

One of the most influential roles parents play in the development of their children is the shaping of their gender identity. Kids grow up to learn that boys wear pants and girls wear dresses, and their parents are there to reinforce these traditional values and notions of our society. Fathers teach their sons to play baseball and ride bikes while mothers bake and do crafts with their daughters. Substitute one mother and one father for two fathers or two mothers and kids are likely to develop confusion regarding their gender identity (Marriage and Family Encyclopedia). "Men and women bring diversity to parenting," offering different contributions to the family and development of children (Hansen). "Two women can both be good mothers, but neither can be a good father" (Hansen).

It is evident that children who are raised by same-sex parents are more prone to psychological and physical health effects like social disorders, mental breakdowns and gender issues (Sullivan, Family Research Council). While research is still incomplete on the extent of the issues children face, Ken Connor, President of the Family Research Council, claims that children should not be used as guinea pigs in a social experiment arguing that laws should stay in place until more research is performed and more conclusive evidence is available (Saleton). Society at large stands against gay adoption because gays are more prone to infidelity, un-stable relationships and illnesses than are straight couples (Saleton). The International Journal of Epidemiology reported that among homosexuals, "there is an increased incidence of suicide, depression, multiple sexual partners, and domestic violence compared to the heterosexual population," making for an unstable environment in which to raise children in (Saleton).

For a more in depth understanding on how same-sex adoption undermines traditional family values I will first explain what constitutes same-sex adoptions and the idea of traditional family values surrounding the issue by defining several key terms. I will then state the facts of the current situation of same-sex adoption in the U.S. Next, I will establish and explain criteria for evaluating how adoption by gays and lesbians is detrimental to traditional family values.

It is first important to define one of the most influential terms surrounding the issue of same-sex adoption, family. A family is defined as "patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family, and biology and marriage define family relationships and regulate rights, privileges, and benefits among family members and against the state" (Appell). It is important to note the significance of the terms patriarchal and heterosexual in this definition. Historically, families have been patriarchal in nature, meaning that the family revolves around the male. This is possible amongst gay men, but not for same-sex couples comprised of two women. Families have also been defined as heterosexual in that they consist of both male and female parents. Two other key terms to point out are biology and marriage, suggesting that adoption plays no part in defining or making up a family and their traditional values.

Another notion of family comes from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints which points to Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, to define family. They also go on to say that Abraham, a man, and his family began the history of Israel with his wife and their offspring (lds.org).

In addition to defining family, it is also important to consider the meaning of family values which can be defined as the "traditional set of social standards defined by the

family and a history of customs that provide the emotional and physical basis for raising a family" (Duffy). Both traditional and history suggest the idea of a heterosexual value of family. Also, the American Family Association strives to protect traditional family values in part by working "to strengthen families, to protect families from government intrusion, and to preserve the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of a husband and wife" (American Family Association). Other ideas associated with traditional family values are stability and longevity. In relation, the Traditional Values Coalition considers traditional values to be "a moral code and behavior based upon the Old and New Testaments" (Traditional Values Coalition). Under this definition, The Traditional Values Coalition puts strong emphasis on the institution of a family as one between a man and a woman and that the Bible clearly denounces actions of sodomy (Traditional Values Coalition).

Lastly, it is important to understand what adoption means. Adoption is the "taking of a child into one's family, creating a parent to child relationship, and giving him or her all the rights and privileges of one's own child, including the right to inherit as if the child were the adopter's natural child" (dictionary.law.com)

The current status of the United States adoption and foster care system is that an estimated fifty-two thousand homosexuals have become parents through adoption. (Appell). In addition, same-sex couples have on average two children, under 18 years old, living in their home according to Census information from December of 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau). Furthermore, out of the total population of adopted children in the United States, an estimated 65,000 live with a gay or lesbian parent (US Census Bureau). As for the pertinent geographical area of the issue, Florida is the only state with an out-right law banning gays and lesbians from adopting ("Same Sex Adoption

Laws"). However, states such as Mississippi allow single individuals to adopt but not same-sex couples ("Gay Adoption"). Adoption by same-sex couples is allowed in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Washington D.C. ("Gay Adoption").

Next, the established criteria for evaluating same-sex adoption as undermining traditional family values are the biological inability for same-sex couples to parent, inadequate relationship duration, fidelity, and health risks.

First, the gay community cannot biologically reproduce without the help of an outside party; thereby resulting in many feelings regarding their lifestyle as unfit and negatively affecting children (Appell, Sullivan). As mentioned before, kids raised under the gay lifestyle often encounter struggles with mental breakdowns and social disorders as a result of their childhood growing up with two parents of the same-sex (Sullivan). The impact that two mothers or two fathers versus one of each has on a child is significant. There is an assumption that one partner plays a female role and one partner plays a male role; however that is generally not true, resulting in an absence of one important figure in a child's life (Patterson). It is also found that lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women and vis versa for gay men (Sullivan).

