

Gender: Self-declaration defies logic

A former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission has expressed grave concern about the government's proposals to allow individuals to decide for themselves whether they wish to identify as a man or a woman, without reference to their biological sex or requiring any form of medical assessment.

Writing in *The Times* newspaper, Trevor Phillips described last year's government consultation on gender recognition as a 'disaster' which revealed a government 'so terrified of being labelled transphobic it is ready to destroy half a century of anti-discrimination legislation to the detriment of every woman, person of colour and disabled individual in Britain'.

Insanity

Commenting on the possibility that a man could declare himself a woman and immediately have every right to enter spaces reserved for women – changing rooms, lavatories, prisons – Mr Phillips remarked:

'I can only imagine that many of those supporting this insanity believe that they are displaying empathy for a group of individuals who have suffered genuine anguish. But this is certainly not what I had in mind when, along with the other authors of the 2010 Equality Act, we fought to include transgender as a protected characteristic in anti-discrimination law.'

'The problem is this: if self-declaration becomes established as a principle for one protected characteristic - gender - why should it not apply to all of the other eight, including disability or race? It is hard to see how the law could resist the claims of a man who, despite all medical advice to the contrary, decides that he is mentally disabled, and therefore should be eligible for disability benefits and time off work. The human and financial costs would be horrendous.'

• **Trevor Phillips, 'Trans extremists are putting equality at risk', *Times*, 22 October 2018.**

The lifelong medical, psychological and emotional implications of using puberty blockers to treat gender dysphoria



Family Education Trust trustee, Dr Julie Maxwell has raised serious concern about the increasing use of puberty-blocking medication for gender dysphoria (GD). In a letter published in the international peer-reviewed journal *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, Dr Maxwell argues that, 'To halt the natural process of puberty is an intervention of momentous proportions with lifelong medical, psychological and emotional implications.'

The letter, co-authored with fellow paediatrician Dr Chris Richards and retired consultant psychiatrist Dr Noel McCune, identifies three areas of concern:

(i) The use of puberty blockers 'leaves a young person in developmental limbo without the benefit of pubertal hormones or secondary sexual characteristics, which would tend to consolidate gender identity'. Dr Maxwell and her colleagues cite evidence showing that medical intervention frequently has the effect of promoting a continued desire to identify with the non-birth sex, whereas the majority of pre-pubescent children attending GD clinics who do not receive intervention eventually lose their desire to identify with the non-birth sex. The authors express concern that 'the use of puberty blockers may prevent some young people with GD from finally becoming comfortable with the birth sex'.

(ii) The use of puberty blockers is 'likely to threaten the maturation of the adolescent mind'. The letter refers to studies suggesting that pubertal hormones promote cognitive maturity and that puberty has a significant part to play in structural brain development.

(iii) Puberty blockers are 'being used in the context of profound scientific ignorance'. Little is known about the causes of GD or the safety profile of commonly-used treatments for it. Dr Maxwell's letter argues that, 'It is surely presumptuous to extrapolate observations from an intervention that suppresses pathologically premature puberty to one that suppresses normal puberty' and concludes that the use of puberty-blocking treatment for GD 'should be curtailed until we are able to apply the same scientific rigour that is demanded of other medical interventions'.

• **Christopher Richards, Julie Maxwell, Noel McCune, 'Use of puberty blockers for gender dysphoria: a momentous step in the dark', *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, published online 17 January 2019, doi:10.1136/archdischild-2018-315881.**

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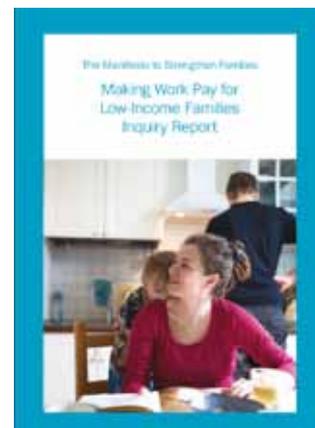
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Making work pay for low-income families

The government must start recognising family responsibilities in the tax system if it is to achieve its goal of making work pay, according to a new report commissioned by The Manifesto to Strengthen Families, a group supported by over 60 Conservative Parliamentarians.

The report follows an inquiry which received evidence from a number of groups, including Tax and the Family, the Resolution Foundation, the Child Poverty Action Group, and former Work and Pensions Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith.

Entitled, *Making work pay for low-income families*, the report observes that because family responsibilities are not taken into account in the assessment of an individual's tax liability, families on low incomes pay thousands of pounds of income tax and then receive large sums of money in benefits. But when such single earners begin to increase their income, they find themselves facing 'cripplingly high effective marginal tax rates [see box below] which suffocate aspiration as the inflated benefits are withdrawn'.



