

society, the issues of urban living will not be solved by personal ingenuity and private wealth.

What we experience in various and specific milieux, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. Accordingly, to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within which we live become more embracing and more intricately connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux. To be able to do that is to possess the sociological imagination.

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PROMISES I CAN KEEP
Why Poor Women
Put Motherhood before Marriage

KATHRYN EDIN • MARIA KEFALAS

This reading by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas is excerpted from their critically acclaimed book *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage* (2005). Edin, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, and Kefalas, an assistant professor of sociology at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, spent five years talking with low-income mothers about their lives and how they perceive marriage and family. This excerpt is an example of sociological research that employs Mills' sociological imagination and, specifically, his distinction between personal troubles and public issues and also the importance of social researchers using the lenses of both biography and history to understand social phenomena. As Edin and Kefalas illustrate, when a middle- or upper-class woman cannot have a child it is seen as a personal tragedy, but when groups of lower-income women are having children outside of marriage, their fertility becomes a matter of public concern. In order to explain adequately why this distinction occurs, Edin and Kefalas examine both the biographies and the larger social contexts of poor women who become single mothers.

Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, excerpts from "Introduction" to *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. Copyright © 2005 by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas. Reprinted with the permission of the authors and the University of California Press.

In spring 2002, the cover of *Time* magazine featured a controversial new book that claimed to “tell the truth” to ambitious young women hoping to have children. The book, *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*, was written by economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett to “break the silence” about age-related infertility. Most professional women believe that female fertility doesn’t begin to decline until after age forty, but Hewlett claims they are tragically wrong. Shockingly, she reports, the actual age is twenty-seven, and because of their misperception, large numbers of high-achieving women are left involuntarily childless. Having a baby “was supposed to be the easy part, right?” quips the *Time* cover story. “Not like getting into Harvard. Not like making partner. The baby was to be Mother Nature’s gift. Anyone can do it; high school dropouts stroll through the mall with their babies in a Snuggli. What can be so hard. . . ?”¹

Hewlett’s *Creating a Life* portrays involuntary childlessness as a tragedy for successful women who have played by the rules for the way a professional woman’s life should unfold: get a college diploma, get even more education, get established in a career, get married, get more solidly established in that career, and then have a baby. But achieving these goals takes time—apparently more time for some than the biological clock allows.

Creating a Life didn’t just make the cover of *Time*; it received extensive coverage in most major newspapers, including a three-part series in the *London Times*, and was named one of the ten best books of the year by *Business Week*. Hewlett appeared on *60 Minutes*, *The Today Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, *NBC Nightly News*, and *Oprah*. All this attention implies a great deal of public sympathy for the affluent highflier who inadvertently misses her chance to become a mother.

Our [research] also describes a crisis of fertility—one that occurs among a different population for very different reasons, and that draws a very different reaction from the general public. For those middle-class women Hewlett spoke to, the tragedy was unintended childlessness following educational and professional success. For the low-income women we spoke to, the tragedy is unintended pregnancy and childbirth before a basic education has been completed, while they are still poor and unmarried. How ironic that so many “Mistresses of the Universe” (as *Time* calls them) make all the right moves yet find they cannot have children, while those at the bottom of the American class ladder seem to have more children than they know what to do with.² And the plight of these poor women tends to generate not pity but outrage.

In 1950 only one in twenty children was born to an unmarried mother. Now the rate is more than one in three.³ Having a child while single is three times as common for the poor as for the affluent.⁴ Half of poor women who give birth while unmarried have no high school diploma at the time, and nearly a third have not worked at all in the last year.⁵ First-time unwed mothers are also quite young—twenty-one on average.⁶ And the situations of the men that father their children are not much better. More than four in ten poor men who have a child outside of marriage have already been to prison or jail

by the time the baby is born; nearly half lack a high school diploma, and a quarter have no job. Thus it is not surprising that almost half of them earned less than \$10,000 in the year before the birth.⁷

But there is another, even more pressing, reason to worry about the growing number of single mothers. Just when new legal and social freedoms, technological advances, and economic opportunities have given American women immense control over when (and if) they marry and when (and if) they choose to bear a child, social scientists have come to a troubling conclusion: children seem to benefit when parents get married and stay that way. Though many single mothers are admirable parents, it remains true that, on average, children raised outside of marriage typically learn less in school, are more likely to have children while they are teens, are less likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college, and have more trouble finding jobs as adults.⁸ About half of the disadvantage occurs simply because their families have less money. Part of it arises because those who become single parents are more likely to be disadvantaged in other ways. But even when these factors are taken into account, children of single parents are still at greater risk.⁹

