



Future of the Family Commission

Key Themes from Meetings # 1 - 5

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

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Background

The first five meetings of the Future of the Family Commission provided background information, current research and expert opinions to the Commissioners, and laid 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 and prosperous states
- **Meeting #4** (June 28, 2016) – Social policy and the family
- **Meeting #5** (August 25, 2016) – Community approaches to strengthening families

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 identified by the Commissioners as relevant to the topic of the day. These **reflections** and **barriers / challenges** are documented in the detailed meeting notes.

Document organization:

This document organizes the notes from meetings # 1 through 5 in the following manner:

- a. Items classified as **reflections** in the notes from each meeting 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; 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 was discussed in meeting #2.
- c. The Commissioners asked follow-up questions and requested information after the discussions in meetings 1 and 2, related to better understanding the current landscape of programming and resources in Wisconsin. Separate documents are available on the Commission website at: [Meeting #1 questions & responses](#) and [Meeting #2 questions & responses](#). These links list the Commissioners' questions and the answers collected by DCF staff.
- d. To facilitate the Commissioners' future discussions, the meeting content has been grouped into the following preliminary categories (these could become input for the Commissioners discussions re: Focus Areas for their recommendations to the Governor's Office). As expected given the nature of the topics, there is considerable overlap among these eight categories:
 - I. Marriage
 - II. Family complexity
 - III. Family planning & the success sequence
 - IV. Roles & responsibilities of men in forming & sustaining families
 - V. Economics
 - VI. Education
 - VII. Civil society & popular culture
 - VIII. Context

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

- e. The notes from the five meetings have been edited for brevity; at **the beginning** of each category, DCF staff added **key themes** from each meeting's reflections.
- f. 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.
- g. **Appendix A** provides a list of specific challenges that the Commissioners identified and prioritized for each of the four Focus Areas of their recommendations.
- h. **Appendix B** provides a summary of the expert presentations and Q & A discussions for each meeting. That information is also available in the meeting notes posted on the Commission website.

Multiple Information Sources:

For their deliberations going forward, Commissioners also have access to multiple information sources listed below; 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

Key Themes from Future of the Family Commission: Meetings # 1 - 5

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
I. MARRIAGE		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>From the legal perspective, there is more than one way to define “marriage” than what has been the traditional understanding.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Assortative marriages are not new. People tend to marry people with similar backgrounds and education levels.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Marriage has eroded in the middle class. We need to increase the “demand” for marriage.</i></p> <p>d) <i>Marriage is a strong defense against poverty. Strong marriages reduce crime.</i></p> <p>e) <i>Marriage education and child support are important.</i></p> <p>f) <i>Remove disincentives to marriage in government programs.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People are forming a variety of alternative family structures outside of the traditional marriage; for example, cohabitation (1) 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) 	<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>There are policy disincentives to marriage.</i></p> <p>b) <i>The institution of marriage has changed significantly over time.</i></p> <p>c) <i>People are not prepared for marriage.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are policy disincentives to marry; the accompanying challenge is that “it has always worked this way,” and the challenge of changing mindsets about these policies. (2) 2. Rethinking marriage as a journey or adventure, as something that could be “normally achievable” by most people. (2) 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) 4. View on Marriage and Sex: 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) 5. Faith and Marriage: The common bond of faith in 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove governmental barriers to marriage such as income support and the marriage penalty. (2) 2. Develop healthy marriage formation programs that encourage “living / existing in marriage”. Reframe marriage to teens and young adults. (2) 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)

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<p>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 a new phenomenon. (1)</p> <p>4. Poverty, education, and incarceration need to be fixed in addition to addressing marriage. (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. Marriage education and the role of child support are</p>	<p>marriage is not as strong as it once was. (3)</p> <p>6. Readiness for Marriage: 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)</p> <p>7. Couples do not 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> <p>9. How to engage local religious and neighborhood organizations in support of marriage and family initiatives? (4)</p> <p>10. How do we promote the positive benefits of marriage? (4)</p> <p>11. How do we ensure that public policy does no harm to marriage? (4)</p> <p>12. How to communicate to the population at large that stable families undergird Wisconsin’s prosperity? (4)</p>	<p>4. Code of ethics for divorce attorneys instructs them to seek reconciliation of the parties. To what extent is this enforced?</p>

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<p>important. (2)</p> <p>13. A marriage license is expensive, and has different cost in different counties. (3)</p> <p>14. How can we frame the public debate in a manner that helps increase & inspire the “demand” for marriage? (3)</p> <p>15. If we cannot influence culture, then policies should “do no harm” to marriage. (3)</p> <p>16. We need to support the long-term costs/benefits of marriage. (3)</p> <p>17. We need to encourage and support new parents—would that help young parents stay together? (3)</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> <p>19. Marriage penalty for means-tested programs provides disincentives for marriage. (4)</p> <p>20. Teach young adults the economic benefits of marriage and do not penalize marriage through government programs. (4)</p>		
II. FAMILY COMPLEXITY		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Contemporary families are increasingly complex, involving multiple partners and roles; poverty exacerbates complexity; family complexity affects 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>KEY THEMES:</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>	

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<p>c) <i>Noncustodial parents face significant challenges, but are largely unassisted by current policy.</i></p> <p>d) <i>Quality childcare is important but expensive, and varies widely.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is sad to realize that many children are trapped in an adverse situation that feels normal to them. (1) 2. Education and economics are big barriers for the success of the family; these barriers are exacerbated for complex families. (2) 3. Three different populations that need help were discussed (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children born into poverty • Teenagers in poverty who need help to gain upward mobility • Families in tough situation 4. There are many different ways you can put together a family. How can a child understand what is “normal”? (2) 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? (2) 6. Family complexity and fluidity put pressure on all families, not just the poorer ones. (2) 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 	<p>c) <i>Parents need support, especially poor parents.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact of foster care and lack of help to children transitioning out of foster care in learning about family stability. (1) 2. Helping fathers and mothers who are in multiple family relationships. (2) 3. Father Figure: There is a lack of a strong father figure in our society. 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) 4. Role Models: in traditional families, there are two roles models, one for each gender. With an increase in single parents, there is an absence of one of the two important role models. Need to strengthen role models for fathers. (3) 5. Childhood Experiences: One’s upbringing affects how one views work and poverty. For example, childhood experiences vary depending on whether their parents worked and the quality of their parents’ marriage. (3) 6. Childhood Experiences: 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) 7. How to provide total parental support at all stages of 	