The report argues:

'If family responsibility was recognised in the tax system so families were taxed less in the first place, there would not be the same need for benefits to be inflated to offset the lack of recognition of family responsibility in the income tax system...'

Illogical and incoherent

No tax system is neutral, and the report describes the present arrangement as 'illogical and philosophically incoherent' in that, 'we tax families as if they are just individuals, whilst at the same time operating a benefits system which views members of the family as a family'. It is also 'anti-choice'. The report notes that:

'The best systems of independent taxation give couples the choice of whether they

want to be taxed independently or jointly. Although families may want to be taxed either independently or jointly, currently they do not have that choice. It appears as though independence is the ultimate priority, and this can be to the detriment of family life.'

The authors of the report stress that they are not calling on the government to abandon independent taxation *per se*, but rather to abandon 'the very unusual form of independent taxation that we have in this country that (with the exception of the tokenistic marriage allowance) has no regard for family responsibility'.

Unintended consequences

They note that 'there have been a number of unintended and negative consequences to introducing independent taxation without any sort of a transferrable allowance or the option of joint taxation' and argue that: 'Fundamental reform of the tax system is needed in order to recognise family responsibility and allow couples the choice to decide how they are taxed.'

The report urges the government to formally review effective marginal tax

rates for low income families as a matter of urgency and to reduce them significantly by recognising family responsibilities across both the benefits and tax systems. It suggests that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should consider a number of measures, including joint taxation, child tax allowances, child benefit increases, reviewing the Universal Credit taper rate and the high-income child benefit charge, and recognising the value of unpaid work.

During the course of a Westminster Hall debate on 16 January, timed to coincide with the launch of the report, Mel Stride, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, accepted that high effective marginal tax rates are 'deeply undesirable' and acknowledged that a complicated tax system 'throws up all sorts of deeply unsatisfactory anomalies'. He gave an unequivocal commitment to look 'genuinely and deeply' at the issues raised by the report.

• **The Manifesto to Strengthen Families, *Making work pay for low-income families: Inquiry Report*, January 2019.**

The Value of Unpaid Work

'In October 2018 the Office of National Statistics estimated the value of the UK's unpaid household work at £1.24 trillion. On average this means that stay-at-home spouses doing cooking, cleaning, washing and childcare, as well as travelling and looking after elderly relatives, contribute at least £18,932 per person to the national economy each year.

'Stay at home spouses add a tremendous amount to both UK society and the economy and yet in the tax system we suggest that they have no value, which in turn has a knock-on effect as to how our culture values, or rather in our opinion, undervalues them. This needs to change. The Government should properly recognise family responsibility in the tax system by treating families as a unit not two individuals.'

• ***Making work pay for low-income families*, p.12.**

What is an Effective Marginal Tax Rate?

An effective marginal tax rate (EMTR) is the amount of money that an individual would lose from every additional pound earned above his or her current salary – whether by way of tax, national insurance or lost benefits.

For example, in the UK a one-earner married couple family with two children earning between 50-75 per cent of an average wage faces an effective marginal tax rate of 73 per cent. This is higher than in any other OECD country and more than twice as high as the average EMTR in the 22 EU countries which belong to the OECD.

As David Burrowes writes in his Foreword to the Manifesto to Strengthen Families report:

'At this level of income, such families retain just 27 pence from every additional pound earned. Rather than making it easy for families to aspire to increase their incomes, UK fiscal arrangements are effectively suffocating social mobility and trapping families in poverty.'

For some families, the EMTR is even higher. A single-earner family earning £21,000 with three children paying income tax and national insurance, and entitled to tax credits, housing and council tax benefit can face an EMTR as high as 96 per cent, meaning that they would keep just 4p from every additional £1 earned.

How relativistic sex education is undermining the moral development of young people



An approach to sex education that rejects moral absolutes is failing children and young people and exposing them to increased risk of sexual exploitation, according to a Finnish academic. Writing in *Public Discourse*, the journal of the Witherspoon Institute, Tapio Puolimatka expresses concern that relativism in sex education classes ‘separates human sexuality from its inherent connection with married love’.

Professor Puolimatka, who serves as a Professor of Educational Theory and Tradition at the University of Jyväskylä and an Adjunct Professor of Practical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki in Finland, observes that morally ‘neutral’ sex education teaches that all forms of sexual behaviour based on mutual consent are normal and acceptable, and abandons young people to make arbitrary choices based on the whim of the moment. He writes:

‘When all sexual alternatives are presented as of equal value, young people will find it difficult to perceive the different moral implications and social consequences of various lifestyles.’

