

The Natural Family

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The Natural Family

Note from the Editor

It should be noted, first of all, that the essays in this issue were written before the November 8 election of Donald J. Trump to the office of President of the United States. Many observers believe that some of the overreaching, anti-family policies exercised by the U.S. and the other Western nations and intergovernmental organizations described in these essays will soon come to an end.

The Declaration on the next page represents a better way forward. On December 10, 2016, leaders from pro-family organizations from around the world met in Capetown, South Africa, to sign the Capetown Declaration. Over the next year, the International Organization for Marriage, parent organization of the Declaration, will continue to collect signatures, with a final goal of one million.

The editors of this journal affirm that this is precisely the theoretical underpinning that governments, intergovernmental agencies, and NGOs should embrace to promote true family health and prosperity around the world.

*Allan C. Carlson
Editor*

The Capetown Declaration

Spanning the globe, we have no common tongue, culture, or creed. We are divided by history and geography, by social customs and forms of government. But in foundations, we are united. We are of one mind on the bedrock of civil society, on the basis of that first and primordial community called the family: We affirm the dignity of marriage as the conjugal bond of man and woman. We embrace it not as the parochial practice of any sect or nation or age, but as the patrimony of all mankind. We defend it not as a matter of preference or temperament or taste but as the heart of any just social order.

Human beings thrive in communities. And every community finds its foundation where every human being deserves to begin: in marriage. Here a man and a woman commit to join their whole lives as one family and seal their love as one flesh. They show forth the fidelity and unity-in-diversity of any healthy community. Thus do they secure for any children born of their bond, the birthright of all men: to know the faithful love of the man and woman whose union gave them life.

Healthy marriages thus make demands of couples; but wounded ones make greater demands of whole societies. A thriving culture will therefore serve marriage—and all society—by promoting purity outside it and fidelity within; by discouraging pornography, adultery and divorce; and by firmly resisting every push to redefine marriage: to include same-sex or group bonds, or sexually open or temporary ones.

We rededicate ourselves to honoring, restoring, and protecting these truths. We commit, where possible, to refuse to deal with corporations that deny them. We pledge to resist the rising cultural imperialism of Western powers whose governments seek nothing less than ideological colonization.

Together we join in common cause, East and West, North and South, to stand for a truth that no government can change. Bowing to no earthly power, using every just measure, we shall not falter or flag until the truth about marriage is embraced in our laws and honored in our lands.

December 10, 2016

President Obama's Legacy of Cultural Imperialism

Joshua J. Craddock

MULTICULTURALISM, PLURALISM, DIVERSITY, AND TOLERANCE: these were once the watchwords of liberalism. When it comes to issues like abortion and sexuality, however, modern liberalism has no room for such things. Particularly in the realm of international affairs, wealthy elites in developed countries are intent on imposing socially liberal policies on economically developing nations, without considering those countries' traditional cultures and religious beliefs. In other words, today's social liberals want to colonize foreign souls rather than foreign soil. Instead of stripping the developing world of its labor and resources, social liberals seek to strip cultures of their traditional religion and morality.

I have called this impulse “the new cultural imperialism,”¹ and it has become a defining characteristic of the Obama administration's relationship with the developing world, especially Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Over the past eight years, this attitude and course of conduct have become especially pronounced, infiltrating all aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

The Liberal Contradiction

Liberals once staunchly opposed colonialism, politically as well as economically and culturally. Denis Diderot, Immanuel Kant, and other Enlightenment thinkers—building on the work of Christian social reformers like Bartolomé de Las Casas—condemned coercive and

1. Josh Craddock, “The New Cultural Imperialism,” *National Review* (April 28, 2015), available at <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/417556/new-cultural-imperialism>.

exploitative colonization practices.² These writers recognized both the individual rights of non-European peoples as well as the tendency of different peoples to develop divergent customs and institutions.³ Shortly after the scramble for Africa at the turn of the twentieth century, Marxist-Leninists condemned imperial colonization as a natural outgrowth of degenerate global capitalism.⁴ The New Left fused liberal progressive ideals with these Marxist critiques of economic imperialism to form the critical theory of postcolonialism, which attempted to deconstruct modes of Western thought and power relations during the decolonization period of the 1960s and 1970s.⁵

It was in this milieu that the young Barack Obama found himself discussing “neocolonialism, Franz Fanon, [and] Eurocentrism” with fellow students in the dorms at Occidental College.⁶ Much later, in his memorable 2009 Cairo address, President Obama blamed tension between the Middle East and the West on historic “colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims.”⁷ One prominent conservative academic has even advanced the theory that President Obama’s predominant political paradigm is shaped by anti-colonialism.⁸ Yet despite his familiarity with and apparent antipathy toward historic colonialism, President Obama’s term of office has been marked by an imperialistic attitude and course of conduct toward foreign peoples—particularly on issues regarding abortion, sexuality, and the family.

Seminal post-colonial thinker Edward Said, who was one of President Obama’s professors at Columbia, defined imperialism as “the practice and theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling

2. Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003): 3-4.

3. *Ibid.*, at 76.

4. Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Penguin Books, 2010) (1917).

5. John Baylis *et al.*, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 140–45, 187–90.

6. Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father* (Crown Publishers, 2007) (alteration added).

7. Barack Obama, Remarks by the President at Cairo University, June 4, 2009, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

8. Dinesh D’Souza, *The Roots of Obama’s Rage* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2011).

a distant territory.”⁹ On this view, colonialism is a natural outgrowth of imperialism. Said acknowledged that “direct colonialism” had already ended, but warned that imperialism “lingers . . . in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.”¹⁰ Cultural imperialism, then, could be defined as “the domination and eventual subversion of a previously autonomous and vital culture by a more powerful one.”¹¹

If cultural imperialism is an oppressive relationship between power-imbalanced cultures in which the values of the weaker are replaced by the stronger, President Obama and his fellow social liberals face a contradiction. On the one hand, they claim to oppose colonialism and imperialism. On the other, they seek to impose their views of abortion and sexuality upon the rest of the world. Of course, it should be noted that one need not accept the premise that cultural imperialism exists or even that it is always bad, to criticize this contradiction.

This examination of cultural imperialism will focus on its political expressions, even though the global export of American sexual mores also manifests itself through the activity of private individuals—such as through music, film, television, the Internet, and tourism. Namely, this paper will explore America’s use of strong-arm diplomacy to impose libertine sexual dogmas about abortion and the family upon foreign cultures and peoples. These practices can be divided into three channels of diplomatic influence: direct advocacy, financial incentives, and international institutions.

Direct Advocacy: “It is part of our diplomacy now.”

Under President Obama’s administration, the American diplomatic corps has become the international advocacy arm of the sexual revolution. Despite a lack of domestic consensus on the issues of abortion and same-sex unions, these subjects have become centerpieces of American

9. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993).

10. *Ibid.*

11. Ralph H. Bowen, “American Cultural Imperialism Reconsidered,” *Revue Française D’études Américaines* 24/25, May 1985, at 179-93.

foreign policy.

Shortly after being confirmed as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton acknowledged in a Congressional hearing that the administration intended to cajole Latin American and African nations into legalizing abortion.¹² Within weeks, Clinton flew to the Dominican Republic to lobby with missionary fervor against a constitutional amendment designed to protect life from conception.¹³ Clinton later told a global audience that “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed” in order to promote abortion.¹⁴

In 2011, the President issued an executive order which made the “vigorous” promotion of LGBT issues an overarching foreign policy priority.¹⁵ Evidence of this directive can be seen above many American embassies and consulates each June, as they wave rainbow flags beside the Stars and Stripes to celebrate “pride” month. In countries where the natural family is the norm, these displays send an unwanted and imposing message. In one recent instance, Jamaica’s Attorney General Malahoo Forte called the American embassy’s display of a rainbow flag “disrespectful” of Jamaica’s laws and values.¹⁶

Last year, President Obama’s first Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons, Randy Berry, rankled his Jamaican hosts with an unannounced visit intended to pressure the former British colony

12. “Hillary Clinton Defends Worldwide Abortion Rights,” Newsmax, April 23, 2009, available at <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/clinton-abortion-rights/2009/04/23/id/329694/>.

13. Josh Craddock, “Unmasking the U.N.’s Abortion Agenda,” Live Action News, April 18, 2012, available at <http://liveactionnews.org/unmasking-the-uns-abortion-agenda/>.

14. Kerry Pickett, “Hillary On Abortion: ‘Deep-Seated Cultural Codes, Religious Beliefs And Structural Biases Have To Be Changed,’” *Daily Caller*, April 23, 2015, available at <http://dailycaller.com/2015/04/23/hillary-on-abortion-deep-seated-cultural-codes-religious-beliefs-and-structural-biases-have-to-be-changed/>.

15. Office of the Press Secretary, Presidential Memorandum—International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons, The White House, December 6, 2011, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/06/presidential-memorandum-international-initiatives-advance-human-rights-l>.

16. Ed Adamczyk, “Jamaican Attorney General: Flying Rainbow Flag at U.S. Embassy Disrespectful,” *United Press International*, June 16, 2016, available at www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/06/15/Jamaican-attorney-general-Flying-rainbow-flag-at-US-embassy-disrespectful/4631465999490/.

into normalizing homosexual relations.¹⁷ Since his appointment in 2015, Berry has traveled to 42 countries to promote, among other things, the legal recognition same-sex relationships. Nigerian Bishop Emmanuel Badejo explained that Berry's appointment "shows how little the current US administration respects the democratic values it seems to preach, especially when they preach them abroad."¹⁸

President Obama received an icy reception in Kenya and Nigeria—both former British colonies—when he made the redefinition of marriage a centerpiece of his 2015 visit. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta rebuffed the suggestion, explaining at a joint press conference that "Kenya and the U.S. share so many values—common love for democracy, entrepreneurship, value for families," but that "there are some things that we must admit we don't share. [Things that] our culture, our societies don't accept."¹⁹

"We want to focus on other areas that are day-to-day living for us," Kenyatta told Obama, alluding to everyday needs, such as adequate nutrition, clean drinking water, and basic education. "The fact remains that this issue is not an issue that is on the foremost mind of Kenyans."

Several hundred evangelical pastors, representing ten million Kenyans, wrote a letter to President Obama, asking him to refrain from "push[ing] us to [accept] that which is against our faith and culture."²⁰ Just a few years prior, Obama's USAID spent \$23 million to support liberalized abortion laws during a Kenyan constitutional referendum.²¹

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari was even more direct,

17. See Helene Nicholson, "Opinion, After the visits . . ." *Jamaica Observer*, December 31, 2015, available at www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/After-the-visits_47377.

18. Diane Montagna, "Nigerian Bishop: Hillary Clinton's Remarks About Religious Beliefs Show She 'Thinks She Is a God,'" *Aleteia*, April 29, 2015, available at <http://aleteia.org/2015/04/29/nigerian-bishop-hillary-clintons-remarks-about-religious-beliefs-show-she-thinks-she-is-a-god/>.

19. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya, Joint Press Conference with Barack Obama (July 25, 2015), available at <https://youtube/ZUbb2QHKngM>.

20. George Thomas, "Kenyan Pastors to Obama: Don't Bring 'The Gay Talk' Here," *CBN News*, July 22, 2015), available at <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2015/July/Kenyan-Pastors-to-Obama-Dont-Bring-The-Gay-Talk-Here>.

21. "White House Spent \$23M of Taxpayer Money to Back Kenyan Constitution That Legalizes Abortion, GOP Reps Say," *FOX News*, July 22, 2010, available at <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/07/21/gop-lawmaker-blasts-white-house-m-spent-kenya-constitution-vote.html>.

giving the Obama administration a “point-blank” no when it came to the issue of recognizing same-sex relationships.²² That rejection has come at a price. According to Bishop Badejo of Nigeria, the United States has refused to assist with the fight against Boko Haram’s terrorism until the nation changes course on homosexuality and abortion.²³ “Africa is suffering greatly from a cultural imperialism that threatens to erode our cultural values,” he said.²⁴

In fact, advancing the sexual revolution in the developing world appears to trump almost every other American foreign policy consideration. When Venezuela descended into political and economic chaos this summer, the U.S. Embassy in Caracas signaled its own priorities, hoisting the rainbow flag and announcing on its website, “We, the U.S. Embassy community, are committed to advancing human rights for all, including LGBT individuals.”²⁵ Meanwhile, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Roberta Jacobson, marched in the Mexico City “pride” parade, telling reporters, “It is the policy of my country, and President Obama in particular, to support LGBTI communities. And it is part of our diplomacy now.”²⁶

Financial Incentives

President Obama’s administration has not shied away from exploiting the financial dependence of developing countries to advance its sexual agenda. Between 2012 and 2015, the United States spent over 41 million taxpayer dollars to promote the LGBT agenda globally.²⁷ That’s in addi-

22. Nnenna Ibeh, “Buhari ‘Pointblank’ on Gay Rights, Says ‘No’ to U.S. Presidency,” *Premium Times*, July 22, 2015, available at <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/187104-buhari-pointblank-on-gay-rights-says-no-to-u-s-presidency.html>.

23. Diane Montagna, “US Won’t Help Fight Boko Haram Until Nigeria Accepts Homosexuality, Birth Control, Bishop Says,” *Aleteia*, February 17, 2015, available at <http://aleteia.org/2015/02/17/us-wont-help-fight-boko-haram-until-nigeria-accepts-homosexuality-birth-control-bishop-says/>.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Embassy of the U.S. in Caracas, Venezuela, Department of State, LGBT Pride Month, June 2015, available at <https://caracas.usembassy.gov/news-events/embassy-news/lgbt-pride-month-2015>.

26. “U.S. Ambassador Roberta Jacobson Joins Gay Pride Parade in Mexico City,” *The Yucatan Times*, June 27, 2016, available at <http://www.theyucatantimes.com/2016/06/u-s-ambassador-roberta-jacobson-joins-gay-pride-parade-in-mexico-city/>.

27. Norimitsu Onishi, “U.S. Support of Gay Rights in Africa May Have Done More Harm Than

tion to monies from a \$700 million slush-fund “earmarked for marginalized groups” that was used to “support gay communities and causes”—more than half of which was spent in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁸

In one notable instance, Ambassador James Brewster used his office to push the LGBT agenda in the Dominican Republic, suggesting, among other things, that “USAID will make money available for political candidates who support the LGBT cause.”²⁹ The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Dominican Republic wrote a letter asking for the openly homosexual ambassador’s dismissal, calling Brewster’s offer “a violation of [the Dominican Republic’s] national sovereignty and its electoral laws” and “a serious act of blackmail towards national policy.”³⁰ Ambassador Brewster has not been recalled, and he recently joined European and U.N. diplomats at the Santo Domingo “pride” parade.³¹

International abortion groups have also prospered on the taxpayer’s dime. Thanks to President Obama’s repeal of the Mexico City policy during his first week in office, abortion groups have received billions of dollars for population control programs, including \$644 million in 2015 alone.³² The U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA)—which is tied to China’s forced abortion agency—has received over \$230 million since 2009.³³ Due to another Presidential directive, the funding eligibility of religious

Good,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2015, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/21/world/africa/us-support-of-gay-rights-in-africa-may-have-done-more-harm-than-good.html>.

28. *Ibid.*

29. “El Episcopado pide al Gobierno que proteste con Washington por las conductas personales del embajador USA James Brewster porque su unión homosexual es un mal ejemplo para los niños,” *Il Sismografo*, March 25, 2016, available at ilsismografo.blogspot.it/2016/03/republica-dominicana-el-episcopado.html.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Dalton Herrera, *Día Del Orgullo Gay*, *Listin Diario*, “Siete embajadores, incluido el de EE.UU apoyan marcha LGBT en Santo Domingo,” July 4, 2016, available at www.listindiario.com/la-republica/2016/07/04/425516/siete-embajadores-incluido-el-de-ee-uu-apoyan-marcha-lgbt-en-santo-domingo.

32. “President Proposes \$644 Million for International Family Planning and Reproductive Health,” *Population Institute*, April 22, 2014, available at <https://www.populationinstitute.org/newsroom/press/view/60/>.

33. Wendy Wright, “Obama’s Foreign Policy Legacy: Chaos and LGBT,” *Center for Family & Human Rights*, May 5, 2016, available at https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/obamas-foreign-policy-legacy-chaos-lgbt/.

charities is now determined in part upon whether they will train staff to identify transgender children and offer refugees abortions.³⁴ “Countries are told ‘unless you pass certain legislation [on abortion and homosexuality], you are not going to get the aid from the government or the agencies that give aid,’” said Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, South Africa.³⁵

Many would rather lose foreign aid than sell out their culture and beliefs. One writer in Ghana steamed, “The imperialists are at it again. This time, they are threatening to cut foreign aids to countries, including Ghana, that have refused to legalize same sex marriage. . . . We must refuse to take their money. Let us not allow them to divide us in order to colonize us again.”³⁶ Or as Bishop Badejo put it, “African values are not on sale.”³⁷

International Institutions As Instruments of “Ideological Invasion”

The United Nations charter protects the “self-determination of peoples,”³⁸ and the charter of the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) enshrines “respect for the cultural values of the American countries” as one its core principles.³⁹ But when developing countries fail to subscribe to the prevailing Western orthodoxy on abortion and gender, these lofty declarations get tossed out the window. The United Nations—which has overseen the decolonization of more than 80 countries in the last century⁴⁰—has now become a tool of the United States and European nations to impose their cultural agenda on the developing world.

The United States and its liberal European allies were the driving

34. Susan Yoshihara, “Obama Tells Faith-Based Groups they Must Refer Refugee Children for Abortions,” Center for Family & Human Rights, February 19, 2015, available at https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/obama-tells-faith-based-groups-must-refer-refugee-children-abortions/.

35. Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, “Cardinal Napier: Africa is Suffering ‘Ideological Colonization’ by the U.S.,” October 9, 2015, available at https://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/latest_news/2015/2015109_1037.shtml.

36. Emmanuel Dela Coffie, Opinion, “Of Gay Right, Obama, And The Threat To Cut Foreign Aid,” *Modern Ghana*, December 9, 2011, available at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/366029/1/of-gay-right-obama-and-the-threat-to-cut-foreign-a.html>.

37. Montagna, “US Won’t Help Fight Boko Haram.”

38. U.N. Charter art. ¶ 2.

39. Charter of the O.A.S., art. 3 ¶ m.

40. U.N., The United Nations and Decolonization, available at <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/>.

force behind the adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, which treat laws that protect human life in the womb as an obstacle to development.⁴¹ Even though no international treaty recognizes a right to abortion,⁴² member states are forced to report to UN monitors about the extent to which they permit abortion in their countries.⁴³ One analysis showed that during the last cycle of treaty compliance review, 74% of pro-abortion recommendations were directed at Latin American nations.⁴⁴

In June, U.S. diplomats whipped votes in the UN Human Rights Council to establish a Special LGBT Rapporteur to focus on “sexual orientation and gender identity,”⁴⁵ even though no international treaty recognizes those terms as legal categories.⁴⁶ Deputy Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken pressured countries to support the resolution, while Keith Harper, the U.S. envoy to the Human Rights Council, visited national delegations to encourage them to support the resolution—all with the understanding that American aid could be endangered by a lack of cooperation.⁴⁷ As in the past, several countries on the Human Rights Council protested this interference as “cultural imperialism” designed to undermine their traditional national cultures.⁴⁸

Many developing nations perceive these shakedown tactics to be hostile and ham-fisted. “We are no longer faced with an invasion using weapons but an ideological invasion,” said Bishop Víctor Masalles ahead

41. Josh Craddock, “What Can Pro-Lifers Expect From The UN's New Development Goals?,” *Aleteia*, January 21, 2015, available at <http://aleteia.org/2015/01/21/what-can-pro-lifers-expect-from-the-uns-new-development-goals>.

42. San Jose Articles, 2011, available at <http://sanjosearticles.com/>.

43. Craddock, “What Can Pro-Lifers Expect . . . ?”

44. Rebecca Oas, “UN Human Rights System Becomes Pro-Abortion Echo Chamber,” Center for Family & Human Rights, November 26, 2014, available at https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/un-human-rights-system-becomes-pro-abortion-echo-chamber/.

45. Personal interview with Luis Losada, Spanish Language Campaigns Director for CitizenGO, June 30, 2016.

46. Family Watch International, “Talking Points for HRC SOGI Resolution 1,” 2016, available at <http://fwipetitions.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/06/Talking-Points-for-HRC-SOGI-Resolution-2016.pdf>.

47. Losada, personal interview.

48. *Ibid.*; see also Craddock, “The New Cultural Imperialism.”

of the 2016 OAS assembly in the Dominican Republic.⁴⁹ He described this ideological invasion as “one that ignores and even has contempt for traditional Dominican values, and which is seeking a cultural change in a country according to principles alien to that country.”

“Our values come from the Western Christian humanist tradition,” Masalles said. “The OAS should encourage the strengthening of that tradition, not seek to undermine it.”

