

The shifts described in Powell's research pleased Jennifer Chrisler, executive director of the Family Equality Council, an advocacy group for same-sex families.

"People are taking a more expansive view of what a family is," said Chrisler. "But for any family that doesn't fit the 1960s Ozzie-and-Harriet mold, slow and steady doesn't feel fast enough."

So in the end, when it comes to defining "Family Ties" and determining "Family Matters," it's "All in the Family."

QUESTIONS FOR READING ACTIVELY

1. The article "What Makes a Family? Children, Say Many Americans" reports on the results of several polls regarding what counts as a *family*. What did the pollsters find out? How would you have responded to their questions?
2. Berman mentions that, in addition to same-sex marriage debates, "the definition of family affects income tax filings, adoption and foster care practices, employee benefits and other matters." What are some of the "other matters" that Berman did not touch on but that would affect families?

QUESTION FOR THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Berman points out that the book *Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family* identifies three "clusters" of Americans: exclusionists, moderates, and inclusionists. If you had to place your parents in one of these groups, which would it be and why? Which group would you place yourself in and why? What are some of the differences between your parents' perceptions and ideals and yours?

QUESTION FOR WRITING THOUGHTFULLY

1. In the beginning of the essay, Berman mentions the Addams family, the Partridge family, and the first family. Reflect on the highly visible or prominent families you were exposed to as a young person. Perhaps the families were fictional, like the Cleaver family in *Leave It to Beaver* or Armand Goldman and his partner, Albert, in the 1996 film *The Birdcage*. There also may be families you knew personally who made an impression on you. Choose one, and define the dynamics of that family, as well as your reaction to the family and how it may have formed some of your beliefs about what constitutes *family*.

"The Rise of Post-Familialism: Humanity's Future?"

by Joel Kotkin

This piece is the introduction to a new report on post-familialism from Civil Service College in Singapore, Chapman University, and Fieldstead and Company and authored by Joel Kotkin.

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For most of human history, the family—defined by parents, children and extended kin—has stood as the central unit of society. In Europe, Asia, Africa and, later, the Americas and Oceania, people lived, and frequently worked, as family units.

Today, in the high-income world and even in some developing countries, we are witnessing a shift to a new social model. Increasingly, family no longer serves as the central organizing feature of society. An unprecedented number of individuals—approaching upwards of 30% in some Asian countries—are choosing to eschew child bearing altogether and, often, marriage as well.

The post-familial phenomena has been most evident in the high income world, notably in Europe, North America and, most particularly, wealthier parts of East Asia. Yet it has bloomed as well in many key emerging countries, including Brazil, Iran and a host of other Islamic countries.

The reasons for this shift are complex, and vary significantly in different countries and cultures. In some countries, particularly in East Asia, the nature of modern competitive capitalism often forces individuals to choose between career advancement and family formation. As a result, these economies are unwittingly setting into motion forces destructive to their future workforce, consumer base and long-term prosperity.

The widespread movement away from traditional values—Hindu, Muslim, Judeo-Christian, Buddhist or Confucian—has also undermined familialism. Traditional values have almost without exception been rooted in kinship relations. The new emerging social ethos endorses more secular values that prioritize individual personal socioeconomic success as well as the personal quest for greater fulfilment.

To be sure, many of the changes driving post-familialism also reflect positive aspects of human progress. The change in the role of women beyond sharply defined maternal roles represents one of the great accomplishments of modern times. Yet this trend also generates new pressures that have led some women to reject both child-bearing and marriage. Men are also adopting new attitudes that increasingly preclude marriage or fatherhood.

The great trek of people to cities represents one of the great triumphs of human progress, as fewer people are necessary to produce the basic necessities of food, fibre and energy. Yet the growth of urban density also tends to depress both fertility and marriage rates. The world's emerging post-familial culture has been largely spawned in the crowded pool of the large urban centres of North America, Europe and, most particularly, East Asia. It is also increasingly evident in the fast growing cities of developing countries in south Asia, North Africa, Iran and parts of the Middle East.

The current weak global economy, now in its fifth year, also threatens to further slow family formation. Child-rearing requires a strong hope that life will be better for the next generation. The rising cost of urban living, the declining number of well-paying jobs, and the onset of the global financial crisis has engendered growing pessimism in most countries, particularly in Europe and Japan, but also in the United States and some developing countries.

This report will look into both the roots and the future implications of the post-familial trend. As Austrian demographer Wolfgang Lutz has pointed out, the shift to an increasingly childless society creates "self-reinforcing mechanisms" that make childlessness, singleness, or one-child families increasingly predominant.

Societal norms, which once almost mandated family formation, have begun to morph. The new norms are reinforced by cultural influences that tend to be concentrated in the very areas—dense urban centres—with the lowest percentages of married people

and children. A majority of residences in Manhattan are for singles, while Washington D.C. has one of the highest percentages of women who do not live with children, some 70%. Similar trends can be seen in London, Paris, Tokyo and other cultural capitals.

