

“Straight Facts” on Child Support?

by Gregory J. Palumbo, Ph.D.

At first glance, increased child support payments seem like a fine idea. Who can argue against more money and better care for children? In fact, the issue’s emotional appeal is so powerful that any debate seems unnecessary, insulting and even heartless.

But similar reasoning was also bandied about in the 1960’s and 1970’s to justify increasing welfare payments to impoverished mothers – provided that the unemployed father or boyfriend could not live in the same home. Result? Two or more generations of Blacks seduced by the promise of welfare money to remove fathers from the black children’s lives. Result? Social chaos, illiteracy, crime, violence, and early death in the black community.

But isn’t government enforced child support just a kind of “privatized” welfare? And regardless of intent, isn’t the ultimate effect of child support to encourage divorce and the separation of children from their fathers? Therefore, should we be surprised if child support ultimately helps cause the same chaos for all Americans that welfare already caused for blacks?

Dr. Palumbo is the Policy Analyst for the American Fathers Coalition, Washington, D.C. and Assistant Professor, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His article illustrates bureaucratic “special interests” in increasing child support enforcement.

On November 25, 1997, Oklahoma media reported on a joint House and Senate Judiciary Committee meeting on Oklahoma Child Support Guidelines (Interim Study 97-33). Unfortunately, the press did not report that the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) officials of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS), attempted to manipulate Committee members and the public into raising Oklahoma child support guidelines with false or mistaken information.

The CSED advocated a *forty-five percent* increase in the child support guidelines for Oklahoma. To achieve their agenda, CSED officials attempted to mislead the Committee with an unpublished faulty study, made untrue statements, and demonstrated a lack of understanding of child support issues including the derivation of Oklahoma’s child support guideline tables. Why the deception? Because the proposed increase would ultimately promote the growth of the bureaucracy for which they work.

CSED officials falsely claimed that Oklahoma has the lowest average child support awards in the nation. This claim was based on a *summary* of unpublished work from a child support “expert”, Dr. Pirog-Good, an Indiana University associate professor. CSED attempted to enhance Dr. Pirog-Good’s authority by distributing a “fact sheet” that claimed she contributed to the

House Ways and Means Committee “Special” Green Book for 1997. There was no “Special” 1997 Green Book as the Green Book is published in even-numbered years, nor was Dr. Pirog a contributor to the last Green Book published in 1996.

The Pirog study cited by CSED officials was based on *hypothetical* child support cases that had family incomes higher than Oklahoma’s current median household income. The study was also erroneous in that it only considered basic child support payments to children who didn’t require child care or high health care costs even though both of these expenses are included in Oklahoma’s child support awards as *add-ons*. The Pirog-Good study also compared child support awards in all 50 States as equals in income and award procedures when, in fact, States differ in their approaches for determining child support awards. Should Oklahoma (which ranks 46th for household income) have child support awards that rank 25th or even 1st in the nation? Of course not.

Further, Dr. Pirog-Good’s unpublished study used data on child support awards in Oklahoma since 1988 that varied for each case. But Oklahoma’s child support guidelines have been unchanged since 1990 and thus there should be no difference in the awards for each case. A check of child support awards in other States also showed

variation when there should be none. Calculation of child support awards for 1997 in several other States, indicated child support award data were also wrong for 1997—some were high, others were low – so her rankings are invalidated by faulty data.

Data for the three hypothetical 1997 cases Dr. Pirog-Good presented to CSED showed a big drop from her 1995 survey of Oklahoma's and the nation's Child Support Guidelines. She reported decrease in Oklahoma awards from 1995 to 1997 of \$143, \$170, and \$226 dollars per month. However, a calculation of the actual obligations for child support in each of her three 1997 cases showed her data *under-reported* the awards by \$91, \$91, and \$115 per month. The data she used for Oklahoma was wrong.

There was more misinformation provided by the Director of CSED for Oklahoma. For example, it was claimed that the Oklahoma child support guidelines haven't changed since 1989. But Oklahoma child support is based on an "Income Shares Model" that uses percentages of gross *income* as a basis for the guidelines, not actual *costs*. Accord-

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ing to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), since 1985, there has been no dramatic change in the cost of raising children as a percentage of income. USDA estimates on expenditures on children by families mirror an Income Shares formula estimate on gross income spent supporting children.