The Backlash Begins

This unwanted interference in the affairs of developing nations is what Pope Francis has denounced as “ideological colonization.”⁵⁰ The Pope has described it as “conditions . . . imposed by imperial colonizers” to promote “gender theory” and other ideologies which undermine traditional moral, religious, and cultural values.⁵¹ The Pope accused those imposing foreign ideologies of trying “to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life.”⁵²

Speaking in the Philippines—a former colony of Spain and the United States—Pope Francis encouraged crowds to “say ‘no’ to all attempts at an ideological colonization of our families.”⁵³ He later added, “Every people deserves to conserve its identity without being ideologically colonized.”⁵⁴ Cardinal Robert Sarah, a native of the small West African nation of Guinea, has also expounded on this theme, calling the promotion of

49. Austen Ivereigh, “Bishop Accuses OAS of Pro-Abortion, Pro-Gay ‘Ideological Colonization,’” *Crux* (June 11, 2016), available at <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2016/06/11/bishop-accuses-oas-pro-abortion-pro-gay-ideological-colonization/>.

50. Alan Holdren, “Pope Francis Warns West Over ‘Ideological Colonization,’” *National Catholic Register*, January 20, 2015, available at www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-warns-west-over-ideological-colonization.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. Pope Francis, Address at the Mall of Asia Arena, January 16, 2015, available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150116_srilanka-filippine-incontro-famiglie.html.

54. “Pope Francis Discusses Contraception, Charlie Hebdo, Travel Plans,” *CBS News*, January 19, 2015, available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pope-francis-discusses-contraception-charlie-hebdo-travel-plans/>.

“gender ideology” a destructive form of “ideological colonialism” that endangers the family.⁵⁵

For those in the developing world, the comparison to direct colonialism strikes a chord. Many are tired of being force-fed foreign ideologies that undermine their religious beliefs and cultural values. In July, 100,000 Panamanians flooded the streets to oppose a UNFPA “comprehensive sexuality education” bill that would have indoctrinated children with the tenets of gender ideology.⁵⁶

The critique of cultural imperialism also creates a conundrum for modern liberals who deny the existence of a transcendent foundation for human rights, but who want to impose their moral views on the rest of the world. From the perspective of the modern left, abortion and same-sex unions are human rights that all cultures must respect, even though international law does not recognize them as such. But what could justify this normative claim? If there is no universal grounding for human rights, how could any culture assert that another culture is bound to respect their foreign set of norms? Belief in cultural relativism reduces any such arguments to smug pretensions of moral superiority.⁵⁷

By framing the debate in this manner, defenders of the family have artfully appropriated the language of the left and employed it to expose the ideological inconsistencies of those who oppose colonialism with their words, but impose the agenda of the sexual revolution with their deeds.⁵⁸

55. Adelaide Mena, “Resist ‘Ideological Colonization,’ Cardinal Sarah Urges at Prayer Breakfast,” Catholic News Agency, May 18, 2016, available at www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/resist-ideological-colonization-cardinal-sarah-urges-at-prayer-breakfast-68951/.

56. Marianna Orlandi, “100,000 Panamanians March Against UN-Style Sex Ed,” Center for Family & Human Rights, July 28, 2016, available at https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/100000-panamanians-march-un-style-sex-ed/.

57. Cf. Michael Ignatieff, “Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry” (Princeton University Press, 2003), 53–98 (presenting, though ultimately rejecting, this line of argument).

58. This tension might be explained within the theory of cultural imperialism itself. One of Edward Said’s intellectual influences was Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist who advanced a theory of “cultural hegemony” to explain how a “dominant fundamental group” can impose a “general direction . . . on social life.” See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 12 (Quintin Hoare ed., Geoffrey Nowell-Smith trans., International Publishers 1971). Gramsci believed marginalized groups needed to create a counter-hegemony—that is, a new and inapposite set of values to guide society—to thwart and eventually overthrow the dominant capitalist system. Favoring a subtle “war of position” to open class conflict, Gramsci viewed all of civil society as

So what will President Obama's legacy be? In *Dreams from My Father*, the President recalled the words of a Kenyan friend: "[T]he worst thing that colonialism did was to cloud our view of our past."⁵⁹ Today, President Obama's own ideological colonialism—motivated by a historicism that attempts to dictate "the right side of history"—risks clouding the future for the rest of the world. Those on the American left, including the President, have correctly recognized the wrongfulness of traditional spades-and-swords colonialism. It is a tragic irony that these same individuals have replaced it with a condoms-and-cash variety.

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a battlefield for culture war. Later cultural Marxists, fusing their theory with Freudian sexuality, saw how the war of position could be applied to marriage and the family. Understood through a Gramscian lens then, the modern left's opposition to "direct colonialism" and simultaneous support for sexualized cultural imperialism might be reconciled after all. On this view, the sexual revolution is a counter-hegemonic force resisting historically dominant—that is, traditional—cultures and values. Even if the contradiction could be resolved in this manner, however, the left's apparent opposition to broad-stroke "imperialism" and "neocolonialism" would be at least misleading, if not dishonest.

59. Obama, *Dreams From My Father*, at 434.

The United Nations' Role in Women and Children's Well-Being

Janice Shaw Crouse

The United Nations was founded right after World War II in the hope of providing a mechanism that would resolve conflicts without nations resorting to armed conflict, thereby fostering peace and prosperity around the globe. The UN was meant to become the hub through which the Member States (now numbering 193 nations) could communicate, and bring the weight of the assembly of nations in order to solve problems together. In 2015, as the UN celebrated its 70th anniversary,¹ Dr. Kim Holmes, Distinguished Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, wrote that the anniversary was “a chance not only to look back on the history of the organization, but to think about its future.” He added, “The UN has accomplished many things; it also has been a disappointment in many areas.”²

Holmes' critique of the UN is fair enough. With a budget of US\$5.4 billion (not counting the peacekeeping budget of \$9 billion or the disaster relief budget that exceeds \$29.8 billion),³ it is rather shocking to find in a quick Google search more than 24 million entries on “what's wrong

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1. “About the UN: Overview,” The United Nations, available at <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/overview/index.html>.
 2. Kim Holmes, “How to Improve the UN,” *The Daily Signal*, June 13, 2015, available at http://dailysignal.com//print?post_id=188120.
 3. “70 years and half a trillion dollars later: what has the UN achieved?” *The Guardian*, September 7, 2015, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/07/what-has-the-un-achieved-united-nations>.

with the UN.”⁴

“The UN gets into trouble,” Holmes writes, “when it engages on issues that are primarily political, especially controversial ones.” He added,

It is not only that developing countries tend to look upon the U.N. as a stage to redress their grievances against the West and to use these grievances as a means to shame it into providing more foreign aid. It is also the fact that Europe’s dominant liberal culture of social democracy tends to prevail in the workings of the UN’s social and economic bodies.⁵

Many of the problems related to the UN originate in a shift in emphasis from the stated mission of establishing peace and prosperity around the globe to a focus on promoting a radical leftist social agenda. That radical social agenda stems largely from the not-so-gradual rise of the radical feminists’ influence and power within the UN’s operations.⁶ I have written about the UN operating on a three-legged stool—essentially a triumvirate wherein UN agencies and NGOs are now (and have been for a long time) coequal in influence to official delegates,⁷ which is a serious deviation from UN procedures and results in major distortions and expansions of the UN mission.

From my experience of more than 20 years at the UN—including working as an NGO delegate advising official delegates and also as an official U.S. delegate appointed by President George W. Bush to two sessions, The Children’s Summit (2002) and the Commission on the Status of Women (2003)—I have learned that whatever the theme of the session and whether it is an official or NGO meeting, there are always several common characteristics. One is that any involvement of conservatives

4. “UN Budget for 2016/2017 adopted by UN General Assembly,” General Assembly of the United Nations, December 23, 2015, available at <http://www.un.org/pga/70/2015/12/23/general-assembly-adopts-un-budget-for-2016-17/>.

5. Holmes, “How to Improve the UN.”

6. For an example of how the treaties are implemented see Janice Shaw Crouse, “Gender Equality Gobbledygook,” *Townhall*, January 19, 2007, available at http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2007/01/19/gender_equality_gobbledygook.

7. Quoting Janice Shaw Crouse in, “Report: United Nations Attempts to Fix all Women’s Problems,” by CWALAC Staff, May 31, 2013, available at <http://archives.cwfa.org/report-united-nations-attempts-to-fix-all-womens-problems/>.

brings out hostile reactions and bullying behavior. The left, increasingly, views the UN as their exclusive club—their playground, if you will.⁸ I have seen the roadblocks that conservatives face, everything from minor difficulties in getting a badge, meeting locations being changed at the last minute without notification of the conservatives, blocking accreditation efforts of conservative groups, to major hard-nosed efforts to get conservative NGO groups kicked out of the UN. It is not uncommon in final negotiating sessions to see leftists become vicious and vindictive when things do not go their way.⁹ They will then demand that the conservatives agree with their positions in order to reach consensus and brand us as “obstructionist” when we are unwilling to bend¹⁰—ignoring the fact that they, too, are unwilling to bend. Nevertheless, it is the conservatives who are expected to “compromise” and thus achieve “common ground.”¹¹

Increasingly, the Left’s route to implementing UN policy is for the UN to focus on women’s and children’s “rights” treaties that can be used to enforce their radical agenda around the world.

Women’s Rights

A 2013 article which cited the ten top accomplishments of the UN lists “promoting women’s rights” as number one.¹²

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8. Here are leftist critiques of my work at the UN and throughout culture on family, marriage, faith and other issues—especially addressing conservative opposition to UN treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Pam Chamberlain, “Janice Shaw Crouse: A Warrior with Words,” *The Public Eye* 24.3 (Fall 2009), available at <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n3/janice-shaw.html>; Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 80-157, available at <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/globalizing-family-values>.
 9. Janice Shaw Crouse, “The UN: Is it Worth Fixing?” *Townhall*, March 6, 2007, available at http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2007/03/06/the_un_is_it_worth_fixing.
 10. Timothy Herrman and Stefano Gennarini, “US Bullying Angers Developing World and Leads to US Defeat at UN,” Center for Family & Human Rights, March 22, 2012, available at https://cfam.org/friday_fax/us-bullying-angers-developing-world-and-leads-to-us-defeat-at-un/.
 11. Here is another critique of conservative women daring to be involved in the public square: “The New Phyllis Schlafly: Janice Shaw Crouse,” Women’s Law Project, October 14, 2009, available at <https://womenslawproject.wordpress.com/2009/10/14/the-new-phyllis-schlafly-janice-shaw-crouse/>.
 12. Flora Khoo, “10 Things Accomplished by the United Nations,” *Borgen Magazine*, October 10, 2013, available at <http://www.borgenmagazine.com/10-things-accomplished-united-nations/>.

The United States contributes more than any other nation to the UN budget—22% of the regular budget and 29% of the peacekeeping budget.¹³ While that does not earn the U.S. more direct power in terms of votes, it enables the radical feminist NGOs in the United States and their cohorts in other Member States to have outsized influence.

After long-term strategizing and laying of groundwork, 1975 was designated the UN’s “International Women’s Year,” followed by “The United Nations Decade for Women” from 1976 to 1985—which included a World Plan of Action and a dramatic increase in NGOs with the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). All of this happened following the drafting in 1972 of the controversial Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.¹⁴ This proposed treaty is promoted as a women’s rights treaty (focusing on the “women’s rights” agenda rather than the human rights of women).

Further, the UN began defining women in a revolutionary way—as “mother, worker and citizen,” intentionally leaving out “wife”¹⁵ and thus implying that the “wife” role is insignificant and unnecessary, even a handicap to women’s well-being and economic security. This anti-wife theme has progressed to the point of “maternal bullying”¹⁶—a narrative trying to convince women that marriage means a man will control a woman’s life by violence and abuse, especially when she is pregnant. This narrative also encompasses the idea of male irresponsibility and reinforces the idea that society discriminates against pregnant women.¹⁷ Marriage and children, then, are inherently limiting for women’s potential and well-being.

13. Holmes, “How to Improve the UN.”

14. For an explanation of the problems related to CEDAW, see Janice Shaw Crouse, “The Stalking Horse Named CEDAW,” *The Free Republic*, January 18, 2004, available at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1060258/posts>.

15. Arvonne Fraser, “UN Decade for Women: the Power of Words and Organizations,” in *Women and Social Movements: 1840 to Present*, Thomas Dublin and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. (Alexandria: Alexander Street Press, LLC, 2016), available at http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/un_decade_for_women_the_power_of_words_and_organizations.

16. Janice Shaw Crouse, “UN Speak at the CSW: New Wine in Old Bottles,” Concerned Women for America, March 5, 2012, available at <http://archives.cwfa.org/un-speak-at-the-csw-new-wine-in-old-bottles/>.

17. *Ibid.*

From 1975 to 1995, there were four United Nations World Conferences on Women (Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing). All these events, according to Ambassador Arvonne Fraser—former ambassador to the Commission on the Status of Women, former coordinator of the Office of Women in Development at the U.S. Agency for International Development, and former Senior Fellow of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute on Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota—were motivated by the idea that “when you put something in law you change culture.”¹⁸ UN treaties, of course, are not law, but “customary law” has become a direct implication of the treaties; economic benefits are given or withheld by the UN according to a specific nation’s adherence to the treaties.

It would be impossible to overstate the influence of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995)¹⁹. There, a Platform for Action was embraced by First Lady Hillary Clinton, who famously said, “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” and went back home to set up women’s bureaus in every U.S. federal agency to further so-called “women’s rights,” including “political quotas and positive measures.”²⁰

During Beijing and the subsequent Beijing+ Conferences (Beijing 5, 10, 15 and 20), “gender parity” and “gender mainstreaming” were major priorities and became a focus around the world through U.S. State Department and UN pressure and funding. Such pressure on Member States is a form of cultural or Western imperialism—local cultural or religious traditions are trampled in the rush to superimpose Western values (particularly unlimited access to abortion and free contraceptives) on other nations and socially construct radical social views and values regarding “women’s rights.”²¹

18. Elizabeth Noll, “Arvonne Fraser: The Seeds of the International Women’s Movement,” *Minnesota Women’s Press*, December 29, 2004, available at <http://www.womenspress.com/main.asp?Search=1&ArticleID=830&SectionID=3&SubSectionID=29&S=1>.

19. Note: I trained a nine-member team for the Institute on Religion and Democracy to participate at the Beijing conference and wrote a daily news page, “The Beijing Bulletin,” which described the proceedings and was faxed to 1,500 media outlets.

20. “Women in Power and Decision-Making: The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20,” UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, available at <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/decision-making>.

21. Janice Shaw Crouse, “Paying for ‘Gender Equality,’” *Townhall*, February 28, 2008, available at

Next, the UN began linking feminism to economics and environmentalism in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the more recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—both efforts had more emphasis on “women’s rights” than on the economy and environment. Both efforts undermined traditional values and pushed an anti-life agenda, “demography, not destiny.”²²

NGO leaders as well as delegates know that words have consequences, so documents are carefully crafted using vague terms with generally understood definitions, but as those words are interpreted the meanings are expanded; as a result, cultures change.²³ Inevitably, “reproductive rights” means abortion, and “gender equity” and “gender mainstreaming” mean quotas. Words, then, become codes that can be interpreted as policy and thus become vehicles of transformation. Each succeeding world conference on women has caused an exponential increase in the ways women’s issues are taking on a life of their own around the world, forcing governments to respond. More significantly, this revolution is increasingly viewed as being hindered by “religious fundamentalism” that embodies “deep-seated prejudices” that cause “discriminatory practices against women.”²⁴

Women gained even greater power in 2010 with the establishment of a body incorporating all of the various UN agencies under one entity—UN Women: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.²⁵ This powerful consolidation of women’s agencies within the UN (often referred to as a “global policy-making body”) gave women unprecedented global influence.²⁶ UN Women is now among the most powerful of the various entities of the UN in

http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2008/02/28/paying_for_gender_equality.

22. Crouse, “UN Speak at the CSW.”

23. Fraser, “Power of Words and Organizations.”

24. *Ibid.*

25. Janice Shaw Crouse, “UN Considers Adding Billion-Dollar Women’s Agency,” *Townhall*, February 28, 2007, available at http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2007/02/28/un_considers_adding_billion-dollar_women%E2%80%99s_agency/; also, “The Push for the UN to Gear Up,” Concerned Women for America, March 7, 2008, available at <http://archives.cwfa.org/the-push-for-the-u-n-to-gear-up/>.

26. Crouse, “UN Speak at the CSW.”

working to impose radical policies and practices related to women's rights and gender identity.

Children's Rights

Also cited among the top ten things that the UN has accomplished is reducing child mortality—certainly a laudable goal. In 1990, one out of ten children died before they were five years old. Through clear water, better sanitation, and better health and nutrition practices, that number dropped by 2011 to one in eighteen. The goal is to reduce the number by another two-thirds.²⁷ The UN has also helped to wipe out contagious diseases among children, including polio, which exists in only three countries now thanks in part to the UN's Global Polio Eradication Initiative; it has also helped to halt the spread of many epidemics affecting children through the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network.²⁸

The UN has also done good work in enforcing laws against child marriage; promoting education for girls; providing good health services before, during, and after childbirth; and working with families and boys to promote respect for girls' rights and zero tolerance for violence against girls and women.²⁹

Among these good emphases and outcomes, however, are some underlying philosophies that are deeply and virulently anti-religion, and particularly anti-traditional Judeo-Christian values. The major instrument through which the UN is affecting transformative changes in life issues and children's rights is the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The UNCRC was signed by Madeleine Albright, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. President Bill Clinton did not submit it to the Senate for approval, nor has any subsequent president because opposition to the treaty is widespread. Religious groups are often blamed for U.S. opposition to the CRC, but there are substantive objections. No benefits to children in the treaty are lacking in current U.S. laws and

27. Khoo, "10 Things Accomplished by the United Nations."

28. *Ibid.*

29. Janice Shaw Crouse, "The UN's Solutions to Teen Pregnancy," *Townhall*, March 3, 2008, available at http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2008/03/02/the_un%E2%80%99s_solution_to_teen_pregnancy.

policies, and there are numerous problems, foremost of which is the curtailment of parents' rights in educating and supervising their children.

As with most, if not all, UN treaties, a specific leftist agenda is implicit in the individual provisions. As Patrick F. Fagan writes, they “counter traditional moral and social norms regarding the family, marriage, motherhood and religion.”³⁰ The provisions of the treaties would take precedence over U.S. laws, thus causing national sovereignty issues. Other areas are problematic: the provision for severe punishment for under-aged juvenile offenders that is in conflict with U.S. laws and, especially, the matter of the “rights” of a child vis-a-vis parental rights. Equally bad are the unintended consequences, including the potential for actual harms to children resulting from the provisions of the treaty. Fagan added:

In general, the social policy agents at these UN committees, often working with radical special interest groups, advise nations to alter the very structure of their societies to decrease the emphasis on marriage, the nuclear family, parental authority, and religious beliefs; mothers are encouraged to find fulfillment by leaving their children in the care of strangers and entering the workforce, and social or legal restraints on sexual activity among adolescents are targeted for removal. Surprisingly, these committees ignore the mounting evidence that the basic family unit of married parents who worship yields far superior social outcomes for children's health, intellectual development, and educational and income attainment, and lower rates of crime, welfare dependency, and teenage pregnancy. They also ignore polls that show most mothers would prefer staying home to raise their young children.³¹

Appointed by President George W. Bush (#43), I was privileged to be an official U.S. Delegate to the UN Children's Summit: The Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children. Unsurprisingly, the summit's poorly hidden agenda was to establish “children's rights” around the world. With the theme “A World Fit for Children,” the summit included

30. Patrick F. Fagan, “How UN Conventions on Women's and Children's Rights Undermine Family, Religion, and Sovereignty,” The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #1407, February 5, 2001, available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2001/02/how-un-conventions-on-womens>.

31. *Ibid.*

a Declaration and a Plan of Action and reiterated the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Global Movement for Children in establishing “child rights” at the center of any and all decisions affecting the lives of children and adolescents worldwide.³² Meeting simultaneously with the children’s summit was the Global Movement for Children, which had the stated goal of turning “young people into skilled policymakers in their communities.”³³

The International Guidelines on Sexuality Education, establishing the “sexual rights of children,” are a highly controversial set of guidelines from the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that pushes “reproductive health care” and “sexuality education” beginning at age five. Tellingly, most of the research for the report comes from the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Both entities push a rights-based approach that shifts responsibility for children’s education from parents to teachers and health authorities. The term *gender* is used nearly 200 times in the 54-page report.³⁴ Specifically, the report stresses that certain beliefs and values are unacceptable and instead provides a “global template” explaining how readers can get around parental and other opposition to sexuality education. It also describes how to plan for implementation. (This is all in spite of the fact that over half of new STDs every year occur among young people, and more than four million girls will seek abortions every year. These guidelines do not promote abstinence; instead they focus on removing the stigma against sexual activity and STDs and teach masturbation and contraception.³⁵)

The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has launched an effort to expand their mission to mainstream

32. “World Leaders ‘Say Yes’ for Children,” United Nations Special Session on Children, May 8-10, 2002, available at <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>.

