



Growing class gaps weaken social bonds



Connor Stangler

America's social fabric — long maintained through common ideals and purposes — is fraying at the edges. Monstrous social pressures tug at the threads that bind our families, communities and classes together, according to social scientist Charles Murray. In Murray's new book, "Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010," he tells the story of this great unraveling and of the dangerously wide gap between the white lower- and upper-classes.

Unfortunately, Murray's ideology prohibits him from granting the government any kind of role in the rescue effort. While disadvantaged Americans plead for help from the bottom of a hole we've been digging for 50 years, Murray reminds the upper classes it is their duty to foster virtue among the poor. Instead of a life preserver, Murray tosses the impoverished lessons about diligence.

Rather than lessons, however, state and federal agencies need to provide those who face the most formidable obstacles a sound economic footing that would enable them to re-access the economy and re-establish strong social bonds.

I have not read "Coming Apart," but I have read many reviews about the work by journalists and scholars from both sides of the political spectrum.

In spite of his misdirected recommendations, Murray points out several important and destructive demographic trends. Among the white working-class, births out of wedlock have skyrocketed and men increasingly claim disability insurance. Among low-income white Americans, the marriage rate has decreased 35 percent since 1960, according to Murray's book. More than a quarter of the white babies born during 2010 were born to unmarried parents. Murray claims children born to single-parent households tend to perform much worse in school than those born to two-parent households.

On the other side of the social division, the white upper class enjoys lower rates of divorce and non-marital births. High-I.Q. adults dominate colleges and tend to intermarry, leading to what Murray calls cognitive homogeneity, meaning they dominate the higher-skilled professions. They form a culture and tend to distance themselves from the "other" America.

The result of the differences is a tale of two nations. While these data are neither new nor shocking, their tendency to worsen each decade is reason enough to take serious steps to address them. Such a class gap shreds the social bonds that inspire empathy. The forces present in a community are similar to gravity — the further two entities move apart from each other, the less subject they are to each other's pull. As the spheres the two classes inhabit become more separate, the foreignness we feel toward the "other" becomes more distinct and destructive.

The antidote for this growing divide is not, as Murray asserts, increased virtue. Rather than the upper classes raising the lower classes because they have an ethical advantage, the upper classes should help the lower because they have an economic advantage. The forces ripping social and familial ties are not because of an increase in immorality.

Men were hit hard during the recession: three-quarters of the 7.5 million jobs lost during the recession were lost by men, according to a Nov. 2011 Atlantic article. This employment gap disrupts family dynamics. With more stable economic prospects, these families can renew strong relationships and work toward prosperous futures for their children. Instead of waiting for a volatile market to funnel wealth to the neediest, the government can invest in communities through jobs-training programs and expanded public employment projects.

Locally, these types of economic and social gaps are common. Twenty-six percent of the Adair County population lives below the poverty line, 12 points more than the Missouri rate, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Is the most effective response to preach for more hard work while leaving the poor financially inept? Or do we gather the appropriate public and private forces to help them while they strive for a better standard? The gap will not shrink with a moral lecture but from a concerted economic outreach.

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Santorum supports dated social ideals



Lauren Kellett

When the results of last Tuesday's Republican non-binding Missouri primaries were released, I was astounded to see former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum won with 55 percent of the vote. I couldn't wrap my head around how the 53-year-old conservative could convince my fellow Missourians he was the right choice for a Republican candidate. I can understand how his economic policy and big family charm might be appealing to some, but my concern lies with his borderline-extremist social beliefs.

It's difficult to decide where to begin when it comes to Santorum's skewed social views. Controversial topics like homosexuals, women in combat and welfare recipients have faced truly embarrassing comments from Santorum.

This type of social conservatism simply is not acceptable in our growing society. The times are changing — hopefully for the better — and we do not need a leader like Santorum knocking us back.

First, there is the issue of gay marriage and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass." When asked about his views about gay marriage in a September interview with Piers Morgan, Santorum said, "The bottom

line is whether the court has the right to create new rights. In creating new rights it opens up Pandora's Box, which it did, leading to gay marriage in Massachusetts and gay marriage in Iowa, and a whole mess of other states."

My complaint here is same-sex marriage would not be creating a new right at all — it would be extending the right of marriage to anyone who is in love and wants to make that love official in the government's eyes. Since when is ceremony of love a product of Pandora's Box. If you are unfamiliar, that means to create evil that cannot be undone.

When confronted about gay people in the Army, Santorum told a gay serviceman at the GOP debate in Florida last September he would work to circumvent the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell because "sexual activity has absolutely no place in the military." Why does Santorum think just because gay people are in the Army they will try to engage in sexual misconduct?

It's 2012 — the evidence is pretty convincing that a substantial contribution to sexual orientation comes from genetics, according to a 2008 ABC News article. It's not a choice. Therefore, hindering someone's ability to serve their country based on their genes would be no different than bringing us back before the civil rights movement when we banned people entering combat based on the color of their skin.

