

**SINGLE-SEX FAMILIES DRIVE AN EMERGING 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN SOCIAL PARADIGM SHIFT:  
RESEARCH DEBATES EFFECTS ON CHILDREN**

by

Maxine Modell

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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## **ABSTRACT**

Spanning merely 44 years between mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the present, three remarkable events informed the lives of homosexual individuals as well as the cultural profile of American families: in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental illness; in 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision compelling all 50 states to recognize marriage between lesbian couples and gay couples; and in 2016, Mississippi was the last state to prohibit single-sex couples from adopting children. Considering these facts, it is easier to grasp the overwhelming inequitable obstacles facing this population, particularly those individuals who long to be parents.

In Chapter One, I will track some decades-old judicial and cultural obstacles, and advancements, marking the gay and lesbian community's journey toward the right to marry and to build families. Included among the challenges I will discuss are: 1) national and state governments' resistance to the idea of homosexuals fostering children; 2) national legal and public opinion roadblocks to the idea of homosexuals adopting children; 3) complex custody challenges resulting from currently available medical and technical advances, including in vitro fertilization (IVF) and surrogacy; and 4) print and electronic media coverage of these issues.

In Chapter Two, I will collate conflicting research data supporting and/or opposing the argument that children raised in single-sex households can achieve optimal cognitive and social potentials that parallel those of children raised in traditional heterosexual families.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A swiftly moving social paradigm shift is altering the profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> century American family. Single-sex couples, married or not, are adopting children and/or bringing babies into the world via in vitro fertilization (IVF) or surrogacy options. As observed by Frederick Bozett and Marvin Sussman in their book, *Homosexuality and Family Relations*, “. . . new paradigms will effect a transformation of dominant values, perceptions, and behaviors of straight persons regarding homosexuality and its legitimacy as a life style. A paradigmatic revolution is underway worldwide” (Bozett 6). This population and their advocates comprise the driving force leading this cultural leap forward.

In Chapter Two, I will track some late 20<sup>th</sup> – to-present-century judicial and societal obstacles facing homosexual couples who wish to become parents. Included among the challenges I will discuss are: 1) national and state government’s resistance to the idea of homosexuals fostering children; 2) national legal and public opinion roadblocks to the idea of homosexuals adopting children; 3) complex custody challenges resulting from currently available medical and technical advances including in vitro fertilization (IVF) and surrogacy; and 4) print and electronic media coverage of these issues.

Arguably the most significant national victory homosexuals and their supporters experienced occurred on June 15, 2015, when the U.S. Supreme Court issued a stunning landmark decision compelling all 50 states to acknowledge gay

marriage and all attendant spousal benefits, thereby sanctioning a new cultural model. This historic ruling capped previous decades during which 35 states and the District of Columbia had already legalized gay marriage, thus this ruling overturned the remaining state restrictions in place.(governing.com accessed 1/5/17). Another significant milestone was reached in March 2016 following a federal judge's ruling that Mississippi's ban on same-sex couples adopting children was unconstitutional, making same-sex adoptions permissible in all 50 states. This ruling validated hundreds of couples throughout the nation who, for years, had been filing local law suits against states that prohibited gay adoptions.

My personal connection to this sensitive polarizing social issue began decades ago when my young-adult son told me he was gay. My mind raced: thinking about what "gay" actually meant became relentless. I knew the challenges David was likely to face because of his non-traditional sexual identity; I feared how the family, particularly his beloved young nieces and nephew, would deal with his announcement; perhaps most threatening, I feared facing my own feelings about homosexuality, having never consciously given the subject much thought. One particular fear dominated the others spinning inside my head: would my son be denied the incalculable emotional riches and challenges of parenthood simply by virtue of prevailing laws and judgmental homophobic public sentiment?

Unfortunately, even though David was a graduate of a respected university, and economically and emotionally stable, he was unable to adopt a child. For my son, a realistic alternative mitigated this profound disappointment: David's answer was to share boundless love, wisdom, and endless exchanges of pure silliness with his sister's children, who continue to adore him. He moved on, and our culture continues to turn

some major corners. Although relevant broad-based discussions about healthy parenting options and trends remain prominent public-conversation topics, I was curious as to whether or not single-sex families were being included in the current dialogue? I welcomed a reason to search for answers.

Chapter Three of the thesis will collate recent and emerging research that examines the cognitive and social development of children who are raised by this growing population of committed, economically stable single-sex families, defined as children and parents who all have at least five years of co-residential stability. “This generation of children will shape the future development of non-traditional family structures, relevant developmental research, and public dialogue” (Rosenfeld 7). In addition, Chapter Three will examine, 1) interdisciplinary debates surrounding multiple research modalities; and 2) journal articles focusing on the impact these relatively new family structures will have on children. Extant data reflects conflicting opinions of scholars and educators who do, or do not, believe this cohort of children is likely to present developmental deficits when measured against earlier studies evaluating children raised in traditional families.