CSED also claimed the cost of raising children in Oklahoma was higher than the National average, with child rearing expenses that approach those for the Urban Northeast Region. This, of course, is untrue.

Although the press missed the significance of some child support issues, arguments and public statements, the Committee members in attendance did understand. Interim Study chairman Rep. Opio Toure, D-Oklahoma City, set out goals to make Oklahoma comply with the Family Support Act of 1988. These goals include establishing the cost for raising children in Oklahoma and examining how to apportion those costs to each parent. A second part of the guideline review is examination of child support cases to determine if Judges in Oklahoma are correctly fol-

lowing the child support guidelines. Case review will also determine whether judges are justifying deviations from the presumptively correct child support amount. The push for a 45% increase in child support was defeated. We support the joint House and Senate Judiciary Committee's stated objectives and goals for the Oklahoma Child Support Guideline review, and believe this action is long overdue.

Dr. Pirog-Good's study is invalid and replete with too many errors to justify raising Oklahoma child support guidelines. But where did Dr. Pirog-Good's data come from? From the Oklahoma State Department of Human Services (DHS) – the same agency that contains CSED. Therefore, Dr. Pirog placed Oklahoma "last" in her child support rankings based on faulty data provided by the DHS – the agency that would probably increase its budget, personnel and salaries if child support awards were increased. I don't believe in coincidences.

So why would CSED wish to raise Oklahoma child support guidelines by 45%? U.S. Census data indicates child support does not statistically impact the removal of families from poverty. Could it be that by dramatically increasing the child support guidelines, CSED creates more caseload as non-custodial parents can't afford to pay their increased obligation and the oppressive enforcement drives them into "beat dead" status? But with over 55,000 state and federal Child Support Enforcement (CSE) workers in 1995 – whose annual cost to taxpayers is a billion dollars more than is collected for the children they are supposed to serve – do we need a CSED agenda that continues to grow the agency at the expense of parents and children?

CSED provided faulty data to Dr. Pirog-Good that was used to generate a faulty study that was used by CSED to push for a 45% increase in the State's child support guidelines. One might conclude that DHS officials conspired to mislead the Committee members, the public, and the press in order to push their agenda. So where is the investigation of CSED officials?

During divorce, the spouses are often so emotional that their decisions are irrational. Therefore, the idea of allowing “disinterested professionals” (lawyers, judges, bureaucrats) to manage our divorce, custody and child support affairs seems smart and necessary.

But “disinterested professionals” is an oxymoron. There is no such thing as a “professional” (who gets paid for his services) who has no “interest” in increasing his income. Almost inevitably, when we surrender our personal responsibilities to others, it’s not long before the “others” begin to profit from – and then encourage – our calamities. “Professionals” aren’t here to help you, they’re here to help themselves (usually to your money). As a result, the supposed agents of your salvation usually evolve into the agents of your destruction.

The solution to child support problems is unpleasant but simple: face the truth. Despite what we see on TV, the purpose of marriage is not eternal love, great sex, or even reproduction. Those are all fascinating attractions, but the primary purpose of marriage is to raise strong, healthy children capable of making productive contributions to society when they become adults.

Proof? Marriage is not necessary to be in love, have great sex, or con-



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ceive a child. All of that can be done by complete strangers who may only meet once in a lifetime. The one thing you typically can’t do without marriage is raise strong, healthy children. There’s no cause for debate. Children from intact marriages tend to flourish; children from broken homes tend to wither.

