

The Natural Family

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The Natural Family

The New Populism and Family Policy: Historical Reflections

Allan C. Carlson

From March 29-31, 2019, participants in World Congress of Families XIII gathered in the beautiful medieval city of Verona, Italy, to discuss both the victories of and challenges facing the pro-family movement around the world. The League, one-half of the ruling coalition in the Italian government, participated heavily in the event. The media scrutiny leading up to the Congress was intense, and culminated in a march of some 30,000 protestors on the final day. The below essay, by Allan Carlson, sets the stage of current European politics. The feature essays following were adapted from talks given at WCF XIII. Many of the speakers note the media attention and subsequent protests. Also of significance: On the day after the protest march, an estimated 40,000 persons marched in support of the World Congress of Families.

NEAR 1900, SIGNS OF A SHARP DECLINE in human fertility appeared in the nations of Western Europe and North America. Observers fretted over the cause. Those of a traditionalist, moralistic bent explained the development as a consequence of selfishness and hedonism, derived in turn

from a move away from Christianity.

Others, though, indicted the emerging economic system of industrial capitalism. In the pre-industrial order, they explained, children were commonly assets. By age three or four, a child could usefully participate in the family-scale enterprise of the peasant—or family—farm, the artisan's shop, or the fisherman's cottage. Accordingly, the birth of a new child would be welcomed as an economic—as well as a familial—blessing. Moreover, grown children would serve as the heirs and the “old age insurance” of aging parents, providing them a certain level of security.

The industrial order, in contrast, was hostile to family unity and the presence of children. Factories ripped away task after task from the household, quickly eliminating home production. Active adults, whose cooperative labor had been home-centered, were now drawn into factories for twelve hours a day, six days a week. Early on, some children found work in the new system: nine-year-old girls with nimble fingers in the textile mills and stocky boys of the same age in the coal mines. Yet, this radical economic individualization of adults and children disrupted family bonds; few parents bore children to send them off to the mines. Moreover, spouses within the industrial milieu increasingly saw each other as potential competitors, rather than as partners, sucking the material and emotional life out of marriage. Employers, for their part, viewed marriages and children as merely so many impediments to economic efficiency. Childless bachelors—male or female—were the preferred workers.

Still others, of a more philosophical mind, condemned the liberalism which undergirded the new economic order. This idea system gave primacy—indeed almost sole recognition—to the urges and needs of the individual, which fit well with the consumerist mentality favored by industrial processes. Indeed, most of the architects of liberalism—including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill—shared two traits: They were unmarried, and they were childless. The sole prominent exception, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, did have children; however, they were born of his mistresses and were quickly dispatched at his decree to foundling homes. The vacuous treatment of family, marriage, and children within philosophical liberalism was the predictable result of ideas designed by men alienated from women and children.

Some early socialist writers identified the anti-family consequences of the industrial capitalist order. Most notably, Friedrich Engels—in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*—eloquently exposed the discouragements to marriage and childbearing found in the rapidly growing industrial towns of Great Britain.

A more measured critique of liberal capitalism appeared in the 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, or *The New Age*, crafted by Pope Leo XIII. He described how this system left each worker alone and defenseless against the new economic lords, with mothers and children forgotten and abused. Leo gave support to efforts that would provide industrial workers with ownership of homes and fertile land sufficient for a family's food supply. He also gave praise to Christian labor associations and ways to adjust factory wages to support marriage and children.

Leo's promptings led within several decades to the first significant European efforts at family policy. Catholic study groups, commonly including Christian employers, actually devised an ingenious system of "equalization funds." Privately organized initially in France and Belgium, they encouraged employers to send a portion of their payroll, determined by their overall count of workers, to a Fund which would then distribute allowances to workers with a wife and children at home. So constructed, these funds reduced or eliminated the industrial system's "bachelor bias." Many soon provided as well pre- and post-natal medical care to the mothers involved along with widows' pensions and related forms of family-centered insurance.

The human slaughter of the Great War, 1914-1918, sharpened European angst over falling birth rates, a development now spreading to ever more lands. Adding to the apprehension was the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, propagating a communism which declared open policy war on marriage, home, and family: easy divorce; legalized birth control and abortion; the forced march of all women into industrial employment; and collectivized child care. On the positive side, joining the "Catholic" model of private wage equalization funds were new policy ideas. These included state-paid child allowances, loans to newlyweds with a portion of the principle forgiven with the birth of a child, and a "bachelor tax" on unmarried men. However, all of these approaches failed to reverse fertility decline, primarily because of their limited scope

or size. The positive birth incentives were simply inadequate to overcome the negative, anti-family pressures of the liberal economic system.

In Sweden, a new form of socialist pro-natalism did emerge. Drafted by the social democrats Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, it shared with the communists the legalization of birth control, the expectation of female employment outside the home, and collective child care. Unlike the Marxists, though, this Swedish model did favor early marriage and a policy goal of doubling the average number of children to be found in each fertile-couple home. The Myrdals would accomplish this through an expensive program of state family housing construction and subsidized rents, the socialization of all medical and dental expenses, free education from kindergartens through the universities, interest-free marriage loans, children's clothing allowances, state-funded child care, breakfasts and lunches for the children at school, and strict price controls on basic foods. These projects would be funded by new tax levies on the childless. The goal was to eliminate the impact of children on their parents' living standard. While too little of this scheme was adopted during the 1930s to gauge its effectiveness, a version of this model would return during the 1970s, with a dangerous twist.

More successful was a family policy model actually developed in the United States. Framed by mainly female theorists called the Maternalists, this approach rested on a firm definition of family: a breadwinning father earning a family-sustaining wage; a mother engaged full-time in the work of the home; and at least three children. Every domestic social program of the New Deal—the anti-Depression agenda of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic Party of the 1930s—rested on this definition as a policy goal. Means to this end involved both legal and cultural job and wage preferences for men as husbands and fathers, social insurance that delivered pensions for homemakers, widows, and orphans, a state program of pre- and post-natal medical care, the mandatory training of girls in home economics, and strong subsidies—direct and indirect—for the purchase of single-family homes by young couples.

Supplementing these policies was an income-tax scheme resting on “income splitting” for married couples. In effect, this procedure cut their tax rate in half, compared to the unmarried. Generous per capita tax deductions also completely removed most families with three or more

children from the federal income tax rolls.

American marriage and fertility rates began to climb during the mid-1930s; following World War II, these numbers soared. Overall fertility rose by 80 percent. Among the college educated, the birth rate more than doubled. This was the famed Baby Boom. This was also the Golden Age of the Homemaker, as a combination of cultural attitudes and policy prescriptions finally overcame the anti-family incentives of the liberal industrial order. This economy could claim one—but only one—family member: the husband and father.

Something very similar occurred in Western Europe. Following the war, energetic Christian Democratic parties emerged in France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Western Germany. Committed to moral, economic, and social reconstruction resting on Christian principles, these political movements fixed support for the natural family as the foundation of their domestic agendas. The Christian Democrats favored the family model now affirmed in the United States: a breadwinning husband and father; a homemaking wife and mother; and their children. While Christianity played no direct role in Great Britain, the postwar platform of the victorious Labour Party rested on the “Beveridge Plan,” which included universal child allowances. Even in social democratic Sweden, The League of Swedish Socialist Housewives (that was their real name!) pushed aside the Myrdal scheme, in favor of family wages for men, with mothers supported full-time at home. Here, too, the homemakers ruled. And fertility recovered in every land.

This time of renewal did not last. After two decades, the Christian Democratic parties began to lose their religious mooring, becoming merely pro-business political entities of the center-right. Family policy shrank in significance, and finally disappeared. In the United States, the Democratic Party abandoned its focus on families and small communities. Real communitarian agendas dedicated to the defense of marriage, children, home, and other human-scale entities gave way to fresh attention to individual wants.

Running parallel to this return of individualism at the personal level was a resurgent neo-liberalism in political economy. By the late 1960s, limits on the capitalist system that favored family life drew growing scorn. Equity feminism—dormant for decades—returned in a particularly

virulent form. It zeroed in on the wage and employment favoritism shown to the breadwinning male and it attacked the policy measures—such as homemaker pensions and “income splitting”—that protected the mother-in-the-home. The feminists also denounced the training of girls in home economics, demanding instead affirmative action for women in industrial employment. Most business corporations were delighted to join in. Long critical of the “family wage,” they were eager to expand the pool of working women and so drive average wages down.

As before, liberalism displayed its primordial indifference toward children, also this time in a particularly vicious way. The “Spirit of 1968”—in Western Europe as in America—had a decided sexual edge. Free love, birth control, and legal abortion were common demands, which cleared the moral and legal paths to a full embrace of the sexual revolution. This would lead, directly and inevitably, to the policy triumph of the LGBTQ agenda. Equity feminism, homosexuality, transsexuality: all share an aversion to fertility. The birth dearth returned, with a vengeance.

Radicals in Sweden and elsewhere now resurrected the Myrdal project from the 1930s, designed to reconcile equity feminism and sexual radicalism with replacement-level fertility. This time, though, marriage was dismissed as irrelevant: Cohabitation and sole parenting were in practice preferred. Twice—in the early 1990s and again in the early 2010s—they claimed success. However, in the first case, this fertility bump was the result of faulty statistical calculations; and in the second, “success” came only through the high fertility of new immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Native-born Swedes were just as child-adverse as all the other value offspring of the “Spirit of ’68.” Indeed, as the European Union took more complete form at the turn of the millennium, it became clear that the EU’s only answer to systemic depopulation was more immigration: in practice, the import of babies from other continents.

However, in the opening years of the 21st century, something new began to emerge. The first clear lines appeared in Hungary, where the Fidesz Party led by Viktor Orbán advanced a different answer to the European-wide birth dearth: Hungary shall encourage the fertility of Hungarians. Border controls would be matched by a massive investment in family support. On the question of women and work, Fidesz chose to support *both* full-time mothers at home and their employed counterparts.

Between 2008 and 2019, the Party implemented an amazing array of policies to support parents bearing and rearing children: massive tax breaks (as in the United States, *circa* 1950, a family with three or more children is in most cases free of all income tax); the forgiveness of student loan debt; large subsidies for the purchase of a home; state-funded child care; and marriage and birth bonuses. These programs represent a hefty four percent of Hungary's Gross Domestic Product. (If the United States were to do the same, this would mean \$760 Billion in annual support for new marriages and the birth of children—20 percent more than the amount allocated to the Pentagon.)

Quite simply, Hungary's pro-natalist family policy is being implemented on a scale never before attempted. Is it having an effect? Early evidence says "yes." Since 2010, when the experiment took hold, the Hungarian total fertility rate has climbed by 25 percent. As some of the largest benefits are only now kicking in, the positive results should grow in the years ahead.

In political terms, this pro-family agenda should be viewed as the real engine behind the success of the "new populism" in Europe. Neo-liberal and socialist critics, along with journalists at the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*, routinely blast this movement for its opposition to open borders. They dismiss positive talk of "family" as mostly a smokescreen.

In fact, the adoption of a pro-family agenda has been the main factor driving "populist" electoral success. These initiatives in Hungary have been overwhelmingly popular, delivering "supermajorities" in Parliament to the Fidesz Party in three successive elections. Support for the natural family has also been the primary reason for the victories of the Law and Justice Party in Poland.

Most tellingly, the "populist" League of the North in Italy—long known mostly for its opposition to immigration—won only four percent of the vote in the 2013 election. However, when rechristened as "The League" and after adopting an aggressive pro-family platform, the party won 18 percent in spring 2018, and became part of the governing coalition. In the May 2019 elections for the European Parliament, the League's vote swelled to 35 percent, a remarkable surge.

The same reconfiguration of priorities may be occurring in France, where The National Rally—long identified with its anti-immigrant

stance—is now developing a pro-family agenda modelled on that of Hungary and Italy. An early result came in that same May election to the European Parliament, where the French “populists” won more votes than any other party. If and when the “populist” movements of Germany, Sweden, and other lands articulate *and act on* clear policies that support the natural family, they too should enjoy greater electoral favor.

In March of this year, the World Congress of Families XIII convened in “the city of love,” Verona, Italy. Launched in 1997, this WCF project aims to reverse both the cultural and legal decay of natural marriage and the birth dearth—in all lands. The host this year was Matteo Salvini, leader of the now pro-family League and Deputy Prime Minister of Italy. The theme of this Congress was: “The Winds of Change: Europe and the Global Pro-Family Movement.”

Indeed, a new spirit has emerged in Europe, with global implications. *Family decline is not inevitable.* The corrosive incentives behind neo-liberalism and industrial capitalism can be countered, contained, and overcome, provided that the political will to do so exists. And this need not mean economic decline. Notably, Hungary has had in recent years an annual GDP growth rate of four percent, the highest in the EU.

Closing on a personal note, one of this author’s historical and political heroes has been Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States from 1901-1909: himself a “populist” and “nationalist.” Writing a little over a century ago, Roosevelt described how “uncontrolled industrialism” tore through family life. He was also an early witness to the consequent birth dearth. While referring here to the United States, his lesson was and is universal: “I do not wish to see this country [as a place] of selfish prosperity, where those who enjoy the material prosperity think only of the selfish gratification of their own desires and are content to import from abroad not only their art, not only their literature, but even their babies.”

The pro-family “populists” now emerging in Europe—and other places as well—would surely agree.

Allan C. Carlson is Editor of The Natural Family.

Address of Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy

Translated by Hannah King

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE. A journalist just asked me, “So you really came?” I answered, “My word is worth more than a thousand made-up controversies that make no sense, that have no foundation.”

We’re living in an incredible time. Last night I spent the night with my two children, and I asked myself, who, in 2019, in Italy and in the world, could be bothered by the word “mom” and the word “dad”? If the word “mom” and the word “dad” bothers someone, the problem is theirs, not ours.

Because really, we’re living in an incredible time. I’m here, not to take anything away from anyone. But I’m here *in favor* of the future. I see some protestors with their “polite” slogans; I’ve noticed a press campaign, and I’ll say that, as a journalist, once again I’m embarrassed to be a journalist. They speak a mixture of hypocrisy, ignorance, conformism, and political correctness. “Against!” They want everyone to be against. Ah, a vice premier who goes to a congress for families! And then even the Holy Father says, “I share the substance of what’s being said today.” Wow. Imagine that!

I’m *for*, not *against*. I’ll say it again: Everyone can do what they want with their private lives. Everyone can make love to whomever they want, go to dinner with whomever they want, go to the theater with whomever they want, go to the movies with whomever they want. I want to get the state *out* of stores and professional studios, including the *studi di settore*; there’s no way I want to bring the state into anyone’s bedroom. Everyone can do what they want in their own homes.

But my duty and my right—as a dad, as an Italian, as a man, as a minister of the government—is to defend the rights of those who don’t have a voice: the children. My duty is to put children back at the center, so they don’t become victims of the selfishness of grown-ups, or the objects of conflict between adults. The rights of the family need to be changed, yes. Because adults can fight; because a marriage, unfortunately, can end. But the ones who mustn’t be caught in the middle of adult conflicts are the children. The mistakes of adults shouldn’t fall on the shoulders of their children, who need to continue to have a mom, a dad, and grandparents. Not “Parent 1” or “Parent 2.” I am a dad. I am not “Parent 1” or “Parent 2.”

On that note, I’m gathering report after report after report, because we’ve dismantled the business of illegal immigration, the very thought of which was disgusting—to use, to exploit human beings who are trying to escape, in order to make billions of euros. Now I’m starting to turn my attention to the business of group homes, of family homes, that hold thousands of children hostage just to earn a few bucks. We’re going to go catch them town by town, city by city, because out of 3,000 family homes, a majority of them do a wonderful job, but there are some who don’t let minors go because of the income. And they say *I’m* the one who kidnaps minors. We’re going to go certify these group homes one by one.

Children must be at the center, children who are born. To women, I want to guarantee the freedom to choose. These so-called feminists intrigue me. If I were a woman, I’d have a hard time with them, women who protest for money. I think there’s an organized tourism business—“I’ll go to Verona for a bit, then Genoa, then Palermo.” It’s the same people, saying the same things, with the same posters. One day it’s the environment, one day it’s the family, another day it’s racism, another day it’s schools, another day it’s justice. It’s good for Verona! Mayor, you can show off your lovely city to some different protestors!

But back to the feminists, who talk about women’s rights, but are the first to pretend they don’t see the first, the only serious, actual danger in 2019 for rights, for social conquest, for the freedom to work, to speak, to study, to dress the way you want. And this danger is not the World Congress of Families, but Islamic extremism, and that Islamic subculture in which a woman is worth less than nothing. A woman goes around covered in a burka, a woman can’t leave her house, a woman can’t wear

a mini-skirt. If she dresses too “Western,” if she thinks too “Western,” if she has fun in ways that are too “Western,” she gets a beating! Not from the dangerous extremists of the World Congress of Families, but from someone who’s allowed in because we want open harbors, because there’s room for everyone.

In my house, there’s neither room nor citizenship for a subculture wherein your god tells you that a woman is worth less than a man. Because in my house, a woman has the same rights and the same obligations as a man.

We’re not interested in going backwards, of course. In one of my “political” activities—it’s lesser-known because, obviously, the newspapers don’t talk about it—I did my small part back in 2012, together with many other collaborators, to open the crisis pregnancy center of the Vittore Buzzi Children’s Hospital in Milan. Here, a thousand babies have been born who otherwise would not have been born, because a thousand women were able to choose.

It’s important to me that there is freedom of choice. A thousand women, who, because of economic or cultural problems, would have made different choices—thanks to that group of heroes, thanks to those twenty square meters inside the Children’s Hospital of Milan, they’ve made the most beautiful choice: to bring a baby into the world.

