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CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Opinion Piece - Youth Researcher

Marriage equality Referendum 2015

So as a 16 year old, what is my understanding of this referendum? The vote on same-sex marriage will be held on the 22nd of May this year. Five years ago same-sex couples were given the right to a civil partnership. This referendum will be held to extend full equality to all relationships. If the public decide to vote YES on this issue, a same-sex couple will have the same opportunity to marry as an opposite-sex couple.

Why should Ireland need to vote for it, should it not be passed anyway? In my opinion it should be a given that everyone should have equal access to rights. However, a debate is always of benefit.

I strongly believe that our country should vote YES. Everyone should have equal rights no matter whom you fall in love with a man or a woman, and if you desire to have children there shouldn't be a law that will stop you. Not only are they agreeing to legalise marriage but same-sex couples will have all the same rights that an opposite-sex couple has. This includes having a child. Spokesman Dr John Murray of the Iona Institute said: "This debate is really about the value we attach to a child having a mother and a father as distinct from two fathers or two mothers. This is a strong issue for the NO voters because they do not think it is fair to a child to be raised by a same sex couple.

They think that the child will be losing out on things in life by not having a male figure and a female figure looking after them.

It is known that the "ideal" family is to have a mother and a father. Children are watching cartoons where a male figure and a female figure fall in love and they understand from them that this is the "normal" family. A classic example of this is the famous cartoon characters Minnie and Mickey mouse. This is where it all starts. From a young age children understand from cartoons what a family is made up by and by influence from your own family that's where the idea of a "normal" family comes from.

When I mention the word family I question it. Define a family? So I looked it up in the Oxford Dictionary. The first definition for family is: "a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit." It does not say that a

family consists of a mother and a father. So what is the "ideal" family? My view on the ideal family is that there is no ideal family, every family will be different no matter how many mothers or how many fathers you have. As long as it is a loving family that is the most important thing in my opinion. As a young person having a family that loves their children no matter who they are is a lot more important than the make-up of the family.

Grainne Healy, chairman of Marriage Equality, said: This referendum is about Ireland valuing its citizens equally and by introducing marriage equality to Ireland it would do that and strengthen our reputation as champions for human rights and equality. All anyone wants is to have a loving family and who is to say a man can't do a woman's job or a woman can't do man's job. If anything, in my opinion a same-sex couple could potentially cherish their child more and work hard to make a good life for them. It isn't easy to have and rear children. Going down the difficult path of having a child would mean they must strongly desire to have a child. Who is to say it may even make them better parents than an opposite sex couple with children.

Some people are voting NO because they think it would cause more child bullying in our society if you had parents who were a same-sex couple. But shouldn't you teach your child not to bully. Everyone is different it shouldn't matter in respect of your race, your skin colour, gender or if you're gay or

lesbian. You should teach your child not to bully rather than saying people should change just so a bully won't affect them!

I am a young student I may not be highly knowledgeable in this area but I'd like to share my point of view as a young person, because I don't have the right to vote, but if I could it would be a yes. I discussed this with all my classmates in class and every single one of them would most definitely vote yes for the reasons I have discussed, if they had the option to do so. This matter will be mostly affecting young people in the coming years. A yes vote will mean a lot to the younger generation because we are the people who will be around to hopefully see this law through in the next generation. There is a strong tradition in Ireland for opposite sex marriage and it would be mostly because of these traditions that the older generation (some though not all) might not like to change. Also I think because of religious beliefs the older gneration may not vote yes.

Voters please don't take for granted that the Yes vote will go through. If you are for equality in marriage vote yes!!! And even if you are not voting yes make sure you cast your vote...unlike me you have one!

Ailish Gowran (16 years old)

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