



# POST-NUCLEAR

## How to Reinvent the Family and Save Your World

### Abstract

A blueprint for an alternative to the traditional nuclear family. Between 9 and 18 children are raised in a single household managed by multiple cooperating adults. The family size is held constant by adding new babies every one-to-two years. With a wide range of ages in the home, many of the routine functions of parenthood will fall to the children themselves.

Glenn Campbell  
baddalailama@gmail.com

# 1. The Problem

Modern industrial societies have a problem: Almost none of them are producing enough children to sustain their populations. With the exception of a handful of deeply impoverished countries, mainly in Africa, hardly any nation or community is generating enough babies to keep their cultures and economies afloat. This is an incremental, slow-moving crisis, akin to global warming, but many of its effects can be seen right now. Already, there are too many old people drawing on government services and not enough active workers paying taxes to support them. This is pushing pension systems, medical systems and ultimately governments toward insolvency, with no solutions in sight.

You can argue that the world was overpopulated to begin with and that it would be more sustainable with, say, four billion people instead of eight, but there is no painless way to get back there. The simplest solution—not having babies—turns us into a society of old people. If fewer babies are born, it follows that the average age of the population will eventually rise.

And rise. And rise. This may seem harmless at first until you realize how expensive and relatively unproductive old people are. The last ten years of most people's lives is a struggle with costly medical conditions and fading faculties. Old people don't pay taxes, at least at the same level as younger workers, yet they absorb vast government resources, so a society of elders is financially unstable and will ultimately fail in its mission of protecting its people.

For decades, we worried that a "population explosion" would strip the planet of its natural resources. Now we are facing the opposite, a "population implosion," that will strip the world of its social and economic resources. Many businesses, institutions and government services will cease to be sustainable if they don't have sufficient clientele to maintain their infrastructure. For example, a smaller population means fewer cars on the road, yet the existing road system still needs to be maintained. Likewise, existing national debts will become unpayable as the pool of taxpayers shrinks. If populations contract, so does the economy, and if the economy is heavily leveraged—as ours is today—there may be no way out but massive defaults and catastrophic institutional collapse.

Why are young adults today having so few children? The primary answer is simple: because childrearing makes no economic sense. Children

are good for our overall economy and culture in the long run, but they are a losing proposition for the individuals raising them. The costs and risks of producing a human being are astronomical, while the practical rewards to the parents are relatively few. If you're lucky, your children may care for you in your old age, but who can be sure? Wouldn't it be better to take the money devoted to raising children and invest it in a retirement plan?

Parents can certainly derive joy and satisfaction from their offspring, but a little goes a long way. Most couples find the joy has dwindled after one or two kids, so they stop there, which is hardly enough to make up for the many adults who choose to have none at all.

Babymaking has also become a victim of modern freedoms. In past centuries, most women had only one acceptable career path: motherhood. Now, there are countless other options available to them. Parenthood inevitably results in a loss of other opportunities, and in a hyperconnected world, you can easily see what those other opportunities are. Just look at your friends and associates on social media. Without a baby, you can travel the world, pursue your artistic muses, build an elaborate career or fight for social causes that are no less important than having children. Once the freedom genie is out of the bottle, it can't be put back. You can't tell women to give up their careers or creative pursuits and go back to the kitchen.

Once a woman decides to stop having children—be it at 2, 1 or 0 offspring—no incentive program is likely to change her mind. Government penalties have been highly effective in reducing births in the past, but the same methods don't work in reverse. China, for example, was successful in reducing its once-astronomical birth rate to somewhere close to the perceived ideal of one child per couple, but now that the costs of the One-Child Policy are becoming clear, the Chinese government has had virtually no success in reversing the trend. You can't threaten or punish someone into making a lifelong commitment they don't want to make. You can try to compensate parents for having children, but the reward would have to be huge to change most people's behavior, because the real cost of parenthood is so high.

In my view, there are no short- or medium-term solutions for the current baby bust. Society is headed for hard economic times due to its relentlessly aging population, and any government birth incentive will hardly make a dent. It would be equitable and appropriate for those who bear and raise children to be paid a fair salary for their work, but where would the money come from? Most governments are already deeply in debt, and salaries for stay-at-home parents would push them farther underwater. Short of enslaving women and forcing them to have children, there is no

government program that can come close to addressing the massive costs of parenting.

Even if a country were to magically produce a lot of children starting this year, the cost of educating those children would be huge, and it would be two decades or more before those students started paying taxes and producing value for the economy. That would mean, at minimum, two decades of economic pain before retiring workers could be start to be replaced by young people entering the workforce. More likely, we would be looking at six decades or more of pain under even the best circumstances, because that's how long the problem has gestated. The pension crises of today can be traced back to the 1960s, when birthrates in much of the developed world transitioned from high to low. The effects of this change were good at first but bad over time.