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<p>things functional in their households. This has a high social cost. (2)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>10. Stronger families lead to safer streets. How can we raise awareness that healthy families can reduce crime? (3)</p> <p>11. How do we educate/make aware poor parents about successful parenting, child development, educational options, good daycare, etc.? (4)</p> <p>12. Poverty does not equal bad parenting. Poor families may just need support, not necessarily parenting education. Do not stereotype all poor parents. Let’s work with their needs and not our assumptions. Support parents, do not supplant them. (4)</p> <p>13. The need for quality, affordable, accessible childcare that works for working people. How to increase quality while not increasing cost? (4)</p> <p>14. Perception that daycare is bad. If you need it, do we have it available? (4)</p>	<p>parenthood, including daycare? (4)</p> <p>8. How can the State support those suffering from mental illness? (4)</p> <p>9. Would the State consider providing total wrap-around services in the schools, or expanding the proposal, for poor families in Wisconsin, rural and urban? (4)</p> <p>10. How to consider stressors on all families, not just poor families, including those with complex family structures? (4)</p>	

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III. FAMILY PLANNING & THE SUCCESS SEQUENCE		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Despite declines in teen pregnancy, the rates of 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>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The onus of preventing unwanted or unplanned pregnancies should fall equally on both young men and women, and not just on women. (1) Many young men do not understand the financial and other consequences of unprotected sex, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. (1) It was shocking to know that 20% of babies are unwanted. (1) The 20% rate of unwanted babies is close to the rate of domestic child abuse. (1) 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) 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 	<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Family planning is necessary for success.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Cultural messaging about healthy sexual relationships needs to change.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> High rate of unwanted babies. (1) Changing the mindset of what is a healthy sexual relationship, through cultural messaging. (2) Responsible sexual relations start with personal integrity. Teaching the immature “how” will not convince them of the “why.” (2) Family Planning: 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) Social Norms: Society frowns on families of more than one or two children, despite the fact that we need more children to take care of aging parents. (3) Address unplanned pregnancies, in and outside marriage. (4) How can we inform teenagers about healthy alternatives to sexual relations? (4) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Delay pregnancy in order to get men and women into healthy, 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)

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<p>addressed the root causes. (2)</p> <p>7. Young people still want marriage and families, but there is disconnect between reality and the choices they make. (2)</p> <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. Sexual behavior among high and low income people is similar and has not changed. However, high-income people have better access to a wider range of reliable birth control methods, such as LARCs. (2)</p> <p>12. LARCs carry moral considerations that are unacceptable to segments of the population. (2)</p> <p>13. 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>14. The teen pregnancy rate has gone down but the unwed pregnancy rate has not. (3)</p> <p>15. How can the State help de-stigmatize adoption? (3)</p> <p>16. We need to focus on the “success sequence” by encouraging cultural change and vocational training. (3)</p> <p>17. The “success sequence” has strong evidence as a means to address poverty – how should we begin meaningful</p>		

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<p>conversations about it and help people get back on the success continuum when they have diverted from the sequence? (3)</p> <p>18. We need to meet people where they are, even if they are not on the “success sequence.” (3)</p> <p>19. More qualified foster homes are needed because the foster care system is already overburdened. Let’s consider the costs to the children that never find a permanent family. How should we handle worst case scenarios when children “age-out” with no foster family or close ties? (3)</p> <p>20. Whether or not we agree on LARCs, a campaign to promote LARCs spearheaded by the State will be met with derision. That is not a good issue for this Commission. We need to be careful not to appear as social engineers, or to make proclamations regarding what people should do in their personal lives. (4)</p> <p>21. Unplanned pregnancy rate. (4)</p> <p>22. The foster care population has not been affected by the reduced teen pregnancy rate. (4)</p> <p>23. The effectiveness of long-term birth control in delaying out of wedlock births. Open to LARCs being part of a holistic solution; concerned that government funded programs include forms of birth control that may cause abortion. (4)</p> <p>24. Provide education and same day access to pregnancy prevention options including LARCs. (5)</p>		

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IV. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEN IN FORMING & SUSTAINING FAMILIES		
<p>KEY THEMES:</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>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>c) <i>Need more positive male role models and other supports for men.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Many young men seem to jump from boyhood to fatherhood, and miss the transformational stages of adulthood and “husbandhood.” (1) 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) The incarceration rates in Wisconsin are staggering. (1) Milwaukee leads the nation in seven negative indicators, and Wisconsin has the highest black incarceration rate in the country. (1) If we could support male employment and male earnings, we would probably see more marriage and less out-of-wedlock births. (2) 	<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Society has not acknowledged the key role of fathers in family life.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Need to change the widespread belief that men do not need social and other supports, and invest in men.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How can we help get society to be ready to invest resources in men, and especially low-income men? (2) How to invest resources in teaching incarcerated men about parenting skills, marriage skills, financial skills and job skills? (2) Helping incarcerated men through mandated classes in prison. Requiring programs about healthy relationships, life skills, marriage stability. (2) Providing men with support such as counseling, information, faith initiatives, support groups. (2) Helping men understand the role of fathers and expectations from them. (2) Role of Men: 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) There is a belief that men should pull themselves up by their bootstraps without help, and that men do not need social support. How can we help change that belief, so that men have the support that they need in life? (3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 distance when relocating prisoners to facilitate family contact, etc. (2)

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<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 US 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 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,</p>	<p>8. How to engage fathers in education/training programs? (4)</p> <p>9. How can State reinforce positive, responsible male role models in parenting? (4)</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 tattooed white men more acceptable to employers. (2)</p> <p>6. Rehabilitation, not just</p>

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<p>poor men need access to economic success through skilled training since women do not marry men without jobs. (3)</p> <p>16. Explore the impact of incarceration rates of African American and Native American men. (3)</p> <p>17. How can we provide more opportunities for our men to become self-sufficient? (4)</p> <p>18. Make government programs more inclusive and focused on the needs of men. (4)</p> <p>19. In areas with high numbers of absent fathers, there may be a way to financially incentivize men to become teachers in those communities. A male teacher could make a big difference in a few of those boys' lives. (4)</p> <p>20. Male children suffer more in a single mother household. We can address this. (4)</p> <p>21. Importance of role models and surrogate dads. (5)</p> <p>22. Provide meaning and purpose for everyone, especially youth, while working to turn those at risk into role models. (5)</p>		<p>punishment, is needed in our prisons – incentives that encourage the individual to achieve a level of success. (3)</p>
V. ECONOMICS		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Need more and better job opportunities for young people.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Policies that help create jobs will help families, as would reforms related to EITC and TANF (economic and fiscal policies).</i></p> <p>c) <i>Need to “move the needle” on poverty.</i></p>	<p>KEY THEMES:</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>c) <i>Geographic mobility for economic reasons is an important factor in economic success.</i></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-</p>

