

The Natural Family

Volume 30 Number 3 2016

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THE NATURAL FAMILY
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND POLICY
Volume 30 Number 3 2016

Editor

Allan C. Carlson

Managing Editor

Nicole M. King

Senior Editor

Bryce J. Christensen

Editorial Board of Advisors

[In Formation]

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The Natural Family

Note from the Editors: A New Focus

THE VOLUME WHICH YOU NOW HOLD in your hand undoubtedly looks a bit different than what you are used to. Allow us to explain. Going forward, this quarterly, which has been known for some years now as *The Family in America*, will broaden its focus to include international family questions.

Why the shift? Partly because family-policy making in the United States is in a rut, caught between Republican indifference and Democratic hostility in Washington's gridlock. Good lessons bear repeating; however, the editors feel that *The Family in America* has largely exhausted commentary on the relevant and important subjects while the Washington carousel continues to spin. In the meantime, the exciting developments in thinking and acting about family policy are taking place internationally: in Eastern Europe, in Africa, in Latin America, in Australia, in China and other parts of Asia, and among traditionalist caucuses at the United Nations and in the European Union. While we will continue to analyze research and suggest family policy in the United States, we ignore what is going on in other lands to our detriment.

The second reason for a shift is that the new title will better reflect the other projects of our parent body, the International Organization for the Family—the World Congress of Families and our work at the U.N. In both arenas, our influence and reach has continued to grow, and we

have been joined by some of the leading scholars in the global family movement. This new title will serve as the premier publication of this movement, the place for exciting new research and budding talent.

And finally, we are shifting our focus now because we believe that the time will come when American policymakers will need positive examples to import back into our country. Among the theories of Russian-born sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, whose work has often been discussed in these pages, is that all cultures move between three basic phases: ideational, or spiritually and morally focused; sensate, or materialistic, focused on the senses; and idealistic, a harmonious blend of the two. If Sorokin's analyses are correct, we are living in a sensate age, but on the verge of transition. When this transition occurs, we are going to need good research and good policy ideas. And we hope, in this journal, to identify these.

For all of these reasons, our governing Board has voted to change the title of this journal to *The Natural Family: An International Journal of Research and Policy*. We will now apply to international issues the same values promoting and defending natural marriage and family living. Allan Carlson will continue to serve as Editor, with Nicole King as Managing Editor and Bryce Christensen as Senior Editor. The format will remain the same, and you can expect the same sort of cogent, groundbreaking essays and clear writing that have long been featured in these pages.

Thank you for your past interest and encouragement. We hope that you will continue reading this journal, and will come to share our excitement at its new direction.

The Editors

The Family of Faith Today: Shaping the Global Future

Allan C. Carlson

This essay has been adapted from an address first delivered to an international interfaith conference: “The Family: At the Center of Human Development,” hosted in Manila, the Philippines, on March 27-28, 1999. The editors feel that it still accurately describes the early stirrings of the international pro-family movement, and sets the tone for this new journal title.

A NEW, UNEXPECTED, AND HISTORICALLY UNPRECEDENTED cultural-political movement forms in our time, one born in defense of family-centered religious faith. If we look, the signs are all about us.

Example One: In 1985, the British government issued the Swann Report on education and multicultural values. Behind the high-minded modernist rhetoric of multiculturalism, the Report in fact was a direct attack on all religiously grounded cultures, old and new. Relative to the Anglican Church of England, the report called for an end to the teaching of the Christian faith and the practice of Christian worship in the government schools. Toward ethnic and religious minorities, the Swann Report declared that they “may maintain their individual cultures only in so far as they are not in conflict with rationally shared values.” In short, “multiculturalism” really meant aggressive secularism, the denial of parental choice, the destruction of the historic British religious culture, and the

disruption of minority religious cultures in Britain, as well.

Yet something extraordinary happened: In the face of a new and very modern form of persecution, religious communities long at odds with each other discovered that they had more in common than they had assumed. Most dramatically, the Islamic Academy in Cambridge and the Islamic Cultural Centre in London issued a joint statement exposing the real philosophy and flawed arguments of the Swann Report. At the same time, these Muslim leaders argued that the existing provisions for Christian worship in the schools should be retained, as a symbol of the need for a school curriculum that respected the sacred. They asked only for the right of Muslim children to withdraw from such collective worship and assembly.¹

Example Two: The February 1999 issue of the American Roman Catholic journal *New Oxford Review* carried this letter to the editor from Margaret Fox, of Latrobe, Pennsylvania:

I'm not Catholic, I'm of the Anabaptist persuasion. . . . Reading through the *New Oxford Review*, I've been amazed at how close various orthodox Christians are, so far as our core beliefs go. I thank the [magazine] for its articles on abortion, homosexuality, contraception, and other issues that I'm very concerned about. Actually, I feel much closer to conservative Catholics than I do to those liberal Mennonites with whom I go to church.²

Example Three: During the 1997 United Nations Habitat conference in Nairobi, an unusual coalition of conservative Christians and orthodox Muslims took form, much to the consternation of the conference leaders. In the process, distrust and misunderstanding gave way to new light. As a report by NGO Family Voice, a group affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, related:

The interest of [Muslim] nations [in our work] in particular was often quite pointed. For example, during an informal "hallway"

1. Cf. Marvyn Hiskett, *Schooling for British Muslims: Integrated, Opted Out, or Denominational?* (London: The Social Affairs Unit, Research Report No. 12, 1989): 11-27.

2. "Roman Anabaptist?" *New Oxford Review* (March 1999): 4.

discussion . . . , the Iranian Ambassador asked [one of us] several direct questions. . . . The Ambassador noted that “your group is different from the others” and inquired whether our position on the family was merely “political posturing” or “based on a deeper spiritual foundation.” He asked whether we thought that the family was getting stronger or decaying throughout the world . . . [and] suggested that his people would benefit immensely from meeting with Americans who believed in the importance of both the family and spirituality.³

The Common Denominator: Families

How might we account for this fresh awareness of a shared, religiously grounded family culture? To begin with, it is important to note that this is not a new example of twentieth-century ecumenism. Those who have studied the ecumenical movement know that it has occurred largely among liberal churches and churchmen, leaders whose faith was already weak, who were willing to rewrite or even abandon long-standing doctrines in the interest of “unity.” In sharp contrast, the contemporary “coming together” of religious people occurs only among the most orthodox of each group, people that are the least likely to compromise on basic doctrine for the sake of other purposes.

All the same, there occurs with growing frequency the pleasant process of mutual discovery, as folks of deep religious conviction come to agreement and practical cooperation with persons of other faith communities once thought to be their foes. These epiphanies occur most frequently over matters of family life and sexual ethics. To understand better this coming together, we might also consider these statements from a broad array of religious faiths on the place of the family in the social order:

- From the Muslim author, Abdel Rahim Omran, 1992: “The family is the basic social unit in Islamic society, and marriage is the fundamental Islamic institution.”

3. “Report from Nairobi,” NGO Family Voice, Brigham Young University, May 6, 1997, 8.

- From the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994: “The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.”
- From the Christian reformer Martin Luther, 1520: Marriage is “the highest religious order on earth,” while the procreation of children is “a divine ordinance which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore.”
- From sociologist Benjamin Schlesinger, 1971: “Throughout the centuries, the family has always occupied the central place in Judaism as the primary social-religious unit.”
- And from the Chinese scholar of Confucius, Chang Chi’i-Yun, 1980: “[I]t is the family, more than any other unit in society, which constitutes a solid base for national life.”

Another set of quotations affirms a shared valuation of the child-rich, or large family among the faith communities:

- The Qur’an teaches that multitude is highly regarded in Islam, that the purpose of marriage is to beget children, and that children are the adornment of life.
- Martin Luther argued that women were created by God to conceive and bear children; they should marry early and have as many children as possible, for “this is the purpose for which they exist.” He called fathers home as well, to commit themselves to the care and rearing of children. In one passage from his essay, “The Estate of Marriage,” Luther described how “God, with all his angels and creatures,” smiled on the father who is washing diapers, “because he is doing so in Christian faith.”
- Pope Pius XII declared in 1958 that “Large families are most blessed by God and specially loved and prized by the Church as its most precious treasures. . . . Where you find families of great numbers, they point to: the physical and moral health of a Christian people;

a living faith in God and trust in His Providence; the fruitful and joyous holiness of Catholic marriage.”

- Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, longtime leader of the Lubavitcher Hasidim, a Jewish community, stressed the importance of the command in Genesis 1:28—“Be fruitful and multiply”—in urging the creation of large families. As he spoke in 1979: “A child is not a faucet to be turned on at will. No power on earth can guarantee the birth of a baby. . . . Such power is God’s and God’s alone. . . . The blessing so disclaimed earlier may not be available later. Take His blessings when He offers them, gratefully, and rest assured that this third partner is benevolent . . . and can be trusted to know the best time.”
- And finally, an early leader of the LDS Church, Heber J. Grant, stated in 1913: “I am thankful that healthy, vigorous, strong, sweet babies are the best crop of [our community], and I hope and pray earnestly that it will ever be so.”

Indeed, it was this implicit shared agreement among the world’s religions on the value of the large family, on the preciousness of children, that stirred earlier in this century the opponents of family, faith, and fertility into a powerful campaign. Called neo-Malthusianism, it stands today as the most fervent foe of God-centered, family-oriented peoples. Its power extends from the halls of the United Nations and World Bank to the internationalized media. When CNN’s founder, Ted Turner, described Christianity as a “religion for losers,” dismissed all people of religious faith as “a whole bunch of dummies,”⁴ and called for a global one-child-per-family policy, we could see the face and attitudes of the modern neo-Malthusian. It is important that we take time to understand the history and purposes of this campaign.

The Malthusian Cancer

Ironically, the movement takes its name from an Anglican cleric. The Rev. Thomas R. Malthus laid out his basic premise in 1798, citing “the

4. Joseph Esposito, “Ted Turner Insults Catholics, Pro-Lifers,” *Catholic Herald*, January 1, 1999.

constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it.”⁵ From this bleak biological perspective, Malthus concluded that human numbers would invariably grow faster than food supplies, and that each new baby generated a demand on resources which exceeded the benefits derived from the new source of labor. Eventually, he concluded, famine, war, and pestilence would drive “over-populated” nations back into balance with their natural resources.

While having lost faith in God’s providence, Malthus remained faithful in other ways. He refused to consider either contraception or abortion in response: these were vile, insulting to women, and unchristian. Instead, he argued in his later editions for sexual abstinence and delayed marriage as brakes on population growth.

However, some of his nineteenth-century followers embraced artificial birth control as absolutely necessary. As soon as these new or neo-Malthusians gained a foothold among wealthy English elites, they spread this new gospel of “the child as enemy” to the whole British Empire. As demographer John Caldwell explained, “the English-speaking world became the nineteenth-century cradle” of anti-natalist thought.⁶ In British India, for example, colonial administrators argued that the subcontinent faced perpetual famine unless the population could be reduced. As one British official in the old Raj wrote:

[T]he only practical method of limiting the population is by the introduction of artificial means of birth control, though it is not easy to exaggerate the difficulties of introducing such methods in a country where the vast majority of the population regard the propagation of male offspring as a religious duty and the reproach of barrenness as a terrible punishment for crimes committed in a former incarnation.⁷

Still, the British worked hard and with some success to convince Indian elites that human fertility begot starvation. Only the followers of Mahatma Gandhi both saw through the scheme and offered significant

5. T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on Population* (New York: Dutton, 1941), I: 5.

6. John C. Caldwell, “The Global Fertility Transition: The Need for a Unifying Theory,” *Population and Development Review* 23 (December 1997): 803-12.

7. *Ibid.*

political resistance to the Western anti-natalist creed.

In our age, Malthusian doctrine has evolved into a comprehensive worldview or ideology. As much an emotional state of mind as a rational argument, the modern Malthusian choir has taken four voices.

Demographic Malthusians see biology as the key factor in human history and cast excessive human reproduction as the primary source of poverty and misery. People—especially other people—are the problem, a conviction held with emotional intensity. One Malthusian activist, Paul Ehrlich, wrote about a “stinking hot night” he had spent in Delhi, India:

The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people . . . [S]ince that night I’ve known the feel of overpopulation.⁸

Resource Malthusians stress that nature is finite, that basic “natural resources” are limited, and that the current consumption of “non-renewable” resources represents a crime against future generations.

Economic Malthusians fear unregulated or unplanned economic expansion: in other words, they fear the free and open market. Indeed, history has repeatedly shown the logical and policy connection between a “planned population” and a “planned economy.”

Linguistic Malthusians focus their ire on acts of creation, be they material or biological. Examples would include the loathing often directed toward business owners and builders and the emotional devaluation suffered by the word “motherhood.” This orientation takes its strongest form in an animus directed toward children, symbols as they are of risk-taking, unpredictability, and growth.

In his book from Oxford University Press, *Intended Consequences*, historian Donald Critchlow shows how a small cabal of wealthy neo-Malthusians have carried this ideology into prominence and political power. One early episode is particularly instructive: the introduction of

8. Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine, 1968): 15-16.

neo-Malthusian ideas into the American territory of Puerto Rico. The wealthy American industrial leader, Clarence Gamble, funded creation of a Malthusian center there in 1925. The Rockefeller Foundation then sent doctors to expand the beachhead. In 1932, one of the Rockefeller-funded doctors, named Cornelius Rhoads, wrote a memo. It shows plainly the racism that lurked at the heart of the neo-Malthusian campaign. “The Puerto Ricans,” Rhoads stated, “are beyond doubt the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate . . . race of men ever inhabiting this sphere. What the island needs is not public health work but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the population.”⁹

While the tidal wave could not be ordered up, an aggressive campaign against the Puerto Rican people’s fertility would have the same result. Goaded on by wealthy American figures such as John D. Rockefeller III and Hugh Moore, the U.S. government introduced an island-wide birth control campaign (something it still feared to do in the States). It was said that Puerto Rican women had a “lack of inhibitions in regard to sex,” which made control of them all the more necessary. Opposition by the dominant Roman Catholic Church was dismissed or subverted through lies and obfuscation.¹⁰

Modern Malthusians

Since the 1950s, neo-Malthusianism has been in the ascendant around the globe, with much of the pressure—I am ashamed to admit—coming from the United States. The publication in 1954 of the Hugh Moore Fund’s provocatively titled and widely circulated pamphlet, “The Population Bomb,” called attention to high population growth rates occurring in the less-developed areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In July 1959, the U.S. Department of State released a report on world population trends which concluded that rapid population growth threatened international stability. An October report issued by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded that “some means of controlling population

9. Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 36.

10. Critchlow, 38.

growth are now inescapable.”¹¹

Over the next few years, neo-Malthusian indictments extended from the undeveloped world to America itself. It is important to note that the U.S. birth rate had started falling in 1957 and by the early 1960s had clearly entered a period of serious decline. Nonetheless, in their 1964 book, *Too Many Americans*, demographers Lincoln and Alice Day blasted the “American Fertility Cult” which welcomed large families and population growth. They argued for a fundamental change in ideas about what constitutes a social responsibility, so that “a large family can no longer in itself be viewed as a social contribution. . . . If the parents of three children decide to have a fourth, it should be with the full awareness that they are choosing to indulge their personal desires at the expense of the welfare of their society.”¹²

By mid-decade, neo-Malthusian ideas were winning victory after victory within the U.S. government. In his June 1965 address before the United Nations, President Lyndon Johnson declared:

Let us in all our lands . . . including this land . . . face forthrightly the multiplying problems of our multiplying populations and seek the answers to this most profound challenge to the future of all the world. Let us act on the fact that five dollars invested in population control is worth one hundred dollars invested in economic growth.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall “vigorously challenged” the myth that population growth was the key to prosperity and the good life: “Instead, it is more likely to lead to poverty, degradation, and despair.” Indeed, this government agency even agreed with biologist Julian Huxley that mankind itself had become the “cancer of the planet.”¹³

By the late 1960s, a new wave of frantic Malthusian tracts appeared.

11. On the arguments from this period, see: Jack Zlotnick, “Population Pressure and Political Indecision,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 1961): 685-90.

12. Lincoln H. Day and Alice Taylor Day, *Too Many Americans* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), 133-35, 233.

13. From: James Roosevelt, “U.S. Presents Views on Population Growth and Economic Development,” *The Department of State Bulletin* (January 31, 1966): 176; and *The Population Challenge . . . What it Means to America: United States Department of Interior Conservation Yearbook No. 2* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966): 3-4, 65.

“Catastrophe is foredoomed,” wrote William and Paul Paddock in their global-oriented work *Famine 1975!* “[I]n the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked on now,” wrote Paul Ehrlich in his popular work *The Population Bomb*. We “must” cut out “the cancer of population growth,” Ehrlich concluded.¹⁴

Nor were Ehrlich and his colleagues shy about the price that would have to be paid. “Domestic policies” were necessary to get populations under control, Ehrlich wrote. “Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause. . . . We must be relentless in pushing for population control.” Among his many proposals, Ehrlich urged the creation of a powerful Department of Population and Environment which would promote sex education in the schools, give “responsibility prizes” to childless marriages, and develop a “mass sterilization agent” to be placed in water supplies. He called for taxation systems that would penalize all families with children, but especially those “irresponsible” couples with more than two.¹⁵

Others were even more extreme, as the “our children as enemy” theme gained explicit treatment. Bioethicist Garrett Hardin stated that “Every babe’s birth diminishes me.” He told a medical audience that obstetricians should discourage fertility among their patients, “in order to diminish the amount of adult stupidity, which itself is a form of social pollution, and a most dangerous one.” A voluntary system of birth control, Hardin argued, could not achieve the goal of national population control: “Some form of community coercion—gentle or severe, explicit or cryptic—will have to be employed.”¹⁶

Even with the change of administration, the U.S. government kept in lock-step with the neo-Malthusian surge. In his unprecedented July 1969 “Message to Congress on Population,” President Richard Nixon labeled population growth “one of the most serious challenges to human

14. William and Paul Paddock, *Famine 1975! America’s Decision: Who Will Survive?* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968): 9, and Ehrlich, 11, 24.

15. Ehrlich, 135-39, 149, 151.

16. Garrett Hardin, “Everybody’s Guilty: The Ecological Dilemma,” *California Medicine* (November 1970): 42, 45-6.

destiny in the last third of our century.” He urged the American people to respond to “the population crisis” facing the United States and the world.

The public policy consequences of the neo-Malthusian ascendancy also grew. Starting in 1965, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds were increasingly diverted to population control. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities accelerated its work, soon joined by the World Bank, guided by population control zealot Robert McNamara.

The campaign soon ricocheted back on the Americans themselves. In 1967, the U.S. Congress allocated its first \$50 million for domestic population planning efforts. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 was the key step in shifting the U.S. income tax burden onto families with two or more children, while the unmarried and childless gained a tax cut. The Family Planning Services and Population Research Act of 1970 moved the Federal government into population control work in a big way, authorizing \$382 million for the period through 1973.

Malthusian Fallacies

But, some might still ask, weren’t the neo-Malthusians at some level right? What about those charts showing the explosion in human numbers since 1800, and the continued reduction in the number of years it has taken for the world’s population to double: 200 years, 80 years, 37 years, 18 years, . . . ? Aren’t we doomed to an ant-like existence unless we use all the tools available, including coercive ones, to control our reproduction?

The simple answer is “no.” At the very least, doubt about the neo-Malthusian arguments bantered about during the 1960s should arise from the fact that all the dire predictions of that decade simply proved wrong. The mass famines guaranteed for the 1970s and beyond have not occurred. There is, of course, hunger in the world and some die of starvation. But these deaths are attributed almost exclusively to wars, political corruption, and the abject failure of centrally planned economies. Even today, governments in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Europe, and elsewhere are still trying to conjure up ways of suppressing agricultural production.

