

“WHERE WE START FROM HAS
EVERYTHING TO DO WITH
WHERE WE GO”

Professor Wendy Sigle
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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