Why Women Are Unhappy

by Phyllis Schlafly June 19, 2009

The National Bureau of Economic Research released a study to be published soon in the American Economic Journal that shows women's happiness has measurably declined since 1970. It's no surprise that this has stimulated much comment.

This study covers the same time period as the rise of the so-called women's liberation or feminist movement. The correlation demands an explanation.

One theory advanced by the authors, University of Pennsylvania economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, is that the women's liberation movement "raised women's expectations" (sold them a bill of goods), making them feel inadequate when they fail to have it all. A second theory is that the demands on women who are both mothers and jobholders in the labor force are overwhelming.

I'm neither an economist nor a psychologist, but I'll join the conversation with my own armchair analysis. Another theory could be that the feminist movement taught women to see themselves as victims of an oppressive patriarchy in which their true worth will never be recognized and any success is beyond their reach.

Feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women held consciousness-raising sessions where they exchanged tales of how badly some man had treated them. Grievances are like flowers; if you water them, they will grow, and self-imposed victimhood is not a recipe for happiness.

Another theory could be the increase in easy divorce and illegitimacy (now 40 percent of American births are to single moms), which means that millions of women are raising kids without a husband and therefore expect Big Brother government to substitute as provider. The 2008 election returns showed that 70

percent of unmarried women voted for Barack Obama, perhaps hoping to be beneficiaries of his "spread the wealth" policies.

In the pre-1970 era, when surveys showed women with higher levels of happiness, most men held jobs that enabled their wives to be fulltime homemakers. The private enterprise system constantly produces goods that make household work and kiddie care easier (such as dryers, dishwashers and paper diapers).

Betty Friedan started the feminist movement in the late 1960s with her book The Feminine Mystique, which created the myth that suburban housewives were suffering from "a sense of dissatisfaction" with their alleged-to-be-boring lives. To liberate women from the home that Friedan labeled "a comfortable concentration camp," the feminist movement worked tirelessly to make the role of fulltime homemaker socially disdained.

Economic need played no role in the feminist argument that marriage is archaic and oppressive to women. A job in the labor force was upheld as so much more fulfilling than tending babies and preparing dinner for a hard-working husband.

Women's studies courses require students to accept as an article of faith the silly notion that gender differences are not natural or biological but are social constructs created by the patriarchy and ancient stereotypes. This leads feminists to seek legislative corrections for problems that don't exist.

A former editor of the Ladies' Home Journal wrote in her book Spin Sisters that the anorexic blondes on television are every day selling the falsehood that women's lives are full of misery and threats from men. Bernard Goldberg calls the mainstream media "one of America's most pro-feminist institutions."

According to feminist ideology, the only gender-specific characteristic is that men are naturally batterers who make all women victims. On that theory, the feminists

conned Congress into passing the Violence Against Women Act (note the sex discriminatory title), which includes a handout of a billion dollars a year to finance their political, legislative and judicial goals.

The feminists whine endlessly using their favorite word "choice" in matters of abortion, but they reject choice in gender roles. The Big Mama of feminist studies, Simone de Beauvoir, said, "We don't believe that any woman should have this choice. No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children . . . precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."

The feminists have carried on a long-running campaign to make husbands and fathers unnecessary and irrelevant. Most divorces are initiated by women, and more women than men request same-sex marriage licenses in Massachusetts so that, with two affirmative-action jobs plus in vitro fertilization, they can create a "family" without husbands or fathers.

Despite the false messages of the colleges and the media, most American women are smart enough to reject the label feminist, and only 20 percent of mothers say they want full-time work in the labor force. I suggest that women suffering from unhappiness should look into how women are treated in the rest of the world, and then maybe American women would realize they are the most fortunate people on earth.