More basic, though, are the fatal logical flaws in the whole Malthusian argument. First, the birth of a baby not only represents the addition of a new mouth to the world; it also means the addition of a new mind

capable of innovation and a new set of hands capable of work, provided they have the freedom to do so. Second, resources are not finite. Rather, it is the human mind which takes hitherto “worthless” materials—rocks and weeds, for example—and transforms them into something of value. Over the long run, human beings in this sense create new resources and thereby reduce scarcity; and the more minds added to that creative process, the greater the resource base. Third, even the maintenance of a quality environment has little relationship to human numbers, and a strong linkage to human values and self-discipline.

Fourth, the neo-Malthusian credo blurred over the vital role that population growth can play in economic development. Demographer Alfred Sauvy has shown how a moderate increase in population size may actually be necessary for any social and economic progress. He points to the experience of France, which had a relatively stable—indeed, at points a declining—population between 1850 and 1960 and which suffered from serious economic troubles throughout that period. It was only during the 1960s, after century-old obstacles to a free market—called “Malthusianisms” in the famed 1959 Rueff Report—were removed and population growth resumed, that the modern French economic boom began again.¹⁷

Solid quantitative evidence affirming Sauvy’s argument came in 1977, with the publication of Julian Simon’s masterpiece, *The Economics of Population Growth*. Beginning his massive research project in 1968 as a committed neo-Malthusian, Simon confessed to great confusion by 1970 as the available empirical data refused to confirm Malthus’s theory. After still further work, he converted to the anti-Malthusian side. Simon admits the obvious fact that “any additional person adds a burden to parents and society in the short run.” However, he proceeds to his major conclusion: “Moderate population growth has positive effects on the standard of living in the long run (after, say, 30 to 100 years) in both more developed and less-developed countries—as compared to a stationary population and to a very fast population growth.” Recast in Malthus-like terms, Simon puts it: “If population has a tendency to increase geometrically,

17. Alfred Sauvy, *General Theory of Population* (New York: Basic Books, 1969): 298-300.

output has a tendency to increase geometrically, and at least as fast—without apparent limit.” Simon acknowledges the theoretical point that population growth will stop sometime, “just as any other growth process will stop sometime.” But he denies that it “must” be “now.”¹⁸

Finally, there is mounting evidence that the new population problem facing the world is in fact depopulation. In half of the globe’s nations, populations already are at the zero- or negative-growth level, and the negative economic effects of this demographic stagnation are mounting. Even World Bank and United Nations demographers now acknowledge that their prior projections of rapid population growth in the twenty-first century were wrong. The true crisis will be that of depopulation.

The Family of Faith

In sum, neo-Malthusianism as “science” is as dead today as it was a hundred years ago, vanquished by the human imagination and the resource-creating energy unleashed in free societies. Yet neo-Malthusianism as “emotion,” as fear, retains its grip on global institutions and global policy making, discouraging population growth, financially punishing large families, warring against religious faith, and placing roadblocks in front of those innovators who would create new resources. As Frederic Wertham has succinctly put it: “Every reactionary tendency of modern times . . . contains Malthusian elements.”¹⁹

Indeed, the neo-Malthusian campaign of “enlightenment” posed against human life and religious belief continues still. Not too long ago, K.K. Fung—a professor at the University of Memphis—proposed in the journal *Population Research and Policy Review* that the entire population of China be vaccinated against pregnancy (with other countries presumably to follow). This vaccine would be neutralized only when the relevant family had accumulated enough deaths. As Professor Fung explains this union of “birth control” to “death control,” each death would trigger the issue “of a certain amount of birth quota” to the family of the deceased.

18. Julian Simon, *The Economics of Population Growth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977): 3, 493-95.

19. Frederic Wertham, *A Sign for Cain: An Exploration of Human Violence* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 102-5.

As the population stabilized, one birth would equal one death. “Such a changed focus may induce higher mortality among the hopelessly ill,” writes Fung. He is saddened by the “traditional neglect of mortality as a policy instrument,” but hopes that his new policy would normalize physician-assisted suicide and introduce “an element of efficiency into the allocation of births.”²⁰

That, my friends, is the neo-Malthusian vision for the twenty-first century, stripped of all the empty rhetoric regarding “human rights” or “women’s rights,” and exposed for what it is: anti-life; inhuman; opposed to both tradition and progress; exploitative of children; family destroying; the foe of every religion; the very Angel of Death.

But this vision will not carry the day. The great majority of the world remains attached to religious doctrines that celebrate the family and reverence of life. As I noted at the beginning of my talk, peoples of deep religious convictions are also discovering what they share with orthodox believers in other faiths. A global pro-family movement begins to take form, seeking not power or gain, but only to build a common defense against the militant ideology arrayed against the families of the world.

In May, 1998, representatives from the six inhabited continents and the great world religions met in Rome to discuss the Family of Faith on the cusp of the new century. Defying the secular cynics who relish and encourage religious divisions, this group crafted a common definition of the family:

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed by the Creator in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of: satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love; welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children; sharing a home that serves as the center of social, educational, economic, and spiritual life; building strong bonds among the generations, passing on a way of life that has transcendent meaning; and extending a hand of compassion to individuals and households

20. K.K. Fung, “How Many Children?—Fixing Total Annual Births as a Population Control Policy,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 17 (October 1998): 403-19.

whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.

We also issued a statement asking the families of the world to sign a “Call” for convening the World Congress of Families in 1999. This is the opportunity for families of faith to coalesce into a global movement affirming those precious things held in common—family bonds and delight in children—and demanding of politicians that they end the campaign against life and family that has so scarred this century.

Where the twentieth century belonged to the neo-Malthusians and their allies, the twenty-first century can still be the century of the Natural Family. It can be marked by the reaffirmation of the family as the fundamental social unit, and by a renewed celebration of children—and of families with many children—as pleasing to God. We have the power to make this happen if we show the will to do so. I urge all families of faith to join this movement: the alternative is the darkness of a world without children. Let us choose the light!

Allan C. Carlson is Editor of The Natural Family.

Tbilisi Declaration—2016

From May 15-18, 2016, pro-family leaders from around the globe met in Tbilisi, Georgia, for the World Congress of Families X. At every meeting of the World Congress, a Declaration is delivered at the closing session. Below is the Tbilisi Declaration, which was adopted by acclamation at the closing session of WCF X. The four short essays following it have been adapted from talks originally delivered at that Conference.

WE DELEGATES TO THE WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES X have gathered in the ancient and honorable land of Georgia, in the venerable and beautiful city of Tbilisi, at a time of great historic import. During the last several decades, a titanic global contest over the nature of society and the fate of children has been taking form. It has now come to a head.

On the one side are gathered forces combining revolution with retrogression, novelty with depravity, and cries of liberation with a new slavery. This movement elevates sexual desire and atomistic individualism to the highest of human values. It denies any natural order to human life. And it degrades children into nuisances or tools to serve adult ends.

On the other side are those who defend the natural family. We affirm the wisdom embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, entitled to protection by society and the state.” We hold that human beings are by nature social, conjugal, and procreative. We see in the Creation a divine moral order that seeks to protect and nurture children.

In this context, it is distressing to find many Western nations, transnational bodies such as the European Union, and large corporations joining the cause of the sexual revolution. Yet it is hopeful to see the young nations of Africa and Asia and many of the lands recently freed from the yoke of Communism rallying behind the natural family.

Today, the Republic of Georgia is a pivot point in the great contest over the human future. Accordingly, we delegates to this Congress affirm the following truths:

- Human sexuality exists to bond men and women together in love and cooperation in the begetting and rearing of children.
- Marriage is a social institution ordained of God, designed to protect the procreative couple and their children.
- Wise public policy seeks to maximize the number of children born into stable, married-couple homes. Men and women are equal in dignity and rights, yet complementary within marriage and childrearing, a distinction that governments must respect.
- The home is the first polity, the primary source of sovereignty, and also the first economy, where private property serves to protect liberty.

Relative to events in the year 2016, such truths point to specific propositions:

- Governments and transnational entities should end efforts that redefine marriage, returning to the conventional and natural understanding of one man in a voluntary union with one woman for life.
- Governments and transnational entities should cease all propaganda in favor of “gender theory” and “sexual orientation,” which have no basis in biological reality.
- To counter the perils of sub-replacement fertility, tax and other

public policies should favor the married couple, child-rich home.

- Governments should acknowledge and respect the role of parents in determining their children's education, guarding childhood innocence, and raising the next generation with the ability to differentiate between vice and virtue and to follow the path of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth.
- Governments and international bodies should abolish the practice of surrogacy, which reduces a woman's biological function to a business transaction and treats children as commercial products, subject to quality control.

Georgia is Family

Levan Vasadze

I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE EVER FACED MORE DIFFICULTY in preparation of a speech. How do you condense in a few minutes the joyous obligation of a host to tell educated guests about where they are, and how do you put such a description in an international context? When describing the terror that your country has gone through, how do you keep a cheerful and a positive spirit? Where do you draw the line between an academic presentation and an event-specific, concerned narrative? How do you denounce without offending, or tell the harsh truth to friends and partners, without turning them into enemies? Whom do you address: your beloved compatriots, your dear guests, or someone not sitting in this hall but listening very carefully to this Congress? So my dear Patriarch and our dear audience, have mercy on me in your judgment.

As a host, I am obliged to brief our foreign guests on modern Georgia, its hardships and joys, its threats and dreams. Perhaps the foreign part of this audience will see many parallels with their own countries and draw relevant conclusions for their own reality.

Our ancient country is one of the oldest Christian nations in the world. We are proud owner of a rare, authentic language, culture, alphabet, and polyphony; we are one of the planet's most indigenous ethnoses, which scientists believe has lived here for at least 6,000 years. And we are yet again torn in the battle of the superpowers. Perhaps not blameless, we host you in hard times for our nation. But as you will see during your visit, no hardship prevents us Georgians—or *Qartveli* as we call

ourselves—from being happy, hospitable, and respectful towards our guests.

We Georgians believe that when God gave lands to the nations, we were, as always, late. We asked God to forgive us for being late, because we were hosting guests. And we asked Him to, nonetheless, give us a land to live in as well. The Forgiving Father gave us the last piece of earth, which He had actually saved for Himself. This is how we came to live in this majestic paradise. And this is why all the superpowers at all times have wanted to own us, and why our history is nothing but trying to stay Qartveli in the face of a supreme force—each one arrogant, promising us liberation from the previous power, promising us the permanent dominance of its own values. This era is not our first era of survival; the experience of a modern Western empire battling the Russian empire over Georgia is not at all new to us. Over thousands of years, the battles have waged: ancient Greece versus Parthia, Mazdeanic Persia versus Greece, Shiite Iran versus the Byzantine Empire, Arab caliphs versus Mongol Khans, the Ottomans versus the Czars, and the communists versus the capitalists.

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Georgia's ancient state and its independence from communism. Perhaps it is important to stress that Georgia's longing for the restoration of its statehood was never Russophobic; together with our Russian brothers we have endured and got rid of first fascism and then communism. Before that, Christian Russia helped Christian Georgia in its existential struggle against extermination, although at the unacceptable cost of abolishing our kingdom and our church's independence. But our desire to restore Georgian independence was always unshakable, rooted in the profound understanding that a nation of our culture and history could never be truly healthy and could never realize its full potential as part of another country.

Generations of our heroes have fought and sacrificed their lives for this holy cause; my generation was honored to be the last one. Undoubtedly, the terror and hardships that befell our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were infinitely greater than those that fell upon us, but we, too, had to defend our share of Saqartvelo.

Twenty-seven years ago, on April 9, 1989, a few hundred meters

from here, Soviet soldiers crushed a peaceful, pro-independence demonstration on Tbilisi's historic Rustaveli Avenue. Civilians were killed with sharpened shovels, bullets, chemical gas, and heavy clubs; 19 died, of whom 16 were women, and hundreds were wounded. The world was shocked by the news, but soon forgot about these victims as the events on Beijing's Tiananmen Square overshadowed the tragedy of Tbilisi.

Many of us hoped that this bloody event was the conclusion in a long quest for independence, but it was actually a prelude to many more tragedies and hardships to follow: civil wars; the occupation of our two regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and the loss of 22% of our territory; every eighth person ethnically cleansed and turned refugee from those regions; and finally the Western sponsored "Rose Revolution" in 2003, resulting in even more terror for our population.

When an independence-minded Georgia looked to the West with hope, it considered Western culture as a beacon of freedom for its citizens, their speech, their religion, and for private enterprise. What a disappointment. Instead of freedom for our citizens, we got a Western sponsored regime which, during the nine years of its rule, jailed over 330,000 people, giving it a staggering 0.1% official acquittal rate. For a country of our size this means that 7.5% of our entire population has recently been incarcerated; 10% of ethnic Georgians went to prison under the rule of the revolutionary regime; 35% of working-age Georgian males were put in jail by Mr. Saakashvili and his henchmen. At some point, when the number of prisoners jumped from some 10,000 to 31,000, Georgia moved from #50 or so in the world in terms of the percentage of its population jailed, to #2 in the world, right next to the world leader, the United States.

You want us to talk about the family situation in Georgia? I just did: almost no family was left untouched by this.

Instead of freedom of enterprise, we got, by the official statistics of Georgia's Prosecutor's Office, 9,940 businesses harassed, oppressed, and/or confiscated by the Saakashvili regime. The owners were arrested and jailed, lost their shares, their buildings, their land, their cash, and their automobiles, and were released only after the payment of an official ransom and the signing over of their property either to the state or its favorite oligarchs.

You want us to talk about the family situation in Georgia? I just did:

almost no businessman's family was left untouched by this.

Instead of freedom of religion, we got the relentless humiliation of and attacks on our embattled Georgian Orthodox Christian Church, its Patriarch, its clergy, its preaching, its followers. The attacks were planned and perpetrated by hundreds of NGOs, established and lavishly funded by the West in our poor country; these NGOs propagated, employing and poisoning a part of our young generation, who in the absence of other employment and educational alternatives and in exchange for the 30 pieces of silver were bred in the spirit of anti-traditional cynicism and the false promise of freedom.

You want us to talk about the family situation in Georgia? I just did: no Christian family was left unhumiliated by this system.

Instead of freedom of speech, we got a totalitarian dictatorship of liberals on our television and in our press, and increasingly so in our educational institutions and bodies. These liberals' main goal seems to be multiplying their own kind by means of a clan-like discrimination against others, and by exhibiting on a non-stop basis shamelessness and perversion and ruthlessly crushing, mocking, demonizing, and ignoring the voice of traditional Georgian society.

You want us to talk about the family situation in Georgia? I just did: no family, no adult or child viewer in Georgia has been left untouched by this.

Despite the terror of the Rose Revolution and its full support from the West, our people opposed the rule it established with peaceful, democratic means. On November 7, 2007, and on May 26, 2011, Georgians staged peaceful protests on the same Rustaveli Avenue. They were crushed, not this time by the Red army, but by the Western-sponsored Georgian liberalism. The morning after the 2011 bloodbath, Saakashvili hosted a military parade, while two corpses of civilian victims of the massacre were hidden by the police on the rooftop of a nearby building. Every Western ambassador stood next to Saakashvili with not a single word of protest. Two years later, the West supported yet another attempt at the propaganda of anti-traditional values. And when Georgians opposed this attempt and chased the shameless propagandists from the site, without hurting them, the same cohort of Western ambassadors sang in a choir of outrage over us not accepting the shame parade. What conclusions

can our society draw from this non-diplomatic offence? When Georgians are mutilated and killed by a Western-sponsored political regime, there is a victory parade the next day; when Georgians dare raise their voices against an attempt to impose a shameful set of pseudo-values upon us, the West is outraged.

In spite all of this, Georgians continued their struggle against the bloody regime and were able to change it through democratic elections in 2012. Nobody expected this outcome. God only knows what would have happened were it not for gruesome videos of prisoner rapes and beatings made public ahead of the election, which made the planned Western-sponsored falsification of the parliamentary election results impossible.

The newly elected government has prosecuted Saakashvili, who fled to the U.S. But instead of handing him to our authorities, his sponsors have deployed him to orchestrate another revolution, now as governor of war-torn Ukraine. To do this, he had to refuse his Georgian citizenship and become instead a Ukrainian citizen—an unprecedented case in international politics.

Wherever left alone by the West and its NGOs, the new government does some wonderful things. As an apolitical citizen I am obligated and happy to be objective and to admit these successes. Aside from stopping the terrorizing of the civilian population and private enterprise, which is a priceless achievement for this nation, the new government has implemented very successful healthcare reforms, raised farming and agriculture from its grave through numerous initiatives, introduced impressive tax and funding reforms for business and industry, and drastically reduced the corruption that completely embodied Saakashvili's high ranks.

But unfortunately, this is not enough. Our country is still profoundly shocked over the horrors of the previous decade. The majority of this population is depressed and cynical

The new government has been able to justly prosecute only a handful of the previous regime's criminals, in each case facing fierce resistance and PR attacks from the West. The new government has been held hostage to the everlasting threat of a Ukrainian-like military coup and the return of Ukraine-stationed Saakashvili and his gang, if it did not obey. So obey our officials did: under this threat the parliament and government have

been passing laws and regulations that even the previous regime did not dare to pass. Our exhausted and depleted electorate, grateful at first to the new political force for salvation, has been left confused and awed at what has followed:

- In a North Korean-like unanimous vote, the new parliament has adopted one of the most radical versions of a so-called anti-discrimination law. In its Western prototypes this law covers mostly employment regulations; here it is omnipresent. Under its provisions any citizen can go to jail or have his/her business liquidated if the judge believes the plaintiff has “discriminated” against a minority group.
- The ministry of education has accelerated introduction of gender-theory-based sexual education.
- Our parliament developed a new barbarian version of the juvenile justice law. This law, about to be ratified, will give social workers increased rights to separate children from their parents under the excuse of abstract formulations, such as “failing to meet the child’s physical and psychological needs.” This vagueness will hold us hostage to the mercy of poorly paid social workers and put family culture under further pressure.
- The same parliament has rejected all attempts to ban or limit omnipresent advertising and propaganda of both online and offline gambling, which drives thousands of families into poverty every year.
- We have been able to make almost no progress toward controlling the tragic scale of abortions in Georgia.
- Mainstream Georgian television has been filled with perverts and cynics even more than during the rule of the previous regime.

Numerous other initiatives, to most inconsequential but so painfully familiar to this audience, have been launched in a meteor-like shower of legal and policy initiatives: ongoing attempts to decriminalize “light

impact” narcotics; legal bans on young marriages coupled with promotion of promiscuity among teenagers; state-funded c-sections resulting in abnormally high percentages of such procedures in our hospitals, resulting in harm to women’s fertility rate.

As a result we are dying: 50,000 or so more people die than are born in Georgia annually; 40,000-100,000 abortions are performed in Georgia every year, mostly among ethnic Georgians. Thanks to liberal propaganda, our citizens are under the illusion that these numbers are due to their economic hardships. They don’t realize what all of us in this room know: the richer the country, the fewer children its families bear. And if this was not indeed the case than why would other ethnic groups in Georgia (may they all live long and prosper with us) be multiplying under the same or worse economic conditions?

According to UN forecast, by 2050, our country’s population will be reduced by 28%, primarily at the cost of ethnic Georgians, whose numbers will be halved in the same period. Our beautiful, ancient nation is currently dying in a defunct, hellishly urbanized environment, in front of idiotic TV shows, while singing and dancing in thousands of casinos, night clubs, and bars.

In all our attempts to seek justice from the West, which stubbornly continues to shelter and promote aggressive liberalism in Georgia, we are told that those 330,000 people deserved to be jailed, those 10,000 businessmen were crooks, the church deserves to be attacked because it opposes freedom, our people need to be taught democracy.

