# Chapter 6: Family Stability

This chapter discusses the societal impacts on family stability. It emphasizes the importance of choosing how one responds to sensitive topics and beliefs, rather than being offended or defensive. The chapter also highlights changes in family living arrangements over the years, citing US Census data, and encourages readers to be defenders of the Family Proclamation by sharing knowledge about marriage and parenting with others. Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson's talk 'Defenders of the Family Proclamation' is referenced as a source of inspiration for women to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, and the divine roles of men and women.

﻿In this chapter, we will introduce and discuss various societal impacts to the family. These topics are sensitive and can be difficult to talk or read about, and can trigger negative thoughts or memories. Sensitivity can invite defensiveness and offensiveness.

We are free to choose how we respond: do we get offended and defensive, or do we choose to listen and learn?

If your spouse or coworker says something that is offensive to you, how offended or upset you become is up to you. This seems to counter what many in our world, and even our own feelings, are telling us. Even so, the difficult but liberating truth taught by many renowned philosophers and found within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ sources, is that our ability to choose how we see and inwardly respond is the only freedom that no one can take away from us (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

Elder David A. Bednar shared that it is impossible for another person to offend you, rather being offended is a choice you make. Neither contention nor peace, hardness or softness, or even meanness nor kindness can be forced upon us. But each of these can be invited. You are encouraged to take responsibility for your own feelings and learning; all while being open to and learning from others. It will not do you or anyone else any good to cry foul every time you read or hear something you don't like. The best response to ideas and beliefs you disagree with is to seek understanding and then give a thoughtful, principle-based response.

Regardless of your current position on topics such as same-sex marriage, abortion, cohabitation, transgender ideology, and so on, you will be asked to think openly and critically about your own position and the position of others as well. Whereas all beliefs and positions should be respected, it does not mean that every belief or position leads to healthy or optimal outcomes for children, families, and society.

### Families Are Ever-Changing

Families are ever-changing over the years since the Family Proclamation was given on September 23, 1995. Yet, our Prophets are still reminding us of the teachings in the Family Proclamation, which is that children need to be cared for by both a mother and a father. Given that our prophets are seers and revelators, meaning that they can see the past, present and the future, we would be wise to heed their counsel. We should subscribe to the values found in the Family Proclamation since the family is ordained of God.

Reread [The Family: A Proclamation to the World](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng#p1) and pay special attention to paragraphs 6 and 7:

Now, look at this US Census data for some statistics on how family living arrangements have changed in America in recent years: (Note: Although this data is from the United States and will differ from country to country, it represents what can happen if responsible citizens and government officials fail to act in accordance with true principles concerning the family. These changes have not come all at once in the US, but overtime. Citizens in all countries would be wise to do whatever they can to “promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.” )

Census Bureau Releases New Estimates on America’s Families and Living Arrangements (Barrett, 2023)

Newly released estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s annual America’s Families and Living Arrangements show that living with two parents was more common for children at younger ages than older ages.

In 2023, 75% of children under the age of 6 lived with two parents, compared to 68% of children between the ages of 12 and 17 who lived with two parents.

Among children who lived with two parents, the majority lived with married parents. However, about 3.2 million children under age 18 lived with cohabiting parents in 2023, a significant increase from the 2.2 million children who lived with cohabiting parents in 2007.

Other highlights:

#### Households

* In 2023, there were 38.1 million single-person households, which was 29% of all households. In 1960, single-person households represented only 13% of all households.

#### Families

* The percentage of families with their own children under age 18 in the household declined from 2003 to 2023. In 2003, 48% of all families lived with their own children under age 18, compared to 43% in 2013 and 39% in 2023.

#### Marriage

* In 2023, 34% of adults ages 15 and over had never been married, up from 23% in 1950.
* The estimated median age to marry for the first time was 30.2 for men and 28.4 for women, up from ages 23.7 and 20.5, respectively, in 1947.
* Almost one-quarter (23%) of children under age 15 living in opposite-sex married-couple families had a stay-at-home mother, and 1% with a stay-at-home father.

#### Living Arrangements

* More than half (56%) of adults ages 18 to 24 lived in their parental home, compared to 16% of adults ages 25 to 34.

These statistics come from the 2023 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, which has collected statistics on families for more than 60 years. The data show characteristics of households, living arrangements, married and unmarried couples, and children.

Have you seen similar changes in your country? Consider researching statistics from your country to see if there are similarities.

### Being Defenders of the Family Proclamation

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson explained why we should share our knowledge about marriage and parenting with others that we come in contact with. In essence, this helps to build the Kingdom of God. Please read her talk “Defenders of the Family Proclamation” given in 2015, and ponder as you read the rest of this chapter how you personally can “Defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.”

[Defenders of the Family Proclamation](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/04/defenders-of-the-family-proclamation?lang=eng)

### Defenders of the Family Proclamation

By Bonnie L. Oscarson (Former Young Women General President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

I recently read the story of Marie Madeline Cardon, who, with her family, received the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the first missionaries called to serve in Italy in 1850. She was a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age when they were baptized. One Sunday, while the family was holding a worship service in their home high in the Alps of northern Italy, an angry mob of men, including some of the local ministers, gathered around the house and began shouting, yelling, and calling for the missionaries to be brought outside. I don’t think they were anxious to be taught the gospel—they intended bodily harm. It was young Marie who marched out of the house to confront the mob.

They continued their vicious yells and demands for the missionaries to be brought out. Marie raised her Bible up in her hand and commanded them to depart. She told them that the elders were under her protection and that they could not harm one hair of their heads. Listen to her own words: “All stood aghast. … God was with me. He placed those words in my mouth, or I could not have spoken them. All was calm, instantly. That strong ferocious body of men stood helpless before a weak, trembling, yet fearless girl.” The ministers asked the mob to leave, which they did quietly in shame, fear, and remorse. The small flock completed their meeting in peace.

Can’t you just picture that brave young woman, the same age as many of you, standing up to a mob and defending her newly found beliefs with courage and conviction?

…Few of us will ever have to face an angry mob, but there is a war going on in this world in which our most cherished and basic doctrines are under attack. I am speaking specifically of the doctrine of the family. The sanctity of the home and the essential purposes of the family are being questioned, criticized, and assaulted on every front.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley first read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” 20 years ago this year, we were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. Little did we realize then how desperately we would need these basic declarations in today’s world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.

May I point out something obvious? Life rarely goes exactly according to plan for anyone, and we are very aware that not all women are experiencing what the proclamation describes. It is still important to understand and teach the Lord’s pattern and strive for the realization of that pattern the best we can.

Each of us has a part to play in the plan, and each of us is equally valued in the eyes of the Lord. We should remember that a loving Heavenly Father is aware of our righteous desires and will honor His promises that nothing will be withheld from those who faithfully keep their covenants. Heavenly Father has a mission and plan for each of us, but He also has His own timetable. One of the hardest challenges in this life is to have faith in the Lord’s timing. It’s a good idea to have an alternative plan in mind, which helps us to be covenant-keeping, charitable, and righteous women who build the kingdom of God no matter which way our lives go. We need to teach our daughters to aim for the ideal but plan for contingencies.

During this 20th anniversary year of the family proclamation, I would like to issue a challenge for all of us as women of the Church to be defenders of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Just as Marie Madeline Cardon courageously defended the missionaries and her newly found beliefs, we need to boldly defend the Lord’s revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord’s plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord’s plan, it should also be our plan!

There are three principles taught in the proclamation which I think are especially in need of steadfast defenders. The first is marriage between a man and a woman. We are taught in the scriptures, “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” For anyone to attain the fullness of priesthood blessings, there must be a husband and a wife sealed in the house of the Lord, working together in righteousness and remaining faithful to their covenants. This is the Lord’s plan for His children, and no amount of public discourse or criticism will change what the Lord has declared. We need to continue to model righteous marriages, seek for that blessing in our lives, and have faith if it is slow in coming. Let us be defenders of marriage as the Lord has ordained it while continuing to show love and compassion for those with differing views.

The next principle which calls for our defending voices is elevating the divine roles of mothers and fathers. We eagerly teach our children to aim high in this life. We want to make sure that our daughters know that they have the potential to achieve and be whatever they can imagine. We hope they will love learning, be educated, talented, and maybe even become the next Marie Curie or Eliza R. Snow.

Do we also teach our sons and daughters there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father? I would hope that as we encourage our children to reach for the very best in this life that we also teach them to honor and exalt the roles that mothers and fathers play in Heavenly Father’s plan.

Our youngest daughter, Abby, saw a unique opportunity to stand as a defender of the role of mother. One day she got a notice from her children’s school that they were having Career Day presentations at the school. Parents were invited to send in an application if they wanted to come to school to teach the children about their jobs, and Abby felt impressed to apply to come and speak about motherhood. She didn’t hear back from the school, and when Career Day was getting close, she finally called the school, thinking they may have lost her application. The organizers scrambled around and found two teachers who agreed to have Abby come talk to their classes at the end of Career Day.

In her very fun presentation to the children, Abby taught them, among other things, that as a mother she needed to be somewhat of an expert in medicine, psychology, religion, teaching, music, literature, art, finance, decorating, hair styling, chauffeuring, sports, culinary arts, and so much more. The children were impressed. She finished by having the children remember their mothers by writing thank-you notes expressing gratitude for the many loving acts of service they received daily. Abby felt that the children saw their mothers in a whole new light and that being a mother or father was something of great worth. She applied to share again this year at Career Day and was invited to present to six classes.

Abby has said of her experience: “I feel like it could be easy in this world for a child to get the sense that being a parent is a secondary job or even sometimes a necessary inconvenience. I want every child to feel like they are the most important priority to their parents, and maybe telling them how important being a parent is to me will help them realize all that their parents do for them and why.”

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is a wonderful example of honoring women and motherhood, especially his own mother. In reference to our earthly mothers, he has said: “May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and [our earthly] mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one.”[3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/04/defenders-of-the-family-proclamation?lang=eng#note3)

The last principle we need to stand and defend is the sanctity of the home. We need to take a term which is sometimes spoken of with derision and elevate it. It is the term homemaker. All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers. We should “make our homes” places of order, refuge, holiness, and safety. Our homes should be places where the Spirit of the Lord is felt in rich abundance and where the scriptures and the gospel are studied, taught, and lived. What a difference it would make in the world if all people would see themselves as makers of righteous homes. Let us defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.

Sisters, I am grateful to be a woman in these latter days. We have opportunities and possibilities which no other generation of women has had in the world. Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home. The Lord needs us to be brave, steadfast, and immovable warriors who will defend His plan and teach the upcoming generations His truths.

I bear witness that Heavenly Father lives and loves each of us. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Societal Impact on the Family

In the remainder of this chapter, we will briefly discuss some of the issues families are facing today.

All around us, we see families under attack. Cohabitation is replacing marriage. Divorce is breaking up families. Pornography use is rampant and easily accessible. Abuse and neglect are prevalent in every society.

We are hearing stories about sex trafficking in every corner of the world, even in places like Rexburg, Idaho.

Substance abuse is on the rise. Screens are everywhere, and many children are spending more and more time online. Children are using social media and gaming at high rates. This is having negative effects such as less time outside, screen addictions, and less time interacting with others in person.

Comprehensive sex education that encourages youth to engage in premarital sex and accept abortions is a threat to the family. Some youth are confused about their sexuality and are having feelings of gender dysphoria. Parents’ rights are being diminished as they are expected to engage in gender reassignment, if the child desires, or else be punished by law.

Poverty is affecting more people and homelessness, and food insecurity is on the rise globally. There have been more violent and aggressive acts against churches and religions in the past several years.

(Family Research Council, 2023, Hostility Against Churches Is on the rise in the United States - Analyzing Incidents from 2018-2023)

We hope that this chapter brings to light some of the problems families are facing today, and how you can help to address them. This includes educating your family about the various harms and even making changes in your own life as needed.

Below are websites of a few organizations that are dedicated to strengthening families and educating the public. Take a few minutes to check them out! Here you will find research and statistics that point out the direction society is taking and the problems it is causing, as well as ways to address these problems in the home, community, states, nations, and the world:

[United Families International](https://www.unitedfamilies.org)

[Focus on the Family](https://www.focusonthefamily.com)

[Family Research Council](https://www.frc.org)

### Divorce

The first topic we will discuss is divorce. Sadly, in today’s world, nearly (if not) everyone is or knows someone who is affected by divorce.

In a document discussing divorce by United Families International we read:

Marriage is central to families and is the cornerstone upon which healthy and progressive societies are built.

Although necessary in extreme cases of abuse, divorce negatively impacts husbands, wives, and children. Society's lack of understanding of the fundamental nature of marriage has brought about a retreat from this crucial institution.

When marriages and families are healthy, communities thrive; when marriages break down, communities break down. Governments and societies should promote marriage and conflict resolution, not dissolution of the family unit, when relational problems arise.

Society's cavalier attitude towards marriage and divorce is not a positive phenomenon and has perpetuated a cycle of failed marriages and a lengthy list of associated social problems detrimental to children and to adults. Divorce is not a solo act, nor is it a victimless phenomenon. There is no debate that divorce has brought enormous physical, emotional, and economic harm to families.

Governments have a great stake in responding to an epidemic divorce rate. Indeed, governments can never create enough safety-net programs to compensate for such comprehensive failure in marriage. Divorce prevention should be a high priority around the globe, beginning with a renewed effort to provide positive pre-marriage training, crafting public policy to strengthen existing marriages, and to create social and cultural environments supportive of the commitment to marriage.

Although divorce rates have leveled off, they are still higher than they ought to be. We must push back against high divorce rates by not buying into the divorce culture, notions of same-sex marriage, or any form of contemporary sexual liberation. We must regenerate a culture that understands the significance of marriage between a man and a woman and by doing so, we give our children back their lives and their most basic human right — a natural family with their biological mother and father.

In the same document, United Families International provided 100 reasons why not to divorce…here are just a few:

(1) “Compared to children who are raised by their [biological] married parents, children in other family types are more likely to achieve lower levels of education, to become teen parents, and to experience health, behavior and mental health problems.”

(6) Those living in a step-family or with a single mother at age 10 were more than twice as likely to be arrested by age 14 than were those living with both biological parents.

(11) Family structure is strongly associated with an adolescent’s risk of sexual activity, even when considering ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status. “Youths living with one parent had significantly higher rates of first sex than those living with both biological parents.”

(17) Children who experienced their parent’s divorce were more likely to endorse premarital sex, approve of cohabitation, have a negative attitude toward marriage, and prefer a smaller family size than children with continuously married or widowed parents. This effect was even stronger for children whose divorced mothers remarried.

(22) Twenty-five percent of children of divorce used drugs and alcohol before age 14, compared with nine percent of the comparison group.

(29) “…adults with divorced parents tend to obtain less education, have lower levels of psychological well-being, report more problems in their own marriages, feel less close to their parents (especially fathers), and are at greater risk of seeing their own marriages end in divorce.”

(70) “Marriage is associated with physical health, psychological well-being, and low mortality. Compared to people who are divorced, separated, single, or widowed, the married have better overall wellbeing. This overall positive effect is strong and consistent.”

### Should I Keep Trying to Work It Out? Sacred and Secular Perspectives on the Crossroads of Divorce

Alan J. Hawkins and Tamara A. Fackrell

Virtually everyone desires a healthy, stable marriage, but when a person’s marriage does not fit that description, he or she may consider divorce. Previously, researchers have estimated that 40 to 50 percent of first marriages—and about 60 percent of remarriages—are ending in divorce in the United States (M. Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Popenoe & Whitehead, 2007). Although these numbers have come down slightly in recent years, the divorce rates are still high. The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, but it is common in many other countries, as well (Popenoe, 2008).

Faithful Latter-day Saints are hardly immune to divorce. Precise estimates of the Latter-day Saint divorce rate are difficult to obtain. One estimate is that 25 to 30 percent of Latter-day Saint couples, who regularly attend Church, experience a divorce (Heaton et al., 2004). While it is heartening to know that the divorce rate for faithful Latter-day Saints is much lower than the national average, still many Latter-day Saints face difficult decisions regarding serious problems in their marriages at one time or another.

#### Spiritual Counsel on Divorce

Marriage is ordained of God and central to our spiritual and temporal well-being. Accordingly, ancient and modern prophets have provided important counsel on marriage and divorce. Though our actions often fall short, the celestial law treats the bonds of marriage as permanent. The Lord taught:

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:6–9).

In our day, latter-day prophets and apostles have provided valuable clarifications and counsel regarding divorce. First, President Gordon B. Hinckley (Hinckley, 2000) said: “There is now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us. . . is not of God.” Referring directly to the doctrine of marriage, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2007) explained: “Because ‘of the hardness of [our] hearts’ (Matthew 19:8–9), the Lord does not currently enforce the consequences of the celestial standard [of marriage]. He permits divorced persons to marry again.” Like the ancient Israelites whom Moses suffered to divorce (see Deuteronomy 24:1), Latter-day Saints too struggle to live the higher law. Thus, a loving God gives us a law more aligned with mortal capabilities and circumstances.

Although the Lord permits divorce and remarriage, the standard for divorce is still high. President James E. Faust addressed this issue directly (Faust, 2004):

In my opinion, any promise between a man and a woman incident to a marriage ceremony rises to the dignity of a covenant. . . .Over a lifetime of dealing with human problems, I have struggled to understand what might be considered “just cause” for breaking of covenants. I confess I do not claim the wisdom nor authority to definitely state what is “just cause.” Only the parties to the marriage can determine this. They must bear the responsibility for the train of consequences which inevitably follow if these covenants are not honored. In my opinion, “just cause” should be nothing less serious than a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person’s dignity as a human being.

President Faust’s humble statement is striking, in that he does not claim to possess “the wisdom [or] authority to definitively state what is ‘just cause.’” His statement underlies an important principle, circumstances surrounding each marital breakdown are unique and perhaps cannot be fully understood by others.Thus only the individuals involved—and an omniscient and all loving God—can determine “just cause.”

President Faust provides some counsel, however, on the decision to divorce. He gives a three-part test for those seeking to determine if ending a marriage is justified: just cause should be nothing less serious than “a prolonged and apparently irredeemable relationship which is destructive of a person’s dignity as a human being.”

#### Prolonged Difficulties

The first part of President Faust’s test is that only prolonged marital difficulties should lead a couple to contemplate divorce. By this, we believe President Faust counsels that spouses should not seek a divorce without a lengthy period of time to attempt to repair or reduce serious problems. The standard does not require that couples spend the decision-making time living together, and in cases where a spouse’s or child’s personal safety is at stake, a separation likely is necessary while determining whether repentance, forgiveness, and change are possible.

