

## **Big Daddy: Paternalistic Government versus Liberty, Prosperity, and the Family**

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A note about terminology: The family has been the primary fundamental social unit since time immemorial. The primary relationship within the family—indeed its *sine qua non*—is marriage between a man and woman. Marriage is the fundamental building block from which other familial relationships derive. The terms “family” and “marriage,” then, although not synonymous, are so inextricably intertwined in both real life and the academic literature as to be almost interchangeable. Thus, observations, data, analyses, etc. about marriage serve readily as a virtual proxy for the family. For example, when we talk about disintegration of the family, we are talking about the decline in marriage and vice versa.

### **Introduction: The Economic Benefits of Intact Families**

The economic significance of intact nuclear families (i.e., father, mother, and children) is enormous. The evidence that the family yields pronounced economic benefits to individuals, and therefore, to societies, is voluminous and conclusive. We can see the economic value of intact families most clearly by comparing the economic status of intact families with that of single-parent families.

Heritage Foundation analyst Robert Rector calls marriage “America's greatest weapon against child poverty.” In support of this assertion, Rector cites this grim statistic: “The poverty rate for single parents with children in the United States 2009 was 37.1%. The rate for married couples with children was 6.8%. Being raised in a married family reduced the child's probability

of living in poverty by about 82%. ...Even when married couples are compared to single parents with the same level of education, the married poverty rate will still be more than 75% lower.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Brad Wilcox, one of the keynote speakers at this conference, there are costly negative socioeconomic consequences to children growing up without an intact family: 1) the odds of incarceration for young men from single-parent households are more than double than for young men who grow up with both mother and father present;<sup>2</sup> 2) teenage girls whose father left them between the ages of 6 and 18 are more than five times as likely to get pregnant as girls whose fathers didn't leave the family;<sup>3</sup> 3) teenagers from single-parent families are almost twice as likely to drop out of high school as those from intact families.<sup>4</sup>

Unmarried mothers who cohabit with a man are not doing their children any favors. Teens in such households are more than twice as likely to indulge in substance abuse and 60% less likely to graduate from high school than are teens in intact, married families. School-aged children in cohabitating households experience emotional problems, such as depression, at almost five times the frequency of their peers in intact, married families.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Whaples, Professor of Economics at Wake Forest University, relying heavily on the landmark study “The Socio-Economic Benefits of Marriage” by Joel Schwartz, cites additional positive effects of marriage, including significantly lower rates of infant mortality among married women than in unmarried women and a spectacular differential in life

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Rector, “Marriage: America’s Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty,” Special Report No.117, Sept. 5, 2012, 1; Heritage Foundation Web site, <http://report.heritage.org/sr117> (accessed December 3, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> W. Bradford Wilcox, “Put a Ring on It: Why Marriage Matters to Children, Couples, and Communities,” PowerPoint presentation given at a Values & Capitalism Conference hosted by American Enterprise Institute, January 18, 2014, Slide #14.

<sup>3</sup> Wilcox, “Put a Ring,” slide #15.

<sup>4</sup> Wilcox, “Put a Ring,” slide #16.

<sup>5</sup> Wilcox, “Put a Ring,” slide 19.

expectancy—“Annual mortality rates for unmarried people are roughly 50% higher among women but 250% higher among men.”<sup>6</sup>

Given these marked pathologies, the statistic that only 6% of children were born out of wedlock in the mid-1960s, but that 40.8% of all children born in the United States in 2010 were born outside of marriage is profoundly unsettling.

### **The family in a larger context**

As essential as it is to understand the socioeconomic importance of intact families, we must realize that the health of the family and its future is central not only to our national prosperity but to our liberty. Furthermore, both our prosperity and our liberty depend on our ethical norms and moral values, and hence, on the state of religion in our society.

Indeed, historically viewed, faith and family have been the two main pillars of American society and the abundant liberty and prosperity that have flourished here. The decline in the influence and cultural predominance of the Judeo-Christian tradition—the subject of last year's conference—parallels the decline in the family. The decline in the family also parallels the growth of the state to a multi-trillion-dollar leviathan that has left us both less free than we used to be (The Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal “2014 Index of Economic Freedom” ranks the U.S. as the 12<sup>th</sup> freest country in the world<sup>7</sup> with a downward trend toward less liberty.) and also less prosperous, struggling with perennially sluggish economic growth and a widespread

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Whaples, Modern Economic Issues, Part 2, Lecture 19, “Poverty and Families,” 17:07-17:50 (cf. p. 96 of the Course Guidebook); (Boston: The Teaching Company, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Heritage Foundation Web site, [www.heritage.org/index/country/unitedstates](http://www.heritage.org/index/country/unitedstates) (accessed December 12, 2014). (The United States is the only country in the world to have suffered a net loss of economic freedom on this index in every one of the last seven years. As recently as the year 2000, the US ranked as the third freest country.)

belief that today's youth will be the first American generation who may "be worse off financially than their parents."<sup>8</sup>

The Bible gives us God's wise commands for how to live a good life in this world. The Almighty gave us commandments—most importantly, the Mosaic Decalogue, which directs us to put God first and not to trespass upon the God-given rights of others by respecting their lives, their property, their families, etc.—as being for our benefit.<sup>9</sup> The Judeo-Christian tradition upholds individual rights and the social institutions of private property and families as the key to the welfare of human society.

