The Natural Family

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The Natural Family

"Home" in Crisis and Renewal: An Introduction

Allan C. Carlson

During the 1990's, dozens of academic conferences and hefty volumes of analysis appeared on the problem of "the home," a focus that continues to our day. Driving this analysis has been the wave of feminist scholars, for whom the home has served as "the crucible of gender domination." Expected phrases such as "patriarchal capitalism" and "masculinist oppression" have been summoned to explain this supposed crisis in basic human social relationships.[1]

Yet, beneath the ideological verbiage, real issues appeared. One team of researchers, for example, identified a mounting conflict between the role of wife and mother in the home versus the need for two outside jobs to pay for a mortgage.[2] Others noted the simultaneous occurrence of the triumph of the owner-occupied home and the "breakdown of family life." In Great Britain, for example, the proportion of houses that were owner-occupied rose from 29% in 1951 to 65% in 1989. During those same years, though, both the birth and marriage rates fell to new lows, while

1. For a survey of this attention, see: Shelley Mallett, "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature," *The Sociological Review* 52 (February 2004), 62-89.

2. Ruth Madigan, Moira Munro, and Susan J. Smith, "Gender and the Meaning of Home," *International Journal of Urban and International Research* 14.4 (1990), 634.

divorce and out-of-wedlock-birth rates soared.[3] Such contradictions did, and do, imply a fracturing of the once clear and primal bond between the child-centered marriage and the home. What is going on?

Some Early Definitions

Let us start with the Old German and English linguistic origins of the word, "home." One reference, from southeastern Sweden a thousand years ago, focuses on home as a place of sanctuary: "you may not arrest a killer at his home." More positive definitions of *heimen* (Middle German), *ham* (Old English), and *heimr* (Old Scandinavian) included "village," "dwelling," "one's farm," "peace for every man," "love," "beloved," "marry," "bring to bed," "to have sexual intercourse," "to lie down," and "to return." Still another encompassed all of these acts and sentiments: "where things are as they should be." *Hus* from Old English alluded to the place where goods could be safely stored, or husbanded: the source of *hus*-band, the man bound to family and house through ownership. Following another linguistic line, the Latin *domus* linked the symbolic power of "domain" to the necessary "domestic" handicrafts and the nurturance of "domestication." *Home* embraced safe territory, material shelter, sustenance, and a setting for family life, especially the presence of children.[4] *Home* also stood as an expression of identity, "after the body itself . . . as the most powerful extension of the psyche."[5]

In Anglo-American law, this understanding found lasting expression in the words of the 17th-century judge, Sir Edward Coke. As he wrote, "The house of everyman is to him as his castle and fortress, as well as his defense against injury and violence, as for his repose." This was simplified in the 19th century as "The Englishman's house is his castle." This was

3. Graham Crow, "The Post-War Development of the Modern Domestic Ideal," in Graham Allan and Graham Crow, eds., *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere* (London: MacMillan, 1989), 21, 27; and Sophie Bowlby, Susan Gregory, and Linda McKie, "'Doing Home': Patriarchy, Caring, and Space," *Women's Studies International Forum* 20.3 (1997), 344.

4. Stefan Brink, "Home: The Term and the Concept from a Linguistic and Settlement Historical Viewpoint," in David N. Benjamin, ed., *The Home: Words, Interpretation, Meanings, and Environments* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1995), 17-22; and Gwendolyn Wright, "Prescribing the Model Home," *Social Research* 58 (Spring 1991), 215.

5. Lorna Fox, "The Meaning of Home: A Chimerical Concept or a Legal Challenge," *Journal of Law and Society* 29 (December 2002), 589-90, 600.

popularly understood to describe *home* as comprising both the living structure and the surrounding land.[6]

Such a vision of the good home reached an apogee, of sorts, in mid-19th century America. According to historian Maxine Van De Wetering, Americans of that era understood that the successful home gave to children and adults alike faith in the trustworthiness of the world. It offered an image of a Great Provider, a stronghold of stable organization, "an endowment of consistent nurture," and a confidence in the future. More specifically, the productive home on the land was "the place of great earthly plenty." Inside, there was "the overflowing table"; outside, "the productive garden, the busy barnyard, and the bountiful field." As she summarizes, "It is a picture of orderly bounty, the riches provided by the good earth and a good, human cultivator. The mark of the homemaker is here. And with it is the mark of the homemaker's success, bounty." Such a focus on "the ordered provender" also embraced the many skills of home handiwork and self-sufficient labor found among men and women alike.[7]

This was more than just an ideal. Nineteenth-century Americans saw the self-sufficient *home* "as springing from the wells of permanent, innate human nature itself," resting in turn on God's very design of Creation.[8] Remarkably, the same understanding and sentiment would extend into the 20th century, to be found even in dry government reports. For example, the British government's 1971 "White Paper," entitled *Fair Deal for Housing*, labelled the owner-occupied home as not only "normal," but "natural." Such a home, it declared, "satisfies a deep and natural desire on the part of the householder to have independent control of the house that shelters him and his family."[9]

New Threats

By then, however, this understanding of home—at once, both ancient and modern—was actually unraveling. The process had begun decades

6. Mallett, "Understanding Home," 65.

7. Maxine Van De Wetering, "The Popular Concept of 'Home' in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American Studies* 18 (April 1984), 6, 26, 28.

8. *Ibid*., 17.

9. Cited in Crow, "The Post-War Development of the Modern Domestic Ideal," 26.

before, as the Industrial Revolution tore through human society. The rapid rise of factories and offices rested on one central change: the separation of productive labor from home. No longer would the family-scale farm or the artisan's shop meaningfully engage in production-for-use. Adults, and even children, would leave their homes to earn wages that would buy from corporations the food, clothing, and other items which the family had only recently produced for itself. According to economic historian Karl Polanyi, this single change alone represents "the Great Transformation" in human history.[10]

The idea-system behind this revolution was not capitalism, *per se*. Rather, the ideology driving the industrialization of human life was liberalism which, in the end, demanded the liberation of the individual from the bonds of family and *home.* Feminism was a specialized version of the liberal impulse, focused especially on destroying the status, skills, and joys of the woman making a home. The architects of industry applauded, for the bounteous, self-sufficient home was their primary target, or foe.

During the latter half of the 19th century, well-meaning figures such as Sarah B. Hale, Lydia Sigourney, and Catharine Beecher sought to restyle the home as an almost functionless "retreat from the world," with women entering a somewhat ethereal "separate sphere." These late Victorian homes would, astonishingly, even turn over their children to professionals running state schools on an industrial model.[11] However, feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman identified early on the moral and material weakness of homes restricted merely to cooking, cleaning, and early childcare. These functions could, and would, be industrialized as well through "fast food" outlets, mobile professional cleaners, and child-care centers.[12]

This campaign to eliminate the productive home usually advanced indirectly, increasingly through clever advertising. Sometimes, though, its advocates could be astonishingly blunt. In 1929, for example,

10. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1944).

11. Tamara Hareven, "The Home and Family in Historical Perspective," *Social Research* 58 (Spring 1991), 262-3.

12. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics*, ed. Carl N. Degler (New York: Harper and Row, 1966 [1898]): 225-317.

"household economist" Benjamin Andrews ridiculed the old homemaking skills, while praising the new "home woman" as a "purchasing agent" of industrially produced goods. He continued: "The world in which the typical family lives is the world built for it by the woman who spends."[13] The same year, the highly paid "home economist" Christine Frederick proudly reported that the modern housewife "is no longer a cook; she is a can opener." Remarkably, Frederick openly pushed the industrialists who employed her to do still more to crush any lingering domestic or home skills: "I affirm that the manufacturer's real success is measured by the degree of thoroughness with which the . . . [female] operator of the appliance has been able to adapt herself to a transformation from a hand and craft technique over into a machine process."[14] Even the parent-child bond was corrupted, as the corporate order invented "the consuming child." Advertisers, eventually working with broadcasters, successfully labored to transform the parent from guardian and teacher into "simply a purchasing agent for the child."[15]

In the mid-20th century, American home builders enthusiastically embraced their own "industrial revolution,"[16] which mandated sweeping changes in housing design. As one official industry commentary stressed, "the family was no longer the basic economic as well as the social unit." This meant that "there was no longer" any need "for attics, sheds, storage cellars, work rooms, storage rooms, etc." Given easy access to industrially processed food, there was also little need for pantries and larger kitchens. Virtually the whole of family life had been commodified. As historian Tamara Hareven summarizes, the home "became an institution of industrial capitalism." In place of family autonomy and continuity, the "individualization" of each family member became the goal.[17] All that the modern "companionate family" needed now were houses featuring "open

13. Benjamin A. Andrews, "The Home Woman as Buyer and Controller of Consumption," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 143 (May 1929), 41.

14. Christine Frederick, *Selling Mrs. Consumer* (New York: The Business Course, 1929), 181.

15. Philippa Goodall, "Design and Gender: Where Is the Heart of the Home?" *Built Environment* 16.4 (1990), 275; and S.M. Dworetz, "Before the Age of Reason: Liberalism and the Media Socialization of Children," *Social Theory and Practice* 13 (1987), 187-218.

16. "Cornerstone for a New Magazine," *House and Home* 1 (January 1952), 107.

17. Hareven, "The Home and Family in Historical Perspective," 264-5.

plans with flexible spaces that could be adapted to the family's more informal lifestyle."[18] Empty of real functions, the productive home would die.

Fight the Good Fight

Fortunately, though, there has always been an opposition. Working-class families, for example, might adopt some commercialized forms of home designs and furnishings while continuing to employ household space in more complex and diversified ways. The blue collar home was not only a private refuge for those absorbed by the capitalist order, but also "a resource that could be used for generating extra income, for paying debts, for staying out of poverty, and for maintaining autonomy in old age."[19] More notably, the rural home survived as a productive sphere. Public entities such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture fell under control of the industrialists and pushed and bribed farm families to join the "modern economy." Like everyone else, they should abandon vegetable gardens and chicken coops and buy their food at the supermarket. Farm wives should abandon the dozens of productive skills learned from their ancestors and become "club women," just as in the cities. Many refused, and the farm home continued to be a place for production in both agriculture and the "home industries."

Actually, the recent attention given to the crisis of the home has wound up affirming old truths. Housing economists, for example, have shown that liberal individualization is an ideologically driven myth. The household, rather than the sole person, is still the "basic economic unit" where the true relationships of production and consumption can be analyzed and understood.[20] Even feminist-inspired research commonly ends up reporting that *home* and *family* are "almost interchangeable," a "birth-family dwelling" where "children are nurtured and reared

18. Gertrude Sipperly Fish, ed., *The Story of Housing*, sponsored by the Federal National Mortgage Association (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 476-8.

19. Hareven, "The Home and Family in Historical Perspective," 273-4.

20. P. Saunders and P. Williams, "The Constitution of the Home: Toward a Research Agenda," *Housing Studies* 3.2 (1988), 81-93.

and finally depart when they come of age."[21] Meanwhile, the "gendered" structure of the home, distinguished by *male* and *female* tasks, has found affirmation in unusual places. As sociologist Sarah Oerton reported in her study "Queer Housewives," lesbians "do not seem to fare much better than heterosexual couples in their attempts to divide domestic tasks . . . equitably."[22] The natural imperatives of *home* still in a way have won out.

Moreover, the new researchers kept discovering a stubborn persistence of home-based work, among women and men alike. Among the former, it commonly involved sewing, laundering, cooking, child minding, quilting, basket making, and clerical tasks.[23] Among men, self-employed tradesmen and professionals also routinely engaged in paid work from home. So-called "telecommuters" were also experimenting with new forms of office communication made possible by the home computer and internet. Such homeworkers often identified a desire to be "a more integral part of home and family life" as their primary motivation. They commonly redesigned their homes to create distinct work rooms in a converted garage, an extra bedroom, or even in a backyard shed.[24]

Remarkably, the year 2020 revealed such homeworkers to be, not a struggling remnant, but the leaders of a workplace revolution. Restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 virus transformed an estimated two billion persons into homeworkers, most for over a year. A frantic search for productive workspace in dwellings once deliberately denuded of them saw the return of 21st century equivalents of family workshops and sewing rooms. Meanwhile, a related surge in home gardening and home cooking stimulated demand for pantries and large kitchens. To the consternation of industrialists, homeworking employees found pleasure in a new freedom from the commute and a reintegration

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21. See: Mallett, "Understanding Home," 73-4.

22. Sarah Oerton, "'Queer Housewives?': Some Problems in Theorising the Division of Domestic Labor in Lesbian and Gay Households," *Women's Studies International Forum* 20.3 (1997), 423.

23. See, as example: Ann M. Oberhauser, "The Home as 'Field': Households and Homework in Rural Appalachia," in John Paul Jones III, Heidi J. Nast, and Susan M. Roberts, eds., *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, Representation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 178-80.

24. Marjorie Bulos and Waheed Chaker, "Sustaining a Sense of Home and Personal Identity," in Benjamin, *The Home*, 227-35.

of work and family. While the post-COVID order has witnessed some return of the old ways, this partial undoing of the industrial revolution seems to have a lasting legacy.

Also driving counterrevolutionary change has been the surprising surge in homeschooling, now an international phenomenon. There are powerful moral and practical arguments for the return of the education function to the home, especially in the superior learning results found among the children so involved. From the family perspective, the primary consequence of homeschooling has been to re-energize the home as a functional and autonomous unit, operating as designed to be the center of life-giving social order and communitarian health.

In these ways, and in our time, *home* now finds an unexpected renewal.

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A Mother's Home Is Her Castle: In Favor of Homemakers

Rafael Hurtado

Second-wave feminism, which expanded rapidly in the late 1960's, declared open war against the family home and its traditional values. In the traditional home, the husband-father was the primary breadwinner and protector of the household, while the housewife-mother was the primary homemaker and caregiver of their children. Together, in a marriage, they were considered the foundational economic unit of society, one based on sex differences and intergenerational responsibilities. Alternatively, what later became known as radical feminism (espoused by Betty Friedan, and honoring Charlotte P. Gilman and Simone de Beauvoir) played a determinant role in the diminishing of the image of the mother as a homemaker who decided to put aside a professional career. The feminist juggernaut struck the family nucleus first, while the new image of the "liberal woman" was promoted. This woman would not prioritize husband and children over career, but put in the center of her aspirations the emerging professions in the new labor market.

In order to accomplish such goals, feminists concluded that the traditional family structure would have to change. The homemaking mother must be freed from domesticity. The key to feminist success lies in the notion that the homemaker should see herself as a parasite, a vestige of the patriarchal era who would spend her days doing infantile activities, as Hanna Arendt stated.[1] This thesis was validated by many intellectu-

1. "La labor no permite el desarrollo de la individualidad ni la realización personal a través de la

als, who labelled the family home a "comfortable concentration camp."[2] Massive cultural changes—including the sexual revolution—derived from such radical criticism, and the industrialized societies in the West were the first to embrace this new liberal ideology. A new social norm arose in which men and women would share their responsibilities in the family home and society alike according to a 50-50 standard.

More recently, third-wave feminism is often seen as a more diverse movement, more compatible with pro-life and pro-motherhood views. Among these new discourses, "work-family balance" studies have been promoted as both pro-family and pro-domesticity. The primary aim of this field is to develop a new *culture of choice*, where both husband-fathers and housewife-mothers can freely enter the workforce according to their own ambitions and needs. "Work-family balance" favors diversity, equality, progress, freedom, and domestic participation of men and children. Family policy, accordingly, should support benefits to women and mothers who decide to work outside the home. These trends, though understandable from a modern-liberal rationality, neglect the possibility that some mothers still freely decide to stay at home and become the primary homemakers and caregivers of their children. The purpose of this paper is to briefly explore these social trends, which are rooted in classic liberal authors, and to identify the anti-homemaking-mother discourse and confront it with a more Christian understanding of the concepts of marriage, family, and most of all the family home.

participación política. Por eso en el mundo clásico, se condenaba a los esclavos y a las mujeres a realizar las actividades necesarias para el sostenimiento de la vida, a fin de liberar a un puñado de ciudadanos (principalmente varones) para ejercer la ansiada libertad a través de las grandes acciones políticas"; F. Galindo & R. Hurtado, "El secreto de Andrómaca: la esclavitud de las labores domésticas en *La Condición Humana* de Hannah Arendt," in *Revista Empresa y Humanismo* 23.2 (2020), 50.

2. "The comfortable concentration camp that American women have walked into, or have been talked into by others, is just such a reality, a frame of reference that denies woman's adult human identity. By adjusting to it, a woman stunts her intelligence to become childlike, turns away from individual identity to become an anonymous biological robot in a docile mass. She becomes less than human, preyed upon by outside pressures, and herself preying upon her husband and children. And the longer she conforms, the less she feels as if she really exists. She looks for her security in things, she hides the fear of losing her human potency by testing her sexual potency, she lives a vicarious life through mass daydreams or through her husband and children." From Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 2001): 328.

Making a Stand for Motherhood and Domesticity: Losing the Battle?

The ancient Greeks introduced the formal study of economy (οἰκονομία, οἶκος: "household"; νέμομαι: "manage") to humankind. According to their wisdom, the concept of economy began with the bond between husband and housewife in matrimony, with the purpose of living under the same roof. Their spirit would expand through their children, their progeny and extended kin and, eventually, toward the well-being of the community and society at large. In other words, they understood that a good economy is rooted in marriage and settles in the family home: a place where humans learn how to make and use things, while yearning for the classic *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία: to live a virtuous, flourishing, happy life). Needless to say, one cannot accomplish the latter without the proper balance between work, leisure, and rest. One must live according to virtue (ἀρετή: "excellence").

Aristotle emphasized the importance of "use value" for those objects (and traditions) made within the family home. It was a communal duty to share or exchange those goods with other households. One cannot deny that a high degree of domestic self-sufficiency must be accomplished in order to enjoy this kind of domestic settlement. For this reason, Aristotle also emphasized the just limits to the acquisition of such goods, especially property. He encouraged a social order that rests in a strong middle class, composed of autonomous family homes that in time would become experts in agribusiness, horticulture, but most of all in childbearing. These family homes would in time become the seedbed for civic virtue, order, equality, and liberty.

The liberal-capitalist revolution that took place over the last two centuries enforced its own vision of a "brave new world," however. It began by trampling the vision of a natural domestic economy, resting on an exaggerated division of labor, in light of the thought of the British economist Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Liberal capitalists replaced the notion of a mere domestic economy with a flood of consumer goods that largely eliminated family autonomy, favoring instead a new individualism that would praise a maximum economic efficiency for the masses. This new political-economic rationality undermined a middle-class order, always tending toward the extremes of great wealth, vast property for the few, and a new form of servility for the property-less

many. In time, this model would be severely attacked by the German philosopher Karl Marx in his book *Das Capital* (1867). Marx's thesis was simple: modern history can be summarized as the struggle that takes place between the classes for increasing both wealth and property by means of industrialized production. If this struggle were to be perpetuated, Marx thought, radical economic differences would interfere with the equality that would supposedly bring true freedom to everyone, especially the less fortunate.

Marx's colleague and benefactor Friedrich Engels analyzed the family home through the Marxist optic. In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), Engels transferred his "dialectical materialism" to the relationship between husband and housewife. In its most radical proposition, a new stand for absolute equality between the sexes in both the private and public realms started to brew. In the writings of the English philosopher John Stuart Mill, particularly *The Subjection of Women* (1969), a proto-feminist imperative became the novelty of the 20th century and beyond.