33. “Global Movement for Children Seeks to Build on Momentum,” United Nations Special Session on Children, May 10, 2002, available at <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/activities/gmfc.htm>.

34. Janice Shaw Crouse, “A Report on the UN’s Shocking Sexuality Guidelines,” *Townhall*, August 31, 2009, available at http://townhall.com/columnists/janiceshawcrouse/2009/08/31/a_report_on_the_un%E2%80%99s_shocking_sexuality_guidelines.

35. *Ibid.*

acceptance of LGBT families and LGBT children, even though there is no evidence that homosexuality is an innate characteristic. Even so, UNICEF is endorsing same-sex “marriage.”³⁶ More bizarre, UNICEF is discouraging international adoptions.³⁷

The United Nations Population Fund almost ten years ago began distributing a booklet, “Giving Girls Today and Tomorrow: Breaking the Cycle of Adolescent Pregnancy.”³⁸ Poverty is cited throughout as a *cause* of early marriage and early sexual activity. These same activists object to abstinence and faithfulness programs, and their approach is to view pregnancy and motherhood as the problem rather than the lack of education and opportunity. Mentioned in passing in the middle of the first page and sporadically through the document is the fact that adolescent pregnancy is actually *declining* worldwide. Even so, the booklet sounds an alarm about the problem, with the solution being safe sex; values-free, non-judgmental attitudes; access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education; readily available, free contraception; and on-demand, free abortion.³⁹

* * *

It is tempting to say that the UN is irrelevant. It has in fact proved important regarding its founding mission of maintaining peace in the world, but through its tentacles of power and money, the UN forces nations to implement treaties and distasteful policies by threats to withdraw development funds. The combination of unintended consequences and deliberate attempts to eradicate religious beliefs and cultural traditions that stand in the way of the radical leftist agenda makes the UN especially dangerous and harmful for women and children.

By undermining the family and the rights of parents; making women’s

36. J.C. von Krempach, “UNICEF gives up children, and instead promotes ‘gay rights,’” Turtle Bay and Beyond, Center for Family & Human Rights, December 15, 2014, available at https://c-fam.org/turtle_bay/unicef-gives-children-instead-promotes-gay-rights/.

37. Kim deBlecourt, “My Problem with UNICEF,” *Nourished Hearts*, June 6, 2011, available at <http://nourishedhearts.com/issues-and-commentary/my-problem-with-unicef/>.

38. Available at https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/giving_girls.pdf.

39. Crouse, “The UN’s Solutions to Teen Pregnancy.”

worth dependent upon their economic contributions rather than including their value within the home and family; expanding children's rights; constructing new social and sexual norms; trying to eradicate the influence of religion and morality; and trying to destroy traditional cultural mores, the United Nations is using women and children to bolster and promote their views and interject their values into the fabric of international cultures.

Fortunately, conservative groups have frequently been successful in blocking the worst of the leftist agenda. Perhaps more importantly, conservatives have exposed the ways that UN entities abuse their roles and bully poor, third-world nations into conformity with their radical agendas by threatening to cut off aid. It is the conservative NGO leaders who have brought attention to the ways the UN has become an instrument of colonialism—exporting the worst of Western values in order to fundamentally transform other nations. These brave and valiant voices in the wilderness need to be heard and heeded by those with power and influence in the Member States.

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Protection of the Family in International Law: Recent Developments and Challenges

Thomas A. Jagels

AT THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, a significant victory was scored for the countries and advocates dedicated to the promotion of the natural family: a resolution on the protection of the family, with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, was adopted by 32 votes to 12.¹ The result of the vote largely adhered to established factional lines, with Russia, China, and almost all African and Muslim states voting in its favor, and European Union states and their allies voting against. The 20-vote margin was nevertheless resounding. Throughout the process of negotiating the document, however, confusion seemed to abound.

“Why does the family need protecting?” one Western diplomat had complained. “We aren’t even sure what it means to ‘protect’ the family.” Another agreed, and challenged the main country sponsors to justify the resolution by pointing to even one international instrument containing language affording protection to the family. The chairman wryly smiled and leaned towards his microphone:

I suggest that the distinguished representative review the Universal

1. A/HRC/RES/32/23, Human Rights Council Resolution on Protection of the Family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities, adopted July 1, 2016, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/156/45/PDF/G1615645.pdf>.

Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights if any such justification is required. I would also like to point out that if representatives have become unfamiliar with the obligations contained within the covenants and declarations that their nations signed and even helped draft, then I think that this draft resolution is even timelier than we had previously imagined.

On December 10, 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the United Nations General Assembly, in the wake of the horrors of the Second World War, adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global statement of the rights which all human beings inherently possess. Article 16 of the Declaration asserted that men and women of full age have the right to marry and found a family and that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”² Correspondingly, Article 12 recognized a right to freedom from arbitrary interference with one’s family.³

As a result of this Declaration, the path towards the protection of the family in all major international arenas began, most importantly in later binding UN instruments, at the Council of Europe, and at the European Union. Despite this robust protection, however, a number of threats to the family’s esteemed position in international law have arisen. These shall be examined presently by way of assessing the black-letter legal protection afforded to the family by these institutions in light of contemporary political pushes to undermine it, especially and most strikingly through explicit opposition to recognition of the family’s integral role in civilization, as well as the promotion of “sexual orientation and gender identity” in the international sphere.

United Nations

Articles 12 and 16 of the UDHR formed the basis of Articles 17 and 23 of the legally-binding International Covenant on Civil and Political

2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

3. *Ibid.*

Rights (ICCPR) adopted in 1966.⁴ Building on this, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognized in Article 7(1) that every child has, “as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents,” and in Article 9(1) that “a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will” without due legal process where the separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.⁵ Its Preamble also states that

the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.⁶

Since 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council has adopted three resolutions on the protection of the family. Resolution 26/11 was adopted on July 26, 2014, by a vote of 26 to 14, and recognized “that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children and that children, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”⁷ The Council also declared “that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members,

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4. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>; this also provided the foundation for Article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), in which Member States recognized that “the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children,” as well as the according of special protection to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth.
 5. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. A/HRC/RES/26/11, Human Rights Council Resolution on Protection of the Family, adopted June 26, 2014, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/086/78/PDF/G1408678.pdf>.

and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.”⁸

Resolution 29/22 was adopted on July 3, 2015, by a vote of 29 to 14, and focused on “the contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development.”⁹ It recognized “that the family, while respect for the rights of its members is ensured, is a strong force for social cohesion and integration, intergenerational solidarity and social development, and that the family plays a crucial role in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage and the values system of society”; also recognized was the fact that “the family unit is facing increasing vulnerabilities,” as well as other significant additions to the groundwork laid by the previous resolution.¹⁰

Resolution 32/23 was adopted by a recorded vote on July 1, 2016, and focused on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities. It added a number of operating paragraphs building on the progress made by the previous resolution.¹¹ Both the second and the third resolutions enjoyed larger margins of victory than their immediate predecessors. The fact that they were put to recorded votes, however, meant that significant opposition existed from an extremely vocal minority of Member States, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many civil society groups promoting the “LGBT agenda,” as well as several members of the European Parliament (MEPs), have repeatedly labelled the resolutions as

8. *Ibid.*

9. A/HRC/RES/29/22, Human Rights Council Resolution on Protection of the Family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development, adopted July 3, 2015, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/163/18/PDF/G1516318.pdf>.

10. *Ibid.*

11. A/HRC/RES/32/23, Human Rights Council Resolution on Protection of the Family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities, adopted July 1, 2016, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/156/45/PDF/G1615645.pdf>.

“non-inclusive,” and protest that employing the singular “family” instead of “families” excludes “diverse forms of the family.”¹²

In all three resolutions, attempts have been made by European and Latin American countries to introduce amendments recognizing that in “different cultural, political and social systems various forms of the family exist,” as well as to change all mentions of “the family” to “families,” in order to remove focus from the family as an institution. Despite the fact that the resolutions specifically recognize and note the vulnerabilities of single-parent-headed and child-headed households, proponents of “inclusivity” have complained that the focus on the singular family discriminates against alternative household arrangements, implying the apparent exclusion of households headed by same-sex couples.¹³ The language used in binding international covenants such as the ICCPR and the ICESCR (the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights), however, specifically marks out “the family” as an institution rather than “families” as individual units.

The sponsors of Resolution 29/22 were labelled “detached from reality” by the International Service for Human Rights, and the resolution was accused of “increasing vulnerabilities and exacerbating inequalities.”¹⁴ This NGO complained that the resolution elevated the family as an institution in need of protection “without critical assessment of the needs of individual rights-holders within the family.” Operating Paragraph 17 of the same resolution provides a response, stating that “violations and abuses of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of family members adversely affect families and have a negative impact on efforts aimed at protecting the family.”¹⁵

12. “UN Human Rights Council adopts non-inclusive ‘Protection of the Family’ resolution,” The European Parliament’s Intergroup on LGBT Rights, last modified June 27, 2014, <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/press-releases/un-human-rights-council-adopts-non-inclusive-protection-of-the-family-resolution/>.

13. Cf. A/HRC/RES/32/23, Operating Paragraph 9.

14. “Protection of the Family resolution increases vulnerabilities and exacerbates inequalities,” International Service for Human Rights, last modified June 19, 2015, available at <http://www.ishr.ch/news/protection-family-resolution-increases-vulnerabilities-and-exacerbates-inequalities>.

15. A/HRC/RES/32/23, Human Rights Council Resolution on Protection of the Family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities, adopted July 1, 2016, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/>.

This criticism was repeated during informal negotiations on Resolution 32/23, and the answer from the sponsors was the same both times: the family requires protection as an institution not because it is itself a rights-holder, but so that the rights of its members be optimally guaranteed. Protecting the family involves preventing the causes of abuse and neglect that occur within individual units in order that the institution can function as it properly should. Unfortunately, with each resolution proposed and adopted, the same condemnations arise: “families perpetuate patriarchal oppression, traditions and harmful practices, and . . . human rights abuses do occur within families.”¹⁶ Such criticisms miss the point of these resolutions, as nobody denies that human rights abuses can and do occur within families, and part of the rationale behind protecting the family involves minimizing this as much as possible.

Challenges to promoting the protection of the family, however, are not relegated solely to pro-family resolutions. It is no coincidence that the loudest hostile voices have come from attempts by proponents of “LGBT rights” to advance counter resolutions and initiatives. Although a series of General Assembly resolutions on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions have included protection of persons on the grounds of “sexual orientation” since 2003, this language has gained very little ground over the years in negotiated UN documents. This is due to the fact that it has no grounding in international law and is opposed by the majority of Member States. In recent years, certain UN bodies and Member States have taken a much more focused approach towards “sexual orientation and gender identity” (SOGI), thereby advancing an extremely controversial issue lacking consensual support, counter to the manner in which the UN is meant to function.

A number of approximations of the natural family exist to varying extents, but the reason why the family is recognized as the natural and fundamental unit of society is because it exists antecedent to the state and all positive law, being rooted in the biological reality of the

G16/156/45/PDF/G1615645.pdf

16. “SRI Condemns HRC29 Resolution on ‘Protection of the Family,’” Sexual Rights Initiative, last modified July 6, 2015, available at <http://sexualrightsinitiative.com/2015/hrc/hrc-29-session/sri-condemns-hrc29-resolution-on-protection-of-the-family/>.

sexual complementarity and procreative potential of men and women. International instruments recognize the right to marry as a compound right to establish a family due to the fact that the interest of every state in sexual and romantic unions is ultimately rooted in the right of children to be jointly raised by both of their biological parents wherever possible.¹⁷ Though good intentions may well be at the core of the movement to enshrine SOGI in international law, its logical conclusions and current trajectory pose a grave threat to the way in which the family should properly be understood, legislated for, and protected. The most pertinent example of this is that recognition of SOGI as a distinct class of protection paves the way for eventual demands that same-sex marriage be recognized as a universal human right, which would completely undermine the aforementioned rationale behind the recognition of the right to marry and protection of the natural family.

The genesis of this push in its contemporary form at the UN was in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. From November 6-9, 2006, an international seminar of socially progressive legal experts met at Gadjah Mada University for the purpose of drafting the “Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.” Although legally binding international instruments make no reference to SOGI whatsoever, the Principles have attempted to read-in new rights and thus represent a serious, albeit illegitimate, challenge to international legal protections for the family.¹⁸

The Principles stop short of explicitly claiming there to be a fundamental human right to same-sex “marriage,” but Principle 24 nevertheless interprets the right to found a family as including “diverse forms,” so that access to adoption and assisted reproduction must be legislatively and administratively available to same-sex couples, and that same-sex

17. Cf. Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, & Robert P. George, “What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense,” *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 34.1 (2013): 245, accessed October 1, 2016, available at <http://www.harvard-jlpp.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GeorgeFinal.pdf>; Ryan T. Anderson, “Marriage Matters: Consequences of Redefining Marriage,” The Heritage Foundation, March 18, 2013, accessed October 1, 2016, available at http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2013/pdf/ib3879.pdf

18. “Backgrounder: The Yogyakarta Principles—An Overview,” The Yogyakarta Principles, accessed September 29, 2016, available at http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/backgrounder_en.pdf.

relationships must be treated on the same terms as opposite-sex unions of the same legal status.¹⁹ Signatories to the Principles include UN mandate holders and members of treaty bodies, representatives of pro-LGBT NGOs, politicians, judges, and legal academics, but, as the document was not negotiated by UN Member States, it has no binding force whatsoever.²⁰

Despite this, UN treaty bodies have seen fit to read the Principles into their interpretation of binding covenants and conventions, acting outside their mandates and undermining the negotiation processes of the UN system. General Comment 4 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and General Comment 20 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights both interpret “other status” in the non-discrimination provisions of their respective treaties as including “sexual orientation and gender identity;” the latter directly and explicitly referencing the Principles in doing so.²¹

Almost immediately following the signing of the Principles, on December 1, 2006, Norway presented a joint statement on human rights violations based on SOGI at the third session of the HRC on behalf of 54 states.²² This was followed on December 18, 2008, by an analogous joint statement at the General Assembly presented by Argentina on behalf of 66 states,²³ which prompted a joint statement in opposition to the promotion

19. The Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, The Yogyakarta Principles, accessed September 29, 2016, available at http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.pdf.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 4: Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC/GC/2003/4 (General Comment), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, last modified July 1, 2003, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/Health/GC4.pdf>; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 20: Non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2, para. 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, last modified July 2, 2009, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/E.C.12.GC.20.doc>.

22. 2006 Joint Statement, 3rd Session of the Human Rights Council, Joint Statement by H.E. Wegger Chr. Strømme, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations Office in Geneva, ARC International, last modified December 1, 2006, available at <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/sogi-statements/2006-joint-statement/>.

23. 2008 Joint Statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity delivered by

of a SOGI agenda, mainly from Central Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and South-east Asian states, which at present is signed by 54 states.²⁴ All of this culminated in South Africa initiating Resolution 17/19, expressing “grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity,” and requesting that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights commission a study documenting “discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.” This resolution was adopted by the HRC on June 17, 2011, by a recorded vote of 23 to 19.²⁵

Resolution 17/19 was followed by Resolution 27/32, adopted on September 26, 2014, by a vote of 25 to 14, which responded to the aforementioned report of the High Commissioner and requested that the High Commissioner update the report “with a view to sharing good practices and ways to overcome violence and discrimination, in application of existing human rights law and standards.”²⁶

Finally, Resolution 32/2 was adopted on June 30, 2016, by a vote of 23 to 18 and established a special procedure and mandate for an Independent Expert on the issue of SOGI. A number of amendments sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, however, were successfully added to the text. They stressed the need “to maintain joint ownership of the international human rights agenda,” reiterated “the importance of respecting regional, cultural and religious value systems as well as particularities in considering human rights issues,” underlined “the fundamental importance of respecting relevant domestic debates

Argentina on behalf of 66 states on 18 December, 2008, ARC International, last modified December 18, 2008, available at <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/sogi-statements/2008-joint-statement/>.

24. Patrick Worsnip, “U.N. divided over gay rights declaration,” *Reuters*, December 18, 2008, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-homosexuality-idUSTRE4BH7EW20081218>.

25. A/HRC/RES/17/19, Human Rights Council Resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, adopted June 17, 2011, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/148/76/PDF/G1114876.pdf>.

26. A/HRC/RES/27/32, Human Rights Council Resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, adopted September 26, 2014, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/177/32/PDF/G1417732.pdf>.

at the national level,” deplored the use “of external pressure and coercive measures against States, particularly developing countries,” and expressed concern with attempts “to undermine the international human rights system by seeking to impose concepts or notions pertaining to social matters, including private individual conduct, that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights legal framework.”²⁷ South Africa, which had moved the first resolution on this topic, abstained from voting on the grounds that the debate had become too confrontational and unilateral, citing its experience of overcoming apartheid by way of unity and consensus.²⁸

During formal debate on the adoption of the resolution, a number of African and Middle Eastern Member States affirmed that all people are entitled to the protection of those fundamental human rights, including freedom from unlawful violence, which had already been discerned and ratified through treaty and consensus. They expressed concern, however, that were SOGI to be instituted as a distinct class of protection, reports and resolutions would soon be delivered and adopted declaring same-sex “marriage,” adoption, and assisted reproduction to be universal human rights, illegitimately forcing states to fundamentally redefine, in their own domestic systems, the meaning, and therefore the purpose and the function, of marriage, family, and maleness and femaleness. Representatives from Western European states insisted that such a thing would never come to pass but provided no logical justification for their assurances.²⁹

The push to promote same-sex “marriage” is also well underway in UN organs that are outside the joint responsibility of Member States.³⁰

27. A/HRC/RES/32/2, Human Rights Council Resolution on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, adopted June 30, 2016, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/154/15/PDF/G1615415.pdf>.

28. “South Africa—Explanation of the vote before the vote,” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, HRC Extranet, June 30, 2016, available at https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/32ndSession/Resolutions/A_HRC_32_L.2_Rev.1/South%20Africa%20-%20Explanation%20of%20the%20vote%20before%20the%20vote.docx.

29. A/HRC/32/L.2/Rev.1 Vote Item: 41st Meeting 32nd Regular Session of Human Rights Council, UN Web TV, June 30, 2016, available at <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-council/regular-sessions/32nd-session/watch/ahrc32l.2rev.1-vote-item3-41st-meeting-32nd-regular-session-of-human-rights-council/5009164455001>.

30. Paul Coleman, “The UN’s Push for ‘Same-Sex Marriage,’” *Public Discourse*, January 21, 2016,

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched the “UN Free & Equal” campaign in July 2013, and the following year the Secretariat began to recognize the same-sex “marriages” of its employees even when such unions are not recognized by their home nations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon unilaterally declared these unions to be a human right, and a year later praised the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*.³¹ A number of UN agencies, including UNICEF, have also taken an explicit position in favor of same-sex “marriage,” and treaty bodies have spoken favorably about domestic same-sex “marriage” laws and encouraged other Member States to follow in the same direction.³² There is no internationally recognized human right to same-sex “marriage,” however, and only a minority of Member States back this agenda. The Human Rights Committee, in the 2002 communication of *Joslin v. New Zealand*, has been of the view that Article 23 of the ICCPR guarantees no fundamental human right to same-sex “marriage.”³³ Subsequent developments in other

accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/01/16281/>.

31. Michelle Nichols, “United Nations to recognize same-sex marriages of staff,” *Reuters*, July 7, 2014, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/07/us-un-gaymarriage-idUSKBN0FC1VU20140707>; Amanda Terkel, “United Nations to Expand LGBT Marriage Benefits,” *The Huffington Post*, July 7, 2014, accessed September 29, 2016, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/07/united-nations-lgbt_n_5563902.html; Michelle Nichols, “U.N. Chief calls U.S. gay marriage ruling ‘great step forward’ for rights,” *Reuters*, June 26, 2015, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-gaymarriage-un-idUSKBN0P627120150626>.
32. “Eliminating discrimination against children and parents based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity,” UNICEF Current Issues, No. 9, November 2014, accessed September 29, 2016, available at http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/Current_Issues_Paper_Sexual_Identification_Gender_Identity.pdf; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Forty-Seventh Session, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant—Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Argentina, last modified December 2, 2011, available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/co/E-C-12-ARG-CO-3_en.doc; Human Rights Committee Ninety-fourth session, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 40 of the Covenant—Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee on Japan, last modified October 30, 2008, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/co/CCPR-C-JPN-CO.5.doc>; United Nations Treaty-Based Bodies (CEDAW, Human Rights Committee, CESCR, CRC, and CAT) Concluding Observations, General Recommendations and General Comments related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, last modified January 24, 2013, available at http://www.iglhrc.org/sites/default/files/UNTreaty%20Bodies_RefSOGI.pdf.
33. Ms. Juliet Joslin *et al. v. New Zealand*, Communication No. 902/1999, U.N. Doc. A/57/40 at 214

treaty bodies, however, as well as political shifts on this issue across the world, have led some commentators to conclude that this opinion would most likely be reversed if such a case was to come before the Committee again.³⁴

At the close of the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council on September 30, 2016, Vitit Muntarbhorn, a Thai law professor and former UN Special Rapporteur, was appointed to the position of Independent Expert for SOGI. Muntarbhorn was the co-chair of the Yogyakarta Experts' Group and one of its original signers. In light of the fact that most of those nations opposed to the most recent resolution have pledged not to interact or cooperate with the mandate at all, defenders of the family and traditional values will need to keep a careful watch on the activities of this special procedure.