Far from being a burden, a sudden drop in babies unleashes a “demographic dividend” that lasts for several decades. The last quarter of the 20th Century was relatively prosperous in the developed world in part because there was an excess of active workers—the Baby Boomers born before the mid-1960s—with relatively few children and old people to care for. Today, the Boomers are retiring, with few young workers coming online to replace them. They are shifting from a net asset to society to a net

liability, and no policy change will change this calculus. Governments can try to raise the retirement age, but nothing can change the fact that humans get old, and as they do, they naturally become sicker, costlier and less productive. Politically, old people become an increasingly powerful voting bloc, resistant to any change in their entitlements. Without any attempts to reform, say, Social Security, catastrophic collapse becomes ever more likely.

Falling fertility is a self-reinforcing process. As taxes rise and economies decline due to our aging population, young adults are even less inclined to have children. They say, “I can hardly support myself right now, so how can I support a child?” They may also look at their unstable society and say, “Why would I bring a child into this?” When times are tough, childbearing gets put off until a later date, which often means never.

Even if the economy could somehow adjust to an excess of old people, where does the population decline stop? Once your country has achieved a population number deemed optimal, how does it crank up the baby-making machine again? How do you ever convince skeptical people that raising children is in their best interest? Who would trade the freedom of childlessness for the relative slavery of parenthood?

In this book, I am not attempting to solve any nation’s demographic problems—a least in the near term. The world economy is heading for a

demographically-induced economic disaster no matter what we do. I am not interested in repairing society as a whole, because I see no government policy that can provide any meaningful relief. I am concerned only with “communities,” or small groups of people organized independently of the government. A community can be a village, an extended family, a religious group or any small society drawn together by strong common values. A community can be a dozen people or thousands, but it isn’t millions. As long as it is only a subset of society, a community has more flexibility than a government does. It can decide who is allowed to join, and it doesn’t have to be inclusive of other belief systems. The community can say, “We want to raise children in a certain way, and if you don’t like it, you shouldn’t be a part of our group.”

Any kind of future for your community requires new human beings to populate it; otherwise, it will soon be as dead as the Roman Empire. Some communities may be okay with vanishing from the Earth—For example, certain environmental movements think that way.—but others will regard the shortage of new members as a crisis. This book is intended for the latter group. If you care about the future of your community and realize that it will require producing well-trained children, I have a hypothetical plan for you.



## 2. The Solution

My solution, at least for some communities, is a structure I call the “post-nuclear family”. Our basic understanding of what a family is comes from the nuclear family most of us grew up in: Two parents and a couple of kids. We don’t have to discard this structure entirely, but let’s tweak it to make it better suited to the modern world. The post-nuclear family, as I envision it, is still recognizable as a family, just a larger one than normal, and to support its size, it has a more complex management structure than simply “Mom and Dad”.

My solution sounds simple: Instead of two adults raising one or two children, why not have a group of parents raising a much larger number of kids? Instead of 1 or 2 children per household, imagine 9 or as many as 18 raised together in one home. If you could make the whole thing work, you would have an economy of scale you didn’t have before, with all sorts of new opportunities for efficiency, consistency and intra-family education.

I proposed that within these big family the children be evenly spaced:

separated in age by one or two years. This assures that each child has their own special place in the family, not competing directly with others. It also means there is always a natural pool of free babysitters available. Instead of adults providing all of the kids' daily care, I propose that older children care for younger ones as much as possible. Big families have tapped this captive labor force for millennia. You don't need to be a full adult to change diapers, prepare meals or protect a child from obvious dangers; you just have to be a few years older than the child you are caring for.

A big factory is naturally more efficient than a small one because once your fixed costs are met, your marginal costs increase only modestly for each new unit produced. A family of 9 kids needs only one washing machine, just like a family of 2, and adding more children doesn't increase that fixed cost. Big families need more space than small ones, but not necessarily one room per child. Through judicious use of bunkbeds and shared rooms, especially for younger children, doubling the size of the home might quadruple its capacity to house children.

Calling families "factories" may sound vulgar, but that's what they are: facilities for the production and training of new societal units. Bigger factories mean greater efficiency, but only up to a point. You don't want a family with 100 kids under one roof, because then you'd have a sort of

Communist bureaucracy that would favor some children and traumatize others. I'm talking about large families only within the upper bounds of what is normal for our species. Nine children in one family was common a century ago, and 18 children would be similar to you and your cousins living together in the same village.

A family of 18 kids might harken back to our hunter-gatherer days, before the invention of agriculture 10,000 years ago. A tribe might have consisted of 60-100 people (similar to primitive tribes today). Children were birthed by multiple mothers but cared for by the whole community. One mother or grandmother might watch all of the children while the other mothers go out to hunt or gather.

A big family is not inhumane. It was the norm before the Industrial Revolution and again during the post-war Baby Boom. Children in large families had lots of relationships and role models to draw upon. They didn't just depend on Mom and Dad for care and education; they had a whole network of support, including siblings, grandparents and relatives. It is easier to question the wisdom of today's single-child households. Only-children may lack the socialization opportunities of large families. With Mom and Dad catering to their every need, singletons are more likely to end up entitled and self-centered because they learned the skills of

compromise and resource sharing. There are advantages to being a member of a small family, but big families also have their perks. In the end, you can't say that a child was "better off" having been raised by one or the other.