#### Apparently Irredeemable Relationship

The second part of the test is directly related to the first. The marital relationship must reach the point where it is apparently irredeemable. By this, we believe President Faust means that there appears to be little hope for repairing the marital relationship. This determination requires that sincere and sustained efforts have been made to understand and address the problems. If one spouse is unwilling or unable to make such an effort, this does not excuse the other spouse from determining his or her part in any problems and making needed change. Elder Oaks (2007) reassures us that the Lord will “consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain” (2 Nephi 2:1–2) in difficult circumstances such as these, and promises, “I am sure the Lord loves and blesses husbands and wives who lovingly try to help spouses struggling with such deep problems as pornography or other addictive behavior or with the long-term consequences of childhood abuse.”

#### Destruction of Human Dignity

The third part of the test is that the relationship has deteriorated to the point that it threatens to destroy the dignity of one or both spouses. By this we believe President Faust means that the marital problems have become serious enough over a period of time that an individual begins to lose his or her sense of worth. Although this may be a difficult standard to discern, certainly abuse or repeated infidelity can threaten a victim’s sense of worth. President Faust’s council suggests that feeling unhappy or unfulfilled in the marriage does not meet this standard. Nor do feelings of emotional or psychological distance or growing apart. Irritations or conflicts brought on by personality differences and other personal preferences rarely rise to the level of threatening our sense of worth. Indeed, these kinds of problems motivate us to pursue changes and improvements that affirm our agency, good desires, and skills that, in turn, reinforce our personal dignity.

The three-part test that President Faust offers to determine just cause for ending our marital covenants, is a high standard by contemporary secular ethics. Such a high standard is best understood in light of God’s eternal plan for His children. In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the Lord’s anointed proclaim that marriage is “ordained of God,” it is “essential to His eternal plan,” and it is “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (¶¶ 1, 7).

#### Secular Perspectives on the Crossroads of Divorce

A strong case for a high standard in determining just cause for divorce can also be made with secular research.

#### Allowing time for deciding about divorce.

The first test President Faust gave was that serious marital problems should exist for a prolonged period of time before one can determine if there is just cause for ending a marriage. There is not much research on how long people experience problems before seeking a divorce. However, research documents that the first five years of a marriage are the years with the highest risk of divorce, and these risks are even higher for remarriages (Bramlett & William, 2001). Apparently, then, many who divorce are married for a relatively short period of time. In our own professional work, we have learned that unfortunately many people divorce after a short period of problems and make their decision quickly, based almost solely on emotion. Some research suggests that many who divorce have regrets about the divorce later (Emery & Sbarra, 2002).

#### Trying to resolve problems before deciding to divorce.

The second part of President Faust’s test of just cause is that the marriage is “apparently irredeemable,” or that there is little hope of repairing the relationship. Related to this point…research suggests that most couples do not seek counseling before they divorce. A final determination of whether problems are irredeemable rests with each spouse. However, we should seek help from various sources, including religious leaders and professional counselors who provide needed perspective and who help distressed couples develop the skills to resolve their problems.

Many people seem to believe that once a marriage has gone bad, it is like bruised fruit that cannot be restored, but instead needs to be thrown out and new fruit bought. But research shows that a high percentage of people who say they are unhappy in their marriage, but persevere for several years, later report that their marriages are happy again (Amato & James, 2018; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Patience and perseverance can make a real difference.

#### Divorce, dignity, and well-being.

The third, interrelated part of President Faust’s test of just cause for divorce, is that the marital relationship has become destructive to a person’s basic human dignity. Certainly there is ample evidence that the process of marital breakdown, the aftermath of divorce, and struggles to rebuild a life and meet daily challenges can leave people feeling exhausted, lost, beaten down, lacking confidence, and depressed (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Wallerstein et al., 2000). Of course, for some adults, divorce, despite its difficulties, can be the beginning of a new, energizing, and exciting path. But for most, marital breakdown and divorce carry with them difficult adjustments that challenge our personal resources to adapt (Amato, 2000; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Specifically, those who were unhappy in their marriage and divorce did not end up having greater emotional well-being a few years down the road compared to unhappily married individuals who stayed together.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this is only a general statement. Certainly there are far too many instances when one’s basic human dignity or safety—as well as children’s well-being—is put in jeopardy by a destructive marital relationship. Spousal abuse carries with it a high risk of destructive consequences, including poor mental and physical health (Afifi et al., 2009; Campbell, 2002). Similarly, the discovery of infidelity, especially a pattern of repeated infidelity, can produce feelings of traumatic stress, anger, depression, anxiety, disorientation, and psychological paralysis (Snyder et al., 2007). Furthermore, when children are witnesses to ongoing high levels of marital conflict, research suggests that most are better off if their parents divorce (Amato & Booth, 1997).

### The Best Course

What is the best course if we come to the crossroads of divorce? Echoing similar, earlier teachings from President Gordon B. Hinckley (2000), Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2007) provided challenging but needed counsel:

Now I speak to married members, especially to any who may be considering divorce. I strongly urge you and those who advise you to face up to the reality that for most marriage problems, the remedy is not divorce but repentance. Often the cause is not incompatibility but selfishness. The first step is not separation but reformation. . . . Under the law of the Lord, a marriage, like a human life, is a precious living thing. If our bodies are sick, we seek to heal them. We do not give up. While there is any prospect of life, we seek healing again and again. The same should be true of our marriages, and if we seek Him, the Lord will help us and heal us.

Latter-day Saint spouses should do all within their power to preserve their marriages.

Whatever sincere actions are taken, we know that a loving God will support those efforts to help couples preserve a union that is essential to his plan for the eternal welfare of his children. And if those efforts ultimately prove unfruitful, then couples can know that they have done all they could to honor a relationship ordained of God.

### Abuse

The second topic we will discuss is abuse, including child abuse and neglect, and intimate partner violence.

### Understanding Abuse in Family Life

by Kay Bradford and Jason B. Whiting

We warn that individuals who . . . abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God.

There are few things so completely contrary to the plan of our Heavenly Father than the problem of abuse. Abuse involves hurting, demeaning, and controlling others, and often the worst types of abuse take place within families.

Abuse comes in many forms, has many causes, is common, and can have profound consequences. This subject may be difficult to understand or uncomfortable to consider, particularly for those who have suffered abuse. However, because abuse affects so many, it is important for Church leaders and members to understand.

Abuse in the family is not new. Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8), and in the days of Noah “the earth [was] filled with violence” (Genesis 6:13). Throughout history, family members have hurt each other, and often these abuses have remained hidden from others. Not until the early 1800s was child abuse initially recognized in the United States; since the 1960s there has been a marked increase in scholarly attention to abuse in the family. In the year 2002, the World Health Organization identified violence between family members as a global health problem (World Health Organization, 2002).

#### Abuse—What Is It?

Abuse consists of actions or attitudes that are intended to hurt or control. It can include many different types of behaviors, from subtle verbal criticisms to the severest forms of physical or sexual violence. Church leaders have been given this definition: “Abuse is the physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual mistreatment of others. It may not only harm the body, but it can deeply affect the mind and spirit, destroying faith and causing confusion, doubt, mistrust, guilt, and fear” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995). It is important to recognize differences in severity. The term maltreatment is sometimes used to identify relatively mild to moderate harm, whereas the term abuse denotes more serious harm (Barnett et al., 2011). Such distinctions are important so that relatively minor acts are taken seriously but seen as different from severe abuse, such as battering. The context is important as well. For example, grabbing or pushing in a sibling relationship is different from such behaviors in a couple relationship.

#### Child Abuse and Neglect

The term child maltreatment encompasses child neglect and child abuse in their various forms. Estimating the prevalence of child maltreatment is complex due, not only to its multiple manifestations (physical abuse, emotional and mental abuse, child neglect, and child sexual abuse), but also because it is impossible to know how much maltreatment goes unreported. Worldwide, younger children tend to be more vulnerable to physical abuse, and pubescent and adolescent children are at relatively higher risk for sexual abuse (World Health Organization, 2002). A national survey in the United States found that during a one-year span of time, one in seven children between ages 2 and 17 were victims of maltreatment, including physical, sexual, or psychological and/or emotional abuse, child neglect, and custodial interference or family abduction (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Parents or adult caregivers are responsible for child maltreatment in about 80 percent of cases (Holden & Barker, 2004). More than some forms of violence, child abuse is often hidden from those in the community and even in the family. Nevertheless, revelation states that, in time, these insidious acts will eventually be brought to light (D&C 1:3).

#### Risk factors for child abuse.

Certain demographic, parental, and child variables have been found to be associated with child maltreatment (note that these are linkages, not necessarily causes). In a 17-year study, poverty was found to be linked to child neglect, but not to child sexual abuse (Brown et al., 1998). Other characteristics that may increase the risk for child maltreatment included poor parent–child relationships, low parental involvement, low parental warmth, an authoritarian parenting style, single parenthood, poor marital quality, dissatisfaction with the child, unrealistic expectations of children, stress, and low impulse control (Brown et al., 1998). Child traits associated with maltreatment include perinatal problems (such as low birth weight), child disability (for example, low IQ), and maladaptive personality traits (like a difficult temperament). In one study, the rate of child maltreatment was 3 percent where there were no risk factors, but increased to 24 percent when four or more risk factors were present (Brown et al., 1998).

Frequently, abusers have been victims themselves. One study found that about half of sex offenders had been abused themselves (Craissati et al., 2002), and in general, those who have witnessed or experienced physical abuse as children are more likely to have violence in their relationships as adults (Whiting et al., 2009). In part, this is because children tend to learn behaviors and attitudes from their parents and other important adults around them, including attitudes about how to act in relationships, and how to view others and themselves. Still, transmission of violence may not be as common as once thought and is a complex process that is affected by a number of factors (Ertem et al., 2000). Notably, most individuals who are exposed to abuse as children do not grow up to become abusive (Barnett et al., 2011). Many who experience abusive childhoods are able to learn healthy relationship skills and succeed brilliantly as parents.

Despite contextual influences and other risk factors that may make abuse more likely, individuals still choose how to react to others, even in stressful situations. This is a primary tenet of most abuse treatment programs (Stith et al., 2004), and is consistent with what we know about agency. Elder Richard G. Scott (2008) stated that moral agency is at the center of God’s plan of happiness. However, the Savior taught that those who use their agency to abuse others will suffer: “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). To abusers, Elder Scott (2008) emphasized the importance of taking responsibility for overcoming abusive behavior and seeking professional help.

#### Consequences of Child Abuse

Maltreatment during childhood is particularly harmful because children are vulnerable and in “need of much nourishment” (1 Nephi 18:19), and childhood experiences have an important impact on a person’s well-being during adolescence and adulthood. Broadly, the consequences of physical abuse are often manifest in externalizing problems (such as delinquency or aggression); the consequences of sexual abuse are often manifest in internalizing behaviors (such as depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem). The consequences of abuse can differ, ranging from mild to severe and from short term to long term, and the consequences can manifest in diverse ways—physically, psychologically, behaviorally, and in interpersonal relationships. Important factors include the child’s age, developmental stage, and the type of abuse, as well as its frequency and severity.

#### Physical abuse

Physical abuse of children often results in physical, behavioral, and emotional problems that manifest in childhood but can continue into adulthood. In addition to bruises and injuries, physical abuse creates risk for impaired brain and cognitive functioning, poor perceptual and motor skills, and poor academic achievement (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2007). It is linked to anxiety, depression, irritability, dissociation, and impaired self-image (Briere & Elliott, 2003). Interpersonally, physical abuse is associated with attachment problems, impaired social skills, and peer rejection. Not surprisingly, such abuse can lead to symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as hyperarousal and hypervigilance, since the child may be faced with the prospect of further assault (Ford et al., 2000). Exposure to trauma may also increase the likelihood of oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and attention-deficit disorder (ADHD; Ford et al., 2000). In adulthood, those abused as children are more prone to engage in criminal and violent behavior, to abuse intimate partners, to abuse alcohol and other substances, and to have emotional problems (Barnett et al., 2011).

#### Sexual abuse

Data suggest that sexual abuse can have more extensive and longer-lasting negative consequences than child physical abuse (Briere & Elliott, 2003). Like physical abuse, the harms that result from sexual abuse are manifest in multiple areas, including physical and reproductive health problems, and, in adulthood, difficulties in maintaining a healthy sexual relationship (Briere & Elliott, 2003). Other possible consequences of sexual abuse include sexually transmitted infections; mental health issues, such as self-blame and shame; negative and avoidant ways of coping; and interpersonal problems, which are in turn associated with emotional distress, insomnia, feelings of helplessness in avoiding victimization, and substance use to dull the pain (Whiffen & MacIntosh, 2005).

#### Psychological abuse and neglect

Psychological maltreatment can result in emotional problems, intellectual deficits, shame and guilt, and insecure attachment. It also can increase anger and aggression, disruptive behavior, and difficulty in making and keeping friends (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2007). These problems can continue into adolescence and adulthood, but can become complicated with other problems, such as negative life views, depression and suicidal ideation, and personality disorders. Relatively less is known about the consequences of neglect, but like other types of maltreatment, it can lead to social, cognitive, behavioral, and academic difficulties; emotional problems; and even physical dysfunction. These outcomes can be long term, but they vary depending on the type, severity, and frequency of neglect.

Characteristics of the child and the child’s environment can have a positive effect toward recovery, including the child’s self-esteem, optimism, and creativity; their independence and courage; and the ways in which the child thinks about the abuse. The child’s safety; access to support; and a social network of trusted people, including peers, teachers, or other important adults, are important protective factors that help promote recovery (Fraser & Terzian, 2005).

### Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a public health problem, human rights issue, and clinical challenge (Saltzman, 2004). Rates of IPV are difficult to assess accurately and vary greatly, depending on the sample and methods used. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2005) gives the following estimates on rates of intimate partner violence in the United States: (a) Approximately one in every four women will experience physical violence by an intimate partner at least once in her life; (b) Almost one third of female homicide victims reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner (Johnson, 2006); (c) About 1.3 million women are raped or physically assaulted or both by their intimate partners every year; (d) Intimate partner violence results in more than 18.5 million mental health care visits each year ([www.ncadv.org).](http://www.ncadv.org).) Although these numbers are specific to the United States, a recent worldwide study confirms that this problem is indeed global.

World Health Organization researchers found that women throughout the world suffer physical and sexual violence by intimate partners at rates usually between 29 and 62 percent (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Much of this violence is severe and continuous. To find this information, a trained group of more than 500 female interviewers met with more than 24,000 15 to 49-year-old women at 15 sites in 10 countries. Women were randomly selected to be interviewed in the area they lived, and care was taken to keep the interviews completely private. Even though many different cultures and languages were part of this study, violence was prevalent and hidden in every country visited. As members of a worldwide church, Latter-day Saints should be aware that violence crosses cultures and is also found within the families of Church members.

#### Adult Sexual Violence

When people hear the term adult sexual violence, they may think of rape, which indeed is a terrifying and traumatic event with many potential consequences (Briere & Scott, 2006). However, people may not necessarily think of marital rape, although it is much more common than stranger assault, and also has significant consequences. Although a full discussion of this type of abuse is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to know that sexual coercion in intimate partnerships exists, and may occur along with other types of violence, especially as a form of domination and control (Logan, 2006).

#### Adult Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse (sometimes referred to as emotional or verbal abuse) includes a repeated pattern of demeaning, devaluing, and conveying to a person that he or she is unlovable, worthless, or unwanted (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2007). Victims of abuse will often say that this type of abuse is even more damaging than physical abuse since it frequently leaves the victim struggling with low self-worth and feelings of inadequacy (Whiting et al, 2012). Psychological abuse is always present with physical violence, but often occurs in nonviolent relationships as well (Straus & Field, 2003, p. 200). It can range from severe shaming and demeaning, to more subtle forms of criticizing and contempt, all of which are damaging to relationships and individuals (Gottman, 1999).

#### Why Do They Stay?

I was powerless. I felt trapped and I felt like I was paralyzed, I couldn’t get out of it and I started struggling with moral issues and spiritual issues and feeling like I wanted to get out of it but honestly I was so terrified of the process and the aftermath of what that would mean . . . it was easier to just stay in that situation and deal with [it] than to make things worse by getting out. —Joanie, age 26

As illustrated by this woman’s experience, leaving abuse is not usually a simple matter. Although many people who suffer abuse ultimately do leave abusive relationships, this may take a long time, and many want to stay and just have the abuse stop (Sleutel, 1998). Sometimes people blame a victim for staying in an abusive relationship because of their own strong feelings of shock or anger, but this is a complex decision that can carry great risk. Many women are threatened if they leave, and indeed this is a time that rates of violence and even homicides spike (Morton et al., 1998). Women may also fear for their children, who may have been threatened, and they may have few options or resources to draw upon if they do leave.

#### Dating Violence

Although it may be easy to think of violence as only a marital or cohabitation problem, it occurs with similar frequencies in dating relationships. In fact, women who are between the ages of 20 and 24, which includes many college students, are at the highest risk of violence (Catalano, 2007). Dating violence, like most forms of abuse, is difficult to define and measure, but awareness of this problem has increased in recent years as college and even high school campuses are addressing the issue. Physical and verbal aggression is common between partners who are committed, casually dating, or may not know each other well at all. Another form of dating violence is date rape and sexual assault, which may involve the use of drugs (for example, GHB or Rohypnol) that can impair a person’s ability to consent to sexual relations or even remember them (Schwarts et al., 2000). Also, stalking is a common dating-violence issue, involving unwanted communication, pursuing, or harassing of another person that causes fear (Sheridan et al., 2003).

#### Risk Factors for IPV

Researchers have identified a number of possible risk factors that may contribute to the likelihood of intimate partner violence. These include substance abuse, alcohol abuse, male partner isolation, living in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, witnessing or experiencing violence in one’s family of origin, child maltreatment, stress, gender inequality, and psychopathology (Coker et al., 2000; DeMaris et al., 2003; Fox et al., 2002; Holtzworth-Monroe & Stuart, 1994; Straus, 1991). Although these are contributing factors, it is important to know that violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that is found in all sectors of society, affecting those of varying marital status, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and gender (Barnett et al., 2011; Michalski, 2004; Schumann & Valente, 2002). It is notable that cohabiting relationships are found to be more likely to be violent than marital relationships (Kenney & McLanahan, 2006).

#### Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence

Violence towards women has been found to correlate with symptoms of PTSD, depression, stress, low self-esteem, substance abuse, limited problem-solving skills, low social support, and limited material resources (Logan, 2006). Abuse is also associated with many adverse health outcomes for female victims, such as chronic pain, arthritis, disability, migraines, frequent headaches, stomach ulcers, spastic colon, and other illnesses (Coker et al., 2000; Logan, 2006). And of course, abuse is extremely spiritually damaging for both victims and perpetrators.