It is no surprise, therefore, that many Americans believe a whole host of social ills can be traced to the lapse in judgment that a poor, unmarried woman shows when she bears a child she can't afford. The solution to these problems seems obvious to most Americans: these young women should wait to have children until they are older and more economically stable, and they should get married first. Policymakers have been campaigning against teen childbearing for decades, and the downturn has been profound.¹⁰ But because marriage rates for those in the prime family-building years have declined even more rapidly, nonmarital childbearing has continued to increase. Public concern over the rise in nonmarital childbearing cannot be dismissed as mere moralistic finger-pointing, since it is indeed true that if more of these mothers married their children's fathers, fewer would be poor.

In response, the Bush Administration resolved to restore marriage among the poor. Ironically, this controversial new domestic policy initiative has found encouragement in the work of liberal social scientists. A new landmark study of unwed couples, the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study,¹¹ surveyed unmarried parents shortly after their child's birth. The results show that, contrary to popular perception, poor women who have children while unmarried are usually romantically involved with the baby's father when the child is born, and four in ten even live with him. More surprising still, given the stereotypes most Americans hold about poor single mothers, the vast majority of poor, unmarried new parents say they plan to marry each other.¹² But the survey also shows that their chances for marriage or for staying together over the long term are slim. It seems that the child's birth is a "magic moment" in the lives of these parents. And it is at this magic moment that Bush's marriage initiatives aim to intervene.

The "marriage cure" for poverty that the Bush administration launched has infuriated many on the political left. The *Village Voice* exclaims, "It's as if Washington had, out of nowhere, turned into a giant wedding chapel with

Bush performing the nuptials." A left-leaning columnist for the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* insists, "Many of us don't believe that the traditional family is the only way to raise a healthy child. . . . A growing number of us will 'just say no.' And no amount of law is going to change that." The *San Jose Mercury News* editorializes, "It's impossible to justify spending \$1.5 billion on unproven marriage programs when there's not enough to pay for back-to-work basics like child care." And on the web, a *Women's eNews* headline reads, "Bush Marriage Initiative Robs Billions from the Needy." Yet, a *Washington Post* editorial recently chided liberals for their "reflexive hostility" to the "not-so-shocking idea that for poor mothers, getting married might in some cases do more good than harm." "Why not find out," they ask, "whether helping mothers—and fathers—tackle the challenging task of getting and staying married could help families find their way out of poverty?"¹³

Even those who support the political agenda with regard to marriage acknowledge that if it is to succeed, we need to know why childbearing and marriage have become so radically decoupled among the poor. All policy should be based on a sound understanding of the realities it seeks to address. Since these trends first became apparent, some of the best scholars in America have sought answers, using the best survey data social science has at its disposal. They suggest several intuitively appealing answers—the extraordinary rise in women's employment that presumably allows them to more easily live apart from men, the decline of marriageable men in disadvantaged groups, or the expansion of the welfare state. Even taken together, however, these explanations can account for only a small portion of the dramatic break between marriage and childrearing that has occurred. So the reasons remain largely a mystery—perhaps the biggest demographic mystery of the last half of the twentieth century.

What is striking about the body of social science evidence is how little of it is based on the perspectives and life experiences of the women who are its subjects. Survey data can, of course, teach us a great deal, but surveys, though they have meticulously tabulated the trend, have led us to a dead end when it comes to fully understanding the forces behind it. Social science currently tells us much more about what *doesn't* explain the trend than what *does*, and it tells us next to nothing about what will make marriage more likely among single mothers.¹⁴

We provide new ideas about the forces that may be driving the trend by looking at the problems of family formation through the eyes of 162 low-income single mothers living in eight economically marginal neighborhoods across Philadelphia and its poorest industrial suburb, Camden, New Jersey. Their stories offer a unique point of view on the troubling questions of why low-income, poorly educated young women have children they can't afford and why they don't marry. *Promises I Can Keep* follows the course of couple relationships from the earliest days of courtship through the tumultuous months of pregnancy and into the magic moment of birth and beyond. It shows us what poor mothers think marriage and motherhood mean, and tells us why they nearly always put motherhood first.