If you want to save your community from its demographic demise, I say that big families are your solution. The challenge lies only in implementation. Hardly any couple can afford to pull it off alone, so you would have to find a way to get multiple adults to cooperate on the project. It seems impossible at times to get even two people to agree on parenting policies, so how would get, say, six or eight adults to work together? How would you keep this big project with multiple managers from devolving into chaos?

That's my challenge in this book. Given what we know about economics and human nature, how could anyone make this plan work? You can't get adults to cooperate on a life-long project without significant incentives to do so, and as of this writing (in 2020), I don't think the incentives are in place. Conditions in developed societies haven't gotten bad enough yet. People don't radically rearrange their lives until they feel they have no choice. That sense of crisis isn't yet upon us, but I think it soon will be.

### 3. Why Am I Here?

This book is a theoretical mind exercise. The world has a birth crisis, and I'm trying to design a system to solve it. Although I have no formal credentials, I consider myself a born engineer who has spent his life building practical systems to solve problems. I'm not trying to push my family plan on anyone, and I don't expect to personally participate in its implementation. I am more like an engineer designing a bridge and presenting it to local planning board to see what they think. I am offering a blueprint for raising a large number of healthy, well-behaved and responsible children at relatively low cost. My theories are based on what I currently know about human psychology. I think this plan should work, based on my theoretical analysis, but I haven't conducted any practical tests. That's for someone else to try.

I got into this project through a series of steps that began with the election of Donald Trump on Nov. 8, 2016. I asked myself, "How could so many voters be so stupid?" Was there something about the makeup of the

U.S. population that favored an obvious con man? Were there too many old people? Were too many dumb people mating with other dumb people? My questions led me to demography, which is clearly related to democracy, because every human, rich or poor, smart or dumb, gets the same vote. Whatever happens to a population as a whole is bound to affect its elections.

Demography never gave me to a clear explanation for Trump's election, but once I started getting into it, I began to realize that the real crisis wasn't Trump, but something entirely unexpected. I discovered that the "population explosion" I had been taught about in childhood no longer existed. The world now faced a depopulation crisis that hardly anyone outside of the field was talking about. Over time, I came accept that a catastrophic economic crisis was unavoidable. The short-term future looked grim, so I started to focus on the long-term future. I asked myself, "How will we ever get out of this?"

As I pass my 60th year, I have become deeply concerned about the future of my "community," even though on the surface it doesn't seem like I have one. My community isn't attached to any place, culture or genetic lineage. It is more of a theoretical construct. I want to make the world a better place for *people who think like I do*, even if I have never personally

met them. I believe in certain emotional and intellectual disciplines that I want to see perpetuated.

Although I am looking at families theoretically, I am not without real-world experience. I have three key credentials. One is that I tried to raise a family once—a big one—in a five-year marriage experiment gone awry. My second qualification is that I spent about two years studying the family court system in Las Vegas—where I sat in on court cases and watched other families disintegrate. My third credential is an accident of my birth: I was born in the Baby Boom era and was surrounded by big families while growing up.

None of these experiences have given me a rosy view of big families. I have seen that they can be as deeply dysfunctional as small ones. My own experience raising a big family was instructive mainly in teaching me what doesn't work. For example, you can't just throw a bunch of children together with well-meaning caregivers and expect to have a smoothly functioning family. A family is held together by its internal culture, which can only be built slowly over time. When I got married, I stepped into my wife's family as a naïve rescuer, not realizing that the family's culture had already been established and couldn't easily be changed.

The most powerful lesson of my various personal experiences is that if

you want to smoothly integrate a child into your way of life, you have to start early—preferably before birth.



## 4. Forming the Family

Welcome to my plan. It is a modest reorganization of the most basic building block of human society: the family. Without a family—or some semblance of one—none of us would be here. Most of us tend to be loyal to our families, and our daily lives often revolve around them. The type of family most of us came from is called the “nuclear family,” usually consisting of two parents raising one or more children in an isolated dwelling. I have no hostility toward the nuclear family, but in the modern world it isn’t doing the job. It isn’t producing enough children, and we can argue that it isn’t producing the highest quality of them. My plan tries to address both issues.

My plan can start out simply: Several couples, producing babies in the traditional way, decide to pool their resources by raising their children in a single household. Instead of one couple raising two children, you might have four couples raising nine children or more. The parents who join this collective might already have children of their own, but once the plan gets rolling, the mothers coordinate their births to create an even spacing

between children.

From the perspective of economic efficiency, this plan makes plenty of sense. Only one parent needs to be on duty at any one time, while the others can go to work and lead more-or-less independent lives. Food can be purchased in bulk, and resources like washing machines and kitchen supplies can be shared. If the age of the children is evenly distributed from 0 to adulthood, much of the routine tasks of care and education can be performed by older children. Under proper supervision, a 12-year-old can change a diaper or prepare a simple meal almost as well as any adult, so let's make use of this captive resource.

Infants in particular require a lot of one-on-one attention, and older children generally enjoy providing it. A new baby in the household is like a new puppy. Everyone wants to play with it, which is exactly what the baby needs. You don't have to be an adult with a PhD to talk baby-talk to a baby and teach them basic skills. You just need the time, and kids have plenty of it. Adults will always have to provide a certain degree of structure and supervision, and but they shouldn't need to perform the most time-consuming tasks of parenthood. They don't need to change the diapers or teach simple language skills when older children can do it just as well.