Several feminists of the 1950s dedicated themselves to this life-changing quest. Perhaps the most prominent of them all was Simone de Beauvoir, author most famously of *The Second Sex* (1949). De Beauvoir categorically stated that a society governed by men had constructed a chimera that she herself calls the "eunuch," but that the whole world calls "woman."[3] This idea gave birth, over time, to what is now called radical feminism, and more recently to gender studies (under Judith Butler´s leadership). Both stand for the differentiation between sex (what is naturally given) and gender (what is culturally constructed).

In the middle of this drama, there was another key figure of second-wave feminism, and that was the American writer Betty Friedan. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Friedan criticized the previous feminisms for not achieving a broader liberation for women. Though many battles had been won in the fields of politics and education, the role of mother and housewife, or homemaker, was still standing between the new liberal

3. Simone De Beauvoir, *Le Deuxieme Sexe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949): 13.

woman and the old patriarchal rag.[4] Friedan sought to liberate woman from the home, so she might find "self-fulfillment."

In this overview of our current cultural wars in terms of marriage and family, domestic and political economy, sex and gender, the image of the classic battle between Hercules and Hydra comes to mind: swords, claws, and teeth are meeting in battle; heads are severed, but new ones keep growing and growing. Analogically, it appears that the more we fight for marriage, family, children, and the home, the more new ideologies keep springing up to bite us. At the beginning of the 21st century, is making a stand for the family home[5] a lost cause?

Sublime Lighted House: About the Home

There exists a certain ambiguity in our current public and political discourse when one reflects on the natural differences between the man as a husband-father and the woman as a housewife-mother. At most, one can see a few hints in favor of the complementary that both should equally share in order to face the responsibilities that come along with procreation, child upbringing, and professional life in both the domestic and public realms.[6] What is becoming unpopular, nevertheless, is to wonder about what the Greek philosophers meant by the term *oeconomia*. A time when husbands risked their lives to obtain the appropriate materials, hunt edible animals, manufacture the right tools and processes to build and protect the human house, has become nothing more than a whisper. What to say about the housewives, the ones who gave their lives in childbirth, who were able to turn those materials, game animals, tools, and processes into a true family home, full of life, a "sublime lighted house," in the words of the Spanish poet Luis Rosales? "Man and woman he created them" (Genesis 1:27) "to become One Flesh" (Genesis 2:24), to "be

4. For a more systematic coverage of feminist and gender studies, see the German sociologist Gabriele Kuby in her paramount work *The Global Sexual Revolution* (2012), or the Argentine thinkers Nicolás Márquez and Agustín Laje in their controversial book *El Libro Negro de la Nueva Izquierda* (2016). A contrasting approach to analyze Betty Friendan's criticism of the homemaker can be found in Carolyn Graglia's *Domestic Tranquility: a Brief Against Feminism* (1998).

5. *Cf.* R. Hurtado and F. Galindo, *A Stand for the Home* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2019).

6. *Cf.* A. Masuda, N. Chinchilla, and M. Las Heras, eds. *Balancing Work and Family: No Matter Where You Are* (Massachusetts: HRD Press, 2010).

fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). What happened to that place where human beings show their innate vulnerability, share their mutual dependency, in order to pursue true autonomy in this world?[7]

There is no sense in drowning oneself in nostalgia. Nevertheless, the time has come to face reality: the family home has changed in such a way that it is difficult to fully grasp where it is headed. As Jutta Burgraff (1952-2010) stated: "Our world would be a better place when both men and women display 'harmoniously' their own masculinity and femininity."[8] From this perspective, there are those who affirm that the task of rebuilding this world should be placed in women's able hands[9], given to their "great genius," as Saint John Paul II stated many times.[10] The Polish Pope and Saint is correct in his assertion.

Surprisingly enough, Saint John Paul II's recommendation is strongly supported by contemporary feminism (both radical and moderate). Even Pope Francis has brought new light to the topic in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetita* (2016): "If certain forms of feminism have arisen which we must consider inadequate, we must nonetheless see in the women's movement the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women."[11] From this perspective, a better understanding of the true meaning of femininity in correlation to the life of real women—all women—is most needed. Is there anything specific about being feminine?

We may not find a short answer to such a radical question, but one can say, as Rafael Alvira has, that we miss the feminine dearly:

> It seems to me that our main problem today has nothing to do with atomic bombs, unemployment, or drugs. In my opinion, the most serious thing that is happening to us is the progressive diminishment of what is specifically (also traditionally) feminine, in a situation that

7. A. Marcos & M. Bertolaso, "What is a home? On the intrinsic nature of a home," in A. Argandoña, ed., *The Home. Multidisciplinary Reflections* (London: Elgar, 2018): 35-56.

8. J. Burggraf, "Género [gender]," in *Lexicón* (Madrid: Palabra, 2004): 517.

9. I. Sánchez, *Mujeres Brújula en un Bosque de Retos* (Barcelona: Espasa, 2020).

10. Saint John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem,* 1988.

11. Francis, *Amoris Laetita*, 2016, n. 54.

is shaped—as Modernity itself—by the masculine cravings for power.[12]

This is a bold claim, one that dares to suggest that women's strongest contribution to rebuilding a culture could be the family home, the everlasting place for all that is feminine (but not exclusively so). Both Marx and Engels, as well as Mill and De Beauvoir, must be rolling in their graves for such a statement. (Friedan adjusted her initial thesis in her 1981 book, *The Second Stage*.) Everything that takes place in the family home has become suspicious in the eye of postmodernism. The reason for this is simple: the family home is "the place to come back to" ; it is the space where we make our stand to live in a particular time, with people who share our identity.

Truly, the family home plays a crucial role as the singular "space" where the basic relationships between human beings first take root. The conjugal love between man and woman becomes the life of newborns. As Julián Marías puts it: "I-man, I am towards a woman . . . I-woman, I am towards a man. The reference to the woman is inherent in me, and the reference to the man is inherent in her." When these two confront—conjugally—the many faces of contingency and catastrophe, the human lineage has grown and perpetuated their existence. Perhaps this is the main reason why, according to Rodney Stark, many cultures have identified marriage as not just a civil institution, but one also accompanied by both ritual and religious meanings, standing for the everlasting, the eternal, and the divine. Marriage is a true anarchist stronghold; it has existed, in essence, prior to any modern material or social construction of every age, whether churches, cities, even democracies. This is true for periods of hardship and scarcity, and in times of persecution, and social and moral decline. Now in pandemic times, perhaps more than ever in human history, each family home has to become what it already is: a practical and heroic affirmation of life itself; a place where the human spirit can comfortably linger; a Chestertonian act of rebellion against all contemporary ideological and social attempts to end it.

12. R. Alvira, *Filosofía de la Vida Cotidiana* (Madrid: Rialp, 2001): 19.

What God Has Joined: About Motherhood.

The family home also safeguards the intimate language of sexual love and its immeasurable power to procreate, that is, to bring children to life and to educate them. Truly, the conjugal bond thrives in a domestic environment that treasures the prevailing principles of human upbringing. This is a challenging task, no doubt, because every new child that is brought into existence comes with an exclusive responsibility, unique and unpredictable. Married life, therefore, must safeguard this radical power that is exclusive to its essence. Men and women, entrusted by the Creator with a shared dignity, become bearers of exclusive gifts, intrinsic to their masculine and feminine natures. They are different in the way they exercise these qualities, but complementary in their union. They are an entity that exceeds the mere sum of its parts. At the same time, married life also establishes the foundations for building other relationships of economic, social, and political nature, given its contractual dimension—a bond between a husband and a housewife who agree to give themselves to each other as a gift, pledging to care for their relationship, and accompanied with a singular responsible openness to the new lives that may come from their union.

For this purpose, the founding conjugal bond must be guaranteed at all cost. Otherwise, the efforts of husbands and housewives to formally become *una caro* (one flesh) become economically and politically worthless. Marriage as "free association" (legal or not) based on sentiment or convenience (asexual or not) might be understood from a mere legal framework. However, in such associations, the individuals tend to reserve their resources and future expectations in case their relationship (and the responsibilities involved) do not fully consolidate. Therefore, our contemporary society must be reminded of the promise that marital indissolubility entails in itself. Indissolubility becomes a solid motivator to develop logical criteria for objective negotiations in the face of expected failures, radical differences, or habitual contingencies that may appear between couples in the course of married life. Experience confirms that unfulfilled promises in this area operate like a fissure that suddenly appears in the foundations of a large building, expanding over time

to the point of collapsing the entire construction. [13]

At the same time, married life entails the establishment of a second bond: the filial relationship between the married couple and their offspring. The institution of marriage holds the honor of bringing two families together in a promise that becomes the life of grandchildren, praising and perpetuating kinship in time and space. More broadly, it also embodies the ordinary solution to the common problem of dependency between man and women, the young and mature. Each *communio personarum*—as Saint John Paul II explains[14]—must assume the economic, educational, and intimate challenges implicated in the care for the infant, the needy, the convalescent. Who will manage the goods obtained from productive labor among those who are unable to care for themselves? In the natural order of things, this effort has been entrusted to the immense network of kinship relationships, clearly exalted in the phrase that every marriage vows before God and the community, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health."

In pronouncing this vow, the paternal and maternal functions (sometimes known as "roles") are called to stage, with the purpose of educating, healing, and protecting their own children, so that they too aspire to care and nurture their own families one day. This journey would be impossible without the irreplaceable support, wisdom, and love of their elders. Altogether, whether called "natural" or "traditional," the matrimonial family, settled in a home, has one primary purpose: to procreate and educate children who freely aspire to become parents themselves.[15] To accept these functions, entrusted from generation to generation, means to see each child as a cultural vase to be filled with the love of his parents, grandparents, uncles, cousins, and friends, who aims to expand such familiar love to the broader tribe and, hopefully, to the next generations.

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13. *Cf.* K. Andrews, *Maybe 'I do'. Modern marriage & the pursuit of happiness* (Australia: Connor Court, 2012): Ch. 1.

14. "Marido y mujer, en esa etapa de crecimiento en humanidad, como personas adultas, capaces de transmitir la vida; la busca también el hijo que de ella recibe la vida, insertándose como hombre entre sus padres, desde el primer instante de su concepción." K. Wojtyla, "La familia como *communio personarum.* Ensayo de interpretación teológica," in J.M. Burgos, ed., *El Don del Amor* (Madrid: Palabra, 2003): 227-69.

15. J.J. Pérez-Soba, "El misterio del amor según Karol Wojtyla," in J.M. Burgos, ed., *La Filosofía Personalista de Karol Wojtyla* (Madrid: Palabra, 2007): 85-86.

This cultural chain should stand strong to teach children the responsibility to be assumed when the time comes for them to bear children.

Finally, married life also establishes a third bond: between family homes and the context of the broader community they inhabit. As stated before, the procreative power entrusted to the matrimonial family becomes the promise of a new member for every society. Parents need to be reminded of how important their contribution is, as fathers and mothers, to the happiness of their children. The temptation to coldly entrust the education of our children to institutional care must be called into question. Why? Being a son implies acquiring enough maturity to become a responsible parent, a husband, who yearns above all else to work hard (professionally if needed) to make a living for his own family and the immediate surroundings. It would be predictable that children raised like this will grow up healthy, intelligent (not just academically), hard-working and, above all else, honest, open to cooperation, anywhere and anytime. They will also acquire practical knowledge and skills with a strong sense of community, being less prone to violence, abuse, and self-destructive behaviours.

In sum, each marriage stands for the renewal of its own community through the promise of procreation and the subsequent humanization of the new members of society. For this reason, every healthy society that aspires to remain such must invest enough time and resources to celebrate each "passing ceremony"(baptisms, first communions, weddings, for example) according to age and sex, at each stage of the infant's maturity. In the Christian tradition, marriage itself is a sacrament: a clear symbol of the need to maintain the unity of the community, through the grace of God.[16]

Conclusion

The image of the husband-father and the housewife-mother who pledge eternal love to each other, in the presence of God and the rest of humanity, who establish a family home of their own, represents the cultural last stand for true unity and diversity, freedom and equality, love and

16. *Cf.* K. Wojtyla, "La propedéutica del sacramento del matrimonio" in J.M. Burgos, ed., *El Don del Amor* (Madrid: Palabra, 2003): 101-27.

responsibility. Beginning in the family home, this pair of "true adventurers" (in the words of Charles Péguy)[17] are daring to transform the world from the inside out through simple acts of kindness and love, normal parts of their daily life. Their children are the first witnesses of the creative strength of their bond (marital, procreative, communal), as well as its clear interdependence with the rest of society. However, if the bond is weakened by their failures, or becomes politicized and subordinated to ideologies that declare themselves contrary to its nature, social pathologies—violence, avarice, promiscuity—become the norm.[18] This is how the State claims its "right" to become, in practice, the new patriarch, with democracy its religion. This is an emergent disorder that appears ready to expand its control even further, in Orwellian ways, as we are clearly seeing in our current pandemic crisis in places like Spain, Australia, and, sadly enough, Mexico.

Meanwhile, one must accept that the family home cannot be erected automatically, by accident, or by the good deeds of the Smithian "invisible hand." Up until very recent times, most people enjoyed the privilege of having "a place to come back to," thanks to the tireless efforts of husband fathers, but mostly to the self-giving care of homemaking mothers. They both made a true stand for the home, and for everything that is worth living. The essence of a matrimonial family necessarily implies knowing how to nurture the particular space it inhabits. If a family inhabits a home, that means they have to own it, cultivate it. At the same time, that also means that they, as a family, become "inhabited" by every experience—good or bad—that takes place there. In this regard, every homemaking mother has had the lead over husband fathers for one simple reason: *a mother is a living home.* If one embraces biblical wisdom, the woman is truly "the mother of the living" (Genesis 3:20). Analogically, we can also say that the mother is the *home of the living*. The womb is

17. "There is only one adventurer in the world, as can be seen very clearly in the modern world, the father of a family. Even the most desperate adventurers are nothing compared with him. Everything in the modern world, even and perhaps most of all contempt, is organized against that fool, that imprudent, daring fool." C. Péguy, "Clio I," in *Temporal and Eternal* (London: The Harvill Press, 1932): 108.

18. *Cf.* K. Andrews and R. Hurtado, "Pitirim Sorokin on Marriage, Family and Culture," in *The Chesterton Review* 46.1-2 (2020), 127-39.

our first home, where every living person made his/her first stand to live, starting with childbirth and moving forward. The family home is no different. Being back home is, or should be, like being back in our mother's womb (and in our father's heart). As Julián Marías says, "being a woman consists of self-retreating—not very acceptable nowadays—in order to open up to reality in a welcoming-hospitable way: from the child that is housed inside her body to the outside world transformed through her sensibility into a 'home.'"[19]

The feminine wisdom inherent in homemaking implies the receptivity that is needed to accept reality in its fullness, ours and that of others. Marías identifies this dynamic as knowing how to install oneself in a specific way within the world of human beings, particularly in the world of men.[20] However, men have not yet managed to install themselves in the world of women or, in the words of Alice von Hildebrand, in the authentic privilege of being a woman. This is a divine and eternal privilege that men can only aspire to grasp from the outside, through her, since the woman is really touched by God at the moment of conception, at the moment of becoming a mother. She also has the privilege of touching her husband and children in her own intimate space, both physical and metaphysical.[21]

I believe the time has come for this feminine privilege to be brought to the public plaza again, in conjunction with new interdisciplinary research such as Antonio Argandoña's recently edited work, *The Home: Multidisciplinary Reflections* (2018), and Argandoña's and Mohamed G. Adbelmonem's *People, Care and The Work in the Home* (2020). Only then will we be able to honor Saint John Paul II's brilliant message from his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1918) in relation to women's role in society:

> The true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and all other professions. Furthermore, these

19. J. Marías, *La mujer del siglo XX* (Madrid: Alianza, 1980), 170.

20. *Cf.* Marías, *La mujer del siglo XX*, 172.

21. *Cf.* Alice Von Hildebrand, *El privilegio de ser mujer* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2019): Ch. 1.

> roles and professions should be harmoniously combined if we wish the evolution of society and culture to be truly and fully human.[22]

The "world" built by women, the family home, should be considered of the highest value, worthy of being set as the maximum parameter of economic, social, and cultural restoration. Renouncing it, as Marías affirms, implies to accept, implicitly, that the world built by men is essentially superior—a true falsehood.[23]

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22. Saint John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, n. 23.

23. *Cf.* Marías, 175.

24. Rafael Hurtado, "A Mother is a Living Home. Making a Stand for Domesticity," *Familia. Revista de Ciencias y Orientación Familiar* 60 (2022): 9-22.

Mr. Potter's Takeover of George Bailey's Housing Policy

William C. Duncan

In Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, the concept of home ownership looms large. As the residents of Bedford Falls come to George Bailey's rescue, one of the donors says that without George, he would not have a roof over his head.

Indeed, George has devoted his life to building homes and increasing access to financing so others can buy these homes. The Bailey Park subdivision he creates boasts "dozens of the prettiest little homes you ever saw." He and his wife, Mary, even help the Martini family (and their goat) move into one of these homes. George's nemesis, the banker Henry Potter, also provides a roof over the heads of many Bedford Falls residents, but these residents pay rent to live in the "slums" he owns. Potter resents George's Building and Loan at least in part because it threatens to deprive him of these rents and his control over the people of the town.

George Bailey's selflessness is heroic. The object of his generosity, helping hardworking families own their own homes, resonates with the audience. America values home ownership. A recent survey, highlighted in the *New York Times*, "found that 74 percent of respondents ranked homeownership as the highest gauge of prosperity, above having a career (60 percent), children (40 percent) and a college education (35 percent)."[1] The American dream of home ownership still looms large, even more than 70 years after *It's a Wonderful Life* first captured the American imagination.

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1. Gregory Schmidt, "Homeownership Remains the American Dream, Despite Challenges," *New York Times* (June 2, 2022), available at https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/02/realestate/homeownership-affordability-survey.html.

The Home in American Law

"Home," understood as a physical residence, is not only an aspiration but an important legal concept.

In fact, it has constitutional status in the United States. The Third Amendment in the Bill of Rights prohibits the government from forcing citizens to provide lodging for soldiers in peacetime in their houses without the owner's consent. Even in the case of war, the amendment provides some protections by requiring that formal laws would have to be made to regulate the practice. Although cases involving violations of the Third Amendment are rare, at least one such case included a discussion of the important interests the Amendment protects:

> The notion that the home is a privileged place whose privacy may not be disrupted by governmental intrusions is basic in a free and democratic society. As Judge Jerome Frank felicitously phrased it, "(a) sane, decent, civilized society must provide some such oasis, some shelter from public scrutiny, some insulated enclosure, some enclave, some inviolate place." Accordingly, [the trial judge] properly concluded that the Third Amendment is . . . one of the "fundamental" rights "rooted in the tradition and conscience of our people" and thus "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty."[2]

The Fourth Amendment likewise protects "[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, *houses*, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures" (emphasis added). The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted this provision to give stronger protection against government surveillance of activities that take place at home as opposed to those that take place in other settings.[3]

Indeed, the protection of the privacy of a home can arguably trump other powerful government interests. For instance, in 1985, the town of Brookfield, Wisconsin enacted an ordinance prohibiting picketing outside a person's residence. While the Court noted that picketing, like other public protests, is protected free speech, it held that this particular form

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2. *Engblom v. Carey*, 677 F.2d 957, 967-968 2nd Cir. 1982 (Kaufman, J., concurring & dissenting) (citations omitted).