In his article, Professor Puolimatka refers to the Family Education Trust report, *Unprotected*, which found that ‘comprehensive sex and relationships education’ has created in young people the expectation that they will have a series of casual sexual relationships and has fostered a culture in which sexual exploitation has been allowed to go undetected and vulnerable young people have been deprived of protection.¹

He observes that the 20th century philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand had similarly noted that amoral sex education leaves the moral capacity of young people undeveloped with the result that they become incapable of discerning and resisting sexual exploitation.

Consequences of amoral sex education

Professor Puolimatka contends that: ‘By reducing sexuality to a biological instinct, amoral sex education produces people who are guided by what is subjectively satisfying and controlled by their drives, appetites, and desires, rather than by what is intrinsically valuable.’ He argues that: ‘Without a moral framework, young people do not have adequate criteria for choosing between competing lifestyles, which means that their choices become arbitrary.’

He further reasons that where young people are taught that there are no absolute sexual norms, they are rendered insensitive to moral distinctions and deprived of ‘the capacity to distinguish between genuine love and exploitative sexuality’.

Professor Puolimatka concludes that:

‘Though its practitioners may be well-intentioned, comprehensive sex education does not offer a solution to sexual exploitation. On the contrary, it is part of the problem, since it fails to develop students’ capacity to differentiate between genuine love and sexual exploitation. What is needed is a form of sexual education that is oriented to married love and the virtues required by a stable nuclear family.’

Note

1. Norman Wells, *Unprotected: How the normalisation of underage sex is exposing children and young people to the risk of sexual exploitation*, Family Education Trust, 2017.

• Tapio Puolimatka, ‘Comprehensive Sex Education Undermines Students’ Moral Development’, *Public Discourse*, 19 December 2018 <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/12/46417/>

What young people need to know about intimate and sexual relationships

An extract from the Family Education Trust response to the government consultation on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education

We would recommend that the following points are added to the list of things that ‘pupils should know’ about intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health:

- there is a clear distinction between lust and sexual desire on the one hand and true love on the other. Love runs deeper than feelings and involves commitment, faithfulness and perseverance;
- character qualities such as stability, honesty, faithfulness and commitment will need to be developed in order to build a strong and lasting marriage in adult life;
- sexual intimacy is intended to serve as an expression of love and self-giving, and should therefore always be considered and referred to with modesty, respect and restraint;
- history demonstrates the importance of marriage between a husband and wife for the nurture of children, and research confirms the invaluable richness of the complementarity of care provided by a father and mother for their children;
- marriage is associated with a much greater degree of stability than cohabitation and other living arrangements;
- the positive reasons for saving sexual intimacy for marriage: it is the surest safeguard against STIs and emotional harm, it provides the most stable context in which to bring children into the world, and leads to a more trusting marriage. Research demonstrates that most parents stay together if they married before having children;
- since sexual promiscuity is a major contributor to family breakdown and divorce, it is important to exercise self-restraint in relation to sexual desire.

Next steps

The government consultation on draft regulations and guidance for mandatory Relationships Education in all primary schools, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in all secondary schools and Health Education in state-funded primary and secondary schools closed on 7 November 2018.

The Department for Education is currently considering the consultation responses and expects to lay the regulations before Parliament for debate during the spring. After the regulations have been laid, the government’s response to the consultation will be published and a copy of the guidance will be placed in both Houses.¹ The Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, has stated that: ‘Schools will be encouraged and supported to teach the new subjects from September 2019, and it will be mandatory to do so from September 2020.’²

Notes

1. HC Hansard, written answer to Parliamentary Question 202088, 18 December 2018.
2. HC Hansard, written answer to Parliamentary Question 194193, 26 November 2018.

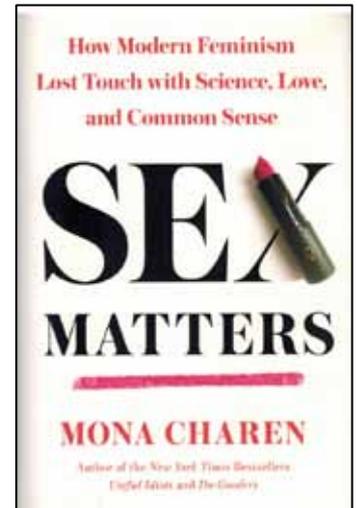
Sex Matters: How Modern Feminism Lost Touch with Science, Love, and Common Sense

Mona Charen

Crown Forum, 2018, hb, xxiii + 295pp, US\$27.00

ISBN 978-0-451-49839-7

Mona Charen is an American columnist and political analyst, based at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington DC. In this title she shows how feminism has advanced from being a movement and a controversy to becoming a piety, and the high price that society has paid as a result. She writes: 'I hope this book will help both men and women see that denying the differences between the sexes leads to unnecessary misunderstandings and miseries. Rejecting the family and – yes, I'll say it – traditional roles within the family for mothers and fathers is also causing needless hardship.'