The chief advantage of the of post-nuclear family over the nuclear

family is lower cost to each parent, in both money and time. If everything is running smoothly, they only need to be “part-time parents”, on duty for predictable hours and leading independent lives otherwise. A financial contribution would be required of each parent, calculated according to some sort of formula, but it should be far less than the vast amounts that today’s parents spend on their offspring. For example, there would be no childcare expenses, which could cost as much as rent for today’s working parents.

Another advantage of the post-nuclear system is the distribution of risk. Birthing and raising children is fraught with danger and probably always will be. A certain percentage of children are going to be crippled by some accident, disease or birth defect. This is devastating when it happens to traditional parents, but it could be less so when several adults are sharing the burdens. A parental consortium provides a sort of insurance plan, where one parent or couple doesn’t have to go it alone.

Given an appropriate household culture, I am confident in the ability of children to adapt to the lifestyle they are given. The only thing that might gum up the works is adult politics. How do you get eight or more adults to work together and fairly distribute the burdens and responsibilities of management? A key feature of human behavior, displayed throughout the

ages, is that parents tend to give preference to their own biological offspring. It also seems to be human nature that every parent thinks they know best how children should be raised. In a traditional two-adult family, if a child doesn't get what they want from one parent, they go to the other. Imagine if there were seven other parents they could appeal to. Keeping the children in line is one problem; keeping the parents on the same page is an even more complex task.

## 5. Key Internal Elements

As I see it, the smooth coordination of multiple parents depends on three key factors: **selection**, **separation** and **policy**. *Selection* is the careful choice of which adults are allowed to join the parenting collective. *Separation* means that parents live apart from the main household and come into it only for scheduled duties. *Policy* refers to the rules, customs and command structure that govern the family. The adults decide by mutual consent what the policies of family management should be, then they are obligated to abide by them.

Looking at each factor...

**Selection.** The founding couples of this collective would enter such an arrangement only after a rigorous mutual vetting process. Like marriage, you are entering into a lifelong commitment, so you need to have a lot of confidence in the people you are partnering with. The couples have to be in sync on a lot of basic issues before the project begins, including core issues

of belief, behavior and parenting philosophy. Each adult's personality has to be compatible with the group and its goals, and they have to be strongly motivated to see the family succeed. It is not yet clear to me how this vetting process would work, but if you are going to engage in a lifelong project with other adults, you have to know you can get along with them. Formally or informally, everyone has to submit to some kind of personality test to determine whether they are compatible with the project. Fundamental disagreements and incompatibilities have to be weeded out before acceptance to avoid grief later.

This collective isn't as intense as marriage, because the adults are free to live apart. The adults in this group don't have to be in perfect sync on all things, but they do need to share certain basic understandings of the world and the role of the family. Each member should be disciplined, intelligent and willing to resolve problems through negotiation. Above all, each founding member need to be "conscientious", which means they are aware of their responsibilities and always try to do what's right. Disagreements are expected, but members are capable of resolving them without rancor. Mental illnesses and dysfunctional personality traits need to be detected early, preferably before admission, so they don't interfere with the functioning of the group.

Even today, accurately evaluating the personalities of others is a key element of success in both business and relationships. Do it well, and your marriage or organization is a smooth-functioning machine. Select candidates poorly, and the machine falls apart.

**Separation.** Although eight or more adults may be responsible for the household, I propose that none of them lives there. Instead they live in their own apartments or houses at a respectful distance from the main house—accessible but not too accessible. This helps prevent parents from stepping on each other's toes. In the home where the children are raised, only one individual or couple is on duty at any one time. On a day-to-day basis, the older teenage children are in charge, and adults provide only occasional guidance. Management of the household is a subtle and complex job, and having too many cooks in the kitchen at once would only complicate the process.

With only one adult or couple on duty at any one time, their word is law—at least until the all the parents can discuss the matter. Children shouldn't see their parents fight, and the easiest way to accomplish this is not having too many parents on-site at once. Any disagreements on parenting choices should be resolved outside the view of the children,

through a process the parents have already agreed to. The overall goal is a sustainable family culture, enforced largely by the children themselves. To give the culture space to bloom, parents can't be lording over their children. They design the machine, make adjustments to it and support it financially, but whenever possible, they let the machine run on its own.

Living apart from the household has a huge advantage to the parents: It means that, barring a crisis, each of them is on duty only for a predetermined schedule. The rest of the time is their own to pursue a career or do anything else they choose. Parents can even take extended vacations without children, so long as they can get other parents to cover for them. Today's nuclear parents need to be on duty 24/7, and they rarely get independent vacations. The post-nuclear parent might be on duty in the home only one or two days a week during defined hours. This already reduces one of the greatest burdens of nuclear parenting: the sense that you can never turn "off". Unless there's a crisis that demands everyone's attention, parents can periodically detach from the family. They can leave its problems behind until they are back on duty.