### What Can We Do?

The cultural lens through which maltreatment is viewed has an important impact on the response. Family violence is viewed by some cultures as largely a private affair in which authorities should not be involved. In some countries the victims of sexual abuse may be silenced, constrained to marry an abuser, or even killed by relatives in the name of family honor (World Health Organization, 2002). Fortunately, maltreatment is gaining recognition and is increasingly denounced. One encouraging trend is a decrease in rates of child abuse, at least in some Western countries. Some experts believe the progress is, in part, due to better public awareness and improved prevention and intervention programs.

There are many ways to help decrease the prevalence and impact of child abuse. Some of these include condemning the cultural acceptance of violence and considering its detrimental effects (for example, media violence and culturally accepted family violence). Individuals can advocate for public policies that support the prevention as well as the treatment of child maltreatment (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2007). Other methods include supporting local and national agencies that address abuse, including programs that address related causes (poverty, unemployment, housing issues, family life education). Efforts in various parts of the world have been effective in reducing the risk of child maltreatment. For example, where risk factors for abuse exist (multiple stressors such as teen parenthood, or impoverished single parent households), parent education has helped reduce rates of physical abuse (World Health Organization, 2008). Interventions are beginning to focus on prevention of abuse and not just treatment once abuse has occurred.

### Church Response

Any form of physical or mental abuse to any woman is not worthy of any priesthood holder. . . . This, of course, means verbal as well as physical abuse (Faust, 1988).

When we undertake to . . . exercise control or dominion or compulsions upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man (D&C 121:37).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was among the first churches to recognize the problem of abuse and has issued an official statement regarding child abuse. In the early 1980s, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then second counselor in the First Presidency, denounced child abuse: “The exploitation of children. . . for the satisfaction of sadistic desires is sin of the darkest hue” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009). Confirming Church policy, he later stated, “We cannot tolerate it. We will not tolerate it. Anyone who abuses a child may expect Church discipline as well as possible legal action” (Hinckley, 2002).

### Additional Topics:

Unfortunately, there isn’t enough time in this short 7 week course to discuss in detail all the issues families are facing. Below we will briefly mention several more topics that impact families today. If you want to study these topics in more depth, additional optional study pages will be provided.

### Cohabitation:

In a document published by United Families International we read:

Despite its growing frequency and acceptance, the practice of cohabiting among unmarried couples is a counterfeit form of marriage. It does not serve the best interests of adults, children, or society.

In settling for cohabitation, society erodes the ideal of marriage. Social engineers around the world are breaking down the family by devaluing marriage, parental rights, and the worth of mothers and fathers.

Relationships sealed by the commitments of marriage are more likely to last, transmit positive values, inculcate personal ethics, and strengthen the interpersonal bonds between a man and a woman. A committed marriage relationship is more likely to produce healthy, productive, responsible children — the most important resource of a nation.

### Abortion:

In a document discussing abortion published by United Families International we read the following:

Abortion is defined as a deliberate act or procedure intended to end human life in the womb.

Throughout the centuries and around the world, abortion has been generally considered to be a criminal or immoral act subject to legal punishment and/or social disapproval in the vast majority of civilized cultures. In the past few decades however, restrictions on abortion have been loosened in some countries, and in others, abortion has become legal. Estimates are that during the 20th century more than one billion babies were aborted.

Most countries place some level of legal restrictions on abortion such as:

* Mandatory waiting periods.
* Parental consent in the case of pregnant minors.
* Regulations mandating safe clinical conditions.
* Bans on partial birth abortion.
* Requirements to inform women about potential complications or alternatives to abortion.
* Restrictions as to which trimester of pregnancy abortion is allowed.

Language is important. Sometimes, where abortion is illegal, the law allows exceptions if the life of the mother is threatened or in the case of rape or incest. More controversial is an exception based on the “health of the mother,” a term which is ambiguous and hard to define. Loopholes in abortion laws, resulting from overly broad language such as permitting abortion to preserve “the health of the mother,” a much lower threshold test than preserving the life of the mother, are often used to justify almost any reason for abortion. For example, in the United States, “health” is defined as including “mental” or “emotional” health, allowing a woman who is merely upset that she is pregnant to claim that she has the right to an abortion.

When women are given full and accurate information with regard to the life in their womb, such as the abortion procedure itself, alternatives to abortion, and the well-documented negative consequences abortion can have for them and their families, they will then be empowered to make lifesaving instead of life-ending decisions. It is our hope that this guide will help empower women to make informed choices when considering an abortion.

### Sex Trafficking

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) provides information on various forms of sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking.

### What is Sex Trafficking?

Trafficking in persons is the illegal commerce of human beings. It can be helpful to think of trafficking in persons, or human trafficking, as the process through which a person loses his or her freedom and is reduced to the status of someone else’s property. People who live through the trafficking process ultimately experience slavery because they become people over whom others assume the powers and rights of ownership.

Sex trafficking, a subcategory of human trafficking, involves the exploitation of people in the commercial sex industry (i.e., prostitution marketplaces) where victims are expected to provide commercial sex acts on demand. Commercial sex acts are any sex acts on account of which anything of value (for example, money, clothes, shelter, food, drugs, etc.) is given to or received by any person. Because a person has no meaningful right to refuse sex in the context of sex trafficking, the principle nature of their exploitation is that of rape and the abrogation of their individual autonomy.

Here’s just a few fast facts on Sex Trafficking from NCOSE:

1. Global analysis: Internationally 50% of detected human trafficking victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation in 2018. Data compiled from 148 countries reported that there were 49,032 human trafficking victims detected in 2018.
2. 2019 Federal Human Trafficking Report: In nearly 1/3 of all active sex trafficking cases, defendants controlled their victims without using violence. Instead, they used tactics such as withholding pay.
3. Sex traffickers are mostly male, but females can also be traffickers. The vast majority of pimps and sex traffickers are male, but studies have found a significant minority (15-32%) are female.
4. Many people know their trafficker. Most sex traffickers prefer to develop relationships with their targets, either virtually or in person, in order to methodically groom and traffic them. Child sex trafficking often involves a person who knew the child or even a family member of the child.
5. Race. Several studies have shown that black youth comprise the majority of child sex trafficking victims. Black children are disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation and trafficking, which makes truly combating sex trafficking a racial justice issue.
6. Exploitation of vulnerabilities. Sex traffickers usually target individuals with pre-existing vulnerabilities who will be easier to recruit or control. Among victims in new criminal human trafficking cases in 2019, at least 36 victims struggled with drug dependency or substance abuse, 24 had run away from home, 19 had irregular immigration status, 12 were homeless, 11 had been previously trafficked, 9 were in foster care, and 4 had experienced child abuse or neglect.

### Technology Use, Screen Time and Social Media:

While many of the topics we discuss have been around for ages, some, like technology use, screen time, and social media, are newer issues.

Children born after the year 2000 have known smartphones, Wi-Fi, and high speed internet for much of their lives. They, and those born after them, are like fish in water. Until a fish spends some time out of the lake or ocean, it doesn't know there is a different world besides the wet one. Unless children today are raised out in the wilderness, they will not know anything but a streaming video, social media, online gaming, and an instant-answer world. Because of this, technology is both a blessing and a curse. It is not technology that destroys attention spans, cognition, relationships, mental health, and physical health. It is how we choose to use it.

In [a 2019 study](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2019-census-8-to-18-key-findings-updated.pdf) of more than 1,600 US children between 8 and 18 years of age, researchers compared their findings to a similar 2015 study just four years earlier, with results that may be surprising. For instance, on average, 8 to 12-year-olds (or tweens) averaged in 2019 nearly five hours of entertainment screen media per day, and teens even more at an average of over seven hours. Keep in mind that this number doesn’t include time spent using screens for school or homework. If we assume that a teen is hopefully getting at least eight hours of sleep, we can do the math, which leaves only about nine hours left for anything else. That is 65% of a 24-hour period taken up in screens or sleep!

By 2015, about 24% of tweens owned a smartphone, with that number climbing to 41% in 2019. Numbers are even higher with teens, with over half of children owning a smartphone by age 11. In short, access to technology is expanding rapidly and we must be intentional as individuals, spouses, and parents if we want technology to be a blessing not a curse.

### Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)

In a blog article on United Families International webpage the following question is posed and answered: What is the curriculum of comprehensive sex education?

One of the [guides](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/ITGSE_en.pdf) provided for CSE explained this approach to sex education: “It promotes structured learning about sex and relationships in a manner that is positive, affirming, and centered on the best interest of the young person.” Reading through the various manuals, pamphlets, and guides distributed about comprehensive sex education, one can glean that the approach is more than just positive, affirming, and it is not entirely focused on what is best for the child.

Comprehensive means all encompassing. So, when the word is tacked onto sex education, the teachings do not end with just the biological and technical aspects of puberty and intercourse. Included are different sexualities and ways of having sex, how to consent to sex, normalizing of homosexual behavior, encouraging of sexual pleasure (especially self-stimulation), giving the greenlight for becoming sexually active at a younger age, promoting contraception and abortion, and the pushing for sexual rights. It is extraordinary that the designers of this curriculum tout its ability to decrease the frequency and initial start of sex, seeing as how the entire focus is on exploring yourself sexually as well as others (in a consensual manner). Conflicting messages are taught, for example: prostitution is reduced to merely ‘sex work’ in the manuals, leading one to believe that engaging with multiple individuals is just any other job. How can such teachings minimize sexual encounters among adolescents while at the same time encouraging increased sexual behaviors?

### Gender Dysphoria

In a blog article by Tara Bleazard on United Families International’s webpage we read:

My first-grader jumped in the van after school, and before the seat belt even clicked, she quickly blurted out, “Charlie is actually a girl. Sara told me that they were twin baby girls when they were born, but that Charlie wants to be a boy, so their family told him he can be, and…” Her voice hushed and I could tell she was about to reveal the most astonishing information. “He can use the boys’ or the girls’ bathroom!”

I then proceeded to have a conversation with my 7-year-old that I had only previously had with my middle school and high school aged children. I first felt overwhelmed by this unexpected leap into mature topics, but I quickly remembered that despite complexities that the woke agenda is attributing to gender, the reality is quite simple. So, we began with biological reality. “How do you know you’re a girl? How does a boy know he is a boy?” She quickly described the very evident physical differences. I’m not sure there is much to say beyond that, but I proceeded, “Well, that’s a very clear difference. Because of those physical differences we are able to live as men and women with different and complementary roles and responsibilities.”

Children understand biological sex. Yet they are being exposed to confusing gender ideology younger and younger.

The prevalence of gender dysphoria has increased over the years, even more than doubling from 3-4 out of a 100 in 2017, to as high as 9 out of a 100 in 2021.

In another article on UFI’s webpage written by Christine Richey we read,

An increasing number of children and adolescents are being diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Raising kids today is no small task. There are many voices out there telling children who they are and what they can become, whether true or false. With access to unprecedented amounts of information at their fingertips, the minds of our youth have the potential to be misled about how to cope and handle the distress that sometimes comes along with their growing, changing bodies, sexual development, and gender. Although gender dysphoria can be a real concern, are professionals too quick to treat and diagnose gender dysphoria? Is this now common diagnosis creating greater issues such as medical transitioning, which is known to lead to infertility, pain, harmful side effects, dependency on pharmaceutical companies and even suicidal thoughts?

### Poverty

According to Our World in Data, global poverty is one of the most pressing problems that the world faces today. The poorest in the world are often undernourished, without access to basic services such as electricity and safe drinking water; they have less access to education, and suffer from much poorer health.

There is no single definition of poverty. Our understanding of the extent of poverty and how it is changing depends on which definition we have in mind. In particular, richer and poorer countries set very different poverty lines in order to measure poverty in a way that is informative and relevant to the level of incomes of their citizens.

For instance, while in the United States a person is counted as being in poverty if they live on less than roughly $24.55 per day, in Ethiopia, the poverty line is set more than 10 times lower – at $2.04 per day. To measure poverty globally, however, we need to apply a poverty line that is consistent across countries. This is the goal of the International Poverty Line of $2.15 per day – shown in red in the chart below – which is set by the World Bank and used by the UN to monitor extreme poverty around the world.

We see that, in global terms, this is an extremely low threshold indeed – set to reflect the poverty lines adopted nationally in the world’s poorest countries. It marks an incredibly low standard of living – a level of income much lower than just the cost of a healthy diet.

### Mental Health

Our World In Data states, “Mental health is an essential part of people’s lives and society. Poor mental health affects our well-being, our ability to work, and our relationships with friends, family, and community.”

Mental health conditions are not uncommon. Hundreds of millions suffer from them yearly, and many more do over their lifetimes. It’s estimated that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men will experience major depression in their lives. Other conditions, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, are less common but still have a large impact on people’s lives.

Mental illnesses are treatable, and the impact they have can be reduced. Despite this, treatment is often lacking or poor quality, and many feel uncomfortable sharing their symptoms with healthcare professionals or people they know. This also makes it difficult to estimate the actual prevalence of mental illnesses.

To support them, it’s essential to have good data to understand these conditions – how, when, and why they occur, how many people are affected by them, and how they can be treated effectively and safely.

Mental health is a critical factor in healthy family dynamics. Part of our efforts to strengthen the family needs to focus on addressing the mental health challenges in our societies and homes.

### Pornography

Sarah Fairbanks, an author for the UFI blog, wrote the following:

Those who view pornography rarely jump straight to “hard-core porn”. It usually starts inadvertently and is small: a naked rear, for example. Most exposure happens early, with the average first age of exposure at 8 years old. One Australian study reports that by age 14, nearly 94% of youth have seen pornography. This is troublesome on many levels. This is a crucial developmental period when an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex makes children and youth less capable of making rational decisions.

A recent report by the British Board of Film Classification reports that while 75% of parents believe their children have never seen porn, 53% of those children actually have. Your children could be among those.

While those numbers can be discouraging, it doesn’t mean that we can’t do something about it. We can protect our children against pornography exposure and its damaging effects. Here are seven things that have worked for some:

1. Do the talking before someone else does. The pornography industry is eager to get to your children before you do. Don’t give them the satisfaction. If pornography exposure starts early, then talking needs to start early.
2. “This is a safe space to talk.” This is a mantra in our home. We emphasize to our children that they can ask us anything without unfair reaction or judgment. Children need to know that they can have their questions answered lovingly and honestly. If your child has a question, let them ask and then do your best to answer. If you don’t know, say so, and schedule a time to talk again once you’ve found answers. Keep your word and follow up.
3. The discussion about pornography must be ongoing. I cringe when I hear parents say that they’ve successfully given their children “the talk”. This is not a “one and done” event. Discussing important things like sex and pornography must be ongoing. Your children are growing and developing. This includes their understanding of and curiosity about pornography. Keep talking.
4. Set rules as a family. We found that our children are more likely to keep rules that they help make. We also found that they are more willing to make rules when they understand the why behind needing them. Tell them how damaging pornography can be. Then, trust them to help you make rules to keep the family safe. They will surprise you!
5. Have a healthy dialogue about dating, marriage, love, and sex. Pornography distorts a child’s view of what real love is. Pornography teaches a child to objectify another person. When parents talk positively and honestly about dating, marriage, love, and sex, we teach them that people are for loving in real ways. Sex is an expression of that love and is most satisfying within a devoted relationship. There is no room for pornography in a healthy relationship because it teaches us that people are to be used instead of loved.
6. Talk about your body and the bodies of others in uplifting, positive ways. Pornography will challenge a person’s self-esteem because of its ability to distort perceptions regarding the human body. Teach your children how wondrous the human body is and the need to treat it with respect. Bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Speak kindly about your body and the bodies of others.
7. Watch for warning signs. Is your child unusually stressed, tired, depressed, secretive, and removed? While this might indicate many different types of problems, it might also be time to ask about and reevaluate their digital habits. They may be struggling with pornography. Be supportive and ready to help.

In a porn-saturated society, these are small steps that parents can take to protect their homes and children from the damaging effects of pornography.

### Parental Rights

In a UFI blog article, Cristina Cevallos Calle, wrote:

In August 2013, 33 police officers and seven youth welfare officers forcibly entered the home of Dirk and Petra’s Wunderlich using a battering ram to break down the door. Then, violently pushing the couple aside, officials took away their four children, aged seven to 14, and confiscated their passports to keep them from fleeing the country. The reason for this mistreatment? The Wunderlich’s homeschool their children in accordance with their Christian faith. In Germany, this is forbidden despite the country having signed several international agreements that guarantee parents the right to direct the education of their children. The Wunderlich children were eventually returned, but the parents only have partial custody and the children are forced to attend a local school with a government- approved education program. Meanwhile, in January 2020, a man in Canada (courts have withheld his identity) was served with an injunction that stated any attempt to pressure his 15-year-old son to abandon his sex reassignment treatment and to call him by his birth name was a form of family violence. The justices said the father’s conduct was “seriously misguided” and he is forbidden to express his opinions publicly.

What do these cases have in common? In both, the state’s decision undermines parental authority. Unfortunately, these incidents are not isolated. According to some children’s rights activists, children are damaged by constraints upon their liberty and should have the same rights as adults, including the right to separate from their parents when the relationship is strained or on grounds of incompatibility. As a result, legal systems around the world increasingly diminish the rights of parents.

Parents do not arbitrarily discriminate against children due to their age. Rather, they limit the choices children make based on their cognitive capacity. For that reason, the law establishes restrictions on the freedom of children to vote, marry, drive, shoot firearms, gamble, enter contracts, consent to sexual acts, etc. It is due to their lack of capacity that minors receive special treatment and protection from their own immaturity. Poor choices can cause permanent harm far more damaging than temporary limitations.

The development of the capacity to make responsible choices is a process that is impaired when children are given unlimited freedom too soon in life. Giving children the power to separate from their parents assumes that they know what is in their best interest and disregards the fact that decision-making is gradually acquired and requires parental guidance. Regarding children’s decision-making capacity, psychologist Jim Taylor says, “It would be downright dangerous to give children complete latitude in their decision making.”

While we mentioned several topics above, this is just the surface. Other topics that impact the family and society that were not discussed include, but are not limited to, religious intolerance, substance abuse, mass shootings, obesity, hook-up culture, crime, toxic masculinity, quality education, transgender sports, death with dignity, and more.

### Why Marriage? Why Family?

Now that you better understand various issues that impact the family, let’s conclude with some words from an Apostle of the Lord. There is peace in following what we have been taught from our Prophet and Apostles. We must be defenders of the Family Proclamation and explain to others the blessings of happy families and the detrimental effects of straying away from these teachings.

Read below a portion of the talk “Why Marriage? Why Family?” by Elder Christofferson.

In what way does marriage between a man and a woman transcend their love for one another and their own happiness to become “a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind”? In what sense does it come “from above, from God”? To understand, we have to go back to the beginning.