I’m here because the biggest crisis we’re facing in Italy isn’t the bond spread or the budget deficit. The biggest crisis is the empty cradles.

As the Vice President of the Council of this country, I want to be judged at the end of my five years (because it *will* be five years), on the fact that Italians will once again have certainty, have work, and will start having children again. Because a country that doesn’t have children is a country that dies. Hungary is an example. The family must be at the cultural and economic center of a country’s choices. I say this with the utmost respect for some of my “distracted” friends in government, who look at this room as a return to the past. To the contrary, in this room, we’re preparing the future. In this room, we’re looking ahead. We’re not looking backwards. And if talking about mother, father, and children, with the weight of calling oneself Christian, or Catholic, is for losers, then I’m proud to be a loser—who looks to the future as a Christian, as a Catholic, as a dad, and who wants a country that starts to smile and bet

on the future once again.

This also means freedom of choice in education. Here with us today is the Minister of Education. I think of the million children who go to semi-private/semi-public schools, and shame on anyone who calls into question the freedom of choice, and the freedom of education, and the work of those teachers, and the choices of those families. There are those who say, “Stop giving money to the private schools!” But they ignore the fact that if you magically took away money from the private schools and closed these thousands of private institutions tomorrow, you’d leave hundreds of thousands of children out in the cold, because the public schools wouldn’t be able to handle it. Before you criticize, inform yourself.

Freedom. In this room, we’re breathing freedom. And yes, there are different points of view. I’m the last person to be a testimonial for the traditional family. I’m separated, I’m divorced. I’ve made mistakes. But the one who makes mistakes learns from them. I don’t permit myself to judge what other people do. I was reading a sad article—not sad for me, but for the one who wrote it. It was titled, “What’s Salvini Doing at the World Congress of Families?” As though the millions of separated and divorced parents were less qualified to discuss family. On the contrary, we separated and divorced ought to be helped a little more than all the others to maintain a relationship with our children, with our relatives, with their grandparents, with our work. The racism, bigotry, ignorance, and hypocrisy are outside this room today, in the scores of media camped on the steps. Instead, we are working on a fiscal reform that puts the family at the center, to make it a fiscally recognized entity, because unfortunately, in Italy, and in Europe, having children is the doorway to poverty for many people. But having children must not be an undertaking that’s open only to the wealthy; it must be a free choice for whoever feels up to the task.

On the subject of adoptions, I suggest to some of my friends on the left, to some of my friends in government, instead of busying yourselves with various and eventual adoptions—I am doing this, and I hope other ministers, or rather, other members of parliament, are as well—to make adoptions faster and less costly for the 30,000 Italian couples who have been waiting for years to adopt a child in Italy, in Africa, and around the world.

I'll allow myself, with respect to everyone's sensibilities, to state here that as long as I'm around, I will fight against the barbaric and inhumane practice of surrogacy, which disgusts me just to think of it. A woman as an ATM, a microwave oven that cranks out eggs, that cranks out children. This is a perversion: a human, social, and cultural perversion.

As Minister of the Interior, I'm also proud to have financed the "Safe Schools" initiative. We have stopped hundreds of drug dealers, pushers of death, outside our children's schools. We seized kilogram upon kilogram of drugs, because those who imagine a society founded solely upon rights, where duties don't exist, are preparing for a future founded upon anarchy and chaos. Rights must be matched by duties. And on this, I will never change my mind. I'm grateful to the Minister of Education, who, last September, brought back civics as a course of study in our classrooms. Rights without duties don't work anywhere.

Freedom. Yesterday I was with my two children—a girl and a boy. We must preserve the freedom of a little girl to be a little girl, and of a little boy to be a little boy, without anyone else deciding what's right or wrong. I'm terrified of intellectual orthodoxy, of a one-size-fits-all consumer—of a single, worldwide muddle without identity, values, and distinctions. A little girl is a little girl, and a little boy is a little boy. Let's let them play the way children have always played. Because we're also in the midst of a madness that allows some pseudo-educators who have chosen the wrong line of work to say, "They'll decide what they are when they're adults." What a tragedy! I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but gender theory, in which no distinctions are allowed to exist, is something I'll fight against as long as I live. Because, fortunately, the good Lord made us different. I'm not saying better and worse, but different.

Therefore, I believe it's the government's duty to help mothers and fathers become mothers and fathers more and more often, and more and more comfortably. Here in this room, we don't want to take the freedom of choice away from others, but instead we're talking about relieving financial pressure—the IVA tax, for example, on baby products. We want to extend the model of the Lombardy Region to other regions of Italy: Child support for divorced and separated parents, policies in favor of the family, free day care for everyone in Italy. Day care, unfortunately, has become something that's attainable for only ten percent of Italian families.

Here, too, we see classism. Those who can afford it pay a babysitter. Those who are lucky enough to have grandparents, use those grandparents. Those who don't, don't have children. At this point, a woman doesn't give birth for the first time until she's 32 years old. And they say *we're* the ones thinking toward the past!

I'll close in the same place I started. Today I was reading two authors. One was George Orwell, author of *1984* and *Animal Farm*, two books that would do well to become required reading in school. We're living in this dangerous time: intellectual orthodoxy, newspeak, the Ministry of Truth, thought crime, a socialist regime that decides what you do and don't have a right to think. And today, if someone else were in charge, talking about mothers and fathers would be a thought crime.

Italians don't have children because there's no steady work, but we're getting them to work. Just today, the editors of *Corriere della Sera* probably didn't notice, and I thank them for it—because today, they had a headline that was, for once, very accurate, that says: Thanks to Quota 100, 116,000 Italian young people will start working, will be able to start families and have children—116,000 people with stable jobs, thanks to our pension reform, will be able to build a future for themselves. The editors didn't notice that this headline was in our favor. I think the headline came in late; maybe it slipped through their fingers, but no matter—we'll take what the good Lord gives us without making faces about it.

Because what is the motive, ill-concealed as it is, of certain people? "The Italians don't have babies; no problem! We'll send you twenty-somethings by the shipload!" They come pre-packaged. They have no culture; they have no identity; they have no roots. They have no past, so they have no present; they have no future.

I'm all for diversity. That's why I hope to go back to Ghana soon, to invest some real money to help those children, and those young people, not to run away from their country, but to have an honest future in their own country, without being uprooted, deported, or used as meat to be butchered.

Last year, less than half the number of babies were born in Italy compared to the number born in 1975. *Less than half*. Now, we don't want a new baby boom, but that's the economic, social, and cultural data that we have both the right and the obligation to work with. So I thank you, and

I hope what we want is very clear to the world that's watching us—but then I already know that tonight, the newscasts will fabricate whatever they want. It's for this reason, however, that I'm thankful for the fact that, in 2019, thanks to the Internet, Italians and citizens all over the world can inform themselves directly, passing over the rigged information that comes out of the newsrooms of newspapers-for-hire, who find it in their interests to report only what's convenient for them.

I'll close with a thought from one other author—moving from Orwell to G.K. Chesterton. And this line, although written over 100 years ago, seems as though it were written yesterday: “Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four.”

Consider me on your side, with each of us maintaining our distinctions. I did not come here to Verona today looking for votes. I don't care about votes. I care about building a society and a community with the values that will give this country a future. I care about trust; I care about the responsibility that you are giving us. I thank the good Lord for these nine months as Minister of the Interior, which is the greatest gift the good Lord and the Italian people could have given me. I hope to carry out this assignment with dignity, with honesty, and with courage. Let it be known that if my country and the future of our children need defending, there's no threat, no court case that will hold me back. I'm moving ahead like a freight train, and I won't let anyone stand in my way. I'm not afraid of anyone or anything.

I'm grateful to Verona. I'm grateful to the mayor. I'm grateful to those who had the courage to act as sponsors. This experience has been surreal, with journalists asking me, “Salvini, are you seriously going to Verona?” Not even if someone went to a congress of purse snatchers, or of serial molesters, would there have been such a reaction. We're talking about families, mothers and fathers, and our opponents think we're insane. “The Middle Ages, losers, the extreme right . . .”

But good God, I don't believe in distinctions like left, right, fascist, or communist anymore. We're in 2019. There are no more fascists—communists, yes. They still go around with a hammer and sickle and a red flag. Yet those who talk about mothers and fathers are the problem?

So I thank all of you because you are that *avant garde*, that nucleus, that breach keeping the flame kindled that represents 99.9% of the

community that the good Lord—both for believers and unbelievers—has placed on this earth.

And so, as a Minister, as a man, as a dad with a thousand defects, a thousand limits, who in his relationships has made—and will make—a series of incredible mistakes, I am fighting, and I will fight, to the end that Europe and Italy once again place woman, man, and child at the center, and that there might be a future on this continent that's not one of consumers, of intellectual orthodoxy, of one-size-fits-all food, of one-size-fits-all congresses, of one-size-fits-all TV. This uniform thinking is terrible. Long live differences! Long live varied types of beauty! Long live that which makes us, not better or worse, but human beings—sentient, conscious, and distinct from one another! Count on me to defend the right to life, the right to freedom of choice, freedom of education. Long live freedom! And let's go change a Europe that has tried to take away our freedom—to take it away, to rip it from our hands, in the name of finance, business, and bureaucracy.

I'm counting on you—long live the family! Long live the mothers, the fathers, and the children! And hands off the children! Thank you. *Viva Verona!* Good luck, and I wish you well. And thank you to the good Lord.

Address of Giorgia Meloni, Secretary of Fratelli d'Italia¹

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. I've just arrived—I was doing the ironing. Then I found ten minutes to come and talk about politics with you.

And really, this great attendance, in spite of all the controversy, is the best response you could have given to the protestors. Thank you to everyone for their work. Thank you Brian Brown, Jacopo Coghe, Toni Brandi, and Massimo Goldolfini. Thank you to everyone who allowed this event to take place. Thank you for not giving in. Thank you for the courage. Thank you for the determination, not just today but for many years. Your work, along with the work of many other associations, has helped to keep alive certain issues that were destined to be removed from politics—you have kept them alive, active, and present.

They said we want to go back to the past. That we're losers, embarrassing, unenlightened. They said it's scandalous for people to defend the natural family founded on marriage, to want to increase the birth rate, to want to place the correct value on human life, to support freedom in education and to say no to gender ideology. I think the ones who want to go back to the past are those trying to bring back censorship by trying to stop an event like this from taking place. I think it is unenlightened when a state that is usually willing to sponsor any old thing, even exhibitions featuring a crucifix immersed in a beaker of urine, is ashamed to sponsor

1. "Brilliant defence of conservative values by Giorgia Meloni at World Congress of Families, subtitles," YouTube video, 14:50, "Cassius," April 17, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_Z1LClhnsk.

an event like this. I say the losers are those with nothing better to do than come here and insult us while we talk about what we can do for the the Italian family. But above all I say the embarrassing ones are not us. The embarrassing ones are those who support practices like surrogacy, abortion at nine months, and blocking the development of children with drugs at eleven years of age. That is embarrassing.

They said all sorts of things about this Congress. That we want to limit the freedom of women. That we want them at home doing the ironing. Can you see me at home doing the ironing? Do you think I, the only female party secretary in Italy, who was a candidate for Mayor of Rome while pregnant—for which I was criticized—do you think I want women to be chained to goodness knows where? Exactly the opposite. We want to guarantee rights that today don't exist. The right of a woman to be a mother and not to have to give up working as a result. The right to be a mother, choose not to work, and not starve to death as a result. The right of a woman forced to have an abortion because she has no alternative to have that alternative. Because if a woman only has the option to abort, that isn't the freedom to choose. The freedom to choose means having a choice. That is what we want to guarantee. We're here to defend women, to defend the family, to ask for things that we have brought to parliament, like the nation's "infant income," which we believe in more than the citizen's income. I say that sincerely. We want funding for people who have children, because the whole of society benefits. We have proposed free nursery schools, open until shops close, and on Saturdays, to give mothers who work another option. We have asked for the full application of Law 194 for the reasons I mentioned, so economic support can be provided to women who commit to and who prefer carrying their pregnancies to term, including in cases of adoption. We have called for a moratorium at the UN to declare surrogacy a universal crime, because that really is degrading and abusive of women.

We want to bring these issues to Europe. It's scandalous that one of the EU's priorities for funding is not the birth rate. The low birth rate is the biggest problem facing Europe. If we do not address this, everything else we do is pointless. If the EU has an Erasmus program for student mobility, if it has a Horizon program for science, why can't it have a program for families, to increase the birth rate, to invest resources in the

birth rate?

But they think everything we propose is crazy. They think it's unenlightened, that we want to take away rights—that we are living in the Middle Ages. You know, the Middle Ages was also the time of the cathedrals and the abbeys; the founding of the *comuni*, the universities, the parliament; the epoch of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Saint Francis, Saint Benedict. But let's not expect people who don't know where Matera is to have read history books.

We have been attacked on a personal level. I have also been attacked. "You should be ashamed of yourself. You talk about family based on marriage and had a child out of wedlock." Yes, I also talk about large families but only have one child. Ironically, when they say these things they actually strengthen our position. My pro-family work only shows that what I am calling for will not benefit me personally. I am calling for what I think will benefit Italian society. I believe the state should incentivize the natural family based on marriage. And if I'm not married, I do not expect the state to extend to me the same privileges that it does to married couples. That's the point. Pay attention. I believe in a society where every choice has consequences and you accept responsibility for them. I reject a society where every desire becomes a right, every whim becomes a right. A society wherein I have no responsibilities but only rights. I reject it. It's wrong.

I also think it says a lot that I don't accept a religious approach to any of this. I believe in God, but I don't adopt a religious approach. Why should I? I fight these battles because of secular common sense. I am a person who asks myself uncomfortable and profound questions. And I want answers to these questions that are credible. And all too often the high priests of single thinking are incapable of giving answers that make sense. And I have dozens of these questions. Is it right for a society to spend more energy and resources trying to find quick and easy ways to get rid of human life, rather than trying to encourage it? Is that normal? Is that civilized? Is it right that you, correctly, cannot rip a newborn puppy from the bosom of its mother, but you can with a baby, the child of a desperate mother who sold it to two rich men? Why do Italian courts take away legal custody from two married parents, the natural parents of a baby girl, saying they are too old to raise her at 52 and 54, taking away

their natural daughter? But if two men go abroad and buy a child, that's fine? *Why? Why? Why?*

Why, if they told us that the father of Eluana Englaro should be free to disconnect the plug that kept her alive, because nobody knows better than a parent what is best for their child, why did the same not apply to Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans? Why is the winner always the one who wants to disconnect the plug? Why is the winner always death? If the life of a sick child like Alfie Evans is defined as pointless, how long before they define as pointless the life of a disabled or elderly person or anyone who doesn't correspond to the idea of the perfect consumer? How long? Why do we spend our time fighting all types of discrimination but we pretend not to see the greatest ongoing persecution, the genocide of the world's Christians? *Why?* Please answer me these questions.

This is what we are doing here today. Why is the family an enemy? Why is the family so frightening? There is a single answer to all these questions. Because it defines us. Because it is our identity. Because everything that defines us is now an enemy for those who would like us to no longer have an identity and to simply be perfect consumer slaves. And so they attack national identity, they attack religious identity, they attack gender identity, they attack family identity. I can't define myself as Italian, Christian, woman, mother. No, I must be citizen X, gender X, parent 1, parent 2. I must be a number. Because when I am only a number, when I no longer have an identity or roots, then I will be the perfect slave at the mercy of financial speculators. The perfect consumer. That's the reason why. That's why we inspire so much fear. That's why this event inspires so much fear. Because we do not want to be numbers. We will defend the value of the human being, of every single human being. Because each of us has a unique genetic code that is unrepeatable. And like it or not, that is sacred. We will defend it. We will defend God, country, and family—those things that disgust people so much. We will do it to defend our freedom, because we will never be slaves and simple consumers at the mercy of financial speculators. That is our mission. That is why I came here today.

Chesterton wrote, over a century ago, "Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer." That time has arrived. We are ready. Thank you.

**Address of Katalin Novák,
Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs, Hungary**

HELLO TO EVERYBODY! I'm very happy to be here in Verona today, in the beautiful city of love, in the city of Romeo and Juliet: the best place to organize this year's World Congress of Families. I am happy to be here. I'm happy to have come here, even if it was not easy to reach this building today. I come from Budapest, from Hungary. I represent the government and the governing party of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a leader who not only speaks about family values, but also acts in favor of families.

I know how much tension the World Congress of Families has caused here in Italy. I see the newspapers, I see the media, I see that so many people were angry because of this conference. Don't be angry! We are all very happy to be here.

I see that the so-called "liberal" media cannot accept anyone who doesn't think the same way they do. I am conservative, so I trust the other person in the conversation. I am conservative, so I think that everybody has the right to think whatever they want. I am conservative, so I think that we have the right to speak out for what we take to be important, what we take to be true. And I also give others the right to do so. So let's be conservatives, and let's respect others by letting them say whatever they want to say.

We are living in the time of "fake news," of lies. Let me tell you a story. Just today, on a Hungarian website, appeared a long article about my speech. The authors said that I said this, I said that, and that you didn't like it. They claimed that what I said wasn't even popular in this room! And I hadn't even given my speech yet! That's the world we are living in. Maybe they published this article some hours before they wanted

to. It was a little bit too early, certainly, because I hadn't even stepped on the stage! I hadn't even entered the building yet!

But we are fine. We are used to this. And we have to stay brave. If we become afraid, if we lose our braveness as political leaders, then we will lose ourselves. We should not do that, and we should keep speaking up for our values.

