



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2011

CONTACT: David Lapp
dlapp@americanvalues.org
212.246.3942

ARE INTENTIONAL FAMILIES NECESSARILY GOOD FOR CHILDREN?

MAJOR REPORT RAISES NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT “INTENTIONAL PARENTHOOD” AND CHILD WELL-BEING

Released today by the Commission on Parenthood’s Future, One Parent or Five offers the first-ever systematic critique of the concept of intentional parenthood; the report takes on difficult questions related to intentional families that are often systematically ignored by family diversity proponents and offers surprising—and at times disturbing—portrayals of practices now occurring around the world

New York, NY—October 6, 2011—The Commission on Parenthood’s Future released internationally the major new report *One Parent or Five? A Global Look at Today’s New Intentional Families*, by scholar Elizabeth Marquardt, a recognized family expert. Marquardt’s report, *One Parent or Five*, takes the reader on a global tour of today’s new intentional families, introducing one, two, and even three, four, and five parent families from around the world. The report reveals what we do and do not know, from a social scientific point of view, about child well-being in these family structures.

Until now, intentional parenthood has been viewed as an intrinsic good. It is a concept that has generally not been questioned since the term originated in the 1990s to resolve disputed surrogacy or lesbian parenting family law cases. Anyone can be an intentional parent, straight, gay, coupled or not. The rationale is that intention makes a wanted child, and if a child is *wanted* then how could that situation not be good? This notion has been widely accepted by family law leaders and by proponents of family diversity in the academy and the media.

This report, for the first time, systematically challenges the assumption that intentional parenthood, simply because it is planned in advance of the child’s conception, is good for children.

“Some of these family forms are too recent, too rare, or until recently too secret to have been studied very much. But some of these types of families we know a great deal about. At the same time, intriguing new research on the practice of intentionally conceiving children who will not know or be known by their biological fathers – through anonymous sperm donation – suggests that intention alone hardly guarantees good child outcomes,” explains Marquardt.

One Parent or Five not only offers a broad survey of the issue of intentional families but provides a series of provocative questions for readers to grapple with, perhaps for the first time, such as:

- What defines a parent? Biology or intent?
- Do mothers and fathers really matter?
- Is intending to have a child a key factor in child well-being, or do other factors, such as the family structure in which a child is raised, matter as well?
- Are children fine with “multiple” parents?
- Do young people miss the absence of their own mothers and fathers in their lives?
- Are polygamy and polyamory healthy or unhealthy for children?
- Is the possibility of human reproductive cloning ethical if it improves the quality of an individual’s way of life?
- Does intended parenthood—the commissioning of children—equate to the commodification of human life?

According to Marquardt, the main point is this: *“The value of ‘intentional parenthood’ is not a settled question, but rather a hotly contested one. For example, most persons conceived through anonymous sperm donation believe it is wrong that they were intentionally denied knowledge of their father’s identity. For them, this intentional denial is precisely the problem.”*

THE REPORT is based on a global review of current media, family law, and scientific cases involving single mothers by choice, single fathers by choice, posthumous conception, polygamy, polyamory, conception by three persons, scientific experimentation with same-sex procreation, the possibility of reproductive cloning, and more.

AUTHOR Elizabeth Marquardt is director of the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values in New York City and editor of FamilyScholars.org, where she also regularly blogs. She is the co-investigator of *My Daddy’s Name is Donor*, which examines the identity and kinship experiences of adults conceived through sperm donation, and is author of *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. Marquardt has appeared often on NBC’s *Today Show* as well as on broadcast news programs on CNN, ABC, FOX, CBS, and PBS and scores of radio programs including BBC World News and national and local NPR stations. Published widely, her writings have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Slate*, *Huffington Post*, and elsewhere. Marquardt holds a Master’s in Divinity and an M.A. in international relations from the University of Chicago, and a B.A. in history and women’s studies from Wake Forest University.

THE INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES, founded in 1987, is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization devoted to research, publication, and public education on issues of civil society. By providing forums for scholarly inquiry and debate, the Institute seeks to bring fresh knowledge to bear on the challenges facing civil society. Through its publications and other educational activities, the Institute seeks to bridge the gap between scholarship and policy making, bringing new information to the attention of policy makers in the government, opinion makers in the media and decision makers in the private sector. For more information visit www.americanvalues.org.

For more information about this report, or to schedule an interview with author Elizabeth Marquardt, please contact David Lapp at 212-246-3942 or dlapp@americanvalues.org.

—###—