Prophets have revealed that we first existed as intelligences and that we were given form, or spirit bodies, by God, thus becoming His spirit children—sons and daughters of heavenly parents. There came a time in this premortal existence of spirits when, in furtherance of His desire that we “could have a privilege to advance like himself,” our Heavenly Father prepared an enabling plan. In the scriptures it is given various names, including “the plan of salvation,” “the great plan of happiness,” and “the plan of redemption.” The two principal purposes of the plan were explained to Abraham in these words:

“And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [spirits] may dwell;

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

“And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; … and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”

Thanks to our Heavenly Father, we had already become spirit beings. Now He was offering us a path to complete or perfect that being. The addition of the physical element is essential to the fulness of being and glory that God Himself enjoys. If, while with God in the premortal spirit world, we would agree to participate in His plan—or in other words “keep [our] first estate”—we would “be added upon” with a physical body as we came to dwell on the earth that He created for us.

If, then in the course of our mortal experience, we chose to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God [should] command [us],” we would have kept our “second estate.” This means that by our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. … Those who did would “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever”—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body.

…God ordained that men and women should marry and give birth to children, thereby creating, in partnership with God, the physical bodies that are key to the test of mortality and essential to eternal glory with Him. He also ordained that parents should establish families and rear their children in light and truth, leading them to a hope in Christ.

…A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive—the setting for the birth of children, who come in purity and innocence from God, and the environment for the learning and preparation they will need for a successful mortal life and eternal life in the world to come. A critical mass of families built on such marriages is vital for societies to survive and flourish. That is why communities and nations generally have encouraged and protected marriage and the family as privileged institutions. It has never been just about the love and happiness of adults.

The social science case for marriage and for families headed by a married man and woman is compelling. And so “we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.” But our claims for the role of marriage and family rest not on social science but on the truth that they are God’s creation. It is He who in the beginning created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and joined them as husband and wife to become “one flesh” and to multiply and replenish the earth. Each individual carries the divine image, but it is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. Neither we nor any other mortal can alter this divine order of matrimony. It is not a human invention. Such marriage is indeed “from above, from God” and is as much a part of the plan of happiness as the Fall and the Atonement.

In the premortal world, Lucifer rebelled against God and His plan, and his opposition only grew in intensity. He fights to discourage marriage and the formation of families, and where marriages and families are formed, he does what he can to disrupt them. He attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts. He seeks to convince men and women that marriage and family priorities can be ignored or abandoned, or at least made subservient to careers, other achievements, and the quest for self-fulfillment and individual autonomy. … Brothers and sisters, many things are good, many are important, but only a few are essential.

To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure that, for the moment at least, overshadows faith. Or you may have married, but that marriage ended, and you are left to manage alone what two together can barely sustain. Some of you who are married cannot bear children despite overwhelming desires and pleading prayers.

Even so, everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God’s plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has been anticipated and, in the end, will compensate for all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children.

One young mother recently confided to me her anxiety about being inadequate in this highest of callings. I felt that the issues that concerned her were small and she needn’t worry; she was doing fine. But I knew she only wanted to please God and to honor His trust. I offered words of reassurance, and in my heart I pleaded that God, her Heavenly Father, would buoy her up with His love and the witness of His approval as she is about His work.

That is my prayer for all of us today. May we each find approval in His sight. May marriages flourish and families prosper, and whether our lot is a fulness of these blessings in mortality or not, may the Lord’s grace bring happiness now and faith in sure promises to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Sub-Chapters

### Chapter 6.1: Cohabitation

In a document published by United Families International it states:

Despite its growing frequency and acceptance, the practice of cohabiting among unmarried couples is a counterfeit form of marriage. It does not serve the best interests of adults, children or society.

#### Comprehensive scientific-based research finds cohabitation is:

• Inferior in social outcomes to the married, intact, two-parent family.

• Damaging to the social well-being of women and children.

• A considerable strain on units of government that deal with social, correctional, and welfare issues.

Cohabitation typically leaves in its wake a trail of broken relationships. Who cohabits? On average, it is:

• Predominantly young adults.

• Men with less education and lower incomes.

• Individuals who are less traditional, often with less traditional parents.

• Individuals who are less religious.

• Women who have had an out-of-wedlock birth.

• Couples with significant differences in their ages.

• Women who are older than the live-in-male.

The top reasons cited for cohabiting are:

• Economic advantages

• Increased sexual opportunities

• Fear of commitment

• Companionship and/or time together

• Less complicated dissolution of relationship

• Testing for compatibility

• Trial marriage

• Pressure from partner

• Convenience

• Anti-marriage sentiments

In settling for cohabitation, society erodes the ideal of marriage. Social engineers around the world are breaking down the family by devaluing marriage, parental rights, and the worth of mothers and fathers.

Relationships sealed by the commitments of marriage are more likely to last, transmit positive values, inculcate personal ethics and strengthen the interpersonal bonds between a man and a woman. A committed marriage relationship is more likely to produce healthy, productive, responsible children — the most important resource of a nation.

Marriage tends to civilize men, channeling sexual activity toward one woman; obligating them to live and sacrifice for family; and providing the deepest levels of trust, reliability, stability, joy and affirmation.

Women tend to fare better in marriage than in cohabitation. Married women are more likely to receive the provision of intimacy and a secure home, as well as a partner:

• Who honors, respects and cherishes them.

• Who assists in the care, nurturing and safeguarding of the children they create together.

• With whom she can model the responsibilities of citizenship.

In conclusion, the steady functioning of the family headed by married, two-parent, biological partners contributes significantly to the vitality and the synergy of a healthy, peaceful society — present and future.

### Chapter 6.2: Abortion

Defending the Sanctity (or Holiness) of Human Life by: Cynthia L. Hallen

In academic circles and public forums, the phrase “sanctity of life” is used by people who have concerns about life-related issues such as abortion on demand, birth control, capital punishment, and euthanasia. When leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints speak about the sanctity of life in conference talks, Church magazine articles, and official statements, they usually focus on the issue of elective abortion. For example, former Young Women general president, Susan W. Tanner identified abortion as one of the weapons in “Satan’s attack on families” and showed how the family proclamation succinctly takes a stand on the issue (Tanner, 2005). Other life-related topics are also addressed in Church materials, including issues such as abuse, addiction, adoption, chastity, cohabitation, fidelity, pornography, purity, teen pregnancy, virtue, and the unwillingness of some married couples to bear and rear children. This section focuses mainly on what Elder Russell M. Nelson calls the global “war on the unborn,” a war that kills approximately 40 million voiceless and defenseless unborn babies each year (Nelson, 1985, p. 32).

In 1991, the First Presidency (First Presidency, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991) issued a comprehensive statement on abortion, reaffirming the “sanctity of human life”:

In view of the widespread public interest in the issue of abortion, we reaffirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has consistently opposed elective abortion. More than a century ago, the First Presidency of the Church warned against this evil. We have repeatedly counseled people everywhere to turn from the devastating practice of abortion for personal or social convenience.

The Church recognizes that there may be rare cases in which abortion may be justified—cases involving pregnancy by incest or rape; when the life or health of the woman is adjudged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy; or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But these are not automatic reasons for abortion. Even in these cases, the couple should consider abortion only after consulting with each other, and their bishop, and receiving divine confirmation through prayer.

The practice of elective abortion is fundamentally contrary to the Lord’s injunction, “Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6). We urge all to preserve the sanctity of human life and thereby realize the happiness promised to those who keep the commandments of the Lord.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an institution has not favored or opposed specific legislative proposals or public demonstrations concerning abortion.

Inasmuch as this issue is likely to arise in all states in the United States of America and in many other nations of the world in which the Church is established, it is impractical for the Church to take a position on specific legislative proposals on this important subject. However, we continue to encourage our members, as citizens, to let their voices be heard in appropriate and legal ways that will evidence their belief in the sacredness of life.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley presented the proclamation at the general Relief Society meeting in 1995, he reaffirmed “the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan” (¶ 5). A careful look at the language of such teachings can help us understand why life is so sacred and so important.

### What Is Life? Why Is Life Sacred?

Life. The etymology of the Old English word for life includes meanings such as “body” and “person,” or that which “remains” and “continues” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Life can be defined as a condition of sustained regenerative activity, energy, expression, or power that human beings and other animate creatures experience. Emily Dickinson said, “To be alive—is Power” (Franklin, 1998). Her definition suggests that life is empowerment, in spite of the risks and difficulties that human beings may experience in mortality. Respect for the sanctity of life increases when we remember that “the life” is one of the titles by which Jesus identifies himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Sacred. The earliest meanings of the word sacred in English have to do with the consecration of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Life is sacred because Jesus Christ is the ultimate source or fountain of life through His work in the Creation and through His sacrifice in the Atonement. Human life is sacred because human bodies are temples. Our bodies belong to the Lord:

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Each individual is sacred because each one reflects the divine image of the Creator (Genesis 1:26–27; Colossians 1:13–16; Moses 2:27). The proclamation confirms that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God” (¶ 2). While a member of the Seventy, Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen elaborated on the importance of this principle:

We are created in the image of God. The union of the flesh with the spirit can bring us a fulness of joy. Teach your children to respect the sanctity of human life, to revere it and cherish it. Human life is the precious stepping-stone to eternal life, and we must jealously guard it from the moment of conception (Mickelsen, 1995).

From conception to resurrection, mortal life is a gift from God (Job 33:4; Acts 17:25; Alma 40:11). Elder Russell M. Nelson explains why we should have respect for the gift of life:

As sons and daughters of God, we cherish life as a gift from him. . . . Life comes from life. It is a gift from our Heavenly Father. It is eternal, as he is eternal. Innocent life is not sent by him to be destroyed! This doctrine is not of me, but is that of the living God and of his divine Son (Nelson, 1985, p. 85).

Each human being, no matter how young or how small, is a “beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (¶ 2).

Welcoming children into our lives is one of the most important ways to follow Christ, who invited little children to come unto him (Luke 18:16). Elder Russell M. Nelson testifies of the value of a child’s life. “Yes, life is precious! No one can cuddle a cherished newborn baby, look into those beautiful eyes, feel the little fingers, and caress that miraculous creation without deepening reverence for life and for our Creator” (Nelson, 1985).

### What Is Abortion?

The English word abort comes from the Latin ab, which means “off, away,” and the Latin or-ri, which means to “arise, appear, come into being.” To abort literally means to “cut off the existence of someone” or to “cause someone to disappear” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Abortion can generally be defined as the natural or deliberate termination of the life of an unborn or partially born child.

To better understand public attitudes and Church policies on abortion, it is useful to distinguish between two types of abortion: (a) spontaneous or natural abortion, and (b) non spontaneous or induced abortion. The phrase “spontaneous abortion” is a synonym for miscarriage: the premature, involuntary expulsion of a fetus from its mother by natural causes. While a miscarriage may cause significant grief for the mother and family members, spontaneous abortions are not considered a moral issue.

Nonspontaneous or induced abortion can be divided into two subcategories: (a) emergency abortion, and (b) elective abortion. The more advanced a pregnancy is, the greater the danger to the mother who undergoes an emergency or elective abortion. Methods of abortion correspond to various stages of fetal development in order to reduce risk factors for women who abort their pregnancies. All methods of induced abortion involve the violent destruction of at least one human life—the life of a child. All methods of abortion pose at least some potential health risks to the mother, such as infertility, bleeding, increased susceptibility to breast cancer, problem pregnancies, and sometimes death. Whether legal or illegal, an elective abortion may also be fatal to the mother.

Willke & Willke (1997) provide further information about the methods and risks of abortion in a handbook titled, Why Not Love Them Both? Questions and Answers about Abortion.

The term emergency abortion refers to cases in which a fetus is intentionally expelled from the womb of its mother because of critical circumstances attending the mother, the child, or both. Such “hard cases” include serious health problems for the mother and severe health problems for the baby (Torres & Forrest, 1988). For example, in medical emergencies such as ectopic or tubal pregnancy, the life of the unborn child is taken because the child and possibly the mother would die if the pregnancy were to continue (Willke & Willke, 1997).

In other cases, a pregnant mother may consider aborting a child conceived as a result of incest or rape because of the severe trauma that she has already experienced as a victim. However, the mother may not wish to experience aborting the child because she may see it as an extension or reenactment of the trauma she experienced as a victim of rape or incest (Willke & Willke, 1997).

Although emergency abortions raise moral questions, they are not at the heart of the abortion debate in society, because the number of emergency abortions is very low in comparison to the vast number of non-emergency elective abortions performed each year.

The phrase “elective abortion” is synonymous with terms such as “non therapeutic abortion” or “abortion on demand.” Elective abortion is the voluntary destruction of the fetus in the womb of its mother for nonemergency purposes or nonmedical reasons: “Most abortions are performed on demand to deal with unwanted pregnancies. These abortions are simply a form of birth control” (Nelson, 2008). Elective abortion is a serious moral problem because it pits the social, emotional, personal, psychological, or financial concerns of adults against the innocent lives of unborn children. Women cite financial trouble and pregnancy outside of marriage as the most frequent reasons for having an elective abortion (Reardon, 1992).

In the 1990s and early 2000s … 22 percent of pregnancies in the United States ended in abortion (Guttmacher Institute, 2011).

### Appropriate and Legal Ways to Support the Sacredness of Life

The proclamation concludes with a call to action: “We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family” (¶ 9).

In recent years the First Presidency has frequently urged Church members as citizens to join with their neighbors in vigorously opposing such evils as pornography, abortion, and the availability of liquor to youth. Acting as concerned citizens (not as Church representatives) members have in many cases helped achieve tighter abortion laws (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988).

Latter-day Saints share a reverence for human life with people of many other faiths. Perhaps the best known champion for unborn children was Mother Teresa, the beloved Catholic humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, who said:

Many people are deeply concerned with the children of India, with the children of Africa where quite a few die of hunger. Many people are also concerned about all the violence in this great country of the United States. These concerns are very good. But often these same people are not concerned with the millions who are being killed by the deliberate decision of their own mothers. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today—abortion, which brings people to such blindness.

By abortion, the mother kills even her own child to solve her problems. And, by abortion, the father is told that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into the world. That father is likely to put other women into the same trouble. So abortion leads to abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love but to use violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion Mother Teresa et al., 1996).

The 1991 First Presidency statement on abortion encourages Church members as citizens “to let their voices be heard in appropriate and legal ways that will evidence their belief in the sacredness of life” (First Presidency, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991).

The following are a few suggestions for preserving and defending the sanctity of life in legal and appropriate ways.

1. Maintain and promote chastity and fidelity. Since unwed pregnancy is one of the chief motives behind elective abortion, the most important thing anyone can do to uphold the sanctity of life is to maintain sexual chastity before marriage and marital fidelity after marriage. “Marriage between man and woman is essential to [God’s] eternal plan” (¶ 7). Supporting measures that help individuals make and keep commitments to sexual chastity will help promote the sanctity of life.

2. Help provide for unwed parents. Since financial problems are another common motive for elective abortion, another important way to protect the sanctity of life is to provide help for people who face parenthood out of wedlock.

3. Become better informed. We can also help by becoming better informed about life-related issues. Research on the topic of elective abortion enables us to build persuasive arguments for promoting the sacredness of life. Latter-day Saint legal scholars have published many useful studies on this topic from the perspective of family law (Wardle & Wood, 1982; Wilkins et al., 1991).

4. Discuss the sanctity of life accurately and appropriately. Members of the Church must not condone violent or illegal means for opposing elective abortion. Just mentioning the topic of abortion can stir up controversy because the issue has become so sensitive and volatile in modern society. Therefore, Latter-day Saints should seek the Spirit in order to discuss the sanctity of life in ways that will help others gain accurate information about elective abortion and its consequences. The vast majority of people who oppose abortion use peaceful means to express their concern. In a few highly publicized incidents, some individuals have chosen to fight abortion on demand with terrorist tactics. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has warned that “violence to an unborn child does not justify other violence” (Maxwell, 1993, p. 76). All reputable “pro-life” advocates and organizations are opposed to the use of violence to end the violence of abortion.

5. Recognize the consequences of abortion. We need to recognize the grief and psychological pain that may come to women, men, and families who have been affected by elective abortion.

6. Strengthen our testimonies of the sanctity of life. Latter-day Saints should prayerfully strive to strengthen their testimonies of the sanctity of life, their resolve to oppose elective abortion, and their ability to articulate and defend gospel principles relating to the sanctity of life. Upholding the sanctity of life is not only a defense for unborn children, but also a shelter for individuals and families whose lives might otherwise be devastated by elective abortion. The proclamation invites us to counteract the violence of abortion by peacefully upholding the sanctity of life.

### Chapter 6.3: Sex Trafficking

Beyond the brief introduction to sex trafficking, The National Center on Sexual Exploitation provides additional information on this threat to children and families.

### Is every person in prostitution a victim of sex trafficking?

Not every person in prostitution has been sex trafficked, but it is important to realize that prostitution and sex trafficking overlap in significant ways. First, the commercial sex trade is the context where sex trafficking occurs. Prostitution marketplaces (for example, strip clubs, illicit massage businesses, brothels, escort agencies, pornography studios, camming and “sugar daddy” websites) are notorious for their association with sex trafficking.

Additionally, sex buyers use sex trafficked and other women in prostitution interchangeably. In other words, there is no specific demand for sex trafficked women per se, but demand for women, as well as children and men, in prostitution generally. The demand for people available for sex in prostitution is what fuels sex trafficking.

Sex trafficked and prostituted people also suffer the same harms such as physical injury from sexual assaults, acquisition of sexually transmitted infections, and psychological trauma.

Those in the sex industry, sexually trafficked or not, share key demographic characteristics. Systems of prostitution prey on vulnerable people who face adversities such as economic insecurity, barriers to higher education, racial discrimination, homelessness, and/or have histories of childhood neglect and sexual abuse. The sex trade exploits vulnerable people whether they have experienced sex trafficking or not.

Regardless of how people enter prostitution, once in it, they experience serious psychological, physical, and sexual trauma predominantly from sex buyers and “partners” who are often their traffickers. This is harm that cannot be regulated away.

### Who are sex traffickers?

Sex traffickers are often depicted as big, unknown, threatening men who forcibly kidnap young girls for sex trafficking. This creates a stereotypical super-predator image that makes it hard to recognize sex traffickers in real life.

