

How does the media mislead people?

Questions about the importance of gender, sexuality, and marriage are central to influencing opinion in our time. A typical example of the misleading way in which the media of our time communicates the results of family research is an article in the Finnish newspaper *Keskisuomalainen* (April 13, 2018) entitled The Best Family Type.

The article compares different types of families such as the nuclear family, the stepfamily, the single-parent family, and the same-sex family. In this connection, Kimmo Jokinen, professor of family research at the University of Jyväskylä, in central Finland, is quoted as saying: "Traditionally, it is customary to regard as normal a family consisting of a husband, a wife and their common children. According to research, it seems that the family type does not directly explain very much about whether the family is doing well or not."

Vague language confuses the reader

Jokinen does not deny that the family type does have an effect on the well-being of family members. But he says that the family type does not *directly* explain very much about whether the family is doing well or not. When expressed in this way, it is difficult for the reader to realize that the family type already directly explains to a certain extent the well-being of the family members and through mediating factors such as family stability and financial resources it explains even more.

Walter Schumm, a professor at Kansas State University, states that it is very different to claim that the family type does not directly explain much of the well-being of the family and to claim that family type or family structure does not matter. The point is that family structure often *indirectly* causes better or worse effects.

An example of such an indirect influence is the ability of various family types to maintain stability. Gender complementarity, which is the basis of a heterosexual marriage, supports family stability. One problem for same-sex families is their greater instability: female couples have the highest divorce rates of all forms of relationships, and within a few years, most male couples develop into open relationships that include many external sexual relationships. Family instability, in turn, has a negative impact on the well-being of both adults and children.

The article by the paper *Keskisuomalainen* obscures these facts from the reader's view by titling Jokinen's interview: "There is no best family type". This sends a misleading message: There is no particular reason to strive to maintain an intact nuclear family, as both adults and children are equally well, even if you divorce and remain a single parent or enter into a new romantic relationship after the divorce. The title obscures the importance of family stability for the well-being of adults and children and the child's central need for identity and relationships, which is best met as the child grows up in the intact marital family of his or her biological father and mother.

The crucial question that Jokinen fails to discuss is this: How does genderless marriage affect children's inherent natural rights? As human beings in search of their identity and life's meaning, children have a special need to trace their origin and to live in touch with it. Margaret Somerville points out, that children have three fundamental human rights with respect to their biological origins (their very coming into being) that cannot be taken away from them without incurring incalculable harm: "their rights to knowledge of their biological origins; their rights to be reared within their immediate and wider biological families; and their rights to a parent of each sex."

The biological origin of a human child in a love relationship between a woman and man forms the basis for her identity in several respects: (1) Her moral identity as a human being with inherent

worth is supported by the fact that her existence is the fruit of the love between her mother and father. (2) Her social identity is founded on the web of social relations where she is located as the child of her parents. (3) A foundation of her sexual identity is the awareness that she is the fruit of the love between a man and a woman. (4) She acquires her national identity by association with her kin and its place in the wider community of a nation. In this way, she is able to locate her special place as a member of humanity. (5) Her biological origin connects her with previous generations and with human history. To break this historical connection leaves her without an acknowledged place within the chain of human generations. (6) Through her historical origin she participates in her mother's and father's cultural heritages with their languages, literature, and art.³⁷ Man-woman marriage naturally combines all these dimensions of children's identity in one integrated whole instead of leaving children with a disconnected web of ambiguous sources of identity and unanswered questions that hamper their coming to know who they are. Genderless marriage undermines children's right to an integrated identity by setting fatherless and motherless families as an ideal: the structure of SSM separates children either from their biological mother or father and thereby deprives them of the opportunity to develop an integrated moral, social, sexual, historical, and kinship identity in relation to their double biological origin

The inability of a same-sex relationship to realize the unitive and procreative goods of marriage is brought into sharp focus in its failure to support the father-mother-child bond. According to the Harvard sociologist Carle Zimmerman's classic *Family and Civilization* the rise and fall of civilization is dependent on the strength of that bond: In familism "we can approach closely that dream of the philosophers, determining the 'first' cause in social systems." When "we speak of the 'fall' of great civilizations like those of Rome or Greece, in which an inner decay is the main agency, we are justified in giving an absolute causal analysis" in terms of familistic decay.

The negative social consequences of the disintegration of the family are a central focus of contemporary family sociology. Extensive meta-analyses of relevant social science research show the benefit of the intact family of married biological parents for children's healthy development and the well-being of society

Jokinen thus disregards the fact that stable bodily unions aimed at procreation are universally distinguished from other relationships involving friendship and companionship. He forgets that although marriage is constantly evolving, it "reflects one idea that does not change: For every child, a mother and a father." While not all gender-diverse marriages produce children, the structure of gender-diverse marriage secures that every child is born into the home of her biological parents. To break this structure violates children's identity and relationship rights. Same-sex unions structurally separate the child from either her biological father or mother

While addressing the question of "whether justice requires the acceptance of same-sex marriage by state and church,"³³ Wolterstorff argues that homosexuals are a vulnerable and oppressed minority whose rights we should be defending. Yet Margaret Somerville points out that even though homosexuals are a vulnerable group, "as adults their claims take second place to children's needs and rights. Moreover, in upholding children's rights we are acting in the best interests of all children, whether their sexual orientation later proves to be straight or gay, and of all citizens, because, at one stage, all of us are children."