



June 20, 2016

## Key Themes from Future of the Family Commission, Meetings # 1, 2 and 3

This document provides the Commissioners with a preliminary, organized summary of their discussions from the first three Commission meetings, and identifies key themes that emerged during those meetings as input to subsequent discussions and recommendations to the Governor's Office.

### **Background:**

The first three meetings of the Future of the Family Commission provided background information, current research and expert opinions to the Commissioners, laying an informed foundation for the Commissioners to use when identifying potential recommendations to the Governor's Office. The Commissioners heard presentations by leading experts on these topics:

- **Meeting #1** (January 27, 2016) – History and current state of the American family
- **Meeting #2** (February 23, 2016) - The role of family structure on child well-being, and how family formation affects income/earning potential
- **Meeting #3** (May 5, 2016) - Strong families & prosperous states

Following each expert presentation, the Commissioners reflected on the discussion and identified main points that stood out to them. These reflections included new, relevant or otherwise interesting information, along with various barriers, challenges and problems related to the topic of the day. These **reflections** of the Commissioners are documented in the meeting notes.

### **Document organization:**

This document organizes the notes from meetings # 1, 2 and 3 in the following manner:

- a. Items classified as **reflections** from each of meeting notes are listed in the first column. Items classified as **barriers / challenges / problems** from meeting notes are listed in the middle column. Any potential solutions discussed in those meetings are presented in the last column; this column will be filled in subsequent meetings since very few potential solutions have been discussed so far, by design.
- b. The meeting in which each item in each column originated is shown by the number in parenthesis at the end of that item. For example, (2) at the end of the following item "How do we normalize marriage? (2)" denotes that this item is from meeting #2.
- c. A summary of the expert presentations and discussions for each meeting is provided in Appendix A of this document and also available in the Meeting Notes for each meeting.
- d. The Commissioners asked follow-up questions and requested information after each discussion. Separate documents available on the Commission website are at: [Meeting #1 questions & responses](#) and [Meeting #2 questions & responses](#). These links list the Commissioners' questions and the answers collected by DCF staff.

e. To facilitate the Commissioners' future discussion, the meeting content has been grouped into the following preliminary categories (these could become input for the Commissioners to define topic "buckets" in subsequent sessions). There is considerable overlap among these eight categories:

- I. Marriage
- II. Family complexity
- III. Family planning & success sequence
- IV. Roles and responsibilities of men in forming & sustaining families
- V. Economics
- VI. Education
- VII. Civil society & popular culture influences
- VIII. Contextual items

In meeting #3, the Commissioners organized and labelled their discussion of barriers/challenges/problems; those labels are reflected in bold in the middle column.

- f. The notes from the three meetings have not been edited. However, **at the top** of each category, DCF staff added **key themes** reflected in that column's content.
- g. Each column contains an independent list; item numbers in one column are not related to item numbers in other columns. For example, item #1 in the **reflections** column of "Marriage" is not related to item #1 in the **barriers** column of "Marriage". Therefore, we recommend reading the items within each of the eight categories one column at a time and not across columns.

**Multiple Information Sources:**

For their deliberations going forward, Commissioners also have access to multiple information sources; all are available on the Commission's website:

- Video recordings of each meeting
- Summary notes from each meeting
- Expert presentations
- Answers to Commissioners' questions, compiled by DCF staff
- Key Themes listed in this document

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<b>I. MARRIAGE</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>There is more than one way to define “marriage”.</i></li> <li>b) <i>Assortative marriages are not new.</i></li> <li>c) <i>Marriage has eroded in the middle class. We need to increase the “demand” for marriage.</i></li> <li>d) <i>Marriage is a strong defense against poverty. Strong marriages reduce crime.</i></li> <li>e) <i>Marriage education and child support are important.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are multiple ways to be “married”, even though it might not be called a marriage; for example – cohabitation (1)</li> <li>2. The erosion of marriage among today’s middle class is surprising. We cannot take the institution of marriage for granted even among communities where the marriage rates have been historically high (Latinos, for example). (1)</li> <li>3. Assortative relationships (“marrying your own kind / class”) and marriages accentuate socio-economic inequality – for example, a high-earning professional typically marries another high-earning professional, and a low-earner typically marries another person from the same socio-economic segment of the society. Although there are more marriages between different ethnicities, neighborhoods and religions, people still tend to largely marry within the same class. Assortative marriage is not</li> </ol>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>There are policy disincentives to marry.</i></li> <li>b) <i>The institution of marriage has changed significantly over time.</i></li> <li>c) <i>People aren’t prepared for marriage.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are policy disincentives to marry; the accompanying challenge is that “it’s always worked this way,” and the challenge of changing mindsets about these policies. (2)</li> <li>2. Rethinking marriage as a journey or adventure, as something that could be “normally achievable” by most people. (2)</li> <li>3. Marriage as a partnership—what does a partnership look like in the modern day? Historically marriage were contractual partnerships, what do they look like today? (2)</li> <li>4. <b>View on Marriage and Sex:</b> Marriage is no longer viewed as a lifetime commitment and lifelong marriages are looked down upon. We have created a selfish society. Sex is no longer reserved for marriage. It is easy to change partners and easy to get a divorce. (3)</li> <li>5. <b>Faith and Marriage:</b> The common bond of faith in marriage is not as strong as it once was. (3)</li> <li>6. <b>Readiness for Marriage:</b> Increasingly, people see romance as a sufficient reason to get married, regardless of their readiness for a successful marriage. More work is needed to get people ready for marriage. (3)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove governmental barriers to marriage such as income support and the marriage penalty. (2)</li> <li>2. Develop healthy marriage formation programs that encourage “living / existing in marriage”. Reframe marriage to teens and young adults. (2)</li> <li>3. Provide divorce intervention to try to salvage marriage even after filing for divorce. Create opportunities for marriage repair. Provide resources about strong marriages, for example, when couples apply for their marriage license. (2)</li> </ol>