That is why the radical destroyers, such as Karl Marx, in their crazed lust to build a brave new world, assail not only private property—the practical bulwark of individual liberty—but the family and religion as well. The humanistic (actually dehumanizing) revolutionaries seek to build a new utopian society out of the ashes of the old societies they seek to destroy. The only way for them to achieve such ruination is to do what Marx taught—to gain control of property, to crush liberty, and to annihilate the institutions of church and family that would resist people's total obedience to the revolutionaries' plans. Marx explicitly articulated and advocated this four-fold diabolical agenda in Chapter Two of "The Communist Manifesto": "The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property;" "The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at"; "Abolition of the family...this infamous proposal of the Communists"; "Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Kohut, "What will become of America's kids?" Pew Research Center Web site, May 12, 2014, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/12/what-will-become-of-americas-kids/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/12/what-will-become-of-americas-kids/) (accessed December 14, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Deut. 4:40, 10:13, [http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/bible-verses-like\\_Deuteronomy-4-40/](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/bible-verses-like_Deuteronomy-4-40/).

<sup>10</sup> Marxist Web site, [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf), 22, 23, 24, 26, respectively (accessed December 14, 2014).

Seen in this larger context, we can see how high the stakes are in the battle for the survival of the traditional family and how crucial it is that the decline in the family be halted and reversed. Admittedly, this is easier said than done, but however difficult it may be, it is imperative for our society's future wellbeing.

### **Soft Despotism and Creeping Tyranny: Tocqueville's Foresight and a Current Scorecard**

The United States has remained largely immune to the revolutionary siren call of Marx and other would-be tyrants. Growing up during the Cold War, my generation pondered the possibility of defeat in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union (however remote such a prospect actually was, as we could see in hindsight). The ghastly specter of totalitarian tyranny was portrayed in various works of literary fiction and given its most fearsome portrayal in George Orwell's *1984* with its characterization of a smothering totalitarian state personified as "Big Brother."

As it turned out, the major threat to our liberty, families, religion, and prosperity has not come from a violent Big Brother state, but in a more subtle, superficially benevolent state whose gradual expansion of power and control in actuality has resulted in what might be termed a creeping tyranny. This allegedly "do-gooding" state has beguiled and ensnared millions of Americans, enticing them to surrender independence in exchange for being taken care of by a paternalistic welfare state more aptly personified as Big Daddy instead of Big Brother.

This historical development of America was foreseen by the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville, whose prescience continues to amaze us today, more than 180 years after he wrote down his observations in the classic text *Democracy in America*. In a chapter titled "What Kind of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear," Tocqueville predicted that, compared to, say, the Roman emperors, despotism in the democratic United States "would be more widespread and

milder”; “it would degrade men rather than torment them.” Anticipating the intrusive, paternalistic government we have today, Tocqueville wrote that Big Daddy “would penetrate the sphere of private interests more habitually and more deeply” than any ancient emperor did.<sup>11</sup>

Tocqueville further wrote that the objective of such a government is “to keep them [i.e., the citizens] fixed irrevocably in childhood”—that is, in a condition of dependence on the paternalistic state. Tocqueville makes explicit the implications and dangers of such a state, writing,

It willingly works for their happiness; but it wants to be the unique agent and sole arbiter of that; it provides for their security, foresees and secures their needs, facilitates their pleasures, conducts their principal affairs, directs their industry, regulates their estates, divides their inheritances; can it not take away from them entirely the trouble of thinking and the pain of living?

... Everyday it renders the employment of free will less useful and more rare...

Thus, after taking each individual by turns in its powerful hands and kneading him as it likes, the sovereign [i.e., the government] extends its arms over society as a whole; it covers its surface with a network of small, complicated, painstaking, uniform rules through which the most original minds and most vigorous souls cannot clear a way to surpass the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them... it does not tyrannize, it hinders, compromises, enervates, extinguishes, dazes, and finally reduces each nation to being nothing more than a herd of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd.<sup>12</sup>

The Heritage Foundation’s David B. Mulhausen and Patrick Tyrrell, authors of *The 2013 Index of Dependence on Government*, have written,

America is increasingly moving away from a nation of self-reliant individuals, where civil society flourishes, toward a nation of individuals less inclined to practicing self-reliance and personal responsibility. Government programs not only crowd out civil society, but too frequently trap individuals and families in long-term dependence, leaving them incapable of escaping their condition for generations to come.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield and Debra Winthrop eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 662.

<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 663. See also Mark Hendrickson, “With Gulliver Asleep, The Lilliputians Are Almost Done Smothering the U.S. Economy,” Forbes Web site, forbes.com, June 20, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> David B. Mulhausen and Patrick Tyrrell, “The 2013 Index of Dependence on Government,” Special Report #142 on Economy, The Heritage Foundation Web site, November 21, 2013,

We will examine some specific ways in which Uncle Sam has extended his reach into formerly private family matters in the next section, but first let's let Mulhausen and Tyrrell document the magnitude of the overall problem of citizen dependence on government against which Tocqueville warned.