More precisely, don’t believe that “single-parent” families are the cause of a child’s problems. The “single parent” excuse implies that children of divorce become dysfunctional because there’s a mathematical disadvantage in having one parent while the other kids have two. There’s some truth in that generality, but the “single-parent” explanation ignores the significance of which parent is missing. If successful parenting were only a function of the

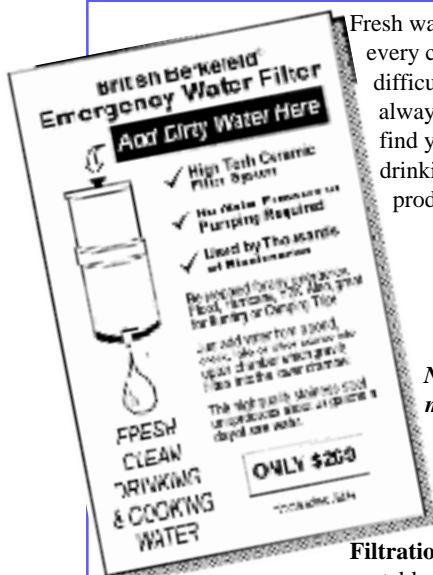
number of one’s parents, then stepfathers (who change single-parent families into two-parent families) should not be eight times more likely than the biological father to sexually abuse a child. Likewise, if two parents of any gender or identity are better than one, it logically follows that two lesbians or homosexuals are, on average, better parents than single, heterosexual mothers (let’s see you serve that opinion with apple pie at a baseball game and get the mothers of America to salute).

Further, if the only difference between “single” and “double” parent families is a question of numbers, it follows that “three-parent” families must be superior to a “two-parent” families. Shall we therefore legalize bigamy and polyandry? And if three are better than two, why not four or five or fifty? Why not surrender children to be raised by the government so they can have hundreds or even thousands of “parents”?

In truth, it doesn’t “take a village” or a bureaucracy to raise good kids. Quite the contrary. It takes an intact family, and particularly a strong, moral biological father. This observation is not news. About 400 B.C., the prophet Malachi (2:15) explained God’s reason for permanent marriage and binding a husband and wife into “one flesh”: “And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring.”

2,400 years ago, folks understood the real purpose for marriage was not “true love” but to raise “godly offspring”. And what are “godly offspring”? Boys who grow up to be priests and girls who become nuns? Of course not. “Godly offspring” are children who, by virtue of having a mother and a biological father, tend to love and

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Some athiests might dismiss this ancient Biblical wisdom as folklore with no modern application. Well, I invite these critics to take a stroll through an African-American urban community populated with a high concentration of fatherless kids. "Yea, though I walk through the ghetto of the shadow of the fatherless children I will fear no evil"? I think not. You'll be scared every step of the way. And why? Because these kids are black and presumed racially inferior – or because they're fatherless?

I believe the biological father is the "bridge" that carries children from their family into society. Biological fathers instill confidence and self-esteem in children that cannot usually be derived from single-parent mothers. Without the self-esteem that a loving father can provide, children of divorce are often unable to stand up or fight for themselves. They tend to become victims and victimizers.

Watch Jerry Springer or any of the other TV "freak shows". How many of the strippers, whores, homosexuals, depressed, alcoholics, drug addicts, sadists, masochists, neurotics and psychotics who appear on those programs come from intact families? While cripple after cripple shows up with his/her mother, fathers are seldom mentioned and rarely seen. In truth, the one common denominator that appears in virtually all dysfunctional personalities is a dysfunctional relationship to the biological father. If that father is abusive or missing, the child tends to be dysfunctional.

Abusive biological fathers are relatively rare (stepfathers are eight times as likely to be abusive) but miss-

ing biological fathers are commonplace in our Brave No-Fault World.

Are there exceptions? Sure. Bill Clinton's a classic example of a child from a broken home who "made good". So not every child of divorce is doomed to failure. But Bill Clinton is also a classic example of a dysfunctional personality. His wife is allegedly a lesbian. Serious allegations exist that Bill has been responsible for massive drug smuggling into Mena, Arkansas and even murder. According to Ms. Lewinsky, President Clinton has occasionally called her for phone sex – i.e., while she "talks dirty" over the phone, Bill masturbates in the Oval Office. Think about it. We're not just talking about a powerful man with a strong libido, we're talking about a man who is obsessed by his private parts. There's something wrong with that guy. Psychologically, Bill probably has more in common with the Bloods and the Crips than the Republicans or Democrats. Yes, he's the President, but Yes, he is also dysfunctional.

Obviously, children who grow up without fathers won't necessarily die young or waste their lives. But only rarely will they become all they might have been.

