the service then throwing up a poster, you know, in rec halls and so forth, they invariably have very few people coming. And churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship and faith-based organizations have this kind of natural connection and the confidence of, as best demonstrated by the fact that this is where people turn to in the time of need.

I will end with a small story, actually about a secular group of people, that impacted us. And I spoke with 50 CEOs of fairly major companies and they all wanted to know how they could help with the President's Healthy Marriage Initiative. And I asked them, I said, "do you run an employee assistance program?" And they all raised their hand. And I said, "in your employment assistance program, do you have services for people who have drug and alcohol programs?" They all raised their hand.

I said, "do you have programs for your employees that are dealing with issues related to depression, mental health problems," and about three-quarters raised their hand. "And how many of you deal with post-divorce issues, single parenting?" and about a quarter raised their hand. And I said, "how many of you have a program in your place, business program to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages through marriage education?" And nobody raised their hand. And I said, "don't you realize that a lot of those problems are contributed to by the breakdown of marriages and unhealthy and dysfunctional marriages?"

So I was feeling very smug and bright and smart, you know. And I was flying back to Washington DC, and I have this terrible habit of having this very smart executive assistant travel with me. And he turned to me and he said, "Wait. You have an employment assistance program, don't you?" And I said, "I don't like where this is going." And so we got back and we developed a pilot program to provide marriage education through our Employment Assistance Program and the Administration of Children and Families, not just at headquarters, but in all our regional offices. And this is a pilot program, not just for HHS, but in the entire Federal Government to see if this is something the government employers are interested in.

I bring this up because of the fascinating data from Brad that only 18 percent -- it's not that 18 percent of marriage education services only, it's marriage or parenting. And that shocks me. I mean, parenting is a lot safer that marriage education is. And my guess is if you were going into marriage education, it's got to be a percentage that's going to be very, very low.

I think that at the very least, we as a culture, ought to be working with congregations of faith to say this is something that people say they want. And whether you partner with the federal government or not, you should at least talk to your congregations about whether you think this would be helpful to them.

My guess is that if we get over the sort of conspiracy of silence that Theo talks about, many of them will start to do it. And I hope do it in a way that ultimately is beneficial not just to the couples but to their kids.

With that I do have to leave, thank you.

(Applause.)

DR. NATHAN: Thank you, Wade.

Comments, questions from the audience? And you can address them to a particular person if you wish, and Diann will join us at the table. Thank you, Wade.

Hi to Andy Bush. Welcome home, Andy.

Chip Lupu.

MR. CHIP LUPU: Yeah, thanks Dick. I'm Chip Lupu from George Washington University Law School and I'm involved with the Roundtable as a legal analyst. And this question is for John and -- it's Diann, is it, who's just sat in for Wade Horn?

John, I was really struck in listening to your account of the program in Mississippi, by the distinction between, as you described it, secular programs that are doing skills teaching about parenting or about marriage, and faith-based programs that you described as designed to be transformative -- inside-out, changing people's ways of being as a way then to get them to be better spouses or better parents. And, of course, the transformative programs, as you described them, had significant religious inspiration and religious content. And, of course, my perspective on many of these issues has to do with church-state separation, First Amendment concerns.

The first part of the question is for you. Are those transformative programs being directly funded by the state of Mississippi? That's the first part. The second part is are you, the public officials, or the faith-based providers sensitive to the kinds of constitutional issues that paying for that kind of transformation suggests?

The part that's for Diann is, I'm wondering about this definition of no proselytizing in directly financed programs and I'm wondering whether these transformative programs that John describes would or wouldn't fall under what you consider impermissible proselytizing?

DR. NATHAN: John?

DR. BARTKOWSKI: Yes, they are funded by the state. I do have concerns as a researcher and a citizen and specifically as somebody who would be sensitive to issues of religious pluralism or even nonreligious affiliation. The idea in the program is that faith is not forced on anyone, so that transformation is something that is initiated on the participant's part. I still think you bring forward a very important issue.

But family educator after family educator would simply say that, you know, this is something that's a resource that's made available to people, kind of like a menu of options that is expanded in faith-based programs where faith is one of the additional resources available to participants and it's not forced on anyone.