Unfortunately, Santorum's military views don't stop there. In a Feb. 9 interview with CNN, Santorum said, "I do have concerns about women in front-line combat. I think that could be a very compromising situation, where people naturally might do things that might not be in the interest of the mission, because of other types of emotions that are involved." He went on to add,

"It already happens, of course, with the camaraderie of men in combat, but I think it would be even more unique if women were in combat, and I think that's probably not in the best interest of men, women or the mission."

One of the points he likely is trying to make is men will feel inclined to protect the women they are fighting with, and get distracted from their own combat. I can't help but wonder how this is different when it's between two men. If a man sees his comrade hurt, naturally he is going to stop and help him. It is no different for women, so why does Santorum not want them fighting in the Army?

Perhaps the most outrageous — and humorous — of Santorum's comments was made during a January speech in Iowa when he was asked about entitlements and welfare. I kid you not, Santorum said, "I don't want to make black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money." Don't worry folks, Santorum has a reasonable excuse for his slip-up. "If you look at it, what I started to say is a word and then sort of changed and 'blah' came out. And people said 'black.' I didn't. I said 'blah,'" Santorum told Fox News a few days after the comment. That makes much more sense, Rick.

I fear Santorum's policy does not comply with the way our society is growing into a more accepting environment for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations and economic backgrounds. America finally is learning to fully celebrate our diversity, and Santorum's staunch conservative beliefs appear to be hindering that.

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What do you think about Rick Santorum winning the Missouri primaries?

"People don't know what they're voting for. If all women knew the things he says, I don't think the results would be the same."

Becky Rader junior



"I couldn't care less because he is irrelevant and an idiot who hates gays."

Travis Pope senior



"It isn't surprising in a conservative state. I think he's a well-intentioned guy but not the best for the job."

Sam Pernicka junior



AROUND THE QUAD

Contradictory Christian organization harms more than helps



Lacy Murphy

There's always a person or organization that rubs the population the wrong way because of the way they pursue their interests. Because we live in the U.S., we enjoy freedom of speech and of the press, and while I can acknowledge the value of these freedoms, interest groups sometimes exploit these rights. At a certain point, interest groups lose their effectiveness when the techniques they use to reach their goals are annoying and insulting.

An episode of the Ellen DeGeneres show sparked my interest in a group similar to the types of organizations that seem to do just that. Although DeGeneres usually abstains from discussing most social and political

issues on her show, she responded to an insulting accusation by a Christian activism organization called One Million Moms that condemned JCPenney for making a lesbian their spokesperson.

It is a huge disappointment to me that a famous individual such as DeGeneres is labeled as someone unfit to represent a company with traditional values because she has done commendable work throughout the country. DeGeneres launched the "Small Change Campaign," which fights hunger in America, and has been a part of several charity organizations including the American Red Cross relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. DeGeneres' actions are proof she is deserving of the JCPenney spokesperson position.

OMM has stirred controversy by declaring anyone who disagrees with their opinions "bigoted liberals who hate Christians." This is bizarre and absurd because the word bigot means a person who obstinately or intolerantly is devoted to his or her own opinions and prejudices, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. I wonder if OMM knew they were the pot calling the kettle black when they made that statement.

Another issue OMM is fighting against is a Macy's bridal registry advertisement that

featured a cake topper of two men.

"Macy's must believe this is mainstream, but just because gay marriage is legal in a few states, this is inappropriate marketing and conservative customers will not support it," according to onemillionmoms.com.

I fail to see how same-sex marriage is immoral, violent, vulgar or profane. In fact, the ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals just declared Proposition 8, which overturned gay marriage in the state of California, as unconstitutional because it violates the civil rights of the gay community.

Not only has OMM stood against advertisements that support gay rights, it has made a public stance against non-profit organizations seeking to do positive work in the community. The "It Gets Better" campaign was created to show young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential and positivity their lives will reach as well as combat the staggering number of teen suicides in the LGBT community.

OMM stands against anyone or any group that supports this cause, claiming this campaign isn't an effective way to reduce teen suicide because statistics have shown there is a higher rate of suicide among teens that "choose" a homosexual lifestyle. Statistics have shown that nine out of 10 LGBT

students have experienced harassment at school and are bullied two to three times as much as straight teens, according to it-getsbetter.org. It is not being gay that causes LGBT teens to turn to suicide, but the cruel treatment of organizations like OMM.

While OMM has the right to rally against issues they don't agree with, they don't seem to practice what the Bible preaches. "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord," according to Leviticus 19:18. I interpret this as love your neighbor despite his or her sexuality.

OMM contradicts itself by claiming to be a Christian organization but condemns any company that represents equality for all.

For being a group of moms who want to teach their children Christian values, they seem to do the opposite by sending a message of hate to those who don't share their beliefs. There probably are a million better things One Million Moms could be doing to benefit their children.

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