I am Minister of State for Family and Youth in Hungary. I have been doing this job for five years now. I am also vice-president of our party, Fidesz. But above all, I am a mother. I am a mother of three children. And I am not "Parent 1," nor "Parent 2." I am the *mother* of my children! I am even a working mother, a hard-working mother. I have my political, professional career; I am a member of the Parliament. But it is much more important that I am the daughter of my mother and my father, the sister of my brother, the wife of my husband, and the mother of our three children.

I have never been a feminist—sorry to say that, but it's true. We women are constantly fighting for our rights, but while fighting for our rights, we give up our privileges. Yes, we have rights; but we also have privileges. We women have the *privilege* of bearing a child. We have the *privilege* of delivering a child. We have the *privilege* of breastfeeding a child. Let's never give up on these privileges.

I come from Hungary, and represent the Hungarian government. Hungary is a family-friendly country. We have had a new constitution since 2011. Imagine, in 2011—just eight years ago—we stated in our constitution that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, that family is based on marriage and the relationship between parents and children. And we also stated in our constitution that life should be protected, and that life begins with conception.

Hungarian people love children. So do Italian people. Young Hungarians and young Italians want to have a family. Young Hungarians and young Italians want to get married, and want to have children. But what happens? In Italy the marriage rate has dropped by 12% in the last several years, the number of divorces has risen by almost 70%, and the so-called fertility rate has also dropped by 10%. For a long while, Italian politicians and leaders left the Italian people; they abandoned the Italian people. They didn't help Italian young people to have families, to have

children and to raise children. That is why I think Italy needs its new leaders, needs a wind of change, needs a government that is in favor of protecting and helping families. You need those leaders who are brave enough to stand up for family values, to support families and to find ways to help young Italians to be able to fulfill their dreams of having families, even large families if they wish to do so.

Europe is a continent of empty cradles. There is not a single European country now where enough children are being born. There is not a single European country where at least two children are born in one family. We are giving up on ourselves. We have a demographic decline in many European countries, and on the other hand we are facing a mass migration towards Europe. Tens of millions of people are coming for a better life to Europe. And what do we do? We don't even raise questions. We just give bad answers. We don't ask: Why don't European young people have children? Why did they give this up? How can we help our young Europeans? How can we help the young Hungarians, and the young Italians, the young Europeans to be able to have children?

Instead, what do we do? We import people from the outside. We support mass migration as the continent, as Europe, instead of helping our own people to be able to have children, to be able to have families.

In Hungary, we have family-friendly policy. We have a family-friendly tax system. The more children you have, the less taxes you pay. For example, in Hungary we just started a new program. If you are a young couple, and you get married, you can have 35,000 euros as a credit with no interest. You begin to pay it back. But if the first child comes, then you don't have to pay for three years. When the second child comes, again you don't have to pay for three years, and we decrease the debt by 30%. If the third child comes, you don't have to pay back anything anymore! So a young Hungarian married couple gets 35,000 euros, which they can use for whatever they want. (Because we are conservatives, we let people decide on their lives themselves. We don't tell them what to do with their money.) In addition, they can get 35,000 euros non-reimbursable—they don't have to pay it back ever—if they buy or build a new house or a new flat, so that they have a flat or a house to have children. In summary, if they want to have three children in the future, they get 35,000 euros non-reimbursable, plus the other 35,000 euros for building a house or flat.

With 70,000 euros, in Hungary, this is already a sure start.

Importantly, in Hungary all the family subsidies take effect once the mother has passed the first trimester of pregnancy. So after the first trimester, the couple will get these subsidies, because we also acknowledge not only the newborn but also the unborn child. And beginning the first of January 2020, even grandparents can stay at home with the grandchildren if the mother and the father work. I was lucky enough in my life—and I always thank God for this—that each and every day I could see all four of my grandparents. I would never give this up for anything, and we should give this possibility to the children of today as well.

And the last new incentive I would like to mention to you is that beginning the first of January 2020, mothers who gave birth to four children, or adopted four children and raised four children, are exempt from personal income tax for the rest of their lives. I suspect many of you have four children. So, welcome to Hungary! You are all welcome.

Europe is committing a slow suicide, because Europe is giving up on its Christian culture and on supporting young people in having families. We won't just let this happen! We Hungarians and Italians won't let Europe commit suicide, because Europe is our Europe, and we will defend her. And we don't only agree with the Italian government about migration policy, but we also agree with the Italian government about family policies, the pro-family policies they want to introduce in Italy. Good luck to Italy, to the Italian people! I hope you will keep this family-friendly government. And I very much hope that, together, we can save Europe.

Traditionalism After 2016

Levan Vasadze

GOOD MORNING! WHAT A PLEASURE TO BE HERE! I feel very much at home every time I come to Italy. In Soviet days, Georgia was referred to as the Italy of the Soviet Union, thanks to its wine, food, beaches and mountains, musical culture, and southern climate. I, as a Georgian patriot who loves Italy, would of course reciprocate the compliment and say that it is actually the other way around: Italy is Europe's Georgia, and this is the best compliment I can render to our generous hosts.

Having hosted this Congress three years ago in Tbilisi, let me share some experiences of how the Congress has affected our country in its aftermath. Many traditionalists in Georgia (I'm not a big fan of the term "conservatism," as I believe living the eternal tradition is more important than conserving an outdated one) state that it was actually World Congress of Families X that changed the course of events in our country. The flank of traditionalist NGOs, bloggers, and activists has grown dramatically. Although we still have a long way to go to the happy day of a complete victory over the Soros-funded demons, the fact of a large international forum like this one was obviously very reassuring to my compatriot traditionalists, who (a) found out that they are not alone and (b) have discovered through the international guests of the Congress that not all Americans and western Europeans are cynical perverts. I believe this Congress will have a similar impact on Italy's pro-life culture and family movement, and I'm here to congratulate our Italian friends and organizers on this remarkable achievement.

The Congress of Tbilisi in 2016 also coincided with remarkable

changes on a global scale. Later that year, Donald Trump managed to score a historic victory against the entire U.S. mass media and mainstream political establishment, marking a turning point in the march of global liberalism. His announced policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, although still fiercely opposed by the globalists nested in the State Department, is already yielding results. We, the habitants of the colonial provinces of the U.S. empire, are already feeling a less sodomizing pressure in our respective countries. Make no mistake, the dragon is not dead and his death will last long and the agony will prove bloody, but the trend is evident.

At the same time the rise of a generation of new European traditionalist leaders, including Matteo Salvini and many others across the continent, became an evident tendency. We do not believe these are accidental outliers; all of the data suggest that opposition to the monopolar liberal world is here to stay.

If so, than the key question is, what lies ahead? Many modern thinkers believe our world, during the first half of our lifetime, was essentially bipolar. Now, through a time of monopolarity, the world is becoming multipolar.

The 21st century is marking the rise or the resurrection of several opposing civilizational poles. If the apocalypse is still to be postponed, it is obvious that the planet's global domination by one ideological center can only be reverted if those re-emerging alternative civilizations can develop something more important than just a greater degree of sovereignty from the dollar system. By this I mean the alternative civilizational ideologies. If the African, Asian, Latin American, or any other alternative is to become a reality, we need to see that these centers have something else to say than more GDP per capita.

I have been speaking about the utter necessity for such innovation by the traditionalists for some time now. Last year in Chisinau, Moldova, and the year before that in Budapest, Hungary, at World Congress of Families XII and XI, respectively, I presented my views on the contours of an alternative, post-liberal ideology. In those speeches I said that in this post-liberal ideology we must replace the obsession with so-called human rights, which are at large an invention of French revolutionaries who murdered 200,000 people in the genocide of the Vendée, with

something much more traditional and acceptable to all human societies irrespective of their ethnicities and religious traditions. I said that instead of the rights of the Cartesian “individual,” we should concern ourselves with the writing of the world’s first constitution based on the rights of a human family and on the obligations of a human being and society towards this family.

In my view, this is a revolution in the thought process, the consequences of which are difficult to grasp. In the aftermath of last year’s Congress in Moldova, during one of our working sessions, we discussed why we should concern ourselves with the writing of such a thing in the absence of a country where it can be implemented in reality. I said there that actually it is the other way around: First, we develop an affirmative narrative of a post-liberal ideology, and then the course of history will guide us toward the country that accepts it. Hence, as much as I would like this to be first implemented in Georgia and then in the entire Caucasus region, I have to submit to the basic logic of the above sequence.

Therefore, I hereby invite all of you into this exciting and creative line of work: the writing of the world’s first constitution based not on human rights, but on the rights of the family and on the human obligations toward the family. This work, which has consumed a great deal of my recent past, would benefit immensely from the participation of the great thinkers, lawyers, politicians, and social activists present here.

Organizationally, for those enthusiasts who want to join us, it is easy to get involved; you can always obtain my personal contact information from Brian Brown and his wonderful team.

Last but not least importantly, allow me to conclude with some innovative guidelines, which in my view must be the basic characteristics of this post-liberal ideology/constitution, which for the time being, for the lack of a better term, must be called a traditionalist ideology:

- Theocentricism instead of anthropocentricism—If we are to succeed we must revert Friedrich Nietzsche’s paradigm of the “death of God,” and instead bring God back to life and place Him at the epicenter of such societies. This does not mean theocracy, but neither does it mean democracy in divine and moral issues, either.

- No universalism—Unlike liberalism, Marxism, and fascism, traditionalism must not aspire to being universal. Each civilization must read the constitution in its own, unique way, and thus enrich the renaissance of the world’s traditionalist movement
- No globalism—all three of the aforementioned modern political theories have shared the ambition of world domination. Ours should not. Those societies that are deeply entrenched in liberalism or in fascism or in communism, and want to stay in these systems, should not be subject to any interference from our side. We believe in the collective intellect and character of individual nations as well as in the purely unique pace of their individual historical events. What is good for Georgians today may be bad or even lethal for Italians at the same time. Hence, whatever the nation freely chooses should be that nation’s business and no one else’s. That said, knowing all too well the oppressive nature of liberalism, we do understand that the free expression of such nations may be significantly hindered by propaganda. Nonetheless, in order to avoid any globalist actions, the international society of traditionalists should abstain from any interference in the lives of each society.
- No usury—I believe this is a highly desirable and achievable goal for the post-liberal traditional society. It is in full agreement with the philosophy and tradition of all three Abrahamic religions and was practiced for centuries by all of them. Unfortunately, only parts of Islamic banking have retained it, while the rest of us have lost it. We need to restore it.
- A revisitation of Montesquieu’s three branches of power—without much detail, let me state here that, while I remain a very strong advocate of the people’s direct rule (I don’t like the Greek word “democracy,” since liberals have done everything to taint its meaning) in practical affairs, I believe the above dogmatic division may prove less necessary under the new ideology and constitution.

Finally, let me say that unless we step up and put forward an

affirmative narrative of tradition, we as fruitless dissidents of liberalism are risking dying with it. And although many of us present here would gladly give our lives in exchange for saving our families and societies from continued perversion and degradation, let us do more, let us stay alive and build jointly the post-liberal world in those parts of human civilization that want to remain alive, God-fearing, and thus human.

Levan Vasadze is a Georgian businessman and served as organizer of World Congress of Families X in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Two Family Policy Essentials

Allan C. Carlson

IN MY TIME TODAY, I want to focus on two matters regarding family policy.

The first is the absolutely critical need to craft an “ideal family” structure as a model or goal in shaping policy. Without such a model, it becomes impossible to build a coherent public policy; the results would actually be social chaos and fiscal irresponsibility.

In the World Congress of Families project, we crafted early on a definition of the “natural family” as our focus. Specifically, in May 1998 we gathered 30 persons in a second century B.C. room in the ancient city of Rome, here in this land. Our hosts were Ambassador Alberto and Christine Vollmer, of Venezuela. The group represented all the scattered children of Abraham: Roman Catholics, Russian and Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans and other Evangelical Protestants, Mormons, Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and Orthodox Jews. It also included important research scholars from the fields of law, demography, history, sociology, and psychology. After a long conversation and debate, the group agreed on this definition:

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of:

- Satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love;
- Welcoming and insuring the full physical and emotional development of children;
- Sharing a home that serves as the center for social, educational,

economic, and spiritual life;

- Building strong bonds among the generations to pass on a way of life that has transcendent meaning; and
- Extending a hand of compassion to individuals and households whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.

We chose the phrase “natural family” as an alternative to earlier terms. For example, “traditional family,” in English, is backward-looking, or vaguely reactionary. “Nuclear family” is far too narrow, and it sounds ominously like a bomb. In contrast, “natural family” appeals to the reality that there is a “human nature”—whether designed by God or evolution—that includes a core, vital family component. It also has the advantage of appealing to nature, to the place of human beings within the ecological order. And it implies, by intent, that a natural law exists, to which we owe appropriate deference.

My second point is that effective family policy must strike a creative balance between state support for families and family autonomy, or independence. The goal must be a family policy that, paradoxically, actually strengthens families as free, autonomous entities.

The “Swedish model” of family policy, first developed during the 1930s by Social Democrats Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, did aim at raising the Swedish birth rate. However, it would do so by eliminating marriage and the marital household as meaningful legal and economic institutions. After accomplishing that, the architects of the Swedish model proposed to socialize all of the costs of bearing and rearing children. By implication, the properly organized Social Democratic state would then also claim the primary role in rearing and educating children. It was hoped that once freed from these responsibilities, parents—perhaps married, perhaps not—would joyfully produce three or four children per family, delivering modest population growth for the socialist state.

The Swedish model does not work; it never did. When the Swedish birth rate rose again during the 1950s and early 1960s, it was only because social conservatives managed to gain control over family policy. They favored “family wages” for fathers and home-centered mothers. As late as 1965, for example, 95 percent of Swedish preschool children received

full-time care by their mothers.

Since 1970, the Myrdal agenda has been relentlessly and completely achieved. However, if one discounts the births of recent immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, the Swedish total fertility falls back to about 1.6 births per women, near the European average and well below the replacement level.

A promising development in Europe today is the turn by policymakers to the creative use of taxation policy to affirm and support natural families. Where the Swedish model uses direct government subsidies and state allowances to meet the costs of children, new tax policies in Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere focus on cutting, or even eliminating, the income and payroll taxes of families with dependent children. Unlike the Swedish model, which reinforces state control of children, this new European model allows parents to keep more—much more—of what they earn while rearing children. This strengthens the parents as a married couple and strengthens their home as an autonomous economic order.

This is a vital form of liberty—familial liberty—that overcomes the paradox of state support and family strength. And as such, it is a pillar of true democracy.

Allan C. Carlson is Founder of the World Congress of Families and Editor of The Natural Family.

Nuclear Powers: Economics, Autonomy, and Legal Threats to the Family

James M. Kushiner

ON AUGUST 6, 1945, the United States dropped a nuclear atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, killing up to 90,000 people. Modern scientists had discovered how to split the nucleus of the atom and destroy a city.

I was born six years later into a nuclear family in Detroit, Michigan. I first lived with my parents and two older siblings in a bedroom of my grandparents' house. They were immigrants from Scotland.

A 1940 census of our neighborhood shows that our neighbors were immigrants from Czechoslovakia, French Canada, Greece, Italy, Poland, Russia, and Scotland. My father's parents lived nearby. His father emigrated from the Russian Empire, and his mother from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

What brought all these people to Detroit from around the world? Many would say, economics. There were plentiful well-paying jobs in the factories of American automakers Henry Ford, Walter Chrysler, the Dodge Brothers, and William Durant (founder of General Motors). The demand for automobiles was explosive. Detroit grew quickly. In 1900, it had 285,700 people. By 1930 it had 1,568,700. It had grown more than five-fold in just 30 years!

Home Economics

The Age of Enlightenment appears successful because its science produced the industrial revolution, modern medicine, atomic power, and computers. However, the Enlightenment failed to understand economics.

John D. Mueller argues in *Redeeming Economics: Rediscovering the Missing Element* that modern views of economics suffer from the omission of factors that previously had been considered central. Basically, there are four activities key to classical human economics, as developed by Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle and Augustine: Humans *produce, exchange, distribute, and consume* goods. However, in his 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith, credited as a founder of modern economics, eliminated two of the four elements: *distribution* and *consumption*.

Mueller also presents economics on the personal, domestic, and political levels. All three are necessary because we are, as Aristotle put it, “rational, matrimonial, and political animals.”¹ The *matrimonial* is also the domestic level, the bedrock of economics, a word derived from the Greek *oikos-nomos* or “the law of the house.” Economics was originally and primarily the *household* economy.

A household does not follow the same rules as the production and exchange of goods in the modern industrialized and commercial marketplace. Therefore, Mueller insists, economics cannot be restricted to production and exchange, to the marketplace: “economics is essentially a theory of *providence*. It mostly concerns human providence, describing how we provide for ourselves and other persons we love, using scarce means that have alternate uses.”²

What is, after all, the modern economic theory that explains the decisions of Chiara Corbella Petrillo, who gave up her life so that her third child would live?³ Such decisions flow from love and are offered as gifts for the sake of others.

Now Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* was written at the dawn of the industrial revolution. He was addressing new economic forces that were poised to rapidly expand in manufacturing, banking, and mercantile

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1. John D. Mueller, *Redeeming Economics: Rediscovering the Missing Element* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010), 5.
 2. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
 3. Maggie Maslak, “A saint for our times’—the inspiring story of Chiara Corbella Petrillo,” Catholic News Agency (December 24, 2017), available at <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/a-saint-for-our-times-the-inspiring-story-of-chiara-corbella-petrillo-27329>.

activity. His book was about this revolutionary international capitalist economy, not about the older *household* economy. Ever since, economists have forgotten household economics.