These stories suggest that solving the mystery will demand a thorough reevaluation of the social forces at work behind the retreat from marriage, a trend affecting the culture as a whole, though its effects look somewhat different for the middle class than for the poor. But while members of the middle class delay marriage, they delay childbearing even more.¹⁵ The poor also delay marriage—or avoid it altogether—but they have not delayed having children.¹⁶

The growing rarity of marriage among the poor, particularly prior to childbirth, has led some observers to claim that marriage has lost its meaning in low-income communities. We spent five years talking in depth with women who populate some of America's poorest inner-city neighborhoods and, to our surprise, found astonishingly little evidence of the much-touted rejection of the institution of marriage among the poor. In fact, these mothers told us repeatedly that they revered marriage and hoped to be married themselves one day. Marriage was a dream that most still longed for, a luxury they hoped to indulge in someday when the time was right, but generally not something they saw happening in the near, or even the foreseeable, future. Most middle-class women in their early to mid-twenties, the average age of the mothers we spoke to, would no doubt say the same, but their attitudes about childbearing would contrast sharply with those of our respondents. While the poor women we interviewed saw marriage as a luxury, something they aspired to but feared they might never achieve, they judged children to be a necessity, an absolutely essential part of a young woman's life, the chief source of identity and meaning.

To most middle-class observers, depending on their philosophical take on things, a poor woman with children but no husband, diploma, or job is either a victim of her circumstances or undeniable proof that American society is coming apart at the seams. But in the social world inhabited by poor women, a baby born into such conditions represents an opportunity to prove one's worth. The real tragedy, these women insist, is a woman who's missed her chance to have children.

The Stories the Mothers Tell

Young women like Antonia Rodriguez, who grow up in the slums of Philadelphia's inner core, first meet the men destined to become the fathers of their children in all the usual places: on the front stoop, in the high school hallway, in the homes of relatives and friends. Romance brings poor youth together as it does their middle-class peers. But rather than "hooking up," carefully avoiding conception, or ending an unwanted pregnancy, inner-city girls often become mothers before they leave their teens. [Our research] tells of romantic relationships that proceed at lightning speed—where a man woos a woman with the line "I want to have a baby by you," and she views it as high praise; where birth control is quickly abandoned, if practiced at all; and where conception often occurs after less than a year together. Stories like

Antonia's reveal why children are so seldom conceived by explicit design, yet are rarely pure accident either.

Mahkiya Washington . . . illustrates how the news of a pregnancy can quickly put a fledgling romantic relationship into overdrive. How does the man who can do no wrong become the deadbeat who can do nothing right, even though his behavior may not change much at all? And how does he feel when his admiring girlfriend is transformed into the demanding woman who is about to become his baby's mother? The experiences of women like Mahkiya illustrate how an expectant mother uses pregnancy to test the strength of her bond with her man and take a measure of his moral worth. Can he "get himself together"—find a job, settle down, and become a family man—in time? What explosive confrontations result when he doesn't? Why do some men who once prodded their girlfriends toward pregnancy end up greeting the news with threats, denials, abandonment, and sometimes physical violence?

Yet the most remarkable part of the stories many mothers tell is of relational transformation at the "magic moment" of birth. Few couples escape some form of relational trauma during pregnancy, and for some the distress becomes extreme. So how does it happen that by the time the baby is ready to leave the hospital, most couples have reunited and committed themselves to staying together? The euphoria of the birth may suddenly resolve the tumultuousness of the previous nine months; even a father who has tried desperately to avoid impending fatherhood—by demanding that his girlfriend abort the baby or by claiming the child is not his, thus branding her as a "cheater" or "whore"—may feel a powerful bond with his newborn, so much so that he may vow to mend his ways. The mothers are all too eager to believe these promises.

Still, despite these young couples' new resolve to stay together, most relationships end long before the child enters preschool. . . . When we first meet Jen Burke, Rick, the father of her two-year-old son, has just proposed to her. Now, with a second baby on the way, he says he is ready for marriage. Surprisingly, when we run into Jen a couple of months later, Rick is no longer in the picture at all. What accounts for the high rate of relationship failure among couples like Jen and Rick? The lack of a job can cause strain, but it's seldom the relationship breaker. Sometimes, it's the man's unwillingness to "stay working" even when he can find a job—that was one of Jen's problems with Rick. Or he may blow his earnings on partying or stereo equipment. But most women point to larger problems than a lack of money, such as Rick's chronic womanizing. The stories these women tell uncover the real sources of relational ruin.