According to Mulhausen and Tyrrell, "For more than a decade, the Index [of Dependence] has signaled troubling and rapid increases in the growth of dependence-creating federal programs, as measured by the amount of spending devoted to them." Nearly 70 percent of Uncle Sam's gargantuan three-and-a-half-trillion-dollar annual spending is going to programs included in the *Index*. These are programs "that assume the responsibilities of individuals, families...and other civil institutions." The *Index* "does not include traditional government services that provide public goods, such as defense, police protection, and transportation infrastructure." It "has grown by 80.1 percent since 2001." "Index measurements began in 1962; since then, the index score has grown by more than 20 times its original amount. This means that, keeping inflation neutral in the calculations, more than 20 times the resources we're committed to paying for people who depend on government in 2011 than in 1962."<sup>14</sup>

The aforementioned Robert Rector supplies another way of looking at the growth of paternalistic government and the concomitant growth of dependency: "Since the beginning of the War on Poverty 50 years ago, the U.S. has spent over \$20 trillion on anti-poverty programs." He adds, "Total federal and state spending on these programs now exceeds \$900 billion per year (excluding Social Security and Medicare). Over 100 million persons—or one in three

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[www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/the-2013-index-of-dependence-on-government#](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/11/the-2013-index-of-dependence-on-government#) (accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Mulhausen and Tyrrell, "2013 Index."

Americans—receive aid from at least one means-tested welfare program each month.”<sup>15</sup> Instead of liberating people from poverty and reducing the number of poor Americans, as of 2011 there were 46 million Americans living in statistical poverty compared to 36 million people in 1964,<sup>16</sup> despite welfare spending increasing from 2.19 percent of GDP to 6 percent.<sup>17</sup>

## **Big Daddy versus the Family**

### 1. The welfare trap

Sadly, some of the government spending that comprises the bloated dependence index adversely affects families. For decades, welfare mothers have received allowances on the condition that they do not work or marry working males—what Rector memorably dubbed “the incentive system from hell.”<sup>18</sup> Mulhausen and Tyrrell, surveying the history of the American welfare state, found that federal programs often “created perverse incentives—discouraging work among able-bodied adults and discouraging marriage,” and that children raised in families receiving welfare were significantly more likely to become dependent on welfare programs as adults.<sup>19</sup>

As Professor Robert Whaples tells us, nearly three-fourths of poor children would immediately be lifted out of poverty if their fathers married their mothers. Furthermore, the poverty gap that exists between black Americans and white Americans is essentially a marriage gap, because the poverty rates for married whites and married blacks is nearly identical (below

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Rector, “Want to Help the Poor? Transform, Don’t Grow, Welfare,” National Review Online, January 29, 2014, [www.nationalreview.com/corner/369845/want-help-poor-transform-don-t-grow-welfare-robert-rector](http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/369845/want-help-poor-transform-don-t-grow-welfare-robert-rector) (accessed December 14, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Clark Barrow, “The True Cost of Welfare,” RedState Web site, July 24, 2012, [www.redstate.com/diary/clarkbarrow/2012/07/24/the-true-cost-of-welfare/](http://www.redstate.com/diary/clarkbarrow/2012/07/24/the-true-cost-of-welfare/) (accessed December 14, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Michael Cournoyer, “U.S. Nearly \$1 Trillion a year fighting poverty....” Job Market Monitor Web site, May 15, 2012, [www.jobmarketmonitor.com/2012/05/15/u-s-nearly-1-trillion-a-year-fighting-poverty-and-over-the-next-10-years-governments-will-spend-250000-for-every-poor-american/](http://www.jobmarketmonitor.com/2012/05/15/u-s-nearly-1-trillion-a-year-fighting-poverty-and-over-the-next-10-years-governments-will-spend-250000-for-every-poor-american/) (accessed December 14, 2014).

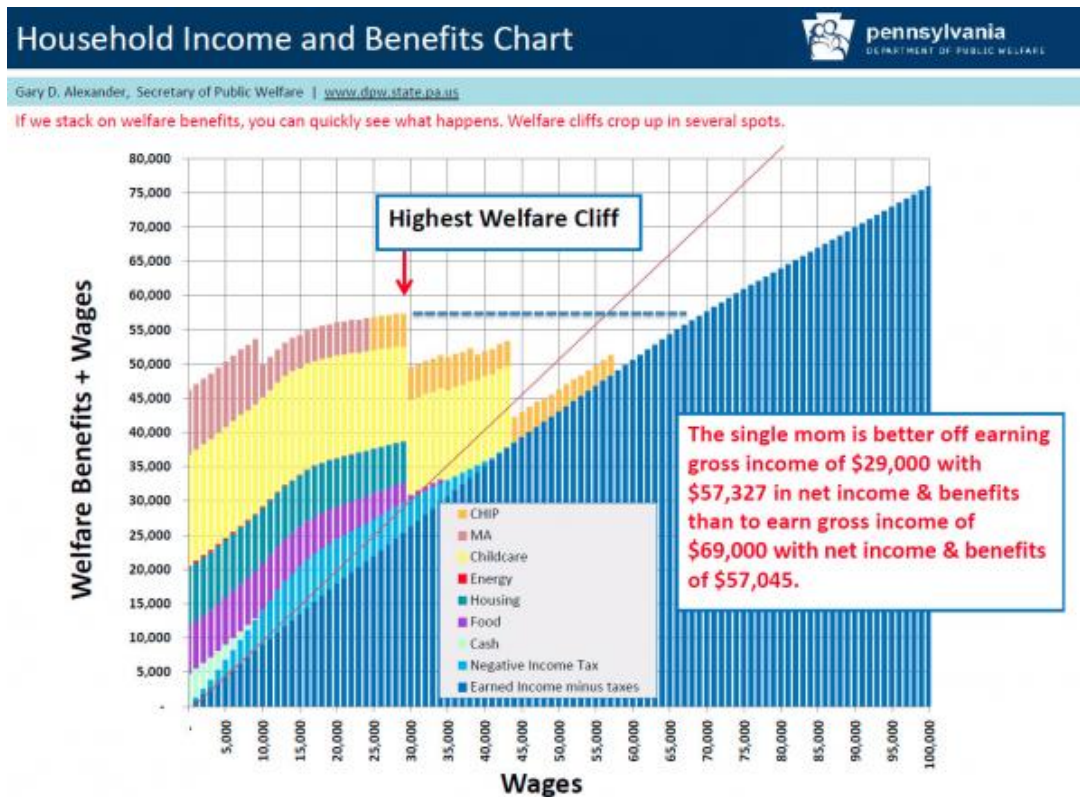
<sup>18</sup> Peter Honey, “Poverty,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 16, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Mulhausen and Tyrrell, “2013 Index.”