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<p>a new phenomenon. (1)</p> <p>4. Poverty, education, and incarceration need to be fixed before marriage can be addressed. (1)</p> <p>5. Marriage is a strong defense against poverty. (2)</p> <p>6. How do we normalize marriage? (2)</p> <p>7. Why are people penalized for being married in income support programs? (2)</p> <p>8. Sexual activity is a cultural issue. Young women want to get married and like the idea of marriage, so maybe we need to address the benefits of marriage for men. (2)</p> <p>9. Marriage inoculates against poverty; let's create incentives for or remove disincentives to marriage. (2)</p> <p>10. For people with less than a college education who are married, what are they doing to encourage marriage in this subset of people? (2)</p> <p>11. Societies with polygamy and polyandry lose wealth. Monogamous societies tend to be wealthier. What can we learn from the historical transformation from polygamous to monogamous societies? (2)</p> <p>12. A marriage license is expensive, and has different cost in different counties. (3)</p> <p>13. How can we frame the public debate in a manner that helps increase &amp; inspire the "demand" for marriage? (3)</p> <p>14. If we can't influence culture, then policies should "do no harm" to marriage. (3)</p> <p>15. We need to support the long-term costs/benefits of marriage. (3)</p> <p>16. We need to encourage and support new parents—would that help young parents stay together? (3)</p>	<p>7. Couples don't have conversations about finances before getting married and thus bring different financial assumptions and goals to the relationship. Differences in how couples save and spend money are a common reason for marital disagreements. (3)</p> <p>8. The decline of Judeo-Christian faiths and "Christmas Phenomenon": Couples get married without knowing each other well enough, and discover their differences when their first Christmas together comes around. (3)</p>	

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<p>17. Marriage education and the role of child support are important. (2)</p> <p>18. Family is the foundation of the state’s prosperity; how can we educate youth about the structure and roles of family? (3)</p>		
<b>II. FAMILY COMPLEXITY</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Contemporary families are increasingly complex, involving multiple partners and roles. Complex families put pressure on all family members and subsequent repercussions affect multiple facets of society.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Education and economic stability are key factors in family success, especially so for complex families.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Noncustodial parents face significant challenges and are largely unassisted by current policy.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is sad to realize that many children are trapped in an adverse situation that feels normal to them. (1)</li> <li>2. Education and economics are big barriers for the success of the family; these barriers are exacerbated for complex families. (2)</li> <li>3. Three different populations that need help were discussed (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids born into poverty</li> <li>• Teenagers in poverty who need help to gain upward mobility</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Increased family complexity and single parent households mean that children do not have the perspectives of both parents as strong role models.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Childhood experiences shape what children learn about family life and stability, and influence the choices they will make as adults.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impact of foster care and lack of help to children transitioning out of foster care in learning about family stability. (1)</li> <li>2. Helping fathers and mothers who are in multiple family relationships. (2)</li> <li>3. <b>Father Figure:</b> A strong father figure is not evident today. One man can have children with multiple mothers and is therefore not a strong father figure for a single family. This is equally applicable to strong mother roles, too. Many factors will fall into place with a strong and positive father figure, but strong mothers are also needed. (3)</li> <li>4. <b>Role Models:</b> in traditional families, there are two roles</li> </ol>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families in tough situation</li> <li>4. There are many different ways you can put together a family. How can a child understand what is “normal”? (2)</li> <li>5. There is an increase in family complexity for all but those with bachelor’s degrees. How do we get vulnerable young men and women to decrease that fluidity by, for example, going to college? (2)</li> <li>6. Family complexity and fluidity put pressure on all families, not just the poorer ones. (2)</li> <li>7. Members of complex families with stresses may have a hard time becoming the best employees, parents, or community members if they are just trying to keep things functional in their households. This has a high social cost. (2)</li> <li>8. We need to move from mere education about family issues to “formation” of strong families, and teach families how to deal with hard issues. (2)</li> <li>9. There are lots of mandates and not a lot of support for noncustodial parents, so how can we encourage noncustodial parents to contribute more financially and emotionally to their children? (2)</li> <li>10. Stronger families lead to safer streets. How can we raise awareness that healthy families can reduce crime? (3)</li> </ul>	<p>models, one for each gender. With an increase in single parents, there is an absence of one of the two important role models. (3)</p> <p>5. <b>Childhood Experiences:</b> One’s upbringing affects how one views work and poverty. For example, childhood experiences vary depending on whether their parents worked and married for love vs. married for necessity. (3)</p> <p>6. <b>Childhood Experiences:</b> A person’s exposure to marriage and the family culture in which a person grew up (single parent, multigenerational, etc.) affects how that person views family life. (3)</p>	
<b>III. FAMILY PLANNING &amp; THE SUCCESS SEQUENCE</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Despite declines in teen pregnancy, the rates of</i></p>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Family planning is necessary for success.</i></p>	<p>1. Delay pregnancy in order to get men and women into healthy,</p>

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<p><i>unplanned and unwanted pregnancies for young adults ill prepared economically, socially and emotionally to be parents has increased.</i></p> <p>b) <i>“Success sequence” is supported by evidence. Change and intervention are needed when a child is born outside of the “success sequence.”</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The onus of preventing unwanted or unplanned pregnancies should fall equally on both young men and women, and not just on women. (1)</li> <li>2. Many young men do not understand the financial and other consequences of unprotected sex, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. (1)</li> <li>3. It was shocking to know that 20% of babies are unwanted. (1)</li> <li>4. The 20% rate of unwanted babies is close to the rate of domestic child abuse. (1)</li> <li>5. The Expert spoke about the “right” and “wrong” way to have a baby; we need to effect change when the “wrong” way happens—the unplanned and unwanted babies. (1)</li> <li>6. The lower teen pregnancy rate is good, but we still need a behavioral and mindset change. The symptoms are changing in the right direction, but we have not yet addressed the root causes. (2)</li> <li>7. Young kids still want marriage and families, but there is disconnect between reality and the choices they make. (2)</li> </ol>	<p>b) <i>Cultural messaging about healthy sexual relationships needs to change.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Changing the mindset of what is a healthy sexual relationship, through cultural messaging. (2)</li> <li>2. High rate of unwanted babies. (1)</li> <li>3. <b>Family Planning:</b> It matters how parents arrive at parenthood. There is a difference between parents who planned to be married and have children, vs. those who became parents because they did not have access to family planning. Lack of family planning means “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” (3)</li> <li>4. <b>Social Norms:</b> Society frowns on families of more than one or two children, despite the fact that we need more kids to take care of aging parents. (3)</li> </ol>	<p>committed relationships by supporting LARCs. Learn from the programs in Colorado and St. Louis. Consider offering LARCs to those at most risk, e.g., young women in foster care who are twice as likely to get pregnant by age 19. (2)</p>

