

Marriage Promotion: Policy & Practice

Overview of the Course: The course examines the shift away from marriage within low-income families in the United States and the resulting legislation that seeks to reinstate marriage as the norm. With this course, students will examine the institution of marriage as the locus for a demographic shift in this country, as a micro-level context for individual development for both children and partners, and as a policy issue at the macro level. We will examine why or whether marriage is important, why we believe Americans are marrying at lower rates, and given that the federal government has defined this as a problem, what we know about how to fix it, with the end goal being to push students to think critically about how to utilize research to inform policy.

WEEK 1: THE TRENDS

Casper, L.M. and Bianchi, S.M. (2002). Continuity and Change in the American Family. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- o Chapter 1: Changing Families in a Changing Society
- o Chapter 4: Single Mother Families

Reischauer, R. (2003). Beyond Ideology, Politics and Guesswork: The Case for Evidence-Based Policy. (downloaded May 16, 2005 from http://www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/900636_EvidenceBasedPolicy.pdf)

Cherlin, A. (1999). Going to Extremes: Family Structure, Children's Well-Being and Social Science. Demography, 36(4): 421-428.

ASSIGNMENT DUE NEXT WEEK: Write a 1-2 page description of what you think should be done, if anything, about the retreat from marriage. This does not have to be in-depth or supported by research, but it should be thoughtful and have a central argument.

WEEK 2: PRWORA – THE BILL AND ITS INFLUENCES

Haskins, R. (2001). Liberal and Conservative Influences on the Welfare Reform Legislation of 1996. In G.J. Duncan and L. Chase-Lansdale (Eds.), For Better and For Worse: Welfare Reform and the Well-Being of Children and Families (pp. 9-34). New York: Russell Sage.

Roberts, P. and Greenberg, M. (2005). Marriage and the TANF Rules: A Discussion Paper. Center for Law and Social Policy. (downloaded March 1, 2006 from http://www.clasp.org/publications/2_parent_tanf_rules.pdf)

Roberts, P. (2006). Update on the Marriage and Fatherhood Provisions of the 2006 Federal Budget and the 2007 Budget Proposal. Center for Law and Social Policy. (downloaded March 14, 2006 from http://www.clasp.org/publications/marriage_fatherhood_budget2006.pdf)

Cherlin, A. (2003). Should the Government Promote Marriage? Contexts, 2(4): 22-29.

Ooms, T. (2001). The Role of Federal Government in Strengthening Marriage. Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law, 9(1):163-191.

Shonkoff, J.P. (2000). Science, Policy and Practice: Three Cultures in Search of a Shared Mission. Child Development, 71(1): 181-187.

WEEK 3: MARRIAGE AND PARTNERS AND PARENTS

Waite, L.J. and Gallagher, M. (2000). The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially. New York: Broadway Books.

- Chapter 1: The Marriage Wars – Five Myths of the Postmarriage Culture
- Chapter 2: The Marriage Bargain
- Chapter 3: The Cohabitation Deal
- Chapter 4: In Sickness and in Health – The Medical Powers of Marriage
- Chapter 5: Happily Ever After? Marriage, Happiness and Mental Health
- Chapter 6: With My Body I Thee Worship – The Sexual Advantages of Marriage
- Chapter 7: The Wages of Wedlock
- Chapter 8: For Richer or For Poorer – The Wealth and Poverty of Spouses

Lichter, D.T., Graefe, D.R., and Brown, J.B. (2003). Is Marriage a Panacea? Union Formation Among Economically Disadvantaged Unwed Mothers. Social Problems, 50(1): 60-86.

Hawkins, D. and Booth, A. (2005). Unhappily Ever After: Effects of Long-Term, Low-Quality Marriages on Well-Being. Social Forces, 84(1): 445-465.

Catlett, B.S. and Artis, J.E. (2004). Critiquing the Case for Marriage Promotion: How the Promarriage Movement Misrepresents Domestic Violence Research. Violence Against Women, 10(11): 1226-1244.

Amato, P. (2004). Tension Between Institutional and Individual Views of Marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 66: 959-965.

WEEK 4: CHILDREN AND MARRIAGE

McLanahan, S. and Sandefur, G. (1994). Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hofferth, S. and Anderson, K. (2003). Are All Dads Equal? Biology versus Marriage as a Basis for Paternal Investment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 65(1): 213-232.

Manning, W. and Lamb, K. (2003). Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married and Single-Parent Families. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 65(4): 876-893.

Hetherington, E.M. and Jodl, K.M. (1994). Stepfamilies as Settings for Development. In A. Booth and J. Dunn (Eds.), Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kane, A. and Lichter, D. (2006). Reducing Unwed Childbearing: The Missing Link in Efforts to Promote Marriage. Center on Children and Families: Brookings Institution. CCF Brief #37, April.

WEEK 5: WHY ARE MARRIAGE RATES DECLINING?

Murray, C. (2001). Family Formation. In R. Blank and R. Haskins (Eds.), The New World of Welfare (pp. 137-168). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Bumpass, L.L., Sweet, J.A. and Cherlin, A. (1991). The Role of Cohabitation in Declining Rates of Marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53: 913-927.

Casper, L.M. and Bianchi, S.M. (2002). Continuity and Change in the American Family. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Chapter 9: Economic Causes and Consequences of Changing Family Structure

Wilson, W.J. and Neckerman, K. (1987). Poverty and Family Structure: The Widening Gap between Evidence and Public Policy Issues. In W.J. Wilson (Ed.), The Truly Disadvantaged (pp.63-92). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ASSIGNMENT DUE NEXT WEEK: Write a 2-5 page general description of what you think your final paper (a policy proposal) might be.

WEEK 6: WHAT DOES THE TARGET POPULATION HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE ISSUE?

Edin, K. and Kefalas, M. (2005). Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gibson, C., Edin, K. and McLanahan, S. (2003). High Hopes but Even Higher Expectations: The Retreat from Marriage Among Low-Income Couples. Center for Research on Child Wellbeing Working Paper. (downloaded Nov. 11, 2004 from <http://crcw.princeton.edu/papers.html>)

WEEK 7: WHAT IS BEING TRIED?

Ooms, T., Bouchet, S. and Parke, M. (2004). Beyond Marriage Licenses: Efforts in States to Strengthen Marriage and Two-Parent Families, A State-by-State Snapshot. Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy.