It is important to consider that much of the research predates gay right-to-marry and to-adopt decisions. As one consequence of the two legal milestones mentioned above, valuable earlier data on obstacles facing gay couples and the academic and cultural impact on their children has become the foundation upon which forthcoming more inclusive research will be based. Now free to marry, or not, same-sex couples have greater latitude when considering the possibility of building families. Legalizing gay marriage suggests a logical extension: the number of couples desiring

to bring children into the marriage is likely to increase. These families are indeed revolutionary as well as evolutionary.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LEGAL, CUSTODIAL, SOCIAL CHALLENGES**

In this chapter, I will explore the collective journey of homosexual couples who want to build families and their struggle against formidable social, judicial and custody obstacles that impede the goal of gaining widespread acceptance as average moms or dads, possessing a range of parenting skills and hopes as diverse as those of their heterosexual counterparts.

For countless centuries, prevailing Western religious and cultural norms identified a traditional model family unit as one comprising a married heterosexual couple and their natural, adopted, or stepchildren: Ideally, this arrangement provided family members with identity, stability, even genetic continuity. In the United States, that historically accepted standard was jolted when the U.S. Supreme Court reached a landmark decision compelling all 50 states to recognize same-sex marriages and all attendant spousal benefits, thereby sanctioning the birth of an exploding new cultural model. This unprecedented decision was not intended to negate or to diminish existing values and familiar customs; instead, it redefined a broader, more inclusive dual concept of marriage and family.

For mid-20<sup>th</sup> century gays and lesbians, the path to parenthood often began with inquiries about providing foster homes for children in need. Decades before same-sex couples won right-to-adopt and right-to-marry victories, many homosexual individuals and couples fought painful and precedent-setting battles for the approval of relevant agencies to fill foster-parent roles, even though thousands of children needed

placements. During the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anti-gay prejudice was almost palpable: AIDS became terrifying front-page news, not only for gay men, but for heterosexual individuals as well. A substantial portion of the public accepted prevailing social sentiment denouncing the gay life-style as immoral. Frequently, gays and lesbians, spanning an economic and educational spectrum, were stereotyped as child molesters or psychologically unstable, thus profoundly unfit to fill parental roles. “Homosexuals who wished to provide foster-care had few choices: remain silent about their sexual orientation, or lie, thus perpetuating a culture of invisibility and deceit” (Bozett 42).

The following time-line of positions taken by child-welfare agencies regarding foster home placements provides a framework to better understand the “invisible” position prospective gay or lesbian parents endured merely 35 years ago:

- 1973: Chicago, IL – The Director of the Department of Children and Family Services revealed that children observed to have “homosexual tendencies” were being placed in foster homes with gay parents.
- 1974: Washington State – The Department of Social and Health Services proposed new legislation that excluded gay men and lesbians from consideration as foster parents.
- 1974: Oregon – The Department of Human Resources prohibited the placement of any state-supervised children into gay foster homes.
- 1975: Vancouver, WA – A judge ordered a 16-year-old gay youth to be removed from his four-month foster placement with a gay couple although expert witnesses testified in favor of continued placement.
- 1976: California – The Department of Social Services adopted a policy allowing gay people with “clean records” and without a “proclivity to sexually assault children” to be licensed as foster parents (Ricketts 86).

As always, and by design, Americans rarely display consensus. Thus, defying formidable legal opposition between 1974 and 1979, New Jersey, New York,

Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., reported that lesbians and gay men were being approved as foster parents for homosexual adolescents. These forward-thinking states opened the door for more lenient same-sex fostering possibilities.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew toward conclusion, gay and lesbian couples gained tenuous ground in their collective legal and cultural effort toward winning broader fostering, adoption, and eventual marriage equality. A major obstructionist ruling facing gay couples and their advocates was the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Enacted in 1996 and signed into law by President Bill Clinton, DOMA, particularly Section 3, is considered by many legal experts to be the root of complex national adoption guidelines. Implicit in this portion, gay marriage, legal in some states and prohibited in others, created multiple cross-border benefits conflicts. This meant that even though some states did recognize same-sex marriages, adjacent states that did not were able to impose constraints on federal benefits married couples commonly received. For example, a couple who was legally married in “State A”, but resided in “State B”, where their marriage was not recognized, might not be able to receive insurance benefits for government employees and Social Security survivors’ benefits. Thus, in a very tangible way, Section 3 actually codified annulment of same-sex unions. “Supreme Court Has Overturned the Defense of Marriage Act,” ([gladd.org/marriage](http://gladd.org/marriage) *Wikipedia*. accessed May 4, 2015).

