



Using the Family Impact Lens To Build Better Public Policy For Families

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1) In Italy, are families the cornerstone of a sound economy and a strong society?

2) Are families in Italy struggling with stressful conditions?

3) In Italy, could public policy do more to help families deal with stressful conditions?

The Secretary General of the United Nations Reports:

“Family policy has not kept up with the rising difficulties families experience in fulfilling their numerous functions” (2014)

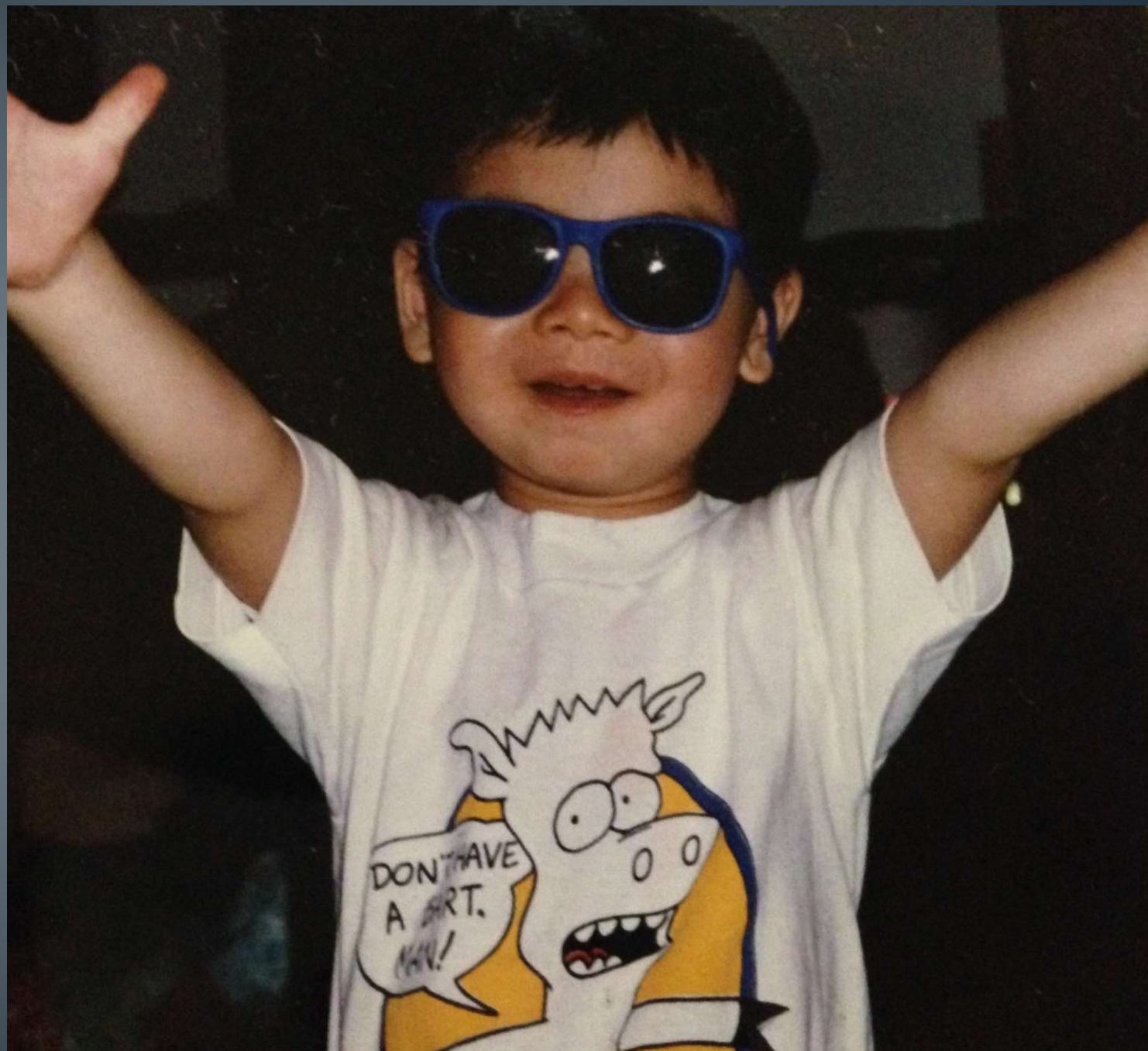
Why is Public Policy in the United States Not Working as Well as it Could?

- A Conservative Voice:
 - Arthur Brooks, President of the conservative American Enterprise Institute



Why is Public Policy in the United States Not Working as Well as it Could?

- A conservative voice
 - Arthur Brooks, President of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative commentator
- A liberal voice
 - E.J. Dionne, of the Washington Post and National Public Radio, a liberal commentator



The Far Ends of the Political Spectrum Ask:

What if the boldest and most innovative
new ideas in social policy
involve figuring out ways
to strengthen the oldest of institutions . . .

FAMILIES

Investing in Families Contributes to Effective Policies



Which is More Effective for Preventing Youth Substance Use: Youth-Only or Family-Focused Approaches?