3. See, *e.g.*, *Stanley v. Georgia*, 394 U.S. 557 (1969).

of protest could be limited as an imposition on residential privacy. The Court cited encomiums to this interest in prior decisions:

> "The State's interest in protecting the well-being, tranquility, and privacy of the home is certainly of the highest order in a free and civilized society." Our prior decisions have often remarked on the unique nature of the home, "the last citadel of the tired, the weary, and the sick," and have recognized that "[p]reserving the sanctity of the home, the one retreat to which men and women can repair to escape from the tribulations of their daily pursuits, is surely an important value."[4]

The Court went on to explain that though usually individuals have to put up with unwanted expressions of protected speech, "the home is different. . . . a special benefit of the privacy all citizens enjoy within their own walls, which the State may legislate to protect, is an ability to avoid intrusions."[5]

The Fifth Amendment also has implications for homes. It provides that government may not "take" private property for public use without compensating the owner for the taking. Although the provision applies to all types of property, some important cases have involved homes. For instance, a 2019 U.S. Supreme Court decision allowed a homeowner to sue her local government for forcing her to keep the property she lived on open to the public because it included a small family cemetery.[6]

Another intriguing case extends other constitutional provisions to a home, this time with regard to the makeup of the residents. This case involved a challenge to a local zoning ordinance that allowed only single-family residences in a certain area of East Cleveland. These types of ordinances are common, but one feature of this particular law was a somewhat narrow definition of the term "family." Under that definition, a homeowner was given a citation for allowing her son and two grandchildren (who were first cousins) to live with her. A majority of the U.S. Supreme Court concluded the law was unconstitutional. Four of the

4. *Frisby v. Schultz*, 487 U.S. 474, 484 (1988) (citations omitted).

5. *Ibid*. at 484-485 (citations omitted).

6. *Knick v. Township of Scott*, 139 S. Ct. 2162 (2019).

justices believed the law infringed on "rights associated with the family" protected by the Fourteenth Amendment.[7] The Court pointed to past cases "tracing their lineage to" decisions of the Court from the 1920s that involved attempts by the state to override parents' decisions about the education of their children.[8] In a footnote, this plurality opinion quoted a famous dissenting opinion that talked about the link between home and family as a constitutional value: "The home derives its pre-eminence as the seat of family life. And the integrity of that life is something so fundamental that it has been found to draw to its protection the principles of more than one explicitly granted Constitutional right."[9]

Interestingly, one justice wrote separately endorsing the result but not the reasoning of the other justices. His conclusion was that a "rule which would allow a homeowner to have two grandchildren live with her if they are brothers, but not if they are cousins . . . cuts so deeply into a fundamental right normally associated with the ownership of residential property" that it violates the Fifth Amendment by essentially taking the owner's property.[10]

Other legal rules also provide some protection to homes. For instance, in the context of filing for bankruptcy protection, the law treats a debtor's home differently from other property. Depending on the section of the federal law under which the person seeks protection, a debtor can be given more time to become current with house payments. This increases the likelihood that the individual can keep his or her home (including a condominium, mobile home, or trailer), if the home is the debtor's "principal residence."[11] Likewise, when a married person dies, his or her spouse will generally inherit the family home even if the person who has died did not leave a will directing such.

These constitutional and statutory provisions give some content to

7. *Moore v. East Cleveland*, 431 U.S. 494 (1977).

8. *Ibid*. at 499, citing Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U. S. 390 (1923) and Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U. S. 510 (1925).

9. *Ibid*. at 504 note 12, quoting *Poe v. Ullman*, 367 U. S. 497, 551-552 (1961) (Harlan, J., dissenting).

10. *Ibid*. at 520 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

11. "Chapter 13—Bankruptcy Basics," United States Courts, available at https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/bankruptcy/bankruptcy-basics/chapter-13-bankruptcy-basics.

our understanding of "home" and why home ownership is so prized.

First, a home represents a refuge, free from the interference of others. The language used in court opinions—"oasis," "shelter," "inviolate," "insulated," "privacy," "citadel," "retreat," "sanctity"—are powerful clues to why home ownership is an aspiration. As the venerable legal maxim describes it, "a man's home is his castle."[12] G.K. Chesterton said that "to the moderately poor the home is the only place of liberty," and called "a separate house" (as opposed to a "semi-detached home" or "flat") "a definite cell or chamber of liberty."[13]

Second, a home represents stability and security. It is something not easily taken or opened to others—only in the rarest instances of public need or financial disaster. Usually, even the death of a spouse does not interfere with one's continued ownership.

Third, a home represents family. Chesterton proposed this syllogism: "As every normal man desires a woman, and children born of a woman, every normal man desires a house of his own to put them into."[14] As Justice John Marshall Harlan II explained, "The home derives its preeminence as the seat of family life."

This understanding of home as the embodiment of refuge, stability, and family goes a long way towards explaining why the people of Bedford Falls would be so grateful for George Bailey's championing of their opportunity for home ownership.

Promoting Home Ownership

It also explains why the federal government of the United States has pursued a policy of incentivizing home ownership.

Federal policy has promoted home ownership since at least the early 20th century. In that time, government agencies like the U.S. Department of Labor and government leaders conducted a public relations campaign

12. Jonathan L. Hafetz, "'A Man's Home is His Castle?': Reflections on the Home, the Family, and Privacy During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *William & Mary Journal of Women & the Law* 8.175 (2002).

13. Alvaro de Silva, Ed., *Brave New Family: G.K. Chesterton on Men and Women, Children, Sex, Divorce, Marriage & the Family* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), at 77-78.

14. *Ibid*. at 78.

in favor of home ownership. During President Franklin Roosevelt's administration, support became more tangible and transformative. As Vincent J. Cannato explains, "the Federal Housing Administration and the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae)—created in 1934 and 1938, respectively . . . redefined the way Americans purchased their homes." These agencies changed the typical approach to mortgages, from a system in which "home buyers were generally offered short-term mortgages lasting from five to ten years and covering only about 50% of the cost of a house," to one in which most buyers would get a "20- to 30-year mortgage covering 80% of the cost of the house."[15] In time, the government began to directly subsidize mortgages.

Though popular with most Americans, home ownership has its detractors as well. A now-famous thought piece written in preparation for a World Economic Forum meeting describes a future in which no one owns homes, cars, appliances or, oddly, clothes.[16] A recent article in *The Atlantic* argues that government should abandon the policy of promoting home ownership and focus instead on fixing the rental market.[17]

Critics of homeowning boosterism make some compelling points. The initial forays of the government into housing were marked by ugly and unjustifiable racial discrimination. Sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, new suburbs were often segregated by race. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that explicit racial restrictions are unconstitutional, but racial minorities are still less likely to be homeowners than white Americans.[18]

There is also reason to believe that aggressive support for home

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15. Vincent J. Cannato, "A Home of One's Own," *National Affairs* (Spring 2010), available at https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/a-home-of-ones-own.

16. Ida Auken, "Welcome To 2030: I Own Nothing, Have No Privacy And Life Has Never Been Better," *Forbes* (November 10, 2016), available at https://www.forbes.com/sites/worldeconomicforum/2016/11/10/shopping-i-cant-really-remember-what-that-is-or-how-differently-well-live-in-2030/?sh=234c85ca1735.

17. Jerusalem Demsas, "The Homeownership Society Was a Mistake," *The Atlantic* (December 20, 2022), available at https://www.theatlantic.com/newsletters/archive/2022/12/homeownership-real-estate-investment-renting/672511/.

18. "Racial Differences in Economic Security: Housing," U.S. Department of the Treasury (November 4, 2022), available at https://home.treasury.gov/news/featured-stories/racial-differences-in-economic-security-housing.

ownership at almost any cost benefitted mortgage lenders and bankers, but not necessarily many new homeowners. The increase in borrowers with "little to no equity in their homes" during the 1990s and 2000s led to inflation of home prices and the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008, when "many home owners were saddled with debts larger than the value of their homes." Cannato comments, "Foreclosures exploded, rippling across the economy and affecting institutions and investors who held the increasingly complex securities based on the bad mortgages."[19]

Even the U.S. Supreme Court has backtracked in its protection of homeowners, holding in 2005 that a city could use its eminent domain power to take the homes of unwilling property owners and give them to private corporations as part of an "economic development" project.[20]

As Allan Carlson notes, the increased role of government and related developments have even contributed to a shift in the understanding of the concept of home. "By the 1970's," Carlson writes, "housing in America ceased to serve primarily as a place for shelter and the nurture of children. Rather, houses had now become more important as a form of investment, forced savings, and hedge against inflation. Americans increasingly purchased houses with 'resalability' rather than 'livability' in mind."[21]

In essence, since the mid-20th century, the nominal goal of George Bailey has been pursued by decisionmakers and businesses with the motives and practices of Henry Potter. This has led, along with demographic and ideological influences, to a transformation in the meaning of home—from a stable family refuge to a market commodity.

Bringing Bailey Back

Though there are serious problems with housing policy, home ownership itself is not the problem and should not be abandoned for a rental utopia too quickly. Rather, we could seek a return to the wisdom of Chesterton and George Bailey's father: "It's deep in the race for a man to want his

19. Cannato, "A Home of One's Own."

20. *Kelo v. New London*, 545 US 469 (2005).

21. Allan C. Carlson, "The Weakening of the Family in America and How It Has Undermined Parental Rights," Franciscan University of Steubenville (October 16, 2021).

own roof and walls and fireplace."

Some critics of home ownership argue that it has been oversold as a path to wealth, since other forms of investment are likely to be more lucrative. G.K. Chesterton and Peter Bailey remind us that wealth is probably not what most people are looking for in a home. The attributes of home and home life mentioned in the paeans to it in Supreme Court decisions still hold sway over many, perhaps most, Americans. The aspiration to home ownership is still strong despite the mortgage crisis of 2008, particularly so for families. Research shows "married couples buy homes at higher rates, and buy them more quickly, than do their unmarried counterparts."[22]

Housing policy could become less iatrogenic if it were more attentive to stable family refuges than to securitized commodities. It would also be more in line with the needs and aspirations of prospective home buyers.

Policy might begin with the Martinis' goat. As Allan Carlson explains, "During the 1930s, the federal government had favored the subsistence homestead of house, garden, and chicken coop on three to five acres."[23] After World War II, housing policy favored suburban development. In these communities, zoning regulations make any or most productive uses of a home or surrounding property difficult. These limitations could be eased to make it easier for homeowners to use their homes for simple food production and storage and perhaps even workshops or businesses. The push for flexibility in remote work arrangements was intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and is an illustration of simple ways this might happen. The pandemic also brought increased attention to the most obvious and probably most widespread trend toward a productive household—homeschooling. It is unlikely that we would return to multiple-acre plots for most homes. However, many productive uses of homes would require only modest changes in zoning regulations, education laws, and employer policies. These adjustments could also make the investment in a home less financially risky, since that home could be the

22. Michal Grinstein-Weiss *et al.*, "The Effect of Marital Status on Home Ownership among Low-Income Households," *Social Service Review* 85.3: 475-503 (2011).

23. Allan C. Carlson, *Fractured Generations* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), at 78-79.

source of modest ongoing benefit, or at least cost savings, to the homeowner. A productive home is more of an investment than a commodity.

The historian Niall Ferguson notes that George Bailey knew his borrowers. The disconnect between lender and borrower that now characterizes the default arrangement of home buying arguably contributed to some of the excesses in lending that led to the housing bubble. Regulations might be beneficially adjusted to allow smaller scale lending within communities rather than favoring large lenders. The former would be more likely to encourage less risky practices, like tiny or nonexistent down payments, and could also shorten the terms of a mortgage, leading to smaller debt loads for buyers.

Legislators could also increase the security of home ownership by protecting owners from unnecessary takings. The U.S. Supreme Court has adopted a permissive approach to assessing government takings that is hard to justify as an appropriate application of the Constitution, which requires that property should only be taken when it is needed for a public use. The Court has, on a positive note, more recently made it a little easier for owners to challenge these types of confiscation. Legislators, however, need not wait for the Court to revisit its interpretation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. Legislation to protect property owners, particularly when the property is used as a residence, could prevent disputes without requiring difficult, costly, and protracted litigation.

The federal government began its foray into promoting home ownership with a public relation campaign. Similar campaigns by private and public entities could be adjusted to include educational components about the importance of saving for a down payment, shortening the term of a mortgage, and thinking clearly about house sizes. Mr. Potter's henchman admired the "little" homes in Bailey Park. It is hard to imagine lenders and government agencies promoting manageable home sizes except as a temporary step towards purchasing ever larger homes. People should be free to buy the home they want and can afford, but the government need not subsidize every home purchase in precisely the same way. This does not require the government to impose limits on buyers, just to counteract prior simplistic messages implicit in its policy of incentivizing home buying regardless of size or even of the use to which the home will be put (*i.e.*, as an investment rather than a residence).

Stability and security in home ownership could also be promoted by easing or eliminating property tax obligations in some circumstances. Some states have exemptions or discounts on property tax for retired homeowners. Without this exemption, on retirement, the property tax obligation makes continuing home ownership a liability. The homeowner is encouraged to treat the home as a commodity to be liquidated to pay for continuing expenses in retirement.

In various circumstances, housing policy could target incentives for home ownership to owner-occupied homes in priority to investment or vacation properties.

Whatever the specific policies, the primary goal should be to promote the aims of George Bailey—helping families find a home that is a stable refuge. George's father felt that his building and loan was doing something worthwhile by pursuing this aim, which George would eventually adopt as his own. It is a noble aim and something worth restoring as the actual practice in our policies of homeownership.

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

From Green Gables to the Postmodern Child: The Evolution of "Home" in Children's Literature

Nicole M. King

"Here I am! I am Alex," opens the popular children's board book, *Two Homes*.

> "This is Daddy. And this is Mommy.
> Daddy lives here. Sometimes I'm with Daddy.
> Mommy lives there. Sometimes I'm with Mommy.
> So . . . I have two homes!"

So begins a very young fictional child's explanation of the worlds of divorce, of coparenting, and of separate residences. Alex continues his narrative, detailing that he has two front doors, two rooms, two favorite chairs, two kitchens, two bathrooms, and lots of friends at both residences. He also has two telephone numbers. Mommy calls him when he is at Daddy's. And Daddy calls him when he is at Mommy's. And they both love him, wherever they are, and wherever he is.

It's a saccharine little tale, hiding the dark reality of Alex's world. His parents are divorced, or never lived together to begin with. There are no brothers or sisters. And instead of coming home every night to a home where his whole family resides, where mom reads him a book and dad tucks him in, he finds himself carted back and forth between two homes—although both parents are kind enough to provide him with a toothbrush.

Two Homes is but one example of the changing meaning of the

concept of "home" in children's literature over the past several decades. This book is clearly aimed at very young children, so the tone is rosy. But as the intended audience gets older, the books become more mature, and the themes darker.

In the classic children's literature of yesteryear (*Alice in Wonderland*, The Chronicles of Narnia, the *Little House* books), home was a stable, significant organizing force. Alice explores the confusing world of adults, but returns home, where she awakens peacefully on a riverbank. Peter, Susan, Edwin, and Lucy venture into the fantastical Narnia and spend some Narnian decades as kings and queens, yet end up back at the home of the Professor—displaced from their actual home, yet safely tucked away from World War II-era London by their responsible and caring parents.

The quest for home has long been a theme in literature, dating as far back as Homer's *Odyssey*. As Renee Mathis writes for The Circe Institute:

> Sweet Home. It's more than just a lovely sentiment on a cross-stitched pillow. You might say it's engraved, embedded, etched on our very souls. From the time we are little and draw a crayon square with a triangle on top to the day we leave home for college or set up our first apartment or purchase a house for the first time or bring that first baby home, we are ever consumed with a desire for a place of our own, indeed a place to make our own. . . . This desire for a place to call home provides one of the strongest themes for authors, poets, and artists of all kind to weave throughout their works. We may laugh at the sugary sentimentality of a glowing thatched cottage, covered in flowery vines and surrounded by a picket fence, but the desire for a place to call one's own is no laughing matter.[1]

But modern children's literature bears fewer and fewer depictions of the "glowing thatched cottage." Instead, many children's books now treat the reader to the "postmodern child."[2] Such stories begin, as two scholars

1. Renee Mathis, "Dulce Domum: The Longing for Home in Literature (and Our Hearts)," The Circe Institute (April 29, 2016), available at https://circeinstitute.org/blog/blog-dulce-domum-longing-home-literature-and-our-hearts/.

2. Melissa B. Wilson and Kathy S. Short, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: Challenging the Mythoogy of Home in Children's Literature," *Children's Literature in Education* 43 (2012): 129-

put it, "with the child being abandoned, rather than the child leaving the home. The child's journey is to construct a home within a postmodern milieu complete with competing truths and failed adults."[3] The quest for home in children's literature has changed drastically, and tells the reader much about how the very meaning of the concept of home has altered in recent decades.

The Home in Early Children's Literature

The genre called "children's literature" today didn't exist as we know it until roughly the 18th century.[4] Before that, children read things like fables, romances, and religious texts, but none of these was specifically written to them. What did exist especially for children was, as one author describes it, "almost always remorselessly instructional . . . or deeply pious."[5] One entertaining 1670 example, by James Janeway, bills itself "an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children":

> These children lie on their deathbeds, giving accounts of the sins too often committed by children—idleness, disobedience, inattention to lessons, boisterousness, neglecting the Sabbath—but tell those assembled round them that salvation awaits all who renounce such wickedness, and they explain how happy they are to be going to their eternal reward.[6]

Gloomy, to be sure, and also relentlessly didactic.

By the middle of the 18th century, a few books had emerged that weren't overtly instructional but rather more entertaining in nature. But the "father of children's literature" is still widely considered to be John Newbury, with his *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss*

44, doi: 10.1007/s10583-011-9138-z.

3. *Ibid*, 129-30.

4. M.O. Grenby, "The origins of children's literature," British Library (May 15, 2014), available at https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-childrens-literature.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

Polly (c.1744). This volume, which was accompanied by a ball for boys or a pincushion for girls, exemplified the Lockean principle of the child as *tabula rasa*—the purpose of the book was to instruct, by means of entertainment. With the success of this work and others like it, publishers realized there was a market for books for children. The genre took off.

The children's literature of the 19th century was more developed, mature, and entertaining, and the themes were traditional—the importance of family, the development of good Christian virtues, and the search for home. *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812) is one such book. Little is known about the author, Johan David Wyss, other than that he served as both a chaplain and rector.[7] He and his wife and their four sons were also naturalists, taking long hikes, hunting, fishing, and otherwise exploring the natural world. One of the family's favorite books was Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. From his own experiences as father and outdoorsman, one might suppose, comes the theme of *The Swiss Family Robinson*: a thoughtful and noble Christian patriarch, who leads his family through what could have been utter disaster after a shipwreck. Instead of despairing, the family learns valuable lessons about character, husbandry, and home-building, and the book has become one of the most popular works of all time (adapted into a famous 1960 film of the same name). Home, in this beloved classic, is very much a physical place, but it is also where the family works together.

Another common literary theme is the child who somehow ends up on a confusing quest, but in the end returns to the stability of home. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (L. Frank Baum, 1900) falls into this category. Dorothy and her dog, Toto, are famously swept to the fantastical world of Oz in a cyclone. Dorothy navigates her journey through Oz to find the Emerald City and the Wizard of Oz, so he can help her return home to Kansas. When she does, she rushes to her Antie Em, crying "I'm so glad to be home again!"

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll, 1865), *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Carlo Collodi, 1883), and even the beloved

7. "Johann David Wyss," Kids Brittanica (accessed December 20, 2022), available at https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Johann-David-Wyss/340882.

Peter Rabbit stories of Beatrix Potter all exemplify this theme of quest for home. Alice falls down the rabbit hole and encounters the bewildering, exciting, even dangerous Wonderland (what many critics believe is representative of the adult world), before being awakened by her sister on a riverbank. Pinocchio navigates the deceptive and manipulative world of adults in the form of the Fox, the Cat, and the Puppet Master, but in the end returns home to his father-creator, Gepetto. And the mischievous Peter Rabbit goes on any number of naughty adventures, but winds up collapsed, tired but safe, on the warm floor of the family's burrow, in a sandbank under a great fir tree.