Huston, T. and Melz, H. (2004). The Case for (Promoting) Marriage: The Devil is in the Details. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 66: 943-958.

Mazmanian, D. and Sabatier, P. (1983). Implementation and Public Policy. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, and Company.

- Chapter 2: A Framework for Implementation Analysis

WEEK 8: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOW POLICIES CAN INFLUENCE MARRIAGE AND CHILDBEARING?

Horvath-Rose, A.E. and Peters, H.E. (2001). Welfare Waivers and Non-Marital Childbearing. In G.J. Duncan and L. Chase-Lansdale (Eds.), For Better and For Worse: Welfare Reform and the Well-Being of Children and Families (pp. 9-34). New York: Russell Sage.

Mincy, R. and Huang, C. (2002). Just Get Me to the Church: Assessing Policies to Promote Marriage among Fragile Families. Center for Research on Child Wellbeing Working Paper. (downloaded Feb. 23, 2005 from <http://crcw.princeton.edu/papers.html>)

Halford, W.K., Markman, H.J., Kline, G.H. and Stanley, S.M. (2003). Best Practice in Couple Relationship Education. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 29(3): 385-???

Moore, K.A., Jekielek, S.M., Bronte-Tinkew, J., Guzman, L., Ryan, S. and Redd, Z. (2004). What is 'Healthy Marriage'? Defining the Concept. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

WEEK 9: MARRIAGE EDUCATION

Halford, W.K., Sanders, M.R., and Behrens, B.C. (2001). Can Skills Training Prevent Relationship Problems in At-Risk Couples? Four-Year Effects of a Behavioral Relationship Education Program. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4): 750-768.

Nielsen, A., Pinosof, W., Rampage, C., Solomon, A., and Goldstein, S. (2004). Marriage 101: An Integrated Academic and Experiential Undergraduate Marriage Education Course. *Family Relations*, 53(5): 485-494.

Hawkins, A.J., Carroll, J.S., Doherty, W.J. and Willoughby, B. (2004). A Comprehensive Framework for Marriage Education. *Family Relations*, 53: 547-558.

Ooms, T. and Wilson, P. (2004). The Challenges of Offering Relationship and Marriage Education to Low-Income Populations. *Family Relations*, 53: 440-447.

WEEK 10: LOOSE ENDS

Lundquist, J.H. (2004). When Race Makes No Difference: Marriage and the Military. *Social Forces*, 83(2): 731-757.

Umberson, D., Williams, K., Powers, D., Chen, M. and Campbell, A. (2005). As Good as it Gets? A Life Course Perspective on Marital Quality. *Social Forces*, 84(1): 487-505.

Mincy, R. (2002). Who Should Marry Whom? Multiple Partner Fertility Among New Parents. Center for Research on Child Wellbeing Working Paper (downloaded March 3, 2005 from <http://crcw.princeton.edu/workingpapers/WP02-03-FF-Mincy.pdf>).

Cherlin, A., Burton, L., Hurt, T. and Purvin, D. (2004). The Influence of Physical and Sexual Abuse on Marriage and Cohabitation. *American Sociological Review*, 69(6): 768-789.

Final Project: In this course, students will be provided with an overview of the law, demographic trends and literature about marriage and marriage promotion. Given this background, students are asked to write a policy proposal; you are asked to propose, support and defend a program that will fulfill the requirements set out in the PRWORA reauthorization bill to “promote healthy marriage” and draw on existing literature to explain why they believe that your program will be effective.

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More specifically, imagine that you have been tapped by the governor of Illinois to devise, implement and run a marriage promotion program using federal funds, and your only mandate is that this program will “promote healthy marriage” among low-income parents. That is, you are free to think outside the box about how to improve the lives of poor families and you do not have to directly promote marriage, but one of the expected outcomes of any program you suggest should be healthy marriages for low-income families. Given your knowledge of the needs of said families and of existing research on the topic of marriage promotion, what type of program would you advise and why? (15-20pp., not more than 20, due during finals week)

Grading:

- Initial Thoughts paper (due week 2): 10%
- Paper proposal (due week 6): 10%
- Attendance, class participation and in-class assignments: 40%
- Final Paper: 40%

Overview

The current federally-funded push to promote marriage among low-income parents provides a unique opportunity for policy makers concerned with evidence-based policy making. Politics has brought the issue of marriage to the fore, and while the research and academic worlds have not yet fully defined or analyzed the problem, there nonetheless exists both a policy mandate and a good deal of information to inform new policy efforts. With relatively generous federal funding and vague policy guidelines, the push for marriage from a policy maker's perspective is still largely *carte blanche*. This 10-week, masters level course takes advantage of this unique opportunity both to critically examine the need for, and appropriateness of, policy efforts at marriage promotion and to explore the ways in which research can inform policies and programs designed to influence human lives and behaviors. In this course, we will examine research both in support of and opposed to marriage promotion, as well as research on the implications of marriage for the adults and children affected by such policies. The final paper for this course will be a policy proposal advising how best to answer the call to "promote healthy marriage," based on empirical evidence about both program efficacy and the needs of the population being served.

Course Description

The role and practice of marriage in the American family is in flux. Age at first marriage is increasing (Casper & Bianchi, 2002), cohabitation is providing a normative substitute for marriage for some couples (Bumpass, Sweet & Cherlin, 1991), and it is currently estimated that one in three American children is born to unmarried parents, and that number is even higher in low-income and minority populations (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). Marriage is no longer the starting point of adult life, but rather a transition that, for many Americans, is more and more often occurring after they already have many of the trappings of adulthood that were once obtained only after a trip down the aisle.

Many have noted similar demographic trends in Europe, but there is evidence that the shift away from marriage as a social institution means different things and is experienced differently in Europe than

in the U.S. (Raley, 2001).¹ That is, while the adults and children in unmarried families in many (particularly Northern) European nations can generally be expected to have functionally equivalent experiences and outcomes to their counterparts in married families, this does not appear to be the case in the United States, where shifting marriage patterns seem to both mirror and cause social disadvantage. For example, while middle and upper-income white Americans may delay marriage, they do not eschew it entirely. African Americans and the poor, however, are experiencing dramatic decreases in their rates of marriage that do not appear to be simply due to a delay in age at first marriage. For example, Raley (2000)² estimates that only 66% of black women will marry by the age of 50, while 90% of white women will do the same. Further, rates of non-marital childbearing among high school dropouts are twice that of college graduates, and only 14% of unmarried mothers were employed in managerial, professional or technical jobs in 1998 (Casper & Bianchi, 2002).