But as I say, that's counterbalanced by the evangelical emphasis on, you know, Biblical instruction, using the Bible and treating the Bible as a sacred text and interpreting it in a certain way that's consonant with evangelical convention. So certainly I have concerns about that. But I think that that's something that needs to be discussed and debated more. In the rural South, in particular, there is such a strong evangelical emphasis that I think that questions of pluralism are a lot less salient to people in some of the programs there. Whereas, in a major metropolitan area with a more religiously diverse group of people, those issues may be more readily discussed.

DR. NATHAN: Diann, did you want to make a comment?

MS. DIANN DAWSON: Well, I think to echo Wade, first of all this is new work and so we really haven't had an opportunity to kind of look at some of the programs in terms of that dimension, in terms of federal funding. I think the 11-15 waiver project in Iowa with Northwest Families is one that we're looking at very closely and making sure that the work with that organization certainly makes that distinction.

You know, what we've spent most of our time doing is trying to educate those in the faith community about the work that needs to be done and the fact that, as Wade said it -- if you choose to work in this area, there is a deal. And I think that one of the things that we've been trying to stress is that we have to make sure that those faith and state connections -- are clearly separate. But it's new work so a lot of it is, as we move forward, is to make sure that nobody crosses that line.

DR. NATHAN: That's a critical question. I'm going to ask other people, but Diann and Brad will get into this, I'm sure.

David, who's next?

MS. CAROLE THOMPSON: Good morning. My name is Carole Thompson and I'm with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. I know many of you and want to commend you on the excellent work you're doing in this field. I wanted to raise a couple of points and ask for some clarification.

Brad, if you could talk about the size of your sample of black churches that led to your 18 percent, I think that would be helpful because, as I recall, it was a very small sample out of the whole study.

It's a matter of semantics. If you ask if you run marriage education programs, churches may say, no. If you ask do you have a ministry that brings people together in holy matrimony or, you know, for family formation, not on sociological terms, but in more terms that are familiar with them, they will talk about what they do to promote marriage.

The other point is, Brad, your comment on "domesticating" males. As you recall, that term really sent, particularly African-American pastors that were in our forum, off the wall. And it gets to a matter of using sociological terms that can be misinterpreted by the African-American community. Thus, men particularly felt like they were insulted, like they were wild animals to be domesticated. You know, simple use of those kind of terms can set the policy agenda off.

And the third point I wanted to make is the point that Ron Mincy made recently at a conference in Baltimore, that it is not the message, but the messenger that may be distracting or causing cynicism within the African-American community.

And, Diann, I wanted to ask you what has been your success in cultivating national partners at the top levels of the historically black churches, of the sororities and the fraternities? I know you've gotten some individual chapters, but without getting some of the godfathers onboard that would help promote this idea and bring a sense that it is not owned by the Right, it is not an attempt to undermine other efforts within the black community?

Thank you.

DR. NATHAN: I'll call on Brad and then Diann.

DR. WILCOX: Thanks, Carole. In terms of the first question and the issue of semantics, actually the percentage of congregations that are historic black congregations -- predominantly black congregations -- they actually have a lower percentage than 18 percent. The 18 percent applies to all urban congregations, so we're talking Catholic, mainline Protestant, black church, et cetera. So the figure actually would be lower if we're talking just about African-American churches.

MS. THOMPSON: How many?

DR. WILCOX: Well, the size of the sample overall in the U.S. is around -- it's around 1,100 congregations and for the --

MS. THOMPSON: Black churches?

DR. WILCOX: Would be around 200 for the black churches, yeah.

MS. THOMPSON: That's what I mean. That is small.

DR. WILCOX: Yeah. It's a smaller sample, but it's culled from a nationally representative survey.

With regards to the language, you make a good point. I'm, of course, using domestic in the sense of household; domos being the Latin word for house and, you know, something which tries to signal something that's turning men's attention towards their households, towards their families. And if anyone has a better word, I'd be happy to take it.

MS. DAWSON: Well, as you know, Carole, we have spent a considerable amount of time in the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative trying to communicate with the community, to educate about the benefits of marriage, healthy marriage. And while we have had certainly tremendous responsiveness from the communities, the work that we've been doing in terms of, as you call them, the godfather organizations, I think we have begun to make a dent there. Like anything else you start to look at, well, who's doing this work? And I count the people on your hands who are doing the outreach and it just takes time.

But I do say that one of the things that I have been very, very pleased about -- and you talk about the messenger -- as we go out and we talk to our community about the concerns and the issues of family breakdown, there's nobody who disagrees with that. Everybody knows we've got issues that we need to deal with. And when we talk with the mothers, we talk with the fathers, I think it's significant that the fatherhood movement has some issues politically in terms of this agenda. But when they talk about the role of the fathers and connecting to their families, there aren't any disagreement on these issues.