There is also the theme of the home as stable background, during more prolonged coming-of-age stories. *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott, 1868) is one example, as are the *Little House* books (Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1932-1943) and the *Anne of Green Gables* series (Lucy Maud Montgomery, 1908-1939). In *Little Women*, the four March sisters go to balls, to school, to the great house of their mean old Aunt March, but always return to the warmth, comfort, and stability of Marmee and their tattered but still elegant abode. In the *Little House* books, the family braves storms, Native American attacks, snakes, food scarcity, and other dangers, but home is a safe, reassuring force—where Pa and Ma are. In the *Green Gables* series, orphan Ann at first has no home. The resolution to the story is when Ann finds permanence with Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, who raise her as their own. Their love and the stability of Green Gables provide the backdrop against which Ann grows, completes her education, and adventures out into the world as a happy, well-adjusted adult.

Notably, in all of the stories referenced above, the concept of home can take a variety of forms. At the opening of *Little Women*, home is characterized by warmth and love, but there is also an overt feeling of sadness, as Father March is away fighting in the Civil War. Home is whole again only when Father returns. In the *Little House* books, the family lives in a wide variety of physical residences—a cabin in the woods, a sod home on the prairie, a large, comfortable rental house in town—but "home" is always where the wanderlusting Pa leads them. Later, home is where Laura and her new husband, Almonzo, establish it. Home can even begin with a broken childhood. Ann Shirley is an orphan, sent to Matthew and Marilla's by mistake. She faces coldness and disappointment at first, but eventually

wins their hearts and finds a place of permanence and stability.

As children's literature as a genre matured in the 20th century, home remained at least a central presence, a reassuring background. Home is a place of safety for all the characters in *The Wind and the Willows* (Kenneth Grahame, 1908). In an analysis of this literary quest for home, Renee Mathis writes:

> In *The Wind and the Willows*, . . . [i]n a chapter entitled "Dulce Domum" [Grahame] tells how Mole returns to his home after a frightening turn in the woods. Mole's home, with it's [sic] forecourt and fountains, its statuary and fishpond, gives us quite an insight into this little rodent. And who could forget the description of Badger's kitchen, where "heroes could fitly feast . . . and where weary harvesters" would feel right at home, where plates wink from shelves, and the "ruddy brick floor smiled up at the smoky ceiling." The climax of the tale occurs in "The Return of Ulysses" when Badger, Mole, and Ratty come to the rescue of Toad, whose home has been invaded by those forest fiends, the stoats and weasels. The friends band together in a glorious reclamation of Toad Hall.[8]

In this story, the physicality of the home is important. The permanence and stability of the very things in the home offer comfort.

Home is also a comforting presence in many stories geared toward very young children. In the board book *Goodnight Moon* (Margaret Wise Brown, 1947), the "great green room" and the hushing mama rabbit help little bunny fall peacefully to sleep. In *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak, 1963), Max adventures with the monsters, but returns to his "still warm dinner." In *The Snowy Day* (Jack Keats, 1962), Peter ventures out from his apartment building and journeys through the mountains of snow. He returns to his home, his mother, his warm soup, and his soft bed.

Home for the "Postmodern Child"

The thread that ties all the above works together is that "home" is a positive force. Home means comfort, stability, permanence, and love.

8. Mathis, "Dulce Domum."

Home is also where the family is. Ma and the family follow Pa all over the woods and prairie in the *Little House* books. The March sisters wait patiently for the return of their father. Little Peter returns to his mother after romping in the snow. These adults can be relied upon.

Not so for the so-called "postmodern child" of contemporary children's books. In an article entitled "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," Melissa Wilson and Kathy Short find a new, troubling trend:

> In a critical content analysis of recent award-winning middle reader novels from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, a new pattern was observed. This pattern, called a postmodern metaplot, begins with the child being abandoned, rather than the child leaving the home. The child's journey is to construct a home within a postmodern milieu complete with competing truths and failed adults. Ultimately, the child's postmodern journey ends with the very modern ideal of the child leading the adults to a hopeful ending, a home.[9]

The children in this new genre of children's literature face broken homes or the absence of a home, and unreliable and even mentally unstable adults. As Short explained to *The Guardian* for a follow-up article, "These children are not wild things. They are too busy taking care of their troubled parents to have time to follow a rabbit down a hole; too frightened of abuse to trust the Tinman, and too fearful to set out on an adventure for fear that their unreliable parent might not be there when they return."[10]

Wilson and Short analyze several popular children's books to reach their conclusion. In *Helicopter Man* (Elizabeth Fensham, 2005), 15-year-old Pete lives in a dilapidated garden shed with his father, a paranoid schizophrenic who believes that helicopters, police, and a secret organization are out to get him. Pete's mother has left them. Pete and his father flee around Australia, and Pete manages to care for his father while trying to find their next meal and place to sleep. The book's description

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9. Melissa B. Wilson and Kathy G. Short, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: Challenging the Mythology of Home in Children's Literature," *Children's Literature in Education* 43 (2012): 129-44.

10. Ameila Hill, "Children's books reflect harsh reality," *The Guardian* (July 6, 2012), available at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jul/06/childrens-books-reflect-harsh-reality.

tellingly calls it "a haunting and ultimately redemptive story of illness, love, and a boy's indomitable spirit to survive." The boy is surviving, not thriving.

In *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread* (Kate DiCamillo, 2003), the little mouse Despereaux is taken from his parents to face death for the crime of being different. As her son is being led away, Despereaux's mother shouts "Adieu." The narrator remarks:

> Adieu is the word for "farewell." Farewell is not the word that you would like to hear from your mother as you are being led to the dungeon by two oversized mice in black hoods. Words you would like to hear are "Take me instead. I will go to the dungeon in my son's place." There is a great deal of comfort in those words.[11]

In these tales and many others like them, the child must navigate the world alone, because the parents are absent or unstable. As Wilson and Short put it, "In a modern metaplot the child abandons the home and the parents; in a postmodern metaplot the adult abandons the child."[12]

Nor are these cherrypicked examples. In her essay on depictions of post-divorce families in children's books, Katie Walsh acknowledges her interest in the topic began "while searching for resources about how to help my own son make sense of our changing domestic lives."[13] Walsh professes interest in the body of children's literature that seeks to "normalize" the experience of having two homes, in a relatively low-conflict post-divorce or separation environment. In 13 "therapeutic" picture books that represent this scenario, Walsh finds what she calls "four dominant tropes" of transition: "firstly, the disruption of home lives; secondly, the journeying between parental homes; thirdly, the arrival and departure scenes at the thresholds of parental homes; and, fourthly, the packing and unpacking of belongings to carry between homes and make each residence more homely." These tropes are dominant in books

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11. Qtd. in Wilson & Short, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," 137.

12. *Ibid.*, 135.

13. Katie Walsh, "'My Two Homes': Children's Picture Books and Non-Normative Imaginaries of Home in Post-Divorce/Separation Families," *Home Cultures* 14.3 (2017): 237-56.

helping kids understand their new home lives.

In addition to the topics of divorce and two homes, parental mental illness is another subject heavily treated in more modern children's books. *Why is Dad So Mad?* (Seth Kastle, 2015) was written to help kids understand post-traumatic stress disorder, specifically in military families. In *The Bipolar Bear Family* (Angela Ann Holloway, 2006), a young cub struggles to come to grips with his mother's behavior and diagnosis of bipolar disorder. *Under Rose-Tainted Skies* (Louise Gornall, 2012) is the story of Norah, a teenage girl with agoraphobia. Norah hasn't left her home in over four years. Only her romance with Luke—and not her parents' aid—can finally help her deal with her mental illness.

At the root of these varying and frightening depictions of childhood lie the very real changes in family life that have occurred since the mid-20th century, changes which are front and center in one 1997 thesis for Kent State University. Here, Erminia Gallo compares the depiction of family structure in American children's literature in two different periods, 1955-1970 and 1980-1995. She summarizes:

> Since 1960 there is evidence that the family structure has changed. . . . Results of the analyses of the stories indicated that there was a decrease in the depiction of the traditional two-parent family and an increase in the single parent family. The majority of the stories still represent parents with biological children. The number of children represented has decreased, and parents had fewer children in the later time period. The cause of a non-two-parent family in the earlier time period was because the parents had died and in the later time period it was because parents had divorced. In all cases, the father worked outside the home; however, the cases where the mother worked outside the home increased. Regarding family structure problems, the majority of child protagonists did not have conflicts. There was an increase in problems concerning family structure, but the percentage of problem resolution also increased.[14]

14. Erminia Mina Gallo, "A Content Analysis of the Family Structure in Children's Literature for the Periods between 1955-1970 and 1980-1995" (master's in library science thesis, Kent State University, 1997), Education Resources Information Center, available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED412556.pdf.

Note that at the time of this writing, this analysis is 25 years old, almost ancient in terms of scholarly work. The family situation has only become more dire since then.

More recent scholarship in children's literature has focused on the different types of families in the homes that children inhabit. These include LGBTQ homes like in *Daddy, Papa, and Me* (Lesléa Newman, 2009), *My Two Moms and Me* (Michael Joosten, 2019), or *And Tango Makes Three* (Peter Parnell, 2005, about a homosexual penguin couple at the zoo who welcome a son). There is also *A House for Everyone* (Jo Hirst, 2018), a story about friends who work together building a house on their playground. One character, Ivy, is a girl but keeps her hair cut very short and "never, ever chooses to wear a dress." Alex goes by "they," and "does not feel like 'just' a boy or 'just' a girl." Sam is artistic, creative, and likes to wear his long hair in a ponytail when he plays basketball. Jackson is a boy who likes to wear dresses, which "are not just for girls." Notably absent from this story are adults. The children come together to build their new home, where all are welcome and where they play together even though they are "all a little bit different." The concept of merely two homes may now be a bit passée. In its place we find the adult-free "home," where children are allowed to explore their gender identity and roam at liberty.

The Endangerment of Childhood

Of course, children do not themselves write the books meant for them. That job is left to adults. As one author puts it, "children's books are and have always been the site of a power struggle. Even if we assume that children are able to use the texts in ways determined by their own desires, the ones who generally write and prescribe children's books are adults themselves."[15] At the heart of children's literature is what adults believe about children's lives—what they are or should be, how children should act and grow up. "Children's literature," as another author writes, "communicates society's expectations, overt and covert values,

15. Maciej Skowera, "Fracturing the Canon: Toward Adulterated Children's Literature," in Ana Margarida Ramos *et. al.*, eds., *Fractures and Disruptions in Children's Literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 62-77.

and assumptions of appropriate behavior."[16]

Modern children's literature reflects a number of new realities. First is the absence of parents. In literature, as Wilson and Short write, "childhood is not the happy, carefree time it is 'supposed' to be. Children don't leave home on a lark, they are thrust out."[17]

Second, home is a place that is increasingly unstable. The sheer number of children's books that try to normalize the concept of "two homes" for children says the opposite—this is deeply not normal. In spite of the rosy depictions of two kitchens and two front doors, two toothbrushes and two telephones, real kids know that something is amiss. That's why there's so many books screaming the opposite, trying to convince kids that their disrupted lives are just fine, normal, even good.

And finally, home is a place that children must now construct. In *Helicopter Man*, Pete navigates homelessness while helping his father find stability, only to end up in foster care when his father enters an institution. In *A House for Everyone*, the children construct their own home, according to their own rules of "gender." Without a stable, mother-father home, wherein the adults give clear rules and guide their children in how to be a boy or a girl, the kids are left to their own devices.

We live in a society that now expects very, very young children to deal with the realities of two homes, divorced homes, homosexual homes, unstable homes, even scary homes. We expect these things, in spite of decades of research demonstrating that what's best for kids is the two-parent, married home. Kids thrive, we now know, in stability, in routine, and with loving firmness from a mother and father. But in these books, the adults have decided to pursue their own desires instead of what's best for the kids. They expect the kids to be resilient, to overcome, to survive. And overcoming these hardships is not easy, a reality to which the mere plethora of children's books helping kids deal with divorce or gay parenting or whatever the issue might be attest. But instead of refusing

16. Amanda Randolph, "The Portrayal of the Family Unit in Children's Choice Award Books" (master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2013), OhioLINK, available at https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=bgsu1363622755&disposition=inline.

17. Wilson and Short, "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," 141.

to indulge their own adult fantasies, adults are now shelving *Goodnight Moon* and reaching for *My Two Homes* for a bedtime story.

The result—a new generation of anxiety-prone, misbehaving, unhappy kids—speaks for itself.

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How the Pandemic Revivified the Home

Emily Morales

When the COVID-19 pandemic made landfall on Western shores in early spring of 2020, under a public health strategy of "flattening the curve" and virus containment, governments everywhere imposed lockdowns.[1] Concomitant with the stay-at-home orders were school and business closures, cancellation of "superspreader" events,[2] and significant restrictions on travel. Consequently, people experienced a major upheaval in the way they lived, traveled, schooled, worked, and played. Government lockdowns, in effect, forced hundreds of millions of people everywhere to rediscover a place that the conveniences of modernity had caused them to forget: a place called *home*.

This rediscovery was manifest in families' reprioritization of their domicile spaces to accommodate *many* things at once, such as tending to their children's education, preparing meals with greater frequency, and, of course, remote work. Notably, the home-space has been so transformed by the pandemic that builders and architects have changed the design of new homes to meet the demand for increased square footage and greater functionality.[3] Architect Donald Ruthroff observed that new

1. Julia Shu-Huah Wang *et al.*, "Containment, Health, and Social Policies in the Time of COVID-19–Determinants and Outcomes of Initial Responses across 120 Countries," *Health Policy and Planning* 36.10 (2021): 1,613-24.

2. Superspreader events are characterized as any event that leads to more than the average number of secondary transmissions, due to social and micro-environmental factors that make pathogen transmissibility more probable. *Cf.* Swetaprovo Chaudhuri *et al.*, "Analysis of overdispersion in airborne transmission of Covid-19," *Physics of Fluids* 34.5 (2022), doi: 051914.

3. Zach Wichter, "How the Pandemic Has Changed New-Home Design," Bankrate (April 8, 2022), available at https://www.bankrate.com/real-estate/how-the-pandemic-changed-home-design/.

home design requires every square inch to do more, in view of greater functionality.[4]

While it is impossible to overstate the negative impact of lockdowns—the disruption to millions of families, the economic damage to countless businesses and industries, and the shift to the societal landscape of many institutions—there remains a thin silver lining. The lockdowns served as a catalyst to change consumer behaviors in ways that ultimately directed us home. In addition to the tasks of working, educating, and eating from home, many coped by exploring new interests, acquiring new or advanced skills (in cooking and gardening), picking up new hobbies (music and art), and finding creative ways to entertain themselves. For many, the pandemic highlighted the benefits that could be enjoyed in rediscovering home, family life, and one's own hands.

Paradoxically, through the facilitation and added twist of technology[5], the former glory of the home—as a hub for productivity known in times past—returned. With lockdowns relaxed, businesses re-opened, and the fear of COVID-19 infection waning, the now post-pandemic home remains more productive than it has been in decades.

The Home as a Historically Productive Space

Archeological discoveries verify the distinction the home enjoyed as the epicenter of all manner of productivity and family community. The patrilocal culture in the earliest civilizations in the ancient Near East saw larger extended families living and working together in homes or even dwellings functioning as family compounds. Many of these domiciles were successful adaptations to farm life, with interior areas allocated for food harvesting, processing, preparation, and storage, as well as small craft production. It was commonplace for such interior living spaces even to accommodate livestock; while this arrangement would have made for unpleasant smells, the heat from the animals' bodies was a source of

4. *Ibid*.

5. James C. Kaufman, "Creativity in a Coronavirus World," *Psychology Today* (April 9, 2020), available at https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/and-all-jazz/202004/creativity-in-coronavirus-world.

warmth for the family.[6]

Even in the early days of industrialization, the home-space remained the site for productivity for those involved in small family businesses. In late 18th and early 19th century English towns, it was not unusual to find oneself living under a single roof with employers, servants, apprentices, or business partners, in addition to blood relatives.[7] Since the livelihood of the family was contingent upon commercial outcomes, the business took precedence over domesticity when it came to allocating physical space.

In addition to being the site of business, the home was also the site of education. Children were trained and apprenticed in family businesses in order to secure both continued prosperity for the family and future security for the children. If a household was not apprenticing its own young ones in a particular occupation (watchmaker, cobbler, milliner, cutler), it was often apprenticing other people's children.[8]

The Industrial Revolution's continued advancement, manifest in the erection of monolithic factories, coupled with a consumer economy, continued to reshape the home and our relationship to it. Small-scale handwork fit for the home-space or small shop was traded for large-scale manufacturing. Factories in centralized urban areas pulled not only able-bodied men and women from their farms or small family businesses, but children as well. Urban row houses with space fit only for meals and sleep supplanted the historic notion of the home as a space for integrating occupation, education, leisure, and play.[9]

Modernity and industrialization impacted not only home architecture, but family life as well. Because the home was the site of production, it was necessary for all family members to work towards the common

6. Lawrence E. Stager, "The archaeology of the family in ancient Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260.1 (1985): 1-35, at 17.

7. Hannah Barker and Jane Hamlett, "Living Above the Shop: Home, Business, and Family in the English 'Industrial Revolution.'" *Journal of Family History* 35.4 (2010): 311-28.

8. Hannah Barker, *Family and Business During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

9. Available at https://schoolshistory.org.uk/topics/british-history/industrial-revolution/housing-homes/.

aim of a shared prosperity.[10] The removal of women and children (in addition to men) from shared workspaces undermined everyone's ability to function as a family unit.[11]

Urbanization in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was followed by the mid-century migration of millions out of the cities to life in suburbia.[12] While this move afforded greater space, houses in the new "bedroom communities" reflected their intended function—as spaces fit principally for family meals, entertainment, and repose. "Occupation" and "productivity" were reserved for life in the city. The homes' continued limited function meant houses built on lots often so tiny they could barely accommodate a single-car garage, much less a workshop, space for small livestock, or even a modest vegetable garden.

Revivifying the Home from the Ashes of Lockdown

The lockdowns, for better or for worse, reminded us just how ill-equipped our modern homes are as spaces to keep us occupied and operational as a family unit over extended periods of time. The domestic space the conveniences of modernity designated for limited use was now called upon for the schooling of children, the preparation of daily meals, the carrying out of one or more occupations (for those of us who were fortunate enough to have worked from home), the exploration of new hobbies and interests, the entertainment of the family, and even for convalescence. These "new" functions are in truth revisitations of old ones, familiar to many from the lore of Laura Ingalls Wilder. In her *Little House* series, Wilder recounts home life characterized by making cheese, churning butter, drying jerky, canning jams, storing herbs, carving furniture, sewing garments. Her home was a place for convalescence and at times even hospice.

In the face of the massive closures of schools, restaurants, entertainment venues, and businesses, modernity's mortification of the home as a productive space was reversed; the home, by necessity, was revivified. Pandemic parents seemingly overnight were now forced to don many

10. Barker, *Family and Business During the Industrial Revolution*.

11. Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (London: Routledge, 2020).

12. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (1976), series H-156.

hats; of all these hats, likely none would have greater impact on the family, home, and culture than that of their child's *teacher*.