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<p>8. If we could delay pregnancies beyond the late teens and early 20s, would that allow people to choose more effective life partners? (2)</p> <p>9. Children learn by watching their parents; how can we get young women to envision putting off having babies? (2)</p> <p>10. Are we seeing the decline of the family from trends started 20-25 years ago? (2)</p> <p>11. How do we approach unplanned pregnancy? Options include prevention, focus on adoption as a viable alternative, and leading those who are pregnant on a road to marriage. (3)</p> <p>12. The teen pregnancy rate has gone down but the unwed pregnancy rate has not. (3)</p> <p>13. How can the state help de-stigmatize adoption? (3)</p> <p>14. We need to focus on the “success sequence” by encouraging cultural change and vocational training. (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The “success sequence” has strong evidence – how should we begin meaningful conversations about it? It is often seen as a binary issue (on a success sequence or not) – in reality, it is a continuum, and regardless of where individuals and families are on that continuum, there are benefits in moving towards the “sequence.” (3)</li> <li>b. We need to meet people where they are, even if they are not on the “success sequence.” There is room to be gracious to each other if we can come together about the sequence. (3)</li> </ul> <p>15. More qualified foster homes are needed because the foster care system is already overburdened. Let’s consider the costs to the kids that never find a</p>		

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<p>permanent family. How should we handle worst case scenarios when kids “age-out” with no foster family or close ties? (3)</p>		
<b>IV. ROLES &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN IN FORMING &amp; SUSTAINING FAMILIES</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Incarceration, poverty and unemployment are key factors that adversely affect men and their ability to form and sustain families.</i></p> <p>b) <i>When men cannot find jobs, they are pushed in negative directions; unemployment or underemployment leads to illegal activity as a means to earn money, which leads to incarceration.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Schools have not provided young men the skills and training they need to get good jobs and support their families. Supporting male employment and male earnings will likely lead to more marriages and fewer out-of-wedlock births.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Many young men seem to jump from boyhood to fatherhood, and miss the transformational stages of adulthood and “husbandhood.” (1)</li> <li>2. Many young fathers feel that more money will solve their problems and so they engage in illegal activities to get money. This leads them to exist in a constant “survival mode.” (1)</li> <li>3. The incarceration rates in Wisconsin are staggering. (1)</li> <li>4. Milwaukee leads the nation in seven negative</li> </ol>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Society has not looked at men historically as having a key role in family life.</i></p> <p>b) <i>The widespread belief that men do not need social and other supports needs to change.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can we help get society to be ready to invest resources in men, and especially low-income men? (2)</li> <li>2. How to invest resources in teaching incarcerated men about parenting skills, marriage skills, financial skills and job skills? (2)</li> <li>3. Helping incarcerated men through mandated classes in prison. Requiring programs about healthy relationships, life skills, marriage stability. (2)</li> <li>4. Providing men with support such as counseling, information, faith initiatives, support groups. (2)</li> <li>5. Helping men understand the role of fathers and expectations from them. (2)</li> <li>6. <b>Role of Men:</b> Society has not looked at men historically as having a key role in family (for example, women typically are favored in child custody cases). (3)</li> <li>7. There is a belief that men should pull themselves up by their bootstraps without help, and that men don’t need</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide support to help men re-enter society after incarceration – look at Department of Corrections policies and procedures that would do less harm – e.g., enabling identification cards in advance of release, changing time of release from county jails (currently midnight), helping former inmates connect with 3 people outside the prison as support group (similar to Alcoholics Anonymous approach – support groups help people understand they are not alone), considering family</li> </ol>

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<p>indicators, and Wisconsin has the highest black incarceration rate in the country. (1)</p> <p>5. If we could support male employment and male earnings, we would probably see more marriage and less out-of-wedlock births. (2)</p> <p>6. If it is within the scope of supporting families, the Commission can include in its recommendations reducing the number of incarcerated non-violent offenders. The U.S. incarcerates more people than any other country. (2)</p> <p>7. We could look at how men get themselves into situations where they are making illegal choices, for example, when men cannot get jobs, they are pushed in negative directions. Schools have not provided young men the training they need to get a job. (2)</p> <p>8. When the expectations and roles of a father are not met, there is lot of stress, anxiety, frustrations and pressure, and fathers are more likely to leave. Is it easier for them to give up? (2)</p> <p>9. How do we help fathers deal with their multiple roles and expectations, especially regarding complex families? (2)</p> <p>10. The “male issue” has to be addressed; there are a lot of hurt men out there. (2)</p> <p>11. How does a man operate in the world? What is men’s understanding of their role? (2)</p> <p>12. Why does a dad who has partial custody not get partial support from income support programs like SNAP, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), etc.? (2)</p> <p>13. We need to emphasize education for men, especially</p>	<p>social support. How can we help change that belief, so that men have the support that they need in life? (3)</p>	<p>distance when relocating prisoners to facilitate family contact, etc. (2)</p> <p>2. “Ban the box.” (2)</p> <p>3. Support programs for disadvantaged men, especially those incarcerated, and unemployed African-American men. Make programs for incarcerated men mandated rather than voluntary. (2)</p> <p>4. Provide more opportunities for former offenders, such as restoring their right to vote and offering skill certification programs while incarcerated to improve their employability and rehabilitation. (2)</p> <p>5. Make men of color less threatening to employers, and young</p>