Instead of the freedom expected from the West, we got jail, terror, perversion, and injustice. As a result, the Western idol in Georgia has fallen, no matter what our politicians and mainstream media tell you. This nation has already drawn its conclusions.

I say this with great disappointment, as one of the first Georgians to be sent to the West for education, during Gorbachev’s perestroika. We respect certain healthy features of the West, which we still need to adopt and instill in Georgia, but these have been completely overshadowed in our minds by the poison we have been dosed. The West lost Georgia when it attacked our traditional society, its roots and its cultural fabric. As the official West continues to show no remorse over its actions in Georgia, its remaining influence hinges upon its “support” of the territorial integrity

of Georgia against Russian occupation. The day the Kremlin realizes this and begins reconciliation between Tbilisi and Sukhumi and Tbilisi and Tskhinvali will be the day the West loses Georgia completely. I say this with honest regret, as I believe Georgia can only be truly independent in a balanced and profound friendship with both superpowers.

Our main goal is reuniting Georgia, returning Abkhazia and Tskhinvali to Georgia and bringing our refugees back to their homes. We want to fill all of Georgia with happy, strong families, families of both ethnic Georgians and those who have lived alongside us for centuries, irrespective of their nationality or religion. Everything else is a possible tool for achieving this goal.

Hence, as a supporter of independent Georgia, peaceful and reunited, friendly with Russia and the West, a family- and tradition-centered Georgia, the only Georgia that can be, let me address from this podium our Western partners. And let me do this not as their enemy, but as their friend and critic, their disappointed critic:

- Stop this madness now.
- Do not interfere in the internal affairs of this sovereign state.
- Cease financing attacks on our church and family through your hundreds of NGOs.
- Apologize for Joe Biden's, Hillary Clinton's, and Barack Obama's statements that national traditions no longer matter and that the United States' main foreign policy priority is supporting homosexuality worldwide.
- Stop this cultural war on the rest of the world, or you will lose not only Georgia, but your own countries, too

Your first president, George Washington, ruled at the same time as our last great king, Irakli II. Thousands of years before that, the parents of Europe, our Greek brothers, considered stealing wisdom from Georgia as the greatest act of heroism: Jason and the Argonauts went to Georgia to steal the Golden Fleece and Medea's medicine. *Ghvino* is a Georgian word, which later became *vino* for the rest of the world; wheat varieties

come from Georgian *Khorbali*; metallurgy was born here. Yes, we admire you for your short-lived, 200-year-long success. And as an eternal nation we want to learn from you the healthy aspects of your culture, like we have learned from much greater cultures than yours. But we are seeing clear signs of rot on your body, like we have seen on many others who have come and gone from here. You are unconvincing when you think you can teach us morality—some newly invented, pseudo-universal values—and how to be with our women and children. If friendship is not an empty word for you, learn these things from us, since you have clearly forgotten them, if you have ever known them. Learn them from us, like we want to learn from you how to lay better asphalt on our roads. Make this friendship of ours a two-way street, and you will be forgiven. Continue trying to occupy us and you will continue being unsuccessful. Try to scare us and you will be disappointed. Instead, make a clean start, be our friend, help us transform Georgia from a battlefield between you and Russia into a rare oasis of peaceful cultural dialogue. And please remember: Georgia is family and never, ever touch her again with anything but respect!

Levan Vasadze is the Chairman of the Georgian Demographic Society XXI and was the organizer of the World Congress of Families X.

The Natural Family in a Dying Sensate Culture

Allan C. Carlson

THE CONCEPT OF THE NATURAL FAMILY rests on a vision of the good life: a regime of optimism, responsibility, and love. It presumes a culture that sees the marriage of a man to a woman as the primary aspiration of the young. This culture affirms and defends natural marriage as the surest path to health, security, and flourishing. It casts the home built on marriage as the true foundation of political sovereignty, the source of true democracy. This culture also holds the household constructed around marriage to be the primal economic unit, a place marked by rich activity, material abundance, and broad self-reliance. This culture treasures private property in family hands as the rampart of independence and liberty: the place where the state may not enter. It celebrates the marital sexual union as the unique source of new human life. These homes are open to a full quiver of children; these are places where the large family exists as a special gift to society. This culture encourages young women to become wives, homemakers, and mothers and young men to become husbands, homebuilders, and fathers—so fulfilling their natural destinies.

The culture of the natural family acknowledges true happiness as the product of persons enmeshed in vital bonds with spouses, children, parents, and extended kin. It treasures a landscape of family homes and gardens busy with useful tasks and ringing with the laughter of many children. In such homes, parents are the first educators of their children. These places also shelter extended family members who need special care due to age or infirmity. Neighborhoods, villages, and towns are the second locus of political sovereignty. This culture affirms a freedom of commerce that respects and serves family integrity. And it expects

nation-states to consider protection of the natural family as their first responsibility.

And yet, the natural family is not just a vision, or ideal. It is a way of life to be found in all healthy, ordered, and creative societies. Honest historical accounts of family systems in the past—from Edward Westermarck, Pitirim Sorokin, Carle Zimmerman, and George Murdoch (among others)—all find this family model in ages of civilizational progress. Moving even deeper in time, paleo-anthropologist C. Owen Lovejoy shows the invention of “social fatherhood”—the pairing off of men and women into permanent bonds, intensified parenting, and “specialized sexual-reproductive behavior”—to be the key step in human evolution: a social change that occurred in his reckoning over two million years ago.¹

Indeed, the foundation of this family order, grounded in the bond of the married, procreative couple, is obvious even to its foes. For example, Evan Wolfson—an acknowledged leader of the same-sex-marriage movement in America—admits that there is something “natural” about the male-female pair. As he writes:

At first glance, the “basic biology” argument seems to make some sense. After all, it doesn’t take more than a fourth-grade health class education to know that men’s and women’s bodies in some sense “complement each other” and then when a man and a woman come “together as one flesh” it often leads to procreation.²

Why, then, do we see social decay and a culture of sterility and death all around us? Why is the natural family under relentless assault? Why have children become the primary victims of legal and political systems run amuck?

The answer is that it is our fate to live in the latter years of a dying Sensate culture. The term is Pitirim Sorokin’s. It refers to a cycle of civilizational change, recurring over the centuries, where the truths of the natural family—just as other great truths behind a healthy culture—give way to an aggressive campaign to normalize and celebrate “chronically

1. “The Origin of Man,” *Science* (January 23, 1981): 348.

2. Evan Wolfson, *Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People’s Right to Marry* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 75.

excessive, illicit, and disorderly sex activities.”³ The signs of a late Sensate culture, Sorokin explains, include low birth rates and diminished parental commitments; vastly increased erotic content in literature, film, and other media outlets; and high levels of divorce, abortion, pornography, promiscuity, homosexuality, and out-of-wedlock births. All this sounds too familiar.

None of us, to be sure, chose to be born into this matrix, to face a gale of anti-family and anti-child activity, to witness forms of social and cultural madness. Yes, it would have been easier to live our values out in another, better era. And yet, in a different respect, this is a wonderful time to be alive. For history has not come to an end in the moral cesspool of the early twenty-first-century West. The future will not lie with the child-denying partisans of the late Sensate order, for the simple reason that without children, there is no future. Rather, we may expect a great turn—or, better put, a return—to a family-centered culture, either Ideational or Idealistic, to use Sorokin’s terminology. As he writes: “We are seemingly between two epochs: the dying Sensate culture of . . . yesterday, and the Ideational or Idealistic culture of the creative tomorrow.”⁴

The great early twentieth-century defender of Christian orthodoxy, G.K. Chesterton, also reminds us of the power latent within the natural family to rebuild a healthy social order. He writes in his 1920 pamphlet, “The Superstition of Divorce”:

The ideal for which [the family] stands in the state is liberty. It stands for liberty for the very simple reason . . . [that] it is the only . . . institution that is at once necessary and voluntary. It is the only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state and more naturally than the state.⁵

Or, as Chesterton argued in *What’s Wrong With the World*:

It may be said that this institution of the home is the one anarchist

3. Pitirim Sorokin, *The American Sex Revolution* (Page number?) Porter Sargent, Boston

4. *Ibid.*, page number?

5. G.K. Chesterton, *Collected Works: Volume IV: Family, Society, Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 256.

institution. That is to say, it is older than law, and stands outside the state. . . . The man and the woman are one flesh—yes, even when they are not one spirit. Man is a quadruped.⁶

So be joyful, not despondent. Be hopeful, not despairing. Be forceful in your protection of homes and children, not fearful. And may this World Congress of Families X be remembered as a time and a place where the culture of the natural family began its great renewal!

Allan C. Carlson is Editor of The Natural Family and co-founder of the World Congress of Families.

6. *Ibid.*, 67-8.

Uniting Liberalism's Discontents: Thoughts on the Emerging International Conservative Movement

Brian S. Brown

PARANOID. ANTI-INTELLECTUAL. DISCONTENT. This is how prominent critics have imagined those of us gathered here today. From Richard Hofstadter's "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"¹ to Alan Brinkley's *Liberalism and its Discontents*² to self-professed arbiters of acceptable opinion today like the Southern Poverty Law Center, they are united in claiming that there is something profoundly wrong with us.

We know better. But it is worth taking the time to think about their claims and also the larger question of why these particular epithets—Paranoid, Anti-Intellectual, Discontent—are repeatedly hurled at us.

First, why do those committed to redefining marriage and family seek not to engage our arguments but to discredit and demean?

The purpose of demeaning conservatism or the pro-family movement or whatever else you wish to call our common cause—I will simply call it conservatism—serves one simple goal: to make us members of a caste outside the pale of contemporary society. And a quick path to removing us from the realm of acceptable discourse is to introduce the idea that we are unstable—"paranoid."

But to be paranoid is to falsely believe in some threat to yourself or your society. How can people of goodwill not see that the collapse of

1. Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964, available at <http://harpers.org/archive/1964/11/the-paranoid-style-in-american-politics/>.

2. Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

moral norms, of an acceptance of objective reality, has led to disastrous consequences for all of us; that the threat is real, not imaginary?

Even some leaders of the movement to transform the family now see that their revolution has gone too far. When radical feminist Germaine Greer openly mocks the idea that a man can simply become a woman by believing it is so, we should sit up and take notice.³ When Christians and members of other faiths are told that they can no longer live out the gospel call because it is “discrimination,” when girls cannot maintain their privacy in restrooms, when major scholars on the left advocate for marriage to be done away with altogether, when almost all of the consequences that we predicted would occur by redefining marriage in the law have occurred, paranoia must be immediately dismissed as a collective diagnosis for conservatives.

The claim that conservatives are anti-intellectual likewise fails the truth test. Of course, in any movement there will be varying levels of intellectual commitment. But it is also true that an almost constant in the historiography of liberalism has been to claim that there really is not a conservative intellectual tradition at all. Lionel Trilling’s oft-quoted dismissal of an American conservative intellectual tradition in 1950 bears repeating today because modern elites share the same view. Trilling said that in the United States, “Liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition.” And the conservative impulse, “with some isolated and some ecclesiastical exceptions,” expresses itself “not in ideas but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas.”⁴

Thus, an entire intellectual tradition is dismissed out of hand as “irritable mental gestures.”

The reality is that modern conservatism was birthed at the same time as the French Revolution bloodily ushered in an age of attack on family and faith—and ideas were at the center of both the attempt to revolutionize

3. Lucy Clarke-Billings, “Germaine Greer in Transgender Rant: ‘Just because you lop off your penis . . . it doesn’t make you a woman.’” *Telegraph*, October 26, 2015, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/11955891/Germaine-Greer-in-transgender-rant-Just-because-you-lop-off-your-penis...it-doesnt-make-you-a-woman.html>.

4. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1950), xv. Emphasis added.

the family and the defense of it. Conservative writers and thinkers around the world saw that the threat of “the armed ideology” spreading from the French Revolution was international in nature and responded. Edmund Burke in England, Donoso Cortés in Spain, John Adams in America, Alexis de Tocqueville in France—these are merely representatives of an eruption of diverse intellectual work around the world aimed at defending faith, family, and civilization itself in the wake of the spread of revolutionary ideas in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Later, responding to the threat that communism and fascism posed to the family, men as diverse as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Jacques Maritain, and Wilhelm Röpke pointed to the spiritual and social destruction that these ideologies unleashed.

So we can dismiss the first two claims: paranoia and anti-intellectualism. But I will concede that on one point our critics are correct. We are discontent, and we have every right to be.

We are discontent with a world that intentionally robs a child of his right to be known and loved by his mother and father. We are discontent with a world in which a new form of cultural imperialism seeks to punish countries for not embracing the redefinition of family. We are discontent with a world that treats the miracle of human life as anything less than the gift that it is. We are discontent with a world in which the “I will not serve” of that first rebel echoes through history and now applies to the very nature of who we are as created, gendered beings.

Our task is to take that discontent and direct it toward fashioning a thriving, growing, and vibrant global movement. For too long conservatives have done far too little to build international cooperation. The time has come for that to change. Great headway has been made by the World Congress of Families. But we need to confront the reality that we are out-spent and out-organized on a massive scale. I do not pretend here to lay out a comprehensive manifesto for action. But what I can do is touch on three brief points that I believe are critical to realizing the opportunity of this moment in history, of uniting liberalism's discontents in a new and powerful way:

- First, Funding a Global Movement: It is no secret that we are vastly out-spent and out-organized at an international level. The International Planned Parenthood Federation alone has a budget of

over 125 million dollars. Foundations like the Arcus Foundation, the Gill Action Fund, and the Open Society Foundation funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to undermining the natural family. Our budgets pale in comparison. We must identify and cultivate financial supporters from around the globe who understand what is at stake and have the courage and charity to sacrifice their wealth to change history. If Tim Gill, one of the largest funders of the movement to redefine marriage, can vow to spend his half billion dollars in pursuit of that goal if necessary, we surely can do better in funding and mobilizing a global movement,

- Second, Encouraging Social Entrepreneurship: New means of technology can be used to break down the family, but they also offer hope for our movement. Already groups like CitizenGo, a sponsor of this event, have used technology to harness millions of citizens around the globe to sign pro-family petitions in their countries and beyond. But the creation of CitizenGo took the entrepreneurial risk-taking of Ignacio Arsuaga. There are so many opportunities for new ideas to effect change. Billions of people around the globe believe what we believe about the family. We must invest in and encourage new methods of organizing and giving voice to this global community.
- Third, Humility and Courage: Just because we are united together in defense of life and the natural family does not mean that we will not have other differences. We differ culturally, we differ on geo-political matters, we differ in our religious convictions. It is telling that when Russell Kirk put forward his six basic principles of conservative thought in *The Conservative Mind*, immediately after his first principle, “a belief in a transcendent moral order,” his second was an attachment to “the proliferating variety and mystery of human existence.” A belief in objective truth and a respect for difference and even disagreement are not at odds, but at the core of what it means to be a conservative. If we are united in first principles, it is important that we embrace the variety and difference that we have on other matters. That difference need not be the source of division, but strength, by highlighting the beauty

of the histories and cultures which we represent. The point is made most succinctly in this famous phrase: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

With humility, we will need courage. As a Christian, I see our struggle through a long lens. Twelve men went out and spoke truth to power and change the course of human history. Men like St. Andrew the First-Called, so important to your patrimony here in Georgia, did not count the cost of their dedication to the Gospel. And martyrdom was almost unanimously their reward. The whole history of the rise of Christianity is a history of courage and dedication in the face of impossible odds. Even now we see the sacred commitment of men like the twenty-one Libyan martyrs. And what are we being called to do?

Few if any of us will lose our lives over our stand to defend life, family, and true freedom. And yet some are afraid to be called names, to be put on some fake "hate" list, to be ostracized on Facebook. We have become weak and careless with our patrimony if we think that being called a few names is something we cannot afford. Let us "be not afraid" but joyfully move forward together in our labors.

The opportunity to unite liberalism's discontents is before us. It is a monumental task. Humanly speaking, it may look impossible. But the impossible has been made possible before. With the humility to seek God's will in all of our endeavors, may we not shirk the duty before us. God bless you all.

Brian S. Brown is the President of the International Organization for the Family.

Gender Ideology and Education

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY about gender ideology in education. This has been a well-laid plan of Marxist philosophy, which is basically diabolical, contradicting as it does all those things which allow mankind to thrive: family, property, freedom, self-sufficiency, the fulfillment of each one's talents and potential. The Marxists want control of each individual. And these intellectual Marxists managed to infiltrate important departments of the UN and are actively pursuing world government. As argued forcefully in many places by Antonio Gramsci, one of their own, an Italian of the 1930's: Communism will not be able to be imposed until Faith is destroyed, and Faith can only be uprooted if we dismantle the Family.

As other means of imposing Communism have in the end been rejected, the path laid out by Antonio Gramsci has been followed intelligently and successfully so far. First came the destruction of marriage through divorce and contraception, then the undoing of the sacred bond of motherhood through abortion and state control over parental actions. The legal theory of *patria potestas*—each father as the head of his household—has been successfully neutralized by the UN in recent documents. Parents are now to be overseen by the state.

Then came gender ideology, in which the idea of a “couple” became so fluid that any two people who live together may adopt children. This will not stop at the number two; we will see, very soon, the legal recognition of three- or five-person “relationships.” In all of this, children have become a “right” and a product to be acquired.

The promotion of gender ideology is a key step, as it targets the basic character of the individual, those traits which identify every cell in his or her body and brain. The dismantlement of whole populations, of faith and culture, has been begun with this terminology; this dismantlement will only take a generation or two to be complete.

How has this all been achieved, being as it is contrary to the interests of billions of people?

The term *gender* was designed and prepared with care and was unveiled to the feminists who met for the Preparatory Conference in Mar de Plata the year before the Beijing Conference on Women, which was held in 1995. It was then inserted into the entire UN plan of action, attached to every action and every right, in spite of huge efforts against it by the Holy See, the countries of Central America, some of the Arab countries, Malta, and others.

The manipulations performed at the UN to coerce the passage of language they wish to impose is quite incredible if you have not observed it firsthand. I will give a couple of examples from my own experience just to give you an idea.

Susanne Rans, representing Bolivia, and José Donayre, representing Peru, were the main instruments for inserting language of abortion into the Plan of Action of the Cairo document on Population and Development. We were able to unmask Ms. Rans as a fraud when we discovered that Bolivia had not sent her; she had attained her badge from friends on the Podium. José Donayre was fired within 24 hours when we reported his actions to the Senate of Peru. He was obviously in cahoots with the Podium as well. Other manipulations included stalling discussions until it was necessary to go late into the night, and even dawn, when there was no translator available and most delegates had retired from exhaustion.

Martha Casco, the delegate from Honduras, was closeted and browbeaten by Timothy Wirth, the head of the U.S. Delegation, for insisting on “bracketing” the word gender until a satisfactory definition was agreed upon.

Finally, 61 countries took reservations to the Plan of Action of Beijing because of the mysterious word gender—almost *one third* of the countries in attendance showed their dissatisfaction. However, the UN

steamrolled them all, in spite of the fact that UN negotiations are supposed to be decided by “consensus” or agreement on all wording.

The goal of the UN has become obvious: it is the destruction of all the structures of our Judeo-Christian culture. Genesis is to be dismantled: “Man and Woman He created them”; “Be fruitful and multiply”; “Care for and submit the earth.” All of these are to be done away with.

The adoption of gender ideology has already led to several serious and radical consequences. One of these is transgenderism, supported in the U.S. to the extent that a man on death row has been granted surgery to change his sex at the people’s expense.¹ Public school bathrooms can no longer be separate, and Obama has threatened to cut funding from states who do not comply. (Lieutenant Governor of Texas Dan Patrick has instructed Texas school administrators to ignore the President’s mandate.²) Just last week in New York City, my granddaughter of 15, in the ladies’ locker-room of the place where she swims, was confronted by an enormous fully-grown man, totally nude. Complaints were met with “well the law now is that in New York people can use the bathrooms they feel more comfortable in.” In all of these cases, logical thinking has been replaced by personal preference—unless of course your personal preference is to object being exposed to others’ preferences.