Nevertheless, Smith was very aware of the crucial importance of the family. After analyzing Smith's earlier work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Sebastiano Nerozzi and Pierluigi Nuti in a Working Paper on "Adam Smith and the Family," conclude: "Given the crucial role assigned to family affection in [Smith's] system of moral philosophy we can better appreciate Smith's own concern for the *possible menaces which life in commercial societies may impose on family life and parental bonds.*"

Smith saw that aspects of commercial societies could potentially threaten "family life and parental bonds." More from the paper:

The need to reinforce these bonds by a proper education and the need to trace out a protected space where the seek[ing] of profit and market mechanisms are not allowed to enter, shows how far Smith was aware not only of the advantages but also of the risks associated with the rapid process of social transformation which was underway.

The family needed to be protected from the exterior forces and power of the rapidly growing economy. The paper concludes:

While he decidedly favored the development of capitalistic and commercial society, he was convinced that this new form of social organization could survive itself *only if supported by a system of public morality and of non-market social relationships which had their foundation in family life and affection.*⁴

If Smith was correct, then an essential element for any society must be *family life and affection*, without which "this new form of social organization"—modern commercial economies—will collapse.

Smith saw two economies: commercial and household. One is outside the house and the other inside it. Outside is banking, supply, demand,

4. Sebastiano Nerozzi and Pierluigi Nuti, "Adam Smith and the Family," Working Papers—Economics wp2008 04, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Dipartimento di Scienze per l'Economia e l'Impresa (2008), available at https://ideas.repec.org/p/frz/wpaper/wp2008_04.html. Emphasis mine.

price, trade, markets, *etc.* Inside the matrimonial economy, we find spousal love, procreation, care and education of children, sacrifice, care of the sick and elderly—these make up “family life and parental bonds.”

But modern economic theory views the household as just a smaller unit of the larger economy, a collection of consumers to be targeted by advertising, by “commercials,” something Smith saw as a menace to the family.

Family Fundamental

What is true of modern economics is also true of the modern state: Governments increasingly view families as mere collections of individual units of the state and write laws reflecting that reductionist view. This is true in America, where radical abortion laws refer to the “autonomous” rights of individuals to kill their own children in the womb. But the family remains the fundamental basis of society, a view espoused even by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to *protection* by society and the state.”⁵

The family is of a deeper order than social, commercial, and political relationships. Societies, like chemical compounds, come in many varieties. You can have a tribal society, for example, or a communist, capitalist, socialist, totalitarian, imperial, feudal, theocratic, or democratic society. In each case, you must explain to an outsider how your society works. Its essence cannot be assumed.

But the family is universal. Individuals encountering each other from different cultures do not have to explain to each other what a family is. Mother, father, son, daughter, and grandparents are generational aspects of humanity and of all societies. Marriage and family lie at the nuclear or quantum level of all human life.

You can build compounds from various atoms, but if you split the nucleus of the atom itself, you no longer have anything with which to build. The force binding men and women in matrimony are nuclear

5. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 (December 10, 1948), available at <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>. Emphasis mine.

forces. Marriage makes the state possible, not the other way around.

Case Study: Detroit's Demise

In my hometown of Detroit our international neighborhood was not made up of individual consumers but of *families* inspired by dynamic *familial* goals. Couples and individuals arrived from all over the world. They desired to marry, create families, and provide a life for them.

But as in Hiroshima in 1945, the atom was split, unleashing the power holding all things together, and destroyed a city.

Likewise, the family nucleus is tampered with at our peril. If you disintegrate the nuclear atom of the family, you could destroy a city. The modern state may legally threaten the nuclear family. In Detroit, a state-sanctioned threat to the family helped set off a slow-motion American nuclear bomb.

Here's the story. By 1940 Detroit was the fourth largest city in America with 1.6 million residents. Detroit's auto factories were converted to war production.

After World War II, Detroit factories returned to peacetime manufacturing. America, spared the military destruction suffered by Europe, experienced economic prosperity and became a superpower. By 1950, Detroit's population stood at over 1.85 million residents.

Detroit was proud of its manufacturing, consumer economy, and of its financial health: It boasted the highest per capita income in the U.S. This view of economics took family economics for granted, counting families as mere consumers.

After Detroit's violent race riots of 1967, social activists aided by courts tried to integrate Detroit to promote racial harmony. The court ordered the integration of black and white children through compulsory school busing. This ruling meant removing children from their local neighborhood schools, and busing them to schools across the city. An *integrated* society was a reasonable goal, but the government ended up *disintegrating* Detroit. Both African-American and white families were harmed by this unnecessary and coercive court ruling.

Because parents were concerned for the welfare of their children, many sold their homes in Detroit and migrated to the suburbs, even at a financial loss. Detroit lost workers, businesses, and taxpayers. Its

population declined by more than 300,000 in the 1970s. A deadly cycle of dissolution set in. By 2017 Detroit's population had plummeted to 673,000, a loss of over one million since 1960.

After the court's legal attack on its nuclear families, Detroit slowly came to resemble 1945 Hiroshima. Immigrant families, not individuals, had built Detroit; when the families were threatened, they left, and Detroit died. Other American cities saw and learned and avoided this outcome. Threatening the family economy, which was legal, cost Detroit its commercial economy, just as Adam Smith predicted.

Rebuilding

Today, if you want to rebuild Detroit, you need families to do it. A city or nation is not built by autonomous individuals. If you want a stable *economy*, build and protect your *households*. (Quicken Loans, now Detroit's largest employer, is doing just that: Building homes through home mortgages.)

We can build automobiles and spaceships, but we can never completely master the family. At its best, the family shapes and builds us in virtue and love. Family is a force of life that cannot be manufactured, even if the state pretends otherwise. Our lives are deeply rooted in a beautiful mystery we do not fully understand. We are made in families and are not autonomous.

Against individual autonomy, Jesus repeated the teaching of the Old Testament: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Who is my neighbor? The behavior of the Good Samaritan does not follow the laws of economics. Your neighbor is another self. And no one is more another self than your own child.

State-sponsored autonomy means pretending we have no obligation or duty to love. But love is the very thing we are made for. God is love and made us in love. Love makes no marketplace calculation of return on investment. Modern economics cannot explain the life and labor of Verona's Saint Giovanni Calabria in caring for orphans.

With our advanced technological abilities—produced, yes, by the larger economy—we should, with familial love, assist the orphan, the disabled, the handicapped, and not eliminate them in the womb. It is not genuine love that aborts a child.

There should be no war between the state and the family. States and families must cooperate in synergy. The state may regulate public health, defense, and the economy of its marketplace. Legal aggressions of the state against the nuclear family are dangerous to society, undermining it.

The laws, the courts, the government, and the media must welcome, respect, and protect the inner life of the family. The family is the nursery of the future, the kindergarten of society.

The household is a sacred space with its own dynamism, a power that, rightly ordered and at its best, is a sign of the eternal love of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a love by which and for which we were created. The state and its laws must respect it for what it is: foundational.

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Post-Secularism and the Future of the Family

Steve Turley

EVERYWHERE WE LOOK TODAY, the champions of secular liberalism are celebrating another victory. Whether it's so-called same-sex marriage, or the 50 different gender options on Facebook, or lawsuits against Christian business owners, every day we are reminded that our world is changing in ways hitherto unimaginable.

And yet, behind all the indignant insults and blustering banter, make no mistake, secular liberals are panicked. Over the last decade we've seen winds of change that are politically and culturally transforming the world, especially here in Europe, in ways secular liberals never imagined in their worst nightmares. What I want to do for you this morning is introduce you to a field of scholarship that actually predicted these changing winds long before they occurred, which will in turn give us a window into what to expect for the future.

Several years ago, I was doing research for my doctoral studies, and I came across a field of scholarship called "post-secular studies." That term shocked me. Post-secular? How can that be when it appears that everywhere we look, the world is becoming *more* secular, not *post*-secular? But there they were, scholar after scholar arguing that we are, in fact, entering a post-secular age.

By post-secular, these scholars mean very simply that our world is currently going through a massive religious renewal. Today, according to the World Values Survey, four out of five people in the world—that's 80 percent of the world's population—aspire allegiance to one of the major historic world religions. In sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity is actually

growing faster than the continent's population growth, suggesting massive conversion rates. In the Middle East, more Muslims are attending mosque than ever before in the history of Islam. China is currently experiencing what may be the single greatest Christian revival ever recorded in the history of the church. Hungary's government has declared its commitment to the revitalization of Christian civilization, while Poland has formally declared Jesus Christ as Lord and King over the nation. India is experiencing a massive Hindu nationalist revival led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is the single largest democratic party on the planet. In the Russian Federation, the Orthodox Church has risen to a prominence not seen since the days of the Tsars. And in Latin America, Pentecostalism is sweeping throughout the region, while more Catholics are attending Mass than ever before. It's no wonder that a number of scholars believe that we are currently experiencing the single greatest religious surge the world has ever seen.

And yet, I couldn't help but think, something's not right! How could religion be surging while it appeared that the world was becoming more secular? How do we put these two competing dynamics together?

In a word, these two dynamics come together in something that we now commonly refer to as globalization. We all know basically what globalization is, at least intuitively: Coca-cola, McDonald's, Amazon, the International Monetary Fund. We're all living today with the same fast-food chains, the same Internet search engines, the same computer processors. This is globalization: a one-size-fits-all political and economic system that seeks to turn the entire world into a giant version of Orlando, Florida.

But these post-secular scholars have long recognized an inherent futility in globalization. You see, globalization is rooted in a philosophical commitment known as modernity, and modernity, simply put, is the enthronement of scientific rationalism as the one true way of knowing the world, a one-size-fits-all form of knowledge for all peoples, times, and places. What post-secular scholars have noticed is that global populations simply don't believe this anymore. Indeed, Western cultures in particular have become what we call postmodern, in that they've increasingly rejected modernity in favor of a plurality of cultural ways of knowing and being in the world.

However, even though people have rejected modernity, that hasn't stopped Western elites—our political, corporate, and media elites—from continuing to export modernity in the form of globalization. In other words, our elites are trying to export the fruit of modernity even though its roots have rotted out. But if populations have rejected a one-size-fits-all philosophical system, then inevitably they're going to reject a one-size-fits-all political and economic system. What we're seeing today is a massive backlash going on all over the world against globalization, where populations are once again reasserting their nation's cultures, customs, and traditions, particularly their religious traditions, as mechanisms of resistance against the anti-cultural processes of globalization and its secular aristocracy. And this resurgence of religion is as global as globalization itself.

So there are our two competing dynamics. But this of course raises the question: Is this it? Are we just going to see a perpetual clash between secular globalism and traditionalist nationalism for the indefinite future?

The answer to that question is a resounding: "No!" And that's because at the heart of this post-secular religious resurgence is nothing less than the revitalization of the natural family. Scholars such as Eric Kaufmann of the University of London are recognizing that we are in fact in the early stages of a demographic revolution, a revolution where conservative religionists are on course "to take over the world." What scholars are noticing is that there is a dramatic demographic difference between secularists and conservative religionists. For example, in the U.S., conservative evangelical women have a 30 percent fertility advantage over their secular counterparts, and this demographic deficit has dramatic effects over time. In a population evenly divided between conservatives and secularists, a 30 percent fertility differential means that in one generation, that 50/50 split will turn into a 60/40 split; in two generations, that would widen into a 75/25 split; and in the course of 200 years, it would be a 99 to 1 split.

Already, demographers are estimating that there will be over 300 million Mormons in the United States by the end of the century, and by the end of the next century there will be over 300 million Amish. America at that point will consist essentially of evangelicals, Mormons, and Amish. (I know there's a joke in there somewhere, but I haven't figured it out.)

But it's not just the United States; conservative religionists are flourishing everywhere. In France, 30 percent of women are having over 50 percent of all births. Hungary, Poland, and Russia have implemented pro-family policies that are effectively reversing their respective fertility declines. And the Orthodox Church in Georgia has helped that nation rise from one of the lowest fertility rates in Eastern Europe to one of the highest.

By contrast, secularists consistently exemplify a low fertility rate of around 1.5 children per couple, which is significantly below the replacement level of 2.1. Kaufmann and others estimate that, beginning around the year 2030, the secular population will begin a steady decline to little more than about 10 to 15 percent of national populations. This is what's being called secularism's "demographic contradiction"; their own devotion to radical individualism has become the agent by which their entire ideology implodes.

But more than that: If the renewal of the family is at the heart of this religious resurgence, then that means that this Congress, this World Congress of Families, stands at the very epicenter of that renewal. We are not a conference of right-wing losers; we are not a bunch of medieval hangovers. We are the future—a pro-life, pro-child, pro-family future—and there's nothing they can do to stop us.

Welcome to our new post-secular age.

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Taming the World

Antonio Argandoña and Rafael Hurtado

LET US IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that someone very important—perhaps a prominent politician, a brilliant academic, or a wealthy businessman—yearning for humanity, has come to you asking for a favor: “I need you to help me to develop a program to make the world a better place.” Then he would probably have added something like this: “I already know that I’m asking for a complex, long-term task. At the beginning, nobody will listen to us, and we will face many difficulties. It is important that we work first in putting down solid foundations. It will be a multidisciplinary task, and we will have to rely on various experts from different backgrounds. And of course, we will need to listen to the citizens, to the people, to all of them—no matter the creed, ethnicity, or professional status.”

This scenario may seem like pure fiction. The reality is that there are already many people who share that same concern. This World Congress of Families in Verona is proof of this. It is true: Our Western society is very sick. Sick of rampant individualism, materialism, hedonism. But these problems are not necessarily the result of the faults of a particular political regime or economic system. They are not, as we are now so often told, the consequence of erroneous assumptions, of hostile determination, or even of the Machiavellian interests of a few. No, what’s happening today is the lack of a true understanding of reality—of family, culture, and society.

Making the World a Better Place

The modern economist's mind is habituated to beginning its analysis with the personal preferences of individuals. These preferences are considered to be completely autonomous, independent of our personal learning or the environment in which we move, because nobody has the right to judge; we are free agents who should be able to choose our own purpose, no matter what. But problems cannot be treated in a partial way because, as pointed out by the Spanish Philosopher Leonardo Polo, applying purely technical solutions to human problems produces segmentation (due to a lack of overall vision), perverse effects (due to the absence of unconditional principles that guide action in a coherent manner), anomie (the state of discouragement of those who do not have action guidelines), and social entropy (how institutions lose their function).

Curiously enough, in today's Western society, it is common to regard everything that comes from religion as something that is subjective, personal, not scientific, not rational, and not susceptible to being treated in public. The usual response to religious appeals is: "Do not indoctrinate me." But what this phrase seems to ignore is the fact that human beings are rational beings, and we cannot stop being rational. One can be an atheist or agnostic, and recognize that human beings do not exist in this world by mere chance, but receive their persona from others, learn from others, relate to others, develop with others, *etc.*

We cannot truly say "I do not owe anything to anyone," as we often read on social media. And by accepting our relational condition (as Pierpaolo Donati states), we can develop a conception of the human being, of society, of business and politics, which will take us away from the rampant individualist and emotivist anthropocentrism that we've mentioned before. The list of moral "duties" or "principles" on which both the religious and secular vision of reality can elaborate could be very similar. They would both agree on fundamentals: avoiding enforced imposition coming from the "outside," and naming at least some requirements for human perfection, because they would both respond to the same concept of what "happiness" means to humans that live in the same society. But this is true only for a list of abstract duties. When referring to the possibility of actually doing these duties, a secular judgment in particular will be different, because the believer (especially a Christian)

holds a conception of the human person that is different from the non-believer: the idea of an inherited guilt and the redemption of Christ.

When a believer and a non-believer sit down to think about this project for the regeneration of society that we've been discussing from the beginning, they can also agree on all relevant human aspects: on what is good or bad for people and societies, on the consequences of politics, on the strengths and weaknesses of institutions, structures, and organizations, because they will both be using their reasoning abilities and understanding of the phenomena. But when they propose solutions, would those coming from the believer be more advanced? For example, in the case of an unwanted pregnancy or a failed marriage, the non-believer may conclude that the moral demands of respect for life or the indissolubility of the marriage bond are too demanding and that the ethics of what is possible should be more negligent, because that is what can be done in those circumstances.

The problem lies not so much in the identification of what is good for men and women on this front, but in the practical judgment as to whether that good is attainable or not. And here the difference between a believer and a non-believer could be decisive. Why? Because a believer's view of society (such as through the lens of Catholic Social Doctrine) is not just a variant of social humanism, nor an alternative way to overcome capitalism or socialism. It is not even one more voice in the chorus of denunciations of the failures of our society. Rather, it is the true hope for a better world, which can be offered, but never imposed.

Making A Stand for the Home

It is impossible to describe a global solution for a better world. I could not personally give straight answers to that very important person to whom I've been referring since the beginning of this paper. But one thing I would hope to bring to his attention is: Whatever you do, please make a stand for the home.

It is clear that Western society today undervalues the role of the home and of the family, probably because of the emphasis placed on the autonomy and freedom of the individual, more or less separated from his or her immediate surroundings. The home is, from this point of view, a concrete way to solve a problem regarding the coordination of actions

in order to achieve certain goals, according to individual preferences. In this view, the home should adapt to these preferences in terms of its composition, needs, and timing.

It is true that we are witnesses of the consequences of the abandonment of the natural family, and also now to the urge to return to a structure that stands in accordance with the nature of the person and of society. The home is a *Communio Personarum* (as Saint John Paul II stated), one that links the wills of parents and children when they begin their life together. The home leaves both with little margin for freedom in the first years, but always with the purpose of training them in the use of that freedom, of fully developing their lives and teaching them to replicate that same institution in another place, with different people, but always keeping in mind their true purpose.