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<p>young men. (3)</p> <p>14. The government has never invested in programs that support a married man in the house. (3)</p> <p>15. Economics is key. In order to influence marriage rates, poor men need access to economic success through skilled training since women don't marry men without jobs. (3)</p> <p>16. Explore the impact of incarceration rates of African American and Native American men. (3)</p>		<p>tattooed white men more acceptable to employers. (2)</p> <p>6. There are examples where incarcerated men who spend time with their kids received credit towards their child support arrears or payments. (3)</p>
<b>V. ECONOMICS</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Job opportunities for young people and the middle class are evaporating, including low-skill jobs, and this affects families.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Policies that help create jobs simultaneously help families, as would reforms related to wage disparity and TANF.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Child poverty rates in Wisconsin are sobering.</i></p> <p>d) <i>Families do not have means to save money "for a rainy day," and economic instability seems to have affected the divorce rate in recent decades.</i></p> <p>e) <i>Public income support programs penalize those who are married.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <p>1. Job opportunities are evaporating for the middle class.</p>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Economic factors place significant stress on young families due to the high cost of raising children</i></p> <p>b) <i>Different economic expectations are challenging for couples.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <p>1. How EITC (earned income tax credit) is currently applied to non-custodial parents. (2)</p> <p>2. <b>Immigrant Families:</b> Perspectives on poverty tend to vary between immigrant and non-immigrant families, and this can lead to different economic expectations of a couple. (3)</p> <p>3. Is the issue of absent fathers more of an economic issue than a social issue? (3)</p>	<p>1. Offer high-quality childcare subsidies, and review income thresholds for eligibility so that available family resources and incentives to participate in high-quality childcare are aligned. (2)</p> <p>2. Redirect current fiscal resources away from current policies designed to cope with a declining state of marriage, and</p>

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<p>(1)</p> <p>2. The child poverty rates, especially in Milwaukee, are sobering, as are the disadvantages young men face when they become fathers. (1)</p> <p>3. Despite data showing recent economic decline, the trades are alive and well in Wisconsin. Manufacturing in and around Milwaukee is still healthy. The challenge today is to find skilled machinists and labor. (1)</p> <p>4. We need more jobs in Wisconsin. (1)</p> <p>5. Today, many families typically do not save money for a rainy day. (1)</p> <p>6. How has the divorce rate changed since manufacturing and low-skilled jobs started to fall apart in the 1980s? Have we looked at divorce in the context of economic stability? (2)</p> <p>7. More and better opportunities and options are needed for men and women age 20-25. (2)</p> <p>8. At the “macro level,” the economic policies that help create jobs also significantly help families. (2)</p> <p>9. We need to think of adjustments to monetary / fiscal policies for complex issues. (2)</p> <p>10. DCF has a project that helps kids in foster care get jobs at age 16. (2)</p> <p>11. At the “micro level,” there is a lot of hopelessness and not enough role models to help people understand the link between their choices and related financial outcomes. (2)</p> <p>12. Should schools teach financial independence? Would that bring hope and control? (2)</p>	<p>4. <b>Economic circumstances:</b> Adjusting to changes in economic circumstances creates significant stress for spouses and can lead to conflict. (3)</p> <p>5. <b>Affordable Daycare:</b> Students who get pregnant in college tend not to return to college. The lack of affordable daycare means young moms cannot go to class, and their upward economic mobility is compromised because they can’t graduate. (3)</p> <p>6. <b>Economic Factors:</b> “You may marry for love but you can’t eat love.” Economic situations place considerable stress on families, and they particularly change as children are born. Varying expectations of each partner about finances are accentuated when they have children. (3)</p> <p>7. <b>Cost of Raising Children:</b> The cost of children’s basic needs is out of reach for many people. (3)</p> <p>8. <b>Technology:</b> As technology increasingly replaces manual labor, it reduces the earning potential of men and makes it impossible for manual laborers to support a family. (3)</p>	<p>increase spending on developing, strengthening and building families. (2)</p> <p>3. We should consider marriage and child tax credits. (3)</p> <p>4. Rural and urban needs and available resource are different. We need solutions that work for all parts of the state, without leaving rural WI behind. The weight of regulations may be too high for small towns in rural areas due to limited resources. (3)</p>

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<p>13. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reform is needed. (3)</p> <p>14. Wage disparity between genders and races could exist due to discrimination, choices made by individual workers, educational preparedness, # of years of work experience (e.g., women come out of careers more than men do to have babies or to care for kids), etc. (3)</p>		
<b>VI. EDUCATION</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p><i>a) Vocational training and a technical education will help young people find good jobs, leading to economic stability. We need more vocational/technical schools and less stigma associated with them.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have pushed 4-year education at the expense of technical education that will help young people find good jobs. (2)</li> <li>Could we bring back vocational training in high school? (2)</li> <li>Less than 3% of youth in foster homes go to college. There is a lot of financial aid available for them, but there is little awareness of it. (2)</li> <li>At UW-Madison, organic relationships with professors are effective ways of mentoring students who were in foster homes. (2)</li> <li>We need to increase the number of vocational schools. What can be done to start kids on a vocational path</li> </ol>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p><i>a) Financial management, family management and parenting skills are not mandated nor widely taught.</i></p> <p><i>b) Parents' education affects the investments they make in their children's education.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High rate of adult functional illiteracy. (1)</li> <li>Lack of education that focuses on family impact and financial management, in addition to academics. School choice, because without a functional family with good role models, the schools become the next vehicle for teaching. (2)</li> <li>There are no mandated classes for parents. How do we educate parents to be parents? (2)</li> <li><b>Education:</b> The level of parents' education affects the investment parents make in their children's education, and their expectations about their children going to college. For example, if both parents are college-</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill development for young men is lacking, which tends to push men in undesirable directions. Increase high school exposure to technical fields in at-risk rural and urban communities, and explore new models for vocational education. Look for information on ways to reduce the stigma associated with two-year technical education. (2)</li> <li>Provide in-home education programs for new fathers similar</li> </ol>

<b>REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)</b>	<b>BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>
<p>earlier? How do we deal with the stigma of vocational training and careers? How do we address parents' expectations re: vocational training? (3)</p> <p>6. Math is essential for success in our society. We need to quit making kids and people afraid of math (algebra, trigonometry and geometry). (3)</p>	<p>educated, they automatically expect their children to go to college. (3)</p>	<p>to the home visiting nurse programs for new moms. Teach about relationship formation because it is as important as birth control. (2)</p> <p>3. We need to link families, students, and the industry to help remove stigma of vocational training. (3)</p>
<b>VII. CIVIL SOCIETY &amp; POPULAR CULTURE</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Popular cultural messages largely promote negative messages about sex, and do not transmit positive or family-friendly values.</i></p> <p>b) <i>As a result, many young adults have distorted views about healthy sexual relationships and do not learn how to make appropriate sex-related decisions.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Traditional institutions and supports that build social capital have declined.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <p>1. There are not enough educational and informational programs about morals and values to offset changing cultural influences and societal desensitization about sex. (1)</p>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Increasingly, highly sexualized and violent cultural influences are replacing morals and values.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Popular culture glorifies single parenthood and dumbs down the role of fathers.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Difference in religion, beliefs and spirituality make challenges faced by a family more difficult.</i></p> <p>d) <i>Increasing social isolation, and families who are isolated from support networks, make it more challenging for marriages to remain intact.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <p>1. The changing/ declining importance of morals and values, and reduced exposure to those from past generations. (1)</p>	