Some of the liberties lost to the retreat from reality include the illegality of teaching natural marriage, the banning of separate bathrooms, and the legal prohibition of treating those who have “gender confusion,” even if they seek such treatment. The imposition of this new gender ideology is very similar to what almost happened with the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States in the 1970s. Fortunately, the American formula for amending the Constitution is so time-consuming that the public came to understand in time the changes that would accrue, and the ERA lost increasing numbers of adherents until it died completely. Its authors have now found a more direct method of pushing their ideology, with the language of “gender rights.” Note that it was important that the

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1. Paige St. John, “In A First, California Agrees to Pay for Transgender Inmate’s Sex Reassignment,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 2016.
 2. “Texas to Instruct Schools Not to Obey Obama’s Transgender Bathroom Decree,” *Fox News Insider*, May 13, 2016.

definition remain vague, so that it might cover any number of these then-unimaginable consequences.

It is evident that we must teach, once again, the reasoned thinking that made our civilization great, the importance of cause and effect and how to live for significance. Over the last 30 years that these problems began to appear in my own Latin America, starting with sex education and the attempt to impose abortion—while we saw euthanasia moving into the “advanced” countries, the abuses of organ-gathering, unnatural conception, and finally the commercialization of babies—our response was in education. We collected, internationally, the best minds in education, anthropology, brain development, child psychology, and storytelling, and have created a program for the schools. It starts in first grade, for five- and six-year olds, and has a book for each level until age 18. These books show, through the story of a group of boys and girls growing up, how to understand, reason, face, and respond to the complicated situations they encounter as children, as adolescents, and as young adults who must know what they want in life, how to hold their own, negotiate, and take decisions.

This program is called *Alive to the World* (in English)³, *Aprendiendo a Querer* in Spanish, and is now being printed in eight countries and in seven languages, including Korean and Polish. It is in all countries of Latin America. We are intent on raising a new generation, one that develops and leads with a real understanding of the advantages of virtue. The confusion of the twentieth century must be abandoned, and a return to right reasoning championed.

My deep feelings for the Republic of Georgia and its heroic people. I pray that you can ward off the poison coming from the West and unite with those who are resisting, by teaching the truth about the human person.

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer is Founder and President of the Latin American Alliance for the Family.

3. More information available at www.alivetotheworld.org.

REVIEWS

Dispelling Utopian Illusions; Building Real-World Families

Bryce J. Christensen

The Conjugal Family: An Irreplaceable Resource for Society

Pierpaolo Donati and Paul Sullins, editors

Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015; 249 pages, \$18.00

WHAT SEEMED MORE CERTAIN in the sixties than that the future belonged to the utopian visionaries agitating for the creation in America of a marvelous new kind of society, a society of free sex, open marriages, quick and painless divorces, and complete gender equality? What seemed more obvious than the irrelevance of the troglodytes still devoted to traditional and surely outmoded notions of life-long marriage and home-centered child-rearing? And among those troglodytes, who then seemed more hopelessly atavistic than the religious types—especially those benighted, rosary-shackled Catholics—who actually believed God still expected modern men and women to live in that outmoded institution called the family?

Don't look now, but well into the twenty-first century, many of those who believed the luminous promises of the sixties utopians are now suffering from economic distress, psychological trauma, and emotional turmoil. Meanwhile, those who adhered to traditional patterns of marital and family life now look remarkably well-off economically, psychologically,

and emotionally. How can that be? In this volume, Catholic scholars from the United States, Italy, Chile, and Argentina deliver cogent and sobering evidence that even in this post-Woodstock world, the family is not an outmoded obstacle to individual well-being and social progress.

The utopians of the sixties envisioned only good coming from the jettisoning of traditional marriage—the life-long marital union of man and woman, devoted to each other and to their children. Co-editor Pierpaolo Donati notes in his introduction that those allied with these utopians have hoped that rejecting this kind of marriage and the family life it fosters will mean “the advent of a freer, egalitarian and happy society.”

This luminous utopian hope now stands contradicted by dark and sobering empirical social science, compellingly summarized here in D. Paul Sullins’ extended review of research pertinent to the United States, complemented by Eduardo Valenzuela and Beatriz Bailan de Tagtachian on the relevant research from Chile and Argentina, respectively. Whether looking at the well-being of adult men and women, or at the prospects for children and adolescents, or at the dynamics of social relationships beyond the family circle, the authors of these surveys adduce evidence that the disappearance of the traditional—or conjugal—family has meant trouble and distress for those affected.

Wherever the authors of this volume look, the family remains the wellspring of irreplaceable benefits to individual men, women, and children and to the broader community. Indeed, as Sullins assesses what these studies tell us about American family life since the sixties utopians first promised emancipation and social progress, Sullins concludes “such utopianism was (to put it mildly) misplaced.”

Sullins acknowledges that such utopianism has in recent decades helped to turn America into a nation in which men and women “live more of their lives alone and have fewer family connections than any preceding generation in American history.” The prime reason for this is that “in the United States, conjugal marriage is in long-term decline, being displaced by alternate forms of family association, such as post-divorce singleness or remarriage, cohabitation, and always-single parenting, resulting in fewer children.” In turning away from conjugal marriage, Americans have been jeopardizing their best chance for a healthy and happy life. Sullins remarks that “almost every study that has ever examined the question has

concluded that married adults are healthier, wealthier, and happier than those who are not married.”

And the threat to health, wealth, and happiness inherent in this decline of conjugal marriage looms even larger for children. As Sullins stresses, “the proposition that the natural family comprising joint married biological parents offers the best context for child wellbeing and development is among the most strongly attested assertions in all of the social sciences.” In a large-scale study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control’s National Center for Health Statistics, researchers confirm the advantages for children of living in an intact family by examining a wide range of measures of physical and emotional health. “On every indicator examined,” Sullins reports, “children being raised in single mother or blended families exhibited poorer health than those in nuclear families.” And unfortunately, children who grow up outside of the conjugal family continue to labor under disadvantages into adulthood, as the status of their “parents’ marriage has a strong and persistent effect on [their] wellbeing throughout the life course.”

Things are no better for the growing number of children in households headed by cohabiting couples. The data cited by Sullins indicate that such children are “generally disadvantaged relative to children in nuclear families, and [are], for the most part, comparable to children living in single-parent families regarding most health status and access to care issues.”

The disappearance of the traditional conjugal family threatens not only the well-being of children; it threatens their very existence. As Sullins remarks, “The conjugal family is the most fertile form of family arrangement in America. . . . Although alternative family forms are becoming more common, these forms contribute far fewer children to the society.” Many demographers and economists now worry about the way changes in the nation’s family life have driven fertility below replacement level for decades. Because fertile traditional families have grown relatively rare, America would now be teetering on the edge of overall population decline were it not for immigration and increased longevity (a temporary phenomenon).

Among the too-few American babies now being born, only the dwindling number still living in traditional conjugal families are growing

up in the kind of environment most likely to instill in them the personal attributes that will make them strong and productive members of the community outside the home. As Donati remarks, “The data are clear: the weakening of the normally constituted [conjugal] family is accompanied by a decrease in the ability to convey the moral virtues to their children,” especially “honesty and respect for the law . . . as well as an ability to sacrifice for others.” Sullins identifies “the pro-social attitudes of trust in others and uncompromising integrity” as values particularly in jeopardy in the United States when children grow up outside the conjugal family. And like their moral development, children’s academic progress depends heavily on the type of family in which they grow up: a 2014 study cited by Sullins found that “three times the proportion of those whose parents were continually married attained a [bachelor’s] degree than did those whose parents were not married.”

With good reason, Sullins asserts in his conclusion that “conjugal marriage . . . offers benefits to society, both to its participants personally and to the collective common good that cannot be replaced by any other family arrangement,” adding that “a social-policy regime that encourages conjugal marriage thus serves the best interest of all members of society.” It is perhaps dangerous to dwell too long on the idea of the family as a resource *for* society, as though society were something separate and distinct *from* the family, something which can *use* the family as mere raw material for developing something better. Better to remember, as Sullins does, that conjugal marriage is the “vital cell *of* society,” that “the family *builds up* society” (emphasis added). As conjugal families disappear, that abstraction that we refer to as *society* decays into nothing but an aggregate of deracinated and demoralized individuals poorly held together by government bureaucracies.

Despite the wealth of empirical evidence they have collected to advance their perspective on the conjugal family, the authors and editors of this volume appear uncertain about how those in positions of power and influence will respond to their views. “We hope,” writes Donati, “that our analysis, based on the objective reality of the facts, . . . will not be rejected for purely ideological reasons.” And Sullins concedes that he and his colleagues are trying to advance their perspective at a time when “Western culture . . . displays clear signs of resistance, even hostility, to

the notion of conjugal marriage.”

Not a few of those likely to resist this empirical analysis of the costs of losing the conjugal family act out of sheer self-interest, political and economic. For when the conjugal family fails, many essential services previously provided within that family and outside of the cash nexus (and the tax nexus) now must come from dubious surrogates—including lawyers, bureaucrats, child-care providers, political activists, and therapists. Only a cynic would assert that these parties actively undermine the conjugal family. But only a naif would not recognize the effects of self-interest in shaping their attitudes toward the family.

Of course, this volume makes it abundantly clear that strong conjugal families actually advance *everyone's long-term* best interest. With good reason, Sullins reminds his readers that all of the secondary loyalties that sustain our social order in law, economics, and politics depend ultimately on “a greater loyalty to the family (and to God).” Forgetting this fundamental truth while enacting social and legal policies that “burden or inhibit this particular institution,” he warns, is like “society . . . sawing off the branch on which it is sitting.”

Sullins seems to be identifying an instance of such branch-cutting when he notes the “loss of the family wage ideal” which once made it possible for a male breadwinner to “sustain a family with children.” For though he acknowledges that “the entry of women into the sphere of labor is universally regarded as an improvement in their prospects for a meaningful and fulfilling life,” he notes the problematic consequences of “the departure of women from the sphere of the home and family,” consequences that surely include declining numbers of weddings and of child births, elevated numbers of divorces and of children in daycare. Donati calls for the “mature reflection” necessary for “clarifying and strengthening the capacity to connect the private and public dimensions of the family”—perhaps such reflection might lead to attempts to renew the family-wage ideal. It might involve finding ways for women to reclaim home-based motherhood while still doing economically meaningful labors part-time through the Internet. Certainly, such reflection will seek strategies for reversing shifts in “government policy and social mores regarding women serving as full-time housewives and mothers . . . from support to stigma.”

Offering a wealth of what Donati labels “science-based knowledge,” this volume will help defenders of the family to expose the high social costs of family disintegration and to challenge public policies that foster such disintegration. But utopian True Believers will not be swayed by social science. The convictions guiding them are ultimately too metaphysical to yield to merely empirical evidence.

So while defenders of the family have good reason to value this volume of social science, they must recognize that they are up against an anti-family metaphysical vision. In combatting such a vision, they must adhere to their own far more transcendent and substantive metaphysical vision. They must, like Sullins, interpret the love manifest in the conjugal family as “a love like the love of God.” Donati notes that “religion still has the task of supporting the prosocial moral virtues . . . of the family.”

Secular-minded utopians will, of course, reject religious teachings about marriage and the family even more readily than they reject empirical social science. These utopians are impelled not by religion but by (to steal a phrase from English critic T.E. Hulme) “spilt religion.”¹ It was no accident that B.F. Skinner considered a utopia without the natural family as “rather an improvement on Genesis.”² Timely and cogent, this excellent volume casts serious doubt on all such utopian attempts to improve life by abandoning both scriptural faith and family commitments.

Bryce J. Christensen is Professor of English at Southern Utah University and Senior Editor of The Natural Family.

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1. T.E. Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” in *Selected Writings*, Ed. Patrick McGuinness (New York: Routledge), 68–83.
 2. B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (MacMillan Paperbacks: New York, 1948), 297.

Downgrading Freedom to Tolerance

William C. Duncan

Religious Freedom and Gay Rights: Emerging Conflicts in the United States and Europe

Timothy Shah, Thomas Farr, and Jack Friedman, editors

Oxford University Press, 2016; 362 pages, \$99.00

RECENTLY, AN EXPERIENCED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ATTORNEY spoke about the current Supreme Court's record on religious freedom issues. Under Chief Justice William Rehnquist, the Court heard eleven religious liberty cases and decided eight in favor of the party seeking to exercise their religious beliefs. Under Chief Justice Roberts, the Court has heard seven such cases and decided six in favor of claims for religious exercise. This sounds encouraging, but this attorney added an important caveat: "When it comes to issues arising out of the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s, the court is much less reliable in protecting religious freedom."

Take some recent Supreme Court cases for example. In *Holt v. Hobbs*, the Court unanimously decided an Arkansas prison had to allow a prisoner to grow a beard after he claimed this was required by his religious beliefs. Similarly, in *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores*, the Court allowed a potential employee's lawsuit against a retail store that had allegedly declined to hire her only because she wore a head scarf for religious reasons. These are the kinds of victories that allow observers to say the Court is friendly to religious practice.

The "sexual revolution" cases, though, look very different. There has

been one important recent victory—the 5-4 decision allowing Hobby Lobby to decline to subsidize the costs of drugs that might cause abortions for their employees. (One of the justices in the majority, Antonin Scalia, has since passed away.) A more ominous portent comes from the 2011 decision in *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, in which a 5-4 majority approved U.C. Hastings’ denial of recognition to the group based on the Society’s requirement that members affirm a statement of belief and refrain from sexual conduct contrary to traditional Christian teaching.

Thus, while the Court may appear to have a good average on religious liberty, the subset of cases involving competing claims between religious freedom and sexual autonomy seem to be trending in favor of the latter. This is particularly disturbing because the core challenges to free exercise arise from exactly these types of cases, and the government and other powerful interests seem invariably to side in favor of sexual autonomy. (The government brought the head scarf case, and the Solicitor General argued in favor of the prisoner. The Hobby Lobby case was a challenge to a federal government regulation, and Hastings was represented *pro bono* by a mega law firm and supported by the Solicitor General.)

Religious Freedom and Gay Rights is a book of essays arising from a 2012 conference at Oxford that addresses a discrete portion of the heightening conflict between sexual autonomy claims and the religious exercise of those who cannot facilitate conduct at odds with religious teaching about marriage, family, and sexuality. The specific conflicts it addresses have been precipitated by legislative and court decisions redefining marriage and family and extending legal status previously reserved for racial classifications to “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”

Though this topic is becoming well worn, this work is intended to offer new insights from philosophical engagement with the issues and from the comparative perspective of different legal systems in the United States and Europe.

The book is divided into three sections, addressing developments in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Continental Europe. A very helpful introduction by Matthew J. Franck notes that “the probable failure of religious freedom and same-sex marriage to coexist peaceably in the future, on terms satisfactory to actual claimants on both sides, is a matter of virtual consensus among our authors.” He frames the debate

carried on in the book's essays as a contrast between religious freedom and religious toleration. The latter was extended as "a gift from the powerful to the powerless—and a revocable gift at that." By contrast, religious freedom is a principle, the acceptance of which constituted a remarkable accomplishment.

The acceptance of this principle as a claim that can be rightfully made appears to be waning somewhat as it has come into conflict with a powerful counterclaim that the government must facilitate various self-definitions, not only as a matter of a negative right to be left alone but as a positive right for each individual to be affirmed in his or her preferred identity, even against the skepticism of fellows. Thus, "what appears now to be happening in the western democracies, under the pressure of new understandings of 'dignity,' is a rapid collapse of the principled case for religious freedom—a case whose construction was the work of many centuries—and a reversion to mere toleration."

For some of the authors represented in the book, this is an alarming development, and for others not so much. For instance, eminent Australian legal philosopher John Finnis, in the opening chapter on the U.K., describes "the outlines of an oppressive new settlement" which has "been etched deeply into English law and civil society." He describes recent British and European court decisions addressing the question of whether an employee may wear a small crucifix at work (yes, in one instance; no, in another), whether employees could refer same-sex couples to other colleagues rather than register a same-sex partnership or provide sex counseling (no, in both cases), and whether owners of a bed and breakfast could decline a shared bed to unmarried couples (emphatically, no).

The next contribution, far more polemical, is entirely dismissive of these concerns. It characterizes the religious liberty claims Professor Finnis describes as misleading special pleading—asking for an unjustified right to discriminate that is no more compelling than any other aesthetic preference that requires little or no deference by the government. This author, a lecturer at the University of London, does describe a scenario where he believes the religious claimant has a case—a man who was fired from his job for a Facebook post made outside work.

This kind of contrast is evident in each portion of the book.

This is not to say that all of the authors believe the conflict is insurmountable. The most optimistic take is from Robin Fretwell Wilson, who describes legislative compromises intended to accommodate the interests of both people of faith and advocates of same-sex marriage. Professor Wilson's point is an important one—when these types of conflicts are addressed in courts, judges have been very unsympathetic to religious claims, offering little more than patronizing tolerance (as Justice Anthony Kennedy did in the 2015 same-sex marriage case). Thus, tangible protections of religious liberty are far more likely to be secured in the legislative arena.

The basic conflict remains, though. Perhaps the most helpful chapter for understanding what precisely is happening is authored by Steven D. Smith (University of San Diego Law School). Professor Smith examines the nominally even-handed characterization of the debate arising from the conflict between religious liberty and same-sex marriage and similar laws. In this telling there are two competing sides. On the first side, “proponents of sexual equality insist on enforcing anti-discrimination laws against religiously scrupulous counselors, photographers, pharmacists and others, even though these professionals’ services or products are readily available elsewhere, and even when no sensible same-sex couple would actually want the assistance of, say, a counselor or photographer who is religiously opposed to their union.” On the second side (in the words of University of Virginia law professor Douglas Laycock) are the “religious side,” which “persists in trying to regulate other people’s sex lives so long as it thinks it has any chance of success.” This description creates an illusion of evenhandedness, but Professor Smith points out this is not really accurate.

He explains that both sides resist “being placed in the demeaning and vulnerable position of (hopefully) accommodated or tolerated outsiders.” Most importantly, though, he explains that the two positions are not symmetrical and that one side “has more to lose if the other side establishes itself as politically dominant.”

This is clear when examining the asserted description of the “religious side.” In fact, “by and large, religious conservatives are not trying to ‘regulate other people’s sex lives.’” If the religious conservative position was to dominate politically, abortion could be restricted (though not in

the interests of regulating sexuality but in protecting unborn life), and employers would not have to subsidize contraception (though it would still be widely available). Same-sex marriage would not be legally recognized, though same-sex couples could live together and even consider themselves married.

If the “secular egalitarian party or coalition were to achieve dominance and to enact its program,” however, legal protection of conscience would be curtailed, “many religious employers and church-affiliated institutions such as charitable organizations and religious universities would likely have to modify their practices or else, once again, close up shop,” and “religious institutions with teachings or practices that offend prevailing egalitarian principles would be treated less favorably in other burdensome though less directly and formally coercive ways,” such as denial of tax exempt status and denial of official certification for Christian clubs.

Thus, the risks inherent in the debate are asymmetrical. The replacement of religious liberty with religious toleration is likely to be far more momentous for those desiring to live out their faith in all areas of life than a return to a policy of tolerance (rather than promotion) of sexual autonomy would be to those who desire to live out their own preferences.

This analysis is especially valuable when supplemented by the comparative law perspective of the essays. The situation in the United States, at least historically, has come closest to the “healthy secularity” model endorsed by contributor Richard W. Garnett (a law professor at Notre Dame), “in which government respects both the role of religious arguments and commitments in the public square and the important distinction between religious and political authorities.” This approach, “pluralistic and constitutionalist,” “accepts as given the fact that reasonable people, associations, institutions, and communities disagree reasonably about things that matter,” so government and society “do well to resign ourselves comfortably to the crooked timber of free society, and courts, officials, and governments should acknowledge and accept their limited competence and prerogative to resolve authoritatively these disagreements.”