But what about the couples that stay together—why don't they marry? . . . We tell the story of Deena Vallas, who has had one nonmarital birth and is about to have another. She's in a stable relationship with the unborn child's father, a steady worker in a legitimate job who's off drugs, doesn't beat her or cheat on her, and eagerly plays daddy to her son, a child from a prior relationship. Yet there's no marriage. Is that a sign that marriage has no

meaning in poor neighborhoods like hers? No. Her story doesn't indicate a disinterest in marriage; to the contrary, she believes her reluctance shows her deep reverence for marriage. So why does she feel she must avoid marriage for now?

Stories like Deena's show that the retreat from marriage among the poor flows out of a radical redefinition of what marriage means. In the 1950s childrearing was the primary function of marriage, but, as we show, these days the poor see its function very differently. A steady job and the ability to pay the rent on an apartment no longer automatically render a man marriageable. We investigate exactly what does.

Poor women often say they don't want to marry until they are "set" economically and established in a career. A young mother often fears marriage will mean a loss of control—she believes that saying "I do" will suddenly transform her man into an authoritarian head of the house who insists on making all the decisions, who thinks that he "owns" her. Having her own earnings and assets buys her some "say-so" power and some freedom from a man's attempts to control her behavior. After all, she insists, a woman with money of her own can credibly threaten to leave and take the children with her if he gets too far out of line. But this insistence on economic independence also reflects a much deeper fear: no matter how strong the relationship, somehow the marriage will go bad. Women who rely on a man's earnings, these mothers warn, are setting themselves up to be left with nothing if the relationship ends.

So does marriage merely represent a list of financial achievements? Not at all. The poor women we talked to insist it means lifelong commitment. In a surprising reversal of the middle-class norm, they believe it is better to have children outside of marriage than to marry unwisely only to get divorced later. One might dismiss these poor mothers' marriage aspirations as deep cynicism, candy-coated for social science researchers, yet demographers project that more than seven in ten will marry someone eventually. What moral code underlies the statement of one mother who said, "I don't believe in divorce—that's why none of the women in my family are married"? And what does it take to convince a young mother that her relationship is safe enough from the threat of divorce to risk marriage?

Dominique Watkins' story illustrates why poor young mothers seldom view an out-of-wedlock birth as a mark of personal failure, but instead see it as an act of valor. [Our research] reveals our mothers' remarkable confidence in their ability to parent their children well and describes the standards they hold themselves to. As we explain, it is possible for a poor woman to judge her mothering a success even when her child fails in school, gets pregnant as a teen, becomes addicted to drugs, or ends up in juvenile detention. The women whose stories we share believe the central tenet of good mothering can be summed up in two words—being there. This unique definition of good parenting allows mothers to take great pride in having enough Pampers to diaper an infant, in potty training a two-year-old and teaching her to eat with a spoon, in getting a grade-schooler to and from school safely, in

satisfying the ravenous appetite of a growing teenager, and in keeping the light on to welcome a prodigal adolescent back home.

... Millie Acevedo, who, like many of her friends and neighbors, believes that having children young is a normal part of life, though she admits she and Carlos got started a year or two earlier than they should have. Millie's story helps to resolve a troubling contradiction raised in our earlier account: If the poor hold marriage to such a high standard, why don't they do the same for childbearing? Shouldn't they audition their male partners even more carefully for the father role than they do for the husband role? Millie's experiences show why the standards for prospective fathers appear to be so low. The answer is tangled up in these young women's initial high hopes regarding the men in their lives, and the supreme confidence they have in their ability to rise to the challenge of motherhood. The key to the mystery lies not only in what mothers believe they can do for their children, but in what they hope their children will do for them.

Through the tales of mothers like Millie we paint a portrait of the lives of these young women before pregnancy, a portrait that details the extreme loneliness, the struggles with parents and peers, the wild behavior, the depression and despair, the school failure, the drugs, and the general sense that life has spun completely out of control. Into this void comes a pregnancy and then a baby, bringing the purpose, the validation, the companionship, and the order that young women feel have been so sorely lacking. In some profound sense, these young women believe, a baby has the power to solve everything.