<b>REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)</b>	<b>BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. There are not enough conversations between adults and children about healthy sexuality; many children learn about sexuality from TV and movies. This keeps young members of the society from having the tools to make appropriate sex-related decisions. (1)</li> <li>3. There is concern about the dissolution of traditional institutions of civil society. Communities today are unable to transmit virtues. How can we build social capital? (1)</li> <li>4. The values of love, family, and stability are not being heard on mainstream radio, but have been replaced by negative messages and negative aspects of the “hip-hop culture.” (1)</li> <li>5. The message is “you’re not cool if you haven’t slept around.” We have a lot of media messages to overcome. (2)</li> <li>6. The disassociation of sex and marriage and the impact of early exposure to sex, pornography, especially via social media, is troubling. (2)</li> <li>7. Encourage a cultural shift around healthy sexual relationships. We strive for them, and still a lot of people are having sex but not healthy relationships. (3)</li> <li>8. Pornography among young people distorts their perceptions of sex. Young children have easy access to pornography through cell phones. (3)</li> <li>9. Despite pop cultural references, two parents are necessary, not just one. (3)</li> <li>10. How can we find consensus on political strategy re: cultural influences? (3)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Changing cultural influences, especially those that are highly sexualized and violent. (1)</li> <li>3. <b>Religion and beliefs:</b> Differences in religion, beliefs, and spirituality or world views make challenges faced by a family more difficult, particularly when raising children together. A lack of hope can occur even when faith, religion and beliefs are shared. (3)</li> <li>4. <b>Culture:</b> There is much cultural variation regarding sexual education and generational shifts regarding the value of getting married after a teen pregnancy. (3)</li> <li>5. <b>Social Isolation:</b> In the context of a robust civil society, social isolation vs. connectivity are important factors for a healthy family. Regardless of economic status, it is difficult for couples to stay married and have children. Due to increased economic mobility today, couples have family spread all over the world; this increases social isolation. Immigration or significant geographical relocation makes it difficult for families to create their emotional safety nets (beyond government support) in the community. (3)</li> <li>6. <b>Religion or ethics:</b> if there is strong religion or ethics, self-policing within a family is more common. When couples vary in their strength of faith, it can be challenging to parent. (3)</li> <li>7. <b>Communitarianism:</b> America’s culture of “rugged individualism” means self-determination, but we forget about communitarianism (solidarity with all other beings). (3)</li> <li>8. <b>Television &amp; Entertainment:</b> TV culture today exploits</li> </ol>	

<b>REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)</b>	<b>BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>
	<p>sex, and promotes viewing sex as a recreational sport. There is a trend towards degrading and dumbing down men and fathers in entertainment. Single parenthood is glorified. (3)</p> <p>9. <b>Superficial Solutions:</b> Widespread pharmaceutical use teaches us to rely on drugs when things go bad. If something goes wrong, we take a pill instead of addressing the root causes. (3)</p> <p>10. <b>Social Stigma:</b> Women, not just men, have children with multiple partners but do not face the same stigma as men do. (3)</p> <p>11. <b>Support Network:</b> Especially for foster children, there is a lack of people’s stake in each other and they do not have access to “go-to” support of in times of struggle, making derailments worse. (3)</p> <p>12. <b>Personal Introspection:</b> It is not easy to look inward and be unselfish, nor to understand the sacrifice it takes to remain committed in a family. (3)</p>	
<b>VIII. CONTEXT</b>		
<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Families come in many forms, and the definition of family is broad. For the purpose of its work to fulfill its charge, the Commission decided to define “family” as ‘the people and supports who work in the best interest of a child, and can include parents, family members, guardians, foster families, residential care, etc.’</i></p> <p>b) <i>Wisconsin’s socio-economic history and its manufacturing base shaped its demographics and make</i></p>	<p><b>KEY THEMES:</b></p> <p>a) <i>Negative factors such as violent crime, gun violence, addiction, health challenges and adverse childhood experiences affect all families.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Mental health and health issues pose a significant challenge to families.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <p>1. Increase in the number of undocumented people. (1)</p>	<p>1. Promote school choice. (2)</p> <p>2.</p>

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p><i>Wisconsin’s challenges and successes different from those of neighboring states.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Economic challenges and poverty exist in both Wisconsin’s urban and rural areas.</i></p> <p>d) <i>The problems and issues discussed by the commission are broad and complex. Solutions and consensus will be difficult. Issues that cannot be addressed with policy solutions may be suited for the “pulpit” of the Governor’s office.</i></p> <p><b>MEETING NOTES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the purpose of this Commission, the Commissioners discussed and agreed to define family by focusing on “What is best for the child?”, and by including the following in that definition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Natural” or biological parents – both, mother and father, and single parents</li> <li>• Grandparents and other relatives providing care for the child</li> <li>• Legal guardians</li> <li>• Foster family and/or residential care</li> <li>• A person perceived by the child as his or her parent, including key influencers in a child’s life, individuals and supporting agencies. (1)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. The definition of family is very broad. (1)</li> <li>3. Given the diversity of the Commissioners, it will be challenging to reach consensus on all items, even though the Commissioners are all participating for the right reasons. (1)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Impact of violent crime and gun violence on communities and families; these affect all families, not just vulnerable ones. (1)</li> <li>3. <b>Health Issues:</b> Challenges with physical and mental health can have a polarizing impact on families – they create a lot of tension for families or bring them together and cause them to think beyond themselves. (3)</li> <li>4. There is a societal deficiency in understanding the factors that affect mental health and its impact on families and cost. (3)</li> <li>5. <b>Addiction:</b> Alcohol, drug and pornography addictions leads to physiological changes, and all addictions affect the family. (3)</li> <li>6. <b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE):</b> ACEs accentuate trauma, make it more challenging to have a sustainable healthy family because personal attachments become more difficult, and there is low “social capital”. (3)</li> </ol>	