While most sex traffickers are men, studies have found that a significant minority (15-32%) are female (see [here](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf), [here](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23322705.2016.1136540), and [here](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV186.pdf)). In addition, many people actually know their trafficker. Most sex traffickers prefer to develop relationships with their targets, either virtually or in person, in order to methodically groom them for trafficking. In fact, many traffickers of minors are parents or other family members or caretakers (see also [this report](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/reports/csec-2007.pdf) and [this one](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Homelessness%2C%20Survival%20Sex%2C%20and%20Human%20Trafficking%20-%20Covenant%20House%20NY.pdf)). Prevalence of parental pimping has been documented as ranging from 3% – 44% among survivors, revealing that parents play a significant role in sex trafficking. A study of sex trafficking cases in which family members were the traffickers, reported that almost 60% of familial sex trafficking victims have ongoing contact with their trafficker, making it exceedingly difficult for children and youth to remove themselves from harmful situations and protect themselves—both physically and psychologically. Further, as documented in a review of active federal sex trafficking cases in 2019, 23.3% involved a pre-existing relationship, whereas only 3.5% were organized crime-directed. Many people are also trafficked by their boyfriends (see [here](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Homelessness%2C%20Survival%20Sex%2C%20and%20Human%20Trafficking%20-%20Covenant%20House%20NY.pdf), [here](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Domstic%20Sex%20Trafficking%20Chicago%20-%20ICJIA.pdf), and [here](http://ohioattorneygeneral.gov/getattachment/27542187-0e4d-4d48-9b47-8ecbe6ed21b2/2012-Domestic-Sex-Trafficking-in-Ohio-Report.aspx)).

### How does sex trafficking happen?

When most people imagine what sex trafficking looks like they may envision the stuff of sensational, popular action films like Taken—kidnapping, guns, handcuffs, and chains. While physical force is used in some cases of sex trafficking, more often victims are psychologically coerced into sex trafficking situations. For example, in active federal cases of sex trafficking in 2019, only 5.3% of cases involved cages, locked rooms, or barred cells. Most victims are groomed and held captive through psychological abuse, manipulation, and coercion. This kind of abuse is often not obvious at first glance. To help address this problem, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families has developed [this screening tool](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/adult_human_trafficking_screening_tool_and_guide.pdf) to help public health, behavioral health, health care, and social work professionals assess clients and patients for possible human trafficking victimization.

### Where does sex trafficking occur?

Sex trafficking is simultaneously a global and a local phenomenon. Even so, it is not uncommon for people to believe that sex trafficking is an issue only involving people from foreign countries who are trafficked from their country of birth to other countries. This is only a part of the sex trafficking picture. A significant amount of sex trafficking also happens to people who never cross international borders. Some people experience sex trafficking within their own country of birth—even within their own communities.

This means that sex trafficking is happening to U.S. born citizens within our own borders (see [here](https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/us-citizen-sex-trafficking.pdf) and [here](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf)). In fact, sex trafficking is most likely happening in your community. For instance, fronts for prostitution like strip clubs and illicit massage parlors exist in many communities in the U.S. and are known hotspots for sex trafficking. Additionally, the Internet has made it possible to advertise prostitution anywhere there is an Internet connection. Sex traffickers (also referred to as pimps) use these online prostitution platforms to advertise the availability of their victims to potential sex buyers. Such platforms have greatly expanded the geographic range and ease with which sex traffickers can “market” their victims. In 2019, the Internet was the primary method of soliciting buyers, accounting for 83.7% of active U.S. sex trafficking cases.

The Internet has also leveled factors like race and class, by allowing exploiters access to children who usually had the benefit of more protective barriers. The Internet has enabled sex traffickers and other child predators to groom and exploit children without them ever leaving home. Based on survivor accounts and research, sex traffickers and child predators appear to be using popular social media apps such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok to identify, groom, and exploit children in the online space. Sex trafficking can happen in any community or neighborhood. As one researcher put it, “All children are potentially at risk from being groomed online because all children regularly use the internet.”

### How are sex trafficking and prostitution related?

#### Context

The sex trade—the prostitution marketplace—is the context in which sex trafficking takes place. The prostitution marketplace includes any of the various ways by which prostitution is marketed and provided: strip clubs, massage parlors, escort services, Internet-based prostitution websites, brothels, as well as pimp-facilitated, street-level prostitution, etc.

#### Vulnerabilities

Prostitution and sex trafficking overlap in that many of those in prostitution, whether sex trafficked or not, share a common set of vulnerabilities with victims of sex trafficking. As an industry, the sex trade is notorious for its predatory dependence on vulnerable persons to make up “the supply” of people available for sex. Minors, runaway children, children in foster care, people from racial minority groups, homeless persons, those with histories of domestic and/or child sexual abuse, and those with drug addictions are examples of people with vulnerabilities the sex trade routinely exploits. For instance, research finds that those with one or more adverse childhood experience (ACE) (for example, childhood sexual abuse) are more likely to have engaged in commercial sex. In recognition of this reality, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime includes “the abuse of a position of vulnerability” within its definition of trafficking in persons.

Additionally, anyone who becomes involved in prostitution as a minor is by that very fact a victim of sex trafficking because minors cannot legally consent to commercial sex acts. Under the law, adults who buy sex from minors are culpable for sexually exploiting them. Unfortunately, many individuals who are sex trafficked as children are not identified while they are still minors. They literally “grow up” while in prostitution and continue to be exploited in prostitution as adults.

#### Demand

Sex trafficking exists because of the demand for paid sex. Without the men who believe they have a right to purchase access to a woman’s, man’s, or child’s body, there would be no economic incentive for sex traffickers to fill that demand. In sum, no buyers, no business.

While many men have bought sex, most have not. Buying sex is not inevitable behavior. Focusing on efforts to combat demand have proven effective in reducing prostitution.

#### Policy

One’s approach to prostitution policy is key to either combating sex trafficking or fueling it. A study comparing 39 nations and another study comparing 150 nations, examined the relationship between prostitution laws and measures of human trafficking, and found that sex trafficking is most prevalent in countries where prostitution is legal or decriminalized. Governments that legalize or fully decriminalize prostitution, instead of reducing harm, build on ramps to sexual exploitation by unleashing the demand for paid sex.

### The Global Supply Chain of Sexual Exploitation and the Necessity of Combating the Demand for Commercial Sex

By: Lisa L. Thompson Vice President,

National Center on Sexual Exploitation

“To treat prostitution as if it is not sexual exploitation is to assume that sexual dehumanization is the original human condition.”

### Contextualizing the Sex Trade

#### A Market for Male Consumers

The sex trade is a market principally for male consumption of female “sexual services.” There are, of course, prostitution markets for male consumption of male and transgendered sexual services, as well as female consumers of male and female sexual services.2 Nevertheless, as researchers have explained: The most obvious generalization that can be made is that in all societies and periods that have been examined, institutionalized prostitution has been aimed at a male clientele and the overwhelming majority of prostitutes have been women. Though male prostitutes have existed in many societies, they have primarily served other males whose sexual preference was males or who turned to fellow males in special circumstances where there was a lack of contact with women. Only occasionally has the male prostitute who serviced a female clientele been mentioned in literature; to document the existence of such individuals on any scale has been impossible.3 Philosophical Frameworks: Two Perspectives One’s philosophical view of prostitution is at the crux of any discussion of the commercial sex trade.

There are two primary views: 1) that prostitution exemplifies female equality with men, and the contrasting view, 2) that prostitution is a system of female inequality and male domination. Those subscribing to the first view are often described as sex work advocates. Those holding the second are often referred to as Radical Feminists or Abolitionists.

#### Sex Work View

The sex work view has three primary tenants: 1) that many women freely choose prostitution, 2) that prostitution should be viewed and respected as legitimate work, and 3) that it is a violation of a woman’s civil rights to be denied the opportunity to support oneself as a “sex worker.”4 This perspective accepts sex as a public commodity that can be purchased through contractual agreements for the exchange of sexual services in return for something of value.

Advocates of this view make a distinction between “free or voluntary” and “forced” prostitution. In so doing, sex work advocates acknowledge that at least some prostitution may involve coercion, exploitation, or violence, but maintain that not all prostitution is inherently exploitive and that “choosing” to prostitute in a “non-coercive” context is the realization of a woman’s sexual autonomy and agency.6 In stark contrast, the Abolitionist view holds that human sexual relations devoid of intimacy, mutuality of pleasure, reciprocity of affection, and genuine consent are inherently dehumanizing.7 As the noted legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon has observed, this means that “Where sex is mutual, it is its own reward.” Joe Parker puts it this way:

Real sexual relationships are not hard to find. There are plenty of adults of both sexes who are willing to have sex if someone treats them well, and asks. But there lies the problem. Some people do not want an equal, sharing relationship. They do not want to be nice. They do not want to ask. They like the power involved in buying a human being who can be made to do almost anything. Rather than reflecting a mutual attraction, liking, affection, or concern for the other, “The sex purchased in prostitution is ingrained with narcissism, self-indulgence, and utilitarianism. It is drenched in predation. At its core, prostitution is about acquiring that which is not freely given.”

As Rachel Moran explains: Prostitution and rape are commonly distinguished by the logical fact that to buy something and to steal something are two different things; but when we consider that the sex bought in prostitution is the same type of sex stolen in rape, sex that is, as Kathleen Barry puts it: ‘. . . disembodied, enacted on the bodies of women who, for the men, do not exist as human beings, and the men are always in control’—it is then that we understand how deeply traumatising it is for the woman whose body is so used. When we understand that the sex paid for in prostitution shares so many of its characteristics with the sex stolen in rape, it makes sense that so many prostituted women make clear parallels between the two experiences. One woman described her experience of the sex of prostitution very succinctly when she referred to it as: ‘Paid rape.’ Canadian campaigner Trisha Baptis, who was first prostituted as a child, describes it as ‘pay-as-you-go rape.’ Another woman described it as ‘like signing a contract to be raped’ and I wrote an article for the Irish Examiner in 2012 where I described prostitution as ‘being raped for a living.’

Paid sex acts, then, necessarily violate human dignity because such exchanges are devoid of the essential hallmarks of healthy sexual relationships. Additionally, because commercial sex depends on some type of financial inducement to coerce a sexual exchange, payment for sex is considered a form of sexual coercion and abuse. Thus, other forms of commercial sex—pornography, stripping, webcamming, etc.—because they involve financial inducement to obtain sex acts are forms of prostitution, and ergo, forms sexual exploitation. Together the enterprises which purvey commercial sex to consumers constitute systems of organized sexual exploitation.

Moreover, given that systems of organized sexual exploitation exist to cater to the fulfillment of male sexual wants, and that the majority of those used to satisfy those sexual wants are female, “the existence of prostitution presents a priori proof of women’s inequality.” To Abolitionists, prostitution is ultimately the manifestation of men’s choices and the male demand that women’s bodies be sold as public sexual commodities.

Irrespective of the degree to which a woman may be exercising her autonomy in choosing to prostitute, Abolitionists consider prostitution harmful, in part because the harmful effects of an experience are not mitigated by the fact that an individual may or may not have chosen the experience. As has been explained, harm is different. It is an objective condition, not a way of feeling; to be harmed is to have one’s interests set back, to be made worse off, to have one’s circumstances made worse than they were or than they would be in the absence of the thing that’s doing the harm. Whether a person is harmed or not does not depend on how she feels . . . . That something is chosen or consensual is perfectly consistent with its being seriously oppressive, abusive, and harmful—to oneself and/or to a broader group of which one is a member (for example, women).

Consequently, this group does not utilize a prostitution taxonomy that creates classifications such as “voluntary” or “forced prostitution.” Instead, Abolitionists maintain that “Prostitution is ontologically a form of violence.” Therefore, the harm of prostitution is not restricted to the conditions by which it is carried out, but exists in the very carrying out of prostitution itself. Adopting the Abolitionist perspective, the remainder of this paper frames the full spectrum of commercial sex enterprises as supplying persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The consumers of sex from the persons these enterprises sell for sexual purposes constitute “the demand.”

### The Global Supply Chain of Organized Sexual Exploitation

### Supply Chains

According to Investopedia, “A supply chain is a network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product, and the supply chain represents the steps it takes to get the product or service to the customer.” It is important to recognize that, “supply chains include every business that comes in contact with a particular product . . . .”

### The Global Supply Chain of Organized Sexual Exploitation

The continuum of businesses comprising the commercial sex industry includes the following: pornography production and distribution enterprises, strip joints (including topless bars, as well as table and lap dancing), live-sex shows, peep shows, Internet-based (in other words, “virtual”) prostitution, escort or outcall services, prostitution and/or sex tour operators, and brothels (frequently operating behind fronts such as massage parlors, saunas, bathhouses, bars, cabarets, clubs, cinemas, beauty salons, barber shops and restaurants), as well as pimp-facilitated, street-level prostitution. Those profiting from this commerce in human beings sold for sex include not only those directly involved—such as sex traffickers (also referred to as pimps), strip club owners, brothel keepers, madams, and pornographers—but also a wide range of other parties such as the tourism industry, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, security firms, accountants, lawyers, doctors, advertisers, portions of the public health sector, ISPs, as well as local, regional, and national governments. So, while the entities that comprise the global organized sexual exploitation supply chain may appear to be limited to the small-time operators of back alley brothels, sleazy bars, and seedy red-light districts, when one considers the wide range of financial beneficiaries in the aggregate, we find powerful multinational, multifaceted “sex sectors.” These sectors can be so substantial in size that they contribute significantly to the GDPs of national governments.

Such industries, which often include both legal and illegal elements, exist around the world and are commonly referred to using innocuous terms such as the “sex trade,” the “sex sector” and “commercial sex industry.” However, what these entities really constitute is a global supply chain of organized sexual exploitation.

The essential and indispensable commodities in this industry are human beings (primarily females) whose bodies are sold for sex.

#### Profits and Scale

When viewed from a macroeconomic perspective, prostitution has little to do with the decisions of individual women, and much to do with the commoditization and industrialization of female bodies to feed the male consumer demand for sex. The global network of enterprises constructed to meet this demand generates robust profits for those who own, manage, or work for businesses linked to these enterprises. For instance:

A study analyzing the size and structure of the underground commercial sex economies (UCSE) of eight major cities, Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City (MO), Miami, San Diego, Seattle, and Washington DC, estimated that in 2007 the cash-based UCSE in these cities ranged from $39.9 to $290 million—$975.3 million total (excluding Kansas City).24 The sex traffickers interviewed took in $5,000 (Kansas City) to $33,000 (Atlanta) per week.25 The pricing per individual sex act ranged from as low as $5 for street-based prostitution, $150-300 per hour for Internet-facilitated prostitution, to as much as $1,000 for escort prostitution.

A study of San Diego County’s illicit sex economy in 2013 was estimated to have generated $810 million dollars.

In 2007, the government of Spain reported that every day €50 million were spent on prostitution, or more than €18 billion per year.

In 2008, researchers estimated that the Dutch prostitution industry generated between €400–600 million.

In India, it is reported that there are 2.5 million women engaged in prostitution. In Mumbai it is estimated that more than 100,000 women are prostituted 365 days a year, averaging 6 sexual buyers a day at $2 for each sex act. The red-light district, Dharavi, in Mumbai generates at least $400 million in revenue annually.

The Paradise night club in La Jonquera, Spain, is touted as the largest brothel in Europe. The club, which measures more than 8,850 square feet and boasts 80 rooms with rates of $166 per hour, is one of 11 so-called “macro-brothels” in this region of Spain. Approximately 1,800 prostituted women are available there.

Germany’s decision to legalize prostitution has given rise to “flat-rate” brothels which allow sex buyers to have as much sex as they want with any of the women in the brothel for one price. When one such club opened, the management advertised, “Sex with all the women as long as you want, as often as you want and the way you want. Sex. Anal sex. Oral sex without a condom. Three-ways. Group sex. Gang bangs.” Police reported that about 1,700 sex buyers participated on the opening weekend. As many as 700 men stood in line outside the brothel. Later, sex buyers complained in Internet forums that the women were no longer fit for use after a few hours.

The demand for this supply chain of organized sexual exploitation exists to cater to and profit from one class of individual—male commercial sex buyers. It takes a lot of $2, $100, $1000 commercial sex purchases to fuel a system generating billions of dollars in income, supporting a myriad of stakeholders, and bolstering national economies. Behind each of those transactions is an individual, most likely a man, who has decided that he is entitled to have what he wants, when he wants it, irrespective of the consequences to others.

As the quotes below from sex buyers reveal, the extent of their sexual callousness and sense of sexual entitlement can be breathtakingly raw and inhuman.

* “Being with a prostitute is like having a cup of coffee, when you’re done, you throw it out.”
* “If my fiancée won’t give me anal, I know someone who will.”
* “The whole thrill of it, prostitute hunting.”
* “There are no boundaries.”
* “I usually call for a girl, you know, like a pizza.”
* “Anything you can’t get from your girlfriend or wife, you can get from a prostitute.”
* “They will do anything you ask them for with no complaints and nothing said back. ‘Your wish is my command,’ like a genie jumping out of a bottle.”
* “. . . she gave up her rights when she accepted my money.”
* “You don’t care about this person—it’s a feeling of no strings. I don’t have to see that person anymore if I don’t want to.”
* “Something at your job makes you mad, you can’t beat your wife, you can’t beat your kids, and so you go out and have sex to take your frustration out.”
* “Regardless if you have sex with a woman who is a prostitute; women are all the same, they all make you pay. I see no difference in women as a whole.”
* “Prostitution is like masturbating without having to use your hand.”
* “No big deal, it’s just like getting a beer.”
* “It’s like renting a girlfriend or a wife. You get to choose like a catalog.”
* “It’s like going to the toilet.”

Thus we see that the global supply chain of organized sexual exploitation is a system which industrializes sex and robs the sex act of love, equality, and reciprocity of pleasure. It is a system that consents to the daily, serial sexual exploitation of millions of people. To the degree that we ignore it, tolerate it, or participate in it, we concede to the daily sexual exploitation for the abused, addicted, homeless, impoverished, marginalized, widowed, abandoned, and orphaned. The Plan for combating demand for a comprehensive discussion of the strategies and policies needed to combat the demand for commercial sex, please see the report commissioned by Demand Abolition conducted by Abt Associates, “Developing a National Plan for Eliminating Sex Trafficking.”

In addition to the array of items set forth there, I wish to call particular attention to the following recommendations from the National Center on Sexual Exploitation’s “Freedom from Sexploitation Agenda.”