The redemptive stories our mothers tell speak to the primacy of the mothering role, how it can become virtually the only source of identity and meaning in a young woman's life. There is an odd logic to the statements mothers made when we asked them to imagine life without children: "I'd be dead or in jail," "I'd still be out partying," "I'd be messed up on drugs," or "I'd be nowhere at all." These mothers, we discovered, almost never see children as bringing them hardship; instead, they manage to credit virtually every bit of good in their lives to the fact they have children—they believe motherhood has "saved" them.

Eight Philadelphia Neighborhoods

As is the case for all Americans—regardless of their circumstances—people's beliefs about the meaning of marriage and children draw first from the family of origin. As children move into adolescence and adulthood, the hundreds of daily interactions they have both within and outside the family—with kin, neighbors, teachers, and peers—further shape their view of what "family" means. America's poor live in a wide array of communities, but since the 1970s, they have increasingly come to live in urban neighborhoods with people who are as disadvantaged as they are. It is these poor urban neighborhoods that have seen the most dramatic increases in single motherhood.¹⁷

The Philadelphia area, the setting for our story, has more than its fair share of such neighborhoods. . . . America's fifth-largest city entered the twenty-first century with almost a quarter of its citizens, and nearly a third of its children, living in poverty.¹⁸ This is precisely why it was a perfect site for our research. Because of the high rates of poverty there, we found poor whites, blacks, and Latinos living in roughly similar circumstances. Though racial minorities often live in high-poverty neighborhoods, cities where whites live in the same circumstances are rare. The white urban poor usually live in mixed-income neighborhoods and thus have considerable advantages over the minority poor—better schools, better parks and recreational facilities, better jobs, safer streets, and so on. But in Philadelphia, the high poverty rates in several former white ethnic strongholds—those once-proud industrial villages—create a rare opportunity for students of race and inequality to study whites, Latinos, and African Americans whose social contexts are quite similar. This unique feature of our study may explain why we found the experiences and worldviews of these groups to be so similar, and why class, not race, is what drives much of our account.

We share the stories of the residents of eight hardscrabble neighborhoods across Philadelphia and its inner industrial suburbs: East Camden, Kensington, North Camden, North Central, PennsPort, South Camden, Strawberry Mansion, and West Kensington. . . . In each of these neighborhoods, we followed the tack we had taken in Camden and spent time talking to local business owners, representatives of grassroots neighborhood organizations and institutions, and private social services agencies to get some sense of the range of families who lived there. These contacts led us to an initial group of low-income single mothers of black, white, and Puerto Rican descent who were willing to share their lives with us. These mothers then introduced us to others in similar situations. We aimed for 50 to 60 mothers from each racial and ethnic group, and talked in depth with 162 mothers in all.

We limited our sample to mothers who had earned less than \$16,000 in the past year, an amount about equal to the federal poverty line in those years. We wanted to capture both welfare-reliant mothers and mothers working at low-wage jobs. And because of the unusually strong economy at the time, women leaving welfare for employment were averaging \$8 per hour in earnings, an annualized income of \$16,000 for a full-time worker.¹⁹ All of them lived in neighborhoods where at least 20 percent of the residents were poor. Each had at least one child under eighteen living at home, and though some had been married, all were now single, at least in the legal sense, although most did not live on their own or apart from male partners: only about three in ten maintained their own households. Nearly half were doubled up with relatives or friends, but a smaller yet significant number were living with men.²⁰ Some of these men were the fathers of at least one of their children, but others were boyfriends who had not yet fathered any children with the mother.

Mothers ranged in age from fifteen to fifty-six, but were twenty-five years old on average. Forty-five percent had no high school diploma, but

15 percent had earned a GED. A surprising number, nearly a third of the total, had participated in some kind of post-high school educational activities such as college, nurses- or teachers-aid training, or cosmetology school. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) had borne their first child when they were still in their teens. Mothers under twenty-five had 1.6 children, while those twenty-five and older had 3.1 children on average. Almost half had collected cash welfare at some point in the past two years, and almost half were neither working nor in school when we met them. Forty percent held low-end service-sector jobs at the time, working as telemarketers, childcare workers, teacher's aids, nurse's aids, factory workers, cashiers, fast-food workers, waitresses, and the like.²¹

Aside from our informal interactions, we sat down with each mother for at least two in-depth conversations that we taped and transcribed. These focused exchanges typically lasted two to three hours and usually took place in the mother's own home, often around the kitchen table. When we could, we drove mothers to work or accompanied them on errands. Sometimes we were lucky enough to be invited to family gatherings such as birthday parties, christenings, sixth-grade graduation celebrations, and even a wedding or two.