nine percent)<sup>20</sup> with marriage being the surest way to lift a poor mother and her child(ren) out of poverty. Yet, government imposes economic penalties on women who take that step. It is almost as if the government were a real person named Big Daddy who, once he has his hooks into poor people, doesn't want to let go.

Another way in which the government welfare programs become a honey trap for poor Americans is to make it economically costly for a single mother to advance in her career and earn higher pay. Eligibility to receive various government benefits diminishes or ends as a person's income rises beyond specified income levels, with the result being that a person can end up with less net income by working hard and rising up the ranks to positions of greater responsibility at work. This perverse income structure is perhaps depicted most graphically in this 2012 chart prepared by Gary D. Alexander, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Public Welfare:



<http://www.zerohedge.com/sites/default/files/images/user5/imageroot/2012/11-2/welfare%20cliff.jpg>

<sup>20</sup> Whaples, "Poverty and Families" lecture, 18:10-19:04.

As this chart shows, a single mom in Pennsylvania is better off earning gross income of \$29,000 than \$69,000, because in the former case, Pennsylvania's various subsidies would give her a net income of \$57,327, whereas in the latter case, she would lose eligibility for various government payments at various marginal increases of income while incurring an increasing income tax liability, resulting in a net income of \$57,045.<sup>21</sup> Big Daddy is behaving viciously here, seemingly striving to discourage the independence achieved by advancement in the work world, and instead, keeping people dependent on government.

## 2. The tax code.

The federal income tax code also is biased against marriage. It contains a "marriage penalty, which imposes higher taxes on married couples than if they had filed individually."<sup>22</sup> For example, if a single mother of one child earning \$16,000 per year married a man earning \$25,000 per year, their combined tax burden "would be almost \$2,800 more than if the partners remained single."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that puts money into the hands of low-income Americans also results in a significant marriage penalty if two low-income people marry instead of cohabitate or live apart.<sup>24</sup>

The newest way in which the tax code takes away incentives to marry is the tax structure included in the Affordable Care Act (a/k/a Obamacare). According to Robert Rector, under the

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<sup>21</sup> Tyler Durden, "When Work Is Punished: The Tragedy of America's Welfare State," Zerohedge Web site, November 27, 2012, [www.zerohedge.com/news/2012-11-27/when-work-punished-tragedy-americas-welfare-state](http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2012-11-27/when-work-punished-tragedy-americas-welfare-state) (accessed September 6, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Mike Lee and Marco Rubio, "A Pro-Family, Pro-Growth Tax Reform," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 23, 2014, A17.

<sup>23</sup> Elaine Maag, the Urban Institute and Robert Cherry, "Marriage Penalties—the Dilemma for Low-Income Parents," May 28, 2013, <http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/ExclusiveCommentary.aspx?id=594efaf-dc11-4c05-8144-1f9060e46131>.

<sup>24</sup> Maag, Institute, and Cherry, "Penalties."

tax provisions of Obamacare, “You have to pay a penalty of multiple hundreds of dollars—a substantial portion of your income—to stay married.”<sup>25</sup>

Another way in which government’s tax and spending policies weaken familial ties is through its tax-funded unemployment insurance program. Traditionally, family members have lent financial support to relatives in times of need, such as giving money to help a child who has lost a job pay bills until a new job is found. “A study using data from the Panel Study in Income Dynamics (PSID) found a negative association between the receipt of UI benefits and familial support. Specifically, one dollar in UI benefits displaces familial support by \$0.24 to \$0.40.”<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, so greatly has Big-Daddy government encroached on liberty with family court that judges routinely decide, according to Phyllis Schlafly as quoted in *The New York Times*, “where the children of divorced parents attend school and even church, whether they may be homeschooled, what medical care they may receive and even whether they play soccer or take piano lessons...according to the U.S. Census Bureau; these judges now control the private living arrangements of 46 million Americans and have power to transfer \$40 billion between households.”<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Social Security and Medicare: Breaking the Bonds Between generations

By making the government the guarantor of financial support for living expenses and health care in retirement, Social Security and Medicare have done much to weaken the ties between generations. Through the combined impact of these three gigantic entitlement programs, government has gradually been supplanting the family in the care of seniors.