Given evidence of a correlation between marriage and positive outcomes (Waite and Gallagher, 2000), the uncoupling of childbearing and marriage (especially in already vulnerable populations) has attracted the attention and concern of politicians and policy makers, and as prior evidence seems to indicate that not marrying before having children exacerbates risk for all concerned, the response of many has been to say that something should be done to get low-income parents to marry. Simultaneously, however, others (i.e., Cherlin, 2003) have advised caution, suggesting that at this point, we do not yet know whether the relationship between disadvantage and non-marital childbearing is causal or correlational, and if it is causal, what should be done to fix it.

Nonetheless, in the face of declining rates of marriage and rising non-marital fertility, particularly among the poor, the 1996 welfare reform bill included conceptually explicit, but programmatically vague, language about the goals of the administration to reverse both of these trends among low-income unwed parents by promoting marriage. And although in the immediate aftermath of the legislation, the focus of

¹ Raley, R.K. (2001). Increasing Fertility in Cohabiting Unions: Evidence for the Second Demographic Transition in the United States? *Demography*, 38(1): 59-66.

² Raley, R.K. (2000). Recent Trends and Differentials in Marriage and Cohabitation: The United States. In L. Waite (Ed.), *The Ties That Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*, (pp.19-39). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

both policy-makers and the American populace was largely on pushing welfare recipients into the workforce, the Bush administration is now revisiting the family formation components of the TANF legislation, and has allocated roughly \$600 million in federal funds for programs which promote healthy marriage.

The challenge for researchers and policy makers is that politics and policy have outpaced the study of marriage and marriage promotion activities. However, I argue in this course that this does not mean that we are without information that can and should inform the development of future policy. Further, I believe that the fact that the current administration has made marriage a political and social imperative, promising to invest millions of dollars into the *undefined, but not uninformed*, field of marriage promotion constitutes a “magic moment” for policy makers.

The opportunity lies in the simultaneous political and fiscal support for the idea of marriage promotion, while the details of what marriage promotion should be remain largely undefined. Taking advantage of this new and wide open field, this course will offer the students the opportunity to imagine themselves as state-level policy makers. Given an overview of the politics and trends that made marriage among the poor a federal interest, students will spend the bulk of the course reading and critiquing existing research and theory on marriage and marriage promotion, paying particular attention to information about marriage among the populations targeted by current legislation. Students will become familiar with the information available to inform state-level policy choices, and will be charged with evaluating that information critically in order to make recommendations for best policy practices.

Given this background, as a final project, students will be asked to write and defend a research or policy demonstration proposal for the state of Illinois that adheres to the central mandate to “promote healthy marriage” as specified in the TANF reauthorization bill, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.³ In lieu of a final exam, students will be asked to write a proposal for policy that they believe, based on the research, will have the end result of promoting healthy marriage. However, students do not need to

³ I am assuming for these purposes that this is a course that would be taught at Northwestern, and therefore the state of Illinois is a common policy context for all students. The state used as the setting for the policy proposal should be changed if the course is taught in a different university in a different state.

propose something that will promote marriage directly; if a student feels that job training for ex-felons is the best use of these federal funds to improve the lives of low-income families, and they can make a cogent argument that a likely effect of such a program would be an increase in the number of healthy marriages, such a program would be a more-than-acceptable indirect approach to marriage promotion for the purposes of this class.

The goal of the course is to ground students in the practice of thinking about policy as a product of politics, but also something that, in its ideal form, derives from and relies on research. The pro-marriage agenda of the current administration provides a unique vehicle for this central message as the political imperative is clear but the policy development aspects are not yet constrained by a defined body of knowledge, a freedom which allows students to explore the issue of marriage promotion from the perspective of a variety of different disciplines and approaches. By providing students with a comprehensive overview of both what is known and unknown, and by synthesizing across literatures and disciplines, students will be challenged to think about problems and policies that are still largely moving targets. Students are expected to emerge from the course with a firm grasp on existing literatures about the retreat from marriage, and with a thoughtful argument for what they believe is the best course of action. The hope is that this hands-on training in the examination of research with an eye towards policy will position students to be careful and rigorous policy makers.

The course is structured to first introduce students to the data on declining rates of marriage, then to frame the policy debate, then to present research both supporting and questioning the federal push for marriage, and then to examine, in the context of a federal pro-marriage agenda, what research tells us can or should be done to effectively promote healthy marriage among at risk populations. A presumption of this course is that students will challenge marriage promotion both as a universal goal and as a policy objective; however, it is my goal to demonstrate that, regardless of their personal sentiments, marriage promotion is already underway, and so it is our job, as researchers and academics, to inform that process for the good of the populations it affects.

As such, students will be pushed to think each week about three questions:

- (1) what do we know?
- (2) what do we still need to know?
- (3) given what we know, and *given that some action will be taken whether we endorse it or not*, what should we do?

The challenge to students is that doing nothing is not presumed to be an option in this course; in the context of an existing federal push for marriage, the question is not whether, but how, to promote marriage in the best interest of the policy's target recipients. Students will be pushed not to accept or endorse marriage promotion as a goal, but rather to think pragmatically and dispassionately about what is the best course of action to take under the federal order to "promote healthy marriage." That is, given available federal monies, and a known correlation between disadvantage and non-marital childbearing, what does our existing body of knowledge suggest that we do to improve the lots of unmarried families with children?

The readings each week address different aspects of the marriage promotion question, and within each set of readings, I include research that both supports and challenges a pro-marriage agenda, as well as thought pieces intended to provoke students to consider issues such as the morality of government intervention into marriage. The result is a course that is balanced in its approach to the topic of marriage promotion and considers the multidimensionality of any effort to direct human behavior, but remains firm in its challenge to students to think as policy makers "in the real world," constrained by a political agenda and guidelines that they may or may not agree with.

