



# Fractured Generations: Crafting a Family Policy for Twenty-First-Century America

*Allan C. Carlson*

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## Fractured Generations: Crafting a Family Policy for Twenty-First-Century America Allan C. Carlson

Fifty years ago, the phrase "family policy" was rarely heard in America. Individual states maintained laws governing marriage, divorce, education, inheritance, and child protection, which regulated the formation, childrearing practices, and dissolution of families. However, these scattered policy issues were not seen as closely related. Until the 1960s, the nuclear family was an institution that was part of the natural life-course expected of most adults. Family meant marriage, children, the establishment of a home, care of the elderly, but perhaps most of all, bonding of the generations.

As early as the 1840s, certain elements of states' policies hinted at a weakening family structure, but not until the 1960s was the family openly attacked. Feminists objected to a male-oriented home economy, demographers encouraged negative population growth, the sexual revolution was on the rise, and religiously grounded morality in public life was challenged in the federal courts. Married couples with children had to shoulder a larger tax burden, further discouraging people from building and maintaining families. Perhaps because family was so central to the founders' lives they found no need to mention it in the Constitution. But today, generational bonds have fractured, while family policy is a paramount public concern.

As Allan Carlson makes clear no nation can progress, or even survive, without a durable family system. Contemporary family policy represents an attempt to counter the negative forces of the last four decades so as to restore the natural family to its necessary place in American life. *Fractured Generations'* chapters follow the life-course of the human family--marriage; the birth of children; infant and toddler care; schooling; building a home; crafting a durable family economy; and elder care. This is a passionate and well-reasoned appeal for a return to the institution that is the last best hope for America's future: the family.

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