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<sup>25</sup> Garance Franke-Ruta, “The Hidden Marriage Penalty in Obamacare,” *The Atlantic* Web site, November 2013, [www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/11/the-hidden-marriage-penalty-in-obamacare/280890/](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/11/the-hidden-marriage-penalty-in-obamacare/280890/) (accessed July 6, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Mulhausen and Tyrrell, “2013 Index.”

<sup>27</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, “What Happened to our Traditional American Family,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, as quoted in *The New York Times*.

Social Security was originally sold to the American people as a supplement to their own retirement savings.<sup>28</sup> Over the years, though, politicians found great electoral success by repeatedly raising Social Security benefits—which is why Social Security taxes have risen to 12.4% of employee’s gross income—shattering FDR's promise that the contribution would never exceed \$30 per year. The process of repeatedly increasing Social Security benefits has created a huge moral hazard. The savings rate of Americans declined over the years as Americans grew to expect the government would financially support us in our retirement. The lower savings rate has resulted in slower economic growth.

Although it is impossible to quantify Social Security’s impact on child-bearing rates, it is plausible that a major reason why many Americans of the most recent generations have had fewer children is because they believe that they don’t need those children to help support them in their senior years, since the perception is that the government will take care of them. In turn, lower birthrates have reduced the number of workers whose payroll taxes fund Social Security benefits, thereby putting Social Security on a grim path toward insolvency. This sorry state of affairs essentially arrays the interests of seniors against the interests of the young, since the only way to keep the program solvent will be either to reduce promised benefits for the old or to raise an already-heavy tax burden on the young.

Few things could tear a society apart more than having the economic interests of the young and old arrayed against each other, yet that is exactly what Social Security and Medicare are doing. As of 2010, the unfunded liabilities of those two entitlements had exceeded more than \$160,000 per person. This brings to mind Thomas Jefferson’s statement that

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<sup>28</sup> Mark W. Hendrickson, “Social Security’s problems: Past, present and future,” *The Washington Times*, October 27, 2011, *Washington Times* Web site, [www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/27/social-securitys-problems-past-present-and-future/](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/27/social-securitys-problems-past-present-and-future/).

“spending money to be paid by posterity ... is but swindling futurity on a large scale,”<sup>29</sup> and there likely will come a day when the younger generation will rebel against the burden of debt that older generations laid on their shoulders.

The demographic mischief perpetrated by Social Security is not confined to inducing Americans to have fewer children. It also has incentivized adult Americans with senior parents to assume that they don't bear primary responsibility for taking care of their parents' financial needs in their senior years, because the government will do that for them. Combined with the health-care entitlements, Medicare and Medicaid, fewer Americans are willing to sacrifice present consumption to save money for their parents' retirement needs. Indeed, many adults either consume or retitle their parents' assets so that their parents will qualify for taxpayer-funded health care rather than to pay for their aged parents' health care themselves. They are happy to let government pick up the tab for Granny's care and, in the bargain, let Granny become a ward of the state where she will be at the mercy of the state's tender ministrations.

The economic reality is that, just as Social Security is on a path to bankruptcy, so are their health care cousins, Medicaid and Medicare.<sup>30</sup> It is the critical long-term fiscal condition of Medicare that partly explains the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act provision for the establishment of the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) that Sarah Palin, with some accuracy, characterized as “death panels.” IPAB (presently constituted as a totally unaccountable board of unelected officials) is tasked with reining in health care costs. Its plan for doing so, as formulated by Dr. Ezekiel Emmanuel (the brother of President Obama's first chief of staff, Rahm Emmanuel) is to withhold care from Americans past their prime. In other words, decisions when

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<sup>29</sup> Mark W. Hendrickson, “Swindling America's Youth,” Vision and Values Web site, [visionandvalues.org](http://visionandvalues.org), June 9, 2011, [www.visionandvalues.org/2011/06/swindling-america-s-youth/](http://www.visionandvalues.org/2011/06/swindling-america-s-youth/).

<sup>30</sup> Mark Hendrickson, “Did You Really Pay For Your Medicare Benefits?”, Forbes Web site, March 7, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2013/03/07/did-you-really-pay-for-your-medicare-benefits/>.

to withhold treatment from seniors will be made by cost-cutting bureaucrats, not by relatives. This is the bitter fruit of allowing Big Daddy government to get involved in traditional family decisions, such as the provision of health care for one's older relatives.

#### 4. Education policies versus the family

Government paternalism in the field of education is pervasive. We should recall that Karl Marx' tenth point in his ten-point platform for socializing a country was government control of education. He knew that inculcating a specific set of beliefs, values, and loyalties in the minds of the young is essential to government control over a populace. This led Lenin to tell the commissars of education in the Soviet Union, "We must teach our children to hate. Hatred is the basis of Communism. We must teach our children to hate their parents if they are not communists."<sup>31</sup> Obviously, we are nowhere near Communist levels of attempted indoctrination and brainwashing, but we still ought to be concerned that a foundation is being laid for the government deciding what children are to be taught (e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act and Common Core initiative). These are significant steps toward a system by which the state supplants parents and churches as content providers for children's education.