Council of Europe

Article 8 of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protects the right to respect for private and family life, home, and correspondence, in line with Article 12 of the UDHR, and requires that public authorities not interfere with the exercise of this right except in grave necessity and in accordance with law. The Convention also replicates in Article 12 the right of men and women of marriageable age “to marry and found a family, according to the national law governing the exercise of this right.”³⁵

The European Court of Human Rights has delivered a number of decisions which have been cause for both optimism and worry for defenders of marriage and the family. In the 2010 case of *Schalk and Kopf v. Austria*, the Court ruled that the right to family life under Article 8

(2002), delivered July 17, 2002, accessed October 1, 2016, available at <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/undocs/902-1999.html>.

34. Paula Gerber, Kristine Tay & Adiva Sifris, “Marriage: A Human Right for All?” *Sydney Law Review* 26 (2014): 643, accessed September 29, 2014, available at https://sydney.edu.au/law/slr/slr_36/slr36_4/SLRv36n4GerberTaySifris.pdf; “Marriage equality in a changing world: Position paper on marriage equality,” Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012, accessed September 29, 2016, available at https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/human_rights/MarriagePositionPaper2012.pdf.

35. European Convention on Human Rights, Council of Europe, accessed October 1, 2016, available at http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.

of the ECHR, combined with the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of sex under Article 14, does not guarantee a fundamental human right to same-sex “marriage.” It was also held that the fundamental right to marry under Article 12 is only mandatorily granted to men and women. *Obiter dictum* in this case, however, stated for the first time that a cohabitating same-sex couple living in a stable *de facto* partnership constitutes a form of “family life,” as well as that the scope of the right to marry was not necessarily absolutely inapplicable to the complaint of the applicants.³⁶ This general precedent was confirmed in the 2016 case of *Chapin and Charpentier v. France*, which held that a same-sex couple’s human rights had not been violated by France not recognizing their same-sex “marriage” prior to it being legalized nationally in 2013.³⁷

On the other hand, however, the Court ruled in the 2015 case of *Oliari and Others v. Italy* that Italy had violated the Article 8 right to family life by not providing same-sex couples with registered partnerships and civil unions in the absence of legalized same-sex “marriage.”³⁸ The Court’s jurisprudence appears to have settled at this point on a position that States are obligated to recognize same-sex unions in some form, but not necessarily as marriage. Three years prior, however, Sir Nicolas Bratza, a British judge and the then-president of the Court, was reported to have stated that it would only be a matter of time before the Court declared same-sex marriage to be a human right under the Convention, and that the main prerequisite would be the building of political momentum by way of more European countries adopting the policy.³⁹

European Union

Article 7 of the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European

36. *Schalk and Kopf v. Austria* (Application no. 30141/04), European Court of Human Rights, June 24, 2010, available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-99605>.

37. *Chapin and Charpentier v. France* (Application no. 40183/07), European Court of Human Rights, June 9, 2016, available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-163436>.

38. *Oliari and Others v. Italy* (Application nos. 18766/11 and 36030/11), European Court of Human Rights, July 21, 2015, available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-156265>.

39. Christopher Booker, “Gay marriage: the French connection,” *The Telegraph*, February 9, 2013, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/9859036/Gay-marriage-the-French-connection.html>.

Union guarantees the right to respect for private and family life, home, and communication.⁴⁰ Article 9 provides that “the right to marry and the right to found a family shall be guaranteed in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of these rights.”⁴¹ This marks a departure from the language of earlier declarations and covenants, in which the right to marry and found a family is specifically afforded to men and women, in contrast to other rights and protections concerning “everyone” or “no one.” Article 33 provides that “the family shall enjoy legal, economic and social protection,” and goes even further than the ICESCR in saying that “to reconcile family and professional life, everyone shall have the right to protection from dismissal for a reason connected with maternity and the right to paid maternity leave and to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.”⁴² Article 21 also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “sexual orientation,” the same sort of provision cited in numerous arenas for legally redefining marriage and the family.⁴³

On March 12, 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2013 and the European Union’s policy on the matter. Paragraph 162 read that the Parliament “takes note of the legalisation of same-sex marriage or same-sex civil unions in an increasing number of countries—17 to date—around the world; [and] encourages the EU institutions and the Member States to further contribute to reflection on the recognition of same-sex marriage or same-sex civil union as a political, social and human and civil rights issue.”⁴⁴ Even though a number of EU countries still maintain a conservative stance on social issues with respect to the

40. “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01),” European Parliament, December 18, 2000, accessed October 2, 2016, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2013 and the European Union’s policy on the matter (2014/2216(INI)), European Parliament, March 12, 2015, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0076+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

family and therefore marriage, the EU consistently votes as a bloc at the UN in favor of SOGI resolutions and against those on the protection of the family, and on June 16, 2016, the Council of the European Union reached consensus among all 28 Member States for the first time on a Netherlands-backed condemnation of “discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there has so far been no binding mandate imposed upon EU Member States obligating them to redefine marriage or the family, and as pro-family Member States gain ground within the EU, it is hopeful that positive steps can be taken for the protection of the family.

* * *

Although the protection of the family, as well as the inseparable right to marry, possesses nominally robust protection in international law, a number of politically driven agendas have arisen that pose grave threats to the central position the natural family occupies within both international and domestic law and the social and cultural framework of an increasing number of countries. This emerging narrative has exponentially accelerated at the United Nations and in European institutions. Defenders of marriage and the family must be equipped to readily respond, supporting those countries that do not wish to be dragged into the maelstrom and preserving the fundamental societal institutions that the nations of the world pledged to protect at the genesis of modern international law.

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45. Council conclusions on LGBTI equality, Council of the European Union, June 16, 2016, accessed September 29, 2016, available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/16-epsco-conclusions-lgbti-equality/>.

Western Influences on Family Law in Africa

Ann Kioko

Africa's definition of the term *family* has for long been limited to a household made up of a man, a woman, and children. Most constitutions in Africa define the family as the fundamental natural unit in society, which should be defended and protected by all. The African family has long celebrated this definition—until recently.

Today, there is discord in defining marriage in Africa. We have witnessed great judicial activism, especially in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda. The change in the definition of marriage has been influenced by the introduction of same-sex unions: civil unions, domestic partnerships, courts beginning to rule in favor of same-sex unions, and legislation reflecting current Western trends.

Essentially, family laws today are influenced by just a few issues, which are geared towards conferring the benefits of marriage on same-sex unions. This is being accomplished under legal systems which are largely pluralistic, and considerations are also made to religious law (common where Islam is the dominant religion) and received law (civil or common law).

A Brief Overview

The first stage in the evolution of family law in Africa is at the level of colonial law (adopted from the colonizing state), while the second stage is post-independence law (developed by national parliaments). Marriage and family law in Africa are characterized by similar phases, which

include the pre-colonial (defined by cultural law), colonial legislation (infusion of Christian and Western beliefs), and post-independence legislation. These phases created multiple variations in marriage law, which later developed to accommodate specific country needs—for example, religious and customary laws that allowed for both polygamous marriages and traditional, monogamous marriages

Africa has also been subject to generic legislation, which includes the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter, which includes the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa or the Maputo Protocol) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Children's Charter). Both of these are anti-natural family.

In spite of such pressures, many African countries have similar and very traditional definitions of marriage:

- **Kenya**—defines marriage as the “voluntary union of a man and woman,” whether monogamous or polygamous, and registered as the law stipulates.¹
- **Malawi**—“marriage is two people of the opposite sex who are in or want to enter into a marriage.”²
- **South Africa**—provides for same-sex “marriage” through civil unions, customary marriage, or civil marriage.³ It is the only African country allowing same-sex unions.
- **Ghana**—recognizes three types of marriage: customary marriage, which allows polygamy; marriage under the marriage ordinance, which is monogamous; and Islamic marriages under the Mohammedans Ordinance.⁴

1. “Highlights of the Marriage Act, 2014,” Kenya Law, May 20, 2014, available at <http://kenyalaw.org/kenyalawblog/highlights-of-the-marriage-act-2014/>.

2. Thom Chiumia, “Malawi marriage bill spurns same-sex liasons [sic],” *Nyasa Times*, February 17, 2015, available at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-marriage-bill-spurn-same-sex-liasons/>.

3. Mary Alexander, “SA legalises gay marriage,” *SouthAfrica.info*, December 1, 2006, available at <http://www.southafrica.info/services/rights/same-sex-marriage.htm#.WAje3KIrKc0>.

4. George AgboKlu, “3 Ways to Marry in Ghana—Legally!” *Labone Express*, August 3, 2013,

- **Nigeria**—marriage is the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. This is set out in the marriage ordinance. The law recognizes customary marriage (largely polygamous), statutory marriage (under the marriage ordinance), and Islamic marriage.⁵
- **Rwanda**—provides for the constitutional protection of marriage. The monogamous civil marriage is the only legally recognized form. Recognition stems both from the Civil Code and from the Constitution.⁶
- **Egypt**—by law, a marriage is considered “a contract concluded by mutually consenting parties of marriageable age. . . . The civil code, however, limits a woman’s ability to enter freely into marriage by requiring that she have the permission of a male guardian.”⁷ Signing of the marriage contract is significant in Islamic law. It represents the juncture at which “parties can consensually define, enhance, or limit their rights in marriage.”
- **Tunisia**—marriage is governed by the 1956 Code of Personal Status. Consent of both spouses is required, and polygamy is forbidden.⁸
- **Morocco**—marriage between Muslims is governed by the Personal Status Code or *Moudawana*, while “Christian and Jewish communities in Moroccan society have separate family

available at <http://laboneexpress.com/2013/08/3-ways-to-marry-in-ghana-legally/>.

5. Mandyen Brenda Anzaki, “Types of Marriages Under Nigerian Law,” *The Lawyers Chronicle*, accessed October 20, 2016, available at <http://www.thelawyerschronicle.com/types-of-marriages-under-nigerian-law/>.
6. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, accessed October 20, 2016, available at <http://www.rwandahope.com/constitution.pdf>.
7. “Overview of Marriage and Divorce Laws in Egypt,” *Divorced from Justice: Women’s Unequal Access to Divorce in Egypt*, Human Rights Watch, November 30, 2004, available at <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/egypt1204/3.htm>.
8. “Imperialism in North Africa, Primary Sources: Law, Code of Personal Status,” George Mason University, Women in World History Modules, accessed October 20, 2016, available at <http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson9/lesson9.php?s=11>.

laws Thus, there is no unified personal status law that applies to all Moroccans.”⁹

To summarize, in Africa, only South Africa has legalized same-sex unions. In contrast, 35 African countries have laws against homosexual unions or homosexual behavior, with varying degrees of punishment.¹⁰

External Pressure to Redefine Families

External pressure has been the greatest threat to the family in Africa. In July of 2015, President Obama visited Kenya, his first visit to his ancestral land as President. Two weeks before his visit, defenders of the natural family organized a pro-family march around the streets of Nairobi. President Obama is known to export his “legalize gay unions” gospel to Africa in each of his visits. During his presidency, the United States government has done great damage to the African family. Obama’s visit to Kenya came almost immediately after a gay “pride” parade at the White House following the legalization of same-sex “marriage” by the United States Supreme Court. According to a December 2015 *New York Times* article, the United States government alone has given over \$41M to Africa since 2012 to promote same-sex unions.¹¹ This is a very large amount directed to destroy the African natural family and serves to expose the United States’ agenda in exporting unwelcome culture to Africa.

Fortunately, Obama’s attempts to push homosexuality in Africa have received a lot of resistance, especially from African heads of states, and most Africans oppose same-sex unions. A foreign-funded pro-homosexual NGO was last year registered in Kenya, and has since launched

9. *Morocco: MENA Gender Equality Profile, Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, UNICEF (October 2011), 2, available at <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Morocco-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>.

10. “Laws on Homosexuality in African Nations,” The Law Library of Congress, Global Research Center, February 2014, available at <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/criminal-laws-on-homosexuality/homosexuality-laws-in-african-nations.pdf>.

11. Norimitsu Onishi, “U.S. Support of Gay Rights in Africa May Have Done More Harm Than Good,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2015, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/21/world/africa/us-support-of-gay-rights-in-africa-may-have-done-more-harm-than-good.html?_r=0/.

a court case to repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality in that nation.¹² This decision will be determined by the time this journal prints, and serves as a litmus test for Kenya's pro-family fraternity. A recent study in Kenya by Ipsos Kenya has demonstrated Kenyans' traditional leanings: 80% of Kenyans do not support abortion, while 96% of Kenyans oppose homosexuality.¹³

Evidently, Obama's priorities differ from those of Africans. What Africa needs now is not abortion, homosexuality, or destructive comprehensive sex education. Africa needs better education services, healthcare, infrastructure, food, and of course preservation of our own cultural heritage. But most of the foreign aid that Africa receives has ties that are directed at the exportation of the more destructive aspects of Western "civilization."

Uganda is one of the African nations that has been very firm on matters of family, having passed a law protecting the natural family in 2014. This action angered many in the West, and has since brought about unruly activism and "pride" parades attended by mere handfuls of people, most of them likely paid to be there. Just recently the "gays" attempted (unsuccessfully) to host an illegal parade at Kampala. Most Western media houses ran headlines pressuring the Ugandan government by describing it as homophobic. The Associated Press on September 24 of this year ran a headline reading, "Police in Uganda stop a gay parade deemed illegal,"¹⁴ while the BBC announced, "Ugandan police block a gay pride parade."¹⁵ The foreign media has used this tactic for far too long.

Legalizing homosexual unions is one target of Western governments and NGOs; another is abortion rights. Various pro-abortion bills

12. Moses Wasamu, "Gay rights group secures legal victory in Kenya," *New Internationalist Blog*, May 28, 2015, available at <https://newint.org/blog/majority/2015/05/28/gay-rights-kenya/>.

13. "Overwhelming 'NO' for Abortion and Homosexual Practice in Kenya," Ipsos, July 2, 2014, available at http://www.ipsos.co.ke/spr/downloads/downloads.php?dir=lifestyle_issues&file=Majority%20of%20Kenyans%20Say%20No%20to%20Abortion%20and%20Homosexuality_July%202014.pdf.

14. Rodney Muhumuza, "Uganda: Police stop gay pride parade deemed illegal," *Associated Press*, September 24, 2016, available at <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/73e4bd35947c452ca6b9a9a1f96aed89/uganda-police-stop-gay-pride-parade-deemed-illegal>.

15. "Ugandan police block gay pride parade," *BBC*, September 24, 2016, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37462627>.

sponsored by Western NGOs have found their way to African parliaments. In Malawi, a “Termination of Pregnancy Bill” sponsored by Ipas, a U.S.-based NGO, was tabled in parliament last year.¹⁶ Ipas has funded members of parliament to make sure the bill passes to law. In Kenya, at the time of this writing, there are three anti-family bills tabled in the Senate and House: The In-vitro Fertilization Bill, Reproductive Healthcare Bill, and the Health Bill. These all have abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, gender rights, and the diminishing of parental roles as their main agendas. In Sierra Leone, an abortion bill—called, imaginatively, “Abortion Bill”—was unanimously passed by the parliament and was presented to the president, who refused to sign after pressure from pro-family champions.¹⁷ The fact that only 3 out of 54 African countries have legalized abortion is giving the West a severe headache, and Western activists are determined to make abortion legal in all African countries through international bodies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.K. Department for International Development (UKAID), Ipas, Planned Parenthood, Marie Stopes, and the Guttmacher Institute.

Future Needs

There are still plenty of legal issues surrounding the family that need attention. These include personal partnerships, implied and express contractual agreements, distribution of wealth in case of divorce/separation, parentage, and responsibilities upon termination of marriage. Other challenges facing African families include:

Tribal Practices: African legislation is still heavily influenced by cultural and tribal practices that include female genital mutilation, chauvinistic laws, and biased succession laws.

16. “Malawi political parties unite to reform abortion law,” Ipas, September 10, 2015, available at <http://www.ipas.org/en/News/2015/September/Malawi-political-parties-unite-to-reform-abortion-law.aspx>.

17. “Sierra Leone abortion bill blocked by President Bai Koroma again,” *BBC*, March 12, 2016, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35793186>.

Polygamy: Parliamentarians have been known to reject marriage laws that do not accommodate polygamy or pass laws that specifically provide for polygamy, *e.g.* the Kenyan Marriage act of 2014.

Gender Roles: Both in marriage and upon the termination of marriage or the death of a spouse, the rigidity of gender roles has long been a problem. A woman is not allowed to carry out many roles within a family unit, some duties being reserved specifically to men. Often, a man is selected from elsewhere to manage family matters in case a husband dies.

Inheritance: More specifically, inheritance complications are often caused by extended families and the rights of illegitimate children.

Harmful Practices: These include child marriages, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and commercialized dowry.

Division of Matrimonial Property: Women get little or none of the matrimonial property, even where they contributed to its acquisition.

The traditional concept of marriage is also facing threats from other emerging trends. Should adoptions be opened to same-sex couples? Should assisted conception through IVF and surrogacy be available to married people only? Should surrogacy for pay be allowed, and what are the rights of the surrogate versus those of the biological parents? Should contraception be accessible to teenage girls? Within marriage, there are inadequate structures for dispute resolutions, which would allow a couple to resolve their marital disagreements instead of continuing to a divorce. Kenya's new Marriage Act is one exception: it allows for reconciliation and mediation before divorce proceedings begin.

In short, there is much work to be done in Africa, but not the work that liberal, pro-homosexual, pro-abortion Western agencies seem to believe necessary.

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Families in Crisis: Marital Breakdown in India

Sam George and P.C. Matthew

FAMILY HAS ALWAYS BEEN CENTRAL to Indian civilizational thinking, with its many elaborate customs, rules, and values. It has remained a highly esteemed and cherished institution throughout a long and complicated history across diverse geography, cultures, and peoples. Some of its distinctive Indian features include strong relational bonding within a joint family system; arranged marriages; high marital stability; a desire for children; greater intergenerational depth and interactions; and shared living arrangements, property, and religion.

However, families in India have undergone a dramatic transformation in the past two decades, far more than all the changes put together since India's independence in 1947. These changes are rattling the very core of Indian society and its national psyche. Since the opening of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, Indian families have experienced prosperity, mobility, Western cultural influence, demographic shift, prejudices, injustices, educational and economic disparities, media technologies, *etc.*, which have contributed to the undermining of the Indian family system in unpredictable ways.

In this paper, the authors analyze the growing trend of marital breakdown impacting contemporary families in India and identify some underlying grounds behind the rising social instability. This is not an exhaustive analysis of all issues related to marriage and family life in India,

but these findings are based upon extensive involvement of the authors with Indian families and built on input from many scholars, community and religious leaders in India, and the global Indian diaspora.

Family Breakdown: Rising Social Instability

Indian society is known for its traditional joint family system, which provided much order and stability to communities. The joint families would consist of many relatives living under one roof and sharing one kitchen and often a single bank account. Though it may trace its roots to Hindu heritage and the sacred institution of Indic society, the joint family system has been successfully adopted and adapted by other religions.

Though the traditional practice held families together, it is riddled with many problems and complexities. These rarely came out into the open because of the social stigma attached to family conflicts and separation. The patriarchal system was oppressive to women, who were confined to the four walls of their home, doing menial tasks without any major role in family decision-making. Clan elders were often biased and abusive toward women and children, and households were rife with in-law conflicts and even incest or sexual abuse. However, the family unit appeared intact, and individuals endured much pain and frustration without addressing or resolving real issues satisfactorily.

Upon independence, most Indians lived in villages; there were only a handful of cities. The changes of the last two decades brought about by industrialization, new social and economic policies, connectivity, mass media, and migration have led to massive demographic shifts.¹ This rapid urbanization has created many problems pertaining to housing, poverty, inequality, crime, sanitation, health, transportation, environmental degradation, pollution, and governance, all of which affect families adversely. It also led to the nuclearization of families and greater individualism by severing the age-old joint family system. As city life is more favorable to smaller nuclear units, urbanization stripped away familial support systems, and with them, family-based moral authority.

1. It is estimated that by the middle of this century over 814 million people will live in some 400 cities in India. See UN report on World Urbanization, 2014, available at <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>.

