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WETZSTEIN on the Family

Cheryl Wetzstein

Sunday, June 29, 2008

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Few people, if any, would call themselves pro-divorce, at least in polite company. But are you anti-divorce? Or anti-anti-divorce?

Consider some recent studies about divorce and its impact on wallets, children and adult relationships.

On April 15 - "tax day" - leaders of the [Institute for American Values](#) (IAV) and three conservative groups released a study that said divorce and unwed childbearing cost taxpayers \$112 billion a year in welfare, criminal justice, health care and lost tax

revenue.

Their public-policy recommendations? Reduce the number of divorces and increase the number of married, two-parent families.

A few days later, the Council on Contemporary Families highlighted a study by Rand Corp. researcher Jui-Chung Allen Li called, "The Kids are OK: Divorce and Children's Behavior Problems."

Mr. Li crunched a lot of numbers and found that divorce exacerbates problem behaviors in some children, but reduces them in other children. Because these outcomes "cancel each other out," he said, the average effect of divorce on children's behavior problems is zero. "Divorce is neither harmful nor helpful for this measure of children's well-being," he concluded.

Mr. Li's public-policy recommendation? Stop worrying so much about preventing divorce per se, and give families some help before - or after - the deed is done. Government also should become "neutral" on marital status and base neither penalties nor incentives on it.

If Mr. Li's paper is anti-anti-divorce, so is research conducted by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, assistant professors at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

The professors disputed the IAV study's findings about the costs of divorce, saying IAV failed to account for the financial benefits that some women experience after divorce. Moreover, the professors said, no-fault divorce is associated with other positive benefits, such as an 8 percent decline in the suicide rate for women, 30 percent decline in domestic violence and 10 percent decline in the number of women murdered by their partners.

So I ask you, the reading public, which is it? Is divorce a mostly good thing or a mostly bad thing for couples, children and the country?

One thing's for sure: Without a public consensus on even a basic question like is divorce mostly good or bad, there's little political will to change divorce laws.

Certainly, many readers will have their personal answers about



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divorce. About 23 million American men and 27 million American women have experienced divorce, and each one has an answer to the famous "Dear Abby" question, "Are you better off with him or without him?" (Or her.)

U.S. divorce rates have edged down to the same level as in 1970, which is a good thing. But young adults' skittishness about marriage is causing them to delay marriage - or skip it entirely, in favor of cohabiting, which is another subject.

My question is what do you, the reading public, want to do about divorce?

Do you want to hear more about the "upsides" of divorce, i.e., how it provides essential relief for marital meltdown?

Do you want to hear more about the need for a stronger "good divorce" industry with support groups, mental-health counselors and move-on tools to speed recovery? If this is your view, please speak up.

Or, have you seen enough about divorce to conclude that it's mostly bad for adults, children and society. If that's the case, what do you want to do about it? Do you want no-fault divorce laws changed? Do you want to hear more about what divorce actually has meant to people's lives?

Do you think divorce rates can be "greatly" reduced, or do you think that's just a nostalgic pipe dream?

Please consider this column as the first in a long discussion. A lot of people already are talking about the future of divorce, but are you part of the conversation? Please speak up.

--Cheryl Wetzstein's "On the Family" column appears Tuesdays and Sundays. She can be reached at cwetzstein@washingtontimes.com.

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By: [David Adams](#)

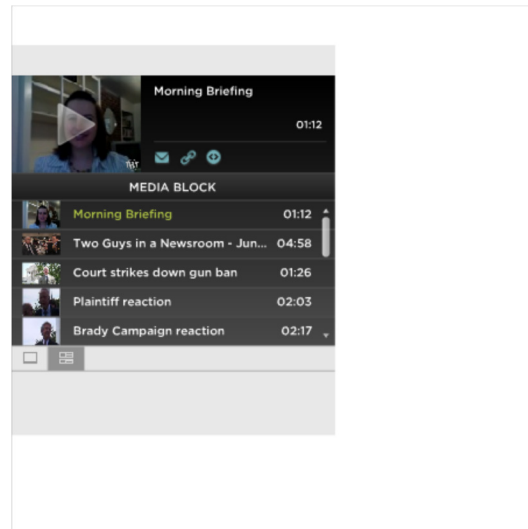
I found this citation interesting:

"The professors disputed the IAV study's findings about the costs of divorce. The IAV failed to account for the financial benefits that some women experience after divorce. Moreover, the professors said, no-fault divorce is associated with other positive benefits, such as an 8 percent decline in the suicide rate for women, 30 percent decline in domestic violence and 10 percent decline in the number of women murdered by their partners."

