

Everyone can agree
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Child Well-being and the Family. David Cameron, in his June 21, 2006 speech to parents, hosted by the National Family and Parenting Institute, declared that “ Everyone can agree that a stable family background is most likely to deliver the environment that children need.” While this statement can quite justifiably be accepted as the truth, the concept of the family has undergone a metamorphosis over the years, in tune with a changing culture and society, to include issues of cohabitation, single-parenthood and same-sex parents. Therefore, Cameron’s statement lends itself to elucidation. A stable family background, founded on marriage, and constituted of a mother and a father, provides the optimal environment for the child.

It is the institution of marriage which provides the foundation for a stable family. Research has led to the consensus that “ Families based on marriage are, on an average, healthier, wealthier, and more stable than any other family forms” (Civitas web site). Marriage contributes to the stability of the family and to the well-being of both adults and children in a plethora of ways. It ensures a mutual sense of responsibility towards the children and the sharing of resources. Children have a good relationship with their married parents, mainly due to the time spent together. Marriage increases the probability of the children themselves entering into stable marriages. Economically, marriage is linked to higher income and thus, a higher standard of living for the child. Children of married parents achieve greater academic success, earn university degrees and have high-status employment. These children also enjoy better physical health, have lower rates of alcohol and drug abuse, have fewer mental health problems, are less likely to indulge in delinquent behavior and are at less risk of experiencing child abuse (Civitas web site. Factsheets on the Family).

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The traditional family structure, composed of the two birth parents, contributes best to family stability and child well-being. Single parent families, which may be the result of bereavement, separation, divorce or bearing children outside wedlock, fail to meet the material and psychological needs of the child. Children of lone mothers have higher chances of living in poverty and deprivation, of getting into trouble at school, playing truant, being excluded and dropping out, having adjustment and socialization problems, being subject to physical, emotional or sexual abuse, indulging in smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, of running away from home and of becoming teenage parents. Breakdown of two birth parent families has been linked to increased societal violence and crime (O'Neill. Civitas web site.). Opponents of the idea of marriage being the only institution for a stable family maintain that cohabitation also ensures commitment towards, and caring of, children. However, statistics show that only 8% of children in married families experience their parent's divorce before the age of five, as opposed to 52% of children of cohabitantes (Factsheets on the Family). Some people also contend that single-parent families, bolstered usually by support from grandparents, are perfectly capable of optimum child care. But experience clearly shows that single-parent households are usually in the lowest income percentile and these children are more likely to live in poverty. It is the two-parent family which is the strongest predictor of the child attaining physical and psychological well-being and high socioeconomic status (O'Neill. Civitas web site).

It can be emphatically said that the family, based on marriage and the two birth-parents model, is the foremost contributor to a child's well-being.

Marriage is a life-long relationship and both the father and the mother are
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essential to fulfill needs, from serving as role models to giving the guidance and attention which children require to develop into responsible, caring members of society.

Works Cited.

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