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<p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job opportunities that allow for mobility into the middle class are evaporating. (1) 2. The child poverty rates, especially in Milwaukee, are sobering, as are the disadvantages young men face when they become fathers. (1) 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) 4. We need more jobs in Wisconsin. (1) 5. Today, many families typically do not save money for a rainy day. (1) 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) 7. More and better opportunities and options are needed for men and women age 20-25. (2) 8. At the “macro level,” the economic policies that help create jobs also significantly help families. (2) 9. We need to think of adjustments to monetary / fiscal policies for complex issues. (2) 10. DCF has a project that helps children in foster care get jobs at age 16. (2) 11. At the “micro level,” there is a lot of hopelessness and not enough role models to help people understand the 	<p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How EITC (earned income tax credit) is currently applied to non-custodial parents. (2) 2. Immigrant Families: Perspectives on poverty tend to vary between immigrant and non-immigrant families, and this can lead to different economic expectations of a couple. (3) 3. Is the issue of absent fathers more of an economic issue than a social issue? (3) 4. Economic circumstances: Adjusting to changes in economic circumstances creates significant stress for spouses and can lead to conflict. (3) 5. Affordable Daycare: 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 cannot graduate. (3) 6. Economic Factors: “You may marry for love but you cannot 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) 7. Cost of Raising Children: The cost of children’s basic needs is out of reach for many people. (3) 8. Technology: As technology increasingly replaces manual labor, it reduces the earning potential of men and makes it impossible for manual laborers to support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> quality childcare are aligned. (2) 2. Redirect current fiscal resources away from current policies designed to cope with a declining state of marriage, and increase spending on developing, strengthening and building families. (2) 3. We should consider marriage and child tax credits. (3) 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)

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>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>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 children), etc. (3)</p> <p>15. The impact of globalization/robotics and technology on poverty in America, especially as it relates to men. (4)</p> <p>16. How can we provide opportunities for those who have less than a high school diploma, regarding employment and becoming financially stable? How to give them a sense of hope and purpose? (4)</p> <p>17. What impact would be the impact of expanding Medicaid in Wisconsin on poverty? (4)</p> <p>18. Regarding the Brookings and AEI consensus on food stamps and housing opportunities, skepticism was raised about the proposed solution of government offering people a job. (4)</p> <p>19. Three factors are indisputable: (1) EITC, (2) keeping individuals out of jail, (3) helping with re-entry. (4)</p> <p>20. How to deal with fraud so that the EITC can be expanded? (4)</p> <p>21. We will not be able to eradicate poverty but we can move the needle, and that would be significant. (4)</p>	<p>a family. (3)</p> <p>9. How to adopt a pro-growth tax and regulatory climate that attracts and allows for the creation of family-supporting jobs? (4)</p> <p>10. How do we provide EITC support benefits to non-custodial parents and the childless poor? (4)</p> <p>11. How can the State alleviate the influence of poverty on families? (4)</p> <p>12. How to provide mobility incentives or assistance for families to move to communities with higher upward economic mobility? (4)</p>	

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>22. How do we reduce crime, and therefore incarceration? (4)</p> <p>23. The impact of increased mobility on a community, especially Northern rural communities, Milwaukee, Racine, Beloit, etc. (4)</p> <p>24. Would like to know more about the ten communities with upward economic mobility. (4)</p> <p>25. The positive role of apprenticeship programs. (5)</p>		
VI. EDUCATION		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Vocational training at high schools 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) <i>Focus on access to a quality education for children from poor families.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have pushed 4-year education at the expense of technical education that will help young people find good jobs. (2) 2. Could we bring back vocational training in high school? (2) 3. 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) 	<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Financial management, family management and parenting skills are not mandated nor widely taught.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Parents' education affects the investments they make in their children's education.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High rate of adult functional illiteracy – among other things, this impacts parents' ability to help child to succeed in school by reading to them and assisting them with their homework. (1) 2. 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) 3. There are no mandated classes for parents. How do we educate parents to be parents? (2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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) 2. Provide in-home education programs for new fathers similar to

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>4. At UW-Madison, organic relationships with professors are effective ways of mentoring students who were in foster homes. (2)</p> <p>5. We need to increase the number of vocational schools. What can be done to start children on a vocational path 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 children and people afraid of math (algebra, trigonometry and geometry). (3)</p> <p>7. Poor children go to the worst schools. So they are set up from the beginning not to be successful. (4)</p> <p>8. School choice: parents should decide where their children go to school, and tax dollars should follow that child. (4)</p> <p>9. Give poor children equal access to better schools (expand voucher programs). (4)</p> <p>10. Studies show the ineffectiveness of many of the preschool (Head Start) programs. If those programs are not showing results, we should reconsider investing in them. It is difficult to have any lasting results when there are no changes in the home or with the parents. Not sure how government can help in that area. (4)</p> <p>11. Provide life skills curriculum in schools, including mental health, cognitive behavioral therapy, and fiscal responsibility. (4)</p> <p>12. De-stigmatize vocational training. (4)</p>	<p>4. Education: 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-educated, they automatically expect their children to go to college. (3)</p> <p>5. How do we help the most vulnerable (children in foster care, young men exiting prison, single parents) find, navigate and stay in training and higher education programs that meet demand and their needs? (4)</p> <p>6. How to provide better educational opportunities, including school choice, educating the whole child? (4)</p> <p>7. How to achieve modernization, organization and accountability of education? (4)</p> <p>8. How can the State make life skills training courses mandatory in high schools and colleges? (4)</p> <p>9. How to dramatically reform vocational training in middle-, high-, and post-secondary institutions, and consider private sector solutions? (4)</p> <p>10. How do we give children hope and purpose (guidance) for life? Skills, training, college, technical schools? (4)</p> <p>11. What influence can schools play in shaping and forming good citizens, from preschool through high school? How can these involve parents? (4)</p> <p>12. How to improve skills at all levels of paying jobs, and ensure that jobs are available? (4)</p> <p>13. How do we decrease the income gap between those with higher education and those without? (4)</p>	<p>the home visiting nurse programs for new moms. Teach about relationship formation because it is as important as birth control. (2)</p> <p>3. Promote school choice. (2)</p> <p>4. We need to link families, students, and the industry to help remove stigma of vocational training. (3)</p>

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>13. Exposure to vocational training starting in junior and senior high school and prison, and de-stigmatize it. (4)</p> <p>14. Work with employers to determine their needs and match those needs with training. (4)</p> <p>15. Infrastructure skills are missing, for example carpenters, welders, plumbers, etc. Training--not a four-year education—is needed for well-paid jobs. (4)</p>		
VII. CIVIL SOCIETY & POPULAR CULTURE		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Popular cultural messages largely promote negative messages about sex, and do not transmit positive morals and values.</i></p> <p>b) <i>As a result, many young adults have distorted views about healthy sexual relationships.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Traditional institutions and supports that build social capital have declined.</i></p> <p>d) <i>Societal and private business investment are essential for family success. Government is only one of the collaborators in finding effective solutions.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</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>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Impact of popular culture on morals and values is negative, since it glorifies single parenthood and dumbs down the role of fathers. Need to change this.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Difference in beliefs, culture and world views make challenges faced by a family more difficult.</i></p> <p>c) <i>Increasing social isolation, and families who are isolated from support networks, make it more challenging for marriages to remain intact.</i></p> <p>MEETING NOTES:</p> <p>1. The changing/ declining importance of morals and values, and reduced exposure to those from past generations. (1)</p> <p>2. Changing cultural influences, especially those that are highly sexualized and violent. (1)</p> <p>3. Religion and beliefs: Differences in religion, beliefs, and</p>	