But, as the contribution by Professor Linda McClain (Boston University) demonstrates, there is growing and increasingly assertive and

efficacious pressure to abandon this model as oppressive to those who feel stigmatized by previously shared notions of family and sexual morality. Perhaps, she suggests, people of faith just need to realize that religious law and civil law are different, and that it is an inappropriate imposition to expect to act on religious beliefs when those beliefs are at odds with secular policies.

The next step, it appears, is the situation in the United Kingdom, where an insistence on religious exercise could disqualify an individual from growing swaths of public service and even from private employment. As the section on the U.K. describes, practices pretty widely accepted in the United States (protection for religious dress and grooming) are not a given there.

But it is the chapter on the law in Scandinavia that is most illuminating on the question of where a wholesale embrace of the tolerance model would lead us. There, at least as the situation is described by Swedish law professor Maarit Jäntherä-Jareborg, there is far less concern over religious liberty. There, the national church has decided that “[i]n order to be part of society at large” it “cannot cherish values that deviate too much from the prevailing mainstream values in society.” So, as the chapter describes, the high point of religious freedom would be the Swedish Supreme Court overturning the one-month jail sentence of a pastor for preaching a sermon critical of homosexual practice. (The next year, the court upheld the conviction of a group of youths who distributed flyers critical of homosexuality at school.)

Taken as a whole, *Religious Freedom and Gay Rights* provides a fairly clear picture of what the choice between religious freedom and religious tolerance entails. The question for the reader and, indeed, all citizens, is whether the movement to the latter, which is devolving into “a merely arbitrary practice: the granting of space as is felt to be either necessary or convenient by those who occupy the seats of power,” is an advance or an oppressive retreat.

William C. Duncan is Director of the Marriage Law Foundation.

Measuring the Family: The Independent Global Index on Family

Nicole King

WHERE IN THE WORLD is the best place to raise a family? Which countries best support family health and growth with a diverse array of childcare and family leave policies? Where can parents most easily find flexible employment? Where is divorce uncommon, fertility robust, and inter-generational ties healthy?

The Novae Terrae Foundation, in cooperation with the Catholic University of Milan, has recently published a large and comprehensive review of the family worldwide in an attempt to answer some of these questions. The Independent Global Index on Family (IGIF), published earlier this year, “aims at providing a synthetic measure of how the family, particularly with children, is supported in different countries over the world, being aware of marked cultural differences.”³

The researchers begin by explaining just what they mean in the term “family”:

On the one hand, the desire to find the family underlying many forms of living together denotes an unequivocal impulse to “make a family,” on

3. Luca Volontè, Francesca Maccioni, Giovanna Rossi, Maria Letizia Bosoni, and Vera Lomazzi, *Independent Global Index on Family: Report 2016 on the Right of Family in the World*, Novae Terrae Foundation and the Family Studies and Research University Centre of the Catholic University of Milan, July 2016, available at <http://www.novaeterrae.eu/en/publication-list/877-igif-published-the-independent-global-index-on-family-2016.html>, 8.

the part of both the individual and society; on the other, the difficulty in acknowledging the family shows that the foundations of the family relationship, their essential nature, have weakened to the point of almost disappearing. . . . The thesis of pluralization, which prevails in the Western today world [sic], forces us—in a sense: to make the idea of family a problem, to ask ourselves about the meaning of a relationship that until a few decades ago was taken for granted.⁴

There is real truth here. It is well noted that the term “family” is hotly contested today precisely because it lies in human nature to form families, even if the dark side of that same nature then wants to twist that meaning to its own desires. But this study concerns a very specific definition of family—indeed, the only real definition, what Novae Terrae Foundation CEO Luca Volontè describes in the Introduction as “the stable relationship between two hetero people. It is based on marriage and it has the purpose of procreation. It should focus on sexual differences and reciprocity, intergenerational solidarity and the principle of non-remuneration.” The “underlying thesis” supporting this work, according to Volontè, “is that the family, despite the changes taking place, is not losing its uniqueness, remaining a fundamental institution with a specific identity.”⁵ The family may change—the authors describe it as “a morphogenetic structure”—but the married-parents-with-children structure is one which they say can be found throughout history, and it remains “an invariant constituent family nucleus.”⁶

The researchers name four key dimension that they believe comprise the identity of the family: generativity, named the “main goal,” both through bearing children and also through forming and maintaining a number of other close social relationships; sexuality as it is expressed between a husband and wife; reciprocity in intergenerational exchange; and the “gift” of family ties. The underlying assumption of the IGIF is that the state has a responsibility to support the family in its various functions to produce flourishing human beings. The aims of the IGIF are twofold:

4. *Ibid.*, 9.

5. *Ibid.*, 10.

6. *Ibid.*

- 1) “on the one hand, to observe the structural and constituent characteristics of the family in different countries: how it is constituted with respect to the marriage bond, stability and presence of children”;
- 2) “on the other, to evaluate how the family is supported (by which resources?): there we consider its main task of caring between generations and identify access to employment without gender discrimination and childcare services as necessary, but not sufficient, resources.”⁷

To accomplish these goals, the IGIF measures a set of three key indicators. The first, “structure,” encompasses the concepts of parenthood and marriage, and is measured in things such as the fertility rate, age of mother at first birth, marriage rate, cohabitation rate, and divorce rate. The second indicator, “resources supporting the family in its basic tasks,” is further split into economic and contextual, and examines the labor force participation rate of both men and women, maternal employment rate (which differs from the labor rate participation rate of women in that it measures specifically women who have born children, versus all women), youth employment, *per capita* Gross National Income (GNI), proportion of children in childcare at various ages, work-family leave, the child tax deduction, and government spending on family benefits. The third indicator, social resources, concerns the health of family relationships, particularly trust and concern, as measured by citizens’ responses to a set of questions. (Not all countries have data for all indicators; where this happens, it is indicated.) In computing, then, the researchers end up with three “sub-indices” (two for the middle indicator, “resources supporting the family in its basic tasks”): “structure,” “domestic economic resources” (job opportunity), “contextual resources” (tax policy, parental leave, childcare policies), and “social resources” (family associations, including levels of intergenerational trust and concern).

The results contain both expected winners and some surprising anomalies. Topping the list of countries for total IGIF score, which takes

7. *Ibid.*, 13. Emphasis original.

into account all these indicators, are, in order: Denmark, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Israel, Germany, Switzerland, Lithuania, Russia, and Iceland. The U.K. and U.S. fall at spots 28 and 29, respectively, and the Slovak Republic, Peru, Croatia, and Macedonia fall in the bottom four spots. A few things are notable in these rankings. First, as the researchers point out, is the “lack of a clear geographical articulation, except for a greater presence in the first positions of some north European countries.”⁸ Also noteworthy is that about half the countries have an IGIF score between 0.60 and 0.50, indicating “a generic support to the family, but with some deficit.”

As something of an anomaly, Malawi appears in this middle range, at position number 16. The researchers credit this to the amazing strength of family structure—high rates of marriage, very low incidence of divorce, and high fertility, although data sources are perhaps unreliable in some respects and the researchers caution the reader to consider this. Malawi earns an astonishing 0.94 in this category. To compare, the next-best country in terms of structure is Turkey, at 0.71, and all but 10 of the 46 countries under consideration earn scores below 5.0. Taking the bottom places in terms of structure are Portugal, Spain, and Peru.

In the sub-index of domestic economic resources—job availability—no clear patterns emerge. Iceland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland are at the top; Croatia, Serbia, and Turkey are at the bottom. In the contextual resources sub-index—which includes “care services, family-work leave system and fiscal policies for the family”—Lithuania, Belgium, and France top the list, with Poland, Malawi, and Macedonia bringing up the bottom. And finally, in the social resources sub-index—levels of intra-family concern and trust—Norway, Denmark, and Sweden are the winners, with Macedonia, Korea, and Croatia falling at the bottom. In summary, the researchers note:

Though we observe good social resources overall, in terms of the presence of family associations and a basic trust in parental networks and others in general, as potential facilitators for mobilizing relationships, economic resources predominate particularly in Denmark, New

8. *Ibid.*, 25

Zealand, Sweden, Germany, Iceland, Austria, Luxembourg and Japan; while contextual resources prevail especially [*sic*] in Estonia, Belgium, France, Cyprus, Israel, Slovenia and Korea.⁹

One thing to note here. The researchers seem to give equal weight to all the indices, so that nations with low structural index values—Denmark, New Zealand, and Sweden—still take the top three slots in overall IGIF scores, due to higher-than-normal scores in the other indices. The researchers note that

in some countries . . . despite the high levels of economic and/or contextual resources for support for care tasks, the structural dimension in terms of children and marriage remains low. This is the case of Denmark, New Zealand, Sweden and Germany, where we find situations that might be called “I could, but I don’t want to.”¹⁰

And in a further comment on nations with high economic resources and good social resources, but lower levels of structural and contextual resources, the researchers note: “here a willingness to invest only in the economic dimension emerges (employment and fiscal policies for families), however with poor results on the structural side.”¹¹

There is a tension here, which the researchers touch upon in the conclusion but, given the descriptive nature of this Index, do not elaborate on fully. Namely, among the top ten countries are several known as generous welfare states. And where the state steps in—to provide subsidized childcare, encourage work outside the home for both fathers and mothers, *etc.*—family structure takes a hit. The family as a unit—and here we mean enduring marriages, low divorce and cohabitation rates, high fertility—thrives best when it, and not the state, provides for its members.

This is one area in which we might have hoped for more from this Index, which in many other ways provides critically needed analysis.

Also included in the Index is a section entitled “thematic in-depth analysis,” which includes a study on intergenerational solidarity and one

9. *Ibid.*, 28.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 29.

on the family in the legal system. Following the conclusion are detailed individual country profiles and further appendices. All of these sections contribute more useful information to this study.

In the conclusion, the researchers again point to the tension mentioned above:

Therefore, the invitation to readers of this report on looking at the data is to go beyond the temptation to reduce family well-being to economic resources and services, factors that are undoubtedly necessary but not sufficient. As this Index highlights, even when economic and contextual resources are readily available, the structural dimension of the family remains moderate, if not low. This leads us to hypothesize that family support should focus on “other” resources, of a more reticular and associative nature, capable of enhancing the social dimension of the family.¹²

Finally, the researchers close with the reminder that “in order to support the family properly, it is fundamental to not give up defining it: the family is a basic human social group; its specific nature lies in reciprocal relations between genders and generations thus transforming the family into a social institution.”¹³

Indeed, and well said.

Nicole M. King is the Managing Editor of The Natural Family.

12. *Ibid.*, 52

13. *Ibid.*

NEW RESEARCH

Bryce J. Christensen and Nicole M. King

Saying No to the Sexual Revolution in Sweden

In the mid-twentieth century, Swinging Sweden commanded the global spotlight as a leader in sexual daring. But in the second decade of the twenty-first century, researchers are finding evidence that the young Swedes now responding to the Sexual Revolution with a firm No (*Nej* in Swedish) enjoy decided advantages over those who say Yes.

Assessing how sexual abstinence affects young Swedes was the purpose of a study recently completed by a team of researchers from three Swedish Universities: Lund University, Linnæus University, and Linköping University. In carrying out their investigation, the researchers parse data collected from 3,380 Swedish 18-year-olds, focusing their attention on those who were still virgins.

After carefully weighing their data, the researchers conclude that sexual abstinence comes linked to social and psychological benefits. The data indeed indicate that when compared to peers who have engaged in sexual activity, chaste young Swedes manifest “lower pornography consumption, lower alcohol and tobacco consumption, less antisocial behavior . . . lower sexual desire . . . and fewer experiences of sexual abuse.” All of these contrasts satisfy the analytical tests for statistical significance, but the disparity in reports of sexual abuse is truly striking (adjusted Odds Ratio of 25.5). Though it is the gap in vulnerability to sexual abuse that is particularly remarkable, the researchers calculate “increased O[dds] R[atio]s for sexual abuse *and* physical abuse” for the sexually experienced compared to the sexually continent.

Though the authors of the new study do not identify it as such,

exposure to pornography understandably looks like a kind of psychological sexual abuse to many conservative thinkers. So it is perhaps not surprising that the Swedish scholars find that the sexually abstinent 18-year-olds in their study were decidedly less likely to have viewed pornography than were their sexually experienced peers. The researchers report that “the O[dds]R[atio] for never having watched pornography was more than double for the males in the [abstinent] group and six times higher for the females.”

Interpreting the overall pattern evident in their data, the Swedish scholars remark that the sexually abstinent 18-year-olds “seemed to have lived a more stable life than their sexually experienced peers . . . and tended to have more conservative attitudes.” Further scrutiny of the data helps the researchers to identify the kind of family background that fosters the stability of life and the conservatism manifest among the sexually continent. Compared to sexually experienced peers, the sexually abstinent teens in this study were “significantly more likely to be living with their biological parents and less likely to be living on their own, in boarding schools, institutions, or foster care.” The authors interpret this finding in the context of “earlier research from both Western and non-Western countries [concluding] that an intact household or dual-parent family was . . . a protective factor.”

As they reflect on their findings, the researchers see indications that “late sexual debut seems to be the symptom or consequence of several factors during early childhood and adolescence.” Accordingly, they recommend that “preventive measures of various kinds should be directed to families with very young children.” The Swedish researchers do not go very far in spelling out the kind of preventative measures needed, but it is clear that these would include a cultural recovery of the virtue of chastity and a social renewal of intact parental marriages.

(Åsa A. Kastborn et al., “Differences in Sexual Behavior, Health, and History of Child Abuse among School Students Who Had and Had Not Engaged in Sexual Activity by the Age of 18 Years: A Cross-Sectional Study,” Journal of Adolescent Health, Medicine, and Therapeutics 7 [2016]: 1-11, emphasis added.)

The Healthy Family Meal with Married—but Not Wealthy—Parents

Public-health officials well understand that young children and adolescents are much more likely to eat healthy, well-balanced meals if they eat them with their family than if they eat them on their own or with peers. But how does family structure affect the likelihood that young people will in fact eat meals with their family? After carefully investigating this question, a team of epidemiologists at Ohio State University recently concluded that, compared to peers living in single-parent homes, children and adolescents living with married parents enjoy a distinct advantage in eating family meals. But these researchers also uncovered evidence that twenty-first-century America's two-career formula for amping up household income may be jeopardizing children's health by reducing the number of family meals.

The authors of this study begin their work cognizant that "family meals are increasingly promoted as a strategy for improving public health and preventing obesity." After all, previous research has shown that "frequency of family meals in adolescence was positively correlated with eating with others in young adulthood which in turn was linked to greater reported intake of nutrient dense foods such as fruits and vegetables, particularly for females." Early studies have also concluded that compared to peers who do not eat family meals, adolescents who eat with their families face a "reduced risk for overweight and obesity in young adulthood." The benefits of family meals established by earlier research even extend to parents: one recent study cited by the authors of this new inquiry finds "a positive association between family meal frequency and consumption of fruits and vegetables for mothers and fathers."

Intent on determining the sociodemographic characteristics that correlate with the frequency with which families eat together, the Ohio State scholars analyze survey data collected between 2007 and 2010 for 18,031 individuals living in multi-person households.

These data establish, unsurprisingly, that "family meal frequency was positively associated with a healthier pattern of household food availability." That is, when researchers compared households where families ate meals together frequently with households where they ate meals together rarely, the researchers found "greater household availability of fruits and dark green vegetables and less availability of salty snacks and

sugar-sweetened beverages” in the frequent-family-meal homes.

Perhaps also predictable was the finding that “households that included partners who were married or living together had more frequent family meals than households headed by respondents who were divorced, separated, widowed, or never married.” (As in other studies in which political correctness prompts researchers to lump cohabiting partners with married couples, this study almost certainly understates the benefits of wedlock.)

More surprising—even provocative—are the findings indicating that “family meals were more prevalent in low-income households and those in which the reference person . . . had less than high school education.” The Ohio State researchers do not tease out the social implications of this explosive finding. Nor do they explore the cultural implications of their similarly stunning finding that “households headed by someone born outside the U.S. were substantially more likely to report frequent family meals” than were households headed by someone born in America. It is likely, however, that the researchers have unwittingly stumbled across one of the negative outcomes of the standard American formula for maximizing household income by sending a well-educated Mom out of the home to work.

Given that the researchers are completely aware of the benefits of family meals and completely unable to resist the pressures of political correctness, perhaps it is inevitable that they would conclude their study expressing the hope that “nutrition and health professionals . . . [will] support all households, regardless of their configuration, in efforts to eat more meals together as a family.” Outside of utopian fantasies, family configuration will forever determine the likelihood of family meals. And though it is not a configuration designed to maximize household income, the married-couple-with-homemaking-wife configuration will put meals on the family table much more regularly than will any other configuration.

(Sarah L. Newman et al., “Family Meal Frequency and Association with Household Food Availability in United States Multi-Person Households: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2007-2010,” PLOS ONE 10.12 [2015]: e0144330. Web.)

Shacking Up—The Failed Alternative to Wedlock

Back in the sixties and seventies, enlightened social commentators dismissed as Chicken-Little fear-mongers those who expressed concerns about the growing number of couples living in cohabiting unions outside of wedlock. Cohabitation, they assured the nation, would actually serve a beneficial social function as a kind of “trial marriage,” ensuring that those who went on to take vows actually were suited for each other. And even if these cohabiting couples never got around to taking vows, these progressive luminaries averred, their cohabiting unions would be functionally equivalent to marriages. So, no, they assured one and all, the multiplication of cohabiting couples did not mean that the sky was falling.

But in a new study of cohabitation recently completed at Bowling Green State University, sociologist Karen Benjamin Guzzo adduces evidence that can only intensify concerns about cohabitation. In recent decades, not only have fewer and fewer cohabiting couples gone on to marriage, but fewer and fewer have even stayed together. In terms of cohesion and conjugal solidarity, it appears that, yes, the social sky is falling.

Aware that “cohabitation has become quite common in the United States in recent decades,” Guzzo looks for evidence as to whether the practice of cohabiting has changed. She seeks such evidence in data collected between 2002 and 2010 for a nationally representative sample of 20,687 cohabiting unions. Guzzo’s analysis of these data establishes that “cohabitation is indeed changing over time”—and is changing in disturbing ways.

While the data indicate that “the majority of today’s marriages are preceded by cohabitation,” they also reveal that “fewer cohabitations are transitioning to marriage” than in past decades. Consequently, “marriage rates are at an all-time low,” and—in our cohabitation-prone culture—“marriage rates are [still] declining.”

The progressive theory of cohabitation as a beneficial preparation for wedlock looks increasingly implausible in light of data establishing that among cohabiting couples “the chances of marriage . . . have declined over time, with the earliest unions—those formed in the 1980s—more likely to transition to marriage and those formed since 2000 less likely to transition to marriage.” Guzzo understandably interprets this statistical

trend as evidence of “the de-linking of cohabitation and marriage.”

The progressive theory of cohabitation as the functional equivalent of marriage is also losing credibility. The data show that cohabiting unions are becoming more and more fragile. Guzzo reports that “since the late 1990s, the risk of dissolution [among cohabiting couples] has increased, with the most pronounced changes occurring for cohabitations formed most recently.” Guzzo, in fact, believes that “the elevated risk of dissolution” among cohabiting unions has played a “particularly big role” in transforming the character of cohabitation. If the couple cohabiting this month is quite likely to have parted next month, then it appears that couples who dispense with a priest or pastor in coming together enjoy the rather dubious advantage of dispensing with an attorney in separating quickly. Guzzo wonders if cohabiting couples are now less likely to marry, less likely even to stay together, than in past decades because of “a ‘lowering of the bar’ to cohabit as cohabitation becomes increasingly acceptable.”

