Defining and defending marriage

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Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. - the *Marriage Act (1961)* s.46.1

The status of marriage and the purpose of law

Communities historically have given esteem to male-female covenanted unity. That status recognises the complimentary nature of human sexuality, with its role to raise children. Such esteem is based on the valid role of government - to commend what is best for family and society, but not endorse every claimed "right". While calls to redefine marriage so as to include same-sex partnerships and polygamy may be motivated to remove discrimination, every law makes distinctions about right and wrong. So the question is whether discrimination in favour of male-female marriage is a justifiable action.

The complementary nature of male-female unity

Supporters of same-sex relationships want homosexual couples to achieve access to matrimony so they can gain legal approvals. But there is much more to marrying than legislative enactment. Marriage is the union of two different things that is more useful and stronger than a mixture of similar elements.

We see this in the combination of metals to make jewellery: pure gold is very soft and totally useless as a jewellery metal until it is alloyed with a different metallic element such as copper. Neither do jewellers utilise copper to make wedding rings, as it is too soft, and readily oxidises. But the alloy of gold and copper is strong enough for long-term use. Similarly, male and female unite physically and in a complimentary way - that ideally is protected by virtue of public promises that are witnessed, with social approvals including the commendation of government.



The instability of same-sex relationships

Sweden provides clear details about the weakness of same-sex relationships. Single-gender partnership have long been well-accepted in Sweden, and they became registrable from 1995. However, same-sex relationships in Sweden during the mid-to-late 1990s failed at twice the rate of male-female marriage, as may be determined from matched data sets in Andersson, G. *et al*, 2004, "Divorce-risk: Patterns in same-sex 'marriages' in Norway and Sweden", (Table 3) presented at the Population Association of America annual meeting.

Health, safety and homosexuality

Men and women in same-sex relationships are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, experience mental and physical health problems, and be involved in domestic violence. At the age of 20 years, homosexual and bisexual men have a life expectancy that is 8 to 20 years less than for all men (Hogg, R. *et al* 1997, "Modelling the impact of HIV disease on mortality in gay and bisexual men", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26:2). Lesbian life expectancies on average are 20 years less than heterosexual women (Cameron, P. & K. 2007 "Federal Distortion of Homosexual Footprint [Ignoring Early Gay Death?]", Eastern Psychological Association Convention, Philadelphia).

Same-sex attraction is not biologically based

One of the presuppositions behind the call to rework the meaning of marriage is the view that same-sex attraction is biological and cannot be changed. It is claimed that homosexual people are born into that orientation and therefore must receive the right to marry. Reputable research shows that claim is wrong. The main influence on same-sex attraction is not genetics but life experience, and especially childhood or adolescent family dysfunction and abuse. Hence there is considerable movement between sexual inclination.

US research into adolescent health found 72% of boys who identified as same-sex attracted at the age of 16 were opposite-sex attracted by the age of 22. Additionally, 55% of girls who identified as same-sex attracted at 16 years of age were opposite-sex attracted at 22 years (Savin-Williams, R. & Ream, G. 2007, "Prevalence and stability of sexual orientation components during adolescence and young adulthood", *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 36:3). Many studies have demonstrated that people change between heterosexual and homosexual orientations, but a greater proportion of homosexuals become heterosexual than vice-versa. Clearly homosexuality is not genetically based.

Children in same-sex households

Long-lasting cultures have all given esteem to male-female unity because the two genders are complementary and provide the only natural way to procreate. Though same-sex relationships never naturally produce offspring, children are often brought into such households from previous relationships, or by adoption or surrogacy. The child's exclusion from its natural family is mainly deliberate.

A child whose conception is arranged by a same-sex couple and is brought into that relationship will be denied the name, modeling, and ancestry that can only be provided by the child's biological father and mother. Whenever a same-sex couple adopts, the child is raised without the advantage of having a father and mother. But children who are raised by their married mother and father tend to benefit greatly, as may be seen by careful comparisons of household types.

The health and well-being of children

Reliable studies demonstrate that the joining of male and female in marriage generally gives children the most long-lasting and stable family environment (eg "Children in three contexts: Family, education and social development", by Sarantakos, S. 1996, *Children Australia*, 21:3).

Despite the prevalence of several methodologically unsound publications, many reputable scientific studies demonstrate how children who are raised by homosexual parents eventually are more likely to smoke, get in trouble with the law, feel depressed, and have a much higher number of sexual partners than those who are raised by their married, biological parents. One major study is by Regnerus, M. (2012), "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study", *Social Science Research*, 41:4. Comprehensive studies also clearly report how children raised by same-sex couples tend to have much poorer educational development, and experience a greater risk to their psychological well-being.

Since drug addiction, alcoholism and tobacco smoking are more common in same-sex relationships, they tend to compromise the parenting ability of those couples. Children raised in such contexts are also more likely to be abused. Because same-sex relationships are far less stable than heterosexual unions (and especially marriage), they are less likely to provide the enduring family context needed for raising children to become healthy and responsible adults who can make a positive contribution to society.

Civil unions and partnership registration

As every nation has a responsibility to safeguard its future, each government should endorse and encourage marriage as the ideal foundation of family life. But since so-called *de facto marriage*, and same-sex cohabitation, tend not to provide the best context for raising the next generation, government should not endorse or encourage such relationships. Governments that register civil unions or partnerships (heterosexual or homosexual) are giving those types of relationship official recognition, approval, and legitimacy - thus contradicting the commonsense role of civic authority to commend what is best for society.

Shaping public policy

Legal changes frequently produce unintended ramifications for thinking and behaviour, as may be seen by the way easy divorce law in Western nations has led to huge increases in the breakdown of marriages. Though legislators have long recognised marriage as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life, that foundational agreement has become a disposable commodity through unwise legislation. This provides a serious warning that legislative action may have regrettable consequences.

Some people say marriage should be available to all couples. But civic laws are for the benefit of society, and are not to be changed for the approval and official recognition of anything which may be claimed as a personal choice. Legislation ought never to approve and encourage relationships which tend to be unstable or harmful, especially when the welfare of children is at risk.

It is crucial for MPs to recognise the importance of retaining the true meaning of matrimony, and not be misguided by false assertions. Emotional claims by same-sex couples who complain about discrimination form no basis for public policy. Discrimination is itself a neutral concept that is warranted whenever justified legislation occurs. Laws that commend and endorse only male-female marriage should be valued as they set the highest standard of conduct for the families and the future of nations. As civic authorities are reminded about their role to commend what is good for society, they are more likely to appreciate the time-tested institution of marriage as the most valuable social agreement.

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