Returning Education to the Home

Compulsory schooling laws in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the end of the ancient, ubiquitous practice of home education at large, and the institution of a powerful government education infrastructure. While the call to "return to home" for schooling re-emerged in the 1970's from countercultural "hippies," Christian conservatives were in truth the ones who expanded the movement.[13] By 2012, a conservative estimate of 1.8 million children (or 3.4 percent of the K-12 population in the U.S.) were being schooled at home.[14] Surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (Household Pulse Survey, or HPS) estimated 3.2 million adults (parents) were schooling their children at home, pre-pandemic.[15] The pandemic was soon to change these statistics significantly, not just in the U.S. but globally.

By the beginning of April 2020, with lockdowns in full swing, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported an estimated 172 countries having instituted nationwide school closures, impacting 1.4 billion learners.[16] The Census Bureau's HPS saw the rise of homeschool parents from 3.2 million to 5 million by fall of 2020. The impact on educators, parents, and children was without precedent. First-time homeschoolers were forced to manage the supervision of their children's education, whilst managing other professional, personal, and parental roles, generating significant stress. For families lacking sufficient economic and social/familial resources, significant levels of depression and anxiety—along with the concomitant

13. Kerry McDonald, "Schooling and Educational Freedom: Why School Choice Is Good for Homeschoolers," Cato Institute Brief Paper No. 124 (September 4, 2019), available at https://www.cato.org/briefing-paper/homeschooling-educational-freedom-why-school-choice-good-homeschoolers.

14. Thomas D. Snyder, Cristobal de Brey, and Sally A. Dillow, *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, 53rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2019): 132.

15. Steven Duvall, "A research note: Number of adults who homeschool children growing rapidly," *Journal of School Choice* 15.2 (2021): 215-24.

16. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, "COVID-19 educational disruption and response 2020," available at https://en.unesco. org/covid 19/educationresponse.

issues associated with these syndromes—were reported.[17]

In spite of the hardships faced by first-time homeschoolers, many parents have opted to *continue* educating their children at home as the pandemic wanes and schools re-open. Their main reasons are not unfamiliar to those already convinced of homeschooling's benefit. Chief among these are flexibility and greater control over their children's curricula. Texas first-time homeschoolers Arlena and Robert Brown are representative of this, explaining that they enjoy the freedom of tailoring their Catholic-oriented curriculum to their children's distinctive needs. Their son Jacoby, 11, has narcolepsy, and at times requires naps during the day; daughter Riley, 10, is academically gifted; and Felicity, 9, has a learning disability.[18] For the Brown family and countless others in the U.S., the pandemic forced an education option they would not have under normal circumstances explored. Seeing the benefits of that option, they plan to stick with it.

This return to home education has not gone unnoticed by many publishers and businesses, evidenced by skyrocketing sales of activity books for adults and children.[19] Sales of puzzles and games were similarly robust, with The NPD Group (a market research company) reporting sales up by 228%, "driven by family board/action, card, and children's games."[20]

Home as the Hub of Hobbies, Games and Entertainment

By the early 2000's, technology had bequeathed such a plethora of video-based home entertainment options that the more traditional family game

17. Jörg M Fegert *et al*., "Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic for child and adolescent mental health: a narrative review to highlight clinical and research needs in the acute phase and the long return to normality," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 14.20 (May 12, 2020), doi:10.1186/s13034-020-00329-3.

18. Associated Press, "Sparked by pandemic, homeschooling surges across U.S.," *New York Post* (July 27, 2021), available at https://nypost.com/2021/07/26/sparked-by-pandemic-fallout-homeschooling-surges-across-us/.

19. "Products for Fun and Games Continue Post-lockdown," *Publishers Weekly* 269.37 (September 5, 2022): 21.

20. "At a Time of Social Distancing, U.S. Families Turn to Activity-Based Toys, Books, and Art Supplies for the Home, According to NPD," NPD (April 2, 2020), available at https://www.npd.com/news/press-releases/2020/at-a-time-of-social-distancing-u-s-families-turn-to-activity-based-toys-books-and-art-supplies-for-the-home-according-to-npd/.

night, with its emphasis on board and card games, had been relegated to the dustbin of memory. The year 2008, however, saw an increase in board game sales of 23.5% (with expectations sales would continue to increase in the wake of a prolonged recession), coupled with a renaissance of game developers and publishers.[21] The years since have seen a "golden age" of gaming, with the release of innovative and exciting games involving role-play, such as Pandemic and Dead of Winter, added to already existing franchises like Dungeons and Dragons and The Settlers of Catan.[22]

The pandemic saw record sales and continued gaming innovation, and served as an unlikely catalyst in the return of family game night—likely because board games facilitate connection between people. DePaul University professor and author Paul Booth argues that the power of board games lies in their ability to enable a shared empathy, due to three key aspects. Games are (1) challenging but not insurmountable, (2) inherently social (oftentimes requiring cooperation between players to solve problems), and (3) they allow people to step outside of their own time and space. These aspects were key to record game sales in the midst of the pandemic, as revealed in one Booth survey of nearly 900 people. Respondents reported that board games "helped them with their mental health and have given them opportunities to overcome anxiety issues."[23] In the midst of isolation, board games provided the lifeline people needed.

Game play was not the only entertainment in town for managing the stress of lockdowns. Activity book sales soared, as people took to hand-crafts and new hobbies to keep their minds and hands and those of their children occupied. According to one market survey report, arts and craft businesses saw an uptick in new customers and overall business in the

21. Kim Thai, "Board games are back," CNN Money (July 10, 2009), available at https://money.cnn.com/2009/07/10/news/economy/board_games_resurgence.fortune/.

22. Owen Duffy, "Board games' golden age: sociable, brilliant and driven by the internet," *The Guardian* (November 25, 2014), available at https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/nov/25/board-games-internet-playstation-xbox.

23. Paul Booth, "What's Old Is New: Board Games Can Be a Lifeline in Lockdown," *U.S. News and World Report* (December 24, 2020), available at https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-12-24/board-games-can-be-a-lifeline-in-covid-lockdown.

early months of the pandemic.[24] LoveCrafts.com, an online marketplace for handcrafters selling yarn, fabric, papercrafts, hobby kits, and patterns, experienced a 43% increase in traffic from March to November of 2020, compared to the same time period in 2019. Of great help to U.S. craft retailers was the designation as "essential" businesses, since people frequented their stores to purchase fabric to make masks when the availability of mass-produced masks dwindled.

Commensurate with the boom in arts and crafts supplies were the sales enjoyed by artisan-entrepreneurs on Etsy. Early in the pandemic, CEO Josh Silverman was preparing to cut Etsy's marketing spending in preparation for an anticipated COVID-induced slump in sales. His latest reports, however, showed a huge surge due to face mask sales. Silverman was at first quizzical, but then reasoned, "The world's supply chains had locked up. You couldn't get face masks. Yet Etsy's supply chain was just two hands making."[25] Within a day of an Etsy appeal to sellers to make and sell PPE, 10,000 independent crafters were hawking masks. Within two weeks, 100,000 sellers had joined their ranks.

As an online marketplace supporting high-volume sales, Etsy was perfectly positioned for the pandemic. Indeed, from their March 2020 lows, the numbers of sellers *doubled* (to 5 million), as did the number of buyers (to 90 million). From the early pandemic, Etsy shares skyrocketed 600%, compared to eBay's (175%), Walmart (35%), and Amazon (100%). Lockdowns accorded sellers, new and old, more time to craft furniture, garments, and toys to satisfy cooped-up customers looking to purchase unique and handmade items. The clever leadership of Etsy, coupled with a responsive IT team, enabled significant revival of the cottage industries of the past as millions for the first time marketed the products of their own two hands.[26]

Robust online sales were not the only benefits craftspeople enjoyed.

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24. Nmpi digital, "Market Trends: Impact of COVID-19 on Arts & Crafts Retail" (2020), available at https://nmpidigital.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Impacts-on-Arts-Crafts-Retail-US.pdf.

25. Steven Bertoni, "How Etsy Is Giving AI To Its Army Of 5 Million Artisan-Entrepreneurs To Build The Anti-Amazon," *Forbes* 204.5 (October 21, 2021): 62.

26. *Ibid*.

A Spanish study of adults two weeks after lockdowns began which assessed the best predictors of lower levels of anxiety symptoms during the pandemic concluded what many pre-pandemic crafters and artisans already knew. Finding satisfaction in the work of one's hands is a great way to attenuate symptoms of depression and anxiety.[27] This very conclusion is supported by an earlier study at Drexel University in 2016, which reported that cortisol levels in participants engaged in art-making were reduced after just 45 minutes.[28] This is significant, since cortisol is the hormone mediating the stress response in the body, and too much cortisol released over extended periods of time can interrupt sleep, weaken the immune system, and increase blood pressure, weight gain, and the risk of Type 2 diabetes.[29] With all the stresses that were triggered in the midst of the pandemic, it became vital to mindfully engage in any activity that could attenuate the release of cortisol, and commensurately reduce anxiety.

Nor was crafting the only pandemic stress-reliever. In the wake of widespread concert and festival cancellations[30], record numbers from all walks of life picked up a musical instrument. One study of 2,000 British adults published in October 2020 found that 75% had turned to a musical instrument in order to overcome lockdown blues.[31] This interest in music-making meant record sales in instruments and music. The UK's biggest online retailer of instruments and sound equipment, Gear4music, saw sales rise 80 percent in the period April-June of 2020, compared to

27. Miquel A. Fullana *et al*., "Coping behaviors associated with decreased anxiety and depressive symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 275 (2020): 80-81. In addition to pursing hobbies, following a healthy/balanced diet and avoiding news coverage of COVID-19 were the best predictors of lower levels of anxiety symptoms.

28. Girija Kaimal, Kendra Ray, and Juan Muniz, "Reduction of cortisol levels and participants' responses following art making," *Art Therapy* 33.2 (2016): 74-80.

29. Cleveland Clinic, "Cortisol" (last updated December 10, 2021), available at https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/22187-cortisol.

30. Anna Zygierewicz, "Cultural and creative sectors in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis," Studia BAS 1.69 (2022), doi: 10.31268/StudiaBAS.2022.08, at 124.

31. "Three quarters of Brits have turned to musical instrument during lockdown, new research shows," The Strad (October 13, 2020), available at https://www.thestrad.com/news/three-quarters-of-brits-have-turned-to-musical-instrument-during-lockdown-new-research-shows/11322.article.

the same period the previous year, to a whopping 21.2 million pounds.[32] Ben Harrison, Marketing Manager for Yamaha Corporation of America, observed, "Customers of all levels look at 'stay-at-home' as an opportunity to begin or further their musical journey."[33]

Andy Mooney, the CEO of guitar manufacturer Fender, reported that 2020 marked a 70-year high in sales, at $700 million. Gibson and Taylor reported similar record sales years, crediting the renewed interest in guitars to many factors. Within the first few weeks of the pandemic people were growing tired of binging on Amazon Prime, YouTube, Netflix, and other streaming platforms, and wanted a more creative outlet. Parents purchased instruments for children as an alternative activity to excessive television and video games. Finally, people turned to music as a means to enjoy better mental health. Mike Miltimore, CEO of Riversong Guitars, credited the guitar as "a great therapy tool," enabling players to enjoy an experience that is even "spiritual." Paul Reed Smith of PRS Guitars concurred, designating the instrument as "a powerful mood adjuster." Of the renewed interest in music and the boom in instrument sales, James Curleigh, CEO of Gibson, remarked it exemplified turning "a crisis into creativity."[34]

To these added occupations of artisan-entrepreneur and amateur musician, many also found respite in honing other skills representative of old-fashioned homesteading—those of food preparation and preservation, baking (especially bread), and small-scale farming. The attraction to homesteading in modern times is the feeling of self-sufficiency and a reconnection to nature, which are also key in times of uncertainty (like the pandemic).[35] For households gravely concerned about food shortages, exposure to an unknown virus, and restaurant closures, these

32. Camilla Turner, "Sales of musical instruments surge during lockdown as home learning booms," *Telegraph Online* (September 26, 2020), available at https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/26/sales-musical-instruments-surge-lockdown-home-learning-booms/.

33. Christian Wissmuller, "Bring it on Home," *Musical Merchandise Review* 4 (2021): 14-16.

34. Christian Wissmuller, "Turning Crisis into Creativity: Guitar Sales Soar During the 2020 Pandemic," *MMR Magazine: Fretted* (November 2020), available at https://mmrmagazine.com/site/issue/retail/turning-crisis-into-creativity-guitar-sales-soar-during-the-2020-pandemic/.

35. Katie Daubs, "Back to the land . . . Rising costs and the pandemic have pushed Canadians into homesteading. Goats, gardens and great-grandmothers are making a comeback," *The Toronto Star* (August 2022).

long-forgotten skills served many functions, not the least of which was tending to better family health.

Rediscovering the Joy of Cooking

According to *Fortune* magazine, 2020 saw the unfortunate closure of more than 110,000 eating and drinking establishments in the U.S.[36] In the wake of massive restaurant closures worldwide, people were forced to turn to their pantry shelves, cookbooks, old family recipes, and the Internet to prepare their meals. In areas where restaurants still had limited capacity to operate, people still opted to cook from home, either for fear of viral exposure or wanting to have more control over their family's nutrition.

Of all the types of cooking, the pandemic brought bread-making back in earnest. In times past in the U.S., bread-making was the domain of women in the home, nowhere better illustrated than by Harriet Beecher Stowe: "Bread-making can be cultivated . . . as a fine art," guided by "the divine principle of beauty."[37] Industrial and economic trends between 1890 and 1930, however, shifted the who, how, and where of bread-making. The commercial manufacture of bread meant it was no longer fitting as the crafted outcome of "art and aesthetics," but rather the product of capitalist development and scientific measurement carried out by men.[38] Lockdowns fortuitously returned bread-making to the home. Many who had never had the time to nurture a sourdough starter were learning for the first time how to turn the work of microorganisms and gluten into a hearty and satisfying delight. The countless photos shared on social media by first-time beaming bakers captured the fact that bread-making was returned to the glory of its previous days as a cultivated art.[39]

In large measure, people returned to baking as a means of

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36. Rachel King, "More than 110,000 eating and drinking establishments closed in 2020," *Fortune* (January 26, 2021), available at https://fortune.com/2021/01/26/restaurants-bars-closed-2020-jobs-lost-how-many-have-closed-us-covid-pandemic-stimulus-unemployment/.

37. Sourced from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *American Woman's Home*, published in 1869.

38. Aaron Bobrow-Strain, "White bread bio-politics: purity, health, and the triumph of industrial baking," *Cultural Geographies* 15.1 (2008): 19-40.

39. Gwyn Easterbrook-Smith, "By bread alone: baking as leisure, performance, sustenance, during the COVID-19 crisis," *Leisure Sciences* 43.1-2 (2021): 36-42.

occupational therapy, specifically for the comfort and stress relief found in measuring, kneading, and shaping dough. For many, bread-making provided that all-important sense of self-sufficiency and some measure of control over one's environment (even the microbiome of yeast in bread) in the face of the perceived upending of modern life.[40] The practical sustenance provided by the bread itself was secondary to its place as a satisfying and available leisure activity.[41]

A further paradoxical upside to the pandemic was the increased inclusion of children in everyday baking and cooking activities.[42] In one cross-continental study it was found that in countries imposing stricter lockdowns, parents were more likely to include children in these invaluable life skills. Researchers identified several benefits to this inclusion, specifically an increased willingness on the part of the children to eat fruits and vegetables, along with overall improved diet quality for the family.

Return of the Home Farm and Garden

Small-scale farming and gardening were other activities that returned to the home space. In an online survey asking respondents what they did differently in 2020 at the height of the pandemic as a consequence of lockdowns, 34% reported that they planted a garden. Similarly, in a 2021 National Gardening Survey, 42% of respondents indicated they *increased* their gardening efforts *because* of the pandemic.[43] These survey results are supported by requisite robust gardening supply sales. Canadian-based West Coast Seeds general manager Alex Augustniak reported that seed sales were seven to ten times higher in early March 2020 than at the same time the year prior. Correlatively, B.C. Eco Seed Co-op reported

40. Emily Heil, "People are baking bread like crazy, and now we're running out of flour and yeast," *Washington Post* (March 24, 2020), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/voraciously/wp/2020/03/24/people-are-baking-bread-like-crazy-and-now-were-running-out-of-flour-and-yeast/.

41. Easterbrook-Smith., 38.

42. Tony Benson *et al*., "From the pandemic to the pan: the impact of COVID-19 on parental inclusion of children in cooking activities: a cross-continental survey," *Public Health Nutrition* 25.1 (2022): 36-42.

43. David San Fratello *et al*., "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Gardening in the United States: Postpandemic Expectations," *HortTechnology* 32.1 (2022): 32-38.

sales up by 300 percent.[44]

For many pandemic gardeners, it was important to feel a sense of greater independence from the traditional food supply, since media reports[45] were highlighting disruptions to food supplies and retail availability. These reports generated for many a sense of "food insecurity," characterized by limited access to safe, quality, and nutritious food (all of which should be acquired in a socially acceptable way). Food insecurity is also robustly associated with poor mental health, specifically anxiety and depression.[46]

Pre-pandemic gardening afficionados have long known the benefits of gardening when it comes to reducing stress. Gardening positions us to engage with nature at many different levels that simply make us feel good,[47] by way of (1) offering a setting with a lovely view, as through a window; (2) an immersion into natural processes and cycles, which enhances a connectedness to nature; and (3) an active participation with nature, facilitating the release of stress by physical exercise. An Italian study confirmed to no great surprise that psychopathological distress was lowered in people who engaged in gardening during the lockdowns. Researchers suggested this was due to still other factors, such as offsetting the sedentary lifestyle forced by lockdown measures.[48]

Home as the Remote Office

Up to this point, we have examined the role the pandemic played in making our homes more productive with respect to how we educate, spend time in leisure and hobby interests, and feed our families. Also of great interest is the degree to which the pandemic facilitated working-from-home

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44. Rafferty Baker, "Pandemic panic sees seed sales spike," CBC (April 7, 2020), available at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/seed-demand-spikes-amid-pandemic-1.5524298.

45. "Coronavirus: Supermarkets ask shoppers to be 'considerate' and stop stockpiling," BBC (March 15, 2020), available at https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51883440.

46. Ali Pourmotabbed *et al.*, "Food insecurity and mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis," *Public Health Nutrition* 23.10 (2020): 1,778-90.

47. Monika Egerer *et al.*, "Gardening can relieve human stress and boost nature connection during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening* 68 (2022): 127483.

48. Annalisa Theodorou et al., "Stay home, stay safe, stay green: The role of gardening activities on mental health during the Covid-19 home confinement," *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening* 61 (2021): 127091.

(WFH), and whether those WFH trends will continue.

In early 2020, merely 5.7% of all workers in the UK were working exclusively from home. This number swelled to 43.1% by April 2020, and slightly fell to 36.5% by June.[49] In the U.S., the trends were similar, with fewer than 6% of Americans working primarily from home pre-pandemic. By May 2020, the percentage had increased significantly, with approximately 35% reporting that they had worked from home in the four weeks prior to the survey.[50] Clearly, the pandemic became a catalyst for the hasty adoption and widespread acceptance of WFH environments. As the lockdowns become a memory, the trend for remote work will continue, as companies and industries come to terms with the fact that the nature and place of work has been redefined permanently.[51]

Early on during the pandemic, employees worked from home as a matter of necessity and of personal safety. Three years later, however, workers are staying home by choice. In a January 2020 Pew Research survey, 64% of respondents stated that WFH enables them to better balance work and personal life; 44% found it easier to get their work done and to meet deadlines (while only 10% found this harder); and 72% reported that WFH has not impeded advancement in their job.[52] Workers with disabilities (depending upon the type of jobs they held) are especially poised to benefit from the WFH trend, as the home environment removes many of the barriers of access they might face in their office spaces.[53]

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49. Darja Reuschke and Alan Felstead, "Homeworking in the UK: before and during the 2020 lockdown," *WISERD Report*, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research (2020), available at https://wiserd.ac.uk/publication/homeworking-in-the-uk-before-and-during-the-2020-lockdown/.