Americans who care about the social health of the country will recognize the malign effects of this lowering of the cultural bar—and will remember just who did the lowering and just what mendacious assurances they gave about the consequences.

(Karen Benjamin Guzzo, “Trends in Cohabitation Outcomes: Compositional Changes and Engagement Among Never-Married Young Adults,” Journal of Marriage and Family 76.4 [2014]: 826-42.)

Pushing Children into Poverty

Regardless of their political persuasion, Americans understand that when unemployment rates climb, so do the rates of child poverty. Somehow, however, the nation’s progressive thinkers cannot—or will not—recognize that rates for child poverty also soar when parents do not marry or do not stay married. But the empirical evidence implicating family disintegration as a cause of child poverty continues to grow, regardless of whether progressives wish to acknowledge it. The latest such evidence appears in a study of child poverty recently completed by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

To identify the social and economic predictors of child poverty, the

North Carolina scholars examine a county-level data set, drawn from census reports extending from 1990 to 2010. Quite predictably, the researchers find that “on average, the unemployment rate in a county is a very strong predictor of [child] poverty.” But after statistical analysis of their data, the researchers conclude that “alongside unemployment, high proportions of female-headed households with children and lower aggregate educational achievement levels are also significant predictors of child poverty.” Indeed, the researchers stress that in the final and most sophisticated treatment of their data, “these two variables have predictive power similar to the unemployment rate.”

In their interpretive conclusion, the researchers acknowledge that “the highly time-resistant strong spatial clustering of [child] poverty and its related predictors in this country suggest the United States is making little progress over time in addressing this persistent social and ethical issue.” They understandably believe that as the nation goes forward, “job creation and amelioration of high unemployment must remain part of the policy mix.” Their findings would seem to justify strong efforts to enhance education as well.

However, only the ideologically blind will fail to see the policy implications of a study in which family structure rivals unemployment as a statistical predictor of child poverty. Anyone who genuinely wishes to reduce the number of American children mired in poverty must begin to talk seriously about ways to foster enduring parental marriages.

(Maria A. Call and Paul R. Voss, “Spatio-Temporal Dimensions of Child Poverty in America, 1990-2010,” Environment and Planning A 48.1 [2016]: 172-91.)

Divorce and Dementia

As the American population ages, physicians find themselves treating more and more patients suffering from the cruel mental disease of dementia, a disease often requiring the institutionalization of its victims. In a study recently completed at Umeå University in Sweden, researchers identify marital status as a statistical predictor of this dreaded mental condition. It thus appears that the American retreat from wedlock of recent decades will translate into an epidemic of dementia in the years

ahead.

In initiating their inquiry into dementia, the Umeå researchers are aware that “owing to the global increase in life expectancy, the number of people suffering from age-related diseases such as dementia will rise substantially . . . [so] represent[ing] one of the most serious challenges of the 21st century.” The researchers note that some earlier research has linked “aspects of social relationships . . . with the incidence of dementia,” with a few studies suggesting that “marriage/cohabitation . . . [has] a beneficial effect on dementia risk.”

To assess the relationship between marital status and dementia, the Umeå scholars pore over data for 2,288,489 Swedes ages 50 to 74, none of whom had been diagnosed with dementia at the beginning of the period under analysis. Because aging itself increases vulnerability to dementia, the researchers separate the data into two sets, one for the “young-old” individuals (50–64 years), and a second for “middle-old” individuals (65–74 years). As expected, the incidence of dementia ran much higher among the older group than among the younger group. However, the relationship between marital status and dementia was largely the same in both sets of data: individuals in intact marriages face a significantly lower risk of dementia than do unmarried peers.

In their simplest statistical model (which adjusts only for age and gender), the researchers discern a clear pattern in the data for young-old individuals: “each non-married subcategory was significantly associated with a higher risk of dementia relative to the married sample.” In the young-old data set, the researchers find the highest comparative risk of dementia among divorced individuals (Hazard Ratio of 2.05). But the comparative risk runs almost as high among singles (Hazard Ratio of 1.91). Compared to young-old married individuals, widowed men and women face an elevated risk of dementia, but the comparative risk appears notably lower than among the divorced and single (Hazard Ratio of 1.38).

The numbers come in a bit different when the researchers apply this same statistical model to the middle-old individuals in this study, but the overall pattern is the same: “each non-married subcategory showed a significantly higher risk of dementia compared with the married group.” As with the young-old group, in the middle-old group the comparative

risk of dementia ran highest among the divorced (Hazard Ratio of 1.42) and slightly lower among singles (Hazard Ratio of 1.26). Though still significantly elevated above the risk of dementia faced by peers in intact marriages, the risk of dementia for widowed men and women again came in noticeably lower than that for divorced and single individuals (Hazard Ratio of 1.12). The data indicate that marital status affects the risk of dementia similarly for both men and women, though the results gleaned from the simplest statistical model did reveal that, compared to married peers, divorced men face a higher relative risk of the disease than do divorced women (Hazard Ratios of 2.1 vs. 1.7).

The findings returned from using the simplest statistical model are little changed when researchers re-analyze their data in a more sophisticated model that accounts not only for age and gender but also for education, taxable income, parenthood status, and history of cardiovascular disease. To be sure, the Hazard Ratios calculated for the unmarried subgroups do drop a bit in this more sophisticated model. But all of these ratios remain statistically unfavorable for all of the unmarried groups, in both the young-old and middle-old data sets. The only truly notable difference between the results produced by the simpler statistical model and those returned by the more sophisticated model is that the disparity between the Hazard Ratio for divorced men and divorced women in the young-old group falls to statistical insignificance.

With good reason the researchers remark, “Our results suggest that those living alone as non-marrieds may be at risk for early-onset and late-onset dementia.” The Umeå scholars thus interpret their findings as a confirmation of “previous study results showing a beneficial effect of marriage on dementia,” a confirmation suggesting that the relationship between marital status and risk of dementia is “highly robust.”

The researchers admit that “the specific mechanisms by which marital status influences the risk of dementia remain to be understood,” and they call for additional research to illuminate those mechanisms. But they do offer a few plausible conjectures. “A close relationship may be one of the best sources of cognitive stimulation,” they suggest, reasoning that such stimulation may give married individuals more “cognitive reserve” than their unmarried peers. “A higher cognitive reserve,” they explain, “[may] provide the individual with resilience against neuropathological

damage to the brain, such as occurs in dementia.”

The authors of the study further speculate that the married enjoy some protection from dementia because “marriage may serve as a buffer against the negative consequences of adverse life events,” while those who lose a spouse through divorce or death lose that buffer as the consequence of “a severely stressful event.”

Reflecting on the policy implications of their findings, the researchers see a need for “social-based interventions [that] may provide an opportunity to reduce the overall dementia risk.” Readers may puzzle over just what “social-based interventions” might look like. Indeed, unless it means that policymakers need to do more to promote marriage and prevent divorce, the phrase may indicate very little and protect very few.

(Anna Sundström, Olle Westerlund, and Elena Kotyrlo, “Marital Status and Risk of Dementia: A Nationwide Population-Based Prospective Study from Sweden,” BMJ Open 6.1 [2016]: e008565. Web.)

“Grow Old Along with Me”—The Wedlock Advantage

Robert Browning could not have anticipated this modern age when he wrote his famous dramatic monologue “Rabbi Ben Ezra.” Yet twenty-first-century adults have very good reason to reflect on what the title character of that poem says to his beloved companion: “Grow old along with me / The best is yet to be, /The last of life, for which the first was made.” Social scientists increasingly recognize that men and women in intact marriages face much better prospects in their later years than do their unmarried peers.

Marriage indeed captures the attention of University of Chicago scholars Jaclyn S. Wong and Linda J. Waite in their recent review of research on the health of Americans during the final third of their lives. To be sure, marriage is not the only social relationship Wong and Waite recognize as beneficial to the health of older Americans. In their analysis, “resource-rich networks” of various sorts benefit older Americans as they “promote good health and protect against risky health behaviors.” The scholars acknowledge that “older adults’ social networks often include relatives, friends, and co-workers,” and that all of these social connections

may favorably influence health.

Yet these two analysts emphasize that older Americans “typically spend the most time with spouses and long-term partners so the characteristics of the dyad have a particularly important impact on health.” (Given the relative fragility of cohabiting relationships, readers may suspect that Wong and Waite are yielding to the pressures of political correctness in their dubious reference to “long-term partners.”) The Chicago scholars thus argue that “the marital relationship exerts a unique influence on health, offering protection for adverse physiological health states, and buffering the negative emotional consequences of disablement and functional decline, especially if the marriage is good.”

Scrutinizing the ways that “marriage matters for one’s health, with damaging effects from marital loss,” Wong and Waite focus on a study of “C-reactive protein (CRP), an indicator of chronic or acute inflammation.” The author of a 2009 study reports that “CRP levels were elevated in divorced and widowed men but not in married men, [so] documenting a possible physiological pathway through which being married and marital loss alter health and risk of illness.” Statistical analysis of the data from this study suggests that “for men, marital status may have a direct effect on CRP levels that remains significant after accounting for a variety of measures of health behavior and psychological stress.” This finding, the Chicago scholars believe, may indicate that “married men . . . are protected against the ups and downs of daily life relative to their unmarried counterparts,” though they acknowledge that the results of this study may reflect “gendered family roles” in which “women shoulder more emotional and caregiving burdens, typically, than men do, tempering the benefits they receive [from being married].”

However, Wong and Waite highlight research showing that intact marriages confer health advantages on women as well as men. In fact, these two scholars focus on women’s health in explaining how, on the one hand, “marital exposure may be especially important for cardiovascular risk because cardiovascular health develops slowly over time” and how, on the other hand, “marital transitions influence the metabolic system over relatively short periods of time since marital transitions may prompt fairly rapid changes in diet and physical activity.” Consequently, recent research has demonstrated that “women who had been married

for a longer cumulative length of time had lower cardiovascular risk than women who had been married for shorter periods of time” while also demonstrating that “women who experienced multiple marital dissolutions were at higher metabolic risk than continuously married women.”

In the findings of recent studies, Wong and Waite find evidence that when the marriage is a good one, “being married is associated with many health benefits,” even in hard cases. The two scholars point, for instance, to a 2011 study concluding that “older adults with poor vision were less likely to be depressed and suffer from restrictions in their daily lives if they were happily married and could count on their spouse to help.” In the same vein, they underscore a study finding that “physically-disabled older adults in higher-quality marriages were buffered from loneliness” of the sort typically found among older individuals dealing with physical disabilities.

Sadly, however, at a time when America is graying as a nation, decades of plummeting marriage rates and stubbornly high divorce rates have left far too few in position to rejoice over research proving that “marriage shapes health” in beneficial ways.

(Jaclyn S. Wong and Linda J. Waite, “Marriage, Social Networks, and Health at Older Ages,” Journal of Population Ageing 8.1-2 [2015]: 7-25.)

Getting the Story Straight on Daycare

Every few months, the media reports glowingly on some new study that supposedly demonstrates that paid childcare is a neutral decision for parents—that is, daycare doesn’t seem to impact children one way or the other in the long-term. Even more glowing are the accounts of research demonstrating that children actually benefit from daycare in an increase in social and cognitive skills. But in a recent analysis for *National Affairs*, Carrie Lukas and Steven E. Rhoads offer a refreshingly honest examination of the existing research on daycare, and also the proposed policy that accompanies it.

The authors begin their essay with a sympathetic admission that “Raising a child in America is more expensive today than it has ever been . . . and supporting a family often requires two incomes.” And even if a family doesn’t require two streams of income, “many women wish to use

their educations to pursue lucrative, fulfilling careers.” But the authors also remind the reader that “good things tend to come with tradeoffs”—in this case, the tradeoff is that a mother in the workforce must employ some kind of outside care for her children. Parents are justifiably concerned about such decisions, which “are made all the more difficult by a lack of reliable research on daycare. . . . few are willing to take a hard look.”

Indeed, “[e]arlier studies of daycare, even the the early 2000s, raised serious concerns about the greater risk of ‘externalizing’ behavior—such as neediness, disobedience, and bullying—from children’s early and prolonged exposure to commercial daycare.” But today’s researchers “tend to emphasize how negative outcomes fade over time and are balanced out by cognitive gains for daycare children compared to those cared for at home.” Lukas and Rhoads point specifically to one of the most significant and recent studies, wherein the researchers conclude that “on average,” any negative impacts of first-year maternal employment “are offset by positive effects.” Lukas and Rhoads point out, however, that “the details of the study paint a more complicated picture.” *When* mothers went back to work made a world of difference. The study’s data indicated that when women returned to work when their baby was under three months old—and 70% of the women studied did just that—their children displayed more externalizing behavior. Also significant is that children of mothers who worked part-time displayed less such behavior than did children whose mothers worked full-time.

Part of the complication in studying the effects of daycare is due, the authors write, to methodological challenges. The best research comes from controlled experiments; however, parents will never (and should never) consent “to randomly assign their children to home care or institutional daycare.” Instead, the dataset most often used for such studies is the Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development—a useful study, but observational in nature.

The authors point out an alternative source of data, however, in various research hailing from Quebec, which in 1997 “introduced full-day kindergarten for all five-year-olds and heavily subsidized daycare for four-year-olds” and, since then, has extended such subsidies to infants

beginning at birth. The studies using *this* research have painted a far less rosy picture of daycare. One 2009 article, for example, concludes, “We report striking evidence that children’s outcomes have worsened since the program was introduced.” Another, this one published in March 2014 by the Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network, focused on age of children in the program, and concluded that “The estimates indicate that on average, children who gain access to subsidized child care at earlier ages experience significantly larger negative impacts on motor-social developmental scores, self-reported health status and behavioral outcomes including physical aggression and emotional anxiety.” A follow-up to this study in 2015 found that these negative effects “persisted and even increased into the teen years.” Furthermore, the researchers found that children exposed to such subsidized child care showed a greater incidence of criminal behavior as teens.

“So what,” ask Lukas and Rhoads, “could explain these profound, lasting negative effects of daycare?” One explanation is the stress hormone cortisol. In a meta-analysis of nine daycare studies, Professors Harriet Vermeer and Marinus van IJzendoorn found “that at daycare children display higher cortisol levels compared to the home setting.” And this rise in cortisol levels is disturbing, because, as another study details, “Elevated cortisol levels are often interpreted as boding ill for physical and emotional health.”

Lukas and Rhoads conclude that “[t]aken together, the studies on the Quebec child-care program and on cortisol levels show negative effects from daycare at the time of children’s daycare experience as well as lasting negative outcomes that persist into the teen years, which certainly calls into question the commonly offered conclusion that daycare appears to be ‘neutral,’ with positive and negative effects cancelling each other out.” The authors suggest that instead of subsidizing care which produces such ill effects, “policymakers ought to focus on providing more support for parents, particularly those with lower incomes, to make it easier for them to raise their children based on their own preferences.” And polls reveal that most parents actually believe that it is better for one parent to remain home with the children, and also that 80% of young mothers would prefer to do so.

“Good decision-making on the part of both families and

policy-makers,” write the authors, “depends on clear-eyed, honest assessments of the best scientific research—no matter how difficult the conclusions may be.” The well-being of children is too precious a result to risk with faulty data and analysis.

(Carrie Lukas and Steven E. Rhoads, “The Uncomfortable Truth about Daycare,” National Affairs 28 [summer 2016]: 83-94.)

More Daycare Disease

An indispensable part of the feminist program for taking young mothers out of the home, the daycare center exposes young children to a troublingly long list of diseases. Adding one more disease to that list, Pablo Yagupsky of Israel’s Soroka University Medical Center recently published two studies identifying daycare centers as the prime location for the spread of *Kingella kingae*, a pathogen implicated in “clusters of serious infections, including osteomyelitis, septic arthritis, bacteremia, endocarditis, and meningitis.”

Yagupsky explains that *Kingella kingae* is a Gram-negative bacterium usually carried “asymptotically in the oropharynx and disseminate[d] by close interpersonal contact.” And nowhere is such transmission more likely than in daycare centers. Noting that daycare center outbreaks of *Kingella kingae* have been documented in Israel, France, and the United States, Yagupsky assesses such outbreaks as part of a broader pattern. The Israeli scholar underscores the consequent health risks for the “growing number of children receiving care outside the home.” “The incidence of infectious diseases in general, and of those caused by respiratory pathogens in particular, has substantially increased among daycare center attendees,” he remarks.

The linkage between infectious diseases and daycare centers is obvious to Yagupsky, who traces the spread of pathogens “within daycare centers by child-to-child transmission; they colonize the upper respiratory tract surfaces, from which they can disseminate to other attendees. From the upper airways, pathogens may invade adjacent structures such as the lungs, middle ear, or nasal sinuses, and may penetrate into the bloodstream, causing invasive diseases.”

Because the respiratory germs that spread in daycare centers are

typically enclosed by polysaccharide capsules, they may elude some of the body's simpler immune responses, so surviving in the bloodstream and deep-body tissues. The survival of these pathogens poses a particularly great risk for very young children, Yagupsky points out, because "maturation of the T-cell independent arm of the immune system in humans is delayed until the age of 2–4 years; thus, young children are prone to colonization and infection by encapsulated bacteria."

Of course, children can contract diseases in crowded settings other than the daycare center. They can even contract dangerous germs at home. But Yagupsky stresses the singularly pathogenic character of the daycare center as a setting that brings together relatively large numbers of young children of "approximately the same age . . . [with] similar degrees of immunologic immaturity and susceptibility to infectious agents." "This epidemiologic setting," he insists, "substantially differs from that of large families in that the latter include children of different ages and therefore, at any given time, only a fraction of . . . siblings belong to the age group at enhanced risk for bacterial colonization and invasion, which limits the chances to acquire and transmit the organism."

Limning the health perils at the daycare center, Yagupsky remarks on how "respiratory organisms spread easily [in such a setting] through large droplet transmission among young children with poor hygienic habits, who share toys contaminated with respiratory secretions or saliva." "Introduction of a virulent bacterium in a crowded daycare facility attended by immunologically naïve children," he warns, "may result in prompt dissemination of the organism and initiate outbreaks of disease such as those caused by pneumococci, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, or *Neisseria meningitidis*."

Dispelling doubt about the role of daycare in spreading *Kingella kingae* are data collected from 1,277 children younger than five who had been referred to an Israeli pediatric emergency center. Analysis of these data established a strong independent statistical relationship between *K. kingae* colonization and out-of-home care. Compared to children cared for at home, children who were cared for outside the home were almost ten times as likely to have been colonized by this pathogen (Odds Ratio of 9.66; $p < 0.001$).

Examining relevant recent reports from Israel, Western Europe, and

the United States, Yagupsky finds “high disease attack rates [related to *Kingella kingae*] among [daycare-center] attendees, ranging from 14% to 21%.” To be sure, Yagupsky acknowledges that “with the exception of patients with endocardial involvement, children with *K. kingae* diseases often show only mild symptoms and signs,” reassuring his readers that “if adequately and promptly treated, invasive *K. kingae* infections with no endocardial involvement usually run a benign clinical course.”

However, Yagupsky sees reason for concern in data collected from six daycare center *K. kingae* outbreaks, outbreaks involving a troubling number of “documented or presumptive *K. kingae* infections, including fatal endocarditis and meningitis.” Yagupsky thus fears that “the risk of acquisition of *K. kingae* with progression to a severe and even life-threatening infection appears to be greatly increased among youngsters in daycare.”

In his conclusion to the more recent of his two articles on the issue, Yagupsky frankly admits that “many issues remain unsettled” in trying to deal with *K. kingae*. Physicians do not yet know whether the diagnosis of one *K. kingae* case in a daycare center should trigger the administration of antibacterial drugs to other asymptomatic daycare center attendees and to asymptomatic siblings. Nor do they yet know just what regimen of antibiotic drugs would be most effective in combatting this pathogen.

