



The Social Benefits of Marriage Talking Points

● *Marriage is a Fundamental, Positive & Universal Social Institution*

A Centers for Disease Control report notes, “Marriage is associated with a variety of positive outcomes, and dissolution of marriage is associated with negative outcomes for men, women, and their children.”¹

“Marriage is a virtually universal human institution. In all the wildly rich and various cultures flung throughout the ecosphere, in society after society, whether tribal or complex, and however bizarre, human beings have created systems of publicly approved sexual union between men and women that entail well-defined responsibilities of mothers and fathers. Not all these marriage systems look like our own, which is rooted in a fusion of Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian culture. Yet everywhere, in isolated mountain valleys, parched deserts, jungle thickets, and broad plains, people have come up with some version of this thing called marriage. Why?”²

● *Marriage is Good for Men and Women*

Some General Benefits:

Personal Stability:

- understanding
- support
- encouragement (cure for aloneness/loneliness)
- ongoing stable commitment: (friends are transitory, will come and go).

Personal Health:

- nutritional (generally healthier diet)
- mental/psychological (companionship, friendship)
- physical (longevity, happiness studies³)
- sexual: safe sex (fewer STD's, emotionally safer sex)

Financial /Material Health:

- sharing and pooling resources and talents
Breadwinner/homemaker
- tax benefits

¹ Matthew D. Bramlett & William D. Mosher, 2001. “First Marriage Dissolution, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States,” CDC Advance Data no. 323 (May 31): 1.

² Maggie Gallagher, 2003, “What Marriage Is For” The Weekly Standard, Vol 8, Issue 45 (August 4/11).

³ Married women are less likely to experience domestic violence than cohabitating and dating women. William J. Doherty, et al., 2002. *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values): 6 (co-authors include William J. Doherty, William A. Galston, Norval D. Glenn, John Gottman, Barbara Markey, Howard J. Markman, Steven Nock, David Popenoe, Gloria G. Rodriguez, Isabel V. Sawhill, Scott M. Stanley, Linda J. Waite, and Judith Wallerstein).



● ***Marriage Is Good For Children***

Research clearly demonstrates that family structure matters for children, and the family structure that helps the most is a family headed by two-biological parents in a low-conflict marriage.⁴ A Center for Law and Social Policy Brief concludes, “Research indicates that, on average, children who grow up in families with both their biological parents in a low-conflict marriage are better off in a number of ways than children who grow up in single-, step-, or cohabitating-parent households.”⁵

Some General Benefits:

Personal Stability:

- understanding
- encouragement
- support

Socialization/Norms:

- moral training—teaching right from wrong.
- cultural rules/mores/norms

-manners: social lubrication (how to get along with others)

Modeling: there are strengths that only a mom can bring, and strengths only a dad can bring.

Children from intact families (mom and dad together) demonstrated significantly lower incidents of negative social behavior (premarital sex, underage drinking, school expulsion, shoplifting, fighting, etc) especially children from intact families that attend church regularly⁶.

Twelve leading marriage scholars surveying recent studies concluded the following:

- Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage.
- Children raised outside of intact married homes are more likely to divorce or become unwed parents themselves.
- Children in intact married homes are healthier, on average, than children on other family forms.
- Divorce increases rates of mental illness and distress in children, including the risk of suicide⁷.

⁴ Kristen Anderson Moore, et al., 2002 “Marriage from a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children and What Can We Do About It?”, *Child Trends Research Brief* (Washington, D. C.; Child Trends) (June): 1 (available at <http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/MarriageRB602.pdf>). This research brief on family structure does not compare outcomes for children in same-sex couple households to children in other types of families.

⁵ Mary Parke, 2003. “Are Married Parents Really Better for Children? What Research Says About the Effects of Family Structure on Child Well-Being,” *CLASP Policy Brief* no. 3 (Washington, D.C. ; Center for Law and Social Policy) (May): 6.

⁶ Patrick Fagan, et al., 2007 “A Portrait of Family and Religion in America: Key Outcomes for the Common Good” Heritage Foundation (November).

⁷ William J. Doherty, et al., 2002. *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values): 6 (co-authors include William J. Doherty, William A. Galston, Norval D. Glenn,



- **Same Sex “Marriage,” Where Legalized, is Not Valued By Most Homosexuals**

“THE PROBLEM with endorsing gay marriage is not that it would allow a handful of people to choose alternative family forms, but that it would require society at large to gut marriage of its central presumptions about family in order to accommodate a few adults' desires.”⁸

In countries where homosexual marriage is legally recognized, there has been surprisingly low demand. A survey of marriage statistics from various foreign countries that legally recognize same-sex unions suggests that today between 1% and 5% of gays and lesbians have entered into a same-sex marriage.⁹ The highest demand of 16% was noted in Massachusetts.¹⁰

In those same European countries, the homosexual “divorce” rate was significantly higher than that of the heterosexual population. Overall, gay male couples were 1.5 times more likely (50 percent more likely) to divorce within the 8-year study period and lesbian couples in legal unions were 2.67 times as likely (167 percent more likely) to divorce.¹¹

- ***Marriage is Good for America***

The family is the fundamental building block of society. When marriages and families are healthy, communities thrive; when marriages break down, communities break down. Moral, polite, physically healthy and stable individuals make better community members and citizens. Thus, you can clearly see that as the family goes, so goes the society.

Twelve leading family scholars recently summarized the research literature this way: “Marriage is an important social good associated with an impressively broad array of positive outcomes for children and adults alike....[W] **hether American society succeeds or fails in building a healthy marriage culture is clearly a matter of legitimate public concern.**”¹²

John Gottman, Barbara Markey, Howard J. Markman, Steven Nock, David Popenoe, Gloria G. Rodriguez, Isabel V. Sawhill, Scott M. Stanley, Linda J. Waite, and Judith Wallerstein).

⁸ Maggie Gallagher (2003) “What Marriage is For” The Weekly Standard (August 4).

⁹ Maggie Gallagher & Joshua K. Baker, 2003. *Demand for Same-Sex Marriage: Evidence from the United States, Canada & Europe*. Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, Vol. 3, No. 1 (April 27): 7.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Gunnar Anderson, et al., “Divorce-Risk in Same-Sex ‘Marriages’ in Norway and Sweden.” Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America (April 3), available at <http://paa2004.princeton.edu/download.asp?submissionId=40208> .

¹² William J. Doherty, et al., at 6.