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>5. The message is “you’re not cool if you haven’t slept around.” We have a lot of media messages to overcome. (2)</p> <p>6. The disassociation of sex and marriage and the impact of early exposure to sex, pornography, especially via social media, is troubling. (2)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>8. Pornography among young people distorts their perceptions of sex. Young people have easy access to pornography through cell phones & the internet. Pornography can be an addictive behavior. If parents do not monitor what their children are viewing, the result could be a distorted understanding of sexuality. (3)</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>4. Culture: There is much cultural variation regarding sexual education and generational shifts regarding the value of getting married after a teen pregnancy. (3)</p> <p>5. Social Isolation: 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)</p> <p>6. Religion and ethics: if there is strong religion or ethics, self-policing within a family is more common. When couples vary in their strength of faith or clash over the importance of ethics/values, it can be challenging to parent. (3)</p> <p>7. Communitarianism: America’s culture of “rugged individualism” means self-determination, but we forget about communitarianism (solidarity with all other beings). (3)</p> <p>8. Television & Entertainment: TV culture today exploits sex, and promotes viewing sex as a recreational sport. There is a trend towards degrading and dumbing down</p>	

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>9. Despite pop cultural references, two parents are necessary, not just one. (3)</p> <p>10. How can we find consensus on political strategy re: cultural influences? (3)</p> <p>11. The use of media in promoting information about the consequences of sexual activity; the media can be a useful tool. (4)</p> <p>12. Educate that sex is not a recreational sport. (4)</p> <p>13. Study the successes, not just failures. (5)</p> <p>14. Do not depend on the government for solutions; consider it a collaborator for finding solutions. (5)</p> <p>15. Need to create a marketing campaign / counter-narrative of success studies and share them. (5)</p> <p>16. Need more programs/options/pathways for individuals aging out of group homes. (5)</p> <p>17. Private sector investment is needed for public-sector problems. (5)</p> <p>18. How to expand programs that support at-risk populations, e.g., foster youth, those out of incarceration, single moms, etc.? How to help them succeed and become “witnesses”? (5)</p> <p>19. How to build capacity among witnesses? How to support them? (5)</p> <p>20. Consider revising qualifications needed to be a provider for programs that have proven to be effective; do not rely on credentials as a predictor of success. (5)</p> <p>21. Train neighborhood organizations to be more competitive for funding options, e.g., how to write grant proposals. (5)</p> <p>22. Utilize local leaders in order to influence behaviors in</p>	<p>men and fathers in entertainment. Single parenthood is glorified. (3)</p> <p>9. Superficial Solutions: 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. Social Stigma: Women, not just men, have children with multiple partners but do not face the same stigma as men do. (3)</p> <p>11. Support Network: 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. Personal Introspection: 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> <p>13. How can the use of media be an instrument in challenging acceptable sexual behaviors and the understanding of marriage and family? (4)</p> <p>14. How can the State legislate behaviors, attitudes and culture? Encourage healthy decision-making? Is it possible for government to legislate the culture of poverty? How do we change the culture of poverty? (4)</p> <p>15. What is the societal willingness to invest in “others” (incarcerated, those who “live on the other side of the tracks”, etc.)? (4)</p> <p>16. How do we better prepare those in the State’s care to transition into adulthood? (4)</p>	

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>the community. (5)</p> <p>23. Do not undermine community strengths, whether rural or urban. The challenges of poverty exist in rural and urban communities; do not ignore one in favor of the other. (5)</p> <p>24. Poverty has become a big industry, and there are vested interests that keep people in poverty. Solutions tend to focus on creating comfort in poverty versus moving people out of poverty. We need a new paradigm, but how can advocates for a new paradigm get more visibility? How can we get resources for successful ground-level programs? (5)</p> <p>25. A lack of visible opportunities in the private sector promotes reliance on the poverty industry. People hustle because they don't see other opportunities. (5)</p> <p>26. We forget that it takes two, at least two, to raise a family. In single parent, low-income families, government has become the "second" parent; one income does not work for these families. It's "mom and a partner" or "mom and government support." (5)</p>		
VIII. CONTEXT		
<p>KEY THEMES:</p> <p>a) <i>Families are formed in many ways, and the definition of family is broad. For the purpose of its work, the Commission defined "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>KEY THEMES:</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>MEETING NOTES:</p> <p>1. Increase in the number of undocumented people. (1)</p>	<p>1.</p>

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>b) <i>The problems and issues addressed in the presentations and 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>MEETING NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “Natural” or biological parents – both, mother and father, and single parents b. Grandparents and other relatives providing care for the child c. Legal guardians d. Foster family and/or residential care e. A person perceived by the child as his or her parent, including key influencers in a child’s life, individuals and supporting agencies. (1) 2. The definition of family is very broad. (1) 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) 4. These are extremely complex and broad problems facing the Commission, and proposed solutions are likely to be reductive. (1) 5. Many of the facts presented by the guest speaker are 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Impact of violent crime and gun violence on communities and families; these affect all families, not just vulnerable ones. (1) 3. Health Issues: 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) 4. There is a societal deficiency in understanding the factors that affect mental health and its impact on families and cost. (3) 5. Addiction: Alcohol, drug and pornography addictions leads to physiological changes, and all addictions affect the family. (3) 6. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE): 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) 7. How can we impact partisanship so legislature moves to consensus? (4) 	

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>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 by 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: 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</p>		

REFLECTIONS (new, relevant or otherwise interesting)	BARRIERS / CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
<p>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> <p>14. A lot of government programs have already reduced our poverty rate quite a bit. Government programs have had a positive impact. (4)</p> <p>15. General awareness of available programs is low. (4)</p> <p>16. We need to evaluate programs using standards. (4)</p> <p>17. We need incentives to ensure participation. (4)</p> <p>18. Look at programs that have been successful, for example, BAM in Chicago. (4)</p> <p>19. Let's build on what has already been proven to work in other places. (4)</p> <p>20. Would like to know more about Colorado's LARC program because Republicans were skittish about it. We need to know what made these programs successful. How can we reduce misperceptions about such programs? Make alternatives available when needed. (4)</p> <p>21. The four categories of poverty described by Mr. Woodson were helpful; while he focused mostly on Category 4, the Commission has to focus on all the categories. (5)</p> <p>22. The speaker's recommendations validated Secretary Anderson's approach to change. (5)</p>		

Appendix A – Prioritized challenges for each Focus Area

The Commissioners identified four Focus Areas for their recommendations, based on their reflections, challenges and the eight categories listed earlier in this document.

The following table shows how the categories related to the four Focus Areas. An “X” in a cell below shows the relationship between a particular category and a specific Focus Area. The last category (“Context”) was not applicable to the Focus Areas.