So I think that what I have hopes for is that as we continue the dialogue in the community, that the organizations that have been somewhat reticent to join the discussion, that they will come to the table and bring their contributions to this discussion. I think, as Wade has said this is not about trying to undermine or anything about single parent families. We know that single parent families have done an heroic job. But we also know the devastation in our communities by not having families connected, moms and dads connected to their children. And I happen to believe that marriage is the best institution for our children to grow up in. So we'll just continue the dialogue.

DR. NATHAN: Question right there with the microphone. And we'll try to get as many as we can.

MS. HONOR CARPENTER: Hi. My name is Honor Carpenter. I'm with the Family Violence Prevention Fund here in DC and my question relates to domestic violence in the context of marriage promotion programs, and Dr. Horn mentioned it and I believe one of the other panelists expressed a concern about the safety of victims of domestic violence.

My question is, how does that concern and the awareness -- knowing as we do that 30 to 60 percent of TANF recipients experience domestic violence over the course of their lifetime -- and some rates are as high as 80 percent in some studies. How does that concern that we have and the statement that this will be addressed, how does that translate into both policy and practice? And how, either in existing programs or in future programs under the administration's Healthy Marriage Initiative, will these concerns be implemented? What kind of safeguards are going to be put in place to protect victims of domestic violence and ensure that no woman is ever encouraged to remain with or marry an abusive partner?

Thank you.

DR. NATHAN: Who would like to respond? Brad, we'll start with you.

DR. WILCOX: Just one point about that -- just given the religious piece in this whole discussion of domestic violence -- and that is that I think it's important to note that there are at least low reports of domestic violence among folks who are regularly attending religious services. And part of what's going here, I think in large part, is just being in a community where there are social networks, people who are, in a sense, looking over your shoulder and being accountable to that network and realizing that if things are happening in a relationship that are destructive, there would be people probably in some way making comments or trying to intervene on some levels.

I think the religious context in large part can be helpful. Of course, there is also the prohibition of divorce in some communities, which can also be destructive. So there's kind of a double-edged sword here. But I just wanted to make that kind of empirical point.

DR. NATHAN: Theodora?

MS. OOMS: I'm glad you raised it. I think it's a huge issue in the marriage agenda. In the communities where I think there really is some promising, constructive initiatives going on, domestic violence folks are at the table as part of the coalition and/or as part of the training. And this is a part of education. And I think in terms of faith-based organization, this is an area that

ministers, pastors, lay members need a lot of education about. The marriage movement leaders, marriage educators, marriage therapists don't know a lot about domestic violence. Similarly, the people I know in domestic violence don't know very much about marriage education.

So I feel that anything the government can do to sponsor, promote, build incentives, whatever, require even, this initiatives to involve the domestic violence community, not just on paper but in reality, is needed to make sure that these initiatives really do promote healthy marriage.

DR. NATHAN: John and then Diann.

DR. BARTKOWSKI: Very quickly, there's reams of sociological research that shows that incidence of domestic violence is higher in cohabiting relationships than in marital relationships. And there are different arguments for why that is, that people are differently invested in cohabiting partnerships than in marital relationships. But I think that that's something that needs to be raised is that there is some social scientific evidence on that score, that married relationships create a different context for partners to communicate and connect with one another, which isn't to say they're all free of domestic violence. There are alarmingly high rates, but bearing that in mind.

DR. NATHAN: Diann?

MS. DAWSON: Yes. We know that that's a very important issue that we need to deal with as we are embarking on the Marriage Initiative. One of the things that we have been doing in ACF as we have been working with the various community healthy marriage sites, AHMI sites we also call them, is to make sure that we encourage the communities to reach out to their domestic violence community professionals, invite them to the table. And I have to say that is occurring. We know that one of the things that we are looking at is trying to focus on that particular issue with our youth. And we will be hosting an AHMI forum to address it in the context of the "Hip Hop" culture, because we know there's a lot of violence against women in some of the lyrics and music, et cetera. But this particular "Hip Hop" culture has a lot of influence on young people in relationships. And so that is one of a targeted strategy that we're trying to focus on in terms of getting that information out about looking at the whole area of domestic violence against women. I have to just give you one example of a civic organization in Indiana, the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. This was a civic group that came together to work on the Marriage Initiative and it grew out of an issue around domestic violence with one of their soror. And so, while we know that we want to promote marriage we have to be concerned about how do you address the issues of safety in relationships. And so that is very much a part of the whole conversation.