A significant and stunning turn of events related to DOMA occurred in 2011 when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Section 3 because it violated the Constitution’s “equal protection” promise, and would no longer be defended in court. Translated, this critical prelude to the 2015 marriage-rights decision granted legally

married same-sex couples the same spousal benefits received by their heterosexual peers, including:

- Health insurance and pension protections for federal employees' spouses
- Social security benefits for widows and widowers
- Support and benefits for military spouses
- Joint income-tax filing and exemption from federal estate taxes
- Immigration protections for binational couples
- Rights to creative and intellectual property
- Political contribution laws (gladd.org retrieved 10/28/16)

As mentioned earlier, in 2016 Mississippi became the last state to ban gay adoptions. Ironically, a lawsuit filed by four same-sex couples was in progress at the time the Mississippi legislature was debating the ban on gay adoption. The lawsuit argued that the state's ban, enacted in 2000, was legally untenable given the Supreme Court's 2015 decision to legalize gay marriage (USA Society, retrieved November 2016).

During the first decade of this century, many gay and lesbian couples identified themselves as either part of a domestic partnership or civil union. Responding to gay activists' protests for equality, domestic partnerships became a legal entity in the late 1990s. Typically enacted by municipalities or states, these legal ordinances recognized certain benefits traditionally reserved for heterosexual married couples including medical insurance coverage, pension and retirement benefits, and various tax benefits. In 2000, Vermont granted full spousal benefits of marriage to couples of the same sex, becoming the first state to recognize civil unions. By 2010, 169,000 gay couples lived in only 10 states that recognized these alternative family structures. (U.S.Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs, September 2011).

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century opened, voices of gay activists continued to resonate. Albeit slowly, skeptical public opinion began to reflect more tolerant views regarding homosexuals as parents. Acknowledged family experts of the era began urging a broad cross-section of policy-makers to adopt definitions of families that mirrored the diversity of actual families at this time in history. “Concurrently, legislators, courts, and social service providers were encouraged to respect human diversity without making judgements about life styles and changing family structures” (Bozett 29).

At that time, cultural advances toward marriage equality were slow because states – not the federal government – decided who was legally married. The rules began to bend in 2003 when Massachusetts recognized gay marriage, becoming the first state to contest federal law. In the controversial decision, State officials concluded that the Massachusetts Constitution did not explicitly allow only opposite-sex couples to marry. Shortly thereafter, local officials in California, New York, New Mexico and Oregon allowed same- sex marriages; ultimately, within a short time, these marriages were invalidated. For these couples and too many others, 2015 was only a dream.

An interesting counterintuitive criticism of the Massachusetts legislation was voiced by Stuart Taylor Jr. in his book, *Gay and Lesbian Families*. Taylor, a prolific conservative journalist and author, is a senior writer for the *National Journal* and contributing editor at *Newsweek*, who focuses on timely political issues and events. According to Taylor, “The Massachusetts ruling endorsing gay marriage is misguided because this is an issue to be decided by legislative representatives chosen by voting citizens, not the court system. The struggle for gay rights has made progress and it will continue to do so if rules are pursued through the appropriate channels for a . . .

democracy” (Taylor 93). Taylor appears to have a knack for finding a reasonable counter-argument neutralizing both sides within this national debate.

For religious and political conservatives, the 2015 right-to-marry ruling incited outrage, in spite of the fact that 35 states and the District of Columbia had been recognizing gay marriages for many years. In contrast, many social activists who had been working for years to gain social and legal equality for all people welcomed the long-hoped-for decision with resonant voices.

For the moment, although legal opposition to adoption and marriage is no longer a challenge for gay and lesbian couples who want children, complicated custody regulations continue to be intervening roadblocks. In large part, these obstacles have been the unexpected consequences of modern medical interventional technology. Some relevant medical background sets the stage for the development of ensuing 21<sup>st</sup> century custody battles affecting single-sex couples. Spanning the decades between the 1990s and the present, the art of reproductive technology (ART) advances have broadened parenting options for many couples. In the late 1990s, in vitro fertilization (IVF) became widely available, literally and figuratively introducing a revolutionary way to conceive babies. Surrogacy became another option for couples with fertility problems. Also referred to as third-party reproduction, this fragile process involves inseminating donor eggs or sperm into a third party’s uterus where an embryo then gestates.