<i>Preliminary categories for organizing Reflections and Challenges</i>	Focus Area #1: Parenting Stability	Focus Area #2: Economic Stability through Education/Training	Focus Area #3: Economic Stability Through Jobs/Work Support	Focus Area #4: Social/Cultural Support for Marriage
<i>I. Marriage</i>	X			X
<i>II. Family complexity</i>	X			
<i>III. Family planning & the success sequence</i>	X			X
<i>IV. Roles & responsibilities of men in forming & sustaining families</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>V. Economics</i>		X	X	
<i>VI. Education</i>		X	X	
<i>VII. Civil society & popular culture</i>				X

From the list of challenges the Commissioners had previously identified for each of the categories, they then summarized and prioritized specific challenges within each of the four Focus Areas. The summarized challenges are listed below in a descending order of priority.

Challenges for each Focus Area		Votes
Focus Area #1: Parenting Stability		
• Lack of support for men’s role in forming and sustaining families		8
• Low demand for marriage/too many barriers for marriage		7
• Unplanned pregnancies and lack of family planning		7
• High family complexity		5
Focus Area #2: Economic Stability through Education/Training		
• Lack of high-quality K-12 Education for high-risk segments		7
• Lack of support for most vulnerable groups to find, navigate, and complete vocational/ technical training and traditional four-year college		7
• Lack of affordable, high-quality early childhood education for high-risk segments		5
• Low levels of adult functional literacy and math skills		5
• Limited capacity and access to vocational / technical training		3
• Stigma around vocational / technical training		0
Focus Area #3: Economic Stability Through Jobs/Work Support		
• Insufficient support for men to prevent incarceration and reduce recidivism		11
• Lack of alignment between geographic mobility incentives, infrastructure and transportation with available jobs		7
• Insufficient supply of high-quality, affordable, accessible early childhood education		5
• Limited access to subsidized employment and on-the-job training		2
• Limited access to employment-related supports for partial/non-custodial parents		2
• Limited ability to match employers with skilled potential employees		0
Focus Area #4: Social/Cultural Support for Marriage		
• Few positive cultural messages about marriage		8
• Few positive societal/cultural role models for men		7
• Combating cultural messages that sexual activity disconnected to a committed / monogamous relationship has no consequences		6
• Social isolation of families		6

Appendix B - Summary of Expert Presentations & Discussions

Meeting #1 (Jan 27, 2016) - Presentation summary: Prof. Timothy Smeeding

The Changing American Family

1. The composition of the American family has changed significantly since the 19th 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. Decline in relative incomes of young men has implications for future of marriage.
7. 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. Those who take this path are more educated, more likely to have a stable marriage, older, better parenting skills, smaller families, more income/assets, more stability and able to offer more opportunities for their children
8. The "wrong way" does not support best outcomes for children and families, and includes the following sequence: Have a baby first; Do not finish school right away; Do not have a decent job; Do not have a partner to rely on; Never, ever have a life plan. Increasingly, more and more births are the "wrong way." Those who take this path tend to be less educated (HS degree or less), younger, have fewer parenting skills, a lower rate of marriage, more multi-partner fertility, larger families, lower incomes, less stability and offer fewer opportunities for their children.

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 (partner) stability is difficult; WI has a 75% rate of multi-partner fertility.
4. Less income mobility - if a child starts in the bottom 20% income bracket, the likelihood that he/she will move up is quite low.
5. Parenting skills, abilities and resources matter; we need to make "weaker" parents "stronger" in terms of parenting quality.
6. 41% of births are out of wedlock, 60% of those are unplanned. Out of wedlock birth rates among African-Americans in WI are 10 points above the U.S. as a whole.
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 refundable tax credits (Earned Income Tax Credit, child tax credit), noncash benefits (FoodShare, public housing), work-related expenses (SHARES), and lower out of pocket health costs (BadgerCare).

9. Wisconsin has a small African-American middle class - 22% of all African-Americans in WI were middle class and it is declining; for African-Americans with children in Milwaukee, 13% were middle class, compared to 26% in the U.S. as a whole.
10. 30% of African-Americans in WI are poor; of these, 76% live in Milwaukee.
11. Milwaukee has extreme racial and income disparities, and very high rates of child poverty. The rate of African-American child poverty is 40% in Milwaukee County; with areas in metro Milwaukee exceeding 60% - compared to white child poverty rate in Milwaukee of 8.5% overall and up to 34% in metro Milwaukee. Metro Milwaukee ranks 8th among U.S. metro areas with most concentrated poverty.

Policy Issues

- To build stronger families, increase economic prosperity and possibly increase marriage, need to reduce unplanned, out-of-wedlock births and adopt four cornerstones of AEI-Brookings joint report: (a) promote marriage, (b) promote delayed childrearing, (c) promote parenting skills & practices, and (d) promote skill development, family involvement and employment.
- Marriage promotion policies to date have not worked; Also need higher wages, increased incentives for marriage over cohabitation and decreased disincentives to marriage.
- Abstinence as a policy hasn't worked, but abortion and adoption are controversial and less desirable choices. Evidence suggests that effective birth control is starting to work; recommends promotion of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)
- Also need to reduce incarceration rates.

Meeting #2 (Feb 23, 2016) - Presentation summary: Professor Lawrence Berger

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.
2. There are many implications for family complexity and fluidity.
3. Births to non-married mothers have doubled since 1980 and there has been a large increase in cohabitating families.
4. Many children face multiple family structure transitions by age 9, and cohabiting families with unmarried parents are nearly as unstable as single parent households.
5. Most children born to single parents will be part of complex families.
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.
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, 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.
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.

3. Low parental investments and family functioning lead to poorer childhood outcomes, including unintended pregnancy and non-marital births.

How current policy addresses family complexity

1. Policy implications
 - 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
 - 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.
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.

Questions / Answers with Professor Berger

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 (Feb 23, 2016) - Presentation summary: Ms. Rachel Sheffield

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%.
2. Since 1960s the rate of births to unwed mothers has risen from 7% to over 40% (slide 39); in Wisconsin, the rate is 37%.
3. In the U.S., 71% of poor families with children are not married; in Wisconsin, the rate is 77%.
4. In Wisconsin, the majority of unwed births occurs to women ages 20-29, not teens (61% vs. 7% for under 18).

5. Rate of out-of-wedlock births is significantly higher for women with less education (65% for high school dropouts; 55% for HS only) than for women with more education (42% for those with some college and less than 1% for college graduates).
6. The poverty rate of married couples with children is lower than that for households headed by single parent, even controlling for education levels.
7. In Wisconsin, non-married white families are ten times more likely to be poor than married white families (slide 46); non-married African-American families are five times more likely to be poor than married African-American families; and non-married Hispanic families are three times more likely to be poor than married Hispanic families).
8. Single parents are more likely to remain in poverty and married parents are less likely to be in poverty.
9. 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; married couples are more likely to pool their resources and more likely to receive wealth transfer from their families.
 - d. 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.
10. Married men maintain higher levels of employment than non-married men: in March 2013, 90% of married men were working or in military, compared to 70% of non-married men.
11. If marriage rates had not declined, more men would be connected to the workforce.
12. The decline in marriage has contributed to declining socio-economic conditions.
13. There are financial benefits to intact families and their children, the “intact family premium.”
14. Marriage affects the well-being of children and adults and keeps fathers connected to the labor force.
15. Married couples more effectively build wealth than single parents do.
16. Marriage is doing well among the highly educated but less well among those who could most benefit from it.