1. Of all the initiatives the U.S. government could undertake, none would have as broad and as instantaneous an impact on diminishing the global supply chain of organized sexual exploitation worldwide than item #1 below. In furtherance of the Department of Defense’s “2015 Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Instruction 2200,” institute a rule making strip clubs off limits to all U.S. military personnel worldwide. Strip clubs provide the perfect learning environment for sexually toxic attitudes and behaviors. Leering, jeering, sexual touching, lap dancing, acts of prostitution, sexual assaults, and sexual trafficking are everyday occurrences in strip clubs around the world. Military personnel participating in the consumption of commercial sex at strip clubs fuel the demand for sex trafficking. Moreover, military members cannot exploit and objectify women in one environment without it having a deleterious effect on other aspects of their lives, including their military service.
2. Since the inception of the State Department’s annual Trafficking in Persons Report, countries with legal regimes that normalize the demand for commercial sex have escaped receiving the lower tier ratings that such laws—which serve to further sexual trafficking—deserve. The following recommendation addresses this problem. Pass H.R. 611, the “Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act.” Specifically, this bill amends the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 regarding the determination of whether a government has made serious and sustained efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. Pursuant to the minimum standards for the elimination of sex trafficking, if a government has the authority to prohibit the purchase of commercial sex acts, but fails to do so, it shall be deemed a failure to make serious and sustained efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, irrespective of other efforts the government may have made.
3. Established in 2002, National Security Presidential Directive-22 (NSPD-22) calls on the U.S. government to vigorously combat trafficking in persons. This policy framework incorporates efforts to combat the demand by calling on law enforcement to enforce “the law against all those who traffic in persons, including recruiters, transporters, harborers, buyers, and sellers . . .” (emphasis added).

Recommendations #3a and #3b below builds on NSPD-22 and are particularly important as there is concern that some federal funding may be going to entities with policies on demand for commercial sex that contravene NSPD-22.

 As the 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report observed, “If there were no demand for commercial sex, sex trafficking would not exist in the form it does today. This reality underscores the need for continued strong efforts to enact policies that prohibit paying for sex.” Thus, it is imperative that the DOJ, under the provisions of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, prosecute those who “solicit or patronize” victims of human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sex acts. DOJ should also work with its federally funded anti-trafficking task forces to ensure the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of persons who purchase sexual acts, as part of a concerted effort to combat the demand for sex trafficking. DOJ must also work to ensure that its grantees support efforts to enforce state and local laws criminalizing the purchase of commercial sex, and reallocate and prioritize resources so that demand reduction efforts such as those undertaken in King County, Washington, and by Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, are replicated across the country.

Direct the Departments of Justice, State, and Health and Human Services, as well as USAID, to provide guidance to U.S. states and foreign governments advising against the decriminalization of prostitution and against the normalization of prostitution as “sex work.” Multilateral organizations such as the UN Women and UNAIDS, as well as organizations like Amnesty International and the Open Society Foundation, are pushing for the full decriminalization of prostitution in the U.S. and abroad. Full decriminalization of prostitution transforms pimps and sex traffickers into “business entrepreneurs,” and institutes a de facto right for men to buy women, men, and children for sex. Such laws do not protect the human rights of persons in prostitution, but guarantee that their dehumanization and exploitation will continue.

4. Finally, efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex that are successful may result in diminished livelihood for those currently involved in the sex trade. Accordingly, approaches to curtailing demand must be accompanied by funding for programs to provide training, resources, and case management assistance to those in the commercial sex trade wishing to find alternative livelihood opportunities.

### Closing

Those who engage in buying sex hurt others and themselves. Their behavior contributes to staggering amounts of human suffering, fuels criminal enterprises, and is the reason the global supply chain of organized sexual exploitation exists. The damage they leave in their wake drains society of the valuable social, legal, and medical resources that must be extended in disparate attempts to heal those they have used and discarded like trash. Moreover, when governments decriminalize or turn a blind eye to sex buying, they choose to allow the vulnerable, desperate, or reckless to become prey of the greedy, powerful, selfish, and lascivious. They choose to ensure that a pool of persons are always on supply as public sexual property. They choose to support the global supply chain of organized sexual exploitation. Ironically, the debate about choice in prostitution is usually focused on those with the least power and control in the whole equation: the prostituting person.

Those with the real power—sex buyers, pimps, corporate interests, and governments—are rarely, if ever, held accountable for their choices. Indeed, if sex buyers stopped choosing to buy sex today, the entire sex industry would disintegrate tomorrow. Of course, no one is holding their breath waiting for that to happen. However, those who care about people in forms of organized sexual exploitation can choose to work collaboratively with prostitution survivors, social service providers, law enforcement, and policy makers, to shrink both the global supply chain and the demand. This is the only choice that fosters dignity, wholeness, vibrant life, and a world free from sexploitation.

### Chapter 6.4: Technology Use, Screen Time, and Social Media

#### The Effects of Digital Trends

Okay, now you may be saying to yourself, “But these are just statistics, it doesn’t mean that children and families are suffering because of it!” You’re right, these numbers can’t tell us if these trends are good or bad in themselves. But other research does. Let’s check out what it’s saying, starting with the effects on our physical health.

#### What does digital immersion mean for the brain and body?

If you’ve ever seen the Pixar movie Wall-E, you’ll remember how humans who survived the earthly apocalypse are all on a ship in space where everything is provided for them through technology. Since these humans were all lacking the desire and ability to move, they had devolved to being overweight and lazy.

#### Is that really an entirely make-believe scenario?

Apocalypse aside, that is not too far off from where we seem to be headed. It’s important to not forget how much our physical bodies need the physical world. Using all of our five senses is critical, especially in children. And the rise in something like obesity is not simply due to the prevalence of sugar—with screen time also strongly linked because it’s associated with higher caloric intake, less-healthy diets, and lower physical activity.

Brain health is also connected in many ways to overall body health. Being physically active and getting outside for a couple hours a day can do wonders for you and your child’s physical and neurological development.

### What about the brain and the capacity for attention?

Due to the fact that much of screen media is designed to grab and keep our attention, it comes as no surprise that the more we are on our devices, the more our desire and ability to give our attention to less stimulating options is weakened. Give your kids a steady diet of fast-moving animation for weeks, and don’t be surprised if they’re less interested in the books you snagged from the library!

For children and adults alike, you might say that our focus and attention muscles in the brain start to atrophy when our brains are immersed in an exclusively digital diet (New findings add twist to screen time limit debate). This is especially true for children and teens because their brains are still developing in critical ways—in regulation, attention and impulse control. Other evidence suggests that the overuse of our devices can rob us of our ability to think critically and be creative (Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development).

How about for you or your family? If you have children or grandchildren, think of the last time your child was on a device watching videos or playing video games for a long period of time. Why do you think these are also times you are most likely to hear protests about household chores, homework, being with family, or almost any other activity? It’s called “the law of least effort” and our brains are proud of this. In a moment like this, when your children’s brains are feeling the dopamine spike of digital stimulation, if you were to recommend reading a book, doing some art, practicing an instrument, or doing something creative, you would probably be met with resistance from your child, even angry resistance too, right? Most of us have brains that prefer doing things that don’t take much effort over those that require serious brain power like math or piano practice.

This is partly because each of these activities require focus, attention, and some level of creativity. To put it differently, if the child (or adult) has their brain dessert first, they will have little to no appetite for their healthy brain meal. If that isn’t evidence enough, just think how a diet of constant mental dessert might impact academic performance and interest in learning over the long-term? You probably intuitively already know the answer. One landmark study found that students' test scores increased when smartphones were removed from the classroom. Did we really need a research study to figure that out?

And this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to academic performance. One writing teacher put it this way:

"Teachers are vying for their students’ attention. Of course, this is a [classic] struggle, but in the past, students’ only options were looking out the window, passing notes, or throwing spit wads at each other. Most teachers will tell you the struggle is much tougher today; it’s one of those things they talk about at meetings and lunch breaks" (Cell Phones in Classrooms? No! Students Need to Pay Attention).

### Mental and Emotional Health

Perhaps the most studied and talked about area of human development that is impacted by our devices is our mental health—and for similar reasons. That is, when a person avoids self-reflection and understanding because he or she is uncomfortable being left alone to their thoughts and emotions, serious problems arise.

Yet, pushing away from emotions seems to make so much sense sometimes. For instance, one 16-year-old boy states, “when I am stressed because of school or feeling pretty depressed about girls, I kinda go to my video games and YouTube. Because it’s like I can forget about my problems for a while. And in the game, I’m actually somebody with important skills.”

Sarah, a 14-year-old girl, reflects a similar coping pattern. She says, “usually when I feel crappy about how I look and that I am no good at anything, I get on Instagram without even thinking about it. Sometimes I feel better when I do, but usually I feel worse.”

These two teens describe what many of us parents might also do when plagued by negative emotions. Instead of eating our feelings with food, we screen them with devices. There is ample scientific evidence showing that depression, anxiety, ADHD, and many other psychological disorders have been increasing significantly in teens and adults for the past several years (Six Facts About Screens and Teen Mental Health That a Recent New York Times’ Article Ignores). With little question, this is one contributor.

But why? You see, screening negative thoughts and feelings is like putting dirty dishes under the sink so you don’t have to look at them. The problem isn’t solved, it’s just hidden for a while. In the meantime, the dishes get nastier, moldier, and harder to clean. Negative thoughts and feelings don’t disappear by distracting ourselves from them, they only worsen. Whether those feelings are sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, or even boredom, the key is to understand and work with them—which requires us to be present with them, and actually feel what we are feeling. That’s the opposite of screening them, ignoring them, or stuffing them away. Children need to be taught how to do this because it isn’t a natural process. We parents only need to look in the mirror to realize how hard it can be for us with fully developed brains.

### Relationships

Another area of human development impacted by an imbalance in screen time is perhaps the most important of all. Decades of research on bonding and attachment have shown definitively that we humans are wired to connect with other humans. If that’s true, however, we are disconnecting wirelessly. Sherry Turkle, a Psychology professor at MIT and author of the book Alone Together, said that we are letting technology take us places in our relationships that we don’t want to go. We are getting used to a new way of being “alone together.” Have you ever seen a room full of teens (or parents for that matter) together, but actually quite alone? Places where families gather such as the dinner table, the backyard, and the living room are often taken over by the devices that fit into our pocket. Spouses speak of being screen or phone-snubbed by their partner, parents by their children, and children by their parents. Sound familiar?

Next time you are in a place where people have to wait—the doctor's office, the hair salon or barber shop, the mechanic, restaurants, and others—pay attention to the lack of interaction between family members. Couples staring at their phones. Parents and children are seemingly hypnotized by a screen. Sadly, we are allowing these devices to inhibit our desire and ability to listen to, laugh and cry with, and learn from each other.

If that weren’t enough, social skills in people of all ages—especially children—are also declining. Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair, author of The Big Disconnect wrote the following:

"As a species we are very highly attuned to reading social cues. There’s no question kids are missing out on very critical social skills. In a way, texting and online communicating—it’s not like it creates a nonverbal learning disability, but it puts everybody in a nonverbal disabled context, where body language, facial expression, and even the smallest kinds of vocal reactions are rendered invisible."

### An Apostolic and Prophetic Voice of Warning

In 2009, Elder David A. Bednar spoke at BYU-Idaho for a worldwide devotional and offered this prophetic warning:

“I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. The concerns I raise are not new; they apply equally to other types of media, such as television, movies, and music. But in a cyber world, these challenges are more pervasive and intense. I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to produce high fidelity and that promote degrading and evil purposes” (Things as They Really Are).

Neither the Lord nor His servants are caught by surprise by these digital trends. In fact, they are using these devices to help spread the work of the Lord. But make no mistake, these blessings are to be used with wisdom and prudence.

You can do this! The history of this world has proven that there will always be new territory—physical, emotional, and otherwise—to explore. No matter how new and rugged the terrain, it can be crossed safely. But make no mistake, these terrains need to be crossed. They are not going away. On the other hand, it’s just not enough to sit back in the digital drift and hope for the best. There will be screen time battles in homes and schools. There will be mistakes. And there will be some regret and heartache. But if parents, teachers, and everyday advocates are driven by love and good information, they and their children can find their way through these new tech times with mental, relational, and physical health not only surviving, but also thriving.

For even more information, below are various articles discussing technology use, screen time and social media, and having healthy media use in families.

#1 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/education/screen-time-vs-green-time/>

#2 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/family/families-and-media-you-are-what-you-eat/>

#3 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/family/media/off-the-grid/>

## Chapter 6.5: Comprehensive Sex Education

Below are resources for those who want to learn more about CSE.

### Article #1: Our Children and Their Future: Comprehensive Sex Education

by Alexis Goodman

The authors of comprehensive sex education (CSE) label the countries who accept their curriculum as “champions”. Champions are, “influential thought leaders, including politicians, celebrities, young people, religious leaders, and others from inside and outside the educational field, who believe in the importance of CSE”. The effects of CSE are said to be seen instantaneously in a country, causing things such as:

* Delayed initiation of sexual intercourse
* Decreased frequency of sexual intercourse
* Decreased number of sexual partners
* Reduced risk taking
* Increased use of condoms
* Increased use of contraception

Interestingly enough, these results are the product of only two evidence reviews having been done on CSE, one in 2008 and one in 2016, both of which were commissioned by one of the authors of CSE, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Some of the limitations of these studies were that the evaluation designs were only “minimally acceptable”, and “statistically underpowered”. Additionally, they could not get their research published because programs “are more likely to accept articles for publication when the results are positive”, indicating that the results were not matching the hypothesis. The reviews also only assessed short-term effects, not long-term ones, and methods used to conduct the trials affected the reliability of the outcomes.

Comprehensive sex education authors “champion” their results so loudly that they hope to hide the dismal accuracy of them. There is a push for this type of education in countries around the world, with manuals being targeted towards countries like the Caribbean, Jamaica, Thailand, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

#### What is Comprehensive Sex Education?

The question is, what is this curriculum? One of the [guides](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/ITGSE_en.pdf) provided for CSE explained this approach to sex education: “It promotes structured learning about sex and relationships in a manner that is positive, affirming, and centered on the best interest of the young person.”

Reading through the various manuals, pamphlets, and guides distributed about comprehensive sex education, one can glean that the approach is more than just positive, affirming, and it is not entirely focused on what is best for the child.

Comprehensive means all encompassing. So, when the word is tacked onto sex education, the teachings do not end with just the biological and technical aspects of puberty and intercourse. Included are different sexualities and ways of having sex, how to consent to sex, normalizes homosexual behavior, encourages sexual pleasure (especially self-stimulation), gives the greenlight for becoming sexually active at a younger age, promotes contraception and abortion, and pushes for sexual rights.

It is extraordinary that the designers of this curriculum tout its ability to decrease the frequency and initial start of sex, seeing as how the entire focus is on exploring yourself sexually as well as others (in a consensual way of course). Conflicting messages are taught, for example: prostitution is reduced to merely ‘sex work’ in the manuals, leading one to believe that engaging with multiple individuals is just any other job. How can such teachings minimize sexual encounters among adolescents while at the same time encouraging increased sexual behaviors?

#### Examples of Comprehensive Sex Education

The following are some examples of comprehensive sex education around the world, not including the prevalent material seen in the US. For more information, click [here](https://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/cse-materials-index/).

[Healthy, Happy, & Hot](https://www.ippf.org/static/happyhealthyhot/Healthy_Happy_and_Hot_Guide.pdf)– A guide produced and distributed by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, it is highly promiscuous and erotic in its advisal of leading a sexual life while having HIV or being with someone who lives with HIV. One of the more mind-boggling statements in the pamphlet is, “Young people living with HIV have the right to decide if, when, and how they tell others about their HIV status.”

[You, Your Life, Your Dreams (Caribbean)](https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/bie_fci_you_your_life_your_dreams_caribbean_602a_en.pdf)– This manual was supported by the United Nations Population Fund and includes explicit images of the female and male body, homosexual ideology, and describes in depth what every stage of sexual intercourse looks and feels like.

[My Future Is My Choice (Namibia)](https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/my-future-my-choice)– Instructions for this manual include talking about childhood sex play, homosexuality, wet dreams, and masturbation to adolescents through playing games, activities, and discussions.

[My Changing Body (Rwanda, Africa)](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JN7J.pdf)– The target seen here are Very Young Adolescents, which the manual repeatedly just refers to as YVA’s, as a way to hide the fact that their target audience is only 10-14 years old. One of the teachings is of a “Fertility Awareness Chain”, and the manual explains to the children on what days a woman should and shouldn’t have sex to avoid pregnancy. It also goes into depth about gender roles and gender identity.

### Other Things to Consider

It is incredible to me, that in all its pervasive forms, comprehensive sex education isn’t really all that comprehensive. It fails to address many aspects, one of the main things being that waiting to have sex until after marriage is a leading indicator of success in relationships.

There are also two aspects to consider here. First, why is it that Planned Parenthood, whose pregnancy resolution services are composed of abortions by 95% and reportedly made over one billion dollars off abortions in 2011 and two billion in 2020, is handing out sex education materials? Would it not be considered a conflict of interest that the very organization that makes money off pregnancies of women in vulnerable situations is also encouraging those women to engage in activities that create pregnancies?

And secondly, as Monsignor Robert Murphy said at the UN third committee on child pornography, “It is a mistake to think that a society where an abnormal consumption of internet sex is rampant among adults could be capable of effectively protecting minors.” How can we put our trust in individuals who won’t denounce pornography as a danger, to adequately prepare our children for sex?

### A Solution Safe for Everyone

The answer to all this confusion is to make sure sex education is taught in the home and by families that genuinely love and care for their children. Teach the emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects to intimacy in a relationship, and the benefits of abstinence. A useful resource if you are unsure of how to go about educating your children is Educate Empower Kids. Included are appropriate ages for appropriate topics, information on the dangers of pornography, and how to use technology for good. Another great resource is UFI’s very own Homefront Kids Unit on Parents Teach Sex Best.

Don’t hesitate to talk to your kids and create a safe and learning environment where they feel that they can come to you with questions. Because if you hesitate, a foreign and more than likely dangerous influence will be guiding your child in matters that are essential for their development.

### Article #2: My Experience With the Roll Out of CSE

I would like to share some experiences of the roll out of CSE in California. In my own district, science teachers reported hearing kids in middle school walk out of lessons saying, “I didn’t know you could do that” to their friends. These same teachers said the kids themselves would beg to finish lessons early or skip them altogether. They were not enjoying them much. In another district, a high school chose a book for English that included a situation where a man was fantasizing about being a girl for a day. At another school in this district, a male substitute teacher claimed he was a woman and then supervised middle school girls changing for PE class. The district could do nothing because he identified as a man. This same substitute teacher taught elementary grade levels dressed as a woman, which further confused and upset the young children. There is a story of a teacher who was prepping for the 2019 lesson plans and the principal and Human Resources called him in and wanted to discuss what he would be teaching. He responded that he taught the law of CHYA and not beyond. The result was that they pulled him from teaching CSE because he wouldn’t teach the graphic things in the curriculum. He was harrassed horribly and had to seek counseling as a result.