50. Patrick Coate, "Remote Work Before, During, and After the Pandemic," Quarterly Economics Briefing–Q4 2020, NCCI (January 25, 2021), available at https://www.ncci.com/SecureDocuments/QEB/QEB_Q4_2020_RemoteWork.html.

51. Phil Lord, "Work, Family, and Identity: How Remote Work Will Challenge and Change Who We Are," In *Handbook of Research on Remote Work and Worker Well-Being in the Post-COVID-19 Era* (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2021): 329-41.

52. Kim Parker, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Rachel Minkin, "COVID-19 Pandemic Continues To Reshape Work in America," Pew Research Center (February 16, 2022), available at https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/02/16/covid-19-pandemic-continues-to-reshape-work-in-america/.

53. Lisa A. Schur, Mason Ameri, and Douglas Kruse, "Telework after COVID: a 'silver lining' for workers with disabilities?" *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation* 30.4 (2020): 521-36.

In spite of the widespread acceptance of WFH, it is not without its concerns. Potential downsides for workers include managing the blurred lines between work and home life along with loss of training and promotion opportunities, since being remote often means being "out of sight, out of mind." Employers have the added concern of monitoring employee projects, and lower productivity and morale if employees find themselves too distracted at home and disconnected from their peers.[54] This disconnectedness is a significant concern. For the Pew respondents, 60% reported feeling less connected to their colleagues.[55] Fortunately, these concerns have not gone unnoticed, and researchers are looking for technological tools and tips for managers to advance "togetherness" in the virtual workspace.[56]

Post-Pandemic: What of the Home Today?

The pandemic served as a catalyst for the return of the domicile space as an epicenter of productivity. As economies open and lockdowns fade in memory, there is little reason to assume the home will return to its pre-pandemic place of relegation. In fact, many signals suggest that the post-pandemic home will enjoy its gains as a productive space for many years to come.

One signal of significance is that of education. The opening of schools has seen a decline in the numbers of homeschooled children, but not to the degree we might have expected. The National Center for Education Statistics data from 18 states in the U.S. indeed revealed that the number of homeschooling students increased (as expected) by 63% in the 2020-2021 academic year. Surprisingly, once schools opened with more permanence and with the worries of viral infection having largely waned, this number fell by only 17% the following year. What this portends is that many first-time homeschooling parents plan to continue in

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54. *Ibid*., at 522.

55. "For workers who've made the switch to teleworking, most have found more balance but less connection with co-workers," Pew Research Center (February 14, 2022), available at https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/psdt_2-16-22_covidandwork_0_1/.

56. Julia Ayache *et al*., "Feeling Closer Despite the Distance: How to Cultivate Togetherness Within Digital Spaces," *Handbook of Research on Remote Work and Worker Well-Being in the Post-COVID-19 Era* (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2021): 243-63.

their children's education journey. The reasons cited by these newcomers include "health concerns for their children, disagreement with school policies, and a desire to keep doing what has worked for their children."[57] The concerns expressed by these nascent, post-pandemic homeschoolers mirror those of veterans, who have long been disquieted with issues of school violence and bullying and expressed discontent with the school curriculum.[58] Further, many parents overseeing their children's education for the first time during the pandemic realized the degree to which school curricula has been politicized, especially when it came to content advancing critical theory and transgender ideology.[59]

In the home's reclamation as a space for hobbies and games, businesses recognize that sales may not be as robust as in 2020 but anticipate higher sales than *before* the lockdowns. Publishing house executives believe the trend in sales of books and products supporting crafts and hobbies will continue.[60]

The return to the hearth of home cooking and eating together as a family, both boosted by the lockdowns, is not anticipated to end anytime soon, either. A 2021 survey revealed that 68% of families plan to continue cooking meals at home, post-pandemic, with another 19% wanting to cook at home with even greater frequency.[61] The gardening industry, while expecting a sales dip post-pandemic, is anticipating continued robust sales for a large percentage of people who plan to *continue* gardening in earnest, as they had during the pandemic.[62]

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57. Carolyn Thompson, "Homeschooling Surge Continues Despite Schools Reopening," *Associated Press* (April 14, 2022), available at https://apnews.com/article/covid-business-health-buffalo-education-d37f4f1d12e57b72e5ddf67d4f897d9a.

58. Steven Duvall, "Homeschooling Continues to Grow in 2021," HSLDA (July 7, 2021), available at https://hslda.org/post/homeschooling-continues-to-grow-in-2021.

59. Emma Mayer, "Virginia School Board Hearing on Critical Race Theory Turns Chaotic, Two Arrested," *Newsweek* (June 23, 2021), available at https://www.newsweek.com/virginia-school-board-hearing-critical-race-theory-turns-chaotic-two-arrested-1603500.

60. "Products for Fun and Games Continue Post-lockdown," *Publishers Weekly* 269.7 (September 5, 2022): 21.

61. Russell Redman, "Study: Most U.S. consumers to stick with eating at home post-pandemic," *Supermarket News* (May 13, 2021), available at https://www.supermarketnews.com/consumer-trends/study-most-us-consumers-stick-eating-home-post-pandemic.

62. San Fratello *et al*., "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Gardening in the United States: Postpandemic Expectations."

In the wake of a pandemic that has imposed widespread illness and death, massive institutional shifts, and countless business closures, the continued strong sales in the above-mentioned market sectors testify to at least a few positive outcomes. People acquired many long-forgotten skills while in lockdowns. Whether developed as a means of survival, enhancing the health of themselves and their families, or for realizing a sense of much-needed self-efficacy and control, these skills have some degree of neurological and psychological permanence. Once someone learns how to knit, for example, and enjoys the success of having fashioned something with their own hands, they do not forget.[63] By extension, for those families who were fortunate enough to have the resources to homeschool, entertain themselves, explore new hobbies together, jointly cook meals, or even to survive together, the bittersweet rewards of these home-based activities are also not quickly forgotten.

Historically, it was the place called home where citizens learned to read their first books and write their first sentences. At home was tendered the kind and cruel realities of nature, observed in the birth of farm animals and the fruit (or failure) of the family's harvest. In the historical place of home, lessons in economics were anything but theoretical, as children and adults understood their crucial role in the material success of the family unit. The pandemic for many, then, revivified this past vision of home. If we learn anything from the lockdowns, may it be the lesson that home can be a highly suitable environment for enabling the surviving and even thriving of the natural family, during times that are both perilous and prosperous.

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63. Kelly Lambert, *Lifting Depression: a Neuroscientist's Hands-On Approach to Activating Your Brain's Healing Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 69, 70.

O World, What Else Have You Got?

Rebekah Curtis

Redefining Rich: Achieving True Wealth with Small Business, Side Hustles, and Smart Living
Shannon Hayes
Ben Bella, 2021; 224 pages, $14.95

If you'd kindly turn to the index of first lines in the poetry anthology nearest you, you'll find the O section led by two odes to the world: "O world, I cannot hold thee close enough," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and "O world, thou choosest not the better part," by George Santayana. The first lines are all we need to discern that the poets are dealing with two different *worlds* here. Millay praises cosmic magnificence, while Santayana reproaches secular empiricism. It's a happy juxtaposition, drawing attention to the facts that the world is great, and the world also has a dumb habit of squandering its own greatness.

But not everyone likes poetry, and it must be acknowledged that both poems are short on starter tips for getting one's worlds in order. For such people, *Redefining Rich* by Shannon Hayes might help Santayana and Millay make their points, in addition to making headway on the problems they consider. Where Santayana argues that "It is not wisdom to be merely wise," the Hayes version would be "It is not richness to be merely rich." O world, are you listening? You're never going to get knocked out of a tree by the glory of creation if you never have time to climb one.

Hayes describes herself as liking the terms "free spirit" and "earth mama," but those wary of woo-woo should keep reading. *Redefining Rich* exemplifies the horseshoe phenomenon, in which people at opposite

ends of a spectrum of convictions have more ideas in common with each other than they do with the less dogmatic middle. Moreover, Hayes has reconciled the joys and conundrums of the mundane not with poetry, but with a whole lot of bookkeeping.

Everyone wants to be rich. The question is what kind of riches one wants. Whereas the go-to definition of *rich* is *having a lot of money*, it's clear that those who want something else will have to think harder, and depart from norms of wealth acquisition. This is exactly what Hayes and her family have done with a family farm, the help of grandparents, and a supportive community. They don't want money—at least, not a big pile of it that can only be grown by wage slavery. They want time, access to certain spaces, and to enjoy these things with each other. *Redefining Rich* describes how they did it. The account is not a triumphalist panegyric, but a practical guide to both principles and strategies that allowed them to succeed.

This focus on principles and strategies, rather than the specifics of Hayes' own situation, allows her to advise readers who don't have, for example, a family farm. Any form of assets can be the point of entry into a life-serving personal economy. It starts with a Quality of Life Statement: think carefully about what you want, and define it explicitly in writing. The QOLS can be changed as a household's needs and interests change, but its purpose is to provide constant focus. It is a natural tool for evaluating new opportunities or demands. *Does the proposed change fit into and build up the quality of life we want, or does it drain it?*

Next, those who would redefine richness need a broader way of thinking about income. Conventional wealth is built through *meaningful employment*. Those on an alternate path will probably still need some of this, but can vastly increase their options for making a livelihood by also pursuing *business income*, *nonmonetary income*, and *passive income*. *Business income* includes not only profits generated through sales, but maximized returns through the use of LLCs, access to Section 105 HRAs for health care, and other legal and business tools. *Nonmonetary income* meets needs without expenditure: the most common instance of this is in-home caregiving, but the idea broadly includes all goods and services generated from a household's existing resources. *Passive income* includes financial investments, royalties and patronage, co-marketing with other

businesses, rental properties, and business transfers. The combination of these forms of income will look different in every situation, but any combination incorporates and maximizes the opportunities they create for each other.

All of this grows out of a recognition that the road most people travel, while it will get them through life, is crowded, bumpy, and ugly. It beats up happiness and relationships. Nearly everyone agrees there ought to be a better way, but how do we find it? Hayes identifies two approaches: fighting policy, or personal agency. Those who wish to fight policy to the utmost will obstruct and annoy fellow travelers with barricades, demonstrations, and construction projects whose benefits erode under the constant traffic. The middle of the horseshoe will occasionally be so goaded as to paste on a bumper sticker or pull over for a bit. But those who would hazard a poorly marked off-ramp never know what they might find. Goodwill, openness to adventure, and commitment to finding the next fueling station counterbalance the drawbacks of the scenic route.

This all sounds like a lot of work, but Hayes assures us she is lazy, so there must be some explanation. For one thing, she tells us, figuring out how to get organized is worth the trouble. Remember, she's some kind of loony hippie, and she has still figured out how to devise and live by schedules and procedures. It's just another form of investment that quickly pays for itself, so plug your nose, watch one of those YouTube vids about spreadsheets, and see if she's right.

But this means that the real explanation for redefining richness must be something deeper. Here it is: we get to choose our pain. We can save ourselves the struggle of figuring out how to make something like Hayes' vision work, and report for duty in someone else's world every day. There will probably be a chunk of money at the end of it. Or we can take the risk, heartbreaks, messes, and injuries that will go into building our own worlds, the crazy little world each of us wants: the world where you're allowed to take care of your own baby, drive a junker you fix yourself, or furnish your house with your grandma's furniture and a comfortable layer of clutter. That's the better part, says Hayes. You'll never be able to hold that world close enough.

Rebekah Curtis is co-author of LadyLike *(Concordia, 2015).*

Of Housing and Homes

Nicole M. King

Brave New Home: Our Future in Smarter, Simpler, Happier Housing
Diana Lind
Bold Type Books, 2020; 272 pages, $16.99

Perhaps the most famous quote about the concept of *home* hails from Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man": "Home," says one character to another, "is the place where, when you have to go there,/ They have to take you in."

The line reflects a stark reality. "Home" is more than a spiritual place. It is also a physical place. It is the place where, "when you have to go there," people remain "there," and "there" is a building or shack or cottage or abode of some kind where you can find rest for your weary soul.

We don't really like to ponder it, but much of what we call "home" has been influenced by housing policy over the years. This is a reality that Diana Lind reflects upon in her new book, *Brave New Home: Our Future in Smarter, Simpler, Happier Housing*. Lind acknowledges that the first time she put a lot of thought into the concept of "home" was when she was stuck there, with her newborn son. "When I became a parent," Lind remarks in the Introduction, "my world became centered around my house, and as a result, my values underwent an unexpected and dramatic transition." Suddenly, that extra space she thought she wanted would mean extra income needed to heat and repair, and extra time to clean. She felt isolated, trapped even, and began to wonder "how humans had survived, and in such quantity, living this way—mostly alone, each family for itself."

But of course, she continues, they hadn't survived "this way." The single-family home is "a relatively new concept in the history of humankind." Until somewhat recently, people tended to live more closely—boarding houses and multigenerational households, small family farms, or just more close-knit physical communities.

As Lind acknowledges, the home has never been entirely free of market forces. In the post-Civil War era, influenced by land speculation and mass produced steel, developers focused on high-density housing so they could maximize profit. Simultaneously, the average size of the American household was dropping. While the average American family had a bit more than five children in 1870, that number had dropped by a whole child 20 years later, in 1890 (and has continued to plummet).

The Industrial Revolution had also pushed more and more people into the cities, where reformers started to comment on the lack of good housing. The Child Welfare Manual wrote on city living: "It is hard to think of a real home stored in diminutive pigeon-holes. . . . the natural, free intercourse of the family is crowded out; there is no room to play, no place for reading-room and music and hearth-side; and so families fold up their affections too."

As a result of such negative views of city living, and with the advent of the automobile, the suburbs sprang into being. Now, the family could work in the city, but retreat to the quiet and peace of the suburbs. And with the death of the function-rich home (small family farm, craftsman's workshop, *etc.*), the home became instead a sort of domestic retreat, a safe haven from the world. It also became the abode primarily of women; early feminists began to reject the isolation and "domestic imprisonment" of the single-family home. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and others saw the home as a kind of gilt prison. (Her vision instead was cooperatives for housewives, with community dining halls and publicly funded daycare.)

A series of legislative acts later in the post-war era began to describe housing as not just a place to lay one's head, but as an investment. Suddenly, there was a financial imperative to home-ownership, encouraged by the highest ranks of the federal government. As late as the 1980s and 1990s, home-as-investment-opportunity was almost a moral imperative, as well. If you really cared about your family and its future, you bought a house.

Then, as Lind chronicles, all hell broke loose. The housing crisis of the early 2000s—with its vast tracts of unoccupied mega-mansions in Florida—made people realize how fragile the mortgage machine really was. In part due to this crisis, Millennials tended to be less obsessed with home ownership than were previous generations. They preferred experiences over things, carried greater amounts of college debt, and married later (if at all) and postponed childbearing. The average size of the American family continued to drop. Suddenly, the single-family home—with its huge price tag, vast amounts of square footage, and implied loneliness and isolation—was beginning to lose its luster.

Lind spends the rest of the book highlighting some new innovations in housing that she believes could dramatically alter the American housing landscape. Declining marriage and childbearing rates have meant more Americans are living alone than ever before, and these Americans are looking for new ways to live communally. In urban areas, "co-living" is becoming popular, with new apartment complexes offering more shared work, eating, cooking, and other living spaces, as well as programmed activities and social hours. The tiny-house industry is booming, although Lind rightly points out that most "tiny homes" are really just prettified mobile homes with heftier price tags that appeal to a certain wealthy demographic. Cities are changing their zoning legislation to allow for a greater number of "ADUs"—"accessory dwelling units," or small-scale housing that can be added to a backyard, garage, or other nearby space, either for aging family members or rental opportunities.

One of the most interesting developments Lind highlights, at least for the readers of this journal, is a rise in multigenerational living. Multigenerational living, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as three generations or more living under the same roof, is at its highest level now since the 1950s. Many things account for this, says Lind. These include an aging population in need of care, higher numbers of Asian and Hispanic households (who tend to live together), and more twenty-somethings who aren't moving out. For many, multigenerational living is a great way to help care for older family members, who in turn offer extra help in the upbringing of grandchildren. "In 2018," Lind notes, "the average American household size ticked up for the first time since 1850, in part due to extended families living together."

Multigenerational families who choose to live together tend to have specific needs—two master suites, separate living areas or kitchens. Rather than just more square footage, they need that square footage to function for two distinct family units that might choose to commingle often, but still need a place to which they can retreat. In many places, housing policy actually makes multi-generational housing more difficult, favoring the single-family norm instead of allowing houses that would essentially function as two different homes.

Why the bias? Lind writes, "Compared to a trend like co-living, multigenerational housing, intergenerational living, and grandfamilies are just not sexy. They touch on issues of human vulnerability and the need for caregiving—subjects that many people prefer to push aside." Indeed, she continues, "for the past half century, families have increasingly pushed their young and their old out of sight, paying someone else to take care of them." The elderly, in search of help with the basic tasks of living and less square footage to care for, have been relegated to retirement communities and nursing homes. And the young have been sent to daycare. One might question Lind's statement that there are "great benefits to outsourcing this work," yet agree with her that the cost alone makes it prohibitive for many families. Might multigenerational housing not be part of the solution?

Lind is on to something. As the pandemic has shown, our current homes need some modification to take on the functions of education, work, cooking, *etc*., which they were called upon in short shrift to do in early 2020. But there is indeed renewed interest in making our houses into something more closely resembling the function-rich homes of yesteryear. Homeschooling and working-from-home levels are both still up. The nation still struggles with caretaking, for young and old alike. Lind calls for some imagination, in envisioning how people might come together to provide for each other. Reimagining the family home is an excellent place to start.

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

NEW RESEARCH

Nicole M. King

Sexual Orientation Change Efforts: An Important Debate

"Sexual Orientation Change Efforts," or "SOCE," describe a number of therapeutic practices designed to help a same-sex attracted individual change his or her attraction to a heterosexual attraction. Sometimes referred to as "conversion therapy," SOCE has garnered fierce debate, and is actually prohibited in a number of states. In its place, therapists are often urged to use "affirmation therapy," which counsels the subject to embrace and find comfort with his or her sexuality.

Recently, two important papers discussed SOCE as it relates to suicide morbidity. In a paper titled "Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Suicide Ideation and Attempt Among Sexual Minority Adults, United States, 2016-2018," John R. Blosnich *et al.* argue that SOCE is associated with higher levels of suicide ideation, suicide planning, and suicide attempt, and for "[g]reater awareness of the harms of SOCE." In response, D. Paul Sullins of the Catholic University of America higlights considerable problems with the methodology used by Blosnich *et al*. Specifically, after adjusting to include timing of SOCE and suicide morbidity, Sullins finds that SOCE is not associated with higher suicide morbidity and may even offer some protection against suicide in adult populations.

To conduct their study, Blosnich *et al.* gleaned their sample from the Generations study, which assessed health and well-being across three generations of non-transgender, sexual minority adults (lesbian, gay, or bisexual). After applying the study inclusion criteria (which included

age and ethnicity parameters), the final sample consisted of 1,518 respondents. Blosnich *et al.* also measured the prevalence of "adverse childhood events" (ACEs) using 11 items indicated by the CDC, and including things such as living with a mentally ill parent, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. Suicide morbidity was captured using questions indicating suicide ideation, suicide planning, or suicide attempt—with each of these being seen as increasingly serious and more likely to lead to completed suicide. The subjects were then asked whether they had ever undergone SOCE, how often such therapies had occurred, and the setting (religious or secular, from a therapist or religious leader, *etc*.).