While feminism is thought to be synonymous with women's interests and wishes, in reality it has failed to deliver. Women may have dramatically increased their earning power, educational attainment and independence, but many of the crucial supports for a happy and balanced life are further out of reach than in the past. Since it began in 1972, the General Social Survey has reported a year-on-year decline in women's reported happiness.

Feminism's disastrous turn

According to Charen, the feminist movement did some good in the 1960s and 70s, but took a disastrous turn when it began to regard the family as a prison for women. By endorsing the sexual revolution as part of women's liberation, feminists flew in the face of innate sexual differences. No matter how much they may attempt to deny it, women are, and always will be, more vulnerable sexually than men. *Sex Matters* accordingly argues that we need a sexual counter-revolution, which moves past the hookup culture and the sexual revolution and embraces an ethic that encourages love and tenderness on the part of both men and women.

The book begins with an overview of feminism's first and second waves, and observes that the radical ideas of the early feminists owed more to two nineteenth century men, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, than they did to any woman. It then surveys the evidence for real and quantifiable differences between men and women and notes that many women detect that the feminist agenda is about making women look more like men rather than speaking for women as they really are.

Moral bankruptcy

In a chapter on 'Severing bonds', Charen argues that the elevation of abortion as a key feminist principle reveals the moral bankruptcy of the movement: 'It has sev-

ered the ageless bond between mother and child, hardening women against their own weak and utterly defenceless unborn children. The feminist embrace of abortion is also a rejection of femininity itself... Parents are their children's natural defenders. Abortion cruelly severs that bond.'

The early feminists' embrace of the fashionable view that 'sex is no big deal' has led to an increase in unbridled male sexual predatory behaviour which is now getting out of control. Contrary to the claims of the sexual revolutionaries, Charen remarks that sex *is* a big deal; bodies have minds and souls attached.

The demeaning and disparaging of traditional masculine codes of behaviour by some branches of feminism and progressivism is blamed for a sexual culture in which women are harassed and assaulted. Charen writes: 'Once you dispense with the ideal, with the informal but powerful mores about what constitutes honourable and, yes, manly behaviour, you are left with the unwieldy, capricious, and highly ineffective bureaucracy of sexual assault prevention and punishment'.

The importance of the family

A chapter specifically devoted to the family notes that the sexual free-for-all combined with the decline of marriage has left women feeling more vulnerable, exposed and ill-treated. By sanctioning the sexual revolution, easy divorce and single parenthood, feminism has made homes less secure.

In a concluding chapter entitled 'Having it all', Charen observes that women have different priorities from men; they are the world's primary caregivers – not only to children, but to the elderly and disabled as well. She argues that women are not forced to mother their children by 'the patriarchy', oppression,

or false consciousness, but by their own instincts. She concludes:

'Sexual "liberation" was a fraud that did a disservice to the best instincts of men and the best interests of women. Children are not a burden to be managed but a treasure to be cherished. Any step that reconnects us to lifelong love, commitment and tenderness will make us personally happier and will move society closer to the ideals we all prize: liberty, equal opportunity, and human flourishing.'

'Instead of fighting nature, let's be comforted by its contours. The best and most important sources of identity, meaning and joy, for men and women, are to be found not in the world of work but in our homes and families. If we get that right, the rest will largely take care of itself.'

AGM & conference Saturday 15 June 2019

The 2019 Annual General Meeting and conference of the Family Education Trust will take place at the Royal Air Force Club, 128 Piccadilly, London W1 on **Saturday 15 June**. Please note the date in your diary and plan to join us if you are able.

The speakers are due to be **Colin Hart** chairman of the Coalition for Marriage, and **Dr Stuart Waiton** Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Criminology at Abertay University in Dundee.

Mr Hart will speak on the subject of divorce law reform, with particular reference to the government's proposals to do away with the concept of fault, while Dr Waiton will speak about the ways in which the state is increasingly encroaching on the family and undermining the role of parents.

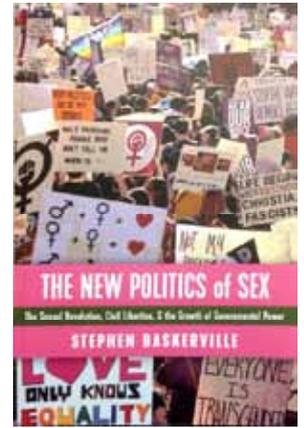
Further details will be provided in the next issue of the bulletin.