Policy recommendations

1. Reduce welfare marriage penalties - provide assistance grants to couples who stay married.
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

Q: Is the reduction in teenage pregnancy due to 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 sexual activity from commitment. Sexual activity is no longer reserved for marriage.

Q: With the benefits of marriage, why do you think so many people do not 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?

Commissioner comment: 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 do not 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)

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 activity among high- and low-income people is similar and has 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. Children born into poverty
 - b. Teenagers in poverty who need help to gain upward mobility
 - c. Families in tough situation
15. With regard to teens and upward mobility, 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. DCF has a project that helps children in foster care get jobs at age 16. At UW-Madison, organic relationships with professors are effective ways of mentoring students who were in foster homes.

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

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) higher economic growth, (2) lower child poverty rates, (3) higher family median income, and (4) stronger upward income mobility (the American Dream). States need to renew the economic, policy, civic and cultural foundations of marriage and family life for the 21st 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Children from intact married families are more likely to flourish and acquire the human capital needed to graduate from college and be gainfully employed.
- 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.

The States of Our Unions

- In general, states in north have stronger and more stable families; states in south have less stable families.
- 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).

- 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).
- 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).

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 programs 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.

Discussion with Prof. Price and Mr. Wilcox

- 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.

Meeting #4 (Jun 28, 2016) - Presentation summary: Dr. Ron Haskins

Key points from presentation:

- Reforms at the state and local level are where social policy is “missing the boat.” The U.S. has concentrated a lot of power and authority in Washington, DC.
- Researcher Raj Chetty used Internal Revenue Service data to study family economics. His work, based on millions of income records from the IRS, confirms that there is an economic mobility problem in the U.S. A child born into a family in the lowest 25% income level has a 43% chance of remaining in that lowest income level. The chances of making it to the top income level are only 5%.
- Many other countries have more economic mobility, on average, than the U.S. does. Within the U.S., economic mobility varies significantly - many communities have at least as much economic mobility as other countries. Key factors that influence economic mobility are demographic and economic segregation, schools and family structure (communities with more married versus single parent families, for example). States and localities can and do make a big difference in social mobility.

- Research presented is derived from a group of American Enterprise Institute and Brookings Institution experts. They met to discuss strategies for reducing poverty and increasing economic mobility. The final report was bipartisan, endorsed by 15 experts who agreed to support a minimum wage increase and the importance of marriage. This group demonstrated that key thinkers can come to agreement across the political spectrum.

Causes of poverty and lack of economic mobility:

The three main causes of poverty and lack of economic mobility are **family composition, employment, and education**. In order for the U.S. to make progress towards alleviating poverty and increasing economic mobility, progress is needed in all three areas; current trends are moving in the wrong direction.

1. Family

- In the last 40 years, American families have seen significant changes in demographics. A key factor is the increase in non-marital births.
- The rate of married adults with children has declined consistently over the last 40 years. Therefore, the number of children raised in single parent households has increased dramatically.
- The poverty rate among children in single parent families is five times the poverty rate of children in families with married parent. This is a relentless social pressure that increases childhood poverty; government programs need to counteract this social trend in order to be successful.

2. Work

- The employment rate of men has decreased consistently in recent decades.
- In the same time period, the employment rate of single mothers has increased dramatically: a 40% increase over a 4-5 year period. This is a staggering change.
- The welfare reform message that people should work has been a successful one; the value of work and the importance of work has increased in many communities.

3. Education

- At every level, it always pays to have more education; the lines on this graph never intersect.
- The salary payoff of higher education is even greater now than it was 50 years ago.
- The income disparity between those with no education and those with higher education is much greater now than it was 50 years ago.

Solutions:

Dr. Haskins proposed four solutions, or “best bets”:

1. Combine work and work supports

- Single parent families work more now than they did in the past, and in general are doing better.
- Government programs reduce poverty in half: the U.S. poverty rate is 48% when calculated using earned income alone; when other benefits are factored in (cash benefits, SNAP, EITC, etc.) the poverty rate is 24%.
- The largest three federal benefits are EITC, child tax credit and SNAP. The first two of these benefits are entitlements tied to employment; if work rates increase, these benefits increase.

2. Increase family stability (birth control)

- There is widespread agreement across the political spectrum about the importance of marriage.
- The longer a woman waits to have a baby, the greater the chance that she will marry.
- 60% of births to single women under age 30 are unplanned.

- We have a lot of data about a key family factor - birth control. In Colorado and St. Louis, an experiment of increased access to birth control, specifically LARCs, to all who wanted it reduced unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Many benefits to reducing unplanned pregnancies; not many policies have as much impact as this does.
3. Skilled employment
- Range includes 4-year and 2-year colleges, apprenticeships, certificates & licenses, career academies.
 - Goal is to prepare youth for skilled jobs available in the local economy.
 - Women do not want to marry men who do not have a job. Increased male employment would increase the marriage rate and therefore reduce the poverty rate. Furthermore, an increased marriage rate leads to improved childhood development.
4. Early childhood education
- By age 2 or 3, children from low income families have already fallen behind their peers; they need this intervention.
 - By early childhood education, means home visiting, Head Start, State pre-kindergarten and child care programs.
 - U.S. preschool programs are not very effective in that they haven't been sufficiently scaled up, both in terms of access and quality.
 - Quality is the key, but high quality programming is hard to do consistently. We have a lot of preschool programs across the U.S. that are actually harmful to children. We need to get rid of the poor programs and increase the positive programs.
 - State and local governments have to step up. This area will require a consistent effort over a decade to make a real difference. However, Wisconsin has a history of developing policies that are adopted on a national scale.

Questions / Answers with Dr. Haskins

Q: Are Scandinavian early childhood development programs successful even across poverty rates?

A: On average, Scandinavian childcare facilities are better than U.S. ones, but he does not know enough about the empirical data to speak to it. However, the guaranteed government programs in Scandinavian countries means there is less poverty than in the U.S.

Q: When I was a social worker, there used to be a lot of teachers' aides, and they were parents. No matter how well a child does in school, it is irrelevant if the parents do not change. How parents talk to their child matters, for example command language versus discussion language. Parents' education is needed.