<b>REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)</b>	<b>BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>
<p>4. These are extremely complex and broad problems facing the Commission, and proposed solutions are likely to be reductive. (1)</p> <p>5. Many of the facts presented by the guest speaker are startling to the Commissioners. Collectively, information on the current state is lacking or not well known. (1)</p> <p>6. Should we assume that the facts we heard are, indeed, facts? (1)            Comment: Some of the facts heard may be coated with opinion; the Commissioners will hear a lot of facts and may need to challenge and question them. (1)</p> <p>7. Issues that cannot be addressed with policy solutions may be suited for the “pulpit” of the Governor’s office. (1)</p> <p>8. There are no quick fixes – these are cultural problems that require long-term solutions. (1)</p> <p>9. Wisconsin does not have a long history with blacks. Many came to Wisconsin after the war for manufacturing jobs, and the second wave came in the 1980s for welfare. Within Wisconsin, Beloit has the longest history with blacks. (1)</p> <p>10. We tend to look at Milwaukee as unique in Wisconsin with its socio-economic issues, but similar things are happening in rural parts of the state, as well. Therefore, these issues pertain to the whole state. (1)</p> <p>11. There is hope. (2)</p> <p>12. Minnesota and Wisconsin are very similar in many respects, yet have significantly different outcomes re:</p>		

<b>REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)</b>	<b>BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>
<p>families. Examine what makes Minnesota different: Is it cultural? Industrial? Jobs creation? Policy? (3)</p> <p>13. Milwaukee’s economic base is manufacturing; Minnesota’s economic base is agricultural movement and trade. As a city, Minneapolis does not have much competition, while Milwaukee competes with Chicago. Milwaukee has a large refugee population from southern Africa which tends to be Christian, while Minneapolis has Northern African population which tends to be Muslim. Milwaukee has always been an ethnically segregated city, unlike Minneapolis. (3)</p>		

## Appendix A - Summary of Expert Presentations

### *Meeting #1 – January 27, 2016 – Presentation summary: Prof. Timothy Smeeding*

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#### **The Changing American Family**

1. The composition of the American family has changed significantly since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, evidenced by people getting married at an older age, rising percentage of women who never marry, rising divorce rates, and increasing births to unmarried women.
2. These changes are due to changing family economics, largely driven by a decline in median wages since the 1970s. More families have dual earners and female breadwinners. Wage labor opportunities, especially for the unskilled, have declined since 1970s.
3. Wage gains have increased minimally only for those with postgraduate degrees. Wages have remained essentially flat for those with bachelor's degrees or no college.
4. Assortative mating ("marrying your own kind / class") remains consistent which increases income disparities.
5. More women are giving birth outside of marriage and in unstable situations; birth rates are not declining but marriage rates are.
6. There is a "right way" and a "wrong way" of having a child, in terms of impact on children's well-being and development. The "right way" supports best outcomes for children and families, and includes the following sequence: Finish school; Get a decent job; Find a partner you can rely on; Make a life plan including marriage; Have a baby. The "wrong way" does not support best outcomes for children and families, and includes the following sequence: Have a baby first; Don't finish school right away; Don't have a decent job; Don't have a partner to rely on; Never, ever have a life plan. Increasingly, more and more births are the "wrong way."

#### **Socio-Economics in Wisconsin**

1. Unemployment levels among young people are high, particularly for those with little education.
2. College graduates delay childbearing until their late 20s.
3. Family stability is difficult; WI has a 75% rate of multi-partner fertility.
4. If a child starts in the bottom 20%, the likelihood that the child will move up is quite low.
5. Parenting skills, abilities and resources matter; we need to make "weaker" parents "stronger".
6. 41% of births are out of wedlock, 60% of those are unplanned.
7. 20% of African-American babies born in Milwaukee are "unwanted".
8. Wisconsin child poverty rates have been declining since 2011 due to public policies and government safety nets such as Earned Income Tax Credit, FoodShare, public housing, SHARES, BadgerCare.
9. Wisconsin has a small African-American middle class and it is declining; African-Americans in Wisconsin face high poverty rates.
10. Milwaukee has extreme racial and income disparities, and very high rates of child poverty. The rate of black child poverty is 40% in Milwaukee County.
11. Poverty varies across counties and dramatically within Milwaukee County, leading to a wide achievement gap across the state.

#### **Policy Issues**

- There are only 5 options for addressing unplanned births out of wedlock – abstinence, contraception, marriage, abortion, and adoption.

- We need to reduce unplanned, out-of-wedlock births.
- Abstinence and marriage promotion have not worked; abortion and adoption are controversial and less desirable choices.
- Evidence suggests that effective birth control is starting to work. Therefore, Smeeding recommends:
  - a. Promote long-acting reversible contraceptives
  - b. Promote marriage. Still, two minimum wage earners cannot adequately support a family, so,
  - c. Higher wages are needed as well to promote family stability
- Incentivize marriage over cohabitation and reduce disincentives to marriage.
- Reduce incarceration rates.

### **Summary**

Prof. Smeeding presented data on how there have been significant changes over time in what a “typical” American family looks like in regards to marriage, age when having children, wage prospects, family stability, etc. His suggestions are LARCs, promoting marriage, and higher wages.

### *Meeting #2 – February 23, 2016 - Presentation summary: Professor Lawrence Berger*

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#### **Family complexity and fluidity**

1. Families are increasingly complex and fluid. Fluidity (instability) across households and parental roles has increased greatly over the last 50 years (slide 11 of his presentation).
2. There are many implications for family complexity and fluidity (slide 12).
3. Births to non-married mothers have doubled since 1980 and there has been a large increase in cohabitating families (slide 15).
4. Many children face multiple family structure transitions by age 9, and cohabiting families are nearly as unstable as single parent households (slide 16).
5. Most children born to single parents will be part of complex families (slide 18).
6. Parents, especially fathers, have multiple parenting roles (biological, step-, resident, non-resident, custodial, non-custodial, etc.), and this trend is higher for families of color (slides 20 and 21).
7. Over the past 20 years the trend of multiple parenting roles has increased for parents of all education levels except those with bachelor’s degree or higher (slide 21), indicating that there are two tracks of family experience, distinguished by the parents’ education level.