A young girl was asked for her pronouns and she said she didn’t want to participate. They told her she had to. Her mom came to school to help her and was told she couldn’t see her daughter because the school was a closed campus. A first grade teacher was made to teach gender identity and told to not count the number of girls and boys, but just the number of children in her class. In a 9th grade classroom, kids were asked to do an exit lesson and/or interview. They had to close their eyes and imagine a world where they were the only heterosexual person in the world. They needed to explore how they would feel if they were scared to go outside because people would judge them or harass them. The teacher defended this assignment, once parents and students complained they were uncomfortable with it, because he said he had clearly invited students to come talk to him if they were uncomfortable. What teenager would go speak with the adult who was clearly comfortable with this assignment?

The grooming of young minds also occurs in clubs. Most high schools and many middle and/or junior high schools have Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs. At a middle school in my own district, there are multiple young women in their early 20s who are still struggling psychologically and emotionally from what they heard in those club meetings. There are high schools where large groups of girls are now graduating as boys. Children are being taught from as young as age 4 that families can have two daddies or two mommies and that they can be whatever gender or no gender. There was a highly publicized case in northern California, where a kindergarten class was subjected to a highly traumatizing event on the last day of school. A boy in the class went behind a barrier while the teacher read “I Am Jazz” to the children. This book details the journey of a young man who stars in the televised show of the same name. This young man writes that he was born in a boy’s body with a girl’s brain. Then the little boy in the class comes out from behind the barrier, now dressed as a girl and is introduced with his new name. The fallout from this was horrific. Parents were given no notification and their children now were home for the summer with all sorts of concerns and confusion. Some kids would wake up screaming in the middle of the night because they were terrified they were going to change genders. One little girl saw herself with wet hair after taking a bath. She began screaming “I don’t want to turn into a boy!”. The teacher of this class went on to be awarded Teacher of the Year by her district. The parents were told their concerns were unwarranted and unwelcome.

CSE is designed to separate a child from his or her parents and family. Students are regularly told if they want to discuss something without their parents’ knowledge, they can tell their teacher. Districts even have gender transition plans that include instructions of how to help the student transition without the parent knowing or consenting. Students are told they can get birth control, hormone therapy, and abortions all without parental knowledge or consent. The strange thing is, students are taught about consent constantly, as part of CSE. This is taught to children, despite it being illegal for a minor to give or receive consent for sex, as a way to help them protect themselves from sexual assault. However, they usually offer students ways to talk about what they’re “ready” for. They teach them to ask things like “Can I take your shirt off?”, knowing that children are often quite unsure of themselves and that girls are pressured to do things by the boys they like. They use the word “pleasure” constantly. They want to make sure their kids know that sex is pleasurable and that they have a right to pleasure.

### History of Roll Out in California

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been mandatory in California schools since January 1, 2016, through the California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA). As such, California families have been dealing with this graphic sex education for several years now. The CA Dept. of Ed. allowed an unelected body of people, under the leadership of ASHWG, to pre select curricula for school districts to choose from. All of these curricula are Sexual Risk Reduction (SRR) programs, rather than Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) programs. SRA programs typically teach that kids can have relationships that don’t include sex, while SRR programs typically teach that kids are most likely having sex anyway, so why not teach them how to do it safely.

As there were pre selected curricula, most districts just choose one of them, often without looking at it beforehand. There have been multiple instances of a parent asking about a particular lesson and the district personnel or board member being completely unaware of the content of that lesson. So, as time went on, we became aware that these programs were chosen with little or no knowledge of what was in them. The other thing to know is that the content of these curricula went far beyond the intent and language of the CHYA. CHYA speaks mainly about making sure sex education is inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation, and teaches about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The curricula read more like how to manuals for sex. They teach that there are 3 types of sex (vaginal, anal and oral – VAO). They say they must teach this to make sure gay students feel their ability to have sexual relations is being addressed. They say this is a way to prevent bullying of gay kids. The problem is, many heterosexual kids then engage in anal and oral sex as well.

When we have mentioned to school districts that there are curricula out there that satisfy CHYA but are not part of the pre-selected list, they often turn us down because the ACLU has been sending threatening emails to every district as well as physical representatives to their board meetings. They have been acting like a sort of police arm of CHYA. Districts’ fear of them usually supersedes any concerns from parents or even themselves.

### Article #3: The Sexual Ideologies Competing for the Hearts of our Children

Contributed by Tori Black

There are two ideologies vying for the hearts and minds of our children and families. One says that humans are sexual beings and that they should be encouraged to explore and express that sexuality any way they want. There is no wrong or right, just what gives you pleasure, and sexual pleasure is the ultimate goal. The other says that we are humans with a sexual drive that plays an important role in marriage and family formation, that helps form and maintain love and trust between two committed individuals, and is so powerful that it should be treated with respect and great care. That misused, it can harm not only individuals and families, but communities as well.

#### How did this change develop?

Many people think the philosophy of sexual pleasure and expression emerged during the 1960s and 70s, but it actually surfaced earlier than that in 1947. That’s when Dr. Alfred Kinsey established the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. Kinsey has been hailed as one of the “most influential Americans of the 20th century”, a “pioneer” of sex research. He is credited with “liberating” society from what he called the “only three kinds of sexual abnormalities: abstinence, celibacy and delayed marriage.” His published research became bestselling books.

Kinsey used questionable research methods, often overrepresenting certain segments of the general population, focusing on gay communities, prostitutes, and sexual criminals. He used the skewed results to overstate the prevalence of sexual behaviors that many would consider deviant and even criminal, thereby presenting them as normal. John Bancroft, former director of The Kinsey Institute, admits that Kinsey obtained information about the “sexual responses” of children from interviews with men who had “been involved in sexual activity with children.” It is from his interviews with pedophiles, and one in particular in which he falsified the data to make it look like the information had come from several subjects, that Kinsey concluded that children are “sexual beings,” a tenet of modern sexuality education.

#### Enter SIECUS.

In 1964, Dr. Mary Calderone, the medical director for Planned Parenthood, founded SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Drawing on Kinsey’s conclusions regarding sexuality, SIECUS sought to fundamentally change society by promoting sexual rights and sexuality education. SIECUS advocates the use of sex ed to transform society regarding “reproductive justice, LGBTQ equality, sexual violence prevention, gender equity, and dismantling white supremacy.”

The government helped fund both SIECUS and the Kinsey Institute. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the “lead federal agency on mental disorders,” became a major financier for both the Kinsey Institute and for SIECUS. The connection between the two organizations was very close. The Kinsey Institute provided the research and SIECUS would design sexuality education based upon that research. Today, SIECUS provides the guidelines governments and agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), use to promote sexuality education. Taking a page from Kinsey’s playbook, SIECUS tells parents, “Children are sexual and think sexual thoughts and do sexual things . . . parents must accept and honor their child’s erotic potential,” and, “Professionals who study children have recently affirmed the strong sexuality of the newborn.”

In addition to the close collaboration of the Kinsey Institute and SIECUS, the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS) trains sex educators and instructors; and the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) serves as a professional organization for instructors, helping to facilitate training. Both the IASHS and AASECT are grounded in the Kinsey Institute ideology of the sexualization of children from birth and are preoccupied with pleasure and encouraging individuals to explore pleasure.

### How educators are “reprogrammed”

One of the ways that IASHS trains educators is through its Sexual Attitude Restructuring (SAR) program, a human sexuality immersion learning experience that, according to one facilitator, “enables the participant to move emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and psychologically into a zone of greater knowing, acceptance, and tolerance of human sexuality in all of its possible dimensions.” Journalist George Leonard investigated one SAR program that culminated in a multimedia experience. The following account is edited because the content was so graphic, but Leonard described his experience as follows:

“in the darkness . . . images of human beings—and sometimes even animals—engaging in every conceivable sexual act…accompanied by [sounds and music]. By the end…nothing was shocking…but nothing was sacred either. But as I drove home, I began to get a slightly uneasy feeling. It was almost as if I had been conned…by my own conditioned response of taking the most liberated position…whatever my deeper feelings…love had not been mentioned a single time during the entire weekend.”

This program designed to desensitize and re-educate is how today’s “experts” in sexuality education are trained. This is an ideology of licentiousness, and the adherents are the ones designing, promoting, and even sometimes teaching comprehensive sexuality education curricula in our schools, to our children. It grooms people in hedonism.

### A better way

Most people want their kids to be happy and to have fulfilling lives that include stable marriages and families, and the vast majority of parents understand that when children delay sexual initiation, their chances of having that happy life increases. The majority of parents, regardless of political affiliation, feel that it is important for children to have well-rounded, informative instruction on sex education. In one survey, 89% of parents said that the topics covered in high school should include “puberty, healthy relationships, abstinence, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and birth control. While fewer parents agree about what should be included for middle school students, 78% believe that those same topics should be presented to middle schoolers.

Another survey asked parents to identify the priorities they had regarding their children’s sex education. It revealed that most parents want children to be taught to save sex for marriage or delay it until close to marriage. Only seven percent of respondents felt that it was okay for children to have sex in high school as long as contraception was used.

Those are pretty clear criteria. Teach about puberty, relationships, STDs, birth control, and waiting to have sex until marriage or close to it. In other words, abstinence or delayed initiation.

### Sexual Risk Avoidance education

Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) is a sex education method that focuses on teaching children about those topics that the majority of parents agree are necessary in sex education. But it also helps young people avoid all of the consequences of early sexual initiation. With CSE, risks of sexual activity focus narrowly on pregnancy and STDs, but studies indicate that risks also include emotional and academic outcomes including esteem loss and depression. SRA proponents believe that information plus delay results in optimal outcomes for young people.

Sexual Risk Avoidance addresses the cognitive development of youth and associated risks. For instance, the part of the brain that is responsible for reasoning, impulse suppression and critical thinking is not fully developed in adolescence. Adolescents are more likely to react emotionally and take risks when experiencing new, intense or stimulating feelings. Girls carry a higher risk from sexual activity that is physiologically innate. Dr. Miriam Grossman relates that girls are “vulnerable to stress, especially the stress of failed relationships.” Both men and women release oxytocin when they kiss, cuddle or are sexually intimate. This is a hormone that encourages bonding and trust. In women, estrogen amplifies the effect of oxytocin, but in men, testosterone diminishes it.

### The benefits of SRA

Organizations that promote CSE claim that SRA is an “abstinence only” program. There are programs out there that encourage abstinence only, but they aren’t sex ed programs like SRA. They tend to be religious programs that focus on purity. CSE proponents sow confusion by comparing apples to oranges. They claim that children are going to have sex, so they need to be prepared for it. Yet from 1991 to 2015, there has been a 28% increase in the number of high school students who have not had sex. Children are not a bunch of animals lacking in self-control. CSE proponents also typically cite condom use as evidence of a program’s success. By that measure, SRA is successful as participants are no less likely to use condoms than their CSE-educated peers.

The real and meaningful difference between the CSE and the SRA programs is in the objective to delay sexual initiation as long as possible. SRA programs teach teens that delaying sex not only reduces the risk of pregnancy and infection, more so than CSE, but it is healthier emotionally, includes academic benefits and helps youth avoid other risky behaviors. It acknowledges what the CDC reports, that “having first sex at a younger age within the teen years is associated with more negative circumstances and consequences.” So, whereas comprehensive sex education emphasizes sexual expression and trains students to use condoms through relay races, sexual risk avoidance teaches students about the benefits of delaying sex and provides tools to encourage abstinence for as long as possible in addition to teaching about methods of contraception and effectiveness. When it comes down to it, CSE proponents and curriculum designers are opposed to SRA because they believe, like Kinsey, that children are sexual beings, and sexual pleasure at any age should not be repressed.

### Finding and evaluating SRA curriculum

There are many sexual risk avoidance programs out there. Ascend is an advocacy organization that educates parents and politicians on the efficacy and superiority of SRA curricula. It provides resources and compares programs. You can find them here and a comparison of curricula and outcomes here.

Dr. Stan Weed and Dr. Thomas Lickona conducted an extensive review that compared CSE programs and SRA programs. They concluded that comprehensive sexuality educators “had not achieved their professed goals of reducing teen pregnancies or STIs or even the more modest intermediate goal of getting sexually active teens to use condoms consistently. By contrast, well-designed abstinence education programs…have achieved significant reductions in teen sexual activity that are still evident a year or more later. The evidence suggests that it may in fact be easier to get a teenager to abstain from sex than to use a condom consistently.”

Weed and Lickona emphasize the philosophical differences between the two approaches based on underlying values regarding human sexuality. Is sex about “personal pleasure seeking” or a foundation for “committed love and a responsibility to one’s community”? We have seen the consequences of the personal pleasure-seeking model – increased STDs, teen pregnancy, higher divorce rates, fatherless homes, sky-high abortion rates.

#### Protecting your children from a sex-saturated culture

There is much parents can do to help their children and families navigate a sex-saturated culture. Dr. Grossman reminds parents that:

1. Your influence with your children is profound…” good parenting has a significant, enduring, and protective influence on adolescent development.”
2. “Model good behavior” and be “warm, supportive, and hands-on. You need to establish firm rules and high expectations.”
3. “Your attitude toward teen sex…and the rules you make about dating will influence your [child] to delay sexual behavior.”
4. Children need both their parents. “Speak about what you’ve learned from your own experiences, and communicate your values… studies show that high parental expectations are associated with postponing sex.”
5. “If you have religious beliefs about sex…convey those to your [children], and even more protective is [your child’s] devoutness. Sincere religious beliefs and practice in adolescence are inversely associated not only with teen sex, but with binge drinking, marijuana use, and cigarette smoking.”
6. “Guilt is a powerful variable; that is, if teens believe that teen sex is wrong, it does limit their behavior significantly. Sex educators are very big on removing sex from morality, and in doing so they remove the guilt factor, but parents should not be able to do so as long as the child understands it’s the timing of sex, not sex itself, that is the issue.” (Emphasis added.)
7. Know what your children are doing, where they are, and with whom. “More unsupervised time with groups of peers and a member of the opposite sex is associated with sexual behavior.”

### We can do better

We can do better for our children than education based on the twisted philosophies of Alfred Kinsey and Mary Calderone. Talk to your school districts, school administrators, legislators and other parents about the efficacy and success of sexual risk avoidance programs and encourage decision makers to implement them. Nurture a warm and loving relationship with your children that will encourage them to come to you for information and guidance. Our children deserve better than what sexual hedonists have to offer them.

### Chapter 6.6: Gender Dysphoria

Let’s take a deeper look at the diagnosis and treatments of gender dysphoria for children and adolescents, as well as what children are being taught about it. Below are various articles from UFI’s webpage regarding gender dysphoria.

“Gender is so simple a child, until that is, they’re taught otherwise” by Tara Bleazard:

(Bleazard, 2023)

My first-grader jumped in the van after school, and before the seat belt even clicked, she quickly blurted out, “Charlie is actually a girl. Sara told me that they were twin baby girls when they were born, but that Charlie wants to be a boy, so their family told him he can be, and…” Her voice hushed and I could tell she was about to reveal the most astonishing information. “He can use the boys’ or the girls’ bathroom!”

I then proceeded to have a conversation with my 7-year-old that I had only previously had with my middle school and high school aged children. I first felt overwhelmed by this unexpected leap into mature topics, but I quickly remembered that despite complexities that the woke agenda is attributing to gender, the reality is quite simple. So, we began with biological reality. “How do you know you’re a girl? How does a boy know he is a boy?” She quickly described the very evident physical differences. I’m not sure there is much to say beyond that, but I proceeded, “Well, that’s a very clear difference. Because of those physical differences we are able to live as men and women with different and complementary roles and responsibilities.”

Children understand biological sex. Yet they are being exposed to confusing gender ideology younger and younger. More often than not, it is without the parents’ knowledge or permission (Melley, 2022). Our schools should be institutions of academic learning, and children spend the majority of their waking time at school for that very reason, but what else are they learning? What are the unspoken lessons shaping their perspective and development? And what resources do we have to fortify them against constant and powerful socialization regarding gender?

As parents we have the responsibility to make clear delineation on topics where lines have become blurred; like the reality of binary genders. Our children’s peers and school policies increasingly expose them to ideologies like gender existing on a spectrum, or that it can be chosen (as in the case of pronouns), or that social transition alleviates the emotional and psychological distress associated with gender dysphoria. Because of these ideologies, our children are experiencing dangerous socialization based on dogma and in the absence of evidence (Malone, 2021).

Exposure to gender ideologies, through social and mainstream media, alters a child or teen’s perception of reality. It oversimplifies the complexities of gender dysphoria, sometimes, removing the condition entirely and presenting gender as a choice. Media influence over inflates the incidence of occurrence, the attention validates the transitioning person and demonstrates that transition is a path to attention and validation. Media influence also presents a false dichotomy of transition or suicide. A recent phenomenon referred to as Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria explores a connection between social media, peer influence, and the idea of gender dysphoria as a social contagion (Veissière, 2018). In addition to media, socially-charged advertising, full of “ally” messaging, negatively influences our children and teens.

Parents must even be vigilant in the face of medical associations. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), published that gender-affirming practices, like hormonal treatments and surgical interventions, are imperative for overall health. However, the HHS document makes false assertions and contains numerous dangerous inaccuracies (Society For Evidence Based Gender Medicine, 2022). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) promotes gender affirming medicine as the only viable path, yet 80% of pediatrician members desire further dialogue on alternative treatments to hormone therapy (Society For Evidence Based Gender Medicine, 2021).

Gender dysphoria prevalence has increased over the years, even more than doubling from 3-4 in 100 in 2017 (Johns et al., 2019), to as high as 9 in 100 in 2021 (Kidd et al., 2021). We must consider if other causes have contributed to this rapid increase in cases of gender dysphoria. It requires that we ask questions and seek answers for ourselves. If we fail to act, we will find ourselves ill-equipped to teach and guide our developing children to navigate social issues like gender dysphoria, pronouns, and transitioning. The very institutions we trust, and entrust our children to, are promoting harmful policies and proliferating false messages, void of sound social science data. Not only are these institutions indoctrinating children, but they are also violating parental rights (K. J. M. Baker, 2023).

Taking responsibility for our children’s learning and development with regards to gender and sexuality, requires that we apprise ourselves of the sound research available and be willing to advocate privately for our children, as well as publicly, in school district meetings. We should exercise our right to review the health and sexuality programs that our school district employs. As parents, we have the right to review forms referring to gender ideology and the policies regarding pronouns. We should also exercise our right to opt out of curriculum that does not reflect our views of gender, sex, and the family.

When we are armed with good science and aware of the influence of school, peers, social media, and medical associations, we can engage in consistent and ongoing dialogue about gender with our children, in our schools, and in the community at large. Maybe the conversation should always begin with biological reality, whether you’re speaking to a 7-year-old or 70-year-old.

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### How Can We Help Our Youth Feel Good About Their Birth Name?

