

Polarity and the Family in the ASI Wave

When the infrastructure mediates connection and meaning, what remains when it cuts out. The attention economy organizes what people direct their attention to, and thereby where they draw connection and meaning. It has captured a reward system that evolved for seeking and for tending relationships. Under ASI conditions this sharpens in two directions. This whitepaper traces both and names the one resilience that carries in both: the capacity for unmediated, real connection.

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PART I

Foreword and Position

The five building blocks secure the outer structure of a life: location, mobility, speed, mindset, anchoring. This whitepaper treats what that structure is for in the first place, the inner capacity for real connection. It is the quietest resource of preparation and at the same time the most easily lost.

The tone is methodical, not personal. This is not a complaint about screens and not about morality. It is about a structural force: the attention economy reaches into a human mechanism older than any technology, and it redirects the energy that once flowed into real bonds. Whoever understands this sees a vulnerability that grows in the ASI wave, not shrinks.

PART II

The Captured Reward System

The starting point is a plain observation about the brain. Whoever scrolls at a screen and sees something exciting or expects a message gets a release of dopamine. The same reward system that in evolution made humans seek food and tend relationships now runs for a pop-up and a like. The tool has captured the mechanism.

This is exactly what the attention economy is built on. Tristan Harris has described the race for human attention in which every platform fights for the same limited resource. Shoshana Zuboff has shown that in this model attention and behavior themselves become the product. Tim Wu has traced the long history of the attention merchants. What is new is not that someone competes for attention. What is new are the precision and the scale with which it happens today.

A distinction belongs at the start, or the argument tips into the wrong thing. The drive itself, including the sexual one and the one toward bonding, is healthy and human. The point is not that desire is bad. The point is who steers it and where the energy goes. When the force that would build a real bond flows into a feed, the bond does not get built. This is not a moral but a structural sentence.

PART III

Polarity: The Charge of Real Connection

Polarity is the charge between two real people, the aliveness of an unmediated encounter, attraction, friction, presence. It is exactly what the feed simulates and cannot deliver.

A screen gives the dopamine of seeking without the result of connection. The mark of an addiction is that one expends oneself and stands at the end with empty hands. The mediated connection is frictionless and infinite, the real one is finite and demanding. The substitute wins in convenience and loses in substance. And like every capacity, the one for real polarity atrophies if it is not used.

Both readings remain open. Evolutionarily, polarity is the drive to bond and to reproduce. Read more deeply, it is the human longing for genuine encounter and for meaning. The point holds in both readings: what the attention economy skims off is the energy from which real closeness arises.

PART IV

The Bifurcation Under ASI, and When the Music Stops

Under ASI the capture sharpens in two directions at once. Both end at the same place.

The one direction is collapse. The mediated loop becomes so complete that real connection thins out. The decline of family formation in many developed countries, documented in the data of OECD and Eurostat, is one of several lenses on this, not a sole cause, but a signal. The other direction is hyperpotentiation. The substitute becomes ever more perfect: AI companions that simulate polarity without a second real person being needed, closeness on demand, without friction.

Here comes the point. The mediated connection runs on infrastructure. It is part of the same application layer that breaks first in the infrastructure cascade. When the infrastructure that delivers this closeness cuts out, the music stops, and the human stands in unmediated reality. In that moment the capacity for real connection is either there or not. It cannot be built in the crisis. It is built in the quiet years, like every other resilience.

Collapse and hyperpotentiation lead to the same place: to a human whose connections largely ran over an infrastructure that no longer holds. What then remains is only what was tended in flesh and blood. This competence is not nostalgic. It is the last layer of preparation that no system can replace.

PART V

Consequence: Competence in Unmediated Connection

The answer is not retreat from technology. It is the deliberate keeping and exercising of a capacity that otherwise atrophies.

Concretely this means redirecting the energy the feed skims off back into real bonds: into the trust cluster, into the family, into physical presence, into the willingness to bear the friction of real polarity instead of trading it for the frictionless substitute. It is the same logic as with tolerance, only turned toward the relationship. A social net of personal acquaintance, not of contact lists. People one sees in the physical world.

This is the link to the building blocks. The mindset building block treats attention as something one steers, not surrenders. Spiritual anchoring gives meaning and connection that do not run on a feed. And the trust cluster is the social architecture in which real polarity has a place at all. Whoever tends this capacity is not only more robust in the transition. He also lives a fuller life right now.

PART VI

Method and Open Questions

This whitepaper is deliberately not a moral argument against desire or against technology. It is a structural argument about where attention and relational energy are steered, and by whom.

The mechanisms of the attention economy are well documented, level two of the degrees of certainty. The bifurcation under ASI, collapse and hyperpotentiation, is a reasoned projection, level three. The population data on family formation come from solid sources such as OECD, Eurostat and Pew, and their attribution to the attention economy is one lens, not a settled causal claim.

Open remains how strongly the substitute displaces real connection and how AI companions change this dynamic. The institute seeks the collaboration of sociologists, attention researchers and demographers. The ongoing source curation is open at ASiResilience.org/evidence.

PART VII

Sources and Evidence

Attention economy: Harris, T., and the Center for Humane Technology (the race for attention). Zuboff, S. (2019), The Age of Surveillance Capitalism (attention and behavior as the product). Wu, T. (2016), The Attention Merchants (the history of the attention merchants).

Reward mechanism: the dopamine system that evolved for seeking and bonding, captured by pop-up and like.

Population data on family formation only from solid sources such as OECD, Eurostat and Pew.

Cross-references: Bertossa, R.F. (2026). The Infrastructure Cascade. Geneva Institute for ASI Resilience, Whitepaper Version 1.0, May 2026 (the application layer on which mediated connection runs). Bertossa, R.F. (2026). The Decoupling Thesis, Whitepaper Version 2.0, May 2026 (trust cluster, mindset and anchoring building blocks). Bertossa, R.F. (2026). Freedom After Superintelligence, The 13th Scenario.

Full ongoing source curation at ASiResilience.org/evidence, with the date of last verification for each item.