

An Introduction to Interconnected Social Problems

By Larry Plachno

This represents more than 30 years of research into what some of us call Interconnected Social Problems. Others see this as the reason for the polarization of our society or the lack of society working together like a team. And, those with a more religious mind might even equate this with love of God and love of neighbor.

I cannot take credit for most of this work. The numbers, statistics and reports originally came from demographers. Much of the remainder came from other researchers whose information proved to be invaluable. I simply put it all together and connected the pieces. Admittedly, there are times when I felt that there was an outside force that helped find information, research and reports that I needed and guided me in the right directions. Religious people can call this my guardian angel and help from above while others can simply ascribe it to dumb luck and the support of others.

The following is a simplified explanation of interconnected social problems and related issues. Many of the points covered are explained in more detail elsewhere.

Our Polarized Society

While some of this information was known for decades, it was the demographers that first started to tie things together. They pointed out that in several major elections, they could predict voting based on the fertility level of a state or area. Those states with the highest fertility levels traditionally swung to the right and voted for conservative candidates and conservative issues. While those states with the lowest fertility levels traditionally swung to the left and voted for liberal candidates and liberal issues.

Two things are immediately noteworthy. One is that the basis for this polarization is fertility levels, which translates into bringing children into our world. The second thing to note is that this question on children tends to polarize our society into the right and the left.

Other researchers soon discovered that this polarization was interconnected with our actions, decisions and social problems. People on the right were more likely to be married and have larger families. People on the right were more likely to attend church regularly. And, ultimately, the people on the right were more likely to judge their actions and decisions as good or evil based on how they impacted others while those

on the left tended to set aside good and evil in favor of personal choice.

This polarization has been emphasized and even expanded over recent decades because people tend to move to be with others like themselves. Larger families tended to move out of big cities and into suburban and rural areas while “swinging singles” tended to move into the big cities. Kids often moved to the big cities for education and jobs but then often moved back to suburban and rural areas when they started a family.

All Black or White

Why does this polarization tend to be so black or white? The reason is that whenever we are faced with a decision or action that could impact others we have two alternatives. We can judge our actions or decisions as good or evil based on how they impact others, or we can set aside good and evil and make a personal choice regardless of who gets hurt.

There are two ways to look at judging your actions as good or evil or personal choice. One is religious and Christian while the other is simple secular logic.

On the Christian side we can note that God sent His Son to earth to suffer and die to atone for our sins. This means that good and evil have a high priority with God. Jesus Christ gave us two rules to live by: love of God and love of neighbor. We love God when we judge our actions as good or evil. We are a follower of Jesus Christ when “good” to us means doing what is best for other people and society.

From the secular side, what is interesting is that the statistics and reports surrounding social problems support and endorse these basic Christian guides. The reason is that logic also tells us that when we work together we all come out ahead . . . much like a team working together. But if someone puts what they want first and makes it a personal choice, the teamwork is gone. Consider four horses pulling a cart. Can the cart make progress if each horse is pulling in a different direction? No one will take the position that people who argue will make more progress than people who work together for what is best for everyone.

The Line from Right to Left

Many people think that each of their decisions and actions are independent. However, the statistics and reports show that they tend to be interconnected, particularly with larger groups. Those who set aside good and evil in one area tend to set aside

good and evil in other areas. Those who move away from children and marriage in one area will statistically move away from children and marriage in other areas. Those on the far right will agonize over telling a lie while those on the far left continually put themselves first.

As people move down this line from right to left their ideal family size becomes smaller. Those on the left will have fewer children and are less likely to be married. Those on the right are statistically more likely to attend church regularly. Married people are less likely to commit crimes and less likely to be the victim of crimes. Married people are less likely to be homeless and less likely to live in poverty. Marriage also impacts children and social problems. The single most important reason why someone ends up in prison is because they were raised without a father. One of the biggest causes of poverty is unmarried mothers.

People who accept choice in one area are statistically more likely to accept choice in other areas. Recent statistics show that 80 percent of women who seek an abortion are unmarried.

It is important to note that cities and states can also be placed on this line from right to left with a fair degree of accuracy. In fact, it is often much easier to determine what a city or state will do because of the larger number of people involved. With only one individual, the statistics are more difficult to follow. This is essentially how we get blue states and red states. Demographers have shown that in major elections, and controlling for any unusual factors, the states with the highest fertility levels will vote for conservative candidates while those with the lowest fertility levels will vote for liberal candidates.

One concern is that people do not seem to understand how this works. This kind of information rarely gets into the mainstream media because liberals do not like to admit that problems are interconnected since that would suggest that good and evil exist.

There are numerous statistics to show how this polarization impacts numerous actions and decisions. It even is a major factor in our dog populations. One of my favorites comes from Researcher Philip Longman who pointed out that in progressive Seattle there are nearly 45 percent more dogs than kids while in conservative Salt Lake City there are nearly 19 percent more kids than dogs. This obvious difference is not based on any shortage of canine breeders in Utah, but is based on local fertility levels.

Utah, where something like two-thirds of the residents are members of the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has the highest fertility rate in the United States with 92 children born annually for every 1,000 women. Utah has one of the highest rates of church attendance in the United States. Longman also pointed out that 47 percent of people who attend church want a family of three or more children. However, only 27 percent of people who seldom attend church want a family of this size. It is all interconnected.

Desensitization

One of the things that moves people along that line from right to left is a process called “desensitization,” which is not much different from what we used to call “giving bad example” when I was a kid. The best way to explain this is to look at the argument of letting kids watch violence on television.

Parents were reluctant to let kids watch violence on television while others felt that the kids should be allowed to be pro-choice in their viewing habits. The experts sided with the parents and indicated that as the kids watched more and more violence, they became desensitized to it.