The New Politics of Sex: The Sexual Revolution, Civil Liberties and the Growth of Government

Stephen Baskerville

Angelico Press, 2017, pb, 395 pp, US\$21.95, ISBN 9781621382874

This is a fascinating, expansive and sometimes exhausting work. Stephen Baskerville, Professor of Government at Patrick Henry College in Virginia, USA, has sought to cover every facet of our current society's malaise. A broad range of topics is covered, each of which would be worthy of a book in itself: the feminist and LGBT movements, the assault on fatherhood, no-fault divorce, daycare, the politicisation of rape, anti-bullying policies and the child abuse industry, sex education, the feminisation of the military and attempts to impose liberal sexual mores on the Third World.



The central crux of the book is the increasingly totalitarian nature of the ongoing sexual revolution. Baskerville argues that the central driver of this revolution has been feminism which, along with the LGBT movement, is today the most powerful force in both politics and academia. There are at least 200 chairs of gender and queer studies in American universities. Any thoughtful analysis or criticism of this movement is taboo.

The sexual revolution has become far more than abandoning ancient taboos about sex and is today primarily about power. The feminist slogan 'the personal is political' is essential to understanding the feminist takeover of the family, marriage, children and private life itself. Baskerville states: *'Modern sexual politics...makes the denial of privacy - specifically family privacy - the specific goal of its advocates.'*

The attack on the family

The New Politics of Sex goes on to illustrate the ways in which the state, under feminist influence, attacks the married heterosexual family. As this family form represents the surest check on government power, it is the only one attacked by state officials. Policies are implemented that put pressure on women to enter the workplace. The influx of new workers drives down men's wages and forces them to work longer hours thereby spending less time with their family. With both parents working, pressure is put on them to place their children in daycare. Feminists advocated for universal daycare claiming it would liberate women from the home. Daycare has become a feminist sacred cow and to criticise it has consequences.

For example, when child psychologist Jay Belsky questioned its effects on children *'not only his research but he himself was personally attacked in the media and academy and effectively ostracized from his profession'*. Yet a

number of studies have found that the longer children spend in daycare, the poorer their academic performance.

Baskerville illustrates convincingly the radical anti-parent agenda behind daycare by quoting from Hillary Clinton's statement: *'Every home and family should be taught, through parenting education and family visitation by social service intermediaries, how to raise children.'* He also cites a leading child psychologist whose advocacy of daycare was based on the contention that: *'Children who have been in daycare... think for themselves and want their own way... They are not willing to comply with adults' arbitrary rules.'*

Fatherhood

Baskerville offers a passionate defence of fathers, who he sees as the principal target and victim of feminist attacks on marriage. In a startling but compelling statement, he argues:

'The purpose of marriage is not procreation but fatherhood: marriage allows children to have fathers. Marriage turns man from a sperm donor into a parent and thus creates paternal authority, allowing a man to exercise the authority over children that otherwise would be exercised by the mother alone. Feminists understand this when they renounce marriage as an institution of "patriarchy" and promote single motherhood and divorce as goods for their own sake.'

In a particularly shocking segment of the book, Baskerville reveals how shelters supposedly established to protect battered women have been turned by feminists into instruments for breaking up marriages. Recounting one particular case he writes:

'One woman whose husband "didn't beat me or nothing, we just had an argument" says shelter workers ignored her pleas and pressured her to leave her marriage. "They asked me if I was abused and I said, 'No'..." She maintains shelter emp-

loyees tried to "trick" her into making incriminating statements about her husband...She was offered financial incentives to leave her husband... "They wanted that so bad. They were trying to break up a family and I didn't want that."

Criminal and international law

Having chronicled the sexual revolution's transformation of family and society, Baskerville describes its impact on criminal and international law. A particular cause for concern is the emergence of the totalitarian concept of 'hate crimes' and 'hate speech'. The special feature of these laws lies in their vagueness, subjectivity based on the perception of the victim, lack of distinction between truth and falsehood, and the tendency to make entire groups, rather than individuals, alleged victims. Hate crime laws have taken a toll on religious freedom, with Christians being especially targeted when they express beliefs about homosexuality.

At the international level, feminist and LGBT NGOs have advanced the sexual revolution through the EU and UN. Baskerville particularly focuses on the European Commission's Equal Treatment Directive which has been pending since 2008. Claiming to combat 'discrimination' and 'harassment', the Directive places the burden of proof on the accused and guilt is entirely subjective, being based on the perception of the accuser.