Wouldn't the constant turnover of parental figures be emotionally traumatic to the children? How would you feel as a young child if you saw you mom only once a week? I don't think it would be as disruptive as it



seems, because human bonds in this family have been rearranged. In the post-nuclear family, the strongest emotional bonds are not between parent and child but between a child and their older siblings, who serve as parents. If you come into the world being cared for by a 16-year-old brother or sister, for all practical purposes that person is your emotional parent. They are who you run to if you stub your toe or have a bad dream. The adult parents would play a role more akin to grandparents today. You see them only about once a week. They may provide special attention and experiences, but they don't look after you on a daily basis.

**Policy.** The post-nuclear family is governed by rules, customs, hierarchies and schedules that are refined over time. I collectively refer to these things as “policy”. This is the software that runs the family, and it could be its most valuable asset. There are policies both among the children and among the parents. Rules and rituals regulate every repeated activity, like meal preparation and cleanup. If you want to get fed, you are expected to take certain steps beforehand. When the rules don't provide a solution, there are policies for decision making and conflict resolution. Well-defined policies mean that everyone—child or adult—has a clear understanding of their responsibilities and boundaries within the family.

Another term for policy is “family culture”. The rules and habits of the family evolve over time and are passed from older children to younger ones. Taken together, the policies are “the way we do things,” and they are encoded almost invisibly into a child’s psyche. If you grow up in a world of consistent rules, they become part of your personality, and you carry them with you into adulthood. Culture is the unique “language” of your family, and you have to grow up in this environment to speak it fluently.

The parents control the rules in the same way that a legislature controls the laws of a state or country. They define them and change them, remaining conscious about what really works, but they also leave room for interpretation. The post-nuclear family is a rules-based organization. Both children and adults know the rules and are expected to obey them, but it is not unexpected that children will push against them. Children must live by the rules for now, but they are also encouraged to question them. If circumstances change and the rules need to be modified, there are rules for how these changes are debated and enacted.

Whenever a conflict or challenge arises, the immediate resolution of it is not the most important issue. The problem is, “How do we resolve this consistent with our rules?” Sometimes, the existing rules provide an answer, and sometimes rules must be modified. The end result over time

can be substantial difference in culture between families, just like there are different cultures in different countries and regions today.

Selection, separation and policy are what keep adults in the group working together, but the structure is different for children. Selection doesn't apply to them, because no child in any family gets to choose their siblings. As with families today, once you are born into your family, you are a member for life, for better or worse. There's also not much separation within the core household. Each child gets their own modest allocation of personal space, but they aren't allowed to live apart from the others until adulthood. Policy certainly apply to children—They have plenty of rules to obey.—but the core family has another important structural element: hierarchy.

Among the children, there is a clear management structure based chiefly on age. For example, a 17-year-old generally has more authority than a 10-year-old. Since 17-years-olds are nearly adults, they are given a great deal of adult responsibility. The older children are usually the team leaders and law enforcers, assigning tasks and resolving conflicts among the younger ones based on their own experience within the system. A conflict is referred to parents only when it cannot be resolved at a lower

level. The older children directly manage the household, making sure all the chores get done. Above them is the hand of supervising adults, but this hand can be almost invisible if everything is running well.

Age is the natural form of hierarchy among children, since their skills advance progressively with each year. A staggered age distribution means there is rarely any doubt about who is in charge: In any grouping, the oldest child has seniority and is responsible for the welfare of younger ones. This doesn't necessarily mean that all of the responsibility falls on the eldest child, because they can delegate authority to younger ones. Even a 17-year-old shouldn't be preparing many meals or changing many diapers, because younger children are capable of that.

The adults should also have a clear command structure, although perhaps more fluid and not necessarily based on age. There is one family leader, perhaps elected by the others. The leader is empowered to make certain executive decisions, while other decisions must be put to a vote. There are rules that govern the parents' financial contribution to the household and their labor obligations. Parents gather for periodic meetings, and when there's a family crisis, everyone pitches in; otherwise, you are unlikely to see more than two parents in the main house at the same time.

I propose that an adult should never perform any routine task that

can be safely handled by minors. Instead, adults are enforcing rules, establishing schedules, directing education and teaching advanced skills to older children. They are more managers than caregivers. They make sure the kitchen is stocked with food and equipment, but they don't make the meals. They make sure the rent and utilities are paid, but they don't clean house. Nearly all routine tasks within the home are handled by inmates.

This isn't "child labor" but an important part of a child's upbringing. Learning to care for their household and family members is part of their education and socialization, as important as any classroom learning. By the time you reach 18, you will have raised several children and helped manage a complex human organization. There can be no better training program for real life!

## 6. Why We Need Families

Before we delve into the details of the post-nuclear family, we need to discuss what a family is good for. It is not just a factory for the production of children but a lifelong support system for everyone involved. In the words of Robert Frost: “Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” Whatever household you grew up in, it will always be your “home” and family members will always be your “people”. Barring a serious conflict or the sale of the property, your childhood home is a place you are likely to return to throughout your life. When you find yourself sick or in trouble, you know your people will help. When you get old and infirm, you know your family will do their best to care for you. Children don’t just graduate from the family and move away. It remains their reference point and service center for their entire life.