The researchers report that 6.9% of their sample had experienced SOCE at some point in their lives, and that 80% reported receiving it from a religious leader. Rates of experiencing SOCE were similar across age groups. The results, according to Blosnich *et al.*, indicated that "Compared with not experiencing SOCE, experiencing SOCE was associated with twice the odds of lifetime suicidal ideation, 75% increased odds of planning to attempt suicide, 88% increased odds of attempting suicide, and 67% increased odds of suicide attempt resulting in moderate or severe injury (the last did not reach statistical significace)." Even after adjusting for ACEs, which are known to be associated with suicide morbidity, "experiencing SOCE was independently associated with suicidal ideation, suicide planning, and suicide attempts." The study closes by advising, "Health care and social service providers working with sexual minorities with histories of or active suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts should be aware that cumulative trauma assessments should include a history of SOCE experiences, which may have amplified internalized stigma."

If correct, such findings would be serious indeed, and warrant increased scrutiny on the practice of SOCE. But Sullins believes that the Blosnich study, as well as three others with similar findings, make a crucial error: they leave out the timing of SOCE treatment and suicide morbidity. As Sullins puts it, "each reports an association of SOCE with suicidality as if the former caused the latter, without examining the possibility that the suicidality may have preceded recourse to therapy." In other words, how much suicidality existed *before* individuals received SOCE? Preexisting suicidality cannot be considered an effect of something that

hasn't yet been experienced. In his own study, Sullins replicates and then adjusts Blosnich *et al.*'s findings "to account for suicidality that may have preceded SOCE."

Using the Generations study, Sullins recreates Blosnich *et al.*'s models in an attempt to replicate those findings. Then, he adjusts to account for timing of suicidality, and extends his analysis beyond Blosnich *et al.*'s models "in order to examine the relationship of SOCE and suicide more fully," including the instance of repeated suicidal behavior.

When adjusting for timing, Sullins finds dramatically different results. First, he reports that over half of participants who reported suicidality "did so *before they underwent SOCE*" (emphasis added). "For every type of suicide behavior," Sullins notes, "Blosnich *et al.*'s inclusion of pre-SOCE suicide bahvior inflated the prevalence among SOCE participants to a rate higher than among those who had never undergone SOCE. . . . When only suicidality during or after SOCE is considered, the unadjusted prevalence in the SOCE group was no longer significantly higher than in the non-SOCE group for any form of suicidality, and was significantly lower for suicide ideation and planning." Furthermore, Sullins finds evidence that may indicate that suicidality is actually reduced among adults who underwent SOCE (though this is not true for minors).

Sullins concludes, "Most of the suicidality did not follow SOCE in time but preceded it," and that Blosnich *et al.*'s findings were thus invalid. He reminds the academic community that "correlation is not causation," particularly in an instance wherein the so-thought result occurred before the thing that was supposed to have caused it.

(John R. BLosnich et al.*, "Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Suicide Ideation and Attempt Among Sexual Minority Adults, United Sates, 2016-2018,"* American Journal of Public Health *110 [2020]: 1,024-30. D. Paul Sullins, "Sexual Orientation Change Efforts Do Not Increase Suicide: Correcting a False Research Narrative,"* Archives of Sexual Behavior *51 [2022]: 3,377-93.)*

Sexual Orientation Change Efforts: The Debate Continues

Following the publication of the Blosnich *et. al* and Sullins exchange on suicide morbidity and the experience of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE), several more academics took to the floor. In further exchange, four more papers attempted (unsuccessfully) to support the findings of Blosnich *et al.*, with only one supporting the findings of Sullins.

First, Blosnich *et al.* responded to Sullins, arguing that Sullins' use of the data to determine timing was incorrect, and that on average, individuals were exposed to SOCE for four years (instead of one). Blosnich *et al.* argue, "no data in the Generations study are available to assess the timing of SOCE initiation, so there is no way to establish temporal order." Sullins responds that one can, in fact, determine timing of SOCE, with answers to the question (in the Generations survey) "About how old were you the last time you received treatment to change your sexual orientation?" Furthermoe, he argues, "Just because the data do not tell us when SOCE began doesn't mean that the information on when it ended does not exist and cannot be used to make reasonable estimates regarding the relative timing of SOCE and suicidality. Blosnich *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that it can be done by actually doing it, at length, in their Commentary." However, Sullins accepts that it is possible that SOCE treatment takes longer than one year, and accepts Blosnich *et al.*'s proposed four years. He adjusts his models accordingly, and then even adds an additional two years, but the finding that SOCE does not impact suicidality (and may in fact help it in some cases) still stands.

Next, Rivera and Beach argue that Sullins is in error because he failed to use a counterfactual analysis, which they believe is less biased, because it creates a hypothetical in which the treatment group would not have received the treatment variable (in this case, SOCE). Sullins replies that counterfactual analysis would not be less biased, but nonetheless, "for those who are convinced of the superiority of this method, I am happy to do so now." He does, and finds, "the counterfactual models yield results that are very similar to those observed in the regression models presented in my study."

In a third response, Glassgold and Haldeman assert that Sullins "appears to minimize the extensive SOCE research literature of the risks

of harms from SOCE, which include suicidal ideation and attempt." In response, Sullins highlights the history of the APA's condemnation of SOCE. In 2009, an APA task force found, "There are no scientifically rigorous studies of recent SOCE that would enable us to make a definitive statement about whether recent SOCE is safe or harmful and for whom." Since that time, only three or four population studies have been added, all of which Sullins addressed in his initial study, and all of which suffer the problem of timing of suicidality. The APA changed its recommendations on SOCE based on those few, faulted studies. Sullins writes, "Glassgold and Haldeman . . . imply that my findings cannot be true because the APA policies based on those false earlier findings have already been authoritatively promulgated. As already noted, this is a case of the tail wagging the dog."

In a fourth response, Strizzi and Di Nucci ask for censorship of positive and even neutral findings about SOCE, because this information is a violation of sexual minority human rights (given a presupposed assumption that SOCE is harmful). Sullins responds, "Evidence that challenges a widely favored political outcome, they assert, is 'nefarious' and should be suppressed. If this view were to prevail, the imposition of such a test for orthodoxy on scientific inquiry would spell an end to the scientific enterprise, as only pre-approved ideas would be permitted to be discussed." Furthermore, it also ignores the "human rights" of those same-sex attracted who acknowledge they don't want to be that way.

In a final response, Rosik praises Sullins' initial paper as "a wake-up call," and argues the current body of SOCE research is a "monoculture that brings into question the replicability of its findings and likely limits the validity of its conclusions." One serious deficiency in existing SOCE research is that it focuses almost exclusively on those who still identify as LGB, ignoring any for whom SOCE may have actually been successful. Rosik notes wryly, "The situation may well be akin to assessing the benefits and harm of marital therapy using only participants recruited through divorce support groups."

The above exchange is worth noting for what it has to say about the deliberate and even deceptive blindness of most of the academic community regarding sexual orientation change efforts. In its haste to promote findings that accord with dominant cultural beliefs, the academic

community has ignored or suppressed data that indicate that SOCE may not be harmful, and may in fact be helpful. In doing so, such academics have also ignored the not-insignificant number of same-sex attracted individuals who express a desire to change their orientation.

Sullins has added significantly to this body of research, and defended his work well against vicious attack. Let us hope that his findings gain an ear with those who make decisions regarding policy, and that the rights of the same-sex attracted to choose their own treatment might be protected.

(For complete coverage, see Archives of Sexual Behavior *52.3 [2023]: 865-99.)*

Marriage Good for Tumor Survival

Studies have long shown the benefit of marriage to health and well-being, in any number of different areas. Married couples simply have better social support, and also tend to live healthier lifestyles than do their divorced and never-married counterparts. A new study out of China now demonstrates the benefits of marriage to upper digestive tract tumor survival, and yet again, marital status makes a significant difference.

In opening their paper, the team of Chinese researchers begins by highlighting the importance of marital status to health, particularly to cancer prognosis. "Marital status," they write, "has been increasingly considered as an independent factor in the prognostic assessment of many cancers." The team now turns its attention to upper digestive tract tumors (UDTTs), which accounted for 6.8% of new cancers and 8.9% of cancer-related deaths in 2018 and are the seventh most frequent type of cancer. (The upper digestive tract includes the oral cavity, larynx, and esophagus, and is thus particularly affected by behaviors like drinking and smoking.) While there has been much research into the benefits of marital status on various illnesses, few studies have focused on the relationship between marriage and UDTT survival. The researchers now seek to remedy this gap.

To conduct their study, the researchers analyze a huge dataset of 282,189 eligible patients, between the years 1975 and 2016. Notably, the "proportion of never-married patients continued to increase" in each 14-year interval, consistent with the national trend of declining marriage

rates. Also interesting is that a higher proportion of SCC (squamous cell carcinoma) was found in the never-married and divorced and separated groups, and a lower proportion in the married group. Also consistent with married-individual health practices, most Stage I tumors were found in the married group, while most Stage IV cancers were found in the never-married group. (Married couples are more likely to engage in health practices like regular check-ups, preventive care, *etc.*)

In line with the findings of many others, this team also discovered that marriage was good for UDTT survival. "The never-married group performed significantly worse," the researchers state, and "married status plays a significant role as a protective factor in patients with UDTTs, especially for men." The researchers highlight that this particular type of cancer is "closely related to psychological and behavioral factors, and the marital relationship has a significant impact on it through psychological and behavioral differences." Unmarried patients, the researchers summarize, tend to "display greater stress and depression" at a diagnosis of cancer, which can damage the immune response and hinder recovery. They also tend to discover cancer later, seek treatment less, and may partake in more stress-induced behaviors like smoking or drinking. Married patients, on the other hand, are far more likely to benefit from increased social support from their spouse.

In closing, the researchers recommend that marital status be considered when predicting the prognosis of patients with UDTTs, and caution that "never married men with UDTTs also need more attention." In yet another deadly disease, the protective power of marital status has become apparent.

(Maofeng Qing et al.*, "Effect of Marital Status on Upper Digestive Tract Tumor Survival: Married Male Patients Exhibited Better Prognosis,"* Frontiers in Surgery *9.880893 [2022].)*

Perceived Marriage Squeeze in Rural China

China's disastrous, decades-long one-child policy has led to a much-studied female deficit in that country. Due to urban migration, among other factors, this deficit is even worse in rural areas. Yet, the pressure to marry, especially for men, remains high. In that country, marriage

is still considered an important marker of having "arrived" or attained adulthood. So it is no surprise that the lack of female partners is causing considerable distress, particularly for young men in rural China. To better understand this "perceived marriage squeeze" and its relationship to subjective well-being, Chinese researchers Qunlin Zhang and Zhibin Li are now trying to understand if a "sense of coherence" might mediate the stress of the marriage market.

Zhang and Li open by asserting that while "Many studies have discussed the potential risks that unmarried rural men bring to families, communities, and society . . . their well-being and development have been less discussed." The researchers point out studies that have indicated "marriage-squeezed men have lower psychological welfare, subjective welfare, SWB [subjective well-being], and lower quality of life compared with married men." However, few previous studies have sought to understand how mediating factors might alleviate such stressors. This research team focuses on a "sense of coherence," defined as "an individual's ability to cope with stressful situations and life events. . . . People with a high level of SOC [sense of coherence] can deal with stressful life events and problems more effectively to reduce the perception of pain and maintain better physical and mental health." Many studies have shown that SOC is correlated with higher well-being, and inversely correlated with depression and anxiety.

The research team obtained their data via survey, administered from July to September 2020, resulting in a sample of 417. They measured satisfaction with life, perceived marriage squeeze, and sense of coherence, while controlling for variables like age, income, education, and other factors. They found, unsurprisingly, that perceived marriage squeeze was negatively correlated with sense of well-being, particularly for older men (who might have begun to view themselves as lifelong bachelors and, hence, "losers"). Moreover, a sense of coherence "was significantly positively related to the SWB of unmarried rural men. . . . Specifically, unmarried rural men with a higher level of SOC had higher SWB." Further analysis revealed "that SOC played a partial mediating role in the relationship between [perceived marriage squeeze] and [subjective well-being]." The researchers believe that a sense of coherence could "mitigate the negative impact" of the perceived marriage squeeze. They close by

recommending, "This mediation model has the potential to develop targeted prevention and intervention programs" to enhance the well-being of unmarried rural men in China.

What this study also shows, however, is the tragic result of decades of forced family planning, and what happens when a state begins to deliberately limit family size.

(Qunlin Zhang and Zhibin Li, "Perceived Marriage Squeeze and Subjective Well-Being Among Unmarried Rural Men in China: The Mediating Role of Sense of Coherence," American Journal of Men's Health *17.1 [2023], doi: 10.1177/15579883231157975.)*

Studying Marriage Intentions in Chinese Students

"With the second demographic transition," opens a new study, "the marriage rate in China has decreased annually. This reduction will have a key impact on national economic and social development." This line is in fact rather understated. The result of both China's disastrous one-child policy (which dramatically skewed the sex ratio), and our modern age's rising sense of individualism, the marriage and fertility rates in China have been tumbling for many years now. As Jianwei Xie and Xiaochang Hong, the authors of this new study, point out, the marriage rate between 2019 and 2020 alone dropped a staggering 12.2%. And while the most common age to marry used to be between 20 and 24, it is now 25-29. The authors believe that China is now experiencing the full effects of the second demographic transition, and they warn that continued low fertility and an aging population will wreak havoc on the state.

To the end of better understanding why young people are delaying or foregoing marriage, Xie and Hong examine the effects of "planned behavior." "The theory of planned behaviour [sic]," they write, "explains the general decision-making process of individual behaviour from the perspective of information processing and is based on the expected value theory. It claims that individual behaviour is the result of deliberate planning." Chinese young people's actual behavior will be affected by their attitudes and intentions toward it. The authors propose four hypotheses—attitudes toward marriage, subjective norm (social influences), and perceived control will all affect Chinese young people's marriage

intentions. The fourth hypothesis is that, given the high education rates of Chinese women and lingering inequalities at home and in childcare participation, women will have lower marriage intentions than men.

To examine these hypotheses, the authors design two questionnaires, and administer them to 850 students at Wenzhou Medical University, Wenzhou University, and Zhejiang Industry and Trade Vocational College. After eliminating a number of invalid responses, the researchers were left with a sample of 772 questionnaires. They found support for all their hypotheses: "Structural equation model analyses showed that behavioural attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control all had significant positive impacts on marriage intention." In addition, women were, in fact, less likely than men to plan marriage.

Encouragingly, "the marriage intentions of college students were not low." Although this sample didn't see marriage as necessary, they nonetheless expressed willingness to try to get married. The main attitude contributing to their desire to marry was that marriage would give them a "companion for spiritual support." Unfortunately for the future of Chinese society, childbearing was the least compelling reason to marry. The "reproductive function," summarize Xie and Hong, "was the least valued. This indicates that even though college students are willing to get married, they may not be willing to bear children in the future." Also unsurprising is that family—particularly parents and older relatives—were more likely to pressure students to get married than were friends. In regards to the social control hypothesis, Chinese students "believed that a good financial condition, stable work, a clear plan, and positive opinions on marriage expressed by the media would make it easier for them to get married." Elaborating on that last, the authors explain that the media prefers to publicize things like celebrity divorces, infidelity, and even domestic abuse rather than more positive aspects of marriage. This kind of negative coverage, they believe, "contributes to form irrational opinions about marriage."

In closing, the authors state their belief that their study "provides implications for policies and plans to promote marriage rates." As they write, "the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm, and the stronger the perceived behavioral control," the greater the likelihood of Chinese young people seeking marriage. They especially highlight the

importance of changing young people's attitudes toward fertility, and list a number of existing Chinese policies to that end.

This study is a valuable contribution to the literature on marriage, fertility, and intentions in China. And while the researchers have a number of excellent suggestions to boost Chinese young people's marriage intentions, these might be too little, too late for an aging, child-poor Chinese state.

(Jianwei Xie and Xiaochang Hong, "Research on Factors Affecting Chinese College Students' Marriage Intention: Applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour," Frontiers in Psychology *13:868275 [2022].)*

The Effect of Income Shocks on Marriage and Fertility in Sweden

In the 1960s, famed economist Gary Becker wrote a series of papers arguing that decisions like marriage and childbearing were subject to many of the normal rules and constraints of economics. Things like income, jobs, supply and demand, *etc.*, were important to family formation. Becker's predictions, however, have been "notoriously difficult" to test, writes an international team of researchers in a new working paper. Nonetheless, this team seeks to better understand the role of large, positive income shocks to Swedish adults' chances of getting married, staying married, and having children. What they find is not unexpected, but still highly interesting.

To conduct their study, the researchers examine data from three different lotteries in Sweden, and match these three samples of lottery players to population-wide registers. They then examine how lottery wins affect individuals' chances of getting married, divorcing, or having children in the short run (two years), medium run (five years), and long run (ten years). Overall, they find, "unmarred lottery players who unexpectedly receive a substantial windfall are more likely to get married." Furthermore, the effects are sizeable—the players are 25% more likely to get married in the short run, 20% in the medium run, and 9% in the long run. These results are from the pooled data, however. A breakdown by sex indicates that results for women are almost nonexistent. The effects on marriage formation are in fact the highest for low-income men. Higher-income men, goes the theory, already have a greater chance

of being married, because their wealth and earning potential are more attractive to potential female spouses. For low-income men, however, lottery winnings make them more attractive potential mates.

The results for divorce are less pronounced. In the pooled sample, the researchers find the effects of lottery winnings are essentially zero on the probability of divorce. But again, these findings are more nuanced when broken down by sex. For men, large income windfalls in fact stabilize marriage. For women, on the other hand, and particularly for low-income women, lottery winnings make divorce more likely, but only in the short term. "These gendered treatment effects," the authors write, "are consistent with a large body of empirical evidence showing higher husband's earnings or employment stabilize marriages, while wife's income or employment have an opposite effect." The authors also speculate that income matters primarily to marriages already on the verge of divorce, which is why the effect is much larger in the short term.

Finally, the authors examine the effects of lottery winnings on childbearing, and again find difference in the male and female groups. For men, lottery winnings make childbearing more likely. For women, winning has no effect. "Our results," the researchers write, "are consistent with children being normal goods, as we find clear evidence that lottery wealth increases fertility in the pooled sample and in the subsample of male winners." However, they continue, a "back-of-the-envelope calculation" suggests that as much as 20-40% of male winners' higher fertility rate can be explained by their higher marriage rate.

In short, what the researchers find is consistent with many large bodies of research on the economic constraints of marriage, divorce, and childbearing. These findings are also consistent with a more gendered understanding of marriage, in which women are still looking for men who make more than they do.

(David Cesarini et al.*, "Fortunate Families? The Effects of Wealth on Marriage and Fertility," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 31039 [March 2023], available at http://www.nber.org/papers/w31039.)*

Married Are Healthier, Happier

A large body of research has already shown that the married tend to live longer, healthier, and happier lives than their never-married or divorced/separated peers. As the authors of a new study on the effects of marriage point out, however, marriage trends have undergone drastic changes in the last century. Marriage rates are now roughly half what they were 100 years ago, and the divorce rate is high. This is even more concerning, given the positive health and protective effects of marriage.

The researchers seek to study these relationships, with one important distinction. They wish to determine the effect of first-time marriage, and the act of marriage itself as compared to the act of staying married. What many studies have assessed is whether those in their data sets have remained married, and compared those individuals to those who have divorced. But this research team seeks to understand more specifically what first-time entry into marriage does for health and well-being, as compared to first-time divorce or remaining single.

