



A Strong Family Foundation:

What Does Family Structure Have to Do
with a Successful Transition to Adulthood in the U.S.?

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Acknowledgement

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The American Dream & Family Structure

Is the Dream Fading?



- Poor & working-class children less likely to realize the American Dream
 - Both in comparison to middle class & citizens of many European countries
 - Evidence suggests less economic mobility today
- Important work being done by Opportunity Nation to renew American Dream

Overlooking the Family Foundation



- Strangely, Opportunity Nation overlooks the family factor
 - Nobel Laureate James Heckman: “The family into which a child is born plays a powerful role in determining lifetime opportunities.”
- What does Add Health tell us about family structure & launching successfully into adulthood?

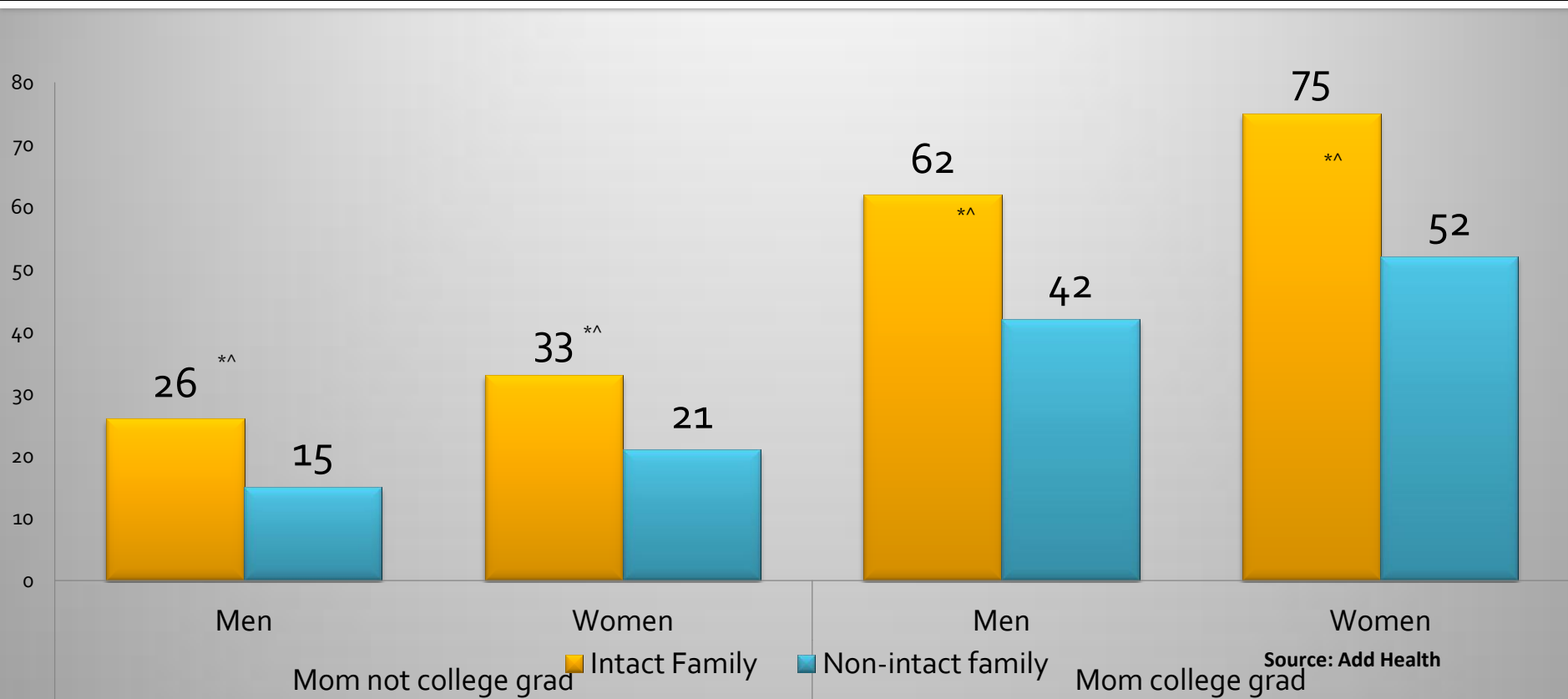
Family Structure & Successful Transitions to Adulthood

- Using Add Health Data, investigate association between class, family structure, and 3 markers of success/failure among young adults (24-32):
 - College graduation
 - Young adult income
 - Nonmarital childbearing

Marriage Most Valuable for the Least Among Us?