What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is that the millions of children in daycare centers face serious health risks. No plan for administering antibiotics will do as much to eliminate those risks as will measures that get children out of such centers and back into their own homes with their mothers.

(Pablo Yagupsky, “Outbreaks of Kingella kingae Infections in Daycare Facilities,” Emerging Infectious Diseases 20.5 [2014]: 746-53; Pablo Yagupsky, “Kingella kingae: Carriage, Transmission, and Disease,” Clinical Microbiology Reviews 28.1 [2015]: 54-79.)

Fatherless Children—Hurting All the Way to the Bone

When fatherless families began to multiply in the seventies and eighties, progressives dismissed fears about the consequences of this social development. Children, they assured one and all, can flourish in widely

diverse family forms, including mother-only families. Only social troglodytes would suppose that children actually need the kind of upbringing found in an intact family comprising both a father and a mother. Decades later, progressives are busy giving a new round of assurances—about the beneficence of same-sex marriage and of transgender social identities, for instance. They are far too busy to notice just how profoundly and lastingly a generation of children has suffered because of the fatherlessness they once dismissed as inconsequential. But the sobering evidence of that suffering continues to accumulate. The latest addition appears in a study recently published by a team of researchers at the David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles, on the relationship between the family structure children experience while growing up and their adult bone strength.

To gauge the impact of childhood family structure on adult bone strength, the UCLA scholars parse data from a national sample of 708 adults who were between the ages of 25 and 75 in 1995-1996 and who were surveyed again 9-10 years later. These data clearly show that “growing up in a single-parent household was associated with lower bone strength in adulthood” than was growing up in a two-parent family.

Further scrutiny of the data in fact established that compared to those peers who grew up in two-parent households, the bones of adults who had grown up in a single-parent household were significantly weaker in compression strength, bending strength, and impact strength ($p < 0.05$ for all three comparisons).

As they try to explain their findings, the researchers consider the possibility that the trauma of losing a parent (typically a father) through death or divorce might account for the disparity in bone strength. However, after further statistical analysis, the researchers conclude, “The experience of parental death or divorce during childhood was not independently associated with adult bone strength once we accounted for the number of years spent living in a single-parent household, suggesting that the event of parental death or divorce during childhood does not by itself have direct effects on bone health independent of the subsequent chronic exposure to single parenting.”

In further reflection on their findings, the UCLA analysts reason that the absence of a parent might harm adult bone health as a consequence

of “maladaptive health behaviors such as smoking and underage or heavy alcohol intake,” all of which are more common among children from single-parent households than among peers from intact families. Additionally, the researchers note that bone health may deteriorate because of the “decreased physical activity [that] is more common in children in single-parent families” than in children from two-parent families. Finally, the researchers conjecture that the disparity they have documented in bone health might reflect the fact that “many children living with single parents are economically disadvantaged.”

But despite the plausibility of all these conjectural explanations of their findings, when the researchers reexamine their data, they find that “the associations between the single-parent childhood and lower adult bone strength were not explained by childhood or adult socioeconomic status or health behaviors over the life course.”

Unable to account for the disparity in bone health as a consequence of differences in socioeconomic background or behavioral differences, the researchers wonder if “the environmental and psychological stresses of growing up with a single parent could directly affect the hormonal milieu in the child, thereby affecting bone accrual.” This conjectural chain of causation strikes them as quite plausible because “children living with single parents face more emotional and environmental stressors than children from two-parent families.” These differences in stressors can translate into potentially damaging elevation of cortisol levels in children’s blood and can even trigger “dysregulation of the sympathetic nervous system, as well as chronic inflammation.”

But regardless of the biochemical linkage between family structure and bone health, the researchers fear that their findings carry “important implications for the bone health of future cohorts of adults” at a time when “large and growing numbers of children . . . spend much of their first 16 years in a single-parent household.” These implications appear particularly alarming for women. The UCLA scholars calculate that “women who experienced nine or more years of single parenting in childhood would be at 14%–19% relative increase (relative to women who did not have a single parent for most of childhood) in fracture hazard when going through the menopausal transition, and 31%–41% relative increase in 10-year hip fracture risk in the post-menopause.”

Clearly, those who rely on progressive theories of family life are putting in peril both life and limb.

(Carolyn J. Crandall et al., "Adult Bone Strength of Children from Single-Parent Families: The Midlife in the U.S. Study," Osteoporosis International 26.3 [2015]: 931-42.)

Adolescent Rule-Breakers—Bad Friends, Missing Fathers

Some wild teens outgrow their adolescent trouble-making. But all too many teen rule-breakers turn into adult lawbreakers and sociopaths. Consequently, educators and public officials have reason to worry about the rule-breaking adolescent. Wanting to know what circumstances or characteristics predispose adolescents to break rules, researchers at Arizona State University recently looked closely at a number of possible influences. And though their findings highlight the importance of early childhood aggressiveness and of bad adolescent friendships, their analysis exposes the role of family structure in fostering or inhibiting both of these antecedents of adolescent rule-breaking.

The Arizona State scholars carefully assess the likelihood that children who are highly aggressive and who develop negative peer relationships become adolescent rule-breakers. To do so, they pore over data collected from 383 children (193 girls and 190 boys) from urban, suburban, and rural Midwestern communities.

Not surprisingly, the researchers discern significant statistical links between childhood aggression-disruptiveness on the one hand and later adolescent rule-breaking on the other. In explaining these linkages, the authors of the new study limn "mediated pathways to rule-breaking . . . consistent for boys and girls." Two "peer processes"—namely, high levels of peer rejection and deviant friendships—emerge in the researchers' analysis as particularly formative in determining these pathways.

But beyond the peer processes that define the researchers' focus, careful readers of their study will detect the potent influence of family structure. As the researchers acknowledge, for the boys and girls in their study, "being in a single parent household" was "positively associated with early A[ggression]D[isruptiveness]" ($p < 0.001$) when they compared these children to peers in two-parent families. A closer look at the

researchers' statistics also reveals a significant linkage between being in a single-parent household on the one hand and experiencing high levels of peer rejection ($p < 0.01$) and having deviant friends ($p < 0.01$) on the other. Predictably, a significant statistical relationship also emerges between being in a single-parent household structure and adolescent rule-breaking of various types ($p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$, depending on the type of rule in view).

Though not as strong as family structure as a statistical predictor of troubling outcomes, the experience of a parental divorce also appears to put the children in this study on paths leading to adolescent rule-breaking. The researchers conclude that "parental divorce was associated with M[oderate]P[eer]R[ejection]" among the boys and girls in their study ($p < 0.01$), with further parsing of the data establishing that moderate peer rejection predicts having deviant friends ($p < 0.05$).

In the conclusion of their study, the Arizona State scholars stress what their findings reveal about "the role of adverse peer relations" in incubating antisocial behaviors. But those who examine those findings closely will realize that they also tell a sobering story about the malign consequences of family disintegration.

(Idean Ettekal and Gary W. Ladd, "Developmental Pathways from Childhood Aggression-Disruptiveness, Chronic Peer Rejection and Deviant Friendships to Early-Adolescent Rule-Breaking," Child Development 86.2 [2015]: 614-31.)

Long-Lived American Women—Marriage and Motherhood

Since feminists captured the citadels of American culture in the seventies, they have ceaselessly promoted a life script for women that makes marriage optional and easily terminated and makes motherhood (likewise optional) a burden women will largely outsource to a daycare center while they pursue their career aspirations. These feminists have tirelessly assured one and all that this new life script gives the women who embrace it a fuller life. But can a fuller life be lived in fewer years? The question demands an answer in light of a study recently completed by scholars at Boston College and Harvard University concluding that in recent decades the American women enjoying the greatest longevity have

not been living by the feminist script. Rather, the longest-lived women in America have been those who have forged enduring marriages and who have devoted themselves to full-time motherhood for a number of years while their children were young.

Intent on analyzing the relationship between the various combinations of social roles that women assume and their longevity, the authors of this new study parse mortality rates after age 55 for 7,536 American women born between January 1936 and February 1956, rates then correlated with these women's earlier social roles. These data indicate that the women who have lived the longest are not the ones who have avoided marital and family roles. Quite otherwise. As the researchers weigh the likelihood of premature death for women with different social profiles, they find that "married women out of the workforce when their children were young were at lowest risk."

The women identified by the researchers as those who faced the highest risk of premature death were those that took on the responsibilities of motherhood but lived their lives outside of the role of wife. "Women spending most of their adult lives as single mothers (working and nonworking)," report the researchers, "were at greatest risk of dying during [the study period]."

The size of the longevity advantage enjoyed by married mothers who stayed at home while their children were young becomes quite discernible when the researchers calculate the age-standardized mortality rates (ASMRs) for all the social profiles of the women in their study. The ASMR for married mothers who stayed at home "for several years" while their children were young came in at 48.5 per 1,000; that for married mothers who were out of the paid workforce "for many years" to care for their children was an almost identical 50.5 per 1000. The ASMR for mothers never out of the paid workforce jumped to 60.4 per 1,000, very close to that for (mostly single) women always in the paid workforce but never in the maternity ward (58.96 per 1,000), and slightly lower than that for married mothers never in paid employment (66.82 per 1,000).

The mortality rate jumps markedly among unmarried mothers: among single mothers regularly in paid employment, the A[ge] S[tandardized]M[ortality]R[ate] came in at 83.1 per 1,000, and for single mothers not employed, it skyrocketed to 121.5 per 1,000.

As the researchers survey the gaps in mortality rates separating the various groups of women, they concede that “not all differences were statistically significant.” But they do highlight the statistically significant differences separating *all* single mothers from the two longest-lived married-mother groups. As the researchers remark, “Single nonworking mothers had the highest A[ge]S[tandardized]M[ortality]R[ate], significantly higher than all other groups ($P < .01$), followed by single working mothers, whose mortality rate was significantly higher than the 2 lowest-mortality groups ($P < .01$),” groups made up of married mothers who had delayed out-of-home employment for “several years” or for “many years” to care for their children.

In their findings on the elevated mortality rates among single mothers, the researchers see fresh evidence that “health impacts of prolonged single motherhood may continue past active childrearing.”

Because healthy women are simply more likely than sickly peers to marry, to have children, or to be employed, the researchers admit that they cannot categorically rule out the possibility of a “selection” bias in their findings. That is, they admit the possibility that their findings reveal no more than the distinct initial healthiness of women who find spouses, bear children, enter employment, and finally live longer than their initially not as healthy peers, who take on fewer social roles and end up living shorter lives.

But the Boston College and Harvard scholars appear reluctant to endorse a selection-bias explanation of their findings. They point to “research [that] suggests that causation may play a stronger role than selection in explaining associations between work–family status and health.” That is, certain work-family life tracks appear to *cause* those who move along these tracks to enjoy better health (and longer life) than do those who move on different work-family tracks. And the work-family tracks that seem to yield the most favorable longevity outcomes were those in which women take on the role of wife, add that of mother, and finally, some years later (when their children are older), add that of employee.

In their summary, the researchers assert, “We found that mortality rates were generally lowest for those simultaneously combining the 3 roles of mother, spouse, and [employed] worker.” But readers may well

blink at the curious adverb *simultaneously*—and then wonder if the pressure of political correctness has not made the researchers loath to acknowledge directly that their study has actually demonstrated that American women enjoy the best chances for long life when they take on the roles of wife and mother but *delay* out-of-home employment for some years, until after their children are older.

A married mother who absents herself from paid employment for “several years” or “many years” to devote herself to child-rearing may be departing from the approved feminist script. But she may thereby be giving her children the best possible beginning in life and herself a long life as a grandmother.

(Erika L. Sabbath et al., “Use of Life Course Work-Family Profiles to Predict Mortality Risk Among US Women,” American Journal of Public Health 105.4 [2015]: e96-e102. Web.)

Children Starting the Day Right—Breakfast with Both Parents

Struggling to check runaway medical costs, public-health officials do all they can to foster good health habits. Even getting more adolescents to eat breakfast every day can make a significant difference in long-term health-care costs. But encouraging the breakfast habit may prove difficult in a world of fractured families. So suggest the results of a new international study recently completed by researchers from Pennsylvania State University, the University of Missouri, the University of Sienna, the University of Southern Denmark, and the National University of Ireland, results that underscore the importance of family structure in determining whether an adolescent begins the day with the nutritional advantage of eating breakfast.

The authors of the new study begin their investigation cognizant that “breakfast is often considered the most important meal of the day” and that “children and adolescents can benefit from breakfast consumption in several ways.” The benefits of eating breakfast have indeed been established in earlier research showing that “regular breakfast consumption . . . [is] associated with overall dietary quality and nutrient profiles in children and with improved cognitive performance.” Not surprisingly, previous studies have also concluded that “breakfast consumption

among children and adolescents is inversely related to body mass index (BMI) and [being] overweight,” probably because regular consumption of breakfast appears “to reduce snacking and consumption of energy-rich foods of poor nutrient density.” What is more, the researchers point out, “regular and healthy breakfast habits in childhood track into adulthood,” so promising long-term health benefits, particularly in preventing obesity and Type II Diabetes.

To determine what personal characteristics and social circumstances predict regular consumption of breakfast among adolescents, the researchers examine data collected through the World Health Organization for 455,391 adolescents (ages 11 to 15) living in 31 European and North American countries. These countries include England, Ireland, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Canada, and the United States.

Statistical parsing of the international data reveals that “numerous factors influence breakfast consumption” among adolescents. But family structure is one factor that receives particular attention from the researchers. And no wonder. “In all [31] countries [in this study],” the researchers report, “children in two-parent families were more likely to report D[aily]B[reakfast]C[onsumption] compared to single-parent families.” In the United States, just under one-half (44%) of adolescents living in two-parent homes eat breakfast regularly, compared to just over one-third (36%) of peers living in one-parent households ($p < 0.05$).

With good reason, the researchers believe that “the findings highlight the importance of the family environment for influencing the dietary behaviours of young people.” The authors of the new study acknowledge that the linkage between family structure and adolescent breakfast consumption has appeared in earlier research. “Other studies,” they remark, “have also shown D[aily]B[reakfast]C[onsumption] to be higher among two-parent families.”

Still, the researchers hope that their new findings will assist health officials responsible for “planning initiatives that enable frequent breakfast consumption.” The need for such initiatives would appear particularly urgent in America given that “breakfast skipping among children and adolescents has increased over the past decades in the USA.”

But in light of the results of this new study, it hardly seems

coincidental that a growing number of American children have found themselves in single-parent households during the same decades that witnessed a rise in breakfast skipping among adolescents. Until wedding bells ring out more often and the gavel of the divorce-court judge sounds less frequently, initiatives to get children and adolescents to eat breakfast regularly may prove all too futile.

(Giocomo Lazzeri et al., “Trends from 2002 to 2010 in Daily Breakfast Consumption and its Socio-Demographic Correlates in Adolescents across 31 Countries Participating in the HBSC Study,” PLOS One 11.3 [2016]: e0151052. Web.)

Kicking Tobacco, Finding the Gym—The Difference a Spouse Makes

Some diseases—such as bone cancer and lupus—fall on their victims like lighting out of a clear sky, so physicians can offer their patients very little advice on how to avoid them. But many diseases—including cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and Type II diabetes—pose a much larger threat for those who make bad health decisions (such as smoking, spending long hours in front of the TV, or overeating) than for those who make good health decisions. Fortunately, those who have put themselves at risk by indulging in bad behaviors can improve their prospects for good health by breaking their bad habits. However, a study recently completed in the Netherlands raises unpleasant questions about how many people public-health officials can hope to turn from bad habits to good ones in a nation where marriage rates have plummeted in recent decades while single-person households have multiplied. For this new study clearly indicates that it is individuals living with a spouse who are most likely to replace unhealthy lifestyle choices with healthy ones.

Completed by an international team of scholars from Isfahan University and Maastricht University, this new Dutch study focuses on “unhealthy behavior”—specifically, smoking, excessive alcohol use, and physical inactivity—and on “decisions to change those behaviors.” The researchers believe that such behavior and such decisions merit attention because of “a high worldwide prevalence of unhealthy behavior” that has caused “policy-makers to agree on the urgent need for individual lifestyle change,” particularly as these policymakers battle against

non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, lung cancer, and heart disease.

To gauge the prevalence of unhealthy behavior and to assess prospects for lifestyle change, the authors of the new study scrutinize data collected between 2004 and 2007 for 1,745 individuals ages 50 and up living in the Netherlands. By analyzing these data, the researchers identify a number of social and demographic predictors of bad health habits and of healthy changes in these habits during the study period. Among these predictors, marital status emerges as one deserving particular attention in an era characterized by a retreat from wedlock.

To be sure, when the researchers determine the marital status of their study participants, they yield to political correctness in assigning these participants to the “two categories of living with or without spouse *or partner*” (emphasis added). Given the evidence from past studies indicating that married couples enjoy many clear advantages over peers living in non-marital cohabitation, readers may suspect that this new study understates the effects of marital status as defined by wedding vows. But despite the constraints of their political correctness, the researchers recognize and report that marital status predicts poor health habits and that it even more dramatically predicts lifestyle changes that improve such habits.

When looking at daily smoking, the researchers discern a statistical trend linking this health-endangering practice to single living, those living with a spouse or partner being about a quarter less likely to smoke daily than their single peers (Odds Ratio of 0.74; $p < 0.10$). In further parsing of the data, however, the researchers discover a much sharper association between marital status and the termination of a smoking habit during the study period. Compared to single smokers in the study, smokers living with a spouse or partner were almost four times as likely to kick the tobacco habit during the study period (Odds Ratio of 3.71; $p < 0.05$).

Turning their attention to physical activity, the researchers found those living with a spouse or partner were just as likely to be couch potatoes as were their single peers, with no significant difference in “physical inactivity” evident between the two groups in 2004. However, a truly dramatic difference between the two groups emerges in the likelihood

that they would by 2007 break out of their coach potato habits by starting some regular exercise. Compared to single peers, physically inactive study participants were almost *ten times* as likely to become physically active by the end of the study period (Odds Ratio of 9.65; $p < 0.05$).

Of course, the researchers see how “living with a partner . . . could encourage positive change in smoking behavior and physical activity.” Curiously, though, these analysts judge marital status to be a social circumstance that does not affect lifestyle changes “in a consistent way,” since the statistics show “no [marital-status] effect on changing drinking behavior.” Given the remarkably strong linkage established in this study between marital status and lifestyle changes affecting smoking and physical activity, however, only blind policymakers will ignore that linkage as they seek “to target policies toward individuals in need of lifestyle change.”

The policies most important for helping older men and women to quit smoking and become physically active would appear to be those that result in more lasting marriages and fewer single-person households.

(Reza Rezayatmand, Milena Pavlova, and Wim Groot, “Socio-economic Aspects of Health-Related Behaviors and Their Dynamics: A Case Study for the Netherlands,” International Journal of Health Policy and Management 5.4 [2016]: 237-51.)

The Wedlock Protection against Sudden Death

With dismaying frequency, relatively young American men and women suddenly and unexpectedly drop dead. But not all Americans face the same risk of such an untimely and abrupt end to life. Indeed, in a newly published study, a team of epidemiologists at the University of North Carolina conclude that men and women in an intact marriage enjoy strong protection against Sudden Unexpected Death (SUD).

To determine the antecedents of Sudden Unexpected Death, the authors of this new study examine the medical files for all of the 190 individuals younger than 65 who died suddenly and unexpectedly between March 2013 and March 2014 in Wake County, North Carolina. The researchers calculate that for the residents of Wake County between the ages of 18 and 64, the incidence of SUD for the year in question was

32.1/100,000. By compiling all of the data from the SUD files included in this study, the North Carolina scholars establish that “the majority of such deaths were unwitnessed and occurred in white, unmarried, hypertensive men with an average age of 53 years.”