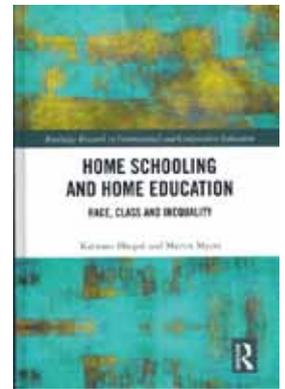
Baskerville has packed an immense amount of information on a diverse range of subjects into this book. While there is some repetition and a greater division of chapters would have been helpful (one chapter reaches over 140 pages!), the book presents a chilling expose of the evolution of the sexual liberation movement into a full-blown, all-consuming ideology that will brook no opposition to its agenda.

Piers Shepherd

Home Schooling and Home Education: Race, Class and Inequality

Kalwant Bhopal and Martin Myers

Routledge, 2018, hb, 132pp, £115.00, ISBN 978-1138651340



The public profile of home education has risen markedly over recent years as increasing numbers of parents in the Western world have either withdrawn their children from school or opted to home educate in preference to sending them to school in the first place. In the United States in particular, over a relatively short period of time home education has moved from being a marginal activity often viewed with scepticism and suspicion to being seen as part of mainstream education.

The purpose of this study is neither to promote nor criticise home education, but rather to explore the experiences of very different types of home educating families, with a particular focus on their reasons for home educating. The book draws on 33 case studies from home educating families in England: 6 Muslim families, 6 white middle class families, 4 evangelical Christian families, 4 families whose children had special educational needs related to disability, 8 gypsy and traveller families and 5 black families.

Wide diversity

Kalwant Bhopal, Professor of Education and Social Justice at the University of Birmingham and Martin Myers, Lecturer in Education Studies at the University of Portsmouth, emphasise the diverse range of ethnic, religious and social backgrounds represented among home educating families. There is no such thing as 'the home educating type'. The diversity of family type is matched by wide-ranging reasons for home education. These include: concerns about the quality of education in schools, a desire for a more child-centred approach to education, religious convictions, concerns about peer pressure, drugs, bullying and racism in schools, and a belief that a child's special educational needs can be better met at home.

The authors note that home education is 'not a new phenomenon. If anything, the introduction of "schooling" outside of the family is a more recent form of education.' The vast majority of parents who took part in the research are described as leading 'remarkably ordinary lives'. 'They were universally engaged and interested in their children's education and in the importance of doing what they could to guarantee the long-term security and lessening of risk in their family life.'

At the heart of the book are five chapters, each of which focuses on two families with a particular characteristic. A chapter is devoted in turn to middle-class families, gypsies and travellers, religious families (a Brethren family and a Muslim family), families with a child

with special educational needs, and families from an ethnic minority. This latter chapter differs from the others in that it includes a case study of a family which felt forced into home education by their child's school, and a study of another family which considered home education but decided against it.

All of the home educating families featured in the book had withdrawn their children from school as opposed to electing to home educate from the beginning. The authors therefore report that:

'Parents often described very specific local concerns that contributed to their decision to home educate, including the lack of effective provision for children with special educational needs, bullying and racism. In addition a number of parents suggested they felt pressured into home educating by schools and local authorities because of disputes with the school. In these instances decisions to home educate are signals of the risk that schools are failing to address the needs of all pupils.'

It might have been helpful to include case studies of parents who had made a positive choice to home educate from the outset rather than as a reaction to unsatisfactory experiences with local schools.

Seeking best outcomes

Despite the ethnic, religious and socio-economic differences, the authors note that 'families reflected on their decisions to home educate; they often worried about whether they were doing the right thing and actively sought to achieve the best outcomes for their children'.

Not all will agree with the authors at every point, not least where they suggest that the main recommendations of the 2009 Badman Review were 'fairly modest', and with a cover price of £115.00 this title is unlikely to capture the attention of a wide and general readership. Nevertheless, those with a particular interest in home education research may wish to request a copy of this volume through the inter-library loan service.

Father departure and children's mental health

Children who see their father walk out on their family in late childhood and early adolescence are at particular risk of suffering emotional or behavioural problems, according to research from the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at UCL.

Using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, researchers studied 6,245 children born between 2000-2002, where both parents were living together when the child turned three. They examined reports of children's mental health at ages three, five, seven, 11 and 14, including emotional problems, such as feelings of low mood and anxiety, and behavioural problems, such as acting out and disobedience. Information on children who experienced family breakdown was compared with those where the family remained intact.

A fifth of children in the study saw their parents separate between the ages of three and 14 and, on average, they suffered a 16 per cent increase in emotional problems and an eight per cent rise in conduct issues in the short-term. While increased emotional problems were evident in both boys and girls, only boys experienced heightened behavioural issues. Children from more privileged backgrounds were just as likely to have mental health problems as their less advantaged peers.