Our goal was to give poor single mothers the opportunity to address the questions so many affluent Americans ask about them: namely, why they so seldom marry, and why they have children when they have to struggle so hard to support them. In the course of our conversations, we learned something of their life histories, including how they met their children's fathers, what happened in the relationship as they moved through pregnancy and birth, and where things stood for them at the present. We also learned much about how motherhood had affected their lives. Women openly, and often eagerly, shared life lessons they had learned about relationships, marriage, and children.

ENDNOTES

¹ Nancy Gibbs, "Making Time for a Baby," *Time*, April 15, 2002, 48-58.

² Only two in ten high school dropouts reach age twenty-five without having borne a child, almost always outside of marriage, and few are childless by age forty. Meanwhile, nearly 25 percent of middle-class women reach forty without having any children (Ellwood and Jencks 2001).

³ *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 51, no. 11 (June 25, 2003): 3, table A.

⁴ Ellwood and Jencks use education, not income, as a measure of socioeconomic status. The comparison referred to here as between the "poor" and "affluent" is between the least educated third and the most educated third of the educational distribution. See Ellwood and Jencks (2001).

⁵ Unpublished figures from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (McLanahan et al. 2003), calculated by Marcia Carlson. These figures are for all unmarried mothers in the survey sample (not just those with first births) who reported annual incomes below the federal poverty threshold, and their male partners.

⁶ Wu, Bumpass, and Musick (2001).

⁷ Unpublished figures from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, calculated by Marcia Carlson. These figures are for all unmarried mothers in the survey sample (not just

those with first births) who reported annual incomes below the federal poverty threshold, and their male partners.

⁸ McLanahan and Sandefur (1994).

⁹ Parke (2003).

¹⁰ Child Trends (2002).

¹¹ The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (McLanahan et al. 2003) is a longitudinal survey of roughly five thousand couples who had just had a child. About three-fourths of these couples were not married at the time of the birth. The survey, when weighted, is nationally representative of nonmarital births in cities of more than two hundred thousand people. Both parents were surveyed soon after the child's birth and again when their child reached ages twelve, thirty-six, and sixty months. Hereafter referred to as the Fragile Families Study.

¹² These unpublished figures, compiled by Marcia Carlson, are for mothers responding to the survey whose annual income was below the federal poverty line. For a description of the sample as a whole, see "Is Marriage a Viable Alternative for Fragile Families?" Fragile Families Research Brief 9 (Princeton, NJ: Center for Child Wellbeing, Princeton University, June 2002).

¹³ Sharon Lerner, "Bush's Marriage Proposal," *Village Voice*, May 1-7, 2002; Diane Glass, "Do We Need Stronger Family Values?" *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, July 31, 2003; "Quick Hit" (editorial), *San Jose Mercury News*, September 19, 2003; Elizabeth Bauchner, "Bush Marriage Initiative Robs Billions from the Needy," *Women's eNews*, September 10, 2003 (www.womensenews.org); "The Left's Marriage Problem," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2002, A22.

¹⁴ Ellwood and Jencks (2001).

¹⁵ Even those who marry may not remain so; more than 40 percent of first marriages now end in divorce, and subsequent marriages dissolve at an even higher rate (Bramlett and Mosher 2001).

¹⁶ See U.S. Census Bureau (2002) and earlier reports, as well as Ellwood and Jencks (2001).

¹⁷ Wilson (1987).

¹⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001).

¹⁹ The exact figures, collected at only two points in time, are \$7.20 in 1998 and \$8.60 in 2002. See Michalopoulos et al. (2003). Note that not all of those who left welfare for work worked full time.

²⁰ Just over 7 percent of those doubled up with relatives or friends also had a boyfriend living with them. In total, 30 percent lived with a boyfriend and 22 percent with a boyfriend alone.

²¹ All mothers' reported incomes were below the poverty line for a family of four, and all had at least one minor child living with them. All were currently single, but a relatively small number had been married.

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