Another pernicious aspect of government involvement in education is the fact that so many American children are literally trapped in dysfunctional schools that fail to equip them with the basic skills that they need to become economically independent and productive members of society.<sup>32</sup> Many of the inner-city children and their parent or parents crave the limited number of spots available in charter schools. The current president does everything possible to restrict school choice. Clearly, his priority is appeasing his allies in the teacher's

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Mark W. Hendrickson, *America's March Toward Communism*, (Spring Mills, PA: Libertarian, 1987), 2.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Hendrickson, "Is There A Problem With Economic Mobility In The U.S.?" Forbes Web site, January 31, 2014, [www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2014/01/31/is-there-a-problem-with-economic-mobility-in-the-u-s/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2014/01/31/is-there-a-problem-with-economic-mobility-in-the-u-s/).

unions rather than maximizing educational opportunities for America's children. The tragic and cruel result of this policy is to deprive children of obtaining the kind of education that will enable them to climb out of poverty and become adults free of dependency on government welfare programs.

The federal government's predominance in the college loan business is another cause for concern. The government lends money to financially naïve youth, who several years later find out to their chagrin—often in the state of unemployment or underemployment—that their accumulated college debts are a financial albatross around their necks.<sup>33</sup> Given the high default rate on student loan repayments (13.7% as of September 2014),<sup>34</sup> it is safe to say that private lenders never would have incurred the risk of lending such vast amounts of money (over \$1.2 trillion) to such poor credit risks.<sup>35</sup> (Incidentally, those risks are exacerbated by the inescapable fact that far more people are graduating with degrees than there are jobs available, and yet the government mantra—at least under President Obama—that everyone deserves a college education continues.<sup>36</sup>) Numerous commentators have observed that college debts delay marriage and child-bearing.<sup>37</sup> Quite literally, college debts are shrinking the population of the

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<sup>33</sup> Mark W. Hendrickson, "The Student Loan Problem," Vision and Values Web site, February 24, 2010, [www.visionandvalues.org/2010/02/the-student-loan-problem/](http://www.visionandvalues.org/2010/02/the-student-loan-problem/).

<sup>34</sup> Nick Anderson, "National Student Loan Default Rate Dips to 13.7 Percent...", *The Washington Post*, September 24, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Denhart, "How The \$1.2 Trillion College Debt Crisis Is Crippling Students, Parents And The Economy," Forbes Web site, August 7, 2013, [www.forbes.com/sites/specialfeatures/2013/08/07/how-the-college-debt-is-crippling-students-parents-and-the-economy/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/specialfeatures/2013/08/07/how-the-college-debt-is-crippling-students-parents-and-the-economy/) (accessed December 15, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Mark Hendrickson, "Mythbusting 101: Uncomfortable Truths Your College Won't Tell You," (parts one and two), Forbes Web site, August 16 and 19, 2012, [www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2012/08/19/mythbusting-101-uncomfortable-truths-your-college-wont-tell-you-part-ii/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2012/08/19/mythbusting-101-uncomfortable-truths-your-college-wont-tell-you-part-ii/) (contains link to Part 1).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Rebecca Ungarino, "Burdened with Record Amount of Debt, Graduates Delay Marriage," NBC News Web site, October 7, 2014, [www.nbcnews.com/business/personal-finance/burdened-record-amount-debt-graduates-delay-marriage-n219371](http://www.nbcnews.com/business/personal-finance/burdened-record-amount-debt-graduates-delay-marriage-n219371); Gloria Goodale, "Behind the Falling US Birthrate: Too Much Student Debt to Afford Kids?", *The Christian Science Monitor* Web site, January 30, 2013, online, [www.csmonitor.com/USA/society/2013/0130/Behind-the-falling-US-birthrate-too-much-student-debt-to-afford-kids](http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/society/2013/0130/Behind-the-falling-US-birthrate-too-much-student-debt-to-afford-kids).

next generation, shrinking size of families and the number of people who will have to bear the burden of the gigantic financial needs of various government transfer payment programs.

Jacob Hornberger, the founder and president of the Future of Freedom Foundation, points out that a major reason why so many American youth need to borrow money to attend college is because of all the money that their parents have paid in taxes over the decades—much of those tax dollars going to fund programs that make citizens dependent on government and weaken families. Thus, when Uncle Sam lends money to students to enable them to attend college, he is effectively lending their family’s own money back to them—hardly what one would consider a favor.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, American education policy wars with the American family by giving the state power to displace parents and churches in choosing what to teach children; making it harder for children to escape poverty and dependence on government. This is done by restricting educational competition and freedom of choice, and by cannibalizing future generations by ensnaring millions in onerous debts to pay for a college education that may or may not make economic sense for youth.

Who are the culprits behind Big Daddy’s anti-family policies?