Week 1: The Trends

The central readings of the first week will provide an overview of the current retreat from marriage. An understanding of the demography of the shift away from marriage is vital in order to understand the problem as it is being perceived by agenda-setters. Ultimately, there is a fundamental difference in who marries and who does not, in who has children and who does not, and in how those two

practices intersect in different portions of the population; the readings presented here will provide some basic information on how these trends both converge and diverge across demographic groups. These readings also provide an overview of the varying pathways by which individuals become either a single parent or the child of non-married parents, and again, how those pathways differ across populations.

The primary readings which provide an overview of these shifts come from a very recent demography textbook (Casper & Bianchi, 2002), and cover the significance of the current trends regarding American families. Chapter 1 paints these trends with broad strokes. For example, while marriage is still normative, the portrait of the American family is changing; age at first marriage is steadily increasing, sex and marriage have become de-coupled, and co-residence is now something that often precedes marriage, rather than following it. These trends and others, such as high (but stable) divorce rates and changing patterns of employment within families, are reformulating how we think about American families.

Chapter 4 examines more explicitly the incidence of single-parenthood in the United States, beginning with a discussion of the multiple ways in which single-mother families can be defined (i.e., single mother living alone, single mother cohabiting with a partner, single mother living with extended kin), and going on to examine trends in cohabitation, education and earnings in this diverse group that comprised more than a quarter of American families in 1998 (Casper and Bianchi, 2002). The authors are also explicit in their discussion of the different ways that a single-mother family is formed, and compare and contrast the outcomes for families in which the mother divorced to families in which the mother has never been married.

These readings were chosen not only because they set the stage for the remainder of the course, but also as very practical way to circumvent the fact that students are often either unable or unwilling to do readings for the first day of class. The chapters selected are heavily supplemented with graphical representations of the trends, which allows for the lecture and discussion to be informative and clear, even if not everyone has read the chapters.

This week also includes two thought pieces, one of which argues for the importance of building policy based on research, while the other cautions against believing that anything has easy answers. The Reischauer (2003) piece frames the two central challenges of the course, focusing explicitly on the primary challenge of building policy in accordance with scientific evidence, while simultaneously alluding to the second, which is the danger of putting forth a call for new policy without a research foundation. Cherlin (1999) picks up this second thread in his piece in which he argues that too often, scholars and policy makers chain themselves to an absolute, asserting that there is a single cause or a single answer, when in fact the social sciences are rarely so clear cut. Together, these two pieces emphasize the importance of nuance, attention to research, flexibility of approach and clinical detachedness in building policy, and set up the intellectual framework from within which I hope students will approach the question of marriage promotion.

The class will open with a lecture on, and discussion of, the demographic trends, and then will move to a more open discussion of how to build policy to affect outcomes, and the role of research and data in that process. We will close with a discussion of the “problem” of the retreat from marriage and student response to, and sentiments about, policy efforts to promote marriage.

Week 2: PRWORA – The Bill & Its Influences

Week Two provides the policy context for the push for marriage; having demonstrated in Week One that marriage rates are declining, particularly among the poor, the readings of Week Two will show that the government has already become both invested and involved in the sphere of marriage. Regardless of whether students feel that governmental intervention with regards to marriage is appropriate, these readings are intended to make very clear the fact that government involvement is already a given, and that the only thing not definite is the nature of that involvement.

The reading by Haskins (2001), “Liberal and Conservative Influences on the Welfare Reform Legislation of 1996,” provides the legislative foundation in that it outlines the 1996 welfare reform law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), and how it came to

be. While the chapter covers the political development of the overhaul of the welfare system in general terms, there is considerable attention paid to the role of non-marital births in both public and political calls for reform. This reading provides a concise overview of the larger PRWORA legislation and the historical and legislative context for current public policy efforts to rebuild and strengthen the institution of marriage.

The second and third pieces, the articles by Roberts and Greenberg (2005) and Roberts (2006), are more explicit about current legislation regarding marriage. The Roberts and Greenberg (2005) article outlines in detail the significance of marriage in the rules and goals of the welfare program created by PRWORA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This piece focuses on the ways in which the structure of the existing legislation (and to some extent, prior legislation as well) affects the likelihood of marriage for welfare recipients. In contrast, the Roberts (2006) piece outlines the marriage-related provisions in current welfare legislation; these provisions constitute the policy environment in which any marriage promotion program must be built, and so will be referred to repeatedly throughout the course. These two pieces, which examine both the intended goals and unintended effects of the TANF legislation with regards to marriage, both provide the legislative framework for the entire course, and push students to think both about the realities of the current legislation with regards to marriage and, more abstractly, about the direct and indirect effects of policy.

Week Two also includes three thought pieces. The article by Cherlin (2003) directly examines the role of morality in the discussion of governmental intervention into the realm of marriage, while the reading by Ooms (2001) demonstrates that despite the perception that marriage is not a place for government intervention, actually, the federal and state governments have a long history of using policy to shape marriage. And while Cherlin argues that the rush towards marriage promotion is ill-conceived and oversteps the ideal role of legislative efforts, Ooms suggests that while the passing of PRWORA, in conjunction with Title V of the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000 and the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, may have demonstrated an elevated federal interest in marriage in the mid 1990s, in fact, the marriage-related provisions of PRWORA are in keeping with a long federal history of involvement in

marriage. The article by Shonkoff (2000) provides the bridge between the two, making explicit the distinct realms of politics, research and the practical implementation of any legislation.

Class discussion will center on these three thought pieces. The first three readings on the syllabus for this week establish the legislative context for marriage promotion, and so are important reference pieces, but as with each week, the discussion will center on the questions of what we know, what we don't know and what we should do, given what we know. In this week's discussion especially, we will focus on the "should" in the final question. Students will be asked to discuss the role of government as moral arbiter, and the responsibilities of politicians and practitioners asked to implement morally driven programs. Following on the Ooms piece, I will also draw heavily on Skocpol's (1992) book, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers,⁴ to guide students in a discussion of the historical precedence of morally- and politically-driven legislation. However, I expect that many students will identify with the points raised by Cherlin, and so a significant portion of the discussion will be given over to challenges to the moral right of the government to intervene in the realm of marriage. Following a discussion of the morality of, and legislative precedence for, marriage promotion, I will draw the class to a close with a short discussion of the Shonkoff piece, pushing students to think about the apparently competing realms of science, policy and practice as instead three approaches to the same goal. We will return to the precedence for intervention and the already enacted call for marriage promotion, and ask the students talk briefly about how to address the concerns and specifications of the legislative agenda within the constraints of implementable policy without violating their own morality.