- Intact, married family may be especially valuable for the most vulnerable:
 - Who have fewer resources
 - More stress/disorder
 - Less latitude for mistakes

Figure 1: Adolescent Family Structure, Maternal Education & College Graduation among Young Adults



Analyses use data from Add Health Waves I and IV. Wave I was collected in 1995 when respondents were in middle and high school. Wave IV was collected in 2007 and 2008 when the participants were 24 to 32 years old. An asterisk (*) indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between respondents who lived with both, married biological parents at Wave I compared with respondents from other family structures, controlling for respondent's age and race/ethnicity. A hat (^) indicates that there was still a statistically-significant difference when Wave I household income was added as an additional control.

Figure 2: Adolescent Family Structure, Maternal Education, & Young Adult Income
 (Source: Add Health, Waves I & IV, 1994-2008)

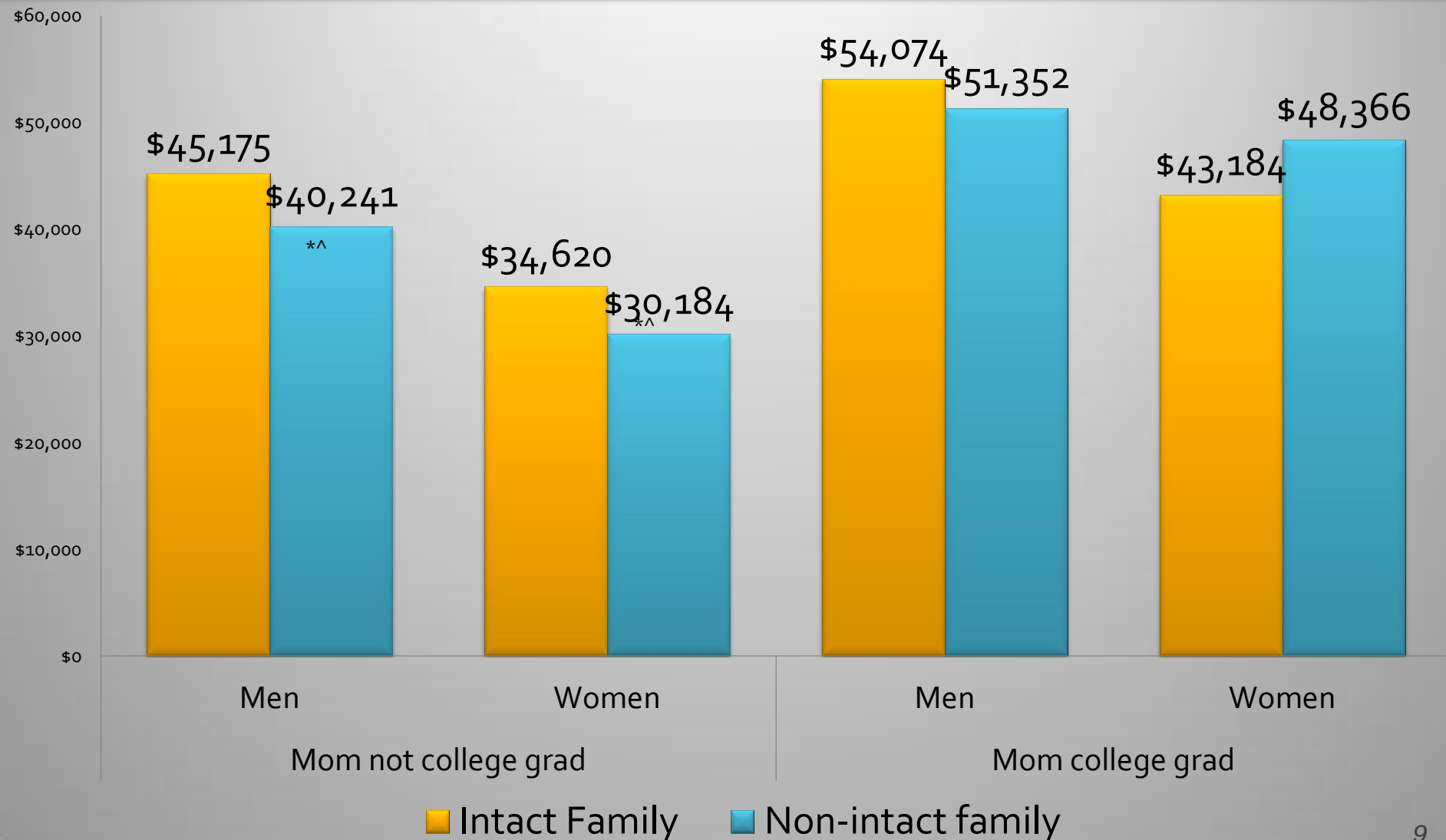
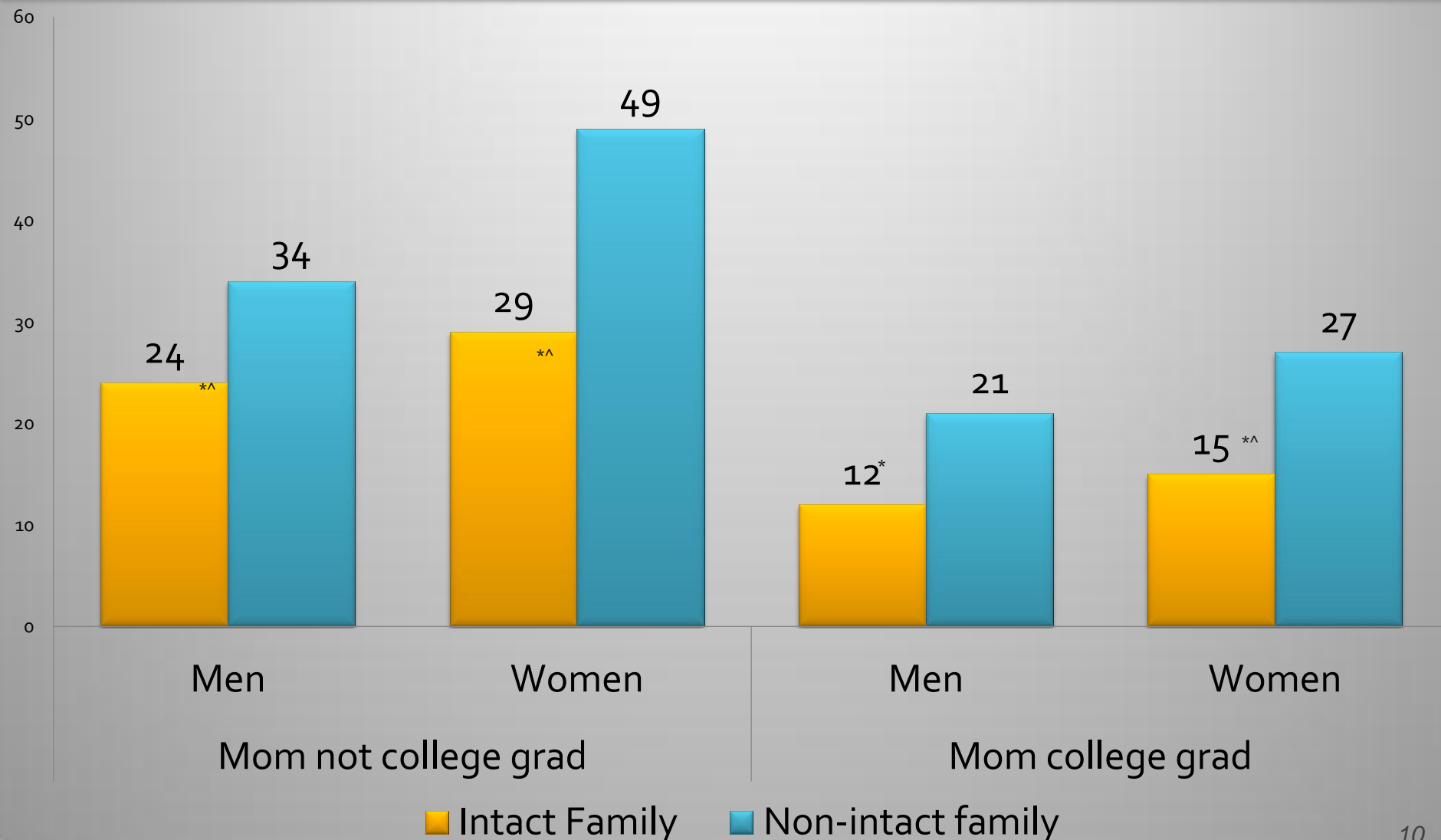