A: Parents are a huge part of this equation—parent education throughout the childhood years is important. Home visits are a part of parent education and those programs produce positive impacts. In 2018 there will be more information about home visiting programs because 700 programs are being evaluated now. The language of low-income parents and the language of middle-income parents is different: more words, give-and-take, two-way conversations of middle-income parents are more conducive to childhood development than command language. Not confident that policy can influence parent activity enough to make a difference.

Q: In the research you cited, how extensive were the program parameters and assessment? Influence of environment, for example churches, associations?

A: The studies were program-specific; not many studies focus on wider circumstances. Chetty shows that broader circumstances make a big difference; however, most of our empirical studies do not do that. There are not many programs working on increasing community involvement.

Q: Regarding Head Start, is there research into why children drop off after first grade? How many low-income single parents have the means to assess schools?

Commissioner comment: There is a big effort in Wisconsin to educate families about five-star childcare ratings. More childcare facilities want to rate above 2 stars, and many families look only at facilities with 3- to 5- star ratings.

A: During preschool years, children from low-income families go to low-rated facilities. Head Start for those families is better. The Obama administration is reviewing Head Start facilities and closing those that aren't working. But states and local governments haven't stepped up. No good answer for why children in Head Start have fallen off. Need programs for children at all life stages. Multiple interventions help. Preschool programs alone will not help.

Q: What about toxic stress in first 5 years? If high-risk children are in high-quality all-day daycare, could that be because you've removed a lot of toxic stress? For low-income children, could all-day daycare make a big difference? Could that change their trajectory?

A: The literature about toxic stress is very primitive. We already have a few small programs for children who have high stress. The intervention is with the mother to increase warmth from her. Those have an impact on children. Foster care has a big negative impact on children's development — it is a gamble when children are removed from home. Instead of foster care, intervention with parents is preferred. Children will move in the direction of their current environment.

Q: How do we make quality childcare attainable for all families?

A: Childcare Block Grant money goes to states. It funds less than 20% of children who are eligible. There is not enough funding for those who qualify. The Quality Rating System is a great idea but the engine needs money.

Commissioner comment: Wisconsin supplements Block Grant funds with TANF funds.

Q: What changes can we make now that will make a difference in 20 years? What can we do for the children in poverty now? Brains are not fully developed until age 23. Fifty years ago people got married younger. Now we know successful people are getting married later. This is a political issue—how do we make it a non-political issue?

A: The #1 success story for public policy is teen pregnancy prevention. Now the rate of pregnancies among 21-year-olds is declining as well. It would be worthwhile to study how we made progress with preventing teen pregnancy. Successful programs give children something to do in the community. The big difference with teen pregnancy is that we have unanimous agreement that it is a bad idea.

Commissioner comment: How to care for the elderly population? We cannot forget that we are living longer and we do not have enough young people to go into the workforce and make enough income to take care of older people. We need to remember the entire life cycle. We think about women too much, men not enough, and we do not think about the life cycle and needs of elderly. Family is also about older people and who is going to care for them.

Commissioner comment: Families need to be able to help each other instead of depending upon programs. Up north, success means leaving the area (moving to other areas). In rural areas the labor force does not have enough skills for the work that needs to be done.

Q: Is \$12 per hour a livable wage? Regarding working single moms...should we look at wage increases?

A: That was part of our compromise—all agreed a minimum wage increase. Projections were that a wage increase to \$11.50 or \$12 per hour would result in the loss of half million jobs. Democrats agreed that it was worth it.

Commissioner comment: But higher minimum wage increases affect only higher wage earners. People with minimal skills, people just starting out, are not affected by wage increases.

A: One of the consequences of international competition is that other countries can produce things cheaper.

Q: Would that create a society more dependent on welfare?

A: There is a slim chance of that since cash welfare is hard to get.

Commissioner comment: Because quality of education is poor, and low-income men are not getting these programs, they are pushed to prison and street corner.

Q: What do you think about expanding EITC to non-custodial fathers?

A: I think it is a great idea. There is not strong evidence that it will work, but the goal of doing so is to lure them into the workforce. The President supports it and Paul Ryan supports it. I think we could take it to \$1000. Republicans think there is too much fraud in the program—mistakes, etc., so the error rate needs to go down before Republicans will support expanding EITC.

Q: How come so many unemployed people do not migrate for jobs the way they once used to? If Wisconsin were to create economic policies that attracted people from other states, would that change atmospheric benefits for everyone, or would it only benefit those who have the jobs?

A: That's a very complex question. Yes, Americans are less mobile. Yes, studies show that children who move to better neighborhoods when they're under 13 are helped by such a move. Would such movement on a large scale have positive effect on community? Probably yes. Two-parent households are more mobile than single-parent households, so my guess would be yes, but it is just a guess. There is no literature on this topic. People who move for a job leads to an increase in the general quality of the state's population.

Q: Males are a big part of the problem—why? What can be done for them to help the problem?

A: Black males suffer more by virtue of not being with their fathers. We cannot raise a community of males without significant influence of males in the home and community. So, boys look for social relationships—gangs, peers. Referenced the “cool pose culture.”

Q: How can we help?

A: EITC, fewer incarcerated men, help people when they come out of prison (very difficult to do), programs for young males during school years, more male teachers, etc. Change the attitude of “I would have a baby with this guy, but never marry him!”

Q: What is the best approach to teach and educate young men to take responsibility for themselves and others?

A: The BAM (Be A Man) program through the University of Chicago, led by Dr. Jens Ludwig, teaches young men to think before escalating a situation. Children want to do it! It works! And it still works a year later—the participants are more likely to stay in school. It teaches them to slow down, think of a better response.

Commissioner comment: What you see in the home, you repeat in public. Today children are heavily influenced by media; we need positive influences.

Q: We know the impact of a dad in the household, the nuclear family. What impact does time element make? How much time does a father need to be involved for it to make a difference? At what point is the child negatively affected?

A: Professional opinion is that the father staying involved is a crucial element to childhood development. There is no doubt that having a father involved is important. The more, the better. But it is difficult for a non-custodial parent to have a consistent influence.

Q: What about a child support credit based on time spent with child?

A: That is against the law. Judges have a lot of discretion, but there are only very narrow circumstances in which a child support amount can be reduced.

Q: Regarding doing no harm to marriage, did your study look at reforms to help with that?

A: Tax policy is generally pro-marriage, and has gotten more pro-marriage. Bigger EITC if they got married, for benefits programs. Means-tested programs, not as much. Increasing food stamps and reducing marriage penalty would have biggest impact.

Q: What about the societal assumption that if I get married I will lose my benefits?

A: I do not think that's a widespread assumption, but I'm not sure. Public media campaigns haven't been tried enough on marriage and its advantage on children.

Q: Is it an issue that people associate marriage with religion?

Commissioner comment: We support marriage, so we need to get ready for all the counseling that needs to accompany it. If you haven't been in a married family, you have no idea how to do it. We need to help people be married.

A: The culture of marriage has been lost for major population segments.