Youth-Only Programs

School-based affective

-0,05

Knowledge plus affective

0,05

Life or social skills training

0,28

— Average size of effect

0,1

Family-Focused Programs

Parent skills training

0,31

Family skills training

0,82

In-home family support

1,62

— Average size of effect

0,96

-0,05

0,45

0,95

1,45

Note. Data obtained from "Family-based interventions for substance abuse prevention," by K. L. Kumpfer, R. Alvarado, & H. O. Whiteside, 2003, *Substance Use and Misuse*, 38, 1759-1789. Copyright 2003 by Informa Healthcare.

Investing in Families Can Contribute to Efficient Policies

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Families Can Contribute to Efficiency in Care for the Aging

- In 2009, caregiving provided by family or friends in the United States was valued at an estimated \$450 billion—more than the \$360 billion spent by state and federal governments on health and aging care services for low-income people.
- In 2002, the services provided by family caregivers in Canada was estimated to be equivalent to 276,000 full-time employees.



Diane Cushman

Executive Director, National Council on Family Relations

What I'll Cover Today

- 1) What Principles Can We Use to Assess the Impact of Policies and Programs on Families?
- 2) How Can Family Impact Discussion Starters Bring a Family Impact Lens to Policy Decisions?
- 3) How Can Family Impact Analysis Be Used to Bring a Family Impact Lens to Agencies and Organizations?
- 4) What Organizations are Well Situated to Provide Nonpartisan Leadership?



1) What Principles Can We Use to Assess the Impact of Policies and Programs on Families?

The Family Impact Principles

- Family Responsibility
- Family Stability
- Family Relationships
- Family Diversity
- Family Engagement



**2) How Can Family Impact Discussion Starters
Bring a Family Impact Lens to Policy Decisions?**

The Family Impact Discussion Starters

How will the policy, program, or practice:

- 1) Support rather than substitute for family members' responsibilities to one another?
- 2) Reinforce family members' commitment to each other and to the stability of the family unit?
- 3) Recognize the power and persistence of family ties, and promote healthy couple, marital, and parental relationships?
- 4) Affect families that vary in race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic regions, and so forth
- 5) Engage and work in partnership with families?

Applying a Family Impact Discussion Starter to Foster Care

How will the policy, program, or practice:

- 1) Support rather than substitute for family members' responsibilities to one another?

Applying a Family Impact Discussion to Children's Health Insurance

**How will the policy, program, or
practice:**

2) Reinforce family members'
commitment to each other and to
the stability of the family unit?



3) How Can Family Impact Analysis Be Used to Bring a Family Impact Lens to Agencies and Organizations?

Qualitative Family Impact Analysis of Child Care Centers

- Sample included two child care centers serving 112 and 304 children in towns with populations of 10,000 and 15,000;
- Focus groups were conducted of 8 to 12 participants, separately for parents and staff about how the center does and does not support families;
- Center directors completed a survey on family demographics and a checklist on center operating policies and procedures.

Changes in Center Policies and Practices

- The Director credited the family impact analysis with a congregation vote to remodel the church basement into a more usable, multi-purpose space;
- Remodeling allowed private space for staff to meet with parents to discuss their child's development;
- Remodeling allowed the opportunity for a summer camp program requested by parents;
- A new policy required the same staff person who greeted the parent when the child was dropped off to meet with them at pick-up;
- Breakfast times were adjusted so all children could eat;
- One center began monthly surveys to solicit parent feedback.

What Contribute to the Effectiveness of the Family Impact Lens

- 1) The family impact lens is effective because it is nonpartisan—conducted without a pre-existing position or partisan agenda.
- 2) Family impact analysis does not recommend that specific actions be taken.
- 3) Instead, the results raise considerations that policymakers can factor into their policy decisions.



**4) What Organizations are Well Situated to
Provide Nonpartisan Leadership?**

What Organizations are Well Situated to Provide Nonpartisan Leadership?

The leadership varies from country to country.

- In the United States, leadership is provided by universities, by Extension Services, and by nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations.
- In other countries, leadership comes from nonpartisan institutes, centers, or government agencies.
- Belgium has a NGO that is apolitical and independent with a membership of 310,000 families.
- The European Union established the Seventh Framework Programme which involves 25 universities and 3 NGOs.

The Conundrum We Face

What if the boldest and most innovative
new ideas in social policy
involve figuring out ways
to strengthen the oldest of institutions . . .

FAMILIES

Families are a cornerstone of a sound economy and a strong society. Families financially support their members, and care for those who cannot always care for themselves—the elderly, frail, ill, and those with disabilities. Yet families can be harmed by stressful conditions—balancing work and family responsibilities, preventing youth substance use, caring for aging relatives, and earning enough money to avoid poverty. Public policy can help families deal with stressful conditions and is often more effective than focusing on individuals. Keeping the family foundation strong today pays off tomorrow.

Families are a cornerstone for raising responsible children who become caring, committed contributors in a strong society, and competent workers in a sound economy.

What Can You Do to Make Families a Cornerstone of Better Public Policy in Italy?