The assignment due this week is a very short (1 or 2 page) write-up of what the student feels might be a good place for policy intervention in the "problem" of the retreat from marriage. There will be no constraints placed on what the students propose, only that they speculate about what they believe the problem to be, and how policy makers might go about solving it. This assignment is intended both to get students thinking about policy solutions, but also to provide me with a baseline measure of the direction

⁴ Skocpol, T. (1992). Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The political origins of social policy in the United States. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

of student interests so that the lectures and discussions of subsequent weeks can be tailored to address them.

Week 3: Marriage and Partners and Parents

Weeks Three provides the students with an overview of the research on the significance of marriage for parents and adults partners; Week Four will continue this theme but will explore this research with regards to children. Having already demonstrated the movement away from marriage and the stake that the government has placed in reversing that trend, especially in specific segments of the American populace, these two weeks will provide empirical evidence on both sides of the debate about the importance for families of the institution of marriage and interventions to support it.

Most arguments in support of marriage promotion take a “for the children” approach, arguing that married parents promote the healthy development of children. However, as the partnership exists between adults, considering the importance of adult romantic relationships and marriage for adult development is also key. As students are likely to be more familiar with the marriage for the benefit of children arguments, we will start with an exploration of evidence on the significance (or lack thereof) of marriage for adults.

The central reading of Week Three is perhaps the book most commonly cited in support of marriage promotion, The Case for Marriage, by Waite and Gallagher (2000). While many have questioned the merits of The Case for Marriage due to what is perceived as a biased and partisan approach, the authors nonetheless do raise many important points in support of marriage as an ideal, such as the financial, sexual, and health related benefits for partners, and given its centrality to the pro-marriage movement’s arguments, I feel that to not assign it would deprive students of an important resource. Additionally, in arguing for the primacy of a societally understood and ratified form of adult romantic partnership for successful adult development, the authors present a cogent argument that it is not merely correlation, but causation, that connects marriage to positive outcomes such as better health and financial stability.

Further, the subsequent readings are intended to counter some of Waite and Gallagher's assertions and so provide a more balanced overview. The piece by Lichter, Graefe and Brown (2003), for example, while finding strong support for the financial benefits of marriage among the very poor, complicates the argument by pointing out that marriage followed by divorce actually leaves women in worse straits than had they never married, and given the demonstrated instability of marriage among such populations, this is of special concern. Similarly, the piece by Hawkins and Booth (2005) points out that unhappy marriages are a significant detriment to health and overall well-being, while the piece by Catlett and Artis (2004) argues that domestic violence, which is especially prevalent in the populations at which marriage promotion legislation is aimed, is a significant and insufficiently examined deterrent to the "healthy" and lasting marriages called for by the PRWORA legislation.

The thought piece for this week is by Amato (2004) and frames the marriage promotion debate as the debate between an institutional and an individual view of marriage; that is, on the one hand, marriage is seen as a social institution which exists for the good of society and helps to maintain the social order (and thus is an appropriate realm for governmental intervention), while on the other, marriage, if chosen, should be for the good of the individual (and therefore should be outside either the reach or the interests of policy interventions). The readings this week focus on the ways in which marriage affects the individual, either for good or for bad, and so as we turn to our three central questions in class discussion, the challenge to students will be to think about whether and how governmental institutionalization can affect such individual outcomes. Students will also be encouraged to try to reframe these individual benefits of good marriage as societal benefits, and to think about whether a positive and productive compromise can be reached between the government's efforts at increased institutionalization of marriage and the ever-more individuated views of marriage among the populace.

Week 4: Children and Marriage

The vast majority of arguments in support of marriage promotion appeal to the high priority that Americans place on the health and well-being of our children, arguing that single parenthood is depriving

children of important resources. The central reading for this week, Growing Up With a Single Parent (1994), by McLanahan and Sandefur, takes exactly this deficit approach to argue not that marriage is good, but that *not* having married parents is potentially detrimental and presents a risk to children. As this book is both more rigorous and empirical than the book by Waite and Gallagher (2000), and because the evidence is stronger in support of the benefits of a two-parent family for children's well-being, the challenge of this week's topic is less of a debate about the merits of marriage, and more a quest to identify the type of two-parent family structure that most benefits children.

As such, the three subsequent readings by Hofferth and Anderson (2003), Manning and Lamb (2003), and Hetherington and Jodl (1994) explore a variety of family structures, examining different legal, social and biological connections between children and "parents," and their effects on children's development and well-being. For example, the Hofferth and Anderson piece explores the comparative significance of marriage and biology for the key outcome of father involvement. That is, if we know that married, biological parents are better for children, but we can only choose one of the two states (unmarried, biological parents or a married stepfamily), which should we prioritize? The authors find that biology explains less than one would expect and that paternal investment seems to be more related to marital status than to biological connections, although the authors argue that this may be due to selection effects. In reading this article, students will be challenged to think about the significance of the presence or absence of fathers or father figures in children's lives, and to think critically about the role that individuals' selection into marriage plays in findings about the significance of marriage for well-being.

The Manning and Lamb piece continues in the deficit perspective presented by McLanahan and Sandefur, exploring the ways in which outcomes for children of single mothers, children in cohabiting stepfamilies and children in married stepfamilies differ from those of the children of married biological parents, and adding to the debate not only by exploring these additional family forms, but also by considering the development of adolescents, who are an often overlooked portion of the population of children affected by parental relationships. And consistent with the McLanahan and Sandefur, and Hofferth and Anderson, findings, the authors find that while adolescents in married families do better than

those in unmarried families, married biological parent families are best, and Manning and Lamb suggest that economic well-being and familial stability may be key factors in these outcomes.

The Hetherington and Jodl piece redirects the discussion by posing the stepfamily not as a problem, but instead as simply an alternate family form and examining the primary challenges that stepfamilies face and the ways in which stepfamilies can contribute to both child and adult development. Although this chapter focuses exclusively on remarried stepfamilies, as opposed to cohabiting or first marriage stepfamilies, the in-depth discussion of the ways in which the stepfamily form can (and does) moderate or mediate development for all family members is open to extrapolation to all stable stepfamily forms. In discussion, I will push students to consider the role of stability as raised by Manning and Lamb as a way to make the findings of Hetherington and Jodl more global, and will challenge them to think about the contextual and developmental challenges raised by Hetherington and Jodl as central issues to any marriage promotion effort not aimed exclusively at biological parents.

