

EXERCISE

READ THE PASSAGE BELOW. THEN, MAKE NOTES OF WHAT SUGGESTIONS/CHANGES MIGHT YOU SUGGEST TO THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARGUMENT?

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Critical Response Paper

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Margaret Somerville's "The Case Against Same Sex Marriage" contains a very subtle and sophisticated argument against same sex marriages. She argues it's a cultural construct, claiming "Marriage is, and has been for millennia, the institution that forms and upholds for society the cultural and social values and symbols related to procreation" (200). Denying homophobia and claiming mutual respect. Somerville says that society needs marriage to establish some sort of cultural meaning, which helps to maintain its cultural and biological functions, rearing children (205). However, the foundation of Somerville's argument is deeply rooted in discrimination against homosexuals.

Most of Somerville's argument focused on the idea of "pair-bonding," a term used to describe animals which form intimate bonds between each other and care for their offspring. The idea of pair-bonding assumes that there is a natural process between a female entity and a male entity. However, there're many different animals in the animal kingdom which don't form pair-bonds and still have children without the mother/father paradigm. Even in primates, which one would assume is our closest animal relative that pair-bonding is ever-present, pair-bonding is not always static.

For example, there's more dynamic behavior in primates such as Gibbons and Bonobos, which although mate within a family don't necessarily pair bond. At times there are pair-bonds; however, they function as a collective group and more or less "swing" between mates. Moreover, Bonobos, like Macaques, engage openly and regularly in homosexual behavior (Owen 1) while still rearing children.

Somerville, though claiming to respect homosexuals, puts forth the idea that "[B]ringing children into a same-sex relationship should not be seen as within the norm, but rather as an exception to it" points to the idea that homosexual couples should be not be seen openly. Moreover, she suggests that we shouldn't recognize same-sex couples relationships in marriage. But, why's it okay to respect their pair-bond with children, put them in the background, and then not allow them to marry?

Now, perhaps it's okay to recognize that marriage is an important construct between a man and a woman. Yet, why limit it? I have known some gay couples who were better fathers (and even better motherly figures) to children than some of the mothers and fathers that I see out in public. Marriage is just a word and a concept, albeit legal. Yet, they're already legal proceedings recognizing homosexual marriages. So, what's all this denial of homosexual marriage doing for straight marriages? What's the purpose? Most often, the answer is religious doctrine.

Given the idea that pair-bonding exists between man and women, man and man, and woman and woman, wouldn't it be sensible to suggest that marriage could exist in such conditions? After all, child rearing and procreation will still continue to occur outside

of traditional marriages. So, why not give the legal implications a rest. It can still be sanctified in a religious context. So, why not allow it in a legal context?

Works Cited

Somerville, Margaret. "The Case Against Same Sex Marriage" *The Contemporary Reader*. Ninth Edition. Ed. Gary Goshgarian. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2008. 200-205.

Owens, James. "Homosexual Activity Among Animals Stirs Debate." *National Geographic News*. 23 July 2004. National Geographic Online. 27 January 2010. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/07/0722_040722_gayanimal.html>