This same thing is happening to both children and adults today. When people hear from others that good and evil no longer exist, they are more likely to set aside good and evil. When they see others setting aside good and evil, they are more likely to set aside good and evil themselves.

Declining Society

Historians are pointing out that our society is showing the same signs of degeneration that preceded the fall of the great civilizations of Greece and Rome. People are moving away from doing what is best for society, particularly in the areas of marriage and family, while demanding more for themselves.

Greece actually passed laws against abortion. Caesar Augustus, the Roman leader, said that a strong state required strong families so he set about supporting marriage and larger families. He gave tax breaks and rewards to larger families and supported marriage in several ways. But the Roman citizens failed to heed this warning and their society fell apart.

Society cannot survive if people put themselves first instead of doing what is best for society. The Roman tax collectors gathered taxes from around the empire and sent the money back to Rome to pay for the aqueducts and running water, the lavish

public baths and the impressive public buildings. Roman citizens increasingly moved away from supporting their society to asking more for themselves. Once the citizens want to take more than they give, their society cannot long survive.

One has to question what dues we owe as a member of society. A hermit living on a mountain top owes little to others because whatever he does has little impact on other people. However, the rest of us living with people all around us have to do something in return for being a member of society. What do we owe in dues? Do we owe judging our actions and decisions as good or evil? Do we owe defining “good” as what is best for others? Do we owe support for marriage and children for the next generation?

An Endangered Species

As marriage, babies and children are reduced, a society gets more households and more people in the work force. This results in more unemployment and often more welfare as the government becomes a pseudo-spouse and a pseudo-father.

When a population ages, its needs change – typically it needs fewer teachers for children and more doctors and nurses for older people. Although there may be unemployment, there typically is a shortage in these positions because divorce and lack of marriage has not only reduced the number of young people but also reduced the moral and financial support for young people who might be interested.

As this process continues, it affects the economy of the country. An older population is more interested in conservative investments for retirement. Hence, there is less of an effort to create new business and new jobs while there are fewer young people available for them. The result is a declining economy that might add other problems beyond unemployment and increased welfare.

Bear in mind that the people who work in this area figure that a fertility rate of 2.1 children is necessary to maintain the existing population. A fertility rate of 1.1 essentially means that the number of people drops in half each generation. In some places, immigration has helped sagging birthrates but many people point out that immigration brings another set of concerns. It is obvious that the fertility rate gives you a good idea of where a population is going in numbers.

What the demographers are now pointing out is that there are numerous countries and nationalities that withstood wars and problems for generations and even centuries because they had strong families. But, today those same countries and nation-

alities are moving towards annihilation because of reduced marriage, families, babies and children and some are also seeing problems in unemployment and their economy.

Perhaps the most frightening reality is that we have become an endangered species and our society is starting to disappear off of the face of the earth. What the demographers have found is that it is the poorer people and poorer nations that are more willing to share. Developed countries are less likely to support and share in marriage and family. This is particularly true in Asia and Europe, where it is causing major population problems, and it is becoming more obvious in America.

A reduced number of births has caused a population imbalance. You soon have a higher number of older people than you have younger people. Your economy can have problems because of the lack of younger people. It is the younger people who are more likely to start new business and create new jobs. And, the economy can suffer if there are not enough young people to take over as the older people retire.

One of the most interesting developments in Asia was seeing China move from a one-child policy to a two-child policy recently. With the second-largest economy in the world, China was starting to struggle because they had too few young workers. They also had a gender imbalance because more girls were aborted than boys.

Singapore is in trouble with a fertility rate of 1.1, essentially half replacement level. Even with modern buildings, impressive health care and low crime rates, the average age is up to 39 and climbing in spite of some immigration.

Hong Kong has a fertility rate of only 1.09, even less than Singapore. The Hong Kong government now encourages larger families to reduce population aging. It has been said that Japan is aging faster than any other country in history. Since 2011, more adult diapers have been sold in Japan than baby diapers. By the year 2040, there will be one Japanese citizen over the age of 100 for every baby born.

The fertility rate in Taiwan is down to 0.9. Its population declines by more than half with each generation. South Korea is now spending billions of dollars supporting families and children because their fertility rate is down to 1.15.

A similar situation exists in parts of Europe. The fertility rate in Italy is now down to 1.4 as younger people put off marriage. Spain is doing a little better at 1.48 but younger people are leaving to find jobs elsewhere. After years of abortion in Russia its fertility rate is down to 1.2. Several smaller towns have been abandoned because of a lack of people and the government is now offering a huge baby bonus.

Venice is in trouble because it has more tourists than residents. When its population declined below 60,000, Venice held a mock funeral for itself. Europe may see worse in the future. To make up for the babies not being born to its traditional population, Europe has been accepting immigrants, generally from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. However, many of these immigrants are unwilling to accept the traditional European culture and morals.

What is absolutely fascinating is that the mainstream media has made very little of this public. If a species of animal becomes endangered, the media will scream for help. However, when nationalities and societies are disappearing by half each generation, they are silent. The obvious reason is that they do not want to admit that there is a downside to ignoring good and evil while moving away from marriage and family.

The United States is following behind some of the Asian and European countries. Our fertility rate is higher, due in part to immigration, but it is dropping because the immigrant fertility rate drops after they have been here a while. Every year there are fewer traditional Americans and our society is changing because of immigration.

The reports and statistics show that our society is in trouble. We cannot agree, we are moving away from doing what is best for society similar to previous civilizations that fell apart, and we have become an endangered species. Most of this is caused by our moving away from judging our actions as good or evil and a failure to do what is best for others.