In some ways, the home is a multipurpose organization, which seeks reproduction, nutrition, the education and socialization of children, the production of goods and services, care of the sick and the elderly, the provision of physical, psychological, and ontological security. The home seeks to become a place where one can act with freedom and carelessness. It is a path to the acquisition of a social identity, which is at the same time a restaurant, a hotel, a school, a hospital, and a place of recreation. It is a space where virtues are learned, a door to enter society, our daily starting point, but the place to which we should return as well and to which we all hope to return in the final stages of our lives.

The home is a place to live and to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and virtues—all of them, true social functions. Nowadays, we think about the home as a mere physical space that demands that one or two family members make economic contributions for the means of subsistence; there is also a third or a fourth who prepares meals for everyone, and a fifth who comes from outside to clean up the house. In reality, every member of the home should be—every day, every minute—contributing in some way to the common purpose.

The work of the home, rightly understood, is as a formidable school of knowledge, skills, and virtues, with everyone contributing: the work of the elderly, the disability of the grandfather, the crying of the baby, the inappropriate remarks of the youngster (then corrected), or the rebelliousness of the teenager. Because at home everyone has to be willing,

every day, every hour, to iron a shirt or fry an egg.

I have extended these considerations about the home because they suggest what remains to be done if you are the one who gets the call of that important person who asks you to help him develop a project to regenerate society. As in the home, we should all be willing to do everything, even if it seems we do not have the knowledge, skills, or virtues to make the world better. I mentioned before the crying of the baby, which is a very important contribution to the purpose of the home, because it is the one motivation for every member of the family to act, every hour, every minute, as they should. The crying of the baby demands the hand that rocks the cradle, the hand that will tame the world.

Taming the World

Learning to work and to love within the boundaries of the home requires technical skills (Gary Becker's "Human Capital"). But those skills are not innate: We must learn them from experts. Certainly, parents' true contribution to society's well-being can be described as bringing up "healthy" children in the physical, psychological, and spiritual realms. But still, it wouldn't be reasonable to say that mothers and fathers are self-sufficient or completely independent in performing this professional work. They need help and support from other members of their community, and from society at large, to fulfill this task in the best possible way. They need other professions—doctors, engineers, lawyers, caretakers, educators, teachers, professors, *etc.* They also need siblings, extended family, friends, neighbors, schools, universities, and churches that collaborate with them in the education of their children.

For children are indeed the first and most important business of parents. The upbringing of children (mainly accomplished in the home) can be called man's ultimate "profession," because it is precisely through this upbringing that society is nurtured and perpetuated. I believe there was a time when that statement was addressed only to husbands and fathers. Today, however, it seems that it is acquiring a very strong meaning for wives and mothers as well.

Mothers, in particular, need to be reminded of the importance of their involvement in the work of the home. Such reminders will be facilitated by the example of fathers who show how much they value the work

of their wives in the home by joining it once again. Our perception of the matter is that, in order for society to move from today's misconception of parenthood, it is essential that husbands recognize the vital importance of the mother's work in the home as well as their own. Otherwise, it will not be possible for mothers, and women at large, to accept this importance, either.

The family (the home) is the place to which we all return, as Professor Rafael Alvira has declared over the past two decades on many occasions. Caring for a home and a family is, without a doubt, the most important professional work a person can perform in building the "global cradle" for the children of God, a work wherein women especially have been entrusted with a very special "charisma" (as G.K. Chesterton reminded us).

Certainly the richness of being a human person, man and woman, allows fathers and mothers to be subjects of a broad and plural set of "professions" in the social sphere. But still, the most basic and necessary profession is primarily accomplished in the family home, where the human person can experience, in a pure and natural way, all there is to know that makes life worth living.

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IN MEMORIAM

**Two Speeches by Margaret Ogola
(1958-2011)**



*On June 12 of this year, Google honored the late Dr. Margaret Ogola with a “Google doodle” on the Kenyan Google homepage, on what would have been her 61st birthday. Margaret Ogola is best known for her award-winning novel, *The River and the Source*, which follows the life of four generations of Kenyan women. She was also the Medical Director of Cottolengo Hospice for HIV & Aids orphans, for which she was given the Familias Award for Humanitarian Service at the World Congress of Families II in Geneva, Switzerland (1999). Ogola was a devout Catholic, a prominent conservative, a wife, and the mother of four children. In recognition of her devotion to the natural family, we are pleased to reprint the speech she gave in Geneva, followed by her speech at World Congress of Families I in Prague (1997).*

Sex and Politics

Address to the World Congress of Families II

Geneva, Switzerland

1999

FROM THE DAWN OF CONSCIOUSNESS, human cultures have attempted to harness and direct the potent power of transmitting life in various ways. Most cultures clearly stipulated not only the person or persons with whom one could have relations but the very manner in which the sexual act may be done. Primitive peoples living close to nature mostly believed in a triple human presence in the world, for example:

- The living dead—including dead ancestors who lived in the spirit world, but who retained an interest and a certain amount of power over the living.
- The living—whose duty it was to keep alive the memory of the dead and to appease their spirits, as well as to transmit life to the unborn.
- The unborn—whose well-being depended on the behavior of the living; thus a curse earned by the living could affect their children, leading to misery, suffering, and death.

Therefore, for example, one could not marry a relative—meaning any clan member or even a member of the maternal clan (among some tribes). To have sexual intercourse with such a person was incest—a terrible taboo which would draw almost instantaneous ancestral wrath.

Also, one did not lie with a woman who was still nursing a child. As children were nursed for extremely long periods, this required an unusual degree of sexual continence. One was also not allowed to lie with a woman having her period. Polygamy took care of some of the sexual tension this created, but bride price ensured that a man could only afford one or two wives unless he was very wealthy.

It appears that the general instinct of humanity (standing in awe before the power of the procreative act) was to shield the sexual act from

misuse; and also to shield society from the impact that the misuse of sex could unleash on a populace. For example, a child born out of wedlock was in a way removed from the three presences—that of the living dead, the living, and the yet to be born. Who could one say were his ancestors? Who would be the ancestors of his children? From whom would he inherit land?



It appears that the general instinct of humanity (standing in awe before the power of the procreative act) was to shield the sexual act from misuse; and also to shield society from the impact that the misuse of sex could unleash on a populace.



The Judeo-Christian and Muslim influence ensured for a time that the idea that the relationship between a man and a woman was to a certain degree sacred (a taboo as the African would say) persisted for awhile in newly converted African communities.

However by the late 1960s this ideal of sex between only men and women committed to each other in the bond of marriage began to come apart. This was true in other cultures in the West and in the East.

Once it began, the collapse of the ideal of the sacred nature of sex was rapid, resulting in children being born out of wedlock, marital breakdown, abandonment of children and the elderly, who used to be held in great esteem, and of course an explosive increase in sexually transmitted disease of every imaginable kind.

What happened to lead to this massive collapse of an almost universal ideal? I put forward several suggestions:

- Contraception: Thanks to contraceptives and their worldwide marketing, most people could get away with infidelity and premarital sex, but deception of course quietly destroys

relationships.

- The demystification of sex: Sex was no longer seen as a wonderful and sacred gift; nor the power to beget children as anything very special. Sex was demystified through: 1) Value-free sex education based entirely on how pregnancy and disease could be avoided. No morality or responsibility to anyone is mentioned, except mutual momentary consent. 2) Planet Hollywood, the worldwide dissemination of a culture of pleasure as the ultimate desirable good. Movie figures committing adultery, engaged in overt sexual play, teenagers necking in the back of cars, and pure pornography can now be beamed electronically to all corners of the world.



*Sexual technique,
prowess, the relentless
search for orgasm (as if
for the Holy grail), all sink
into oblivion when con-
fronted with the splendor
of unconditional love.*



- An entirely individualistic philosophy of me and I: Traditional concepts of loyalty and of the greater good of the family or society no longer exist. Divorce is cast in an attractive light, while perseverance, dialogue, or even compromise is made to appear oppressive and reactionary. Children are fought over or sacrificed to the selfish whims of their parents.
- A worldwide assumption of a small family norm: Children have a stabilizing effect on their parents' relationships. Each child is one more reason to try harder to make a marriage work. However, large numbers of families in the world now only have one or two children. This is called responsible parenthood—a true misnomer if ever there was one.
- Extraordinary expectations: Women especially consume soap

operas by the gallonful. Husbands are supposed to perform like a combination of Romeo, Fearless Fang, Casanova, and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Many men simply retreat in self protection. Women likewise feel compelled to remain forever young and to compete with every half-naked girl they are bombarded with in every advertisement and magazine cover.

- Loss of the sense of a Deity to whom all are ultimately answerable for their actions. People can therefore excuse the most irresponsible actions, and the pursuit of the most fantastic fantasies.

The beauty of sexual love lies in the fact that it is “love” —*i.e.* a decisive act of the mature will to love and to cherish, even when things get tough; yes, even when the spouse proves sometimes to be less worthy. He who loves in a mature way will then rise to the full stature of his potential as a human being—for when we love truly, the good comes back to us.

Sexual technique, prowess, the relentless search for orgasm (as if for the Holy grail), all sink into oblivion when confronted with the splendor of unconditional love.

Reaffirming the Goodness of Life:

Address to the World Congress of Families I

Prague, Czech Republic

1997

MAN, ESPECIALLY MAN CLOSE TO NATURE, instinctively recognizes certain facts which are self-evident in nature:

- That life is, unquestionably, a good thing.
- That new life is a great gift to be desired and, when granted, to be cherished, protected, and allowed to flourish.

These facts run deep in human nature and one needs to do violence to the mental process in order to reverse such universal beliefs. The worst violence to man is often done by forces arrayed in the garb of benevolence and philanthropy, just as sweet-smelling, nice-looking poison is the most dangerous.

In 60 or 70 short years a hydra-headed phenomenon which goes under various euphemisms, such as Planned Parenthood, reproductive health, and family planning, has appeared in the remotest villages and has succeeded in drastically changing the outlook of millions of people all over the world, causing them, contrary to nature and reason, contrary to their deepest instincts, to believe:

- That life is not such a good thing.
- That new life in particular is so great a threat to individual and community well-being that it has to be suppressed by all possible means, violently if necessary.

The pernicious concept of the “quality of life” is now widespread, putting mere fallible man in the position of deciding for his neighbor whether he has enough “quality” to be allowed to stay alive. Another equally pernicious concept is that of “the wanted child,” which allows one child to be brought into the world because of a mere whim while another child, already in existence, is destroyed without mercy because

the mother does not “want” it.

Doctors and nurses mouth these quality-of-life and family-planning platitudes, and who can blame them? These are the unquestioned dogmas of medical schools the world over. Formerly revered as saviors of life, they are now up to their armpits in fetal blood. More frightening still is the collapse of the last bastion—manned by the spiritual shepherds of the people. One seminarian put it in a nutshell when he asked me what we



The pernicious concept of the “quality of life” is now widespread, putting mere fallible man in the position of deciding for his neighbor whether he has enough “quality” to be allowed to stay alive.



can do to help women not have all these “excessive” children. Needless to say, I saw stars. Apart from anything else, someone must have been willing to have some excess in order to bring him to being and maturity. Caught between a rock and a hard place, women are the victims of the new anti-life philosophy. Massive corruption is forgotten, while the collapse of entire economies is blamed on high birth rates, even in countries where poverty can be directly traced to a paucity of people. So women are being sterilized, forced to have abortions, fitted with

foreign devices (IUDs), implanted with poisonous drugs—all in the great march toward zero population growth. It is as if the whole human race is convulsed in a manic hatred against itself.

Four Keys to Making Life Better for Families

Having explored the roots of this self-hatred we must ask: What are the means of possible intervention? Perhaps the most important thing is to recognize that almost a whole generation is lost—poisoned to the core, sterilized, or otherwise maimed both mentally and physically. Nonetheless, the following may be useful.

First, the importance of personal example can neither be equaled nor replaced. The Holy Father may write ten masterpieces all in the line of *Evangelium Vitae*, but until fathers and mothers of families put their

lives and their faith to the test, his shall remain a lonely voice in the wilderness. I was personally moved to tears during the 2nd Pan American Conference on Family in Toronto in May, 1996, when I saw all those men and women with eight or more children in the middle of a notoriously child-hostile country. When asked to give a report on the conference, I forgot all the brilliant speeches that had been made and could only talk with awe about those brave people and their beautiful children. The best way to show the beauty of a large family is to have one and prove that it works, though it takes guts and hard work—and self-sacrifice. I don't see the mother of a large family indulging in expensive clothes and gadgets, and no doubt she soon discovers how useful a pair of little hands can be around the house.



The best way to show the beauty of a large family is to have one . . .



Second, there has to be a massive and organized attempt to rescue and reform the thinking of young people today. My 15-year-old daughter, who previously had no time for marriage or children, especially small ones, recently changed dramatically into a great admirer of children—not to mention an enthusiastic babysitter for all her aunts and our neighbor. What happened? Victoria Gillick (a British mother of ten) came to her school and had a talk with the girls. Among other things, the girls were pleasantly surprised to see that one could have ten children and still look as good, if not better, than women who have had few or no children.

Third, though I am no economist and my faith in politicians died a natural death a long while back, I believe that political will is essential in at least making things a little easier for families, especially in education and health care. In the developing world, encouraging the informal sector, especially in the growth of small industries not requiring huge

machines to sustain, is of great benefit to family providers since in these types of industries the financial overhead is not paralyzing. Agriculture as a major activity and one directed towards home consumption rather than towards cash crops for export is essential. Whole nations with the capacity of being self-sufficient in food production live on the constant verge of starvation because all the best land is devoted to cash crops—coffee, tea, sugarcane, pyrethrum, rubber, *etc.* The slightest sign of destabilization or of a prolonged drought is enough to make them bring out their begging bowls, evincing a dependency that is not necessary at all.

Fourth, doctors could improve on their tarnished image by telling the truth: namely, the biologically self-evident fact that having babies is not a health hazard to be undertaken only by women with a suicidal streak, but rather is a normal, self-regulated activity of a woman's body which ceases by itself at about the age of 45. Within this time a woman's body is designed to hold and nurse babies at intervals of about two years quite safely. With the tremendous advances in obstetric care in recent times, childbearing entails practically no danger in the great majority of cases. The true meaning of the concept of "safe motherhood" should be brought back: It means bringing a pregnant woman safely to the birth of a healthy baby. It does not mean contraception and abortion. That is "no motherhood," not "safe motherhood."

REVIEWS

Empty Rhetoric

Anne R. Morse

Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline

by Darrell Bricker & John Ibbitson

Penguin Random House, 2019; 304 pages, \$14.76

THE MOST DANGEROUS LIES are half-truths. *Empty Planet* was written by journalists Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson. As journalists, these men write engagingly about the state of the global population and its future. They get a lot of the trends and narrative correct. Unfortunately—and dangerously—they also get a lot wrong.

Empty Planet is accurate in several of its assertions. The global demography is changing rapidly and the old narratives about population have aged poorly. The 20th century was unique in the history of humanity, and the 21st is shaping up to be just as unique. The demographic transition—the move from high fertility and high mortality to low fertility and low mortality—emerged in the 1700s but really picked up speed in the 20th century and spread to every population on earth. For the first time in human history, decreases in infant and child mortality made dramatic and sustained progress, declining from several hundred deaths per thousand children to tens per thousand. As a result, life expectancy (the sum of age-specific mortality rates) skyrocketed, rising from 20-30 years to 40, 50, even 60 years over the course of a generation. During this period, the population grew rapidly. Some even said it exploded, but

fertility also began to decline and so, too, did population growth rates.

The demographic transition is not a Western phenomenon, nor is it something that happened to “us” but not to “them.” Mortality has declined in every population on earth. With the exception of one country (Niger), fertility has also declined everywhere. Half of the world lives in a population with below-replacement fertility. Even in populations with above-replacement levels, fertility is lower than it was a century earlier.

This change, however, did not occur uniformly. Populations have varied in the timing, level, and pace of their demographic transition. The global centers of growth and power are shifting. Some populations (such as those of Western Europe) started the transition earlier, completed it, and have now entered into what demographers call the “second demographic transition.” These populations are aging, and some are already shrinking. For the first time in human history, declining populations covary with health and wealth, not with plague and strife. Much of East Asia and South America began the transition later, but experienced in several decades the rapid decline in mortality and fertility that took over a century in Europe. These populations experienced a large youth bulge followed by rapid aging. Sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, is experiencing the transition more slowly than East Asia or South America did, and is still in the phase wherein fertility is catching up with the recent declines in child mortality. These populations are still young and quickly growing. The U.N. projects that more than half of the global population growth in the next century will come from Africa. The global variation in age structures between populations is unprecedented.

These demographic changes do not occur in a vacuum, but rather hand-in-hand with equally momentous strides in industrialization, public health, education, and urbanization. With such rapid change, it is easy for correct ideas to become quickly outdated, and for partially correct ideas to become grossly erroneous. Hence, the field of demography is ripe for the “everything you know is wrong” genre. Yet *Empty Planet* gets too much wrong to redeem what it gets correct.

With an erudite writing style, the authors crudely attack a straw-man version of the U.N.’s population-projection methods. They claim that urbanization is the cause of fertility decline, and since the U.N. has ignored urbanization, its projections must therefore be wrong. This logic

is flawed on several counts. First, although urbanization does contribute to fertility decline, one would be hard-pressed to find any social scientist who claims that urbanization *alone* causes fertility to decline. If decline were due to urbanization alone, then why has fertility also plummeted in rural areas? The urbanization-causes-fertility-decline reasoning might be an acceptable generalization if it were not the crux of the authors' argument. They give a slap-dash and unsatisfying description for why fertility declines and then hang their argument on it.