Multiple factors have contributed to the decline of the family in America. It is impossible to quantify the influence of individual factors or even to reach a consensus as to the relative impact of those factors, but the Heritage Foundation has, I believe, listed the primary reasons:

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<sup>38</sup> Jacob Hornberger, “The Student-Loan Scam,” May 14, 2014, [www.fff.org/2014/05/16/the-student-loan-scam/](http://www.fff.org/2014/05/16/the-student-loan-scam/) (accessed December 1, 2014).



“no-fault divorce, changes in social attitudes and religiosity, family-destructive welfare policies, and radical political movements.”<sup>39</sup>

In simpler terms, the changes are attributable to people and to policies. Having just examined some of the major anti-family policies, let’s now take a look at the people who bear responsibility for those policies.

1) Political radicals.

The proponents of various radical ideologies—egalitarianism, socialism, progressivism, feminism, pagan environmentalism, nihilism—fulminate against the perceived imperfections of the world. They seethe with loathing of the status quo. These pathetic but dangerous individuals never learned the joy and satisfaction of working to get the beam out of their own eyes. Instead, they try to escape their moral responsibility for living nobler, if not holier, lives by turning their attention toward others, seeking to bring revolutionary change to the world.

These self-absorbed misanthropic solipsists are would-be tyrants, drunk with the mad idea that the world will be a better place once everyone else has submitted to whatever ideal dream the would-be reformers exalt. Their zeal leads them to rationalize whatever ruthless steps advance their goal, no matter how many innocent people are trampled and hurt in the process. Often we find them furthering Marxian goals, such as the abolition of private property and the destruction of families, and religion in their lust to create a brave new world. They are people like Bill Ayers, the unrepentant revolutionary who shifted his tactics from physical violence and sabotage to becoming an intellectual saboteur and destroyer in the guise of a professor of education. They are

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<sup>39</sup> “Making Federal Policy Marriage-Friendly, Solutions for America,” 8 (August 17, 2010); Heritage Foundation Web site, [www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/08/making-federal-policy-marriage-friendly](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/08/making-federal-policy-marriage-friendly).

people like Professors Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, who plot to collapse our system of government by overloading and bankrupting the welfare state.<sup>40</sup> As vile and destructive as the venom is that issues forth from such radical intellectuals and thought leaders, numerically these wretched individuals are not nearly numerous enough to carry the day. The advances made by the anti-family forces are attributable to several other larger groups.

2) Government bureaucrats.

Public choice theory, as developed by Nobel prize-winning economist James Buchanan, shows that individuals who work for government respond to the incentives confronting them more or less like everyone else does. (Public choice theory, by the way, is the application of Ludwig von Mises' general theory of human action, called praxeology, to government. It was very gratifying to economists here at Grove City College that this important economic insight was recognized by the Nobel committee.)

The overarching fact is that welfare state bureaucrats have little incentive to cure poverty, for if they somehow succeeded in doing so, there would no longer be any need for their jobs. Years ago I read a reference in a newspaper article to "the welfare lobby." This puzzled me, because I knew that poor people receiving government aid lack the financial wherewithal to hire lobbyists. Who, then, hires lobbyists to promote federal anti-poverty programs? The answer is that, in addition to liberal and progressive think tanks and foundations, the anti-poverty bureaucrats themselves lobby for the continuation and expansion of the programs from which they receive their income.

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<sup>40</sup> James R. Keena, *We've Been Had*, (Nashville: Twin Creek Books), 2010, 180-205.

In hindsight, we can see what a huge mistake it was to allow government to supplant the institutions of civil society—the family, churches, private charities, etc.—in administering charity. As Charles Murray demonstrated in his landmark 1984 book, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980, Since Launching the War on Poverty*, the historical downward trend in poverty rates has been halted. Instead, it has become institutionalized and maintained at approximately unchanged levels ever since. The damage done by these allegedly beneficial welfare programs has been considerable: By aborting the natural progress against poverty, the War on Poverty has helped to weaken the family, contributed greatly to the federal government’s massive indebtedness, and weakened the Constitution, thereby laying the groundwork for future losses of liberty. (Regarding the Constitution, James Madison, known as the principal architect of the Constitution, once stated on the floor of Congress, “I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents. Charity is no part of the legislative duty of the government.”) The Constitution has never been amended to allow the redistribution of wealth in the name of “helping” Americans, so our multi-trillion-dollar welfare state is plainly unconstitutional.

3) Progressive politicians (and others too timid to undo their deeds).

As I wrote in my paper on progressivism for the Conference several years ago, the role of government in America began to expand when the philosophy of “meliorism” took hold—the notion that it was the government’s responsibility to see to it that Americans improved economically. Shrewd politicians embraced this expanded role, for they found that doling out special favors was a very effective way to win elections.

Eventually, this dynamic gave rise to a syndrome that is known as “the Curley Effect.” As defined by Harvard scholars Edward L. Glaeser and Andrei Shleifer in a famous 2002 article, the Curley Effect (named after a politician who perfected the technique, James Michael Curley, a four-time mayor of Boston in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) is a strategy for “increasing the relative size of one’s political base through distortionary, wealth-reducing policies.” Translation: A politician or a political party can achieve long-term political dominance by tipping the balance of votes in their direction through the implementation of policies that strangle and stifle economic growth. Counter-intuitively, the very policies that lead to political success for the politicians who adopt them make the area subject to those policies poorer.