Reflecting on why children who suffered the breakdown of family relationships in later childhood were more vulnerable to mental health problems than younger children, Professor Emla Fitzsimons, who co-authored the study, suggested that one possible reason might be that 'children are more sensitive to relationship dynamics' between the ages of 7 and 14, and that 'family break-ups may also be more disruptive to schooling and peer relationships at this stage of childhood'.¹

Note

1. 'Timing of parents' split matters for children's mental health, new research reveals', UCL press release, 17 January 2019.

• Emla Fitzsimons and Aase Villadsen, 'Father departure and children's mental health: how does timing matter?' *Social Science and Medicine*, published online 9 November 2018, doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.11.008.

Same-Sex Parenting Research: A Critical Assessment

Walter R Schumm

Wilberforce Publications, 2018, pb, 306pp, £14.00

ISBN 978-0-9956832-8-0



It is frequently presented as a settled fact that children raised by same-sex parents are just as healthy and well-adjusted as those raised by their biological mother and father, and any challenges to the claimed ‘consensus’ are considered an expression of hatred and bigotry. Conscious of the extent to which scholarship on LGBT parenting has been heavily politicised, this thorough overview of the research evidence has been written to enable readers to determine the facts for themselves and to weigh how honestly the data has been handled by academics and others.

Walter Schumm is Professor of Applied Family Science in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University and editor-in-chief of the academic journal *Marriage and Family Review*. In his assessment of same-sex parenting, Professor Schumm has set out to be scrupulously honest and faces up to the complexities of the research.

His primary motivation is that he cares about how science is done and how it is used in the public square. He is concerned that people should think more carefully about scientific research in areas of political controversy and be less eager to jump to conclusions that are not warranted by a careful, detailed, systematic review of the research literature. He writes:

‘Research on same-sex parenting has often been cited because it came to the politically correct conclusions, not because it was of the highest quality... In one sense, this book is an attempt to redress that imbalance. In another sense, it is a call for scientists to be more careful in the future and not deceive courts about scientific evidence...’

He expresses the hope that his contribution to the debate will persuade the courts and the lay public that ‘science is far from perfect and is capable of making mistakes that are not discovered for decades, especially when there are financial or political pressures pushing the process more than scientific curiosity by itself’.

Focus on evidence

At the outset Professor Schumm emphasises that his focus is more on assessing ‘difference’ rather than ‘harm’, since difference can be tested scientifically, whereas some harms are a matter of probability and only become evident over the longer term.

He also stresses that the purpose of the book is not to address legal or political questions; his focus is solely on the research evidence. He is therefore at pains to resist the common temptation in a politicised and media-driven academic

environment to inflate results to gain scholarly or media attention.

After an introductory section in which he discusses social science theory and methodological questions, Professor Schumm proceeds to address what we know about same-sex parents - How many are there? How stable are their families? Is sexual abuse more common among them? What about their values and behaviours?

He then considers what is known about the children of same-sex parents in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles and mental health. In each section, he considers in turn what has been claimed and what is known, before providing a literature review, and identifying the limitations of the data currently available and areas where further research is required. Only then does he attempt to offer any conclusions.

Comprehensive and careful

In drawing his conclusions, Professor Schumm honestly acknowledges where the research is sparse or inconclusive and

is careful not to make assertions beyond what is warranted by the data. Nevertheless, his comprehensive overview of research findings demonstrates that: ‘there are both significant and substantial differences in a variety of areas with respect to both same-sex parenting in general and with respect to the outcomes for children’. He is persuaded that the data ‘overturns the so-called research consensus in this area of science and contradicts the views of hundreds, maybe even thousands, of professional social scientists as well as probably dozens of scholarly professional organisations’.

He is concerned that ‘substantial amounts of “fact” have been ignored or suppressed in the process of moving forward the civil rights agenda of LGBT persons’ and insists that in a politically-charged area of social science, ‘Scholars must resist any temptation to accept simplistic solutions, especially if those solutions contradict well-established, common sense social science theory.’

What does the research on same-sex parenting tell us?

‘[S]ame-sex parents may have lower rates of stability, especially lesbian mothers. [They] may be less likely to emphasise traditional gender roles, traditional views of gender as a binary factor, and traditional views of sexual expression (e.g. restricting sex to legal marriage). They may value self-control less in their children than heterosexual parents. The children of same-sex parents may be more likely to question their sexual orientation or sexuality while growing up and more likely to try same-sex sexuality, even if not sexually attracted to same-sex persons. The children are less likely to adopt traditional gender roles and perhaps be more likely to reject traditional definitions of gender. In the USA, the children of same-sex parents appear more likely to engage in substance abuse, at least occasionally. The children’s mental health from their mothers’ perspectives appears fine, but as rated in terms of drug abuse or by other observers seems more questionable...’