Figure 3: Adolescent Family Structure, Maternal Education, & Nonmarital Childbearing
(Source: Add Health, Waves I & IV, 1994-2008)



The Ecology of Opportunity

(Source: Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez 2013)

The Harvard-Berkeley Study:

<http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org>

#1 Metro Region for Economic Mobility
Is Salt Lake City



Tax and other Correlations with Intergenerational Mobility		
Dep. Var.:	E[Child Rank Parent=p25]	
	(1)	(2)
Local Expenditure	0.215	(0.076)
State Tax	0.199	(0.141)
State EITC Rate	0.231	(0.109)
Student Expenditure	0.251	(0.094)
High-school Dropout Rate	-0.639	(0.064)
Score	0.557	(0.086)
College Return	-0.276	(0.137)
College Tuition	-0.003	(0.060)
Colleges per capita	0.102	(0.042)
Inc. at p75 - Inc. at p25	-0.475	(0.089)
Share of Income of Top 1%	0.178	(0.068)
Share Black	-0.605	(0.065)
Black Isolation	-0.513	(0.065)
Segregation of Poverty	-0.405	(0.063)
Migration Inflow	-0.184	(0.075)
Share Foreign Born	-0.016	(0.060)
Migration Outflow	-0.098	(0.069)
Mean Household Income	0.109	(0.075)
Income Growth Rate	0.561	(0.066)
Share Manufacturing	-0.260	(0.081)
Trade Shock	-0.274	(0.124)
Social Capital Index	0.617	(0.091)
Religiosity	0.510	(0.087)
Crime Rate	-0.326	(0.101)
Share Single Moms	-0.763	(0.078)
Share Single Moms (kids of married)	-0.652	(0.094)
Divorce Rate	-0.688	(0.108)
Teen birth Rate	-0.550	(0.091)

Conclusion

- Family matters
 - Young adults, especially those from less-educated homes, are more likely to successfully navigate transition to adulthood when they come from intact, married family

Are Contraception & Delayed Fertility The Answers?



Not Likely to Help



- Children are a great good, especially for poor & working-class Americans who do not have strong professional orientation (Edin & Kefalas 2005)
- We haven't given young adults a strong normative reason to postpone childbearing beyond high school
- Age at first birth has stayed steady since 1990s for less-educated Americans

Hymowitz et al. 2013

FIGURE 10A. Median Age at First Marriage and Mean Age at First Birth for Women **College Graduates**

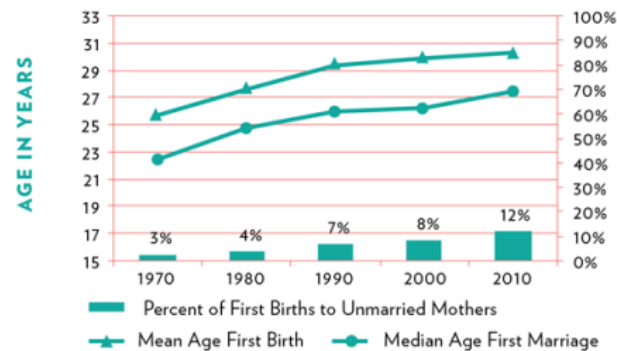


FIGURE 10B. Median Age at First Marriage and Mean Age at First Birth for Women w/ **Less Than High School Education**

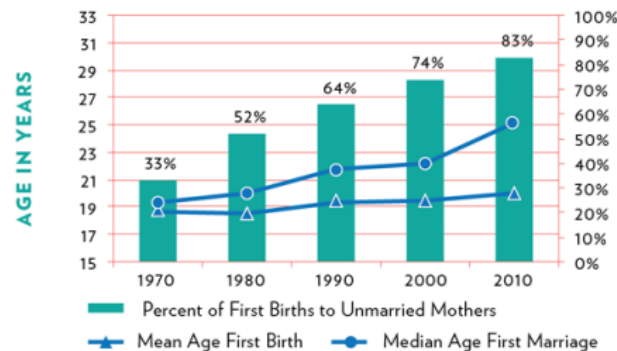
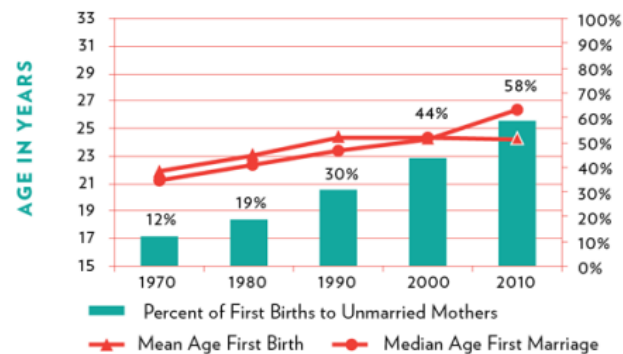


FIGURE 10C. Median Age at First Marriage and Mean Age at First Birth for Women w/ a **High School Diploma or Some College**



SOURCE: National Vital Statistics Birth Datafiles, 1970-2010; Decennial Census Public Use Microdata Samples, 1970-2000; American Community Survey, 2010.

The Agenda



- The agenda:
 - Stress normative importance of marriage 1st , parenthood 2nd
 - Teen pregnancy success = cultural change possible
 - Agnostic about 20something marriages
 - More stable than cohabiting families
 - Shore up economic foundation of working-class families
 - Vocational & apprenticeship policies
 - Expand & apply child tax credit to income & payroll taxes
- Renewing opportunity in America depends on renewing marriage & family in poor & working-class communities.