In the past divorce was unheard of in Indian society, but now marriage courts in India are flooded with divorce petitions. The divorce rate in India has exponentially increased in almost all regions and states. The incidence of marital separation, dissolution, or desertion have skyrocketed in recent decades, though it remains lower than in some Western nations. Some states, like Kerala, and cities like Kolkata have recorded an increase of 350% when compared to the divorce rates a decade ago.² Dowry-related harassment and deaths have risen sharply, and child marriages are still prevalent in some of parts of the country.

Of course, the nuclearization of the family exposed the shackles of the past and rigid authoritarian structures that forced couples to stay together in spite of domestic violence or gender-based exploitation. Though incidence of *sati* (the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband) has been nearly eradicated and there exists a more acceptable life beyond widowhood, the laws against dowry, as well as those protecting property ownership rights and economic interests of women, have all exposed evil practices long ingrained in Indian family life. At the same time, the new legal provisions of mutual consent, a more pleasure-seeking attitude, theories of individual happiness, and disregard for elders and social obligations have contributed to the rise of divorce.

Another major trend that is destructive to family life in India is the rise of cohabitation. The moral or societal inhibition toward cohabitation has disappeared fast among educated urban young adults. Relational and sexual exploration before and outside of marriage have impaired the sanctity and exclusivity of the marital relationship. Other trends closely related to divorce in India are the rise in remarriage, blended families, single parenting, non-marital childbearing, and delay in the marriage age for both men and women.

Factors at Work

There are many, many different factors contributing to family decline in India, most of which have been a contribution of increasing modernization and urbanization. These are examined at length below.

2. "Divorce Rate in India Increasing," IndiaFacts.in, January 5, 2015 (originally reported in the *Hindustan Times*).

Education: Increased educational opportunity has played a major role in changing family life in India. As Joseph George writes, “opportunities for formal education have drastically changed values, attitudes, relational patterns and their belief systems.”³ The prospect of employment and not having to depend on their husbands have given women greater boldness to break away from “repressive” marital unions. Social ostracization and stigma against divorcees have waned significantly among the educated urban populace. Education also provides social and economic mobility to both men and women, and it is common to see couples apart from each other and their children for prolonged periods of time on account of their professional aspirations.

Occupation and work culture: The new economic policies of the last two decades have established a robust middle class in India with ample opportunities for well-paid jobs. These careers have dramatically changed priorities towards careers, and people tend to pour heart and soul into work ceaselessly at the cost of family life. Many find primary emotional gratification from their jobs, titles, and pay package and neglect household relationships and responsibilities. Young people find themselves increasingly wealthy, but deprived of a normal family life and traditional caring responsibilities.⁴ Many work across time zones and cultures and are required to travel regularly within and outside of the country. They miss out on customary familial interactions and build their social, emotional and even sexual bonding with colleagues or others. Marital infidelity and workplace affairs have become common among this “generation of the night,” who are working for overseas clients during night shifts.

Wealth, Materialism, and Independence of Women: The recent economic surge has resulted in increased purchasing power and financial disparities in India. It adds undue pressure on young couples toward material accumulation and results in many financial rifts in their marriages. In spite of increased financial security in the current generation,

3. Joseph George, “The Changing Pattern of Family in India,” in *The Changing Pattern of the Family in India*, ed. P.D. Devanand and M.M. Thomas (Bangalore: CISRS, 2007), 24.

4. *Ibid.*

the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of the spouse and children are not adequately met. Taking advantage of this deprivation, advertisers of various products give material substitutes to human interactions, quality time, and mutually supportive living situations. George calls this the “commodification of family experience.”⁵ Huge salaries and corresponding debt, as outsized purchasing has increased, have caused dual-income couples to keep their individual accounts separate. This growing individualistic attitude and newfound economic freedom—especially for women—have contributed to the growing setback in familial culture.

Inter-Caste, Inter-Faith, and Inter-Ethnic Marriages: Traditionally, marriages in India occurred strictly within language, caste, and religious lines. But in recent years, due to closer interactions with people unlike themselves, more young people are marrying someone outside of their own religious, caste, or ethnic groups than ever before. This is leading to the breakdown of age-old conventions, and these couples remain outside the influence of social norms, family elders, and religious orders. This trend cannot be fully understood unless one considers the confusion, friction, rejection, anger, and indifference encountered in the processes of entering into such intercultural marital relationships.

Media and Technology: Mass media and technology have affected Indian families in a significant manner. Television, computers, Internet, and mobile phones have become part of normal life. Children are exposed to illicit materials at a younger age. With more parents working long hours, television, Internet, and mobile phones are replacing quality time and human interactions. Mobile phones have aided many a marital breakdown with constant messages and phone calls that keep people from spending quality time with their family.

Growing Promiscuity: Sex was a taboo topic in India for generations. It was considered to be strictly private and for procreative purposes within the confines of a marriage relationship. All that has changed dramatically

5. *Ibid.*, 27.

in recent decades. There is a lack of research or reliable figures in regard to sexual behaviors, as the Indian people are reluctant to admit or publically share their sexual experiences. But anecdotal observation reveals greatly changed attitudes. Sexual fantasies are fanned these days by adult literature, movies, and online content, which are all easily accessible. Though men consume more of these sexual materials, women increasingly partake as well. As a result, premarital sexual activities are more common among college students and young adults. There is not much objection to causal flirtation with colleagues or a visit to strip clubs after school or work.

With high smartphone use and cheap data rates, Indian porn consumption is one of the highest in the world. The distribution of obscenity and pornographic materials is technically illegal in India. Child pornography and the sale of obscene objects to minors are also illegal. But accessing obscene content privately is not illegal. When the Indian government tried to ban hardcore porn sites recently, protests and media uproar forced a rollback of the ban within a week.⁶ This shows the levels of consumption of hardcore porn by Indian society.

Growing promiscuity among the young and many other related issues such as abortions, domestic violence, alcoholism and other substance abuse, pornography, single parenting, *etc.* have had a direct impact on the health of families. But in spite of such problems, India is still a very shame-driven culture, which keeps struggling families from seeking any help or professional counseling.

* * *

The strange paradox of embracing modernity came with the disintegration of strong kinship bonds and a centuries-old culture of familism. India may be trailing still in some of these dramatic social transformations, but changes that occurred in the West over nearly a century are taking place within a matter of a couple of decades in India. These sudden developments are sending major shockwaves to social and religious

6. Ivana Kottasova, "India Reverses Ban on Pornography Websites," *CNN Money*, August 6, 2015, available at <http://money.cnn.com/2015/08/05/news/india-porn-ban-reversed/>.

institutions, which are reeling under their negative impacts and wondering how to address these new realities of a new world.

One of the ways to combat the crisis at a grassroots level is for pro-family institutions and major religious bodies to uphold a healthy family culture. Due to strong religious sentiments, the Indian people are still inclined to give heed to such institutional leaders, who must maintain high moral ground to counter the disintegration of families. Family life educators should teach ways to combat forces that are undermining families through systematic teaching to the young as well as adults at schools, colleges, and workplaces. These long-term intentional efforts are the only way to combat the crisis of families in India.

Sam George, Ph.D., serves on the board of Parivar International and is the author of a popular premarital guide titled Before the Wedding Bells: Preparing for a Lasting and Fulfilling Marriage. Its sequel for newly-marrieds, After the Wedding Bells, is expected in December of 2016.

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REVIEWS

The Virtue of Steadfastness

William C. Duncan

Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement Before *Roe v. Wade*

Daniel K. Williams

Oxford University Press, 2016; 400 pages, \$29.95

THIS SUMMER, THE U.S. SUPREME COURT struck down a Texas law requiring abortionists to have admitting privileges to a nearby hospital and abortion centers to meet the minimum legal standards for an outpatient surgical center. Five justices determined this law created an “undue burden” on the right to abortion the Court had created in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Quite apart from the specific holding of the majority, this case is remarkable in another way. It was decided 43 years after the Court had attempted to have the final word on the legal status of the unborn, and it was clear that the issue was still in contention—and would continue to be so. Indeed, Justice Clarence Thomas’ dissent specifically rejected the idea that the Court’s abortion cases had been correctly decided. More importantly, four decades after *Roe*, states like Texas were still pursuing legislation at odds with the abortion-on-demand regime introduced by that case and by its companion, *Doe v. Bolton*.

What explains the remarkable endurance of the pro-life cause so long after its most significant legal defeat? Part of the answer lies in the history of that movement, recounted carefully and admirably by Daniel K. Williams, a professor of history at the University of West Georgia, in

Defenders of the Unborn.

Professor Williams' book is not a discussion of the legal history of abortion but instead a description of the social and political movement that developed first to prevent liberalization of abortion laws, and then turned to forestalling the acceptance of elective abortion and ultimately to restoring to the law legal protection of unborn children.

The narrative of *Defenders of the Unborn* begins with a 1937 meeting of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds at which the doctors forcefully rebuked nascent stirrings of approval for abortion in some circumstances. This, they said, reduced humans to the "level of a beast" and destroyed "the essential dignity of man." In the next decades, increasing acceptance of contraception was followed by increasingly assertive arguments for abortion, gaining real legal traction with the American Law Institute's 1959 endorsement of abortion in difficult circumstances when approved by doctors.

This, in turn, initiated a decade of legislative battles beginning in California. *Defenders of the Unborn* describes these battles and the increasingly well-organized forces taking the side of unborn children. The successes and defeats in these political battles are described in a compelling narrative that couples comprehensiveness and readability.

Though the title suggests an ending point of 1973, the book describes the response of the pro-life movement to the *Roe* decision, which is also very interesting and helpful. Particularly good is the description of the Democratic party's repudiation of any pro-life sympathies as the party's ideology hardened around an absolutist defense of atomistic autonomy in matters of sexuality and family. This resulted in the political realignment of the pro-life cause still evident today.

These stories are fascinating and well told. A particularly interesting part of the tale is the role played by increasing technological advances in understanding and portraying fetal development and, eventually, the abortion procedure.

An important part of this history is its portrait of the diversity of the movement. Though the Catholic contribution cannot be overstated, the pro-life movement attracted many adherents with a wide range of backgrounds, views, and perspectives. Early on, the effort coalesced around a message of protecting the essential human right to life of the unborn

child. Thus, political liberals and conservatives, religious and secular, with contrasting views on government welfare programs, the licit-ness of contraceptives, population and the environment, the morality of war, and on and on, could make common cause. In fact, the book suggests that those we would today probably characterize as political liberals (New Deal supporters, Civil Rights activists, and anti-war protesters) were probably predominant in the early decades of the movement.

This general discussion is augmented by very fine portraits of some of the central figures in the movement, names perhaps known more to fellow activists than to the general public but who, taken together, form a catalog of noble contributions to the cause.

For instance, there is Robert Pearson, “a Maui building contractor” who spent \$7,000 in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to defeat a 1970 Hawaii bill that provided for elective abortions. The immediate aftermath of the law was an increase in the number of abortions in Honolulu from 46 in the first week after the law became effective to 587 two months later. Robert Pearson “created a ‘cemetery for aborted children’” and, with his wife,

spent \$20,000 building a home for women facing crisis pregnancies. He promised to pay all medical expenses incurred in childbirth if a woman chose not to have an abortion. By the summer of 1972, he had helped eighty women through their crisis pregnancies. It was a small number compared to the thousands of women in Hawaii who had abortions, but Pearson was happy that he was at least able to do something, no matter how limited, to rescue unborn children.

Professor Williams includes portraits of other inspiring and diverse figures, such as Father James McHugh, the “liberal reformer” priest who created the National Right to Life Committee; Fred and Marjory Mecklenburg, “self-described liberal Methodists” and advocates of contraception (Fred was a member of Planned Parenthood) who became leaders of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life; Mildred Jefferson, “a Boston surgeon who, in 1951, had become the first black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School” and became a powerful spokesperson for the cause, eventually being elected president of the NRLC; Ellen McCormack, a full-time homemaker from Long Island who launched a

pro-life bid for president, raising over \$500,00 and becoming “the first female presidential candidate in US history to qualify for matching federal campaign financing and Secret Service protection” and who used that status to air campaign commercials to educate the public on abortion; and many others.

These descriptions not only add interest but serve as reminders of the significance of the personal commitments of ordinary and sometimes extraordinary people to the creation and sustaining of this human rights movement.

Defenders of the Unborn concludes with an assessment of the successes of the pro-life movement seen from the vantage point of today. Professor Williams concludes that 40 years after *Roe*, the pro-life movement has succeeded in turning “the country back to a situation that was remarkably similar to the one that had existed immediately before *Roe v. Wade*.” This may not be where the movement wants to be, but it is nonetheless far better than might have been predicted when the Supreme Court handed down that decision.

Though the book, appropriately, does not spend time on drawing lessons from the history it describes, it will yield some helpful insights with relevance for worldwide efforts to prevent or rein in legal promotion of abortion and the growing insistence of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. Perhaps the most significant of these is the unspoken theme of the narrative, running like a thread throughout—the virtue of steadfastness. The book describes a movement that has experienced significant legal setbacks, back-and-forth shifts in public opinion, and the unremitting hostility of elite opinion in media and the law and parts of the political class. It nevertheless persisted. The early legislative setbacks of the 1960s were followed by significant victories shortly after, like the amazing legislative repeal of New York’s liberal abortion law, stopped only by Governor Nelson Rockefeller’s veto.

Similarly, the seemingly crushing legal defeat in *Roe* did not mark the end of the movement but rather provoked a series of successful and unsuccessful efforts to reintroduce legal protections for the unborn. One political party completely realigned on the issue (such that even Donald Trump, who had earlier expressed support for abortion, felt the need to announce his opposition to abortion as a candidate for president), several

American states have increased regulation, and in “2011 the total number of abortions in the United States was at its lowest level since 1975.” In 2013, “[f]ewer than 1,800 abortion providers were still in business, while 2,500 pro-life crisis pregnancy centers across the nation were offering women alternatives to abortion and convincing thousands of women each year to carry their pregnancies to term.”

Through all of this, and in the face of new legal challenges, the pro-life movement persisted. The stalwart Catholic activists continued in the face of early Protestant indecision and even opposition. The movement has persevered in spite of Supreme Court opposition; the desertion of a political party; a sexual revolution; and the immoral actions of a small, violent faction that betrayed its ideals. It is still a force in politics and culture and continues to attract young supporters.

Perhaps the great lesson to be taken from this account is: “Great causes are not won in a single generation.”¹ Defenders of life will stand firm.

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

1. Joseph F. Smith, an early-20th-century leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Exploding the Consensus

Nicole M. King

Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences

Lawrence S. Mayer & Paul R. McHugh

The New Atlantis, Fall 2016

LAWRENCE MAYER AND PAUL McHUGH, authors of the new special report *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences* published earlier this year by *The New Atlantis*, close their review with something of a challenge.

“We expect,” write the authors, “that this report may elicit spirited responses, and we welcome them.”

“Spirited” may perhaps be an understatement. The report’s critics have been vicious in their accusations, but *The New Atlantis* has remained courteous but firm in its response.

To understand this report in full, the reader must first understand the authors’ intended audience. In the Preface, Mayer begins by stating that the report “was written for the general public and for mental health professionals in order to draw attention to—and offer some scientific insight about—the mental health issues faced by LGBT populations.” One of the top criticisms of *Sexuality and Gender* has been that it appeared in *The New Atlantis*, which is not a peer-reviewed journal. In a Frequently Asked Questions page on the journal website devoted to the report, the editors attempt to answer just this criticism. Their response is

thoughtful. Most academic papers, because of their place of publication, are not readily available to the general public. Subscriptions to academic journals are not cheap, but even more expensive are subscriptions to the academic databases that house them. Hence, most social science research is available only to a small, very select audience—universities.

The scholars authoring this report wanted their research to be available to the larger public, because it is in that sphere that policy decisions regarding these topics are being made—and at a furious pace. There is much about issues of sexuality and gender, the authors write, that is touted as scientific fact (the “born that way” hypothesis, to begin with), but which simply does not have much backing in actual research. Or, as they state, “some of the most frequently heard claims about sexuality and gender are not supported by scientific evidence.”

This report is divided into three sections: “sexual orientation”; “sexuality, mental health outcomes, and social stress”; and “gender identity.” One of the most useful parts of the review appears in Section I, in the authors’ discussion of the difficulty in defining such terms as “sexual orientation.” Is a man who calls himself heterosexual but who has occasional homosexual thoughts really heterosexual? How many “encounters” does it take to make one either heterosexual or homosexual? Are study respondents’ answers to questions on sexual orientation reliable? Is self-identification the key? The variety of sexual couplings is rather depressing to ponder for supporters of the natural family, but the exercise in formulating definitions is useful.

With so many studies using so many different definitions of terms like “heterosexual” and “homosexual,” it is no wonder that so much of social science makes very different claims. Nonetheless, among the findings for Section I are that the “born that way” hypothesis “is not supported by scientific evidence”; that although some biological factors do seem to be associated with sexual behavior, “there are no compelling causal biological explanations for human sexuality”; that “sexual orientation,” at least in some people, seems to be rather fluid throughout the life course; and that “[c]ompared to heterosexuals, non-heterosexuals are about two to three times as likely to have experienced childhood sexual abuse.” These are remarkable findings, and highly controversial.

Section II, on the mental health of LGBT subpopulations, bears grim

news. In short, members of these communities see much higher rates of depression and other mental health problems, substance use, domestic violence, and suicide attempt and completion than do their non-LGBT peers. One study finds that “[m]en who identified as gay had more than double the prevalence of lifetime mood disorders compared to men who identified as heterosexual.” A 2011 report from the Institute of Medicine “shows that, like LGBT youth, LGBT adults—and women in particular—appear to be likelier than heterosexuals to smoke, use or abuse alcohol, and abuse other drugs.” On suicide, Mayer and McHugh report that the “association between sexual orientation and suicide has strong scientific support.” One study, using U.S. data, finds that among US adolescents, “suicide attempts are two to seven times more likely in high school students who identify as LGBT.” Another study, this one using data from New Zealand, finds “that LGBT individuals were six times more likely to have attempted suicide.” Yet another, using data from Denmark, finds that “the age-adjusted suicide rate for same-sex RDP [registered domestic partnerships] men was *nearly eight times* the rate for men in heterosexual marriages, and nearly twice the rate for men who had never married” (emphasis added). These are horrifically high numbers.

The authors of *Sexuality and Gender* spend a significant portion of time in Section II on the “social stress model,” which posits that LGBT populations suffer increased rates of mental (and even physical) health problems because of social stressors—stigmatization, bullying, discrimination, *etc.* In their review, Mayer and McHugh find that although it certainly plays some role, the social stress model fails to fully explain the association between LGBT status and increased rates of mental health problems. In other words, something else is going on here.

Perhaps the most chilling findings, in light of recent political and media attention to the “transgender” issue, are contained in Section III. It should be noted here that Dr. McHugh is the man responsible for discontinuing sex reassignment surgery at Johns Hopkins University, an action for which he has earned much criticism. But the findings in this section make it clear why such an action was necessary. Mayer and McHugh find that the “hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be ‘a man trapped in a woman’s body’ or ‘a woman trapped in a man’s

body’—is not supported by scientific evidence.” The authors also fail to find any evidence for a neurological basis for such identities, and furthermore, find that adults who have undergone sex reassignment surgery continue to have mental health problems at a much, much higher rate than the general population.

Mayer and McHugh are the most vocal in urging extreme caution in the treatment of so-called gender dysphoria in children. The great majority of children, they write, will outgrow any tendency to identify as the opposite gender. And furthermore, why does playing with “boy toys” make a little girl a boy, and vice versa? In their closing, they give a chilling warning:

We read popular reports about plans for medical and surgical interventions for many prepubescent children, some as young as six, and other therapeutic approaches undertaken for children as young as two. We suggest that no one can determine the gender identity of a two-year-old. We have reservations about how well scientists understand what it even means for a child to have a developed sense of his or her gender, but notwithstanding that issue, we are deeply alarmed that these therapies, treatments, and surgeries seem disproportionate to the severity of the distress being experienced by these young people, and are at any rate premature since the majority of children who identify as the gender opposite their biological sex will not continue to do so as adults. Moreover, there is a lack of reliable studies on the long-term effects of these interventions. We strongly urge caution in this regard.

Such a warning is all too needed.

Overall, this review is invaluable to its intended audience. One small deficiency is the authors’ lack of systematic explanation when documenting which studies they chose to review and why. A charge against this review by the LGBT media has been that the authors “cherry picked” the studies that demonstrate what they wish to believe. Such a charge seems unfounded, given that quite a few studies discussed actually showed very different results from the overall trend. Nonetheless, except for the beginning section of Part II, the reader must search long and hard to find out what the parameters for inclusion are. Mayer and McHugh may not have “cherry picked,” and they do in fact acknowledge that theirs is not an

exhaustive review, but more explanation of parameters would have been helpful and would perhaps have warded off at least a few such charges.