Second, the authors argue that the U.N. projections are wrong because the U.N. has ignored urbanization. This is false in two ways. It is false, first, in an obvious way: The demographic experts at the U.N. population division are aware of urbanization. Indeed, theirs is the only projection agency in the world that produces disaggregated projections by rural and urban population. The notion that urbanization simply has not occurred to them is ridiculous.

The claim is also false in a less obvious way. It is true that the U.N. does not explicitly account for urbanization in its models. But no projection agency in the world does. Why not? The U.N. (like most other projection agencies) examines past trends in fertility and mortality. Since urbanization has occurred in the past, its effects on fertility are already incorporated into past fertility trends. The same is true for democratization, education, industrialization, and every other socioeconomic variable you can think of and measure as well as the ones that you cannot. Rather than trying to model each of these variables explicitly, most projections observe their effects on fertility and mortality in the past, and therefore absorb these effects by projections from past trends. Most demographers defend this approach since trends in these socioeconomic variables are harder to predict than are fertility and mortality themselves.

Third, the authors of *Empty Planet* write that the U.N.'s projections assume "that the rate of fertility decline is constant between countries and regions and that country A will always mimic country B." This is blatantly false. The U.N.'s models explicitly include separate variables for differences in the starting levels of fertility decline: in the end levels, in the overall pace, and in the acceleration and deceleration of pace of fertility decline.

This book review, however, is not a defense of the U.N.'s projection

methods. There are legitimate reasons for which the U.N.'s methods could be (and are) critiqued. There are also other global projections besides the U.N.'s, projections which use different methods, make different assumptions, and produce different estimates of the future global population. *Empty Planet* considers one such other set of projections: those produced by IIASA (the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis) in Vienna. Yet, the authors of *Empty Planet* give unsatisfactory reasons for why a consumer of projections should choose those produced by IIASA rather than those produced by the U.N. In fact, it seems that the authors favored the IIASA projections simply because those projections best fit their narrative and rationalized the methods—rather than examining the methods, picking the best one, and examining the results. Some of the brightest minds in demography are involved in producing population projections, and there is genuine debate about which methods are best. Yet *Empty Planet* has nothing to say to them or to the lay reader who is seriously inquiring into the future of the global population.

The tip-off that the authors of *Empty Planet* picked IIASA's projections over the U.N.'s for ideological reasons comes from the fact that although IIASA's projections better fit the authors' narrative, they are by no means compatible with it. The authors of *Empty Planet* analyze population collapse. Yet IIASA (which of all projecting agencies estimates the least growth) predicts that the world population will peak at around 9.4 billion, then start a slow decline toward 9 billion people by the end of the century. Yes, these numbers are very different from the U.N.'s estimates. The U.N. projects that the population will continue to grow to the end of the century and hit more than 11 billion people. Yet the gap between the U.N. and IIASA's results is smaller than the gap between the narrative of *Empty Planet* and the actual results from IIASA's estimates. A "slow decline" is not a population collapse. A planet of 9 billion people is not an empty planet; it is a billion and half more people than there are today. The conservative estimate of 9 billion people in 2100 produced by IIASA is very different from the sensationalist picture the authors of *Empty Planet* paint of a world wherein "the swings will sit empty, rusting. No children screaming up and down the street . . . we will grow fewer." There is a huge difference between a slowly shrinking population and a collapsing population, between a smaller population than humanity's peak and

an “empty planet.” Yet this book fails to make any such distinctions.

Some populations are shrinking and others soon will begin to shrink, and the authors capitalize on these populations with poignant anecdotes. Yet these populations—Belgians, aboriginal Australians, the Manx, the Boni—are not drivers of global population growth. The decline of these populations and cultures is a genuine problem, but it is distinct from global population decline. The authors ignore this difference and capitalize on cultural decline for sensationalized storytelling.

It is a shame that *Empty Planet* hyperbolizes to the point of losing credibility. Population aging is uncharted territory and deserves serious consideration. Most industrialized economies developed in an era of young populations and population growth. The implications of aging on these economies are unclear, as aging populations will affect the flow of intergenerational wealth. The most obvious examples of this flow are social security and analogous programs.

Population aging affects the home before it hits the economy. It is the result of declining fertility, which shrinks the extended family. Fewer children by adults translates into fewer siblings and cousins, then to fewer aunts and uncles. Yet even as extended families contract, children are more and more likely to grow up with living grandparents. Adults are more likely to have aging parents for whom to care, creating a caregiving squeeze on adults who are considering having (more) children.¹ All of these age dynamics on a population scale are new developments in human history. Their implications are unclear and merit sincere consideration.

Even as the global population ages, Malthusian population doomsayers persist. Rhetoric for population control endures in India even as that country’s fertility approaches replacement level (and the southern Indian states have fertility levels comparable to Europe’s). Op-eds in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nigeria regularly sound alarmist bells about population growth and call for action to quell childbearing. The myth of overpopulation persists in the popular mind as well as in the mind of many governing elites. When people learn that I am a demographer, the first thing

1. S.C. Watkins, J.A. Menken, and J. Bongaarts, “Demographic Foundations of Family Change,” *American Sociological Review* 52.3 (June 1987): 346-58.

they often ask is, “So, is the world overpopulated?” *Empty Planet* had the potential to help correct this persistent error, but instead overcorrected and lost credibility.

The authors’ sensationalism makes them easy to discount. This is a shame since they write well and could have helped to popularize correct narratives about the world population. The global demography is changing: The facts adults learned in grade school are now outdated. The world is aging. Global aging is quietly reshaping societies even as a few people still sound the misplaced alarm against rapid population growth. Demographic change is neither sudden nor obvious, but it is altering the world. Look for it in the society around you, think about it well, and read about it. Just do not bother to read *Empty Planet*.

Anne R. Morse is pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology and demography from Pennsylvania State University.

Oversexed and Undermarried

Nicole M. King

Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy

by Mark Regnerus

Oxford University Press, 2017; 280 pages, \$29.95

Marriage has been on a steep, decades-long decline in the United States. Some have worried about this decline; others have simply attributed it to inevitable changes. Marriage is outdated, they say, soon to be replaced by cohabitation or other forms of companionship.

But the reality is that many, many young Americans still claim they want marriage—eventually, and with the right person—but that it seems ever further out of reach. Why? Much has to do with the state of American men. As Hanna Rosin has pointed out in *The End of Men*, the American male is, compared to American women, undereducated, underemployed, and unwilling to commit to a lifelong partnership. What happened?

What few are willing to say outright is the simple truth that Mark Regnerus, no stranger to conflict, is more than happy to point out in his latest book, *Cheap Sex*. Regnerus writes, “My central claim in this book is that cheap sex is plentiful—it’s flooding the market in sex and relationships—and that this has had profound influence on how American men and women relate to each other, which in turn has spilled over into other domains.”

This is controversial stuff, because we like to believe nowadays that men and women are essentially the same. Men like sex, and so do

women, just as much and some even more. Regnerus argues that this idea of sameness, particularly in the pursuit of sex, is a delusion. There was once such a thing as the “marriage market,” in which men valued attractiveness and sex, and women valued stability, commitment, and earning potential. Sex was the “bargaining tool.” It used to be that the only way to legitimately access sex was within the bounds of marriage, because sex outside of those bounds was too risky. It brought shame, social stigmatization, disabling diseases, but most importantly, babies. And no one condoned childbirth outside of wedlock.

In this market, sex was a powerful motivating factor for men in particular, who will sacrifice a great deal to get it. Regnerus says the “exchange model” (women give access to sex, in return for commitment and security) he highlights here may have been more obvious in the past, but still exists and is not likely to change anytime soon. As evidence of this reality, he points to the fact that culturally, men are still expected to propose to women, and not vice versa. The media may highlight a few exceptions to this as a new “norm,” but it simply isn’t the case. Marriage originates with men. If the exchange model were to be truly broken,

men would no longer be known (and socially rewarded) for seeking sex, while women would begin to seem more commitment phobic. More men would be longing for emotional satisfaction and validation, while more women would pursue bedding complete strangers. Men would pine to stay at home longer with their infants. Women would play fantasy football. All unlikely scenarios.

But this exchange model, though it still exists, received a major and unalterable shock with the advent of artificial birth control in the 1960s. Contraception “altered the playing field.” Without the pill and other forms of hormonal contraception, the “pure relationship”—defined as one based not on economic necessity or tradeoff but on emotion alone—could not have emerged. And the pure relationship model, in which feelings of love, closeness, self-worth, *etc.* are considered the only legitimate reasons for marriage, now dominates the marriage market and dictates what men and women seek in a mate. “Marriage,” writes Regnerus, “is still widely considered to be expensive, by which I mean that it is a big deal, not entered into lightly, and is costly in terms of fidelity, time,

finances, and personal investment. Sex, meanwhile, has become comparatively cheap. Not that hard to get.”

To make his case that sex in America is relatively cheap and easy to access, Regnerus and his colleagues review available data and also conduct detailed interviews of young Americans. They find, to begin with, that sex is indeed far easier to access today than ever before. As an example, Regnerus examines the modern dating market through the lens of the dating app. When the “hookup” app Tinder came into being, Regnerus predicted it would fail because it didn’t provide a way for women to evaluate a man’s economic position or earning power. “I was wrong,” he writes, signifying “that increasing numbers of women don’t really need men’s resources anymore, and that they outnumber men in the market for committed relationships. . . . when the supply side rises to meet demand, the price of anything—including sex—will fall.” Women felt compelled to participate in the hookup market, because men no longer needed marriage to access sex, and sex was the way they could attract a mate. Also among his findings are that the top 20% of women and men account for 80% of sexual activity—in other words, most Americans are not “gaining” from the advent of cheap sex. Also, the advent of first sex has become startlingly early. The greatest percentage (about 25% of men, and a little over 20% of women) of young Americans report that first sex occurred “after we met, but before in a relationship.” (“After we got married” accounts for about 12% and 11% for men and women, respectively, but this number doesn’t account for previous sexual relationships. Regnerus estimates the premarital virginity rate to be about 6%, at the highest.) He also reports that more frequent sex has not led to more satisfying sex, primarily for women.

The cheapest of cheap sex is, of course, pornography and masturbation. Porn is now easier to access, more culturally accepted, and more explicit than ever before. Might this affect how the marriage market operates? Regnerus believes so. First, he demonstrates that yes, indeed, more young people today are using porn as a vehicle for cheap sex than ever before—46% of men below age 40 view porn weekly. (His team’s interviews reveal that for the most part, users of porn still tend to be men, although even that is changing.) Also still true is that for the most part, women don’t like the fact that men view porn, and they particularly

don't like that their partners do so. What has developed in recent decades is a "culture of tolerating pornography among men's sexual partners—the interviews confirm this—including those that vehemently dislike it. . . . it's the new cost of doing business with men." Sex is cheap, marriage is more expensive, and one of the "costs" of finding a marriageable partner is tolerating his porn habit. Interestingly, porn use actually seems to shape political opinion. Regnerus finds that "Regression analyses . . . confirm that past pornography use is a (very) significant predictor of men's support for same-sex marriage in the full sample, displaying a linear association even after controlling for other obvious factors that might influence one's perspective." Although, he admits, correlation does not mean causation, he speculates that causation wouldn't run the other direction—that is, support for same-sex marriage wouldn't cause more porn use. He speculates instead that the correlation exists because "pornography typically treats gazers to a veritable fire-hose dousing of sex-act diversity, and presses its consumers away from thinking of sex as having anything to do with love, monogamy, or childbearing—all traits that most Americans long equated with marriage."

Regnerus and others speculate that cheap sex may even have something to do with the "decline of men" noted by Hanna Rosin and others. The labor market has been "screaming out," writes *New York Times* Binyamin Appelbaum, that to succeed, Americans need more education. Women have responded to this cue; men, increasingly, have not, and have in fact been dropping out of the labor market in startling numbers. This is an economic mystery, which other scholars suggest may have something to do with men's ability to access cheap sex without the bother of attaining economic success, a career, an education, or other markers of being a good provider. "Climbing the corporate ladder for its own sake may still hold some appeal," writes Roy Baumeister, "but undoubtedly it was more compelling when it was vital for obtaining sex."

Regnerus closes by highlighting that people still want what marriage has to offer. "Cheap sex," he says, "does not make marriage unappealing; it just makes marriage less urgent and more difficult to accomplish." There are clear losers in the new system. Among lower socioeconomic status women, for example, marriage has become far more elusive than it has among higher-income and more educated women. A stark class

divide has emerged. And “children, too, are losing out,” as the stability of the two-parent home, presence of siblings, and exposure to intergenerational communities are all eroded. Regnerus closes with eight predictions for 2030, a couple of which, at least, are somewhat encouraging. He predicts that demand for same-sex marriage will recede, and that “efforts to de-gender society and relationships will fall short.” He also makes some somber predictions, not least startling of which is that age of consent laws will become a relic of the past, enforced only in the most egregious of infractions.

But in the end, he believes, changing attitudes and politics and even behavior can only do so much to uproot biology. Regnerus writes that he has become convinced

the Genital Life we are adopting is misanthropic, ultimately anti-woman, and not sustainable. The exchange relationship, on the other hand, is old. It is deeply human. It fosters love when navigated judiciously. And it remains the historic heartbeat, and the very grammar, of human community and social reproduction.

May nature prevail.

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

NEW RESEARCH

Nicole M. King

Cohabitation Still Not Measuring Up

Family and relationship scholars have observed the growing trend toward cohabitation with wonder. Is this a new substitute, as most such scholars claim, for the old-fashioned concept of marriage? Or is it a passing behavioral blip?

One argument runs thus: Yes, cohabitation tends to be associated with slightly lower rates of happiness and commitment, but that is only because it is still in its infancy. Eventually, cohabitation will replace marriage altogether as the relationship of choice, and at that point, the two will confer exactly the same benefits on couples.

Alas, new data from the National Marriage Project and The Wheatley Institution should help to put such claims to rest. In a careful analysis of the NMP/Wheatley Institution research brief, Institute for Family Studies scholars W. Bradford Wilcox, Jeffrey Dew, and Alysse ElHage identify the relevant findings.

The authors begin by highlighting the need for such research: “[A]s cohabiting became more prevalent and accepted in the U.S.,” some posited that “it would begin to look more like marriage.” “However,” the scholars found, “research continues to confirm key differences.”

Overall, “married individuals were 12 percentage points more likely to report being in the high relationship satisfaction group, 26 percentage points more likely to report being in the highest stability group, and 15 percentage points more likely to report being in the highest commitment group.” These findings persist even after adjusting for a variety

of different life circumstances (socioeconomic status, age, health, *etc.*). “These findings,” continue the authors, “confirm previous research showing that cohabiting relationships have lower levels of commitment, higher rates of infidelity and conflict, and are significantly more likely to end than married relationships.”

Interestingly enough, even though many researchers point to Europe for examples of where and how cohabitation and marriage have become more and more alike, the authors note that “cohabiting relationships are significantly more likely to break up than married relationships, including cohabiting unions that include children, and this holds true even in places, like Europe, where cohabitation has been an accepted practice a lot longer.” They point to the countries of Norway and France as examples of places where “married couples still enjoy a ‘stability premium.’”

In other words, couples thinking they are “playing it safe” by testing the relationship waters through cohabitation should take a hard look at the reality that even after decades of normalization, cohabitation still doesn’t measure up to marriage.

(W. Bradford Wilcox, Jeffrey Dew, and Alysse ElHage, “Cohabitation Doesn’t Compare: Marriage, Cohabitation, and Relationship Quality,” Institute for Family Studies, Web, February 7, 2019.)

Virginity Still the Best Route to Marriage

For decades, the media and even various policy groups have told Americans that it’s OK—nay, it’s good and healthy—to explore multiple sexual relationships with multiple partners. Merely watching television may lead one to conclude that most Americans lead sex lives that are wildly promiscuous and adventurous. But a new study out of the Institute for Family Studies suggests that A) sexual mores have changed less than some would have us believe, and B) there is still much to be said for chastity.

In a study for the Institute for Family Studies, Nicholas Wolfinger seeks to better understand the relationship between premarital sex and later marital quality. “The 1960s,” he opens, “changed premarital sex. Prior to the sexual revolution, unmarried heterosexual sex partners

tended to marry each other (sometimes motivated by a shotgun pregnancy); in more recent decades, first sex usually does not lead to marriage.” Nonetheless, Wolfinger continues, while those trends have certainly been dramatic, the numbers of married Americans who report only one lifetime sexual partner have actually held pretty steady for a number of decades: around 40% for women, and inching toward that for several years for men.

Furthermore, respondents of a previous survey “who tied the knot as virgins had the lowest divorce rates, but beyond that, the relationship between sexual biography and marital stability was less clear. Having multiple partners generally doesn’t increase the odds of divorce any more than having just a few does.” Wolfinger seeks to better understand this relationship.

Analyzing almost 30 years worth of data from the General Social Survey, Wolfinger notes that “[o]verall, 64% of respondents report very happy marriages. . . . Also, most Americans have less exciting sexual histories than the media would have us to believe. The median American woman born in the 1980s has had three sex partners in her lifetime. The median man has had six partners, but only four if he’s a four-year college graduate.”

There are even some notable trends that support the concept of “waiting” until marriage. “Women who’ve only slept with their spouses are, at 65%, most likely to report very happy marriages,” while “the lowest odds of marital happiness, 52% in the baseline model, accord to women who’ve had six-to-10 lifetime sexual partners.” For men, 71% percent of those who report one lifetime sexual partner also report being very happy in their relationships, and this number “drops to 65% for men who report two or more sex partners.”