Whether we’re talking about nuclear or post-nuclear, the family should ideally serve these functions:

- 1) A system for raising children.

- 2) An emotional support system for adults.
- 3) A lifelong mutual aid society.
- 4) An old-age home.

The role of the family doesn't end when teenagers become legal adults. Hardly anyone can call themselves fully independent of their birth family at 18 or 21, or even 25 or 30. Independence, in fact, is only a matter of degree, and the ideal human experience is to never really separate from your birth family. If possible, you return there for holidays, and wherever you are, you keep in touch with the people who raised you and the siblings you are closest to.

One of the goals of childrearing in the post-nuclear household is to foster strong bonds between siblings and loyalty to the family as a whole. These sentiments hold the family together even if the adult children move away. Moving away should be seen as only a temporary state. When you get old, you should expect to move back home again. Strong sentiments are important because a family, like a private college, requires the financial support of its alumni. Even when adult children move away, they are expected to keep in touch with the family and pay their "family taxes" which are levied on all working family members.

In other words, if you graduate from the family and move away, you are expected to pay a portion of your income to the family you came from. In exchange, the family provides you with ongoing support, a shelter in times of trouble and care in your final days.

Family taxes? This may sound weird at first, but it is not much different from the remittances that immigrants from poor countries send to their families back home. There would be a formula to determine how much each family member owed, and they are expected to pay it on a regular basis, just like their income taxes to government authorities.

What is the enforcement mechanism for these taxes? In the best case, you are motivated by a sense of responsibility, but if necessary, shame and embarrassment can be brought to bear. If your siblings are paying their taxes and you're not, you could be facing their personal wrath, which could be more frightening than any letter from the IRS. If you are making a good income and consistently fail to send the required amount back home, you could face excommunication from the family. This means you would lose family services, like aid from other family members in your time of need. Most importantly, refusing to support your birth family could get you excommunicated from the family retirement plan, which means you'd have no place to go when you got old.



Apart from the raising of children, the most important function of the nuclear family is caring for the sick and elderly. In today's world, you might retire to a golf course in Florida. In the post-nuclear world, you would retire to the original homestead where you grew up. "Retirement," in the post-nuclear sense, wouldn't be a life of leisure. You would return to the family homestead only to be put to work managing the household. Pressing older family members into service for parental tasks would mean less burdens younger adults who are at the peak of their careers. Once the family has matured, it could be run almost entirely by people 65 or over.

Older people who have finished their careers would make excellent parents. In today's nuclear world, no responsible person would become a parent at age 65, because you don't know if you are going to live long enough to see the child to adult, but if you are a member of a collective, those worries evaporate. You could die at 75 and everyone would mourn your passing, but no child would be left unprotected.

I said that separation was a key element for the smooth operation of the household. Adults who are supervising the household shouldn't be living there to avoid stepping on the toes of the adult currently on duty. This also applies to older parents, but only as long as they are capable of independent living. Once retired adults become frail and require care, they

should be moved into the same household as the children. That way, children can share in the care of their elders, just like they do for their younger siblings.

Throughout most of human history, ailing elders were cared for by their children and grandchildren, but today this system has been largely replaced by various bureaucracies. Old people who require care are placed in old-age homes while children are raised separately. This can result in lonely old people and neglected children. This is a huge waste of resources, since many old people can still provide services to the family, while children can provide services to them.

As elders approach their final passing, they can have a lot of trouble with simple physical tasks, like moving things, getting dressed and preparing meals. You don't need an advance degree to help with any of these things. Children can perform many of these "assisted living tasks." At least they can try, and if they have trouble, they can call on older kids or adults for assistance.

Being a child in the post-nuclear family is not a life of leisure. There should be time for play and exploration, but significant periods are devoted to the service of others. Children are given important real-life responsibilities from the earliest age they can handle them. They are caring

for younger siblings, caring for the sick, caring for their elders and helping with the physical upkeep of the home. Apart from making efficient use of available labor, childhood responsibilities build a strong sense of clan loyalty. Your duties in this life are not just the pursuit of your personal goals but service to others.

Service to one's family is not always a bed of roses. It can seem like a prison when there are too many people needing care and not enough people to provide it. Imagine an adult mother in the traditional nuclear family: She may be holding down a job, caring for kids while also caring for her aging parents. Under these circumstances, "family service" can become a nightmare. A key to the success of the post-nuclear family would be the careful management of responsibilities, so no one is too stressed and each person still has time for themselves.

Every member of the family should have a clear idea of where their responsibilities begin and end. For example, family taxes should be based on a precisely-defined schedule, so that each adult "taxpayer" knows when they have paid enough. If your job as a kid is caring for someone else, you should know the boundaries of what you are responsible for. When the needs of you charge are being met, you know you can relax.

What you usually get when you care for another person is a strong

emotional bond with them, and they have a strong bond with you. This bond is likely to persist long after the care relationship has ended. For example, when a ten-year-old helps raise their 5-year-old sibling, they are likely to form a bond with each other that lasts for life. It is likely to be much stronger than the bond between siblings who never care for each other. The latter sibling—who are common today—are more likely to go their own way and rarely talk to each other in adulthood.