‘[T]he primary “take-away” is that, despite many declarations to the contrary for decades by many scholars, children do learn from their parents – not just reading or mathematics, but personal values as they relate to sexuality, sexual expression, gender roles, the meaning of gender itself, and possibly even the importance of self-control or emotional self-regulation. Same-sex parents appear to hold more progressive values with respect to such issues and those values would seem to have been adopted in many cases by at least some of their children... This is pretty much common sense, in agreement with most social science theories, except that it has been denied for decades in the interests of promoting or protecting the civil rights of LGBT persons. While the rights of LGBT persons may have been advanced, it is not clear that the integrity of social science in general has been protected nearly as much.’

• **Same-Sex Parenting Research: A Critical Assessment, pp.213, 215.**

Government escalates plans to extend civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that civil partnerships will be extended to opposite-sex couples, the government signalled that it would be launching a consultation to address the complexities of the proposal in advance of its plan to introduce legislation during the next parliamentary session. In a written statement, the Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt said:

*'The changes needed to effect the greater equality we wish to see are not all straightforward and there are a number of questions that arise specifically about opening civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples for the first time, on which we will need to consult. For example, whether couples can choose to convert their civil partnership into a marriage (or vice-versa) and what should be the grounds for dissolution of an opposite-sex civil partnership.'*¹

However, during the Second Reading of the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration Etc.) private members bill on 18 January, the Home Office minister, Lady Williams of Trafford was 'optimistic that the Bill may provide scope as a vehicle for extending civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples' and welcomed the opportunity it afforded to deliver 'a comprehensive and effective opposite-sex civil partnerships regime at the earliest possible opportunity'.²

When asked about the scope of the promised consultation, Lady Williams stated that officials were 'working through all the policy issues before the content of any consultation is determined' and declined to comment further.

'Gross discrimination'

The government argues that the option of entering a civil partnership will enable the 3.3 million cohabiting couples in the UK to benefit from the protections and security that a civil partnership can provide. However, according to the social commentator Olivia Utley, the appetite for heterosexual civil partnerships has been 'vastly overestimated'. Writing in

the *Daily Telegraph*, she observes that:

*'Most of those 3.3 million couples are either "trying before buying" or long-term partners with no interest in state-endorsed commitment. Neither group will be chomping at the bit to get a civil partnership. But the new legislation is worse than a waste of parliamentary resources. In bending over backwards to accommodate everyone, the Government has set itself on a course of action which will result in gross discrimination against one minority group: cohabiting blood relatives. As the law stands, loving, committed, cohabiting blood relatives are the only cohabiters legally unable to access the fiscal safeguards awarded to married couples and civil partners; most importantly, the right to inherit a joint tenancy, and the right to pass on a jointly-owned home to each other free of inheritance tax.'*³

It was such concerns that prompted the Conservative peer Lord Lexden to introduce his own private members bill, which received its Second Reading on 20 July 2018. During the course of the debate, Lord Lexden stated:

*'The cruellest aspect of the current state of affairs is the terrible situation that can arise when one member of the committed sibling couple dies. Their joint home, owned by them both and the repository of a lifestyle of shared experiences and memories, has an importance to them that goes beyond bricks and mortar. Yet the rise in the value of property in our time often means that a home that has been shared for decades must be sold when the first sibling dies to raise the inheritance tax on his or her share. Living with the knowledge that this could happen at any time can cause years of apprehension and anxiety that members of the committed, platonic family unit ought surely to be spared. Loss of the shared home creates huge additional misery when two siblings are parted by death.'*⁴

Notes

1. HC Hansard, 26 October 2018, HCWS1039.
2. HL Hansard, 18 January 2019, col 452.
3. *Daily Telegraph*, 3 October 2018.
4. HL Hansard, 20 July 2018, col 1397.

Dr John Guly (1927-2018)

We are sorry to report the death of our former trustee, Dr John Guly on 28 September 2018.

Dr Guly retired as a trustee in 2012 after 20 years of faithful and enthusiastic service, during which he represented the Trust at meetings in Parliament and elsewhere, served as a media spokesman and prepared media briefings on a wide range of topics. We are also indebted to him for serving as acting chairman for a period of three years following the death of the Trust's founder, Dr Stanley Ellison.

Dr Guly was a very gracious man and ever the gentleman. He was very devoted to his own family, and those who had the privilege of hosting him will testify to the keen interest he showed in others, including the youngest of children. He was always a cheerful guest, with many delightful and entertaining stories to tell.

We extend our sincere condolences to his widow, Maureen, and to the rest of his family.



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