“WHERE WE START FROM HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH WHERE WE GO”
Family Structure and Well-Being

- Evidence from the extant literature suggests
  - Marriage associated with good outcomes
  - Dissolution associated with poorer outcomes
- Range of plausible explanations for why
- But pre-occupation, especially in economics literature, with:
  - Unobserved heterogeneity
  - Selection bias
- As a consequence, questions concern:
  - Whether rather than why
  - All else “equal”
An overview of the approach to research

• Advanced statistical methods have made a substantial contribution to family research
  • Efforts to ameliorate selection bias
  • Methodological rigour
  • Important, policy relevant contributions

• But time to ask whether we are
  • Prioritizing the right issues
  • Asking the right questions

• Potential gains:
  • Contribution to knowledge
  • Policy relevance