Nonetheless, *Sexuality and Gender* is a much-needed summary of timely and relevant research on topics that have, of late, been much in the news. As the authors write, “Popular understandings of scientific findings often presume deterministic causality when the findings do not warrant that presumption.” Policymakers have been too quick to use such popular understandings in drafting legislation that has long-lasting impact. If this report accomplishes nothing more than to put the brakes on some such policy, its impact will have been great.

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

NEW RESEARCH

Bryce J. Christensen and Nicole M. King

America's New Caste System: The Wedlock Divide

Progressives endlessly lament the way a growing gap in economic well-being divides Americans. Curiously, these progressives say remarkably little about the changes in family life that are fast making that gap permanent. However, in a recently published analysis, scholars at Washington University and the University of California Santa Barbara identify family change as a prime reason the economic chasm separating the haves from the have-nots will prove disturbingly hard to bridge in the generations to come.

To a considerable degree, the authors of the new study focus on the way wedlock has—in a development unprecedented in American history—become a class marker. As the scholars acknowledge, “In 1950 the family arrangements of college graduates and high school graduates were very similar. Men and women married early and most remained married.”

But the analysts limn a stunning “transformation of American family life” since the 1950s, a transformation clearly evident in the national retreat from marriage. And though the marked decline in the prevalence and permanence of marriage has affected the nation as a whole, the researchers see this decline as “especially pronounced among the less educated.”

This especially pronounced retreat from wedlock among the less educated shows up clearly when the scholars chart across time the prevalence of intact marriages among women with only a high school diploma

and then compare that to the prevalence of such marriages among peers with a college degree. When the analysts look at U.S. data for 1950, they find that “about 70 percent of 30–44 year old female college graduates and 80 percent of female high school graduates were currently married in 1950.” However, when they look at comparable numbers for 2010, they find that in that year “69 percent of college graduate women were married, compared to 56 percent of those with a high school degree.” Numbers for men run largely parallel.

But to explain the sharp drop in the percentage of minimally educated women in intact marriages, the analysts must examine more than plummeting marriage rates among these women. They must also scrutinize the spike in divorce rates in this population. The researchers calculate that recent divorce rates run “roughly 40 percent lower for college graduates” than for peers with only a high school degree.

Not surprisingly, the analysts also adduce evidence indicating that “the decoupling of marriage and childbearing is [now] much more prevalent among those without college degrees” than it is among peers with degrees. “Births to unmarried women were uncommon in 1950,” remark the authors. They note that “as marriage rates fell, non-marital childbearing increased,” but at decidedly faster rates among minimally educated women than among their well-educated peers. The analysts point out that in 1980, only one in twenty births to women with college degrees was out of wedlock (5%), while almost one in four births to their minimally educated peers (24%) was out of wedlock. “By 2013,” remark the analysts, “non-marital childbearing among college graduates had risen to 11 percent, compared to 58 percent for high school graduates.”

In this decoupling of marriage and childbearing among less-educated Americans, cohabitation figures prominently. “Compared with college graduates,” the analysts remark, “less-educated women are more likely to enter into cohabiting partnerships early and bear children while cohabiting, [and] are less likely to transition quickly into marriage For this group, rising rates of cohabitation and non-marital childbearing contribute to family histories of relatively unstable relationships and frequent changes in family structure.”

Thus, though they concede that marital and family patterns have changed in remarkable ways for America as a whole, the analysts stress

that “college graduates have retained more traditional patterns of marriage and parenting than have men and women with less education.”

Some readers may detect a puzzling irony in the relatively strong commitment to traditional family patterns among college graduates. After all, the university has been the incubator for feminist, Marxist, homosexual, and environmentalist movements subversive of traditional family patterns. Though the authors of this new analysis never confront this irony, readers might wonder if college graduates have perhaps grown sufficiently skeptical of their professors’ antifamily ideologies and sufficiently conscious of the positive and pragmatic benefits of family ties to commit themselves to marriage and family. Readers may also wonder if the poorly educated may be falling for downmarket versions of the anti-family credos university professors have been pushing in recent decades.

The authors of this new analysis—like most academics—probably subscribe to at least some of the progressive theorizing that has subverted family life. Readers may indeed discern authorial sympathy with such credos in the analysts’ assertion that recent changes in family life mean that women “today find themselves with greater independence and control over their lives.”

But the analysts are honest enough to acknowledge that these same changes in family life have put women at “increased risk of poverty,” given that “poverty rates are substantially higher for unmarried women with children at all levels of education than for married women with children” and given that these poverty rates inevitably run especially high for single mothers with only a high school education.

But of course, poorly educated unmarried mothers are not the only ones suffering from the adverse effects of changes in family life. These changes in family life have also exposed the children of these unwed mothers to a host of unfortunate evils. These children, the researchers acknowledge, are much more likely than the offspring of married and more educated mothers “to experience a change (or multiple changes) in the presence of a father . . . [in their lives] and to grow up in a complex family with step- and half siblings” during a “childhood . . . [of] greater instability and more limited father involvement” than that experienced by the children of college graduates.

As the Washington and California Santa Barbara scholars pore over

the differences separating children of unwed, poorly educated mothers from children of married mothers with college degrees, they do so with a keen awareness of “the enormous literature on the association between family structure and outcomes for children document[ing] strong and consistent correlations between child outcomes such as educational attainment, crime, and mental health, and family structure.” These scholars are also cognizant of studies showing that “parental cohabitation (as opposed to marriage) is . . . strongly associated with adverse outcomes for children and adolescents.”

The analysts understand that the adverse effects of growing up as the child of a poorly educated unmarried mother are hardly short-lived. They know that these malign effects persist into adulthood, making it hard for children coming from such a family background to succeed in life. Consequently, these analysts must underscore the increasingly strong linkage between maternal education and maternal marital status as a “‘mechanism’ in the reproduction of inequality across generations . . . and a potential contributor to future inequality.”

The authors of this new analysis probably share many of the views of the progressive commentators who have so loudly decried growing economic inequality in America. But their analysis finally makes it clear that hopes for reducing such inequality will remain dim unless America reverses the family changes that progressives themselves promoted.

(Shelly Lundberg, Robert A. Pollak, and Jennna Stearns, “Family Inequality: Diverging Patterns in Marriage, Cohabitation, and Childbearing.” Journal of Economic Perspectives 30.2 [2016]: 79-102.)

Pregnant without a Husband—Anxious and Depressed

Psychologists have devoted a good deal of attention to the postpartum depression and “baby blues” found among many new mothers. But researchers have also conducted numerous studies to investigate the predictors of *antenatal* mental distress—that is, mental distress *during* pregnancy. And in a systematic review of such studies, scholars at King’s College London find strong evidence that it is mothers without husbands who are particularly exposed to this distress.

Understanding of psychological distress among pregnant women

matters a good deal to the King's College scholars, who recognize that pregnancy is a time of "joy and positive expectations but also of stress and difficulties" and that it is a time of "increased vulnerability for the onset or relapse of a mental illness." Aware that "depression and anxiety are the most common psychiatric disorders during pregnancy," these scholars emphasize that "maternal depression, anxiety and stress during pregnancy have powerful long-term effects on both mother and baby," perhaps by causing "a decrease in blood flow to the foetus . . . [and] an increased exposure of the foetus to cortisol [a biochemical triggered by stress]." These scholars further remark that antenatal depression and anxiety may make pregnant women more vulnerable to "inadequate nutrition and weight gain, increased alcohol consumption, substance abuse and smoking" and less conscientious in receiving prenatal medical care.

Clearly, medical professionals need to understand when and why pregnant women suffer from psychological problems. However, the King's College scholars begin their survey of the relevant professional literature admitting that "we still do not know why some women are more 'at risk' of developing depression or anxiety symptoms while others remain resilient." To illuminate the circumstances in which expectant mothers are at risk of these psychological problems, the King's College scholars examine the professional literature published between 2003 and 2015, finding 97 relevant peer-reviewed studies meriting attention.

As the scholars tabulate the findings, they identify a number of circumstances—including medical complications in the pregnancy, the death of a close relative, and the unexpected loss of economic resources—as predictors of antenatal depression and anxiety. But nothing stands out more clearly in this review of literature as a predictor of such depression and anxiety than does "lack of partner support and of social support."

Partner is an antiseptic and gender-neutral term that aligns nicely with the dictates of political correctness that now govern most social-science commentary. But the social reality behind that term emerges when the King's College scholars examine studies concluding that the women especially likely to experience "depressive symptoms in the antenatal period are [those who are] . . . not married, . . . [that is, those who are] single or . . . have a partner not living in the same household." Indeed,

the King's College scholars identify 14 different studies finding "single marital status" as a predictor of antenatal psychological malaise.

Of course, marital status alone is not the whole story: the scholars point to "marital satisfaction" as one of the most important "protective factors for maternal mental health during pregnancy." The researchers comment that this protective factor is "not surprising, since social support can help the woman to cope with negative emotions and stressors associated with pregnancy and to prepare positively for the birth and the postpartum period."

Sadly, not all married pregnant women experience the marital satisfaction that provides such protection. But even more sadly—in a world of falling marriage rates and high divorce rates—*no* unmarried pregnant women enjoy such marital satisfaction, such protection. Consequently, far too many unmarried pregnant women endure long months of depression and anxiety.

(Alessandra Biaggi et al., "Identifying the Women at Risk of Antenatal Anxiety and Depression: A Systematic Review," Journal of Affective Disorders 191 [2016]: 62-77.)

Marriage—Global Shield against Trauma

Being in an automobile accident, contracting a life-threatening illness, being mugged—these and other traumatic experiences can leave scars physical and emotional. But whether in Boston or Bogota, Beijing or Beirut, Berlin or Brisbane, married men and women face significantly lower risk of acquiring such scars than do unmarried peers. Such is the conclusion of a worldwide study of traumatic-event exposure conducted by researchers from dozens of medical and academic institutions around the world.

The authors of the new study come from an impressive range of institutions, including Harvard, Pennsylvania University, and the University of Washington in the United States, Peking University in China, Balamand University in Lebanon, Moi University in Kenya, the University of Otago in New Zealand, the Federal University of Espírito Santo in Brazil, the University of New South Wales in Australia, the University of Tokyo in Japan, the University Paris Diderot in France, and

the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. Though diverse in national identity, the authors of this new study share a common understanding that exposure to traumatic events can translate into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and “a wide range of other adverse mental and physical outcomes.” These researchers therefore believe that “understanding who is at risk for exposure to T[raumatic]E[vents] is . . . of considerable interest.”

To identify just who is most at risk for such exposure, the researchers scrutinize data collected between 2001 and 2012 for 68,894 men and women living in 24 different countries scattered across all six inhabited continents. The countries included in the study include the United States, Mexico, Columbia, Peru, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Lebanon, Israel, Nigeria, South Africa, Spain, France, and Germany.

The data reveal that over 70% of the men and women surveyed had experienced a traumatic event, with almost a third (30.5%) experiencing four or more. Five types of traumas—witnessing a death or serious injury, the unexpected death of a loved one, being mugged, being in a life-threatening automobile accident, and experiencing a life-threatening illness or injury—accounted for over half of all of the traumatic experiences tabulated.

But not all men and women face the same risk of trauma. “Being married,” report the researchers, “was the most consistent protective factor.” The researchers conclude that “married respondents had reduced odds, compared with the never married, of all T[raumatic]E[vent] factors (O[dds]R[atio]s = 0.5–0.9) except accidents/injuries (O[dds]R[atio] = 1.0).”

In explaining the protective effect of wedlock, the researchers conjecture that “married people may spend less time outside the home, at later hours, unaccompanied, and in potentially vulnerable situations (such as parties or bars) than those never married,” buttressing this conjecture with data from a study conducted in seventeen industrialized nations finding that “single individuals had double the risk of contact [with] crime, and those who went out more frequently were 20% more vulnerable to crime.” The researchers reason further that “married individuals may have more resources and consequently face fewer stressors such as living in unsafe communities than unmarried individuals.”

The authors of the new study hope that their findings will prove “valuable in targeting preventive interventions and anticipating service needs.”

Unfortunately, in a country with plummeting marriage rates and dismayingly high divorce rates, “service needs” may run very high in the years ahead—unless Americans can develop “preventive interventions” that will set wedding bells ringing and quiet the gavel of divorce-court lawyers.

(C. Benjet et al., “*The Epidemiology of Traumatic Event Exposure Worldwide: Results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium*,” *Psychological Medicine* 46.2 [2016]: 327-43.)

The Married-Parent Family vs. the Bottle and the Joint

Detox centers have been extremely busy in recent decades trying to help millions of men and women overcome self-destructive use of alcohol and cannabis (marijuana). And at a time when marriage and birth rates continue to drop to new all-time lows while divorce rates remain near historic highs, the stream of people needing such help is unlikely to decline any time soon. For in a study recently conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, the University of Texas at Austin, and Pennsylvania State University, the unmarried and childless emerge as groups especially vulnerable to Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) and Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD).

In launching this new inquiry into pathological use of alcohol and marijuana, the researchers acknowledge that previous research on use of these two substances has focused largely on young adults. And though they concede that use rates run higher in this younger age group, they feel that looking at use of both substances among older adults—that is, those in their thirties—is warranted given that “substance use and abuse remain among the primary threats for morbidity and mortality across adulthood.” They further argue that “the multiple demands and challenges of early midlife”—demands and challenges that multiply as men and women find themselves “fully immersed in primary adult roles of spouse/partner, parent, and/or worker”—are such that they “may confer emergent vulnerability to substance-use disorders.”

Alcohol and cannabis disorders, the research team argues, deserve attention in part because they are typically “associated with overall poorer health.” Indeed, alcohol and cannabis use disorders often come linked with “neuropsychological deficits” and “other psychiatric disorders, suggesting an array of possible health difficulties.”

To determine which early-midlife adults are most at risk of developing alcohol or cannabis use disorders, the researchers examine data collected between 1975 and 2014 for 25,536 men and women tracked from their senior year in high school up to age 35. These data identify a number of groups as especially vulnerable to alcohol and cannabis use disorders. Less educated and less religious individuals, for instance, are much more prone to developing such disorders than are their better educated and more religious peers.

But given recent trends in American family life, no findings merit more attention than those linking alcohol and cannabis use disorders to marital and parenthood status.

The authors find that rates for Alcohol Use Disorder run especially high among men and women who are “single or separated/divorced, and nonparents,” compared to peers who are married and parents.

Similarly, the authors of the new study report that “those who were married compared to those who were not married/not cohabiting were at lower risk of being in . . . the C[annabis]U[se]D[isorder] category.” The researchers likewise conclude that “parents, compared to non-parents, were at less risk of being in the C[annabis]U[se]D[isorder].”

As the Michigan, Texas, and Penn State scholars reflect on their findings, they find the low rates of alcohol and cannabis use disorders consistent with earlier studies revealing an “ubiquitous marriage effect whereby substance use decreases with marriage (and then increases with divorce).”

And though progressives have spent the last five decades pushing the idea that cohabitation is the functional equivalent of wedlock, the researchers underscore the data indicating that “those who were cohabiting at age 35 compared to those who were not married/not cohabiting were at *greater* risk of being in the A[lcohol]U[se]D[isorder] and C[annabis]U[se]D[isorder] categories.” The researchers leave progressives no latitude in interpreting a finding that “clearly shows that the

benefits of the marriage effect do not apply to cohabitation.”

The challenge to progressive thinking posed by this report extends beyond the finding linking cohabitation to substance-use. Progressives try hard to turn every social problem into an economic problem soluble through more aggressive redistribution of income. But the authors of this new study find “higher socioeconomic status was *not* a protective factor against heavier substance use.”

The authors of the new study suggest that their findings might need reassessment through further research—“particularly in the current changing legal and attitudinal context.” But their findings provide ample reason to suspect that changes in American family life are a prime reason that “among adults in the USA, alcohol and marijuana use have shown an overall increase in the past 10–20 years.”

So long as the clientele for wedding chapels keeps shrinking and the clientele for divorce lawyers remains large, detox centers will remain a disturbingly large presence in American life.

(John E. Schulenberg et al., “Substance Use Disorder in Early Midlife: A National Prospective Study on Health and Well-Being Correlates and Long-Term Predictors,” Substance Use: Research and Treatment 9 (Suppl 1): 41-57, emphasis added.)

Preventing Suicide—Family Connections as Safety Net

With suicide rates in the United States surging to their highest level in decades, public-health officials are looking with a keen sense of urgency for strategies to prevent such deaths. Unfortunately, in a nation where low marriage and fertility rates and high divorce rates are leaving unprecedented numbers of people without the support of spouse or family, their search may prove unavailing. Indeed, according to a study recently completed by researchers at Rice University, a person’s vulnerability to suicide depends first on whether that person lives with spouse or family and then on whether that person lives in a *community* filled with family households.

The Rice team began their new study cognizant of the scope of the problem in view. “As a leader of premature mortality in the U.S. and other developed nations, suicide is a social problem that arouses continued

concern from researchers and policymakers alike,” they write. “In the U.S. alone, suicide accounts for nearly 40,000 deaths annually.”

In framing their inquiry into this distressingly large tragedy, the researchers draw on the thinking of Emile Durkheim, the sociological pioneer who believed that “suicide was an inherently social act, one that is heavily influenced by broader social factors and thus could not be understood solely at the individual level.” Consequently, though the Rice scholars do look at individual characteristics in their investigation of suicide risk, they also examine the broader social context, especially as that context is defined by socioeconomic disadvantage and family living arrangements.

To gauge the impact of individual characteristics and social context on suicide risk, the authors of the new study examine data collected by the National Health Interview Survey from almost one million adults between 1986 and 1993, linking those data with 1990 and 2000 Census data, correlated with mortality numbers through 2006. The focus on adults, the researchers explain, reflects confidentiality concerns relevant for suicides under age 18.

Through statistical analysis, the researchers establish that both individual characteristics and social context affect suicide risk. Of course, individual characteristics actually point toward social context when those characteristics reflect marital status and family-living arrangement. And these marital and family-living characteristics matter for suicide risk: the Rice scholars conclude that divorced and separated individuals face a significantly higher suicide risk than do married peers ($p < 0.01$). They also conclude that individuals face a significantly *lower* suicide risk if they live in a family comprising four or more members rather than in a smaller household ($p < 0.01$).

Furthermore, when the researchers shift their focus from individual characteristics to community characteristics, Durkheim’s theoretical emphasis on social context looks fully justified. In these community-level analyses, the researchers compare Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with relatively high numbers of family households with MSAs with relatively low numbers of such households. For these comparisons, the researchers define family households as those involving “married-couple families and other family types (male or female householder with

no spouse but with children or other relatives).” Non-family households in these analyses were those involving individuals “living alone or with other nonrelatives.” These comparative analyses clearly establish that, “compared to MSAs with the highest proportion of residents living in family settings, persons in MSAs with the fewest family living residents have odds of suicide 2.4 times higher over the follow-up period.”

Even when the researchers repeat their community-level analyses using statistical models that adjust for the individual-level characteristics, they find that “regardless of their own marital status and family size, persons living in the lowest family-living type MSAs have odds of suicide that are twice as high as persons living in the highest family-living MSAs” (Odds Ratio of 2.03; $p < 0.01$).

What is more, in their most sophisticated statistical models the researchers find that “family living related powerfully to both men’s and women’s risk and both younger and older respondents’ [risk].” In contrast, socioeconomic disadvantage in an MSA was “significantly associated with an increased suicide risk only for men,” and not for women.

In other words, regardless of their own personal household circumstances, living in a community largely composed of family households protects both men and women, both young and old, from the temptation to suicide.

After reflecting on the policy implications of their findings, the Rice scholars hope their research can “contribute to reducing the risk of suicide by encouraging more investment in both individual and area level resources aimed at fostering social integration and connectedness and eliminating socioeconomic disadvantages.” “Reducing suicide mortality,” they assert, “can lengthen overall life expectancies and result in stronger, richer, more tightly knit communities.”

Unfortunately, until wedding chapels start filling and divorce courts empty out, until more women are headed for maternity wards and fewer for abortion clinics, phrases such as “social integration and connectedness” will remain empty abstractions, and hopes for “more tightly knit communities” will prove vain. Only a genuine renewal of marriage and family life in America seems likely to end the nation’s alarming epidemic of suicide.

(Justin T. Denney et al., "Suicide in the City: Do Characteristics of Place Really Influence Risk?" *Social Science Quarterly* 96.2 [2015]: 313-29.)

Unhappy Hour: Underage Drinking after a Parental Divorce

Given the dangers it creates for young people's well-being, for civic order, and for public safety, it is quite appropriate that many nations have outlawed underage drinking. Why is it, then, that since the 1970s, these same nations have generally licensed parental divorce sought for any reason or for no reason? There is a profound incoherence here, which becomes impossible to ignore in light of the findings of a study recently completed by researchers at the Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (NIADR) and Brown University. Highlighting a strong connection between parental divorce and underage drinking, this study raises serious questions about the sobriety of those writing divorce laws.