The thought piece this week is the article by Kane and Lichter (2006), which argues that if we are truly concerned about the well-being of children, promoting marriage may not be the solution. The authors suggest that efforts to get unmarried parents to marry are bypassing the true problem of unwed childbearing, ignoring prevention in pursuit of a cure. Students will be encouraged to discuss the ways in which raising the specter of unwed pregnancy and childbearing reframes the debate and what questions it raises about how to effect change on a national level. That is, implicit in the marriage promotion legislation is the idea that we are helping couples with children, and that without the children, we ultimately care little about the adult partners; given that this is how the problem is defined at a legislative level, how do we then think about, and work with, challenges to the central premise such as this? As with every week, students will be pushed to think both about what we know and don't know about the importance of marriage for the healthy development of children, and to think about how, in the context of the requirements of the welfare reauthorization legislation, to go about not just finding a "cure," but also how to work towards prevention.

Week 5: Why are marriage rates declining?

The fifth week will center on some of the most prominent theories for why many Americans, and particularly those in poor and minority populations, are not marrying at the rates they once were.

Drawing from sociology, economics, demography and political science, these readings will explore the question of why, in the face of all of the positive effects of marriage, more and more people are not bothering to get married before having children. In the absence of a clear understanding of the causal factors for the retreat from marriage, these theories should form the foundation for any policy intervention, and so student knowledge of these theoretical frameworks will be pivotal in later weeks when we assess both what is known about what works to prevent the occurrence of unmarried families and what is currently being implemented by states as part of their marriage promotion activities.

Naturally, there are many ideas about what constitutes the central cause for the retreat from marriage, and this week's readings will expose students to some of the more prominent ones. For example, part of the impetus for the marriage-related language in PRWORA stems directly from the arguments of conservative scholars like Charles Murray who have argued that the retreat from marriage is due in large part to values and norms in low-income populations that differ from those held by mainstream America. Particularly, he argues in the assigned reading that low-income populations have stopped valuing marriage as a social institution (Murray, 2001). Therefore, he claims that in order to reinstate marriage as the normative practice across the socio-economic scale, low-income populations must be re-socialized into the belief that marriage is important and valuable.

In contrast, others have argued that sex has been decoupled from marriage, with the result being that other practices, such as cohabitation, have become more socially acceptable and couples are choosing to cohabit rather than to marry. The article by Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin (1991), while slightly dated, nonetheless provides a comprehensive overview and some empirical support for the argument for the role of the cohabitation alternative, and is used because it remains one of the most cited papers in support of the argument that cohabitation has replaced marriage among many young American couples.

Still others have argued that changing economics have altered the American family; the Casper and Bianchi (2002) chapter provides a general portrait of the changing economic circumstances, such as women's increased financial independence, that may have affected rates of marriage among American couples. Similarly, the Wilson and Neckerman (1987) article outlines Wilson's now infamous "marriageable man" hypothesis, stating that the decline in marriage in the African-American community is due to a lack of "marriageable" men, as evidenced by the economic circumstances of African-American men, including high rates of joblessness, as well as high mortality and incarceration rates.

As each piece presents an alternate viewpoint on the retreat from marriage, there is not an explicit thought piece in this week's readings. However, as the Murray piece appears to be both the theoretical outlook underpinning many state efforts to promote marriage and the least empirically supported perspective, students will especially be encouraged to think again about the role of morality and values in the push for marriage promotion, and how to introduce evidence-based policy into a legislative environment framed around a problem most often defined by beliefs and not data.

Due this week is a brief (2-5 page) summary of what the student believes, as of the midpoint of the course, will be their policy proposal in the final paper. This should be slightly more in-depth and research-driven than the first paper, but is not expected to be formal or polished, and students will be encouraged to include questions that they have, or important challenges for their policy proposals.

Week 6: What does the target population have to say about the issue?

The sixth week provides some context for the question of how to pursue marriage promotion by exploring the sentiments about marriage, and rationales for remaining single, in the population that is the target of this policy push. The primary reading is the book by Edin and Kefalas (2005), Promises I Can Keep, an in-depth ethnographic exploration of the choice to have children outside of marriage in several low-income communities in Philadelphia. The authors present an exhaustive qualitative examination, often in the words of the women they interviewed, for the logic behind violating the middle-class norm of marriage first and children second. The second reading, by Gibson, Edin and McLanahan (2003), is also

a qualitative piece and also explores the question of marriage between unmarried parents, but is assigned because in addition to the voices of unmarried mothers, it also includes the voices of the unmarried fathers.

Interestingly, these readings suggest that many unwed parents aspire to marriage and specifically hope to marry the other parent of at least one of their children. By giving voice to the subjects of any eventual policy, these readings allow students a glimpse inside the black box of the choices individuals make in response to the intersection of personal circumstance, belief, culture and policy. These readings are intended to help students to assess the validity of the social science theories about, and explanations for, the retreat from marriage among low-income Americans. The challenge to students in this week is to examine the reasons why these individuals and couples say they do not marry, and to think critically about the merits of those arguments in the context of our empirical and theoretical information. There is no thought piece, per se, in this week's readings as the discussion and dissection of these two qualitative pieces is more than sufficient to fill an entire class period. Discussion will center on what the subjects of these pieces say about what they would need to achieve marriage, how these sentiments correspond with and challenge the largely quantitative evidence explored thus far, and whether and how policy can be designed to address the needs of this population in the context of both a federal, and, as seen here, often also a personal, desire for marriage.

Week 7: What is being tried?

The seventh week is an overview of current marriage promotion activities being undertaken by states, and the readings focus explicitly on efforts undertaken as a component of the implementation of state-level TANF policy. The central reading is a report by Ooms, Bouchet and Parke of the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP, 2001) which indexes state efforts to build marriage promotion policy in the wake of the PRWORA legislation. Ultimately, this report is relatively long but provides only a brief summary of efforts undertaken in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Therefore, rather than reading it cover to cover, the students will be assigned the task of reading about and researching the

efforts made in several states, such that at least one student in the class is prepared to discuss marriage promotion efforts in each state. Further, each student will be required to investigate in depth the efforts being undertaken in the state of Illinois to promote marriage, as Illinois is the state policy context for which students will be proposing policy for their final projects.