So the post-nuclear family of tomorrow would attempt to take all of the loyalties of the nuclear family and pump them up. It intends to build strong lifelong bonds within the family through systems of mutual care and responsibility. All of childhood is essentially a team-building exercise. When childhood eventually ends—or at least fades into adulthood—the team should persist. Even if you travel the world in adulthood, you should always feel the need to check in with the people you grew up with. When adulthood fades into old age, you should feel the natural inclination to return to your family.

They need you, and you need them.

## 7. Education

The single most important function of the post-nuclear family is education—or more broadly “character formation”. The core aim of the family is not just to raise the children to maturity but to form them into “good citizens,” however you define the term. Education is seen as far too important to turn over to any public school system, so in the post-nuclear family, homeschooling is the norm, supplemented by outside services where useful. Online learning may be appropriate for older children, but basic moral and communication skills can only be learned the old-fashioned way: with lots of personal interaction between student and teacher.

This is where the family again taps its captive labor force. If a kid has just learned a new skill, like the alphabet, one of the best ways to cement that knowledge is for them to teach it to a younger child. There must be structure and supervision from adults, but actual teaching can come for a variety of sources, including online programs and older children. Adults

step in to teach only in certain high-value subjects like social studies. If you want to teach children about the complicated craziness of the world at large, you probably need an adult to give it context and meaning.

Homeschooling also allows the education plan to be tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each student. There is a core curriculum expected for every student, with defined age benchmarks for when each skill should be achieved, but if a student is capable of breezing through five years of math in one year, they are free to do so. The traditional model of public education is for everyone of a certain age to proceed at the same pace, boring some students and leaving others behind. In the post-nuclear household, there are no children of the same age, so learning can proceed at whatever pace is suitable for the child.

## 8. Sexual Relationships

The post-nuclear family is a self-contained unit. As long as adults family members are making an income and paying their taxes, the family doesn't need a lot from the outside world. The outside world is still important, however, and the family has to come to an accommodation with it. All children have a thirst for the world beyond their family. It can start at an early age for many children, but virtually all children turn outward during adolescence. In particular, they start developing sexual impulse, which are usually focused on targets outside the family.

In general, siblings raised together are not sexually attracted to each other, even if they are genetically unrelated. This phenomenon is called the "Westermarck Effect", and it was first identified in the kibbutzes of Israel. The kibbutz was a failed system of mutual child-rearing that may seem to resemble the post-nuclear family I am proposing. Children from many different parents were raised together in age-segregated dorms. I will have more to say about Kibbutzes later, but I contend that age segregation

doomed the system. The important point here is that boys and girls raised together under this system showed little sexual attraction to each other, even though they weren't genetically related. Very few of them married their "siblings" later in life even though they were permitted to do so.

A sexual disinterest in one's siblings is probably an evolutionary adaptation to prevent inbreeding, which tends to generate crippling genetic mutations. Nature doesn't want siblings mating, so there are certain to be mechanisms in the human brain to discourage it. Virtually every human society has laws against incest, but those external rules are relatively weak when one is living in close proximity to members of the opposite sex. I contend that the main disincentive is psychological: When you look at your sibling, you may love them in a platonic or idealistic way, but you're not interested in them sexually. That switch is turned off.

So how does the human brain identify a sibling? The Westermarck Effect suggests a sibling is anyone you grew up with. Subjectively, romance requires an element of mystery and intrigue, and sibling, being well-known to you, can't offer that. You may "love" your sibling and may be willing to defend them to the death, but the thought of having sex with them probably seems repulsive. You may eventually know a romantic partner as well as your siblings, but this kind of thorough knowledge won't get the



relationship started. It is lack of knowledge that gets the sexual juices flowing, and siblings just don't fit the bill.

As kids enter puberty, they are likely to start taking an intense interest in kids from other families, and the home family has to be prepared to deal with it. Young love is messy, and family elders are best to stay out of the way. For their psychological health, young people should have access to prospective romantic partners outside the family. They are subject to rules, of course, and they can't shirk their responsibilities within the family, but ultimately a young person needs the right to form relationships with whomever they choose.

If the elders try to constrain romantic relationships, it would be in only one area: *There shall be no babies without permission!* How and when babies are born is an important family prerogative. If a teenage member of the family has sex and that event causes a baby, it puts the family in a difficult position. It is not automatic that the baby or the other parent would be absorbed into the household. The elders devote a lot of attention to who gets to enter the family—either by birth or recruitment—and they can't let it happen outside their control.

This may sound oppressive, but it is not out of line with most of human history. Until relatively recently—and even today in some parts of

the world—marriages were arrangements between families. All humans were engaged in a sort of *de facto* breeding program. Families decided who would mate and have children because the task was seen as too important to relinquish to the fickleness of love.

In the post-nuclear family, there would be no attempt to control the fickleness of love, only the function of procreation. Young people can hold hands and have a fling with whomever they want, but they are taught about birth control and are expected to use it. If you have a child without the permission of your family, you would be putting them in a difficult position and would bring you an element of shame. Accidents will happen, and they have to be dealt with, but sex-for-procreation is not the normal course of events. To produce the babies of the family, other forms of procreation will be used, which I'll discuss later. The children in the family are taught about both sex and procreation, and they know the two must be kept separate.

