ADDITION AMONG SAME-SEX COUPLES

An increasing number of sexual minority individuals and couples are seeking to adopt children, but many face discrimination and legal obstacles. Studies indicate that the adoptive children of same-sex parents have similar psychosocial outcomes to the adoptive children of different-sex parents. Facilitating same-sex adoptions would help many children seeking homes and would save federal and state governments money.

Many children need homes, and many sexual minorities are seeking children.

- In 2011, approximately 400,540 children in the United States were without permanent homes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). An estimated two million sexual minority people are interested in adopting children (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007).

- Research suggests that same-sex couples are more likely than different-sex couples to adopt older, special-needs, and minority children, for whom it is difficult to find homes (Brodzinsky & Pertman, 2011).

Same-sex couples seeking to adopt have similar resources and approaches as different-sex couples seeking to adopt.

- Same-sex couples raising adopted children are generally at least as old, at least as educated, and have at least as many economic resources as different-sex adoptive parents (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007).

- Same-sex couples adopting children have been shown to have similar parenting approaches, parenting stress, and couple relationship satisfaction as different-sex couples adopting children (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010).

Same-sex couples face legal and discriminatory barriers to adoption.

- In most states, adoption laws pertaining to sexual minorities are unclear; parenting rights are determined by judges on a case-by-case basis (Human Rights Campaign, 2011).

- In 2003, only 60% of adoption agencies accepted applications from gay and lesbian people, and just 40% placed children with adoptive parents whom they knew to be gay or lesbian. Many directors of adoption agencies are unaware of their state’s policy on the legality of same-sex adoptions (Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri, 2002).

- Sexual minorities seeking to adopt often face stressors such as discrimination, prejudice, and lack of support from family members (Goldberg & Smith, 2008), birth families, and adoption agencies (Goldberg, Moyer, Kinkler, & Richardson, 2012).

- These barriers have psychological consequences. For example, same-sex couples living in states with unfavorable legal climates regarding same-sex adoption are vulnerable to internalized homophobia and increases in depressive and anxious symptoms during the transition into parenthood (Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

Children adopted by same-sex couples have similar psychosocial outcomes as children adopted by different-sex couples.

- An estimated 65,600 adopted children and 14,100 foster children are living with a gay or lesbian parent (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007).

- Adopted children feel equally close to same-sex adoptive parents as to different-sex adoptive parents (Erich, Hall, Kanenberg, & Case, 2009).
• These children demonstrate virtually the same psychological and psychosocial outcomes as those adopted or fostered by different-sex couples (Farr & Patterson, 2013), a conclusion which also holds true for high-risk adoptees (Lavner, Waterman, & Peplau, 2012).

**Banning or hindering same-sex adoption would have severe financial consequences.**
• Research suggests that a national ban on LGB foster care could cost from $87 to $130 million each year in foster care expenditures, while annual costs to individual states could range from $100,000 (South Dakota) to $27,000,000 (California). Up to 14,000 children currently placed with LGB foster parents would be displaced (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007).

**Many organizations explicitly support same-sex adoption.**
• Based on findings such as these, many scientific and health-focused organizations support adoption by sexual minority parents, including:
  o American Academy of Pediatrics
  o American Medical Association
  o American Psychiatric Association
  o American Psychological Association
  o Child Welfare League of America
  o National Adoption Center
  o North American Council on Adoptable Children
  o National Association of Social Workers

**References**


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1 See the SPSSI fact-sheet on same-sex parenting for more details on the psychological and social outcomes of children of same-sex parents.