DR. NATHAN: I see some more questions.

MS. CARY MASIN: My name is Cary Masin and I'm with an organization called Aish Ha Torah. And first of all I just wanted to thank you for coming to speak to us because I'm new to this community. We're an organization that just started with our pro-marriage initiative and so far we've been pretty successful because we've really seen there's a large demand for this

within the secular community. And we're starting to branch now with some government entities. So this has been very informative for me as a newcomer.

I have two questions. The first question is specifically toward Brad and his study and the second one I have is specifically towards Bush's initiative. So Brad, I wanted to know in your sample of religious organizations and churches, I wasn't quite sure if you were just using churches or other religious organizations and if you had any input on those samples from the Jewish communities? And how many others of you have worked specifically with Jewish communities or have seen statistics in their synagogues and other pro-marriage initiatives within those communities?

And the second question with Bush's initiatives, where exactly is the Healthy Marriage Initiative? I understand most of it has been passed but the appropriations money hasn't been appropriated and I wasn't sure if it was held up in the Senate. And is there the backing of senators and congressmen for it or has it been seen as something to just go along with because it was important to the White House?

DR. NATHAN: I'm going to call on Brad and then Theodora do you want to make a comment? Thank you very much.

Brad.

DR. WILCOX: In terms of the national congregations study, it's focusing on congregations, not on any other faith-based organizations. So it's basically asking individual adults in the U.S. if they attend services, you know, where they attend services and then contacting those congregations. So that's where this data is coming from and I'm focusing on a sub-sample of just urban congregations of whom there would be a number of synagogues, but it would be a relatively small number of synagogues.

Fragile Families data, which is representative of urban parents, also has a number of Jewish parents in the sample but they're a fairly small percent of the sample. In fact, there are more Muslims in the sample than there are Jews in the Fragile Families data, but it's predominantly Christian or secular. That was by far the two biggest groups.

DR. NATHAN: Theodora.

MS. OOMS: Just as a resource, if you really are new to the area and you're a bit confused about the president's initiatives, in the introduction to this report you'll find some information. The government's web site, I think, is cited there. In terms of the current status, do you want to mention that, Diann, of the $1.6 billion --

MS. DAWSON: That's fine, go ahead.

MS. OOMS: Well I think it's tied up with the TANF reauthorization bill that is being tied up. And for over a year it's just been operating on continuing resolutions, extensions. And we have just had another one, I guess, that's starting for three months. And if that passes, when that passes, there will be this new flow of money, but this report shows that the government has already spent quite a bit of money in getting some of these initiatives underway.

MS. DAWSON: I would just add what Dr. Horn described as some of the initiatives that we have been doing in ACF, these are out of existing funding streams and have been, I don't know, there's over $6.5 million just last year that was carved out to begin some of the marriage work.

MR. NATHAN: More questions, comments?

MR. DAVID ARNOTO: Yeah, my name is David Arnoto, I work for ACF. I run seven of the marriage initiatives and they all involve broad partnerships with faith-based organizations and I'd say there are very few problems we have encountered. I did encounter one problem with an application where the faith-based groups did not want to ask certain things of their parishioners. But in general, we have been relatively problem free in terms of dealing with faith-based coalitions.

DR. NATHAN: Thank you. We'll take that as a comment and -- another person.

MS. SHARON DALY: Hi, I'm Sharon Daly and I'm with Catholic Charities USA and I have just three brief points I wanted to make. I'm very surprised at the very low percentages that Brad and Theodora mentioned about congregations, including the mainstream Protestant and Catholic organizations, how low the percentages are offering marriage preparation or marriage enrichment. It may be the way you're asking the question.

Typically, Catholic parishes do not offer marriage prep. But, you cannot get married in the Catholic Church anywhere without completing a marriage preparation program that is approved by the Catholic Church. And typically, they're six or eight weeks long.

So, the diocese sponsors them and people who want to get married in a parish are referred to them. That's more typically the model. So that really surprised me, the low numbers. And Catholics also have two kinds of marriage enrichment, one for the couples who are doing well and another for dysfunctional couples, very separate kinds of programs. We don't have data to show that any of these do, you know, make a difference and that's what we all need to find out a lot more about, I think.