Soooo, divorce is GREAT for women - that's probably why they file it in the majority of cases. But, what's the impact on men? Since the suicide rate for divorced men is dramatically higher than that for single or married men (or women as a whole), it appears that divorce isn't so great for them. Who gets stuck with the bill supporting the new-found financial freedom for those recently divorced women? Who loses most, if not all, of their relationship with their children? Hmmm, maybe there's a link between the divorce rate and the suicide rate for men.

But then, nobody really cares about men anyway. Men comprise almost all deaths in war and work, and almost all of the populations of homeless people and prisons. Where's the outrage at those statistics? Not a peep from anyone. All we hear about is the tiny fraction of men who are privileged, making ridiculous sums of money and holding power over everyone else.

June 30, 2008 at 9:05 a.m. | [Mark as Offensive](#)



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By: [californiasteven](#)

I work with older people and I can tell you that couples who have stayed together end up much happier.

June 29, 2008 at 8:26 p.m. | [Mark as Offensive](#)

By: [advoc8](#)

Very nice article! There was some good, bad and ugly in the form of sources, as their must be in a debate provoking article. Thank you!

Professionals and "professionals" come in a mixed bag, quoting and "proving" about anything you want them to. Psychologists and counselors are constantly at odds one with another. Some are enmeshed with the deceptive divorce and domestic violence industry, making good look evil and evil look oh so GREAT!
(www.mediadar.org)

Many hangers-on in this largely parasitic industry may otherwise have trouble finding legitimate employment on their own real merits. They can make their exploitation and abuse of women and especially children look admirable by promoting indiscriminate divorce in their own best interest.

They are as good as practically any other pied piper. It's "in the child's best interest," wonderful and all for the sake of saving our children. This self promotion of one's own parasitic industry cares not one iota about women or children as it pretends.

But isn't it all OK since it ferrets out all of the bad men, even if they have to trash far more good men and fathers just to be sure they get that one actually bad one? Isn't it OK to use lies, abuse, trampling the constitution and unlimited parasitic action in conjunction with the "legal" system in the land where freedom, truth and justice prevail?

The best psychologists and counselors tell us that 1/3 of their associates will harm you while 1/3 will do you no good and the remaining 1/3 can actually help you help your own situation. The bottom 2/3 won't even tell you this. Guess which third (or two) is promoting the divorce/domestic violence industry while milking all citizens to the tune off over 100 Billion per year?

To get a small taste of this, what this industry is all about, read Dr. Stephen Baskerville's book, "Taken into Custody" or search up his youtube speeches. He documents around a thousand additional real professional sources including former industry insiders. I've witnessed far too many cases myself.

The worst of all predators have always historically hunted in packs. Things that didn't make sense start making perfect sense once you find out their real workings, agenda and motives. Sugar coated excrement? I used to support this agenda.

I was floored once I found out what I was ignorantly supporting in the name of all virtue and goodness. The Nazis likewise did this in the name of "for our children." We'll look back in perhaps 50 years and see this placed smack-dab along side Soviet and Nazi socialism, KKK, witch trials, the Spanish Inquisition, segregation, slavery and so many other historical, current and future scams using the same basic blueprint.

June 29, 2008 at 7:33 p.m. | [Mark as Offensive](#)

By: [Shaakti](#)

I think the break down of the family is the single biggest problem in America and the problems just trickle and grow from there. Do you really have to outline that an abusive relationship is OK to desert as quickly as possible? No. I would guess a vast amount of divorces are based on the childish notion of never ending happiness and self-serving, immediate gratification. All things we at one point or another try to teach our children that it IS NOT ok to live that way. I understand sometimes one spouse would give their left leg and right kidney to change and save their marriage but the other spouse is simply nowhere to be found. What do you with this? I think it's like many things that have a terrible negative impact on families, children and society. It is going to happen so you might as well get on the bandwagon and promote as many positives about it as you can possibly find or make up! It seems the world is Pro Divorce. The choice for marriage and every choice after starts with individuals and

more importantly, humans. Humans who are immature, selfish, and can easily trade their mistakes in one type of life for all the same mistakes in a new life. It just feels better, for awhile.

June 29, 2008 at 7:38 a.m. | [Mark as Offensive](#)

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