The second criteria which allows for the evaluation of how same-sex adoption undermines family values is the relationship duration of same-sex couples and its effects on children. Same-sex male relationships last only a small proportion of the time of most heterosexual marriages, with most lasting between one to three years and the next highest as four to seven ("Comparing the Lifestyles"). Additionally, in a survey conducted by Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census in 2003-2004, 15 percent

responded that their current relationship had lasted 12 years or longer with only 5 percent having lasted more than 20 years ("Comparing the Lifestyles"). Similarly, *Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times*, found that "few homosexual relationships last longer than two years, with many men reporting hundreds of lifetime partners" ("Comparing the Lifestyles"). With the longevity of most same-sex relationships falling below that of heterosexual couples, it is evident that this is a significant factor in determining the ability of same-sex couples to adopt.

In addition to the longevity of same-sex relationships, it is equally important to look at the patterns of fidelity amongst same-sex couples. First, it is important to understand that same-sex couples view monogamy differently than it has traditionally been known amongst heterosexual couples. In relationships where same-sex couples consider themselves to be in a committed relationship, most believed that relationships outside the marriage were the norm and that having to comply to "traditional heterosexual" standards of monogamy was considered oppression("Comparing the Lifestyles"). The *Journal of Sex Research* found that, amongst heterosexual couples, 77 percent of married men and 88 percent of married women were faithful in their own marriage ("Comparing the Lifestyles"). This stands in contrast to the 4.5 percent of homosexual men who had reported that they experienced fidelity in their relationship ("Comparing the Lifestyles").

Lastly, the health and stress factors of same-sex couples also stand as criteria with which to measure the impact of same-sex adoption on family values. In relation to monogamy, Paul Van de Ven of the *Journal of Sex Research* found that the normal range of sexual partners amongst homosexuals was between 101-500 people

("Comparing the Lifestyles"). Because same-sex couples tend to have more partners, this leads to high risk behavior and added stress due to HIV/AIDS and other diseases (Patterson). Even the same-sex couples who remain faithful with steady partners are subject to these added stress factors due to steady partners contributing more to the cause of HIV than casual partners due to the increase likelihood of high risk behavior with a steady partner ("Comparing the Lifestyles"). With same-sex couples being at greater risk for contracting HIV and other diseases due to the high average of sexual partners, it is clear that health and stress factors are reasons why same-sex adoption undermines traditional family values.

In conclusion, there is no substitution for one mother and one father. The idea that one partner plays a female role with the other as a male has been proven a false one, omitting an important role from the lives of children being raised with same-sex parents. Religious ideals of traditional family values also play an important part of the violation of same-sex adoption, dating back to Adam and Eve. Because of these traditional notions of family values and the discussed criteria - relationship longevity/stability, patterns of fidelity, and health and stress - children raised among same-sex couples suffer from health and physical effects resulting in gender identity issues and mental breakdowns.

## Works Cited

- "American Family Association." Web. <<http://www.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=31>>.
- Appell, Annette R. "The Endurance of Biological Connection: Heteronormativity, Same-Sex Parenting and the Lessons of Adoption." *BYU Journal of Public Law* 22.2 (2008): 289-325. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Feb. 2011.
- "Comparing the Lifestyles of Homosexual Couples to Married Couples." *Family Research Council*. Web. <<http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=IS04C02>>.
- Duffy. "Family Values." *Parent IQ*. Web. <[www.parentiq.com](http://www.parentiq.com)>.
- "Family Research Council." Web. <<http://www.frc.org/human-sexuality#homosexuality>>.
- "Family." *The Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints*. Web. <<http://lds.org/scriptures/bd/family?lang=eng&letter=f>>.
- "Gay Adoption in the U.S. and Abroad." *PBS: Public Broadcasting Service*. 07 Apr. 2006. Web. 09 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.pbs.org/>>.
- Hansen, Ph.D., Trayce. "Love Isn't Enough." *Gay Adoption Issues*. Web. <<http://payingatentiontothesky.com/causes-of-homosexuality-a-christian-appraisal-of-the-data/gay-adoption-issues/>>.
- Hill, Gerald, and Kathleen Hill. "Adoption." Def. 1. *Legal Dictionary*. The People's Law Dictionary. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <<http://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=2347>>.
- Patterson, Charlotte. "Family Relationships of Lesbians and Gay Men." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62.4: 1052-069. *JSTOR*. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566724>>.
- Saleton, William. "Should Gays Adopt Kids?" *Slate*. Web. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2061789/>>.
- "Same-Sex Adoption Laws By State." *Liberty Counsel*. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <[http://www.lc.org/profamily/samesex\\_adoption\\_by\\_state.pdf](http://www.lc.org/profamily/samesex_adoption_by_state.pdf)>.
- "Sexuality in Childhood." *Marriage and Family Encyclopedia*. Web. <<http://family.jrank.org/pages/1539/Sexuality-in-Childhood-Gender-Issues.html>>.
- Sullivan, Andrew. "Not in Front of the Children? Same-Sex Marriage and Parenthood." *Same-Sex Marriage, Pros & Cons*. *Google Scholar*. Web. <<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=tOANjJswdRQC&oi=fnd&pg=PT1&dq=Andrew+Sullivan+same+sex+marriage&ots=Utv9x5dhlC&sig=PRoMsMO22hDLelh3Nvx0qEQgc#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.
- "Traditional Values Defined." *The Traditional Values Coalition*. Web. <<http://www.traditionalvalues.org/defined.php>>.