Look back in history. "Legitimate" children take their father's surname – not their mother's. Every child has a mother, but those who also had fathers tended to prosper and make positive contributions to society. Even ancient people understood that from the moment of birth, a child's future was so dependant on a close relationship to his biological father that his name confirmed his relationship to his father. Conclusion? From a sociological per-

spective, the ritual of marriage is not intended to bind a husband to a wife so much as a child to his or her father and thereby insure that the child has maximum opportunity to be socialized, civilized, and enabled to make positive contributions to his society.

On February 16, 1998, the Science section of the Dallas Morning News printed an article by Jane Brody titled, "Evolutionary Scientist Give Genetic Viewpoint on Stepfamily Violence," which reads in part:

"[The] incidence of violence and abuse is vastly greater in stepfamilies than in traditional families in which the children are biologically related to both parents and to each other. . . . Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, evolutionary psychologists at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, found that the rate of infanticide is 60 times as high and sexual abuse is about eight times as high in stepfamilies as it is in biologically related families. . . . The matter is especially pressing now when rates of divorce and remarriage are at an all-time high.

The researchers presented their conclusions in a politically correct manner by comparing "traditional families" to "step families". But in America, what is the pragmatic difference between "traditional" and "step" families? 95 times out of a hundred, the difference is the presence of the biological father. Without their biological fathers, infants are 60 times as likely to be murdered, children are eight times as likely to be sexually abused – and who knows how much more likely they are to suffer "mere" physical and emotional abuse?

The article continued:

"Traditional sociological explanations for abuse and conflict in stepfamilies have focused on issues like economic stress, low socioeconomic status and emotional instability. But evolutionists say these are only proximate, not ultimate, causes of the difficulties that sometimes arise in stepfamilies. . . . Drs. Daly and Wilson found that when the degree of genetic relatedness is taken into account, the role that economic stress plays in problems common in stepfamilies becomes

almost negligible.”

This research implies that the determining factor in a strong family life is not the amount of money available (like child support) but the presence of the biological father. If you want to trash a child's life, pass laws that encourage divorce. If you want to really cripple kids, pass laws (maternal presumption, harsh child support enforcement, etc.) that separate children from their biological fathers. Drs. Daly and Wilson's research implies that a child of divorce is better off having a positive relationship with a “deadbeat” dad than being raised in a fatherless home that receives adequate child support.

Men and women are not equal. (No, that's not a typographical error. I really wrote, “Men and women are not equal.” Quote me if you like.) Even though they are impoverished, intact families can raise fine children, but even wealthy fatherless families tend to fail. The one person in all the world most important to ensuring a child is not murdered or abused is the biological father. Whether we like it or not, fathers are generally more important to a child's psychological development and physical safety than money or mothers. (Quote me.)

Of course, virtually every lawyer, bureaucrat, feminist, and gold-digging whore will shake their heads in scorn. Ha! The very idea that fathers might be more important than money is blasphemy! And more important than mothers is . . . (bluster!) . . . absurd!

Maybe. But I invite every liberal who denigrates the value of fathers to move into any African-American community where the illegitimacy rate (fatherless children) currently exceeds 70%. See how long it takes for you to realize that fatherless children aren't merely abused, troubled and dysfunctional – they are dangerous. The kids who will rob you, beat you, rape you, and fire three slugs into your skull for fun and the fifteen bucks in your wallet tend to be not black or brown or poor, but fatherless.

We don't say so publicly, but most of the “inner city's” social chaos is secretly attributed by both whites and blacks to the black's “natural inferior-

ity”. Racism. Maybe not. Maybe the real problem with African-Americans is that they were simply fool enough to accept Washington's welfare with the proviso that unemployed black fathers could not live with families receiving welfare. Blacks traded their fathers for Washington's welfare money, and look at the result.

What common denominator underlies most gangs, drive-by shootings, etc? Wake up and smell the gunpowder, folks. Gangs are the inner-cities' “big brother” program . . . halfway houses for fatherless kids looking for values and structure that fatherless homes don't usually provide.