In the context of this exploration of efforts already underway, there are two thought pieces in Week Seven, the first of which points out the intellectual challenges of developing such policies and the second of which raises implementation challenges. The article by Huston and Melz (2004) revisits many of the questions raised in past weeks, and while it touches on what is known, the larger purpose of this paper is to pose the question of what we still need to know before we build new programs. The authors challenge the presumption that marriage is for everyone by pointing out a myriad of ways in which our understanding of what makes a marriage either “healthy” or beneficial lag behind our policy efforts to promote marriage. Further, they redirect the discussion back to the individual, to issues of personality, demeanor and socio-emotional development that affect marriages and marriage outcomes, and discuss the ways in which current policy efforts may be failing to deal with these factors. The Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) chapter complements this article by outlining a framework within which to assess policy implementation, and thereby providing an index of issues which policy makers should consider as they develop new programs. The discussion this week will therefore focus on the question of policy design and implementation, and students will be pushed to critically examine state efforts presented in the CLASP report with an eye to the ways in which unanswered questions may be undermining the efforts of existing programs as discussed by Huston and Melz, as well as to implementation issues as raised by Mazmanian and Sabatier. The class will close with a discussion of experiments or evaluations that could be done using the programs described in the CLASP report to fill the gaps in our knowledge base.

Week 8: What do we know about how policies can influence marriage and childbearing?

Week Eight examines what is known about how to promote marriage and counter the trend of families formed and maintained outside of marriage. Ultimately, the target for these pro-marriage

policies is fairly narrowly defined; we don't care if poor women who aren't mothers don't get married, and we don't care about wealthy mothers who don't marry. That is, while research shows that it might be beneficial if the divorce rate were to decrease among higher-income couples, and that poor adults who don't yet have children might benefit from being married, marriage promotion policies are still largely targeted at poor parents. With this in mind, there are two possible points of intervention for marriage promotion activities: the first is efforts to prevent the non-marital birth that places the couple in the target population, and the second is to reach the couple after the birth and change their environment in ways that allow or push them to marry.

Preventing non-marital childbearing has long been a topic of interest to both researchers and policy makers. Under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the welfare program which preceded TANF, conservative analysts often claimed that the structure of welfare benefits rewarded non-marital childbearing, and so with the implementation of welfare waivers in the late 1980s, many states began experimenting with ways to discourage non-marital births by changing the structure and substance of local welfare policy. In "Welfare Waivers and Non-Marital Childbearing," Horvath-Rose and Peters (2001) examine eight different waiver demonstrations, including policies such as the family cap, strong child support, and expanded income disregards, for their effect on non-marital births. This article provides an overview of factors that affected non-marital birth rates throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including such non-policy variables as local wage rate and the prevalence of AIDS.

Once the couple has had the child, however, the policies change. In "Just Get Me to the Church," Mincy and Huang (2001) examine the effects of local economic (or indirect marriage promotion) policy, post-PRWORA, on the likelihood of marriage for couples with a non-marital birth. The authors find that more generous cash welfare benefit policies increase the likelihood of cohabitation, while more stringent child support policies increase the likelihood of marriage, net of controls. Based on these two articles, students will be encouraged to think about the transition to marriage as movement among a non-linear array of possible relationships and roles, paying attention to the ways different policies affect transitions between them.

The third article, by Halford, Markman, Kline and Stanley (2003), provides an overview of the existing literature on relationship education. Given that the majority of current interventions are in the vein of relationship skills training, despite the dearth of rigorous, large-scale research, this literature review, which is recent and comprehensive, provides students with a general sense both of where existing literature is leading us, as well as what remains to be evaluated, and also includes recommendations for practitioners that should be useful for those students interested in pursuing some aspect of relationship education for their policy proposals.

The thought piece for this week is a reading which seeks to define the concept of healthy marriage. In the welfare reform reauthorization law, President Bush amended the language of the earlier legislation to say that the reform sought to, “encourage the formation and maintenance of *healthy* two-parent married families,” (“healthy” added) and many authors and policy makers cited in this course have been similarly explicit in their support of healthy marriage, not marriage outright. However, to my knowledge, this research brief by Moore, Jekielek, Bronte-Tinkew, Guzman, Ryan and Redd (2004) is the first to attempt to fully operationalize the concept. The authors further make the distinction between antecedents and consequences of healthy marriage and the components of its definition. Discussion will focus on the multitude of direct and indirect policy interventions that can be implemented to promote not just marriage, but healthy marriage. Students will be encouraged to to be aware of the distinctions between the different outcomes (both measured and desired) of the indirect, economic marriage promotion policies examined in the first two articles, and the direct, relationship skills efforts examined in the third, and to incorporate program elements that explicitly attempt to build healthy marriages into their final policy proposals. The final article will serve as a launch point for a discussion of how to synthesize programmatic efforts to attain these two desired outcomes (marriage and positive relationships) simultaneously.

Week 9: Marriage Education

As the vast majority of state efforts at marriage promotion have centered on the idea of relationship skills training, or marriage education, Week Nine is devoted to literature evaluating such efforts. There are relatively few evaluations of program effectiveness, but the Halford, Sanders and Behrens (2001) article is one example of a rigorous study of the merits of relationship education, a form of marriage counseling intended to reduce relationship distress and divorce. The authors use a longitudinal, randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) on high and low risk couples. The choice of PREP (which is the program used in Oklahoma's and in other states' highly publicized efforts to promote marriage, post-PRWORA; see Ooms, Bouchet and Park, 2004), the use of randomized treatment, the longitudinal design, and the assessment of programmatic effectiveness taking into account some measure of baseline couple risk led me to assign this article, despite its small sample size, use of Australian couples and slight deviation from the PREP protocol.

The article by Nielsen, Pinsof, Rampage, Solomon, and Goldsteing (2004) is similarly both substantively rigorous but problematic in its sample and design. The authors provide an evaluation of a marriage education course offered to college students outside of the explicit context of a relationship that might progress toward marriage; that is, the skills training that the authors offer is for individuals, not couples. Further, the subjects of this evaluation are unlikely to be within the target population of the welfare reauthorization legislation. However, as several of the relationship skills courses offered at a state level to this target population are offered to individuals, this evaluation seems a nice complement to the couples-based intervention examined in the first article.