A more challenging problem is long-term mating. When two adults fall in love and remain in love, they eventually want to live with each other, and this bond may last for life. Whether you call it “marriage” or something else, this bond raises a conundrum: Which family does the couple belong to?

For example, the natural plan when family members get old is that

they return to the household of their childhood. These “retired” people serve as a source of parental labor, and when they get too old to care for themselves, they are in a place where services can be provided to them. Things get more complicated when two adults from different families are bonded to each other and don’t want to part. Which household do they retire to?

Every family member who has paid their family taxes has a “right of return”—that is, they have guaranteed care from other family members in their old age. Their spouse, however, does not have this right, since they have not paid the taxes. Simply marrying a family member does not automatically make you a member, at least regarding concrete family services like elder care. Since the spouse hasn’t made the lifelong investment that the family member has, caring for them in their old age could be seen as unfair to other family members. It’s a dilemma, because you also don’t want to break up a loving couple.

The solution involves a lot of negotiation and perhaps a financial settlement. The settlement is akin to a dowry, except that it is paid at the time of the couple’s retirement instead of the time of marriage. During a family member’s adulthood, they can bond and unbind with whomever they want. So long as no babies are produced, the family will stay out of it.

Negotiation is required only when the family wants to move back to the family homestead near the end of their life, with their partner in tow. Like any new family member, the partner has to be vetted and approved by family elders, and if accepted, the partner will have to provide financial compensation to make up for the taxes they didn't pay throughout their life.

I'll tackle the issue of family taxes in a later chapter, but the basic idea is that every family member is expected to pay a certain portion of their income to the family throughout their productive adulthood. In exchange, they get full access to family services, including a secure retirement plan. If you don't pay your taxes you lose these services, and if you never paid the taxes—because you were raised by a different family—then somehow your new family has to be compensated. Perhaps this could take the form of a payment between families or a direct payment by the couple. Complex mathematics would be involved in calculating how much is due.

The important point here is that the family doesn't need to take a stand on the romantic lives of its members. A family member can fall in love with whomever they want. There are only two places where the family must take a stand and demand negotiation: (1) You can't have babies without permission, and (2) you can't bring a new member into the family without permission. Permission is not granted easily and may even be

denied, because the long-term integrity of the family outweighs personal relationships.

## 9. Where Do Babies Come From?

In the post-nuclear family, I am proposing a permanent household with a stable number of children spaced evenly apart. As each young adult ages out of the system, a new baby is born into it. This begs the question: Where do the babies come from? This is a touchy subject, because my solution departs from current norms, to say the least.

If the family is founded by several young couples, the problem is solved for the first decade or two. These couples, if heterosexual, produce babies in the tradition way, but coordinated in their timing. If there are four women in the group, each could produce a baby once every 4-8 years, to achieve the family's desired spacing. This system works until the founding mothers lose their fertility around the age of 40. (They can probably produce children beyond that age, but the risk of birth defects tends to rise.) After that point, the family has to get creative.

Producing a baby requires an egg, a sperm and a human female to incubate the baby. Traditionally, a baby is the product of a man and woman

who deeply love each other, but modern science allows a more clinical option: egg and sperm are united in the lab and implanted in the mother. I don't want to declare in advance what the family's solution should be. "Where the babies come from?" is a product of the group's philosophy and the available resources. I can only point out what the options are. Here are several of them:

- 1) The family can adopt unwanted babies or young children.
- 2) The family can recruit new young couples, who will provide both egg and sperm, as well as the mother to carry them.
- 3) The family can recruit new women, and a sperm or fertilized egg is provided.
- 4) The family can arrange a surrogate birth from a woman outside the group, who agrees to relinquish the child and is presumably paid for her services.
- 5) The young women raised by the family serve as surrogates for the next generation.
- 6) Babies are raised in artificial wombs without a human mother.

Each of these solutions has its potential pitfalls, which I will discuss

below. Option #2 is the most politically palatable to current society, while all the others raise the touchy question of “Whose egg and whose sperm?”—which is complicated politics, indeed! Over time, I think Option #5 is the most sustainable method, but let me discuss the other options first.

**Artificial Wombs** sound like a good idea in theory, but I see them as similar to self-driving cars: a utopian future that seems just out of reach but will never actually arrive. A human womb isn’t just a vessel with nutrients. There are all sorts of complex chemical and biological interactions going on between mother and child that I don’t think technology will ever master. It’s like a self-driving car not being able to negotiate all the potholes, vagaries and human behaviors of real roads. At the least, artificial wombs would probably be frightfully expensive compared to the tried-and-true method of human gestation. Since a principle aim of the post-nuclear system is to reduce costs, it will probably be using human vessels for the foreseeable future.

**Adopting an existing unwanted child** sounds like the most humane option, but it presents enormous risks.



## 10. Future Chapters

1. Technology and the Family
2. Adult Freedoms
3. Where Do The Babies Come From?