Further, the fatherless chaos in Black communities will not be easily corrected. Ohh, we can revoke the welfare laws that force fathers from poor black families, but we've already had at least two generations of fatherless black kids. Boys who grow up without fathers, don't know “how to be” fathers; girls who grow up without fathers can't imagine any reason why their children should have fathers. In other words, fatherless children beget even more fatherless children and all the social disruption that is sure to follow.

Ahh, but what the hey – that's blacks. Who cares, right?

Well, you'd better start caring because the government that gave blacks

fatherless homes through welfare is doing the same thing to whites (and browns and everyone else) with family laws that favor “no-fault” divorce, the “maternal presumption” and “git tuff” child support enforcement.

After all, what is government-enforced child support if not a kind of “privatized” welfare? Mothers are encouraged to divorce by the promise of child support and are thereby lured onto the same welfare trap that's already decimated blacks.

Just wait until the fatherless children of white divorces reach the “critical mass” already achieved in the black community. There's no reason to suppose that fatherless whites will be any less dangerous than fatherless blacks.

Solutions?

The best solution to the child support problem is honor your wedding vows and don't divorce you spouse unless he or she clearly poses a threat to other family members than cannot be healed. “In sickness or in health, for better or for worse” – remember?

But if we're gonna have no-fault divorce, let's at least have honest no-fault divorce, because honesty will at least minimize the child support problem. If a divorce is truly “no fault,” then it's fair to say the spouse who files for divorce is self-centered, egotistical, irresponsible and ungodly. After all, if

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the other spouse has committed “no fault,” then the plaintiff has no reason to file for divorce except to satisfy his/her own selfishness.

While “no fault” divorces may be acceptable for couples without kids, parents should be absolutely prohibited from “no-fault” divorces. The plaintiff-parent in a no-fault divorce is sacrificing his/her children, spouse, and worth with God to seek some personal pleasure. If your spouse has done nothing wrong other than to get older or less exciting, your decision to file a no-fault divorce is inexcusably selfish and arguably wicked.

Any fool knows that divorce will damage the children. Therefore, any parent who files a no-fault divorce is knowingly committing the greatest single act of child abuse his/her children will probably ever experience. Should that egotistical, ungodly self-centered bitch or bastard be rewarded with exclusive custody of the children he/she is willing to cripple by filing for a “no-fault” divorce? Should the spouse who committed “no fault” be threatened with high court costs and the loss of parental rights because his/her spouse wants to sleep with someone else? Or should that self-centered plaintiff be saddled with all court costs,

loss of managing custody of the kids and a generous child support obligation?

The answers are obvious to all who don’t profit from the divorce industry – we should not reward parents who file no-fault divorces.

So what am I arguing? That everyone should be forced to stay in their marriages no matter how unpleasant? No. Nothing so simple. I’m arguing that to minimize the child support problem we must minimize the divorce problem – and not with force (which is almost certain to be counterproductive) but with education. I’m not arguing that we change the law (which is fairly simple); I’m arguing that we change ourselves (which is irritating and difficult) and then change our neighbors (which often makes folks mad).

The child support problem doesn’t begin with divorce or even marriage. It begins in the way we are raised and the values we are taught to understand and respect. If we haven’t been taught those positive values as children, as adults we must first teach ourselves, and then teach our children.

And finally, we can debate the existence of God, but we can’t deny the presence of earthly religions which are both restricted and protected by law. Maybe the laws concerning recognized

religions (one of which is Satanism) could be helpful. People who profit from divorce do so by encouraging spouses to break their marriage vows to God, jeopardize their souls and cripple their own children (all of which is contrary to Biblical mandates). Could the divorce industry be therefore characterized as contrary to Christian and Jewish religious precepts? Could the divorce industry even be accused of using government institutions (like the courts) to advance the specific interests of the religion called “Satanism” at the expense of other religions?

If so, could Jews or Christians characterize divorce court lawyers and judges as “constructive” Satanists? Could divorce and others laws that encourage people to break their vows to God be challenged as “constructive Satanism” – a violation of the 1st Amendment and the separation of church and state doctrine?

I don’t know. Probably not. But maybe we’ll run those rabbits another day. In the meantime, know this: Any law that serves by intent or accident to destroy a child’s relationship to his or her biological father is irresponsible, contrary to any legitimate notion of the general welfare, and arguably wicked.

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