Commissioner comment: Billy Graham was an influence. Today's youth are bombarded with negative influences and wrong thinking patterns. That takes away from them learning about fatherhood, mothers, taking responsibility. Children need an environment of trust and peers.

A: Focus resources on the poor, and the poorest of the poor. Head Start and home visiting dollars would focus on poorest of the poor, and a broader group of children would be assisted through Pre-K. This is how to help the most disadvantaged children early.

Q: What about childcare for low-income single parents? Many low-income parents work split or irregular shifts when good childcare is not available. How can we entice more people to do split shift and nontraditional childcare hours? We need to develop an early childcare education system that is supportive of parents' work schedules.

A: Technology is against us—companies can schedule in a way that is cheapest to them but at the expense of their employee.

Commissioner comment: Factory workers get paid more if they work 2nd and 3rd shift.

Commissioner comment: There is a perception that daycare is big and bad, but it is licensed. The in-home daycare is where maybe the problems are.

Q: So what do we do with men?

A: Increase the EITC, keep men out of jail—that means changing minimum sentencing laws and establishing programs for men when coming out of prison, and create fatherhood programs. There are many fatherhood programs across the country, but they’re all so different, there’s not a common curriculum or goals.

Commissioner comment: My program focuses on teaching evidence-based life skills, such as the needs of children, men’s health, and responsibility. The challenge is getting men in the door because it is a voluntary program.

A: All voluntary programs have a problem with attendance. Several hundred million dollars were spent on Bush marriage initiatives. Across 16 sites and several thousand people, the average participant got only 20% of the curriculum.

Q: Can we incentivize attendance?

A: The Oklahoma program had the best impact. It offered dinners, supplied childcare, gave parents rewards if they met goals. The rewards were things for their children.

Q: Should school curriculum be about impulse control? Should we look at this as a public health crisis and include life skills in a public school curriculum?

A: My own view is that we should have programs like that. Right now they vary state to state. Many schools teach these as extra-curricular activities because there is more flexibility in after-school hours.

Q: If children do not see that good behavior modelled outside of the school, how well will it sit? They need to see adults model it.

A: BAM focuses on children and practicing it with their friends.

Q: Is there any research regarding home schooling?

A: I do not know that research very well. Home schooling will not be a major solution because the assumption that men work while women stay home is no longer valid.

Commissioner comment: 60% of births to unmarried women under age 30 are unplanned. Men rate their manhood based on how many women they get pregnant.

A: Women want to control fertility, and if they can, they do. If there’s going to be responsible behavior, it will focus on women. We have been successful at defining responsible sexual behavior as relationships in which they do not get pregnant. And if you are sexually active, use birth control.

Commissioner comment: I teach children to use two forms of birth control if you do not want to get pregnant. There is 9% failure rate 3 years down the road; hormonal contraception isn’t 100% effective.

Commissioner comment: Sexual education has to deal with sexually transmitted diseases. Particularly within inner-city Milwaukee, STDs are at an all-time high. That’s a discussion about community health that needs to happen; we need to teach children to say “no.”

Commissioner comment: All 16-year-old girls are screened for Chlamydia because it is at an all-time high.

Q: There is a rise in unplanned pregnancies, but a lot of underlying things are going on. What is available to our youth to keep them out of negative situations?

Commissioner comment: One bad decision can have effects for 20-25 years. LARCs give women and society time for education, stability, relationships, etc.

Meeting #5 (Aug 25, 2016) - Presentation summary: Mr. Bob Woodson

Mr. Bob Woodson is the Founder and President of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) and has done significant work with communities across the country, including Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Title: “Community Approaches to Strengthening Families”

Between 1965 and 1995 the marriage rate declined dramatically. There are two main factors behind this trend, which led to a breakdown of the American family:

1. Up to the 1960’s, poor people, including immigrants and migrants, were integrated into their communities with the help of civic institutions that made conscious efforts to help people assimilate.
2. In the 1960s and later, the stigma of welfare was removed as it became defined as a right. Welfare policies separated income from work.

Solution

Mr. Woodson proposed the following community solution: key principles of the market economy should be applied to our social economy. A market economy encourages competition, entrepreneurship and innovation. He proposed that not all poor people are the same and it is inappropriate to generalize about the poor. According to him, there are **four categories of poor**, and different categories require different solutions:

1. Those who use welfare as a temporary solution - they have strong moral character intact;
2. Those who remain on welfare - they have strong moral character but perverse incentives to remain on government assistance;
3. Those who are physically and/or mentally disabled;
4. Those who are poor because of character deficits such as moral and spiritual failings.

CNE works with people who are in Category 4 above - they need redemption and transformation before jobs and training can help them. A precondition of assisting people in Category 4 is redemption; once that happens then government supports can be effective.

CNE creates neighborhood-based solutions - the work focuses on grassroots social solutions through entrepreneurship to address community problems such as drug addiction, prostitution, vandalism, etc. CNE locates existing community leaders with moral authority, and helps them provide residents the means to protect and clean up their own neighborhoods.

A key tenet of CNE’s work is to study and learn from success. Mr. Woodson found that successful innovations come from people suffering from the problems. People cannot learn from studying only failures. He encouraged the Commission to study examples of success as there are many “islands of excellence” within poor communities around the country.

CNE empowers those who are already successfully helping their own communities. Mr. Woodson noted that social problems do not necessarily need governmental solutions and reminded the Commission that

government can contract with neighborhood groups. CNE's model involves looking for service providers in the very community suffering the problem. Doing so through governmental support would require a policy shift because being a governmental provider requires certification, licensure, and thus, more often, a college degree. There are barriers to providing assistance in a government-sponsored role.

Questions / Answers with Mr. Woodson

Q: What government programs work, and how would you retool existing governmental programs that are not effective?

A: Mr. Woodson shared a story of how gang members in a community were successfully engaged to help the community in cleaning up graffiti and doing other maintenance tasks. This created ownership about the community in the former gang members, and led to a successful truce. A condition of such contracts is to do something positive in the community. Any time there is a rule or governmental expectation, such as insurance, which is acting as a barrier to program or neighborhood success, consider creative solutions to that rule.

Q: What is your approach to addressing a culture that is bombarded with negative cultural influences?

A: Develop a counter-narrative, such as private-sector solutions that market success or resurrection.

Q: Do "islands of excellence" exist in rural areas as well as urban areas?

A: Yes, CNE has done a lot of work in rural Alabama and Appalachia.

Commissioner comment: The current rate of marriage among whites is where it was for blacks when Patrick Moynihan wrote his report. If blacks are the "canaries in the coalmine," then we are in trouble.

Mr. Woodson: Material and financial success is not enough to live a fulfilling life. The crisis we have is due to a lack of meaning; this a cultural, moral, spiritual war we are fighting.

Q: What is the status of Wisconsin's faith-based organizations?

A: Government should not directly support faith-based organizations. Transfer authority to individuals, for example in the form of a voucher, and let them make their own choices. The GI Bill of Rights is a successful example of this type of government assistance.