Wolfinger notes that the differences in happiness that accrue with more sexual partners are not terribly significant for either men or women. That is, the clear difference in later marital happiness is not in whether a man has had three versus six partners, but whether he has had more than one—and the same for women.

Wolfinger can’t quite account for who these certain Americans are who seem to hold to more traditional patterns of sexual behavior—and gain greater happiness rewards in marriage. Religiosity, he says, is one

obvious influence, but cannot account for the differences. Nor do genetics. But such Americans “are likely different from their fellows in ways that predict both premarital sexual behavior and marital happiness.”

Wolfinger limns a number of limitations in this study, not least of which is that “data on sexual partners are likely prone to errors of boastfulness, shame, and memory.” Nonetheless, this brief overview suggests that even in this age of sexual abandon, fewer Americans are drinking the Kool-aid than is often believed. Furthermore, those Americans who are bucking the trends and report only one lifetime sexual partner are also the ones who report the highest levels of marital happiness.

(Nicholas Wolfinger, “Does Sexual History Affect Marital Happiness?” Institute for Family Studies, Web, October 22, 2018.)

The Benefits of Marriage in Iran

For decades, research has indicated that marital status matters for individuals’ risk of developing certain illnesses—such as cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes—and even seems to impact all-cause mortality. Researchers have long hypothesized that married individuals enjoy less stress and loneliness than do their never-married or divorced/widowed peers, and also tend to exercise better self-care. With such studies as background, scholars out of Tehran seek to better understand how well these effects translate to their own community—*i.e.*, the impact that marital status has on the Iranian population.

The researchers open by discussing some important background for their study. “A number of studies,” they write, “conducted on samples from various ethnic groups have reported that rate of all-cause and cause-specific mortality are higher among those who are unmarried, relative to their married counterparts, a relationship which is independent of various sociodemographic characteristics.” “On the other hand,” they continue, “the meanings of marriage, gender roles and family structure have changed considerably over the last few decades,” and “[t]here are limited numbers of prospective studies assessing the associations of marital status and major health outcomes in the Middle East, namely in Iran with the fundamental demographic and cultural changes over the

past several decades.”

To this end, the researchers glean data from the TLGS cohort database, which followed individuals during the period of 1999 to 2014 to study various health outcomes. The final sample size was 9,737 Iranian adults, and the mean age was 47.6 years. Study participants completed a questionnaire with information on age, marital status, smoking, medication use, and history of cardiovascular disease (CVD). They also indicated if there was any family history of type 2 diabetes and “premature” CVD. “The primary exposure of interest,” the researchers write, “was self-reported marital status”—married, never-married, divorced, and widowed. (Due to the small numbers of divorced and widowed men, these two categories were lumped together in this study.) “The occurrence of hypertension, T2D [type 2 diabetes], CVD and all-cause mortality during the study period were considered as outcomes.”

After careful measurement and comparison using a variety of methods, the researchers came up with some surprising results. “In this population-based study,” they summarize, “we found that being single in men was associated with 55% increased risk of hypertension after adjusting for traditional risk factors. . . . Furthermore, we found that relative to married men, those men in the never married group had a 2.17 times higher all-cause mortality risk (marginally significant).” So for Iranian men, it seems, as for American and European men, being unmarried is still associated with some significant health risks. This finding is in line with many other studies that have found a similar correlation between marriage status and risk of hypertension in men. The researchers write, “It has been suggested that married men have better sleep, less stress, better moods and have a more healthy diet compared with never-married men.”

The results are a bit more complex for women. “Among women,” the researchers continue, “widowed status was significantly associated with a 31% lower risk of T2D” after adjusting for a number of factors. The researchers speculate that as married women care for aging or ill husbands, stress and exhaustion may actually harm their own health. “Hence, women are less likely to feel stressed and more likely to feel relief after divorce or the death of a spouse, aspects which may help to explain the lower risk of T2D seen among the widowed women in our study,

indicating the need for further research . . . ”

Some of the researchers’ findings on all-cause mortality or CVD were inconsistent with previously reported results, which the researchers attribute to a variety of causes, including smaller sample size or methodological issues. Nonetheless, their key findings remain important for those studying family structure around the globe. It should be no surprise that in Iran, as in the rest of the world, marital status matters for health and longevity.

(Azra Ramezankhani, Fereidoun Azizi, and Farzad Hadaegh, “Associations of marital status with diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality: A long term follow-up study,” PLoS ONE 14.4 [2019]: e0215593.)

Predicting a Fewer-Divorce Future

Given Americans’ dramatically loosened modern attitudes towards divorce and cohabitation, one would expect, perhaps, to see more divorce. And yet, as Philip Cohen of the University of Maryland observes in a paper soon to be presented, the opposite is true.

Cohen begins by pointing out “the decline in divorce in the three decades after 1980,” which is attributed in other research to “the aging of the most divorce-prone cohort, the Baby Boomers.” As the Boomers aged, the so-called “grey divorce revolution” took place, in which record numbers of older adults began to seek a divorce. But even amidst this rise, Cohen argues, “however one interprets the trends before 2010, all signs now point toward decreasing divorce rates, on a cohort and population basis, in the coming years.” Cohen finds this coming decrease “remarkable” as it coincides with “an increase in less-stable cohabiting relationships” and also “a growing cultural acceptance of divorce.”

For his source, Cohen relies on data from the American Community Survey, which introduced questions on marital events in 2008. His final regression sample is 6.18 million American women, and he also measures for “divorce-protective factors,” such as age, ethnicity, higher education, first marriage, and a woman’s lack of her own children upon entering the marriage.

Cohen's research aligns with that of others, finding a huge 21% decline in the divorce rate in the period 2008 to 2017. Furthermore, "The predictors of divorce are as expected, with increased age, marital duration, fewer marriages, foreign-born status, more education, and White or Hispanic identity all being associated with lower odds of divorce." And in spite of the fact that older women have historically been divorcing more, Cohen's model also "shows no increase in the adjusted odds of divorce for older women in the last decade."

Cohen believes these age patterns merit closer examination. If, as he speculates, the divorce uptick was initiated by the Baby Boom generation, there would be no reason to expect it to continue among cohorts of younger women. And if, as research has demonstrated, one divorce makes higher-order divorces more likely, then there would also be reason to suspect that a lack of younger divorce would make longer marital stability more likely. Or, as Cohen puts it, "While divorce prevalence for older people continued to increase after 1990, rates plateaued for those under age 45, which may portend lower divorce rates later in life, and for their children." "In fact," he continues, "closer examination of age-specific divorce rates for the most recent decades shows that the overall drop has been driven entirely by younger women. It seems likely these women, who will reach longer marital durations, and who are less likely to be divorced and therefore remarried later in life, will have lower divorce rates than today's older women."

Cohen concludes by highlighting that the women most likely to enter marriage in the first place today are also the women with the lowest "risk profile"—more highly educated, older, and less likely to have been already married. Hence, divorce rates are likely to decrease, even as attitudes toward divorce (as measured by both Gallup and the General Social Survey) have grown ever-more lenient, with more and more Americans indicating that divorce is socially acceptable, and should be easier to obtain.

What does all this mean? Well, for starters, the divorce rate is likely to continue to decline in coming years—a good thing. But on the other hand, as Cohen points out in his abstract, America is also entering an era in which marriage is relatively more rare than it has been in the past, and also more a marker of social class—"representing an increasingly central

component of the structure of social inequality.” So while the well-to-do and well-educated experience increasing stability, the poor and working classes are experiencing decreasing stability, and the fabric of American society continues to unravel.

(Philip N. Cohen, “The Coming Divorce Decline,” November 14, 2018, paper to be presented at the 2019 Population Association of America meetings, available at <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/h2sk6/>.)

Oral Contraceptives—Bad for Relationships

A little-appreciated fact for most is that women’s hormonal cycles are intimately connected to every physical system in their bodies, and thus also to their moods, cognition, and behavior. Researchers have long understood the value of understanding how hormonal changes may affect women’s day-to-day lives. In this vein, some German researchers have set out to better understand how oral contraceptive use affects one specific function: women’s ability to recognize the emotions of others.

The researchers open by acknowledging that “[a]lthough oral contraceptives (OCs) have been regarded as one of the best studied drugs in the history of medicine, remarkably little is known about the psychological and behavioral consequences of OC use.” This is a critical gap in the research, particularly when a handful of existing studies on the topic indicate that OC use seems to impair women’s abilities to accurately recognize the emotional expressions of others, a skill which “is essential for the initiation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, in particular intimate ones.”

To better understand the relationship between emotional recognition and OC use, the researchers designed a study using a task “sensitive enough to detect even subtle impairments in women’s emotional recognition,” by having them identify very small facial changes that indicate emotional state. The researchers recruited a total of 95 women, 42 of whom used OC, and 53 of whom did not. They also asked the women (and, when the women themselves were unsure, took measurements of hormone levels) what point of their cycle they were currently in—follicular (day 0-15 of menses) or luteal (day 15-28)—in the hopes of

determining what role, if any, natural cycle variations made in women's emotional recognition.

After a questionnaire and a screening interview, study participants then completed a series of tests to measure their distress levels, empathetic traits, and finally their ability to recognize complex emotional expressions on others' faces. Participants were shown various black and white pictures, which focused on the eye region (crucial for emotional display), and asked to identify which of four descriptor words best labeled the emotion expressed in the face/eyes.

The researchers found a clear difference between the women who were using OCs and the women who were not. Specifically, their "mixed-design ANOVA indicated that participants with OC use were less accurate in emotional recognition than participants without OC use. . . . Across all participants, recognition accuracy was lower for negative than positive or neutral expressions as indicated by post hoc tests." These differences "did not depend on the menstrual cycle phase of participants without OC use." Furthermore, "all participants were less accurate in the recognition of negative than positive or neutral expressions"—but the OC-use group was clearly worse at the task.

The researchers speculate that OC use impairs emotional recognition by modification of estrogen and progesterone levels, which have been shown to "modulate activity and connectivity changes in prefrontal and temporal brain regions that are impacted in the processing of emotional expression." In other words, hormones play a significant role in emotion recognition, and the use of oral contraceptives impairs the brain's ability to recognize complex emotions by altering natural hormone levels.

The researchers close by limning a series of limitations. Most interestingly, as theirs was meant to be a study seeking global vs. specific effects of OC use, they did not seek to assess whether duration of OC use, discontinued vs. continued use, or other factors had different implications for women's ability to recognize emotions. Nonetheless, the researchers have learned enough to caution that, "considering that more and more women start using OCs shortly after onset of puberty . . . these types of studies are highly warranted to determine the positive and negative consequences of OC use on emotion, cognition, and behavior."

(Rike Pahnke et al., “Oral Contraceptives Impair Complex Emotion Recognition in Healthy Women,” Frontiers in Neuroscience 12.1041 [February 2019]: 10.3389/fnins.2018.01041.)

Marriage Makes You Stronger?

Much research has already demonstrated the benefits of marriage—married people live longer, are healthier, and have fewer depressive symptoms than their unmarried, widowed, or divorced/separated peers. But a new study seeks to understand the relationship between marriage and a key component of living well in old age—physical capability.

The British researchers highlight that while much research already exists on the impact marriage has on both physical and mental health, few studies explore the association between marriage and physical capability, defined as “the capacity to undertake the physical tasks of daily living” and “a key indicator of healthy ageing, not specific to a particular disease or condition.”

To better understand this relationship, the team of researchers mine data from both the U.S. and U.K., specifically from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) and the US Health and Retirement Study (HRS). Two specific measures of “physical capability” were assessed: grip strength and walking speed, with an “exposure of interest” of marital status (distinguishing between first and subsequent marriages).

After measuring for a number of covariables (including age, sex, ethnicity, work and parental status, and education and wealth as measurements of socioeconomic status), the researchers discerned some clear patterns. In men, “widowed and never married men in ELSA had a weaker grip strength than men in their first marriage. . . . In HRS all groups of unmarried men had a weaker grip strength than men in their first marriage.” Much of this difference is attributable to the better socioeconomic position of married men compared to their widowed or unmarried peers (marriage also has a significant impact upon wealth accumulation). Among women, the results were similar, although “[a]mong women in both ELSA and HRS there was not as much variation in grip strength among the different marital statuses as among men.” Interestingly, “Remarried men had relatively stronger grip strength than

remarried women, whilst widowed and never married women had relatively stronger grip strength than their male counterparts.”

For walking speed, the researchers found that “all unmarried men had a slower walking speed than men who were in their first marriage, in both surveys.” Again, socioeconomic status either largely or partly explained these differences. For women, “unmarried women in both ELSA and HRC had a slower walking speed than women in their first marriage, and the addition of the socioeconomic measures, primarily wealth, attenuated this association.”

Overall, the researchers deduced, “an association was found between marriage and physical capability at mid to later life, with those who were unmarried displaying poorer physical capability than their counterparts who had remained in their first marriage.” The researchers close by suggesting, “The importance of wealth in explaining much of the poorer physical capability among older unmarried people suggests that increases in access to economic resources available to unmarried people may help to maintain physical capability and independent living at older ages.”

In other words, in the absence of strong family support systems, the state once again is forced to step in to equalize experiences for older American and British adults.

(Natasha Wood et al., “Marriage and physical capability at mid to later life in England and the USA,” PLoS ONE 14.1 [January 2019]: e0209388.)

Family Caretaking Beneficial to Mental Health

The first place of both giving and receiving needed care is, of course, the family, so it is only natural that researchers have long been interested in the benefits to caretakers of providing that care. Most recently in this effort, Danish researchers have highlighted that “[n]umerous studies have linked psychological stress and emotional strain from work and family to adverse health outcomes.” More recently, however, studies have sought to assess what positive effects might accrue to caretakers: “Positive feelings about work and family responsibilities have been shown to benefit mental health and contribute to psychological well-being.”

The researchers explain the groundwork for their study. The aim,

they say, is “to investigate whether positive feelings about work and family responsibilities benefit objectively measured physical health to the same extent as they might benefit mental health. Specifically, with respect to work, we chose to focus on the perception of work as meaningful.” They also emphasize that women especially tend to experience “role-conflict” in combining family-care tasks with employment.

For their data set, the researchers obtain a sample of 94 Danish men and 87 Danish women aged 49-51, from the Copenhagen Ageing and Midlife Biobank. “Meaningful work” was assessed by asking a number of questions: “Is your work meaningful?, Do you feel that the work you do is important?, and Do you feel motivated and involved in your work?” Participants were also asked how many hours a week they provided care to parents, children, grandchildren, and other persons, and to rate physical and emotional strain on a five-point scale. Four variables were created: average caregiving reward, average physical strain, average emotional strain, and total caregiving hours a week. Depressive symptoms and perceived stress were measured by a series of questions, and physiological dysregulation was measured based on eight biomarkers, which reflected cardiovascular, metabolic, and immune activity.

The results demonstrated that meaningful caregiving activities were indeed beneficial to mental health. Specifically, in their sample, a “majority” provided care to at least one person, and 67% “found caregiving rewarding to a large or very large degree.” Only a small percentage reported caregiving to be straining to a large or very large degree (2% for physical strain and 11% for emotional strain). Furthermore, “81% of respondents rated their work as meaningful to a large or very large degree,” with no difference between the genders.

When the researchers dig more deeply into the data, they find, “For both men and women, higher levels of work meaning were moderately associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms.” In other words, finding caregiving tasks to be meaningful seemed to have a protective effect on mental health. At the same time, however, “meaningful work was related to higher levels of physiological dysregulation” in women but not in men. So even though they find it rewarding, and even though it provides some mental benefit, caregiving work does seem to take a higher physical toll on women.

Why the gender imbalance? The researchers aren't sure, but posit that "Gender differences in health effects of employment have long been known, and the health benefits of being gainfully employed alongside family responsibilities tend to be more pronounced among men, while women are more likely to experience role conflict and role strain from combining work and family duties." But they shy away from making too strong a statement on this, instead cautioning that "Female employment has been a politically charged topic and extra care should be taken when interpreting potentially controversial results presented herein." They instead suggest that "policies aimed at improving work-life balance" and "interventions helping workers prioritize down-time and physical well-being" may be beneficial.

There are a few notable takeaways from this study. First, both men and women find caretaking to be rewarding, and in fact even protective of mental health. And second, it could be that women's higher modern investment in the workplace and the conflict they feel over work/family balance is causing physical strain in these caretaking roles, even though they themselves believe caretaking to be "highly rewarding." What is the solution to this strain? There may not be a good one, but this study is a good place to start when seeking one.

(Nadya Dich et al., "Mental and physical health effects of meaningful work and rewarding family responsibilities," PLoS ONE 14.4 [April 2019]: e0214916.)

Marriage—Predictor of Retirement Savings

Plenty of research over many decades has highlighted that married couples tend to do better financially than do their unmarried peers. True, two are better than one, but in addition, marriage seems to motivate a series of responsible behaviors that bode well for wealth accumulation. So it should come as no surprise that researchers are also interested in the effect that marriage has on a specific type of wealth accumulation—retirement savings, in the form of 401k contributions.

Geoffrey T. Sanzenbacher and Wenliang Hou of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College seek to answer this question. They

set up their research in an even more specific context. Millennials, they point out, are tending to marry later and later. And “While the overall trend in age at first marriage is clear, its implications for a decision about whether and how much to save for retirement are less clear.” “On the one hand,” the researchers continue, “a robust literature has shown that marriage tends to kick start saving for a house as individuals combine their possessions and make plans for having kids. On the other hand, the decision to save for retirement may be different.” So they seek to assess, first, if married people do in fact contribute more to 401k accounts, and second, if later marriage significantly impacts the amount of savings accrued.