A society that is increasingly single and childless is likely to be more concerned with serving current needs than addressing the future oriented requirements of children. Since older people vote more than younger ones, and children have no say at all, political power could shift towards nonchildbearing people, at least in the short and medium term. We could tilt more into a “now” society, geared towards consuming or recreating today, as opposed to nurturing and sacrificing for tomorrow.

The most obvious impact from post-familialism lies with demographic decline. It is already having a profound impact on fiscal stability in, for example, Japan and across southern Europe. With fewer workers contributing to cover pension costs, even successful places like Singapore will face this same crisis in the coming decade.

A diminished labour force—and consumer base—also suggest slow economic growth and limit opportunities for business expansion. For one thing, younger people tend to drive technological change, and their absence from the workforce will slow innovation. And for many people, the basic motivation for hard work is underpinned by the need to support and nurture a family. Without a family to support, the very basis for the work ethos will have changed, perhaps irrevocably.

The team that composed this report—made up of people of various faiths, cultures, and outlooks—has concerns about the sustainability of a post-familial future. But we do not believe we can “turn back the clock” to the 1950s, as some social conservatives wish, or to some other imagined, idealised, time. Globalisation, urbanisation, the ascendancy of women, and changes in traditional sexual relations are with us, probably for the long run.

Seeking to secure a place for families requires us to move beyond nostalgia for a bygone era and focus on what is possible. Yet, in the end, we do not consider familialism to be doomed. Even in the midst of decreased fertility, we also see surprising, contradictory and hopeful trends. In Europe, Asia and America, most younger people still express the desire to have families, and often with more than one child. Amidst all the social change discussed above, there remains a basic desire for family that needs to be nurtured and supported by the wider society.

Our purpose here is not to judge people about their personal decision to forego marriage and children. Instead we seek to launch a discussion about how to carve out or maintain a place for families in the modern metropolis. In the process we must ask—with full comprehension of today’s prevailing trends—tough questions about our basic values and the nature of the cities we are now creating.

Notes

1. The United Nations Population Prospects defines the more developed world as Europe (including Russia and Eastern Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan). All other parts of the world are classified as the less developed world. This inexplicable definition leaves out Singapore, which had the fourth highest GDP per capita in the world in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund. It also excludes Hong Kong, South Korea and a number of other regions. This report has reclassified the UN data into “higher income” and “medium and lower income” regions, with those above a 2010 GDP per capita \$20,000 being “higher income.”

2. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 14.
3. Steven Klavin, *Alone* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11.
4. Radha Basu, *The End of the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11.
5. IBID.

QUESTIONS

1. Joel Kotkin, *The Human Edge: How the New World is Shaping the Future* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11.
2. What are the personal and professional implications of the children for the passages and the future?

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1. Kotkin, *The Human Edge*, 11. For most of the extended history of income we have seen a shift to a more organized and choosing to have a family? Do you see some point in this?
2. Kotkin’s report between career setting into a base and long our world depletion of says, “carve out what are some

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2. Wolfgang Lutz, Vegard Skirbekk and Maria Rita Testa, "The Low Fertility Trap Hypothesis: Forces that may lead to further postponement and fewer births in Europe," Vienna Institute of Demography, *European Demographic Research Papers*, 2005.
3. Steven Klinenberg, *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), p. 5; analysis on census data by Ali Modarres.
4. Radha Basu, "Retire on CPF Savings? Think Again," *The Straits Times*, March 21, 2012.
5. IBID.

QUESTIONS FOR READING ACTIVELY

1. Joel Kotkin's introduction to the report "The Rise of Post-Familialism: Humanity's Future" begins with a somewhat dire look at post-familialism but ends on a note of hope for the future. How does Kotkin use language (specific words and phrases) to define how the family is changing?
2. What are some of the passages in this report that you connected with personally? For example, do you know someone who has put off marriage or children for the sake of a career? What were the consequences? Describe two passages and your reactions to them.

QUESTIONS FOR THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Kotkin observes:

For most of human history, the family—defined by parents, children and extended kin—has stood as the central unit of society.... Today, in the high-income world and even in some developing countries, we are witnessing a shift to a new social model. Increasingly, family no longer serves as the central organizing feature of society. An unprecedented number of individuals are choosing to eschew child bearing altogether and, often, marriage as well.

What are the factors that Kotkin cites to explain this changing nature of the family? Do you think that the family is in danger of becoming obsolete and at some point extinct? Why or why not?

2. Kotkin's report claims that "competitive capitalism" can make people choose between career and family. Consequently, "these economies are unwittingly setting into motion forces destructive to their future workforce, consumer base and long-term prosperity." Consider some of the larger issues facing our world today such as overpopulation, unemployment, world hunger, the depletion of natural resources, and global warming. If we are to, as Kotkin says, "carve out or maintain a place for families in the modern metropolis," what are some of the "tough questions" we might have to ask ourselves?

QUESTION FOR WRITING THOUGHTFULLY

1. Kotkin says that "for many people, the basic motivation for hard work in underpinned by the need to support and nurture a family" and that "without