#### **Family complexity influences family functioning and child and family wellbeing**

1. Social parent families are more likely to break up than biological families. Mothers’ engagement with their children is consistent across family types, and married fathers are very engaged, but not fathers within cohabiting families (slide 23).
2. Expectations shape how well parents perform their roles. As parents take on multiple parenting roles, it becomes trickier to establish clear expectations across households and children. This places more demands on roles and resources, leading to increased family stress and conflict (slide 24).
3. Low parental investments and family functioning lead to poorer childhood outcomes, including unintended pregnancy and non-marital births (slide 25).

#### **How current policy addresses family complexity**

1. Policy implications (slide 27)

- It is difficult to categorize families and policies; complex families necessitate a substantial shift in how we approach families and family roles and responsibilities.
  - Relevant policies cross economic and behavioral goals.
  - Current policies were designed in an era of less complex families and when disadvantaged men had higher earning potential.
2. Approaches to custodial and noncustodial parents (slide 28)
    - Custodial parents have access to more income and social supports than noncustodial parents.
    - Noncustodial parents are categorized as non-parents and are treated with mandates (child support payments, for example) rather than supports.
    - Employment, child support and noncustodial parent involvement are interrelated; consider them as a package, not alone.

#### **Policy recommendations**

1. Prevent family complexity by making LARCs (long acting reversible contraceptives) available for women who want family planning services (slide 31).
2. Provide a parallel and proportionate package of supports, benefits, and tax credits to non-custodial parents, and coordinate with the criminal justice system to accommodate incarcerated parents (slide 32).

#### *Questions / Answers with Professor Berger*

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**Q:** Could benefits incentivize parents to have more children?

**A:** He does not know of evidence to support that, but it could be possible.

**Q:** Could men work and earn money while in jail to continue to pay child support?

**A:** He knows of a program in Milwaukee that helped men stop accruing child support but it was not widespread. Under this program most men were not eligible, because to qualify they needed to have paid all child support for the prior year. That requirement disqualified anyone who had recently lost a job.

**Q:** What did the family planning programs in St. Louis and Colorado do to achieve their widespread reduction in unintended pregnancies when they offered LARCs (chosen by 2/3rd of the women seeking birth control)?

**A:** Health providers were able to give LARCs on the spot without a second appointment, LARCs were free, and providers were trained to give information about them.

#### *Meeting #2 – February 23, 2016 - Presentation summary: Ms. Rachel Sheffield*

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##### **Marriage and poverty: how family formation affects income and earnings**

1. Marriage decreases the probability of child poverty by greater than 80%; in Wisconsin the rate is 88% (slides 37 and 38).
2. Since 1960s the rate of births to unwed mothers has risen from 7% to over 40% (slide 39).
3. In Wisconsin, the rate of births to unwed mothers is 37% (slide 40).
4. In the U.S., 71% of poor families with children are not married (slide 41).
5. In Wisconsin, 77% of poor families with children are not married (slide 42).
6. In Wisconsin, the majority of unwed births occurs to women ages 20-29 (slide 43).
7. Less-educated women are more likely to give birth outside of marriage (slide 44).
8. Marriage and education are effective ways to reduce childhood poverty (slide 45).
9. Non-married white families are ten times more likely to be poor than married families (slide 46).

10. Non-married African-American families are five times more likely to be poor in Wisconsin (slide 47).
11. Non-married Hispanic families are three times more likely to be poor in Wisconsin (slide 48).
12. Single parents remain in poverty and married parents are less likely to be in poverty.
13. Cohabiting couples are not as stable as married couples:
  - a. 50-60% of cohabiting families are likely to break up by the time child turns 5.
  - b. Cohabitors are less likely to invest in child well-being than married families.
  - c. Cohabitors are less likely to share resources and receive help from extended families.
  - d. Married couples are more likely to pool their resources and more likely to receive wealth transfer from their families.
  - e. Men benefit from the so-called “married wage premium”; marriage has a causal effect on increasing men’s wages—likely due to a stronger commitment to their jobs and life routines.
14. Married men maintain higher levels of employment than non-married men.
15. In March 2013, 90% of married men were working or in military, compared to 70% of non-married men.
16. If marriage rates had not declined, more men would be connected to the workforce.
17. The decline in marriage has contributed to declining socio-economic conditions.
18. There are financial benefits to intact families and their children, the “intact family premium.”
19. Marriage affects the well-being of children and adults and keeps fathers connected to the labor force.
20. Married couples more effectively build wealth than single parents do.
21. Marriage is doing well among the highly educated but less well among those who could most benefit from it.
22. She wants children to hope for marriage.

#### **Policy recommendations**

1. Provide assistance grants to couples who stay married; reduce welfare marriage penalties.
2. Consider social marketing campaigns addressing the benefits of marriage, similarly to how the message about the importance of completing high school is ubiquitous.
3. Conduct education about the benefits of marriage.

#### *Questions / Answers with Ms. Sheffield*

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**Q:** Is the reduction in teenage pregnancy part of more planned pregnancies? Is it reflective of delayed childbearing versus teenage parents?

**A:** She did not have specifics. Lower income women tend toward unplanned versus unwanted pregnancies. Maybe the timing was not what they wanted.

**Q:** Does getting married after having a child affect the poverty rate?

**A:** She did not have specifics. Marriage and child-bearing have become disconnected in lower-income families.

**Q:** Has sex become a sport?

**A:** The 1960s sexual revolution and birth control contributed to the disconnection of sex from commitment. Sex is no longer reserved for marriage.

**Q:** With the benefits of marriage, why do you think so many people don’t want to get married?

**A:** Perhaps they have a fear of divorce, so they go about it the wrong way. Instead of choosing a partner, getting married, then having a child, they go about it the wrong way.

**Q:** What is the resistance to removing barriers to marriage if we have known for so long its benefits?

- A: (comment from a Commissioner)** There is a cost to that. A single parent family is cheaper. It is about the “now cost” versus the long-term gain. The conversation has to be about the long-term gain, which is longer than a politician’s watch.
- Q:** Cohabiting families don’t receive as much family assistance—what about step-families?
- A:** She did not have details; step-families are likely to receive more assistance than cohabiters but less than married families.
- Q:** Have there been programs to target teen pregnancy that could be applied to unmarried 18- to 29-year-olds? Could we learn from the reduction in teen pregnancy rates?
- A:** There have been efforts in the past 20-30 years to address teen pregnancy; it was an “all hands on deck” approach. We could apply this to the unmarried pregnancy issue.