This study pulls data from the Nurses' Health Study II, a large national survey of 116,412 American nurses, enrolled in 1989, with subsequent follow-up surveys given biennially. The researchers examine those nurses who were unmarried in 1989, but became married before the next wave in which marital status was assessed (1993). This sample consisted of 11,830 nurses. Similarly, the divorced sample consisted of those who reported being married in 1989, but became divorced by 1993. And those who reported being married in both 1989 and 1993 were the "stayed married" set. A wide range of outcomes was measured to assess physical health and psychological well-being, including all-cause mortality, type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer, obesity, *etc.* For psychological well-being, the researchers looked at positive affect, optimism, purpose in life, hopefulness, social integration, and emotional support, as well as several indicators of negative psychological well-being. The study controlled for a number of factors, including age, ethnicity, income, education, working night shifts, and childhood abuse victimization. They also established a baseline for health behaviors like preventive healthcare use, heavy drinking, smoking, physical activity, and healthy diet.

The results were clear: "Among participants who were initially never married, those who became married had a 35% lower risk of all-cause

mortality." They also enjoyed greater psychological well-being, and less psychological distress. (In this dataset, marriage was only a little associated with other health behaviors.) Similarly, study participants who were initially married but became divorced or separated reported substantially lower levels of social integration, and greater levels of depression and loneliness, as compared to those who remained married. The researchers also concluded that "Marital dissolution was possibly also related to a 19% higher risk of all-cause mortality and greater risks of cardiovascular disease and smoking," although these associations reached the conventional but not corrected levels.

In summary, the researchers point out that their study adds to the literature with its focus on first marriage, control for health status and a wide range of variables, and the size and long-term follow-up in the sample. They close by suggesting online marital counseling programs, and by suggesting, "While marriage is clearly a powerful social bond, all people need social relationships and community support." Indeed, but what research has also made clear is that such "social relationships and community support" cannot compare to the value of marriage for health and longevity.

(Ying Chen et al.*, "Marital transitions during earlier adulthood and subsequent health and well-being in mid- to late-life among female nurses: An outcome-wide analysis,"* Global Epidemiology *5 [2023].)*

Low Sperm Count—A Global Crisis

In 2017, an international team of researchers reported on declining sperm counts in North America, Europe, and Australia. The literature revealed shocking drops in sperm count on these continents, and the article generated plenty of consternation and publicity. (One of the researchers, Shanna Swann, has since authored a book on the subject, *Count Down*, reviewed in *The Natural Family* 35.3-4.) Now, the authors are conducting a follow-up to their initial research. Their purpose is partly to update their review with new research, and partly to focus on parts of the world that had been excluded in the first review—namely, South/Central America, Asia, and Africa.

The researchers open their article by limning the parameters of their

search: January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2019. In this review, they seek to answer two questions. First, could a similar trend be observed in South/Central America, Asia, and Africa? And second, did the low sperm count patterns they observed in their 2017 paper continue?

First, the authors highlight the importance of their research. In addition to being an indicator of fertility, "[i]ncreasingly strong evidence links reduced sperm count and concentration to increases in all-cause mortality and morbidity." To evaluate whether sperm count has continued to drop, and has dropped in the study areas, the researchers conduct a comprehensive search of PubMed/MEDLINE and EMBASE databases. They search both titles and abstracts for certain key words, while filtering out animal studies. They further divide eligible studies into two groups: "unselected," which studied men unaware of their fertility status (college students, men entering the military, *etc.*), and "fertile," featuring men whose partners had born a child or who were pregnant. After excluding a number of studies for different reasons, and extracting data and running sensitivity analyses, the researchers are left with 38 new studies. This number, added to their previous group of studies, yields a total of 223 studies based on samples collected from 57,168 men in the period 1973-2018.

The answer to both questions regarding sperm count, it turns out, is a resounding "yes." "Combining results from all men," the research team writes, "SC declined steeply . . . between 1973 and 2018 when using simple linear models." Sperm counts declined almost 1% per year for all men combined, and by a shocking 41.5% total between 1973 and 2018. After separating the two groups (unselected and fertile), and adjusting for covariates, the team notes a "strong decline in SC among unselected men but not among fertile men." Furthermore, the team comments, the literature provides "strong evidence, for the first time, of a decline in sperm counts among men from South/Central America, Asia, and Africa, as well as a world-wide decline in the 21st century, with data suggesting the pace of this decline has accelerated" since their last study.

The researchers close their study with a note of alarm. "This substantial and persistent decline," they write, "is now recognized as a significant public health concern." This concern is so great that in 2018, a group "of leading clinicians and scientists called for governments to acknowledge

decreased male fertility as a major public health problem and to recognize the importance of male reproductive health for the survival of the human (and other) species." The team calls for immediate research into causes for the alarming drop in sperm count, as well as an "immediate focused response" to prevent further reductions.

Though dismal in its findings, this study is nonetheless a welcome update to the team's 2017 paper. Let us hope that policymakers take its results seriously, and attempt to address this alarming finding.

(Hagai Levine et al.*, "Temporal trends in sperm count: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis of samples collected globally in the 20th and 21st centuries,"* Human Reproduction Update *29.2 [2023]: 157-76.)*

Homeschooling Not a Predictor of Abuse

In 2020, when the pandemic was in full force and Americans and others the world over were taking to homeschooling out of sheer necessity, Harvard Law's Elizabeth Bartholet argued vehemently for a ban on homeschooling. She asserted that homeschooling was dangerous for children for a number of reasons, one of which was the likelihood of abuse within the home. Given the seriousness of her claims, one would suspect that she had valid data to back them up.

Alas, this was not the case, as Brian Ray and M. Danish Shakeel argue in a new paper on the topic. Papers like Bartholet's, argue Ray and Shakeel, "are criticized for offering policy recommendations related to child protection without providing representative empirical evidence on child abuse and neglect across school sectors." Indeed, until this paper, such empirical evidence was hard to come by. All reports indicate that rates of child abuse in the U.S. are horrifically high, but these reports suffer from a number of problems. One is that they are collected from adults, years after the abuse would have taken place, because children are unlikely to report abuse out of either shame or fear of retaliation from the offending adult. The second weakness, at least for the purposes of this article, is that such reports do not report on school sector.

Ray and Shakeel seek to remedy this gap, by developing and administering a survey given to a large, representative sample of American adults across geographical sectors. The survey, which consisted of 37 unique

questions on abuse and neglect, was administered by the Barna Group during September and October of 2021. Background information (number of people in the household, income level, education background, religious service attendance, race/ethnicity, *etc.*) was also collected, and questions asked regarding type of school attended (public, private Christian, other private, private secular, charter/magnet, home, and conventional). Questions were coded on a Likert Scale, where 1=Never True, and 5=Very Often True. The six themes related to abuse/neglect were: sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, abandonment, and lack of family/social support.

In analyzing their data, the researchers find that "without controls, it appears that an increase in the percent of school career spent in homeschool is positively associated with most abuse or neglect outcomes." The magnitude of these coefficients, however, is small. More importantly, when controls are added, "the statistically significant signs for the coefficient on homeschool vanish." This leads the researchers to summarize, "Hence, school sector appears to be an insignificant issue when it comes to the larger problem of child abuse and neglect after the role of demographics is considered."

In other words, it is demographic factors—income level, household makeup, *etc.*—that are strongly associated with risk of abuse, and not school sector. And what are the demographic factors to watch for? Unsurprisingly, family structure is one of the most important. Ray and Shakeel find, "Strong family structure is negatively associated with abuse or neglect. Respondents growing up in other than two-parent households and those spending more years in foster care are more likely to have experienced abuse or neglect." Other factors like single parent household, presence of other adults in the household, and stepparent presence are associated with higher levels of abuse and neglect. In addition, "All else equal, individuals who grew up in household sizes of 4–8 experienced less abuse than individuals growing up in household size of 2." This leads the researchers to suggest, "It appears that larger families protect children from abuse or neglect."

When abuse of the homeschooled does occur, Ray and Shakeel find, it is more common that it happens outside the home—at a co-operative or part-time school setting, athletic activities, or other such events. They

find that "the chances of abuse for homeschooling children at family are half or less than at community or school—only the latter two being statistically significant."

Based on this large, representative data set collecting information on abuse and school sector—the first of its kind—it appears that policymakers should be much more concerned about family structure, and much more supportive of homeschooling.

(Brian D. Ray and M. Danish Shakeel, "Demographics are Predictive of Child Abuse and Neglect but Homeschool Versus Conventional School is a Non-issue: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Survey," Journal of School Choice *[2022], doi: 10.1080/15582159.2022.2108879.)*

Culture of the 1990s: Reeling From the Pain of Divorce

A recent paper by Olga Thierbach-McLean of Hamburg University points out that 1990s culture is back, in a big way. "In what is just the latest in a series of '90s nostalgia bouts, a massive revival is presently underway in music, cinema, television, and fashion," she opens. From pop songs reminiscing about the 90s, to the recent surge in popularity of television series *Friends* and the release of the movie *Captain Marvel*, American pop culture is set on bringing back the 1990s. In this setting, Thierbach-McLean examines the "90's upsurge in divorce-themed art as a distinct cultural product of the latchkey generation," and suggests that beneath the happy façade, a poisonous anger was brewing.

Thierbach-McLean opens her discussion by naming several historical developments that led to a more vibrant, carefree time in American art and music. The great wars were over, and the collapse of the Berlin Wall had just signaled the end of the Cold War. Employment was up, the federal budget saw a surplus, violent crime was down, and generally, things seemed more materially stable and prosperous in this decade than in many before.

In spite of this seemingly happy-go-lucky vibe, however, American culture was characterized by angst, the "grunge" aesthetic, and a sense of purposelessness and even of abandonment. "One of the hymns of the decade," the author writes, "Beck's alternative rock song 'Loser' (1993), famously featured the chorus 'I'm a loser baby, so why don't you kill

me?'" The "grunge" look in fashion was characterized by "torn clothes, unhealthily pallid complexions, and smeared makeup." What Thierbach-McLean terms "a taste for the bleak" also became dominant in literature and cinema, with authors like Bret Eastin Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk, and films like *Pulp Fiction* and *Natural Born Killers* (both 1994).

So what accounted for the seeming disparity, between relative peace and stability, and the despair that Generation X seemed to wallow in during the 1990s? Thierbach-McLean blames "the legacy of an unprecedented divorce wave." As another scholar, Susan Gregory Thomas, put it, each generation was shaped by a war. The Greatest Generation was formed by World War II; Boomers by Vietman; and "Generation X's war [. . .] was the ultimate war at home: divorce." Marriage as stabilizing social force and economic necessity had given way to marriage as self-fulfillment and the "soulmate" mentality. "Compared to the more pragmatic traditional approach," writes Thierbach-McLean, "such highly romantically charged pretensions to a partnership were more prone to being thwarted when the routine of married life set in." And thwarted they were—divorce rates more than doubled from 1960 to 1980, leaving roughly half of American children to see their parents split.

In addition to facing this abandonment and turmoil at home, the "latchkey generation" was also "exposed to what has been characterized as 'an era of unremitting hostility toward children'" in public spaces as well. "With societal priorities shifting from an emphasis on the needs of the young to that of adults, mainstream America became increasingly prone to perceiving children as 'barriers to adult self-discovery.'"

One of the prime examples of Generation X and 1990s culture, Kurt Cobain of rock band Nivana, was vocal about the pain his parents' own divorce caused him. He said in an interview once that at around seven years old, his own parents split, as did those of many others on his block. Cobain described the divorces as "a plague, like a total disease." He and his friends were left wondering what happened, what went wrong, and why their parents were leaving. Thierbach-McLean argues that "coming from a broken home became a vital part of entertainers' appeal in the 1990s, a badge of authentcitiy when it came to speaking for an abandoned youth." She continues to list examples of movies, songs, and other art that focused on how divorce ravaged the well-being of children, and writes

that "reckless and self-absorbed parents and suffering children proliferated in 1990s American pop culture."

One might think that such a piece, which seems to shed some important light on some very real pain that this generation suffered, might conclude by recommending that parents stay married, or reminding all of the importance of stable families for childhood wellbeing. Instead, Thierbach-McLean at least in part blames the kids: "Such indiscriminate censuring of divorce as downright wrong all but excluded the angle that it can also be handled in a civil manner and that—despite the emotional stress almost inevitably involved—it may be preferable to exposing children to constant tension, strife, or even violence between incompatible spouses." Indeed, she continues, by singling out divorce itself for their pain (and not the "bankrupt" marriages that preceded it), these 1990s children were guilty of "a distinctly conservative and even reactionary narrative." Even worse, "behind the female bravado there was the pining for the good old days when women were still housewives and mothers."

Although Thierbach-McLean finally does acknowledge that this period was "a powerful counterreaction to the societal trend initiated in the 1960s to deny the negative effects of familiar disruption on children," she also blames the generation for its "surprisingly one-dimensional discourse" and "finger pointing at the personal defects of parents." "This reflex," she argues, "to simply snap back to an allegedly better past did little to collective negotiate and devise workable solutions for a future in which parents, and particularly mothers, could aspire to affectionate marriages and personally rewarding lives."

This paper is fascinating for what it finds on the cultural despair wrought by decades of increased divorce and family disruption. It is almost equally fascinating for the harshness it expresses toward the generation that suffered so deeply.

(Olga Thierbach-McLean, "The Product of a Spoiled America," IJAS Online *10 [2020-2021]: 4-17.)*

Marriage and Babies: Still a Package Deal

Around the world, but especially in the developed, industrialized world, fertility has been falling for decades. Indeed, in places like Asia and parts of Western and Eastern Europe alike, fertility has been below replacement level for many years. At the same time, however, nonmarital fertility has risen sharply in the last century. This leads some scholars to wonder: If societies were to relax their harshness toward unwed births, could such births be a solution to the problems of low fertility?

The answer, according to Lyman Stone and Spencer James in a joint Institute for Family Studies and Wheatley Institute study, is a resounding "No." The authors survey vast amounts of global data, and draw a definite conclusion: Marriage still matters for fertility, now so even more than in previous decades.

To conduct their study, Stone and James survey a wide variety of global databases, including the National Survey of Family Growth, the World Values and European Values Surveys, World Bank Development Indicators, National Censuses, and many others. They look at three specific areas/questions: First, the link between marriage and fertility in the U.S; second, changes in marriage behavior (later marriage) and their relationship to fertility in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries; and third, nonmarital and marital births in the particularly low-fertility countries of Asia.

In the U.S., the scholars examine two specific questions. First, does the likelihood that a woman gets married increase her likelihood of having a child? And second, does having a child increase her likelihood of getting married? They find that "Across eight decades of American demographic history, the likelihood of having a first birth always rises dramatically after marriage." Even in the 1980s, perhaps the height of unmarried childbearing, a woman's chance of having a baby tripled after she became married. Since then, the link has become stronger. Similarly, unwed pregnancy (or childbearing) tended to quickly lead to marriage before the 1970s. In the 1970s and 1980s, having a child did not substantially change one's chances of marriage, but since 1990, unwed childbearing tended to increase a woman's chances of getting married once again.

For the second research question, regarding later marriage and fertility in OECD countries, the researchers found a clear link between

later marriage and reduced fertility. In these countries, which also tend to be higher income, "Marriages occurring two years later, on average, are associated with fertility rates being about 0.03 to 0.04 children lower per woman." And although such changes seem miniscule, the researchers assure us that "the effect is very significant."

Finally, in the countries of Asia, Stone and James find that overall, nonmarital fertility has remained low, but so has married fertility. Some try to suggest that removing stigmas around unmarried fertility will dramatically change the TFR of these below-replacement countries, but the researchers argue that because married fertility is also so very much lower than in other countries, factors other than marriage (economic forces, grueling work weeks, highly competitive environments, crowded housing, *etc.*) are to blame. These problems must be addressed for fertility to stabilize.

The researchers close by reiterating strongly that marriage still matters for fertility, and in some ways, it matters more now than it did 20-30 years ago. Policies aimed at promoting fertility cannot ignore the promotion of marriage.

(Lyman Stone and Spencer James, "Marriage Still Matters: Demonstrating the Link Between Marriage and Fertility in the 21st Century," Institute for Family Studies and Wheatley Institute [October 2022].)

More Premarital Sex, More Divorce

The modern view is that "sowing one's wild oats" is a necessary part of the experience of being a young adult. Before a young person is ready to settle down, he or she should have a multiplicity of sexual experiences. This will help the individual determine his or her sexual chemistry, gain sexual knowledge and experience, and even help guide toward an eventual desire to marry. These theories, according to a team of researchers in a new study for the Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University, are deeply misguided. In a nation-wide study, the authors find number of lifetime sex partners to be "one of the strongest predictors of divorce in social science research."

To conduct their study, the researchers used data from the National Couples and Pornography Study, which recruited individuals across the

United States using quotas for age, race, education level, and geographic region to create a demographically diverse sample. To qualify for this study, the subjects needed to be at least 18 years old and married to a person of the opposite sex, which led to a final sample size of 3,750. The individuals were then asked about their lifetime sexual partners, both within a committed relationship and outside of it (to gain information about more casual, "hook-up" experiences), and the quality of their current marriages. The study controlled for relationship length, religiosity, and biological sex.

The results indicated, unsurprisingly, that premarital sex is common. In the United States, only about 10-20% of married adults report having only had sex with their spouse. About a third of married adults reported 3-6 lifetime sexual partners, 20% between 7 and 14, and another 12% more than 15. Though this data may seem dismal, the researchers find it somewhat encouraging: "A significant minority of young adults are waiting until marriage to have sex or are at least reserving sex for a committed relationship that is moving toward marriage." (The study did not assess whether first sexual encounter took place before or after marriage.) The numbers were similar for both men and women.

Next, the researchers assessed the quality of study participants' marriage, and compared that to the number of lifetime sexual partners. They found. unequivocally, that "across all our analyses, as the number of dating sex partners went up, the relationship quality reported was lower." First, the researchers assessed relationship satisfaction, using a number of questions pertaining to communication, conflict resolution, and time spent together. The "sexually inexperienced" group (1 lifetime sexual partner) and the "less experienced" group (2-4 partners) reported similar levels of satisfaction; after that, satisfaction dropped precipitously. Next, the researchers asked questions about relationship stability, assessing whether and how often the couple had pondered splitting up. This time, clear differences emerged between the "sexually inexperienced group" and all other groups; this group was three times more likely than highly experienced individuals to be in a stable marriage. Finally, the researchers asked questions about sexual satisfaction and emotional connection. Again, the "inexperienced" group fared the best, though the less experienced group was close behind. Contrary to common wisdom, "Those in

the Inexperienced group again showed the greatest likelihood of reporting that they are 'very satisfied' with all aspects of their sexual relationship, with more than 1 in 5 reporting high sexual satisfaction."

Far from being helpful to later relationship formation and quality, then, premarital sex with a variety of partners (whether in a committed relationship or in more casual encounters) actually seems to be damaging. Startlingly, for every additional sex partner, the researchers found a drop of 4% in later marital relationship and sexual satisfaction, and a drop of 6.5% for relationship stability. The researchers conclude their study by suggesting that "Successful monogamy requires spouses to develop 'person-centered love' rather than an 'experience-centered attraction.'" Sexual restraint before marriage, far from being a hindrance, helps individuals to exercise these skills and gain more practice in "person-centered love."

(Brian J. Willoughby et al.*, "The Myth of Sexual Experience: Why Sexually Inexperienced Dating Couples Actually Go On to Have Stronger Marriages," the Wheatley Institute [2023].)*