The descriptor *unmarried* acquires its full significance only as the researchers compare the statistical profile of the 190 SUD victims in their study to the aggregate statistical profiles of all of the deceased former residents of Wake County and of all the currently living residents of the county. These statistical comparisons reveal that the men and women identified in this study as victims of SUD were “significantly less likely to be married” than were the deceased former residents of the County (33% vs. 46%; $p = 0.018$) and were likewise significantly less likely to be married than were the currently living residents of Wake County (33% vs. 53%; $p < 0.001$). The data further establish that of the 190 SUD victims examined in this study, “only 1.5% . . . were both married and had a witnessed death.”

The North Carolina scholars do not shrink from the obvious implication of their findings: “This [analysis],” they remark, “supports the observation that marriage is a protective factor from sudden death.”

Lamentably, the finding that marriage protects men and women against sudden and unexpected death will come as good news to all too few at a time when the marriage rate keeps dropping while the divorce rate remains stubbornly high.

(Mary Elizabeth Lewis et al., “Estimated Incidence and Risk Factors of Sudden Unexpected Death,” *Open Heart* 3.1 [2016]: e000321.)

Violence in Teen Dating—The Family Roots of the Problem

Concerned about the disturbingly high levels of violence in teen dating relationships, social workers and public-health officials are investing considerable effort in educational strategies for combatting the problem. Those designing these strategies, however, generally ignore a prime incubator of teen dating violence, an incubator that comes into sharp focus in a study recently completed at Bowling Green State University. That typically overlooked incubator is that of being reared in a broken home.

Alarmed by “the phenomenon of teen dating violence (TDV),” the

authors of this new study begin their inquiry into the problem aware of the “troubling rates of perpetration and victimization” for such violence and conscious that “early (adolescent) exposure” to this problem predicts “risk for later IPV [Intimate Partner Violence] during adult life.”

To gauge the extent of the problem and to identify the circumstances that foster it, the researchers examine data collected between 2001 and 2011 from 955 seventh, ninth, and eleventh graders (467 males and 488 females) attending public schools in Lucas County, Ohio. These data indicate that approximately one in six of the students in the study (16.33%) had committed violent acts against a dating partner during adolescence.

In analyzing the antecedents of teen dating violence, the researchers focus largely on “exposure to friends’ violence” and on “the normative climate of schools.” But careful readers will quickly realize that teens’ family background looms very large as a predictor of such violence. In their statistical analysis of the data, the authors of the study indeed acknowledge “the significant differences with respect to family structure, where both single-parent and ‘other’ family types [*i.e.*, grandparent and other no-parent family types] are significantly more likely to report TDV perpetration than are respondents from two biological parent families, at 2.1 and 2.4 times, respectively [$p < 0.001$ for both comparisons].”

Given that adolescents from broken homes are more than twice as likely to commit violent acts against a teen dating partner than peers from two-biological-parent homes, readers are hardly surprised when the researchers note that “the family is a robust predictor, whether the focus is on TDV [Teen Dating Violence] or violence that occurs within adult relationships.” But what may puzzle—even astonish—readers is the way the researchers avert their eyes from family considerations in concluding comments on the implications of their findings for “efforts designed to deter or interrupt dating violence.”

Perhaps “prevention efforts targeting teens” should—as the researchers argue in their conclusion—include “a peer component or emphasis” that engages teens in “discussions about relationship dynamics associated with conflict escalation” and that helps them realize “the harmful effects of resorting to violence within one’s intimate relationships.” But so long as a large number of teens grow up in broken homes, these prevention efforts are all too often going to prove futile.

(Peggy C. Giordano et al., "Teen Dating Violence: The Influence of Friendships and School Context," *Sociological Focus* 48.2 [2015]: 150-71.)

The Black-White Marriage Gap—Dollars and Doubts

Though marriage rates have been declining for all ethnic groups in America in recent decades, social scientists marvel at the particularly precipitous decline among African Americans, a decline opening an unprecedented marriage gap separating blacks from whites. Accounting for this social chasm is the challenge that a team of social scientists from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of California, Los Angeles, recently took on in a study published in *The Future of Children*. Though their analysis is not conclusive, it does expose the socially corrosive effects of recent changes in the nation's economy and its culture.

Acknowledging that the racial difference in marriage rates is now "striking," the authors of the new analysis stress the relative novelty of this difference. "Racial differences in marriage remained modest as recently as 1970," they remark, noting that in that year "94.8 percent of white women and 92.2 percent of black women had ever been married." By contrast, data for 2010 indicate that, compared to white women, "a far lower proportion of black women have married at least once by age 40." These data show that while nearly nine out of ten white women (and more than eight out of ten Hispanic women) have been or still are married by their early 40s, "fewer than two-thirds of black women reported having married at least once by the same age."

Not only do the analysts see post-1970 marriage rates among African Americans dropping to levels much lower than those found among whites, but they also see "marital instability continu[ing] to diverge between black and white women," so that divorce rates among African Americans now run markedly higher than among whites. "About 60 percent of white women who have ever married are still married in their early 40s," the analysts point out, "compared to 55 percent of Hispanic women but only 45 percent of black women."

This plunge in marriage rates and the simultaneous rise in divorce rates have no doubt impaired the quality of life for African Americans considered simply as adult individuals. But the authors of the study worry about what it means for African American adults as parents—and

for African American children. Looking at Census data for 2014, the analysts find that while “70 percent of non-Hispanic white children (ages 0–18) and roughly 59 percent of Hispanic children were living with both of their biological parents” in that year, two-biological-parent households accounted for “only a little more than one-third of black children.” Willing to concede that “many children raised in single-parent households thrive and prosper,” the researchers can hardly ignore studies demonstrating that, in the aggregate, “single-parent families are associated with poorer outcomes for children, such as low educational attainment and teen childbearing,” perhaps—they suggest—because the splitting up of parents has the effect of “reducing fathers’ and mothers’ ability to invest in their children.” The Texas and UCLA scholars thus reason that “even if many single-parent families function well and produce healthy children, population-level differences in family stability are associated with distress for both parents and children.”

But why have marriage rates dropped so sharply among African Americans, so putting them at risk for such distress?

The analysts adduce evidence implicating changes in the economy. Pointing to “an enormous decline in unskilled manufacturing jobs during the 1970s and 1980s,” they emphasize that this decline “hit black men particularly hard,” so widening the “black-white unemployment gap.” Indeed, “by 1985 unemployment rates for black men aged 25–54 were two times higher than for white men in the same age range,” and “among men aged 16–24 the racial disparity was even greater, with the unemployment rate for black men three times that of white men.”

Further depressing the number of marriageable black men was the sharp spike in the late twentieth century in incarceration rates for black males: “in the early 2000s, more than one-third of young black men who hadn’t attended college were incarcerated, and nearly twice as many black men under age 40 had a prison record than a bachelor’s degree. Overall, black men are seven times more likely than white men to be incarcerated.”

Still, the researchers must admit that trends in “men’s demographic availability, unemployment, and low earnings don’t completely explain black-white differences in marriage.” After all, they observe, “black marriage rates fell at the same time that racial discrimination was declining

and black men's wages were growing." Between 1960 and 1980, as African-American marriage rates were falling, "the proportion of blacks who were in the middle class (defined as between 200 and 499 percent of the federal poverty line) increased substantially." What is more, "black marriage rates . . . continued falling after 1980 even as black men's unemployment rates and real wages improved."

And why, the analysts must ask, if adverse economic trends are the prime reason for the slide in African-American marriage rates, is it that "the proportion of blacks who are poor is lower today than in 1960, and blacks' median household income, after adjusting for inflation, is higher"?

Overall, then, the researchers must admit that even if "differences in employment, earnings, and wealth might account for a sizeable portion of the contemporary racial gap in marriage," even if deleterious patterns in "school quality and young men's risk of incarceration . . . combine with economic disadvantage to depress black marriage rates," they still cannot explain why the rate for "black marriage began to fall in the middle of the 20th century and why it continued to do so through good economic times and bad."

Compounding the analysts' befuddlement on this point is the "puzzle" that inheres in the fact "that Hispanic marriage patterns more closely resemble those of whites than those of blacks, despite the fact that Hispanic and black Americans face similar levels of economic disadvantage." But as they reflect on the multi-generational marriage patterns among Hispanics, however, the Texas scholars do tease out a few clues as to what has happened among African Americans. These scholars cite work by colleagues inclined to believe that marriage rates run surprisingly high among Hispanics because so many of them are "first or second generation immigrants who come from collectivist countries where the imperative to marry remains strong."

The Texas and UCLA analysts assert, however, that "even if the attitudes that immigrants bring from other countries buoy Hispanic marriage rates, over time and across generations Hispanic women in the United States experience lower levels of marriage and higher rates of unmarried childbearing." Elaborating on this point, they point out that among immigrant Hispanic populations, "in the third generation and beyond, Hispanic women's family patterns increasingly resemble those

of black Americans. Exposure to economic disadvantage in the United States, then, combined with the widespread individualistic ethos here, eventually trumps whatever pro-marriage disposition Hispanics might have had.”

Here, among third- and fourth-generation Hispanic immigrants, the Texas scholars appear to have gained some real insight into what has happened to marriage among the African Americans that these Hispanics increasingly resemble in their own marriage behavior. It would appear quite likely that wedlock is imperiled among African Americans largely because of the marriage-inhibiting combination of economic poverty and radical individualism (simply another name for cultural poverty).

Even as the Texas and UCLA scholars insist that “no single explanation can account for all the racial gaps we see in marriage,” they do offer “useful (albeit partial) explanations” when they sketch out a narrative underscoring the power of hyper-individualistic culture to trump economics: “When the imperative to marry was high,” they remark, “as it was through the mid-20th century in the United States, the vast majority of women married despite high levels of poverty. But as an individualistic ethos took hold, the dominant model of marriage shifted from institutional marriage based on gendered roles and economic cooperation to relatively fragile marriages based on companionship, and divorce rates began to climb.” “Rising divorce rates,” they elaborate, “in turn, have further increased the ideal of individual self-sufficiency.”

Unfortunately, African Americans have been especially exposed to a truly perfect storm. For the researchers conclude that though “changing ideas about gender and family relationships” have affected white Americans, these ideas affected African Americans “earlier and more strongly because blacks were and continue to be more economically vulnerable.”

But even as they survey the devastation visited upon the institution of marriage among African Americans, the analysts detect signs that similar social devastation may be starting among lower-class whites. “Since 1980,” they observe, “as economic restructuring has eroded opportunities for less-educated whites, they too are seeing dramatic changes in family life.” These dramatic changes among less-educated whites include “high rates of divorce” and “an increasing proportion [who] are likely to

never marry.”

As the passions surrounding the nation’s electoral politics make quite clear, Americans are more than willing to talk about threatening economic trends. And they should. But for the sake of African Americans and white Americans, for the sake of parents and children, Americans of all races need to take a hard look at the radically “individualistic ethos” that has so distorted our culture that fewer and fewer Americans of any ethnic background can hold a marriage or family together in the face of economic hardship.

(R. Kelly Raley, Megan M. Sweeney, and Danielle Wondra, “The Growing Racial and Ethnic Divide in U.S. Marriage Patterns,” The Future of Children 25.2 [2015]: 89-109.)

The Benefits of Breastfeeding vs. the Lifescripts of Feminism

Medical researchers have invested considerable effort in identifying and quantifying the numerous nutritional, immunological, and developmental benefits of breastfeeding. Their success explains why the American Pediatric Association (APA) now recommends that mothers breastfeed their infant children for a year, relying exclusively on breastfeeding for their babies’ first six months of life. Unfortunately, the success of medical researchers in documenting the many benefits of breastfeeding contrasts with the frustrating failure of practicing pediatricians in actually persuading American mothers to follow the APA’s breastfeeding recommendations. Public-health scholars report that among infants born in the United States in 2011 in the United States, less than one-fifth (19%) were exclusively breastfed for six months and only about two-fifths (41%) were exclusively breastfed for even three months.

The reasons that American pediatricians often fail in their efforts to promote breastfeeding come into sharper focus in a study recently completed by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. For at a time when feminist activists have made maternal marriage optional but maternal employment nearly obligatory, the findings of this new study show that it is married mothers with no plans for out-of-home employment who are most likely to follow the APA’s breastfeeding guidelines.

The authors of the new study focus their analysis on survey data collected from 1,799 women who gave birth to a child between 2005 and 2007 and who indicated that they intended to exclusively breastfeed that child. The researchers then painstakingly identify the characteristics and circumstances differentiating those mothers who actually follow through on their breastfeeding intentions from those who do not. Both the researchers' statistical findings and their interpretive comments about their findings deserve attention. But the statistical findings ultimately prove more reliable than the interpretive comments.

Marital status looms large in the statistical findings. When processing their data in a simple bivariate statistical model, the researchers calculate that, compared to unmarried peers, married mothers were more than three times as likely to follow the APA recommendation of six months of exclusive breastfeeding (Odds Ratio of 3.07). The statistical linkage between wedlock and APA compliance remains almost identical when the researchers reprocess their data in a more complex, multivariable statistical model that adjusts for maternal education, household income, number of previous children and other background characteristics (Odds Ratio of 2.96).

Out-of-home work intentions likewise show up strongly linked to APA compliance. Using their simple bivariate statistical model, the researchers calculate that compared to peers who return to paid employment six weeks or sooner after the birth of their child, those mothers who indicate that they have "no plan to work" are almost five times as likely to exclusively breastfeed for six months (Odds Ratio of 4.90). Even when using their more complex, multi-variable statistical model, the researchers identify mothers with no employment plans as more than four times as likely to follow the APA breastfeeding recommendation as are peers who return to work within six weeks of their child's birth (Odds Ratio of 4.26).

Curiously, the authors of the new study do not focus in their conclusions on what their data say about maternal marital status and maternal employment. Yes, in summarizing their conclusions, the researchers do briefly acknowledge that "baby's father's support of breastfeeding" and mother's "having no plans to return to work" were (along with maternal education and not smoking during the prenatal period) "significantly

associated with exclusively breastfeeding to at least 3 months.” But readers can only consider it strange that the researchers do not underscore wedlock in their summary comment on their statistical findings. After all, the statistical linkage between exclusive breastfeeding and marital status is stronger than the linkage between such breastfeeding and baby’s father’s support of the practice, decidedly so for the APA standard of six months of such breastfeeding (Odds Ratios of 2.96 vs. 1.77 for six months in the multivariable statistical model).

And rather than linger on the politically sensitive finding that APA compliance is most likely among mothers with no plans to return to employment, the authors of the new study focus on the elevation of APA compliance among mothers who “*strongly valued* exclusive breastfeeding.” The researchers correctly note that compared to peers who did not so value exclusive breastfeeding, “mothers who strongly valued exclusive breastfeeding had over 2 times the odds of exclusively breastfeeding for at least 3 months (Adjusted Odds Ratio [AOR] 2.29) and 6 months (AOR 2.49).” And on the basis of this finding, the researchers argue that the time is ripe for “investing in programs that focus on maternal education of exclusive breastfeeding benefits.” Such efforts, they explain, should be “comprehensive and offered in diverse settings including high schools, work sites and community centers.”

Perhaps educational efforts designed to realign maternal values may accomplish some good. But the data unambiguously identify both maternal marital status and maternal employment plans as larger concerns for anyone serious about improving maternal compliance with the APA’s breastfeeding recommendation. The public-health policies that would most benefit infants in this regard are unmistakably those that would put more new mothers in enduring marriages and those that would put such mothers indefinitely in their own home rather than in an office or factory. Until they are willing to defy political correctness by advocating such policies, public-health officials are likely to continue coming up short in their educational attempts to promote breastfeeding.

(Uche H. Nnebe-Agumadu et al., “Associations between Perceived Value of Exclusive Breastfeeding among Pregnant Women in the United States and Exclusive Breastfeeding to Three and Six Months Postpartum: A

Prospective Study,” *International Breastfeeding Journal* 11 [2016]: 8. *Web. Emphasis added.*)

Want a Stressful—but Joyful—Life? Have Children!

With national fertility rates languishing below replacement levels in recent years, Americans might well conclude that many adults now view children as a burden instead of a blessing. Such a negative view of children finds both confirmation and refutation in a study recently conducted by scholars at Princeton and Stony Brook Universities. Although this study shows that living with children exposes adults to stresses not felt by peers living childlessly, it also shows that adults living with children experience decidedly more joy than do peers living without them. In other words, adults who have children experience a life of greater emotional amplitude than do childless peers. That amplitude extends on one side to painful stress and on the other side to intense joy. So children are a burden *and* a blessing.

The authors of the new study set about their inquiry wondering about “the wellbeing of those who do and do not have children” and hoping that clarifying that comparison might help illuminate “why people have children.” To that end, the researchers parse Gallup survey data collected from 1.77 million adults between 2008 and 2012, focusing largely on “the subsample of adults aged from 34 to 46, more than 90% of whom are the parents of the children who live with them.” These surveys incorporate both a life-evaluation metric and measures of day-to-day “hedonic experience” (that, is pleasurable experience).

Using a wide range of indices to compare the well-being of adults ages 34 to 46 with children with that of peers without children, the researchers conclude that “generally, and with the exception of stress, all outcomes are more favorable (higher levels of positive outcomes, and lower levels of negative outcomes) when there are children in the household.” Given the data they have on relative household income, the researchers further conclude that having children in the home is associated with “substantial positive effects on life evaluation, on reducing sadness, worry, anger, and physical pain, and very large effects on happiness, enjoyment, and smiling.”

To be sure, the researchers acknowledge that among adults in this age

group, those with children “report more stress.” Still, one clear pattern stands out: “For this age group, those living with children (in nearly all cases as their parents) have markedly better life evaluations and hedonic experience than those who do not.”

The researchers do recognize that the clear association between the presence of children and enhanced quality of life for adults in their thirties and forties may not be a simple one of cause-and-effect. After all, they acknowledge, “people who live with children are more likely to be married, richer, better educated, more religious, and healthier [than are peers living without children], all of which [comparisons] have well-documented positive associations with evaluative and hedonic wellbeing.”

To clarify the impact on adult well-being of living with children, the researchers reassess their data in a series of statistical models that take into account parental characteristics such as marital status, household income, education, religious involvement, and health. In the most complex statistical model accounting for such characteristics, the researchers find “the presence of a child has a small negative association with life evaluation.”

The Princeton and Stony Brook scholars understand, however, that the “small negative” impact associated with the presence of children in adults’ homes appears only in a model with statistical adjustments so extensive that that they “may overcontrol [the results] by blocking off some of the pathways through which having children affects outcomes.” The researchers note, for instance, that “some people will quit smoking once they have children, or work harder to earn more.” Even more obviously, for many people marriage is “part of the process of having children,” not a statistically independent life event. So for these people, “at least some of the increase in life evaluation that comes with marriage should be properly attributed to children.”

The researchers therefore plausibly reason that just as looking simply at the raw data “overstates the benefits of children,” even so using a statistical model that adjusts for *all* parental characteristics “understates the benefits.”

In any case, the researchers’ raw data make quite clear that living with children at least does not *prevent* adults from enjoying a good life. What is more, “no matter what the [statistical] controls [used to analyze

those data], children are always associated with both more positive and more negative emotions.” Regardless of how the researchers adjust their statistical models, those models identify children in the home as a predictor of a broader range of emotions—both good and bad.

The men and women who are keeping our national birthrate low may think they are saving themselves a lot of trouble by not having children. They are undoubtedly right. Too bad they apparently do not realize that they are also denying themselves a lifetime of incalculable joy.

(Angus Deaton and Arthur A. Stone, “Evaluative and Hedonic Wellbeing among Those with and without Children at Home,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 111.4 [2014]: 1,328-33.)