By Christine Richey

(Richey, 2022)

She was a new face, a young visitor. She was introduced to my daughter, who invited her to sit with our family in our pew at church. Immediately I noticed a difference in her versus other 18 year old girls. She looked unhealthy, and seemed very frail. I hurried over to her and introduced myself because I wanted her to feel welcome. As I moved closer, I sensed a difference not only in her appearance, but in her demeanor. Kindly I shook her hand and greeted her. I sat back down, and as I did, a flood of feelings came to me. This young person was not physically healthy. Some of my children asked me who this new person was. My youngest daughter even asked, “Is she a boy or a girl?”

An increasing number of children and adolescents are being diagnosed with gender dysphoria (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Raising kids today is no small task. There are many voices out there telling children who they are and what they can become, whether true or false. With access to unprecedented amounts of information at their fingertips, the minds of our youth have the potential to be misled about how to cope and handle the distress that sometimes comes along with their growing, changing bodies, sexual development, and gender. Although gender dysphoria can be a real concern, are professionals too quick to treat and diagnose gender dysphoria? Is this now common diagnosis creating greater issues such as medical transitioning, which is known to lead to infertility, pain, harmful side effects, dependency on pharmaceutical companies, and even suicidal thoughts?

Children who medically transition are being told they will find mental health relief and happiness as a result of hormone therapy and surgery (MCghee White, 2022). “Gender affirming care” policies, as their advocates have dubbed them, give children access to puberty blockers, which prevent a child’s perfectly healthy body from naturally maturing sexually. Is this really helping these children find relief, or is it harming them even more? The Food and Drug Administration has recently put warnings on certain puberty blocker drugs because of their severe and harmful side effects. Research shows evidence of the many challenges and severe health risks involved for children who are on puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and those who receive sex reassignment surgery (Egnor, 2022). This kind of surgery is mislabeled. No amount of drugs or surgery will change the DNA of a person.

Parents are being told by medical professionals that their children will commit suicide if they are not allowed to receive “gender affirming care” (Burk, 2022). This puts even more emotional distress and confusion on parents as they seek advice, answers, and solutions to help their children. Research has challenged this idea as the suicide rate for transgender children has increased (J. P. Greene, 2022). Moreover, recent policies are making it easier for youth in the United States to seek transitioning hormones (puberty blockers) as young as 8 years of age (Owermohle & Mahr, 2022). Some states do not have policies in place to help protect children from accessing such harmful drugs, and they are allowing children to begin therapy without parental consent (Schemmel, 2002). Does a young child who is just starting puberty understand the consequences of such a choice? Are they able to think past the here and now and into the future? Do they understand that they may feel worse mentally, emotionally, and physically, and that they may never be able to have children later in life? How can we help protect our youth from the harmful voices that lead them astray, and help them find real security, peace and understanding about themselves and their gender (Linquist, 2022)?

Today there are detransitioners sharing their stories of the many health issues along with mental and emotional distress they suffered and still suffer as a result of hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery (Boyd, 2022). Parents’ rights are slowly disintegrating making it difficult for parents to guide their children on these issues. Doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, and policy (Associated Press, 2022) makers are creating a separation (Hathaway, 2022) between parents and their children, causing a division in the modern family. They are isolating children and putting barriers between children and those that are concerned for their health and well-being.

We must re-evaluate the medical and mental health policies that allow this kind of care and treatment of children. We need to make a stand. If parents are being misinformed and even limited in their efforts to help their children, who is helping their children give their consent (Latham, 2022) and understand the lifetime consequences that medical transitioning will have on their health and identity? What are the repercussions of these state, federal, and other organizational policies that allow children to medically transition at such a young age (Biggs, 2023)? For example, a push for a gender neutral society may cause human sexuality to be lost, making it more difficult for science to find solutions on healthcare all together. Are we doing all we can to understand the negative consequences of “gender affirming care”?

Few U.S. states are fighting to protect our youth (J. Greene, 2022). As a society, we must make our voices heard. Professionals need to do more research, and be careful and cautious when labeling people with gender dysphoria. If we are not more guarded with the lives of our youth, these radical ideas and treatments will snowball. As organizations and professionals groom more of our youth into a state of gender dysphoria, and eventually medical castration and infertility, there will be an alarming increase of sexless individuals.

This takes us back to my young daughter’s question about our new friend who sat with our family at church. After a few weeks, this young person shared with us that he was really a young man who identified as a girl and was contemplating surgery. He later asked me if I felt like he belonged. Maybe he was asking me if he could ever be loved. Or maybe he was really asking me for answers about his distressed feelings and his gender confusion and how to deal with them.

I came to learn that he suffered from depression, had recently been diagnosed bipolar, and was recovering from an eating disorder. He told me he had been abused and hurt when he was younger by his older brother and father. Did that cause him to question or even dislike his birth gender? Did he need someone who would listen to his other concerns and feelings of belonging? These sensitive topics about gender dysphoria are real-life for many, and we cannot ignore them by insisting only on a “gender affirming” model for care.

A person’s gender identity is part of their sexual make-up. No surgery or hormone therapy can completely change that fact. If we do not help our youth understand that they can always find belonging, even in their birth sex and gender, then I fear that more and more of our children and youth will make hasty, ill-informed decisions that will gravely impact their future. We need to help our youth suffering from gender dysphoria to feel comfortable in their own bodies. We need to help them know that we are here with them along their journey of mortality and that they belong just as they are.

### Gender Identity Ideology - The Political Religion Distorting the Meaning of Sex and Gender by Tori Black

(Black, 2021)

It is no secret that the United Nations Human Rights Council has taken the lead in promoting policies and principles which are controversial at best, alarmingly dangerous at worst. In July 2020, United Families International spearheaded a petition drive criticizing the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for his warped definition of religious discrimination and abuse, as well as his recommendations that serve to erode religious liberty.

Another of the Human Rights Council’s appointees, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, is doing his best to advance the Human Rights Council’s doctrine of gender identity theory and stamp out the heretical and “regressive” belief in biological sex. Mr. Madrigal-Borloz is currently preparing a thematic report on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity (United Nations Human Rights, 2021). This report will be presented at the 47th session of the Human Rights Council.

### A dangerous ideology

Gender identity theory is the belief that the meaning of male and female is a social “construct,” that is, socially created and not related to one’s biological sex. Therefore, one’s sex is not fixed by DNA or reproductive organs, but is a matter of feelings and how one self-identifies. According to the theory, any attempt by governments, institutions, or individuals to define identity biologically is a form of oppression and discrimination.

In preparing his report, the Independent Expert has called upon a host of entities –governments, human rights groups, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, academic institutions, and more – to submit examples of harm done to LGBT individuals by critics of gender identity theory (United Nations Human Rights, 2021). He states that denial of gender identity theory promotes “violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

In what can only be described as a case of self-contradiction, it is gender identity theory that threatens the safety and well-being of women and LGBT individuals. United Families International was an advisor to the Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF) (Wolf, 2022) in the creation of a submission to the Independent Expert (Women’s Liberation Front, 2021a). WoLF’s submission identified the numerous ways that “gender theory harms LGB individuals, women and girls, and liberal ideals such as freedom of speech—All in direct opposition to the stated goals and initiatives of the United Nations.” UFI was also a signatory to the submission as well as 42 other groups and 41 individuals.

The submission praises efforts to eliminate violence directed towards LGBT individuals and women – violence and discrimination are always abhorrent. It also points out the many ways gender identity theory fails in its effort to establish equality. Rather than improve the safety and freedom of LGBT folk and women, gender identity theory ensures (Women’s Liberation Front, 2021b):

* Reduced political autonomy of same-sex attracted people.
* Sterilization of children who do not conform to sex-based stereotypes.
* Elimination of single-sex provisions for women and girls, including sex-segregated prisons, shelters, hospitals, and sports.
* Inaccurate data collection, obscuring disparities between men and women, hampering efforts to improve women’s health, and falsely inflating female violent crime rates.
* Decimation of free speech, with especially severe consequences for women, academics, and scientists.
* Infringement on freedom of belief for religious people and non-religious people alike.

Of particular concern is the harm done to individual rights of conscience and speech. WoLF points out:

Gender identity theory seeks to force all members of society, and all institutions, to reject the objective reality of sex and to repeat falsehoods about human reproduction, such as saying that men can give birth. It forbids the use of sex-based pronouns and compels affirmative statements of belief such as “Trans women [in other words, men] are women,” a phrase which is objectively false. In the U.S., U.K., Ireland, and Canada, this ideology has taken over parts of the judiciary, with litigants being compelled to refer to men as women, and women as men. In the UK, this rule extends to witnesses in a case, with at least one female assault victim being forced by a judge to refer to her male attacker as “she.” Also in the UK, police are recording “non-crime hate incidents,” showing up to people’s workplaces, and arresting people for saying that men cannot become women. Increasingly, medical professionals are being instructed to include factually inaccurate, so-called, “inclusive” language such as “birthing parent,” “chestfeeding,” “and “chest milk” requiring staff to uphold the belief that child-bearing and lactation are unisex conditions whether that staff agrees or not.

These real-life scenarios are truly nightmarish.

### Standing up to the deception

A reading of Mr. Madrigal-Borloz’s call for submissions, and the questions for which he is seeking comments, exposes the biased nature of his investigation (United Nations Human Rights, 2021). Belief in and adherence to gender identity theory is a given. The Independent Expert, and the Human Rights Council which has furnished his mandate, exist in a gender identity echo chamber. Anyone who believes the human species consists of two sexes exhibiting distinct characteristics will be pressured to surrender to the gender orthodoxy.

The Independent Expert’s questions give the impression that he is searching for suspects guilty of thought crimes. He has asked for the following evidence:

* Examples of “public expressions or statements by political and/or religious leaders”
* “Examples where the concept of gender has been used in religious narratives or narratives of tradition, traditional values or protection of the family”

WoLF, and all the fellow signatories to the submission, warn that “the adoption of gender identity theory…by the United Nations would constitute an establishment of heresy laws at the international level.” How many of our churches, ministries, and religious leaders will be guilty of heresy for saying that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God” (First Presidency & Council of the Twelve Apostles, 1995), or “a person’s sex is a structural determinant of male or female identity,” or for speaking out against “our culture’s distorted sexual devolution”?

We urge the United Nations to reject gender identity dogma, and we encourage everyone who believes in the biological reality of men and women to stand up to UN overreach in forcing it upon the nations and people of the world.

Gender identity theory is an invention. Male and female are not a construct. It is a classification based on the DNA and reproductive system present in every person at birth. All of the cross-sex hormones and plastic surgery in the world cannot turn a man into a woman nor a woman into a man. Such a person will always be an imitation. Does the transgender individual deserve our compassion and the right to work, a home, safety, and courtesy? Absolutely. But ensuring those rights does not mean we condone a lie about something as essential as the biological nature of men and women. There are two. Biologically distinct. Male and female. Determined at conception. Endorsing anything else is not compassion. It’s deception, and we must summon the courage to expose that deception wherever and whenever we find it.

### Chapter 6.7: Poverty

According to Our World In Data, after 200 years of progress, the fight against global poverty is just beginning

Over the past two centuries the world made good progress against extreme poverty. But only very recently has poverty fallen at higher poverty lines.

Global poverty rates at these higher lines remain very high (Hasell et al., 2022):

* 25% of the world lives on less than $3.65 per day – a poverty line broadly reflective of the lines adopted in lower-middle income countries.
* 47% of the world lives on less than $6.85 per day – a poverty line broadly reflective of the lines adopted in upper-middle income countries.
* 84% live on less than $30 per day – a poverty line broadly reflective of the lines adopted in high income countries.

Economic growth over the past two centuries has allowed the majority of the world to leave extreme poverty behind. But by the standards of today’s rich countries, the world remains very poor. If this should change, the world needs to achieve very substantial economic growth further still.

Now let’s look at what is and what can be done to address poverty. While this document focuses mainly on the US, see what could be applied to your country.

### Social Policies to Assist and Bless Families and Children

Michael M. Seipel

The family is by far the most effective way to provide social, emotional, spiritual, and economic security. Some argue that when families are supported by pro-family government policies, families become stronger and problems are prevented (Bogenschneider, 2014). Some developed countries, such as France, provide direct benefits to families in order to support child rearing. Conversely, others argue that the government should not get involved in family matters. They see the government’s intervention as unwise because they fear the government will eventually strip the family of its power and influence (Baker, 2006; Mann, 1998). They also fear that any government involvement in the private choices made by families may create a public burden in the form of increased taxes (Baker, 2006; Mann, 1998). Nevertheless, the well-being of families is important to society as a whole.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of government programs and policy proposals that affect family life (Cheal, 2008). Family researchers and policymakers are now collaborating to identify factors that influence family formation, living arrangements, marriage, and family relations (Moynihan et al., 2006).

Obviously, policy evaluation is difficult work and we cannot always ensure that public policies will have a positive effect on parents and families. Some public policies have provided needed help to families but have created unintended consequences.

In order to better help parents meet the needs of their families, the government should work in partnership with employers and nonprofit organizations. Government can provide health care, and related services, while corporations and employers can offer pensions, health insurance, and other benefits. Churches and non-profit organizations also can contribute to family welfare by giving spiritual guidance, counseling, food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities. In order to provide the comprehensive social service needs of families, these three groups must become partners. They each have a role to play in helping families. While this paper will focus mainly on the importance of government policies, the government cannot and should not try to meet all the needs of the people. Nevertheless, the government can be an important source of help for poor families.

### Families Under Stress

Some believe that the case for greater government support of families is strengthened by the realization that, over the last two decades, American families and families all over the world are experiencing elevated levels of stress. One key factor is economic pressure. A U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, report shows that in 2007, of 146 million workers in the labor force in the United States, 11.9 percent of part time workers earned at or below poverty wages, while 3.6 percent of full-time workers earned at or below poverty wages (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Millions do not have sufficient income to support their families, and the minimal, unrealistic definition of the poverty line means that even more families are unable to provide adequately for themselves.

Working and near-poor families are particularly affected by recent socio-economic conditions. For instance, more low-income people lack access to health insurance. In 2007, about 25 percent of people who earned less than $24,000 a year did not have health insurance, while less than 10 percent of the people who earned more than $75,000 had none (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2009). Furthermore, low income families face increased financial risk from credit card debt. In 2008, the total consumer debt reached $2.57 trillion, and the number of low-income households with credit card debt increased by 18 percent, the largest increase of any income group (Mintz, 2008). Also, more families are declaring bankruptcy. Han and Li report that there were 3.6 bankruptcies per thousand in 1980, but the rate jumped to 14 per thousand in 2000 (Han & Li, 2011). In 2009, there were almost 1.5 million bankruptcy filings, an increase of 31.9 percent, from 2008 (United States Courts, 2009).

While reasonable people may differ in their opinions about how involved government should be in family life, as a Latter-day Saint social work scholar, I believe that supporting low-income working American families should be a priority of this nation. American workers keep the economy thriving, but up-and-down economic cycles have made millions of workers vulnerable to poverty and dependency. To make matters worse, public policies have largely failed to protect low-wage workers from economic insecurity. This affects the ability of parents to care for their families adequately. Well-crafted policies are needed to help workers increase their wealth and become active participants in the mainstream economic life of America. Consequently, families will be lifted out of poverty and parents will have the resources they need to provide the physical necessities of life.

They will also be relieved from the worries and cares of poverty, and thus better able to meet the spiritual needs of their families. When families are blessed with sufficient resources, they will be able to focus more time and resources on developing the individual talents of their children and helping them develop spiritually to achieve their full potential.

Throughout the ages, the Lord has imported his people to care for the poor. Sodom was destroyed in part because its citizens did not look after the poor (Ezekiel 16:49–50). King Benjamin told the Nephites that they could not walk guiltless before God unless they took care of the poor and needy (Mosiah 4:26). King Benjamin taught that it is a serious sin to refuse to help the poor because we think they have brought their troubles upon themselves (Mosiah 4:17–21). In the meridian of time, Jesus declared, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). In the latter days, His message is the same. The Lord has often instructed his people to care for the poor. He commanded Vincent Knight (and all of us), “Let him lift up his voice long and loud, in the midst of the people, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy; and let him not fail, neither let his heart faint” (D&C 124:75; see also D&C 42:30–31; D&C 104:18). Today President Thomas S. Monson continues the message of compassion toward the poor (Monson, 2009, p. F-2). He said:

When we have eyes that see and ears that hear and hearts that know and feel, we will recognize the needs of our fellow beings who cry out for help. How do they eat—without food? How do they keep warm—without clothing? without shelter? How do they live—without means? How do they get well—without doctors, medicines, and hospitals?

### Strengthening Needy Families

Effective public policies can help us to fulfill our religious duty to care for the poor, especially since not all people and organizations accept or are able to fulfill this commandment. For example, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not have the resources to support all the needy of the world, or even of the Church. And yet, as the Savior taught, the poor are always with us (Mark 14:7). [In the United States] contrary to popular belief, most low-income families work hard and play by the rules, but they are falling further behind. Societal efforts to relieve the economic challenges faced by working poor families have been inadequate. In addition to the efforts of individuals, corporations, and non-profit organizations, I believe that government programs and public policies to enable workers to obtain and keep more income, support a more fair tax structure, and strengthen social provisions will best achieve economic blessings for low income families.

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Take some time to review what your country's policies are to assist those living in poverty. Are they simply “giving them a fish or teaching them how to fish?”

### Chapter 6.8: Mental Health

For a more in depth study of mental health and various mental illnesses, here's a compilation of information from Our World In Data:

<https://ourworldindata.org/how-are-mental-illnesses-defined>

### Chapter 6.9: Pornography

To learn more about pornography and its impact on an individual’s brain, read these two pages from Your Brain On Porn:

#1 <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/miscellaneous-resources/start-here-evolution-has-not-prepared-your-brain-for-todays-porn/>

#2 <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/relevant-research-and-articles-about-the-studies/>

To learn more about the impact pornography has on children, families, and society read the following articles from United Families International.

#1 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/parents/arming-your-children-and-homes-against-pornography/>

#2 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/sexuality/pornography/pornography-the-real-monster-in-your-closet/>

#3 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/sexuality/pornography/the-pernicious-effect-of-pornography-on-home-and-society/>

#4 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/education/parents-the-first-and-best-defense-against-pornography-in-schools/>

### Chapter 6.10: Parental Rights

For a deeper study and understanding of parental rights, please review the following articles from UFI.

#1 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/parents/parental-rights/the-precarious-state-of-parental-rights/>

#2 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/parents/parental-rights/a-texas-victory-for-parents-and-children-we-can-all-celebrate/>

#3 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/parents/parental-rights/government-knows-best/>

#4 <https://www.unitedfamilies.org/sexuality/gender/the-equality-act-harming-children-and-hijacking-the-rights-of-parents/>

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