To assess the impact of parental divorce on early initiation into the use of alcohol, the NIADR and Brown researchers parsed data collected for 931 students enrolled in middle school (6th, 7th, and 8th grades). A clear linkage between parental divorce and the initiation of alcohol use emerges in these data: in the researchers' simplest, unadjusted treatment of the data, "youth who experienced [parental] divorce/separation were at significantly greater risk of initiation [of alcohol use] than those who did not" (Hazard Ratio of 1.65).

When the researchers reassessed their data in a statistical model that adjusted for sex, age, and socioeconomic status, this association remained significant (Hazard Ratio of 1.55). In fact, the linkage between parental divorce or separation and children's initiation of alcohol use remained significant even in a statistical model that further adjusted for psychopathology, perceived stress, family history of drinking problems, and current parent drinking (Hazard Ratio of 1.45).

In further analyzing the linkage between parental divorce and young adolescents' drinking, the researchers discerned no evidence whatever that this troubling linkage occurs only if adolescents experience their parents' divorce during a "window of vulnerability" during early childhood." On the contrary, the researchers uncover evidence that "experiencing divorce/separation at all ages was significantly associated with elevated risk of drinking initiation." Indeed, the researchers are emphatic:

“[R]egardless of when experienced, parental divorce/separation seems to be a critical life event associated with increased risk of early alcohol use.”

Having unambiguously identified the connection between parental divorce and young adolescents’ drinking, the authors of the new study seek to explain that linkage. They plausibly conjecture that “a reduction in child supervision and parental involvement may follow [parental] divorce.” They further reason that “parental absence in turn may lead to a decrease in parenting effectiveness and increased access to alcohol.” In the same vein, the researchers suggest that “poor parental monitoring may lead to greater affiliation with substance-using peers, as youth turn to peers to have emotional needs met.”

The authors of this study acknowledge the relevance of previous research indicating that worse may lie ahead for these premature imbibers. Such research has established that “youth who experience parental divorce/separation show elevated alcohol involvement into adulthood, including heavy drinking and alcohol-related problems as well as (lifetime) alcohol abuse and dependence.”

The authors of the new study see a need for “future work exploring the mechanisms underlying the association between divorce/separation and adolescent drinking.” But the more acute need would seem to be future work exploring ways to shield more young adolescents from the trauma of parental divorce.

(Kristina M. Jackson, Michelle L. Rogers, and Carolyn E. Sartor, “Parental Divorce and Initiation of Alcohol Use in Early Adolescence,” Psychology of Addictive Behaviors 30.4 [2016]: 450-61.)

Mired in Gloom: The Depressed Adult Children of Homosexual Parents

Especially during the abruptly terminated national debate over same-sex “marriage,” progressives assured one and all that homosexuals parent their children just as well—or even better—than do heterosexual parents. But evidence continues to grow casting doubt on such assurances. The latest evidence comes from sociologist D. Paul Sullins of Catholic University of America, author of a troubling new study of the long-term psychological consequences of homosexual parenting. Despite all the reassuring claims about homosexual parenting, it seems that children

reared by homosexual parents are all too likely to spend their young-adult years under a shadow of depression, partly traceable in many cases to earlier exposure to domestic violence.

Sullins prefaces his sobering report on the effects of homosexual parenting with a frank acknowledgement that he is sailing into a stiff wind. “In research and policy settings,” he admits, “children in unique distress with same-sex parents are not supposed to exist.” Those who assert that such distressed children do not exist buttress their assertions by referring to “several dozen studies alleging ‘no differences’” between children reared by homosexual parents and those reared by both biological parents.

The number of ‘no differences’ studies might seem impressive. But Sullins counsels skepticism in assessing these studies, which generally suffer from glaring methodological deficiencies—including reliance on small, non-representative samples of homosexual parents, numerous errors in identifying parenting arrangements, dubious statistical interpretation of data, and open ideological commitment to the homosexual cause on the part of both the researchers and study participants. No wonder, then, that Sullins reports that “uniformly benign findings [in research on homosexual parenting] . . . have recently been challenged . . . by several original research efforts, the rediscovery of older studies, and the reanalysis of studies long thought to support ‘no differences’” between being reared by homosexual parents and being reared by both biological parents.

And Sullins intensifies that challenge to the benign view on homosexual parenting with his own new study of depression among young adults raised by homosexual parents.

To assess the long-term risk of depression among children reared by homosexual parents, Sullins parses data collected between 1995 and 2008 from a national representative sample of 12,288 young men and women tracked from adolescence into adulthood. Using a statistical model that accounts for differences in family socioeconomic status, Sullins finds that at the beginning of the study period the risk of depression actually ran “lower than for the general population” among children reared by homosexual parents when these children were still adolescents. However, the picture had changed dramatically by the end of the study period, when

these same children were young adults: by 2008 “the risk ratio for depression had increased to 2.6” for study participants reared by homosexual parents.

In other words, the risk of depression among young adults reared by homosexual parents came in over two-and-a-half times higher than the risk among peers reared by heterosexual parents.

Beyond the clear evidence that homosexual parenting heightens children’s long-term risk of depression, Sullins sees other reasons to question the supposed beneficence of such parenting. Citing earlier research documenting “greater levels of intimate violence in same-sex partnerships” than is found among heterosexual couples, he adduces evidence from his own set of data that such violence was “notably high” among the homosexual parents in his study. Sullins’ data indicate that “ninety percent of the same-sex parented children reported parental abuse [when interviewed in 2002], dropping only to 85% [when they were again interviewed in 2008].”

Sullins interprets this explosive finding in conjunction with an earlier study reporting that “children with lesbian mothers (including those temporarily in a lesbian relationship) reported a substantially higher rate of sexual abuse, at 23%, than did those with consistently heterosexual parents.”

No doubt aware of the kind of controversy his findings might spark, Sullins believes they should be “interpreted with caution and balance, . . . neither exaggerated nor dismissed out of hand on preconceived ideological grounds.” But anyone not wearing ideological blinkers will recognize the justice of Sullins’ characterization of “the inattention of research and policy to the problems of children with same-sex parents . . . [as] unwarranted.”

“Unwarranted” seems like a mild word for the dangerous insouciance of those who see nothing to worry about in homosexual parenting.

(D. Paul Sullins, “Invisible Victims: Delayed Onset Depression among Adults with Same-Sex Parents,” Depression Research and Treatment 2016: 2410392, Web.)

Dizzy and Confused on the Parental Marriage-Go-Round

Getting individuals out of bad marriages and into good ones was one of the professed objectives of the progressive activists who pushed permissive no-fault divorce statutes. Never more than an afterthought for these progressive idealists, the children of divorce have suffered a great deal in the world of revolving-door marriages. As the latest evidence of such suffering, a study recently published by researchers from Princeton and New York Universities shows that American children's well-being typically deteriorates when they experience family instability, particularly when they find themselves moving from a two-parent family into a single-parent family.

Explaining their motivation for conducting this study, the Princeton and New York scholars remark that "family changes over the past half century have created fundamental shifts in children's experiences of family life," as "higher rates of divorce/separation, remarriage/repartnering, nonmarital childbearing, and cohabitation" have radically reordered the world children in the United States live in while growing up." Nor are the authors of the new study unaware of what their colleagues have already seen in looking at how this reordering has affected children. "Numerous studies," they write, "find that children who experience a change in family structure lag behind children who grow up in stable family structures across multiple outcomes in different domains."

But instability in family structure may unfold in a number of different ways. And such instability may start with a two-parent family that fissions or with a single-parent family that transforms into a two-parent (step)family. To measure more carefully the differing effects of family instability when created by different numbers and types of transitions, the authors of this new study scrutinize data collected for 2,952 mother-child pairs in which all of the children were born between 1998 and 2000 in 20 American cities with populations greater than 200,000.

The researchers discern linkages between negative child outcomes and family instability of all kinds. The overall pattern is thus one of "family structure instability ha[ving] a negative effect on children's cognitive and socioemotional development during early to middle childhood." The negative impact of family instability on children of this age is particularly worrisome to scholars who view "early to middle childhood as a critical

and sensitive period in child development, . . . [a period when] children's developmental trajectories are the most malleable . . . and, once shaped, may be difficult to reverse at later life stages." Earlier research has in fact established that "the cognitive and socioemotional skills developed during childhood are strong predictors of life course outcomes, such as academic achievement, health, educational attainment, labor market performance, and union formation."

However, the Brown and New York scholars warn that assessing the impact of family instability on children simply by counting up the number of family transitions they experience may "lead to misleading conclusions." Their analysis shows that, in general, "transitions out of a two-parent family are more harmful to children than transitions into a two-parent family," a conclusion "casting doubt on the claim that all types of instability are equally harmful for children."

The researchers adduce evidence that family instability can retard both children's cognitive development and their socioemotional development. To gauge the effect of family instability on children's development in both realms, the researchers compare it to the effect of maternal education and poverty status, both of which are "universally acknowledged to be consequential for children's development." Their statistical analysis reveals that "the effect of family structure instability on cognitive achievement is about one-third the size of the effect of having a mother with high school education (versus college or more) and about one half the size of the effect of being born into a poor household (versus no poverty)."

As evidence of how family instability affects children's cognitive development, the researchers report that among children who experience the single transition of moving out of a two-parent family and among children who experience multiple transitions (of any sort), they limn a significant fall in scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. However, they note that "having a father or father figure move into the household does not reduce children's cognitive achievement. Rather, the signs on the [statistical] coefficients are *positive*," significantly so in one line of statistical analysis.

It is also worth noting that, "for cognitive achievement, the impact of transitions out of two-parent families is stronger and more negative for black children and girls." (Don't expect that progressives who care

nothing about preventing divorce will continue to stop representing themselves as *the* champions of African Americans and women.)

Family instability may affect children's cognitive development less than maternal education and poverty, but when the researchers shift their focus to socioemotional development, they find that "the story is different. Family structure instability has a larger effect on children's externalizing behavior than does maternal education or poverty status, and [has] a comparable effect on children's internalizing behavior."

In tracking family instability's effects on socioemotional development, the researchers—again—need to keep in view the differing effects of differing kinds of family transitions. As they examine various "behavior problems," the researchers conclude that "the effect of a family structure transition is generally negative regardless of type of move, but typically larger and more significant for moves out of a two-parent family."

The bold activists who gave the U.S. its wide-open no-fault divorce laws rarely thought about how those laws would affect children. Given what we now know, it is surely past time to restore some legal integrity to marriage.

(Dohoon Lee and Sara McLanahan, "Family Structure Transitions and Child Development: Instability, Selection, and Population Heterogeneity," American Sociological Review 80.4 [2015]: 738-63, emphasis added.)

What Does the Pill Prevent? Marital Permanence?

Back in the 1960s, when the Pill first became available as an oral contraceptive, progressives anticipated it bringing nothing but good as couples, now in control of the consequences of sex, developed happier and less stressful marriages. These cheery-minded optimists could see nothing but religious obscurantism in Pope Paul VI's warning that by separating sex from fertility, artificial contraception would actually weaken the marital tie. Fast forward half a century: the progressives look like Panglossian naifs, and the pope looks like a prescient prophet. The bad news that users of oral contraceptives are particularly likely to end up in the divorce court appears in a study recently completed by women's health scholar Richard J. Fehring of Marquette University.

As Fehring set out to assess the relationship between the use of

oral contraception and divorce, he was aware that advocates of Natural Family Planning (NFP) frequently claim that “couples who practice NFP have fewer divorces compared to couples who use contraception.” But this claim has previously lacked empirical backing. Consequently, Fehring systematically compares divorce levels between couples who practice NFP with those among couples who use oral contraceptives (or use condoms, submit to sterilization, or even resort to an abortion). And because religious commitments often affect the use or avoidance of these various methods of controlling fertility, Fehring also compares divorce risks among regular worshippers with those among the religiously disconnected. His data for these comparisons was collected between 2006 and 2010 from a national sample of 5,530 ever-married women.

Overall, a clear pattern emerges in the data: “ever having an abortion, sterilization, and/or methods of contraception increased the likelihood of divorce—up to two times.”

More specifically, Fehring calculates an Odds Ratio of 1.73 for divorce among women using oral contraceptives, compared to couples not using such contraceptives. The Odds Ratio for divorce also runs relatively high for women who have submitted to sterilization (1.67), compared to women who have not. And the Odds Ratio for divorce runs higher yet among women who have ever had an abortion (1.88), compared to women who have not. Perhaps surprisingly, the Odds Ratio for divorce runs the highest among women whose husbands used condoms (2.22) compared to women whose husbands did not.

Fehring draws the inevitable inference: “Contraceptive use, sterilization, and abortion seem to have a destructive effect on the marital bond.”

In contrast, the data reveal that divorce rates run lower among women who use Natural Family Planning or rhythm than among women who do not use such methods of fertility control, though that difference does not reach the threshold for statistical significance. Because divorce rates do run significantly lower among women who attend church frequently than among women who attend seldom or never ($p < 0.001$), Fehring plausibly conjectures that “there is less divorce among NFP users . . . due to their religiosity.” Still, Fehring cites an earlier study finding that “among US couples . . . 80 percent of the husbands and 85 percent of the wives felt that using NFP was helpful to their marriage.” Fehring

also points to earlier research comparing couples relying on NFP with peers using artificial contraceptives and concluding that “NFP couples reported higher levels of spiritual well-being and intimacy.”

On the other hand, in trying to account for the elevated divorce rates among women reliant upon oral contraceptives, Fehring turns to earlier research uncovering evidence that because “the female brain is a major receptor of the synthetic hormonal steroids found in hormonal contraception . . . birth control pills have structural effects on regions of the brain that govern higher-order cognitive activities, suggesting that a woman on birth control pills may literally not be herself—or is herself, on steroids.” These problematic neurological effects of oral contraceptives may, Fehring reasons, “help explain marital dynamics that lead to divorce.”

Regardless of just what neurochemistry it triggers, the Pill has—contrary to what its progressive champions once promised—helped fill far too many divorce courts.

(Richard J. Fehring, “The Influence of Contraception, Abortion, and Natural Family Planning on Divorce Rates as Found in the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth,” Linacre Quarterly 82.3 [2015]: 273-82.)

Fatherless Toddlers, Speechless Toddlers

A growing mountain of research sometimes compels progressives to acknowledge that children suffer when parents separate. Complicit in the attitudes and public policies that foster such separation, progressives typically respond to this research by arguing that the problem is simply economic. Children suffer when parents separate, they argue, because a single mother lacks sufficient financial resources. A sufficiently generous welfare state will wipe tears from all faces. Such finance-focused thinking fails, however, to explain the results of a recent Belgian study, completed by scholars at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. In this compelling new study, researchers conclude that even after they make systemic statistical adjustments for differences in economic status, young children whose parents have separated lag behind peers from intact families in their psychomotor development, perhaps most notably in their speech.

As the authors of the new study begin their research into the effects

of family structure on young children's psychomotor development, they do so cognizant of twenty-first-century data indicating that 20% of all Belgian children ages 0 to 16 live in a single-parent or blended family. While this percentage is high enough to warrant concern about family disintegration, it is—as the researchers note—significantly lower than the “approximately 26% of young Americans . . . living with only one of their parents in 2014.”

To gauge the impact of parental separation on the psychomotor development of children ages 28 to 32 months, the researchers parse data collected between 2006 and 2012 from 28,871 children, all participants in a free preventive-medicine consultation. To determine their level of psychomotor development, the researchers asked all of these children to complete six tasks: “to perform a standing jump, dress themselves, draw a vertical line and circle, use the ‘I’ pronoun, build a three-word sentence, and say their first name.” Because they specifically want to know how parental separation affects these children, the researchers analyze their data for these six tasks in statistical models that adjust for the possible effects of socioeconomic environment—as well as the possible effects of background variables such as maternal age and education, home language, child's birth weight, and child participation in day care. After statistically screening out all of these potential influences, the researchers discern a clear pattern: “we observed that the children exhibited slower progression in psychomotor development, especially in language and graphic ability, when their parents were separated.”

When compared (with all statistical adjustments) to children living with both parents, children whose parents had separated were significantly less likely to be able to draw a vertical line, draw a circle, use the “I” pronoun, or build a three-word sentence (p values of < 0.001 , < 0.001 , < 0.003 , and < 0.001 respectively).

The researchers interpret their finding in the context of a New York study which showed “paternal involvement to have a positive impact on language acquisition” among children ages 24 to 36 months. Also relevant, in the Belgian scholars' view, was a British study concluding that “children aged 0 to 8 years who were exposed to parental separation produced poorer results for language, reading, writing, and drawing tests following adjustment for sociocultural environment.” And in their own

country, Belgium, the researchers note that a previous “cross-sectional study conducted in 7- to 11-month-old infants . . . [likewise] observed a significant correlation between delayed psychomotor development and parental separation.”

Seeking to tease out the implications of their own findings, the authors of the new study point to earlier “studies . . . [that] have demonstrated the positive impact of breastfeeding for at least 6 months on the psychomotor development of children during the first 5 years of life,” adding pertinently that “other studies have revealed a relationship between maternal marital status and breastfeeding.”

Whether or not deficits in breastfeeding help account for them, the delays in psychomotor skills among children with separated parents worry the researchers, who believe these delays entail “a huge impact in terms of public health issues.” After all, previous researchers have clearly established that, “in comparison with other children, those exhibiting developmental delays at preschool age were more exposed during their lifetime to poorer health conditions, socio-economical problems, as well as social isolation.”

Progressives may, once again, rush forward with assurances that welfare-state largesse can solve the problems their marriage-weakening policies have helped incubate. But the authors of the new study pointedly remark that their results signal a need “to revise our commonly-held assumption that the less-than-optimal development of children with separated parents is due solely to a more economically precarious environment.”

Regardless of their size, welfare checks are a bad substitute for an intact family.

(Nadine Kacenenbogen et al., “Parental Separation: A Risk for the Psychomotor Development of Children Aged 28 to 32 Months? A Cross-Sectional Study,” BMC Pediatrics 16 [2016]: 89, Web.)

Head Start? No Start Without Fathers

The Head Start program enjoys a luminous reputation among liberal commentators and policymakers, many of whom believe that its work with preschoolers can compensate for deficiencies in these children’s

family life. Unfortunately, this belief looks rather suspect in light of a new study concluding that children from single-parent homes are particularly inattentive in class, even after participating in Head Start, and so get relatively little out of school.

As scholars at Pennsylvania State University, the authors of the new study recognize the negative consequences when children fail to pay attention in class, particularly if their classroom inattention continues or gets worse over the years. “High rates of inattentive classroom behaviors have severe consequences for children’s academic achievement and attainment,” the researchers note, adding that inattentive classroom behaviors “predict an academic future characterized by low grades, poor test scores, and a reduced likelihood of high school graduation.” Because of their focus on young Head Start children, the researchers are especially mindful of evidence from previous research that “classroom inattention in the early school years may reduce children’s exposure to instruction in foundational academic skills, including pre-literacy and numeracy skills, delaying or impeding subsequent academic skill development, which may account for the sustained impairments in achievement among inattentive kindergarten children, even when their attention improves in the later elementary years.”

But which children are most at risk of becoming these inattentive low-achievers? And which inattentive children will grow out of the problem and which will not? To answer such questions, the Penn State researchers track 356 Head Start students through the fifth grade.

Among the researchers’ findings, one casts serious doubt on the belief that Head Start can erase problems consequent to family disintegration: “Children in single-parent families were more likely to exhibit stable high or rising inattention trajectories,” the researchers report, “whereas children in two-parent families were more likely to show declining inattention trajectories in early elementary school” ($p < 0.05$).

The persistently high level of classroom inattention among children from single-parent homes catches the attention of the researchers, who offer a number of possible explanations. “Single parenthood and the processes associated with separation and divorce may affect inattention directly,” they conjecture, “by increasing levels of child stress and feelings of anxiety in ways that distract or over-burden their attention

processing.” Also plausible as reasons that inattentiveness runs higher among children from single-parent homes than among peers from intact families are the “higher levels of daily hassles, stress, social isolation, and depression and lower levels of emotional and parenting support” typically found in single-parent homes. It is not surprising, then, that the researchers believe that “single-parent or disrupted family systems may . . . reduce the level of organization and routine at home, reducing the amount of parental attention, supportive monitoring, and effective management of child behavior and homework support, and thereby increase child vulnerability to inattention and distractibility.”

The clear findings of this study raise a serious question about the liberals who persist in championing Head Start as a cure to the problems caused by family breakup—were they not paying attention in class when their teachers covered basic logic?

(Tyler R. Sasser, Charles R. Beekman III, and Karen L. Bierman, “Preschool Executive Functions, Single-Parent Status, and School Quality Predict Diverging Trajectories of Classroom Inattention in Elementary School,” Developmental Psychopathology 27.3 [2015]: 681-93.)

Avoiding Childhood Obesity in the Fatherless Home? Fat Chance!