### *Joint Discussion with Experts (Prof. Berger & Ms. Sheffield)*

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After their individual presentations, the two experts and the Commissioners jointly discussed the following points:

1. To increase marriage success, we need to support men and delay childbearing.
2. If we could support male employment and male earnings, we would probably see more marriage and less out-of-wedlock births.
3. Sexual activity is a cultural issue. Young women want to get married and like the idea of marriage, so maybe we need to address the benefits of marriage for men.
4. Women seem to be generally more inclined toward marriage. Men need to hear other men tell them about the benefit of marriage and the dignity of “malehood” and fatherhood.
5. The message is “you’re not cool if you haven’t slept around.” We have a lot of media messages to overcome.
6. Sexual behaviors among high- and low-income people are similar and have not changed. What has changed is that high-income people have easier access than low-income people to a better type of birth control (LARCs). Higher-income people have healthcare providers who know about LARCs and can discuss them in the clinic setting; they have health insurance that covers this type of birth control; and, they have enough control over their lives that they are able to make a return appointment. In contrast, lower-income people do not typically benefit from such factors. In modern chaotic lives, it is hard to make consistent decisions to use condoms and the Pill. With LARCs, women only have to make a decision once every three years.
7. Low-income folks say they want to get married. They delay getting married until after they’ve “made it” and can afford a wedding. Economic factors are entwined with marriage.
8. How has the divorce rate changed since manufacturing and low-skilled jobs started to fall apart in the 1980s? Have we looked at divorce in the context of economic stability?
9. If we could delay pregnancies beyond the late teens and early 20s, would that allow people to choose more effective life partners?
10. We have delayed the age at which a lot of young disadvantaged women are having babies. Every additional year that they delay childbearing makes a big difference.
11. Less advantaged women are still having babies early and they have little access to upwardly mobile choices. There is less to lose if you have babies at a young age and are disadvantaged.
12. We have to consider the impulsiveness of young adulthood as well as the choice sets that people have, and the potential benefits and costs of those choices.

13. Children learn by watching their parents; how can we get young women to envision putting off having babies?
14. Three different populations that need help were discussed:
  - a. Kids born into poverty
  - b. Teenagers in poverty who need help to gain upward mobility
  - c. Families in tough situation
15. Less than 3% of youth in foster homes go to college. There is a lot of financial aid available for them, but there is little awareness of it.
16. DCF has a project that helps kids in foster care get jobs at age 16.
17. At UW-Madison, organic relationships with professors are effective ways of mentoring students who were in foster homes.

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*Meeting #3 – May 5, 2016 - Presentation summary: Prof. Joseph Price and Mr. Brad Wilcox*

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**Joseph Price**, Associate Professor of Economics, Brigham Young University and **Brad Wilcox**, Director of National Marriage Project, University of Virginia and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Family Studies, authors of *Strong Families, Prosperous States: Do Healthy Families Affect the Wealth of States?* spoke to the Commission about their research into the benefits of marriage, and why does marriage matter?

**Introduction**

Social science and medical research show that children who are raised by their married, biological parents enjoy better outcomes; one woman putting a child up for adoption can have a “million-dollar” impact, as it leads to successes across families and generations.

Four outcomes that influence state politics are affected by marriage rates: 1) Economic growth 2) Child poverty 3) Family median income 4) Upward income mobility (the American Dream). States need to renew the economic, policy, civic and cultural foundations of marriage and family life for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**HOW marriage matters**

- If society could go back to 1980 levels of marriage, national GDP would be higher, child poverty rates would be lower, and family median income would be higher.
- WI is #19 in the U.S. for the share of children living with married parents (70%). If WI enjoyed 1980 levels of married parenthood, GDP would be 3.2% higher, child poverty would be 12% lower, median family income would be about 7.4% higher (Slide 13).
- Economic growth, child poverty, family income and the American Dream are all affected by the health of the family in Wisconsin.

**WHY marriage matters**

- Men settle down when they get married, and marriage motivates men to work more (Slide 18)
- Married families have more money to manage and manage it more prudently, due to economies of scale, income pooling, higher savings rates, greater family support, more long-term stability (Slide 20)
- Children from intact married families are more likely to flourish and acquire the human capital needed to graduate from college and be gainfully employed (Slide 22)

- Teenage boys and young men from intact married families are less likely to commit crime and end up in jail, leaving government with lower public safety and security costs, and greater upward mobility (Slide 24)

### **The States of Our Unions**

- In general, states in north have stronger and more stable families; states in south have less stable families (Slide 30)
- States with low levels of education or medium income without college education are most affected by retreat from marriage (Mississippi, Georgia); states with high level of education and median income for men without college are least affected by retreat from marriage (Minnesota and New Hampshire) (Slide 31)
- States with middling or low levels of education, but high degree of cultural conservatism are most resistant to retreat from marriage (Idaho, South Dakota, Utah) (Slide 32)
- Both structural and cultural factors explain why some states are more successful in resisting the nationwide retreat from marriage (New Hampshire and Minnesota, Idaho and Utah) (Slide 33)

### **Recommendations**

- Reform TANF, SNAP and Medicaid to minimize the marriage penalty. Public policy should “do no harm” to marriage, especially for low-income families; 40% of American families receive government benefits, but many benefits penalize marriage.
- Expand vocational education and apprenticeship programs. Most Americans will not get a college degree, and we need to improve economic prospects of Americans from working-class communities. Wisconsin’s Career Academies and Youth Apprenticeship System are steps in the right direction.
- Invest in families because raising children is expensive. Expand child tax credit to \$2500 and encourage investments in future workers and taxpayers.
- Expand civic and cultural supports for marriage. Promote the “success sequence” of finishing school, working, marrying and then becoming a parent. Concentrate this campaign on less-education men.
- Take cues from the success of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

### *Meeting #3 – May 5, 2016 - Discussion with Prof. Price and Mr. Wilcox*

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- The “success sequence” is best; but how do we help those that fall out of the sequence?
- Adoption rates are very low.
- There is no dating any more.
- A legal marriage brings specific aspects—joint commitment, legal rights—that no other relationship does.
- Can having children out of wedlock, which is evidence that you had sex outside of marriage, become unlawful?
- Civil changes will fall to church, media and civic institutions to reshape the message of the “success sequence,” and have a positive influence.