The third reading, by Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty and Willoughby (2004), provides a theoretical framework for the design and evaluation of marriage education activities. Drawing on the more traditional education literature, the authors develop a conceptual model from which to build marriage education, paying attention to content, intensity, method, timing, setting, target and delivery. This article

will provide students with a framework to evaluate the potential efficacy of the programs being implemented around the nation, as well as issues to consider in their own efforts.

The thought piece for this week plays into the questions of sample and design that each of these first three articles address. In their article dissecting the problems and pitfalls of offering marriage education programs to low-income (often minority) populations whose voices were largely absent from the processes of design and evaluation of these programs, Ooms and Wilson (2004) offer a review of existing literatures that may inform this implementation challenge, and make several suggestions as to ways in which existing programs may need to be adjusted to account for the different target populations. Discussion in this week will focus on how to translate programmatic efforts developed using generally well-to-do, white and often married couples to low-income and minority unmarried parents.

Week 10: Loose Ends

This course has alluded to many additional challenges of offering effective marriage promotion programs to unmarried parents which, due simply to space and time, have not been truly explored. The final week will allow both for more in-depth discussion of those and other unfinished issues per student interest, and will also raise several more issues.

For example, the article by Lundquist (2004) explicitly raises the specter of race. While many academic articles (such as, to some extent, the Ooms and Wilson piece in Week Nine) only allude to race in discussions of low-income populations, or avoid such discussions entirely, and some authors mask issues of race in arguments of subcultural norms (a la Murray), Lundquist attacks the issue of race head-on. In examining the U.S. military, where cultural differences between races are presumed to be secondary to the military culture, and where socioeconomic status is decided by rank, not race, she finds evidence for both economic and cultural incentives and disincentives for marriage that challenge our understanding of the black-white marriage gap.

The article by Umberson, Williams, Powers, Chen and Campbell (2005) expands on the question of “healthy” marriage by pointing out that marriage is not simply a transition from unmarried to married,

but rather follows a developmental trajectory as individuals age and change. The authors note that this process means that marriage not only signifies varied things to different individuals, but also different things at different times for the same individual; this life-course perspective further complicates the push for “healthy” marriage by challenging policy makers not only to get couples to the altar, but to figure out ways to sustain them in the relationship as it grows and changes. The article by Mincy (2002) presents similar challenges to the fundamental premise of marriage promotion by pointing out that many of the couples who are the target of this legislation have children by multiple partners, and so any push for marriage must consider the question of who should marry whom. For example, if the research finds that having married biological parents benefits children, but the same mother has children by two different men, which of the children’s fathers should she marry if biological connections are prioritized? Finally, the article by Cherlin, Burton, Hurt and Pervin (2004) revisits the question of domestic violence raised in the third week, but further complicates the issue by pointing out the prevalence and significance of *childhood* abuse in women’s eventual marriage decisions, suggesting that encouraging healthy adult relationships may not be sufficient to counter the movement away from marriage.

There are no explicit thought pieces in this week’s readings, as each of these articles raises challenges that should prompt thought and discussion. We will also spend a portion of this class discussing similar problems and challenges that have been raised throughout the course (i.e., the morality of marriage promotion) per student interests.

The class will conclude with a student discussion based on their ideas for their final papers, which will be due during finals week in lieu of an exam. The discussion will center on brief and informal student presentations of their central argument, followed by questions and suggestions from fellow students. In their presentations, students will be charged with discussing what they think is the most readily influenced point of the “problem,” and what policy instruments they feel would most likely effect the changes they seek, while the student audience will be charged with evaluating and critiquing the proposals of other students, and challenging each other to locate their proposals in the research.

THE FINAL PROJECT:

Over the course of the class, students will be provided with an overview of the law, demographic trends and literature about marriage and marriage promotion. Given this background, students will write a policy proposal due during finals week in which they will be asked to propose, support and defend a program that will fulfill the basic requirement of promotion of healthy marriage set out in the PRWORA reauthorization legislation. Students will be asked to develop this paper based both on a review of the literature, and their own beliefs about what constitutes the best course of action for states to take in promoting marriage.

The goal in this assignment is like the goal of the class – to have students formulate policy based on the research. However, it is also anticipated that students will each bring with them their own intellectual interests and ideas that will shape this assignment and will result in a variety of policy proposals. The only stated expectation for this assignment will be that students should propose policy that they feel has a good chance of promoting “the formation and maintenance of healthy two-parent married families” based on the research, and while they will be encouraged to develop policy that might actually be federally funded under current law, if a student believes that direct marriage promotion is unwise, they will be told that they may also propose other policies that either offer indirect marriage promotion (i.e., job training for ex-felons), or try to divert adults away from unwed parenthood (i.e., free birth control in state run health clinics). Further, although I would not present it as an option to begin with, if a student were to come to me and argue that they cannot endorse *any* effort at marriage promotion, I would accept an in-depth report prepared as an advisory to the state governor about why doing nothing is truly the best option; students would be warned that such a paper would need to be well thought out and supported by empirical evidence, but I would certainly accept such a paper if a student asked to write it. Due to time and content constraints, students will not be required to consider implementation issues in depth, but questions of political, fiscal and practical viability should be considered.

I recognize that this assignment limits students by appearing to require them to “promote marriage.” However, as policy making does not exist in a vacuum, or occur at the whim of individual policy makers or researchers, this assignment pushes students to work within the constraints set out by “the real world,” as embodied in both government funding and government guidelines. In asking students to imagine themselves asked by their state governor to develop such a program, I am trying to create an intellectual challenge that replicates what they might face as future policy makers and program designers. The freedom that students are granted is that they are not strictly constrained by either fiscal or political concerns, but may propose any legislation that is supported by the literature and adheres to the letter (if not the spirit) of the law.

GRADING: Grading will be based on the two small written assignments in Weeks Two and Five (10% each), as well as attendance, completion of the readings and class participation (40%) and the final paper (40%). Non-written assignments throughout the course (such as the review of policy efforts in Week Seven) will be treated as components of class participation.

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