

sends us a mixed message.” On the one hand, she says, he portrays homosexuals “as sharing the same emotions, longings, and dreams as heterosexuals,” but on the other, he says that in gay relationships, there is (in Sullivan’s words), “more likely to be a greater understanding of the need for extramarital outlets between two men than between a man and a woman; and again, the lack of children gives gay couples greater freedom.”

Gay marriage would likely seem a parody

to most people, one that could further weaken an already beleaguered institution, James Q. Wilson suspects. Writing in *Commentary* (March 1996), he observes: “To me, the chief limitation of Sullivan’s view is that it presupposes that marriage would have the same domesticating effect on homosexual members as it has on heterosexuals, while leaving the latter largely unaffected. Those are very large assumptions that no modern society has ever tested.”

## *Farewell to a Factoid*

“A Re-evaluation of the Economic Consequences of Divorce” by Richard R. Peterson, “The Economic Consequences of Divorce Are Still Unequal” by Lenore J. Weitzman, and “Statistical Errors, Faulty Conclusions, Misguided Policy: Reply to Weitzman” by Peterson, in *American Sociological Review* (June 1996), Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz. 85721.

In the ongoing debate about the consequences of relaxed divorce laws, one statistic has stood out: after divorce, women suffer a 73 percent decline in their standard of living, while men experience a 42 percent increase. This staggering finding first appeared in sociologist Lenore Weitzman’s award-winning 1985 book, *The Divorce Revolution*, and it has been repeated hundreds of times since, not only in scholarly journals but in newspapers, magazines, and court cases. Yet the dramatic statistic, Peterson contends—and Weitzman now concedes—is simply wrong.

Weitzman’s finding was based on interviews with people who were divorced in Los Angeles in 1977, seven years after the state introduced a “no-fault” divorce law; such laws allow a spouse to win a divorce without proving a “fault” such as adultery. This and other reforms (including equal division of marital property) were supposed to put women on an equal footing with men, but Weitzman’s work suggested that women (and children) now fared much worse. (All 50 states since have adopted some form of no-fault law.)

Peterson, a sociologist at the Social Science Research Council in New York,

replicated Weitzman’s analysis, using corrected data he derived from Weitzman’s raw data. His re-analysis found a 27 percent average decline in women’s standard of living and a 10 percent increase in men’s. These results are roughly in line with the studies done before Weitzman’s.

Although he performed various operations on the data, Peterson says he is at a loss to explain how Weitzman got her inaccurate results. So is Weitzman, who says that her own original corrected data file no longer exists. She claims that she herself was originally skeptical about the 73 percent figure but that “my computer expert” verified it, “and I accepted that.”

The “major finding” of her book, she says, still stands: “Women and children are unfairly and disproportionately burdened by divorce.” True, responds Peterson, but her argument about no-fault divorce and related reforms does not. Although she herself did not favor a return to fault-based divorce, others who did use her inaccurate data to bolster their case. But rolling back no-fault, it now appears, may not be much help to divorced women and their children.

## *Baseball Goes Uptown*

“The Future of Baseball” by Shannon Dortch, in *American Demographics* (Apr. 1996), 127 W. State St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

A baseball crowd “is a beer-drinking crowd, not a mixed-drink crowd,” Bill Veeck, the late owner of the Chicago White Sox, once observed. He never saw the cappuccino

and cheesecake stands at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, notes Dortch, senior editor of *American Demographics*. Baseball today, she argues, is a sport for the