Here is how the Curley Effect works: A mayor advocates and adopts policies that redistribute wealth from the prosperous to the not-so-prosperous and bestows generous tax-financed favors on unions, the public sector in general, and select corporations. These beneficiaries become economically dependent on their political patrons, and so give them their undivided electoral support—i.e., votes, campaign contributions, and get-out-the-vote drives. Meanwhile, the anti-rich rhetoric of these clever demagogues, combined with higher taxes on productive citizens to fund the political handouts, triggers a flight of tax refugees away from the high-tax jurisdiction. This reduces the number of the incumbent politicians’ political opponents on the voter registration rolls, thereby consolidating an electoral majority for the ruling party. It also shrinks the tax base of the city, even as the

city's budget swells. The outcome of these policies is increased economic stagnation and poverty eventually culminating in bankruptcy (see Detroit<sup>41</sup>).

The Curley Effect is quite extensive. The ten poorest US cities with a population of at least 250,000 are Detroit, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Miami, St. Louis, El Paso, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Newark. Besides all having poverty rates between 24% and 32%, these cities share a common political factor: Only two have had a Republican mayor since 1961, and those two (Cincinnati and Cleveland) haven't had one since the 1980s. Democratic mayors have had a lock on City Hall despite these once-great and prosperous cities stagnating on their watch.<sup>42</sup> This is the Curley Effect in action.

You might think that people would realize what is happening to them, but the record of recent decades demonstrates that a voting majority of them do not. The willingness of voters to re-elect politicians whose policies produce economic stagnation and ruin dates back at least to the 1930s. In his masterful book, *New Deal or Raw Deal?*, historian Burton Folsom reports that many American voters in 1936 had major concerns about the sluggish economy, but in the end decided to vote for Roosevelt because one of his government programs benefited someone the voter knew.<sup>43</sup>

In practice, it seems very difficult for people to forsake free handouts. This point is illustrated most persuasively by looking at the voting behavior of black Americans. In election after election, more than 90% of black Americans vote Democratic, even though it was the Democrats who held out longest against civil rights; who obliterated many

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<sup>41</sup> Mark W. Hendrickson, "In my Native City of Detroit, Atlas has at Long Last Shrugged," The Center for Vision and Values Web site, July 24, 2013, [www.visionandvalues.org/2013/07/in-my-native-city-of-detroit-atlas-has-at-long-last-shrugged/](http://www.visionandvalues.org/2013/07/in-my-native-city-of-detroit-atlas-has-at-long-last-shrugged/).

<sup>42</sup> Mark Hendrickson, "President Obama's Wealth Destroying Goal: Taking the 'Curley Effect' Nationwide, Forbes Web site, May 31, 2012, [www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2012/05/31/president-obamas-wealth-destroying-goal-taking-the-curley-effect-nationwide/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/markhendrickson/2012/05/31/president-obamas-wealth-destroying-goal-taking-the-curley-effect-nationwide/).

<sup>43</sup> Burton Folsom, Jr., *New Deal or Raw Deal?*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 179-191.

thriving black business districts, and demolished thriving black neighborhoods in the name of “urban renewal”; who implemented the welfare programs that have helped to devastate black families; who supported abortion rights that decimated the black population; that conspired with the teachers’ unions to deprive black children better educational opportunities. As long as the government “aid” keeps coming, all else seems to be forgiven.

Some might say that I am being too cynical when I assert that politicians are willing to devastate communities to advance their own careers. My rejoinder is that those who doubt that politicians are this ruthless are being naïve or idealistic. Many people are willing to profit at the expense of their fellowman. Drug-pushers profit from selling people what they crave, even though they know full well that what they are selling is not good for these people. You might say the same about vendors of legal substances, such as tobacco and alcoholic beverages. Politicians, too, are peddling their own particular product—promises of a better society, or more often, simply aid from the government. Politicians want to win elections, and so they will give the people whatever the people crave, even if, in the long run, it turns out that what the people crave wrecks their families and communities. This is the mentality of the pusher: being perfectly willing to sell poison to people if that’s what it takes to get elected or reelected.

#### 4. We, the people.

It is too facile and convenient to point the finger at bureaucrats, leftist intellectuals, and ruthless politicians when laying blame for the growth of the family-destroying welfare state. We the people have elected these destroyers. Many Americans have been corrupted by the seductive lure of getting something for nothing—well, not

exactly nothing, but real financial benefits in exchange for a mere vote. And many other Americans who are not personally on the receiving end of federal largess nevertheless bear their responsibility for the error of believing that government is more to be trusted and relied upon than churches, families, and freedom.

It will be up to us to reverse the trend toward bigger government and weaker families, to dismantle the destructive policies that have inflicted so much damage on the American family. To accomplish this, we will have to overcome the opposition of well-entrenched, well-organized special interest groups. It is possible that we already have passed the proverbial “tipping point”—the point of no return with the other side having achieved a permanent political majority, but just as the first rule of success is that one must show up, the first rule in winning a fight is that one must fight. Ask yourself this: Is the family worth fighting for? The answer is obvious. Our liberty and prosperity, and future social viability all depend on the family. With so much at stake, we either push back or consign our posterity to a grim, dark future.