To analyze this question, the researchers use data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), which they describe as “a panel survey on economic and demographic characteristics.” They link this data to W-2 records for a five-year period, spanning two years before the interviewees’ entrance onto the SIPP panel until two years after. The final sample size is 20,450 individuals.

The results should not be surprising. These results “suggest that both men and women increase their 401(k) participation and contribution rates after marriage,” although men increase their contributions more so than women, because their pre-marriage contribution rates tended to be lower. Furthermore, “Conditional on participating, the contribution rate shows the opposite trend by gender. After marriage, women increase their contribution rate by an average of 0.8 percentage point compared to only 0.3 for men.”

Next, the researchers examine the impact that a later marriage would have on 401k savings, by estimating how much savings individuals would have accrued by age 65 if they had married five years later. “The effect of delay,” they find, “while statistically significant in the regression, is small—a 3.1-percent decline in accumulated assets for men and a 3.4-percent decline for women.” The researchers believe this is “unlikely to make a large dent in retirement savings.”

In closing, they reiterate that “the net effect on retirement wealth is likely to be small and, in any case, solutions for this issue exist.” The researchers then highlight such “solutions” as automatic 401k enrollment and financial education. But the findings from this research brief

are worth noting. As in most other behaviors, married couples tend to behave in a more responsible and far-sighted way than do their unmarried peers, and later marriage does have some effect—even if a small one—on individuals’ retirement savings.

(Geoffrey T. Sanzenbacher and Wenliang Hou, “Do People Save More After They Marry?” Center for Retirement Research Brief 19-7, Boston College, April 2019.)

Happy Married Brits

As part of its “Beyond GDP Initiative,” which seeks to assess indicators of both personal and economic well-being, The Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom conducts periodic surveys of the British populace to see what kinds of things (money, family, employment levels, etc.) make for a happier nation.

The most recent of these surveys—entitled “Personal and economic well-being: what matters most to our life satisfaction?”—highlights marriage and family as key indicators of who is happiest in the UK. Using data from the Annual Population Survey and the Effects of Taxes and Benefits datasets, the researchers conducted regression analyses on a final sample of 286,059 who were polled during the period of October 2017 to September 2018.

They find that “Self-reported health, marital status and economic activity have the strongest associations with how positively we rate our life satisfaction,” with health coming in as the strongest predictor of life satisfaction. A close second, however, is marriage. “People who are married,” the statisticians find, “or in a civil partnership rate their life satisfaction higher—in particular, 9.9% higher than those who are widowed, and 8.8% higher than those separated from a partner.” And while more and more media outlets are praising the glories of the single life, singles in Britain report being only 0.2% happier than those who are divorced.

Also interesting is that, in spite of decades of research that seems to indicate that couples with young children in the home are less happy than those without, “those living with dependent children have 1.25 times greater odds of reporting higher life satisfaction.” Certainly, the

parameters of this survey and the research demonstrating that children make married people unhappy may be too different for comparison. But it seems notable nonetheless that those with children living with them report a greater life satisfaction than those without—whether it’s due to happiness, or simply to a greater sense that one’s life matters to someone.

Another interesting point, which may be useful to individual families, is that those Brits who are able to spend more money on experiences (restaurants, vacations, *etc.*) report being happier than both those who spend more on necessities (food, rent, utilities) and also happier than those who spend more on luxury items (clothes, cars). Having shared experiences with loved ones matters more to life satisfaction than having nice things—a finding that many families could learn from.

(Gueorguie Vassilev et al., “Personal and economic well-being: what matters most to our life satisfaction?” Office of National Statistics, United Kingdom, May 15, 2019, available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/personalandeconomicwellbeingintheuk/whatmattersmosttoourlifesatisfaction#most-important-factors-affecting-life-satisfaction>.)

British Marrieds Still Happier

Decades of research have demonstrated that married individuals tend to be more satisfied with their lives than are unmarried individuals. Some recent and widely cited studies suggest, however, that life satisfaction for marrieds rises for a brief time after marriage, then settles back down to levels more typical of unmarrieds. Now, researchers from Canadian universities seek to understand which is more likely.

The researchers first outline “two sorts of threat” to what they describe as a “growing interest” in using measures of well-being as indicators of progress. “First,” they write, “if major changes in life circumstances have only temporary effects on life evaluations, then this casts doubt on the value of life satisfaction as a welfare measure. Second, if the cross-sectional and panel methodologies give very different estimates of the value of marriage,” then there is reason to suspect both methodologies. More specifically, they say, those who are married also “tend to be

more social, healthier, better educated and have more engaging jobs, all features of life likely to increase happiness with or without marriage.” So does marriage really matter all that much, or only for a brief time, or is it that the types of people getting married tend to be happier, anyway?

To answer these questions, the researchers seek to examine the “size and permanence of the effects of marriage on subjective well-being.” They glean their data from the British Household Panel Survey and the United Kingdom’s Annual Population Survey. Using a number of different methods, they arrived at findings that should be heartening for those already married. First, even with controls, the married are happier than the unmarried. Second, and contrary to some previous work, they find that the benefits of marriage are long-term, “even if the well-being benefits are greatest immediately after marriage.” Second, although the “U-shape” relationship between life satisfaction and age exists for both married and unmarried—life satisfaction decreases for a time, then rises again with age—the trough is deepest for the unmarried. The most significant benefits of marriage occur when individuals are in their 40s and 50s. And fourth, friendship seems to be an important mechanism through which marriage increases happiness. Those who report that their spouse is their best friend see the greatest gains from marriage.

The researchers do highlight one important limitation to their study: The findings are “directly applicable only in those western countries for which there are suitable longitudinal surveys.” Nonetheless, this is an important contribution to the literature on marriage, demonstrating that though the “honeymoon phase” may be the most obvious time in which married people are clearly happier, the benefits of marriage persist for the long term.

(Shawn Grover and John F. Helliwell, “How’s Life at Home? New Evidence on Marriage and the Set Point for Happiness,” Journal of Happiness Studies 20 [2019]: 373-90.)

The Pill=More Nonmarital Births?

When Margaret Sanger first sought to develop an oral contraceptive, her announced goal was to help poor women avoid unwanted motherhood.

Such women—and Sanger was focusing most on married women—were already burdened with too many mouths to feed in the urban slums, and they needed a mechanism to avoid further increasing their already heavy workload. So, enlisting the aid of scientist Gregory Pincus, Sanger set about to develop the world's first oral contraceptive, a pregnancy preventative that would be foolproof and almost effortless for women.

Alas, in the almost 70 years since the pill first came on the market, the nonmarital birth rate has skyrocketed. In addition, numerous scholars have documented the ever-widening gap between America's wealthy and poor women, with married childbearing becoming an almost unattainable dream for working-class women. Now, researchers Andrew Beauchamp and Catherine R. Pakaluk from Wright State University in Ohio and the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., respectively, seek to understand whether the pill had anything to do with these trends.

As the authors point out, the nonmarital birthrate has “increased rapidly after 1960, from roughly 5% to 40% of all births . . . and has been tightly entangled with poverty.” Lower socioeconomic class (SES) women are still the most likely to have an unmarried birth, and the children born to unmarried mothers are far more likely to grow up in poverty and repeat the cycle themselves. Thus, Beauchamp and Pakaluk seek to understand “whether the pill played a causal, if paradoxical, role in the rise of nonmarital births, particularly among working-class and minority women.” They find that yes, it did, and suggest two possible paths for this occurrence. The first is that pill access lowers the cost of nonmarital sex, thus increasing the amount of nonmarital sex. Because no contraceptive is perfectly effective 100% of the time, some women do, in fact, become pregnant. The second path is an indirect one, whereby “marriage combined with childbearing became less common for those women with the least economic and social bargaining power.” In other words, the pill reduced the occurrence of so-called “shotgun marriages,” but also weakened the desirability of lesser-educated women as marriage partners.

To conduct their analysis, the researchers drew data from the National Vital Statistics System and the National Survey of Families and Households on nonmarital childbearing and also the “policy regime” that governed access to the pill at the times these unmarried births occurred.

First, the researchers discover that even though the pill was first legalized for and marketed to married women, by the time the Supreme Court granted access to all women regardless of marital status, nonmarital use was already one in five women. In other words, legislation permitting only marital access to the pill was ineffective, and any rises in the nonmarital birthrate during this period should be considered.

Second, and strikingly, Beauchamp and Pakaluk find “robust evidence that changes in marital access to the pill increased the nonmarital birth rate by between 15% and 18%,” corresponding to roughly one-third of the rise in nonmarital births. Equally notable is that “the effects of contraceptive access on nonmarital childbearing were also concentrated among women from less-educated households and minority women.” Women whose fathers had less schooling had more nonmarital births after legalized access to the pill than did women with more educated fathers. Furthermore, “marital pill access [which, as had already been demonstrated, meant access for all women] substantially lowered the probability that a woman obtained a high-school diploma, consistent with the increase in nonmarital births,” while the rate of post-secondary educational attainment seems to have been unaffected by access to the pill.

The researchers understand that many other factors have also been posited as accounting for the rise in nonmarital births, specifically an increase in blue-collar unemployment and also the expansion of welfare benefits to single-parent households. They find no impact of blue-collar unemployment on the nonmarital birth rate, and find a negative relationship between increased benefits and nonmarital births.

In summary, then, legal access to the pill had a significant effect on the rise in nonmarital births, concentrated in working-class and minority women. Also, “marital access to the pill significantly decreased women’s likelihood of graduating high school, with no evidence that it lowered bachelor’s degree attainment.”

“Taken together,” write Beauchamp and Pakaluk, “these findings suggest that the pill has had not one but two effects on the lives of American women. The first effect may have been to improve the educational and career outcomes of women in the middle to upper socioeconomic brackets,” which led to declining marital family sizes. “The second effect was

to increase the likelihood of a nonmarital birth among women of lower SES.” The “paradox of the pill,” then, is that it represents “historic gains for some women, and discouraging losses for others,” and has contributed to the widening gap between America’s classes.

In closing, the researchers suggest several potential policy ramifications for their study. First, they recommend that policymakers who seek to reduce nonmarital births should “prioritize efficacy in real use in various populations, and not ideal use.” Second, they suggest that fertility awareness methods coupled with use of birth control may have greater effect in some populations than the pill alone.

(Andrew Beauchamp and Catherine R. Pakaluk, “The Paradox of the Pill: Heterogeneous Effects of Oral Contraceptive Access,” Economic Inquiry 57.2 [2019]: 813-31.)

Father Flexibility Good for New Moms

Workplace flexibility policies—which allow employees to make more autonomous decisions about when and where to work, or whether to take a day off and how to time it—are on the rise. With two-working-parent homes increasingly prevalent, increasing workplace flexibility has in fact become a desirable trait for parents considering a job change. Many such policies have focused on maternal workplace flexibility or parental leave policies, but a new National Bureau of Economics Research paper examines a new policy out of Sweden to shed light on how paternal workplace flexibility may be beneficial to a family in a particularly vulnerable period: the months after they welcome a new baby.

Before 2012, Swedish parents were granted 16 months of paid leave after the birth of a child, which was split between the parents. There was, however, an important rule: Parents were not typically allowed to use their leave at the same time, with the exception of the ten days immediately after a birth. Typically, the Swedish mother would take most of the leave, and the father would take two months once the mother returned to work. This was supposed to promote a stronger father/child bond and also increase gender equality by requiring the father to do all the child-care tasks a mother typically does.

The “Double Days” reform of 2012 allowed parents to take an extra 30 days of leave at the same time during the first year of the child’s life. “Importantly,” write the authors of this NBER paper, “these ‘Double Days’ could be taken intermittently; thus, fathers were effectively granted more flexibility to choose, on a day-to-day basis, whether to claim paid leave to stay home together with the mother and child.”

What effect, if any, does this new policy have on maternal health? The authors speculate that a father with such flexibility may provide benefits to the mother in several ways, including support while establishing breastfeeding, childcare during maternal healthcare visits, or alleviating maternal stress and loneliness. To examine the impact of father workplace flexibility, the researchers pore over a number of Swedish national data sets to find who used these leave days and when, and compared them to national health records.

The results are significant. First, the researchers emphasize that workplace concerns about fathers taking leave to “shirk from their jobs . . . are not supported by the data.” Fathers took only a few of the full 30 days of “alongside” leave allowed.

More importantly, the authors “present consistent evidence that fathers’ access to workplace flexibility improves maternal postpartum health. We find a 14 percent decrease in the likelihood of a mother having an inpatient or specialist outpatient visit for childbirth-related complications, and 11 and 26 percent reductions in the likelihoods of her getting any antibiotic and anti-anxiety prescription drugs, respectively, in the first six months post-birth. Moreover, we show that the decline in anti-anxiety medications is especially pronounced in the first three months after childbirth.” These effects are all greater for women with a pre-birth medical history. The researchers also discovered that the days when women visited a healthcare provider tended to be the days that fathers chose to take a leave day, indicating that the fathers used their extra leave to provide infant care so that mothers could pursue healthcare.

These findings, the researchers close, bear important implications for continued discussions of paid family leave. Workplace flexibility—allowing the family to choose when and how to use extra leave days—may be key in providing for better maternal health. The U.S. remains one of the only high-income countries in the world without a national paid family

leave policy, and the authors suggest “the availability of such leave—which fathers could use to care for mothers in the immediate postpartum period—could have important and previously uncalculated benefits for families.”

(Petra Persson and Maya Rossin-Slater, “When Dad Can Stay Home: Fathers’ Workplace Flexibility and Maternal Health,” NBER Working Paper 25902 [2019], available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w25902>.)

BMI and Relationship Transitions in Germany

It is commonly known (though not as well researched) that individuals tend to gain weight once they are in a committed relationship. The guard against gaining those extra pounds is let down a bit, once finding a mate is no longer a high priority. Now, researchers out of Germany attempt to study exactly how, when, and how much weight gain occurs upon entry into and exit from both cohabiting and married relationships.

The researchers open by explaining the reasons for their inquiry. “Most empirical studies,” they write, “on the relation between marital transitions and BMI support the marriage market hypothesis,” which suggests that “individuals who are no longer on the marriage market, and thus no longer concerned with attracting a mate, gain weight.” Findings for weight gain after divorce or cohabitation dissolution are mixed. Why might individuals either gain or lose weight upon relationship transitions? The researchers posit that negative-protection behaviors such as regular and more frequent meals, as well as more calorie consumption at meals shared with others, may be to blame for weight gain after marriage or the beginning of cohabitation. Likewise, a marriage-protection hypothesis would suggest that marriage (or cohabitation) helps couples keep at a healthy weight because they can encourage each other to eat well and exercise, and also cook together, which is a healthier alternative to fast food or other convenient options. This study aims to discover whether either of these hypotheses is supported.

The data comes from the German Socio-Economic Panel, “an ongoing, nationally representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany initiated in 1984 with several refreshment samples thereafter.”

The final sample size was 20,950 individuals with 81,926 observations. The measurements were: body weight and height, duration of cohabitation or marriage/time since separation or divorce, weight-related behaviors (exercise, healthy eating, and smoking), and also control variables (pregnancy, recent birth, having children, employment status, perceived stress, and subjective health).

And indeed, the effects of both marriage and cohabitation upon weight gain were significant. The researchers report that only three percent of all observations “did not report any change in BMI after any relationship transition.” Indeed, “[i]n both men and women, body weight was higher for cohabiting and married respondents than for those without a partner.” Contrary to the researchers’ expectations, however, cohabitation proved much more deleterious to weight gain than marriage. They summarize, “These results are largely consistent with the marriage market hypothesis: Transitions into cohabitation and marriage were followed by weight gain. However, the weight gain after four or more years of cohabitation was much larger—in fact, double the size—of that occurring after four or more years of marriage.”

Also interesting is the influence that relationship exits had on participants’ BMIs. The researchers find, “Partly consistent with the marriage market hypothesis and its implication that people lose weight again after separation or divorce, respondents who separated generally showed BMIs similar to those they had when living alone.” But, they continued, “the present findings showed weight gain in the wake of divorce. In fact, men gained more weight after their divorce than during their first marriage.”

In the discussion section of their analysis, the researchers note that various controls, such as exercising, healthy eating, and smoking behavior, “did not account for changes in BMI after relationship transitions. Thus, the present findings contradict both the respective hypotheses formulated here and previous findings indicating that weight-related behaviors change after cohabitation or marriage. . . ; they do not support either the negative protection hypothesis or the marriage protection hypothesis.” The researchers suspect that their study set-up did not allow them to adequately measure these variables, however, and note that other studies have shown different results.

In closing, the researchers note that 1) cohabitation has a stronger

effect on BMI than does marriage, and 2) that effect is longer-term. Their findings, they remark, are important for a number of reasons, among which is the increase in relative mortality risk caused by relationship transitions. “Summing up the observed relationship effects on BMI from four years each of cohabitation, marriage, separation, and divorce . . . reveals that men and women gained around 2.3 and 1.4 kg/m²”—an increase that “would increase [men’s] all-cause mortality risk by up to about 13%.”

The researchers suggest that closer attention be paid to the effect that such transitions have upon BMI, as neither marriage nor cohabitation are unqualifiedly good for BMI, and “today’s population levels of obesity do not afford the luxury of ignoring any contributing factor.”

(Jutta Mata et al., “How cohabitation, marriage, separation and divorce influence BMI: A prospective panel study,” SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research, No. 973 [2018]: 10.1037/hea000654.)