

Disenfranchised dads

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A simple way to confirm that a particular ideology has captured mainstream culture is to monitor the political vigour or sluggishness around the causes that it deems "correct" and "incorrect."

Gay marriage, a "correct" feminist cause, affects 2% of the population and enjoys about 50% public support -- yet was passed into law at the speed of light, without meaningful consultation or debate. But decades-long appeals for reform to outdated custody laws, affecting 40% of the population (many more tangentially), languish in near-obscurity.

And though eight years have passed since a non-partisan, Canada-wide task force made up of MPs and Senators garnered wide support in recommending shared parenting as a default post-divorce arrangement, feminism still trumps gender equality in family court. That is, women are still awarded sole custody in 90% of disputed cases.

This reflects judicial acquiescence to reigning feminist orthodoxy: Children are essentially the possessions of women, women never lie (or are justified when they do) and men want access to children only to control women.

Objective research points to partner violence and child abuse as bilateral phenomena, with up to 85% of divorce-related abuse allegations manufactured by women (or urged upon them by venal advocates) to gain sole custody. Yet strategically whipped-up media hysteria around bogus data and presumed entitlement in lieu of evidence remains a successful formula for custody-bent women.

Anti-male bias is further entrenched when unsupported grievances on only one side of a divorcing couple are not held up to scrutiny by judges, politicians or journalists. (Voluntary professional delinquency is another symptom of a captured culture.) At the crux of family law's failure is a cynical tolerance for erratic courtroom decisions, with unaccountable judges routinely winking at perjury and child-access obstruction -- jail-worthy misdemeanours acknowledged by court players and observers to be systemically rampant. Indeed, one lawyer confided his intention to abandon family law, as he becomes physically ill anticipating the arbitrarily plucked ruling awaiting his male clients.

The remedy is to abandon existing family law. In its place, we should combine gender equity with the

best interests of children by legislating default shared parenting -- the preferred option for child-focused women, virtually all fathers and most kids.

Numerous studies have concluded that children under shared parenting do significantly better on all adjustment measures than those in sole custody. Contrary to the claims of feminist consultants to family courts, peer-reviewed data shows that over time shared parenting decreases parental conflict, increases co-operation and boosts support compliance.

Most significantly, in all six American states with legislated default shared parenting, divorce rates have fallen markedly -- confirming a widely held belief in the field that expectation of sole custody is the main reason a large number of divorce cases are initiated by women. The positive economic and social fallout from fewer divorces is plain to eyes that see.

Recent benchmark studies have, for the first time, also culled the opinions of children -- up to now pawns in a "best interests" game that means something different to every stakeholder. University of British Columbia sociology professor Edward Kruk, a specialist in divorce and custody issues, analyzed all new research on the subject from 2000-2005. He found that 70% of college-age children of divorce believe equal time between parents is optimal, and that shared parenting creates better relations with both.

Along with other credible academics, Kruk recommends default shared parenting (rebuttable in proven cases of abuse by either parent) and maximum access to both parents. Thus, current scholarship echoes the report by the 1998 Canadian Joint Parliamentary Committee on Custody and Access report, whose "incorrect" conclusions were politically marginalized by relentless feminist lobbying.

In the course of my research, I have read many chilling testimonials by and about men unjustly "disappeared" from their families. Countless other fathers are exiled daily to the same degrading psychological gulag.

Legislators, throw off your ideological shackles. Disenfranchised fathers must be restored to their children, and their children to them. There is no possible restitution for a lost childhood. And all decent men -- which is to say most of them -- must be freed from fear of a lost fatherhood.