Few public-health issues have received more attention in recent decades in the United States and other affluent countries than the epidemic of obesity among children and adolescents. Too often, those who have weighed in on this issue have been too cowed by the orthodoxies of political correctness to speak of this epidemic as the inevitable consequence of the disintegration of the family. Fortunately, scholars at Harvard, Boston College, and Indiana University recently broke through this code of silence with a study clearly identifying fatherlessness as a prime cause of childhood obesity.

The scholars responsible for this new study proceed keenly conscious that “the prevention of obesity is a national and global health priority,” a priority rendered urgent by recent survey data indicating that “in the United States, 16.9% of children ages 2–19 years and more than one-third of adults are obese.” But the researchers stress that the problem can manifest itself among children even younger than age two. Indeed, the

Harvard, Boston College, and Indiana scholars cite data showing that “obesity rates among children have substantially increased worldwide over the past 3 decades” and point to research indicating that “adverse exposures in the intrauterine and infancy periods can ‘program’ trajectories of adiposity and metabolic function throughout life and [so] may increase short- and long-term risks for obesity and its sequelae,” including “cardio-metabolic risk.” Even during childhood, the adverse sequelae of obesity may include “serious childhood morbidities, including asthma, orthopedic problems, psychosocial adversity, and . . . Type 2 diabetes.”

To identify the “early risk factors” that render young children vulnerable to obesity, the researchers scrutinize data collected between 1980 and 2008 from birth certificates linked to results of well-child visits for 200,258 Massachusetts children. The researchers analyze these data in a statistical model that adjusts for such things as mother’s age, education, and use of tobacco and the child’s sex and gestational age. Their results indicate that when their birth certificates were missing the name of a father, infants were likely to begin life with significantly lower birth-weight but were subsequently significantly more likely to reach a weight-to-length ratio that put them above the ninety-fifth percentile.

In other words, among the babies whose birth certificates carry no father’s name, the data reveal “a trend towards increased odds of early upwards crossing of major weight-for-length percentiles, an indicator of subsequent obesity risk,” a risk that remains elevated even in statistical models that adjust for the number of children the mother has previously born and for maternal age and ethnicity.

That fatherless children are often headed for obesity follows naturally, given that these children are especially likely to suffer obesity-fostering early-life disadvantages. The researchers report that in the data for children lacking a father’s name on their birth certificate, they find a clear statistical link to “perinatal risk factors” known to conduce to childhood obesity. Compared to infants whose birth certificates bear the name of a married father, the children lacking a father’s name on their birth certificates were almost eight times more likely to be exposed to maternal smoking (Adjusted Odds Ratio of 7.63) and were only about one third as likely to be breastfed (Adjusted Odds Ratio of 0.36).

The presence or absence of a father’s name on the birth certificate is

not the whole story. Among children *with* a father's name on their birth certificate, the researchers still find obesity-fostering patterns when the mothers are not married, although these patterns are "less pronounced" than they are for the other group of children.

Overall, the researchers consider their findings to be in harmony with previous research showing that "children with divorced parents have a higher prevalence of poor health outcomes than children residing in single-parent households, who in turn have poorer health than children living with their biological, married parents." What is more, previous studies have established that "associations between family structure and various aspects of child development" do extend to "risk for overweight/obesity." It is entirely predictable, then, that "obese children more frequently live in households with an unmarried single parent than [do] non-obese children."

It is hard to quarrel with the researchers when they suggest "using missing paternal data on the infant birth certificate as a practical tool to identify children who may be at greater risk for certain perinatal precursors of childhood obesity." But much better than identifying children at risk would be finding ways to protect them from that risk. Giving children that protection will require a cultural and legal change that gives them two married parents—and a birth certificate bearing a father's name.

(Erika R. Cheng et al., "Association of Missing Paternal Demographics on Infant Birth Certificates with Perinatal Risk Factors for Childhood Obesity," BMC Public Health 16 [2016]: 453, Web.)

Brooding on the Baltic: Family Disintegration Pushes Adolescents toward Suicide in Lithuania

Suicide rates have skyrocketed in Lithuania in recent decades, with a particularly troubling surge in such rates among Lithuanian adolescents. Why this tragic epidemic among the young in this Baltic state? Recently completed by scholars at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, a new study implicates adverse trends in family life.

Though their focus is on their own country, the Lithuanian researchers begin their study troubled by the global sweep of suicide. "Statistics

show that suicide is currently one of the leading causes of death among young and middle-aged people,” they write, “and represents a significant public health problem worldwide.” These researchers find it “extremely disturbing that this issue is becoming more and more associated with the younger age groups.” As they turn to their own land, the researchers acknowledge that “Lithuania has been among the countries with the highest suicide rate for more than 20 recent years.” Even with a slight downturn in twenty-first-century suicide rates in Lithuania, the researchers see reason for deep concern in 2012 data indicating that suicide still accounts for “26 and 35% of external [that is, non-biological] causes of death for all population and young people respectively.”

Highlighting “adolescence [as] the time of greatest risk for the first onset of suicidal behaviors,” the Lithuanian scholars suspect at the outset of their inquiry into such behaviors that the risk of suicide has increased among Lithuanian adolescents because of changes in family life that came when the country started dealing with the challenges of defining itself as a democratic, post-Soviet state. “The political and societal transition in Lithuania, like in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe,” they remark, “. . . brought a painful transformation in family life: tragically declining birth rates, an increased number of divorces, [and] changes in household composition or family structure.”

Underscoring the enormity of these changes, the researchers cite statistics indicating “a drastic increase in the number of extramarital births: from 7.0 in 1990 to 22.6 in 2000, and to 25.7 in 2010 per 100 births,” with an attendant decline in “the proportions of children growing up in a nuclear family composed of a biological father and mother—[an] intact family.” The dramatic erosion in the number of intact families shows up in the fact that in this study “only 62.8% of the total sample of [adolescents studied] were living in intact families, whereas two decades ago, in 1994, during [a parallel study], the corresponding figure was significantly greater—82.7%.”

The researchers worry that the new, non-traditional family forms will prove “less able [than the intact family] to control self-destructive behaviour of the children,” manifest not only in the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, but also in suicidal thoughts and acts.

Judging it “crucial to understand how, and under what conditions,

the family structure and functioning” affect adolescents’ vulnerability to self-destructive impulses, the researchers set to work analyzing data collected in 2014 from a nationally representative sample of 3,572 adolescents ages 13 to 15. The survey used to collect these data provides the researchers with “information about suicidal behaviour (stopped doing activities, considered suicide, planned suicide, and suicide attempts) and family life (family structure, quality of communication in family, parental monitoring and bonding, parenting style, family time, etc.)”

Not surprisingly, statistical analysis identifies some elements of family dynamics—including low parental emotional support, low maternal monitoring, and “authoritarian-repressive” paternal parenting—as predictors of suicidal tendencies in adolescents.

But beyond the dynamics of the family, the structure of the family looms large as a determinant of such tendencies: the data reveal that “adolescents living in a non-intact family, in comparison with adolescents from an intact family, were significantly more likely to report suicidal behaviour.” More specifically, the researchers calculate that for adolescents living in non-intact families, “the odds for suicidal ideation were increased by 32–35% ($p < 0.05$), and the odds for attempted suicide were increased by 70% ($p < 0.001$).”

The researchers express no surprise at their findings identifying adolescents in non-intact family structures as a population at risk. Quite otherwise. They cite earlier research concluding, similarly, that “a broken family . . . [is] linked to the risk for [adolescents’ engaging] in suicide attempts or other risk-taking behaviour.” A key part of that earlier research appears in a 1997 study adducing evidence that “adolescents from single-parent and step-parent families . . . [experience] lowered self-confidence, heightened anxiety and loneliness, more depressed mood, more suicidal thoughts, and even more attempts to commit suicide than children from intact families.”

The authors of the new study believe their findings prove that it is “essential to consider family-life practices in planning intervention programs for prevention of suicides among adolescents.”

But clearly this new study shows that it is not just family-life practices that shield adolescents from suicidal despair. Family structure also makes a huge difference. And until many more adolescents enjoy the

protection of growing up in an intact family, social workers are going to experience acute frustration in trying to design intervention programs that will actually prevent teen suicide—in Vilnius or in Vancouver.

(Apolinaras Zaborskis, Dainora Sirvyte, and Nida Zemaitiene, "Prevalence and Familial Predictors of Suicidal Behaviour among Adolescents in Lithuania: A Cross-sectional Survey 2014," BMC Public Health 16 [2016]: 554, Web.)

On the Dental Front in India: Mom's Career, Junior's Cavities

Progressives suppose that whenever and wherever women leave the home for paid employment, life improves for everyone. The latest evidence to the contrary comes from India, where public-health scholars at Karnatak Lingayat Education University and Narayana Dental College have just published a study implicating full-time maternal employment as a cause of poor dental health in children.

The Indian researchers do not lack for motivation to investigate the circumstances that foster dental caries (that is, cavities in the teeth) among children. After all, the "prevalence of dental caries is on the rise, in many developing countries," with a recent national survey in India finding "a high prevalence (51.9%) of caries in primary dentition ["baby teeth"] of 5-year-old children."

To determine what puts Indian children especially at risk of cavities in their teeth, the authors of the new study scrutinize data collected from 1,000 randomly selected school-going children ages three to twelve in the Nellore District of India's Andhra Pradesh.

These data reveal "a significant correlation . . . between working status of the parents and dental caries status of their children." More specifically, the researchers' statistical analysis establishes that "children from families where both parents were employed had significantly ($p = 0.0170$) increased prevalence of caries in primary dentition and the odds ratio showed a higher risk for caries in permanent dentition [cavities in permanent teeth]."

In other words, when Mom joins Dad in the out-of-home paid labor force, their children are more likely to develop cavities than if Mom stays home. What is more, this problem associated with maternal employment

seems to get worse as children acquire the permanent teeth they will rely on into adulthood.

No one needs to explain these findings to the Indian researchers, who remark that “the quality of time parents dedicate toward upbringing their child/children can . . . impact health and developmental outcomes. This is specifically relevant in developing good oral hygiene practices among children.” Putting a sharper point on their commentary, the researchers write, “In the contemporary scenario of both parents employed, there seems to be limited focus on the dietary habits and dental health of their children.”

Unfortunately, the researchers conclude their study calling for “efforts by government and nongovernmental organizations . . . to implement programs at the school level to enhance oral and dental health care among children.” Apparently, in India—as in the United States and Western Europe—political correctness pushes academics toward statist solutions of the problems caused by the decay of home-centered family life. Before children’s dental problems turn their smiles into check-boards, families in India and elsewhere need to find ways to get Mom back home.

(Niraj Gokhale and Sivakumar Nuvvula, “Influence of Socioeconomic and Working Status of the Parents on the Incidence of Their Children’s Dental Caries,” Journal of Natural Science, Biology, and Medicine 7.2 [2016]: 127-29.)

Ensuring Breastfeeding for Baby, in Saudi Arabia and America

The medical science on the matter is too strong for progressives to deny the immense benefits that breastfeeding gives babies. So when the issue comes up, they claim to support the practice—so long as it doesn’t seriously interfere with women’s out-of-home careers. But two new studies—one from Saudi Arabia, one from the United States—make it amply clear that keeping Mom at home is the best way to ensure that babies receive the incalculable benefits of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding matters a good deal to these researchers, who hail from the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia, and from the Universities of Maryland and Minnesota and from the Cleveland Clinic in America.

The Saudi scholar identifies “the stage of life beginning at birth and lasting until an infant reaches two years of age . . . as the ‘critical window’ in terms of encouraging optimal health, growth and cognitive development,” making it imperative that “mothers in both developing and developed countries . . . exclusively breastfeed their infants for the first 6 months of their lives, and then ensure that they receive adequately safe and nutritious solid foods alongside continued breastfeeding until they reach the age of 2 years or more.” The American scholars similarly stress that “breastfeeding has established benefits for both maternal and child health” and deplore the fact that “The U.S. continues to have one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the industrialized world,” with “only 49% [of American mothers] report[ing] feeding any human milk to their infants at six months.”

To be sure, the Saudi study actually focuses not on breastfeeding *per se* but rather on “complementary feeding” of infants—the introduction into infants’ diets of foods other than breast milk. But such complementary feeding is an issue because—as the Egyptian study explains—“early introduction of complementary foods (*i.e.*, before the infant reaches six months of age) may have the effect of replacing breast milk and halting breastfeeding altogether at too early a stage.” Who, the author of the Egyptian study wants to know, are the mothers most and least likely to start premature complementary feeding?

For the authors of the American study, breastfeeding does define the primary focus of investigation. What these authors seek to identify is the set of characteristics and circumstances found among the employed mothers most and least likely to initiate breastfeeding and then to persist in breastfeeding for at least six months.

To answer his research questions, the Saudi researcher parses data collected in 2015 in the Saudi city of Tabuk from 632 randomly selected mothers with children between the ages of 4-24 months. To answer their largely parallel research questions, the American researchers pore over data collected from 817 Minnesota women ages 18 and older who were hospitalized for childbirth and then tracked for six months thereafter.

But in spite of slightly different focuses, the Saudi researcher and the American researchers end up at the same place: as soon as a mother leaves home for paid employment, she puts her baby’s nutrition at risk.

That is, she is decidedly more likely to prematurely introduce non-breast-milk foods (according to the Egyptian study) and is significantly less likely to continue breastfeeding (according to the American study).

More specifically, the Egyptian researcher calculates that mothers who were employed within six months of giving birth are more than six times more likely to start complementary feeding during this period than are peer mothers who remain in the home (Odds Ratio of 6.39). The American researchers calculate that “the hazard for breastfeeding cessation” ran half again higher among mothers who returned to out-of-home employment during the first six months after childbirth than among women who did not return to employment during this period (Hazard Ratio of 1.46). In other words, the employed mothers most likely to breastfeed for six months are those who do not *act* like employed mothers—they are those employed mothers who simply did not go back to work at all during the study period.

Also deserving mention from the American study is the finding that unmarried employed mothers who initiate breastfeeding are almost 40% more likely than married employed peers to cease breastfeeding before their child is six months (Hazard Ratio of 1.39). Needless to say, in the conservative Islamic country of Saudi Arabia, researchers have little reason to track this differential.

Because out-of-home employment for women now defines a non-negotiable desideratum for progressive academics, the finding that such employment jeopardizes healthy breastfeeding poses a problem for both the Saudi scholar and his American colleagues. But the Saudi and the Americans solve that problem the way progressives always solve problems: by turning to a statist and corporatist formula.

The Saudi scholar interprets his justification for three statist-corporatist conclusions: First, “improved education is . . . needed to improve awareness of the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding.” Second, “public health interventions are needed to reduce early complementary feeding, focusing on mothers at highest risk of giving solids too early.” Third, “programs which can support working mothers must be implemented.”

The American researchers are headed in the same statist-corporatist direction when they argue that their findings indicate the need for “work policies that support longer duration of breastfeeding” in a social world

where “a substantial amount of employed women return to work in the first three months postpartum.” The American researchers’ intransigent commitment to this kind of statist-corporatist nostrum is especially astonishing given that in the data *for their own study*, “having an employer that provides paid leave was *not* associated with breastfeeding initiation and the longest paid leave available to a woman given her employer’s policy benefits was *not* associated with breastfeeding cessation during the 6 months after childbirth” (emphasis added).

Apparently, neither the Saudi researcher nor his American colleagues dare to draw the obvious conclusion from their findings: moving mothers of young children out of the home for paid employment has been a mistake endangering those children’s health. Neither the Saudi nor the Americans dare to suggest that what will safeguard young children’s health most fully would be helping their mothers to stay in the home. (Of course, mothers will find it difficult to stay at home unless they are married, but the American researchers skate around this issue as well.) How strange that plain speaking about home truths has grown impossible for academics in both Saudi Arabia and the United States!

(Riyadh A. Alzaheb, “Factors Associated with the Early Introduction of Complementary Feeding in Saudi Arabia,” International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 13.7 [2016]: 702, Web; Rada K. Dagher et al., “Determinants of Breastfeeding Initiation and Cessation among Employed Mothers: A Prospective Cohort Study,” BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth 16 [2016]; 194, Web.)

Alone and Hurting Themselves in Germany

Dedicated first responders, police officers, and doctors work tirelessly to protect men, women, and children from natural and human threats. But who will keep the depressed and anxious from harming themselves? The urgency of finding an answer to that question manifests itself in a new German study of self-harm among Germans age 14 and older. Though therapists and others may help some of those vulnerable to self-abusive tendencies, this new study concludes that—at least among adults—marital status signals vulnerability, with singles decidedly more prone to harming themselves than are married peers.

Completed by scholars at a number of European institutions, this study brought together researchers from Hannover Medical School, the University of Leuven, University Antwerp, and the University of Leipzig. These researchers analyze the prevalence of “self-directed harmful behaviors” in the German population and identify the characteristics of those most likely to engage in such self-harming behaviors.

To resolve their questions about self-harming behaviors, the researchers examine data collected in 2015 from a nationally representative sample of 2,507 Germans ages 14 and up. These data expose a wide range of self-harming behaviors, including deliberately starving oneself, abusing laxatives, driving recklessly, cutting oneself, head-banging, and attempting suicide. What is more, the researchers find a “relatively high” prevalence of such self-harming behaviors: almost half of study participants (49%) had engaged in “at least one self-harming behavior over the life-span.” Clearly, “self-harm constitutes a common problem.”

Not all Germans are equally likely to harm themselves. The problem appears especially acute among young males, among the obese, and among anxious, depressed, and impulsive individuals.

But given the retreat from wedlock and family life in Western Europe in recent decades, perhaps no finding from the recent study is more disturbing than that those living alone are especially vulnerable to self-harm. According to the researchers, “Individuals currently living with a partner exhibited less self-harm than those being single, living apart, being divorced, or widowed.” More specifically, when the researchers compare scores on the Self-Harm Index, they find that “individuals currently living together with a partner scored considerably lower . . . than those without a partner” (average scores of 0.91 and 1.53; $p < 0.001$). The researchers report that “subsequent separate analyses for men and women revealed similar differences.”

The researcher cannot see any way to “draw causal conclusions” from their data about the relationship between marital status and self-harm. And in the absence of such conclusions, they cannot determine “if marital status constitutes a protective factor against self-harm or if self-harm prevents successful partnership.”

But regardless of which way the cause-consequence relationship runs, it appears painfully obvious that wherever wedding bells have

stopped ringing and single-person households have multiplied, a tragically high number of isolated individuals are hurting themselves.

(Astrid Müller et al., “Prevalence and Correlates of Self-Harm in the German General Population,” PLOS ONE 11.6 [2016]: e0157928, Web.)

Depressed on Birth Control

For as long as hormonal contraception has been around, women have complained about its range of possible side effects—mood swings, blurred thinking, and reduced libido, in addition to a variety of physical ailments. Most of the literature examining the link between hormonal contraception and another pesky side effect—depression—has been of too small a scale or too narrow a focus to be of much use. Now, in perhaps the largest study of its kind, Danish scholars have found an increase in depression among users of all types of hormonal contraceptives, including oral contraceptives, the patch, ring, implant, and injection.

In a huge study of over 1 million Danish women and girls, University of Copenhagen scholars seek “to assess the influence of specific types of hormonal contraceptives on the risk for first use of antidepressants and first diagnosis of depression as an inpatient or an outpatient at a psychiatric hospital.” The need for such a study is clear, as the authors point out. Depression appears in women at double the rate it does in men, and the hormones whose synthetic forms largely comprise various types of birth control—estrogen and progesterone—“have been hypothesized to play a role in the cause of depressive symptoms.”

The researchers used data from the Danish Sex Hormone Register Study, which “includes all women living in Denmark,” and focused on women aged 15-34 over a period of many years. “Depression” was measured by whether a woman filled a prescription for an antidepressant and/or whether she was admitted to an institution for psychiatric care in the time period studied. Women who demonstrated depressive symptoms before the age of 15, or before the period under examination, were excluded from the study. A variety of physical ailments were also controlled for.

The results are startling. “In this study,” write the researchers, “use

of all types of hormonal contraceptives was positively associated with a subsequent use of antidepressants and a diagnosis of depression.” More specifically, women who used a combined oral contraceptive were about 23% more likely than were non-users to have a diagnosis of depression. For progestogen-only pills, the incidence ran about 34% higher. Users of the patch were twice as likely as nonusers to be depressed; those who used a ring, about 60% more likely; an IUD, 40%. Women who received the medroxyprogesterone acetate depot shot—DMPA or Depo-Provera—had almost three times the rate of incidence of depression. The researchers also discovered that adolescents were 80% more likely to be depressed when using a combined oral contraceptive. Incidence of depression peaked six months after beginning a birth control method, and leveled off after that.

The researchers close in restating these findings, and advise that “[f]urther studies are warranted to examine depression as a potential adverse side effect of hormonal contraceptive use.” Given the overwhelming numbers they uncovered, their warning could and should have been more urgent.

(Charlotte Wessel Skovlund et. al., “Association of Hormonal Contraception With Depression,” JAMA Psychiatry, September 28, 2016, doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2016.2387.)