Secondly, some of the work that was done in the Catholic Church to encourage people to get married doesn't have anything to do with what we talked about today. There's a parish up in

Silver Spring where they noticed they have all of these Latino immigrant couples who came every Sunday, who had their children in religious ed, but were not married. And the pastor said, "What's up?"

And they said, "Well, we can't afford weddings. We can't afford -- you know, we're sending money back to El Salvador, Guatemala. We're very poor. We can't afford flowers or a dress or an organist."

So, they had group weddings where they set days aside. The parish brought the flowers and they got dresses donated and they did the music. And sometimes it's pretty simple things if you ask people why they're not married. It may not be because they don't know how important marriage is. It may be because -- just simple things like that that could be helpful.

The third thing I wanted to say is I hadn't ever thought about this question until Wade's parting comments. I'm in the business, as many religious organizations are, of trying to tell the government what the government's policies and programs should be. I think that's a model that some people are uncomfortable with but it's pretty well accepted that various religious groups make recommendations about welfare reform or access to health care or whatever.

Now we've seen, I think starting in the Clinton administration with the AIDS Initiative and now in the Bush administration with the Marriage Initiative, government reaching out to churches and telling them what they should be doing, not forcing them, but encouraging them with money. That's a very different model and I'm not saying it shouldn't be done. I think it's a good strategy for both administrations to be reaching out, but it raises basic questions about church-state.

It shouldn't be the business of government to tell a pastor what he should be doing. I mean, making information available, making sure people know the studies like Brad's study that there is a need, a demand for these kinds of things, but nobody at all mentioned this kind of thing that's kind of creeping through our society that's changing. And it's not just about church-state rules or whether you're proselytizing. It's about the role of government basically telling religious organizations what their role in a community is. I think that deserves another roundtable discussion.

DR. NATHAN: Well, I'm going to make a comment myself on one point -- on two points that you made. On your point about needing to know more about the effectiveness of faith-based services, that's a very special strong interest of the Roundtable, to look at organizations, how they differ. They are very different. And then, to set up very careful ways to learn more about what different kinds of groups are doing and then what the effects are of different kinds of approaches and intensity of approach and things about -- once you get inside institutional entities should influence how you think about studying them. And David Wright and others of us at the Roundtable have done a lot of work on that.

Thank you for your comment, the one that was just made. The second thing, you said we should have more roundtables. Don't worry, we will. So you can talk to us about that. I'm

going to just keep going and ask each of the discussants if they want to -- or other speakers if they want to say things before we break up. We're getting towards that time.

Next person.

MS. CAITLIN HORRIGAN, American Humanist Association: Thank you. I have a question for Theodora. And I know you're maybe a little reluctant to bring up this topic so anyone on the panel is free to comment. But I think there are a lot of people like myself who do find a significant irony that the President is funding and paying lip service to Healthy Marriage Initiatives while at the same time trying to block a class of people from getting married who, I think, all it would do would be to stabilize family structure and also decrease stigma and increase rights. So I'm wondering both how you sort of come to remedy this disjoint, or perceived disjoint, and do you know of any people within the community who are actually working both to promote Healthy Marriage Initiatives while still fighting things like the Federal Marriage Amendment?

DR. NATHAN: Theodora, comment? Others at the table?

Theodora.

MS. OOMS: I'm not at all reluctant to talk about it, but it would take hours to have that discussion and I'm not sure that's the purpose of this meeting. I'd be glad to meet with you after. I think that, as I said, I think the same sex marriage discussion, there is a great diversity in the marriage movement on how they feel about it. That's the first thing I want to say. They have, for that reason I think, basically in the Smart Marriages Conference and so on, sort of kept it, tried to keep it off the table. But there are a number of people within the marriage movement who feel on one side and some on the other. So that's one thing.

I think at the moment it is very confusing for people when they hear the president going for one thing. The "New York Times" story made it sound like this Marriage Initiative, the Healthy Marriage Initiative, was the same thing as his trying to ban same sex marriages. So I think it's been confusing and unfortunate from that point of view, whatever you personally feel about that issue. So that's the two things I wanted to say but I'd be glad to talk to you more about it.

DR. NATHAN: It is a big subject.

MS. OOMS: Another subject for a roundtable.

DR. NATHAN: Are there are other questions or comments?

If not, we're already over our time so I thank you all for coming and I very much appreciate the excellent presentations by the people who spoke today.

Thank you. [END OF EVENT.]

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