(<http://www.lexisnexis.com.udel.idm.ococ.org/hottopics/inacademic/>).

Predictably, many informed members of the gay community also embraced these medical advances, contemplating for the first time parenting opportunities that went beyond fostering and adoption. Unfortunately, interventional technology created

yet more legal problems for many individuals who believed they were winning the battle for parenthood: appearing as another unforeseen consequence, the increasing use of this technology caused many states to impose rigid custody provisions that have become a legal minefield for many would-be parents, not only homosexual couples.

In a Spring 2011 issue of the *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy* essay entitled “The Winding Road to the Two-Dad Family: Issues Arising in Interstate Surrogacy for Gay Couples,” attorney Tiffany L. Palmer summarizes the current difficulties when gays and lesbian couples choose surrogacy.

Some states are considered “surrogacy-friendly” jurisdictions for surrogacy arrangements and for the issuance of pre-birth orders . . . . If the gestational carrier resides in or moves to a state that criminalizes surrogacy pre-birth orders for same-sex couples, it may not be possible for the intended parents to obtain a court order determining parentage . . . . However, as the laws relating to relationship recognition and surrogacy continue to change and evolve, the courts may see more interstate jurisdictional leniency. (Palmer 26).

Palmer continues by noting that even before a couple chooses a third-party reproductive procedure, many critical decisions must be made including the following:

1. Do one or both individuals want a biological connection?
2. Is the sperm or egg donor to be anonymous, or known to one or both individuals?
3. In the case of surrogacy, will the gestational mother use her own eggs or a donor egg?

Where traditional couples are generally supported for their courage and stamina during these emotionally and financially draining periods, gay couples frequently encounter inequitable and skeptical scrutiny emboldened by negative public opinion.

In combination, these medical interventions leading to conception translate into one startling fact: theoretically, one child could have five parents! The

possibilities include a genetic and social (non-biological) father, and a genetic, gestational, or social (non-biological) mother, and any combinations thereof. (Palmer). Considering the number of parties involved in any donor or surrogacy pregnancy, it is little wonder that determining legal parentage becomes a huge dilemma. For example, one member of a lesbian couple who opts to use a male donor or sperm bank might become pregnant. Similarly, gay men also can become legal parents through use of a surrogate mother. In the event of divorce or break-up, the other partner may be considered as a parent only after step-parent or second-parent paperwork has been legally filed.

Currently, according to Palmer, about 30 states grant variations of “second-parent adoptions” to gay and lesbian couples by law or lower court rulings. These options may include stepparent and legal joint adoption possibilities.” This category for adoptions ensures that a child has two legal parents in the event that one parent dies or becomes incapacitated. This straightforward school of thought exploded with the advancement of available reproductive options, creating a very real legal and social need to redefine the meaning of “parent.”

Until recently, a legal parent was defined as “the person who has the right to live with a child, provide financial support, and make decisions about the child’s education, well-being, and health” (Palmer ). In the vast majority of heterosexual marriages, both parents are automatically considered to be the child’s legal parents no matter how the child came into the family, whether adopted or conceived by alternative methods. If a divorce follows, the former partners are still considered the child’s legal parents. But, paraphrasing Nobel prize-winning poet Bob Dylan, the

times they are a-changin'. Adoption and custody are not necessarily symbiotic processes.

Two timely articles relating to the adoption barriers still facing single-sex couples appeared in *USA TODAY*. Reported by Richard Wolf in an article dated March 8, 2016, the concise piece cites a recent Supreme Court decision to unanimously overturn an Alabama court's refusal to recognize a same-sex adoption. The challenge came from V.L. (as identified in court papers), an Alabama woman who, with her unmarried partner, E.L. (as identified in court papers) had established temporary residence in Georgia so that V.L. might legally adopt E.L.'s three children. The couple broke up, but E.L. agrees with the Alabama Supreme Court, which ruled in September, 2016, that Georgia mistakenly granted V.L. joint custody of E.L.'s children. E.L.'s lawyers argued that "the Georgia court had no authority under Georgia law to award such an adoption . . ." Contrarily, the Supreme Court ruled that, "A state may not disregard the judgment of a sister state because it disagrees with reasoning underlying the judgment or deems it to be wrong on the merits. Rather, Alabama must give "full faith and credit" to the Georgia court's decision. According to Wolf, "...the case presented a test of an issue that crops up occasionally in state and federal courts since the Supreme Court struck down state bans on same sex marriage: can gays and lesbians still be denied adoption rights" (Wolf).

A second troubling article, entitled "Court Gives Parental Rights to Gay Partner," cites a case that actually originated more than a decade ago. Appearing on October, 5, 2016, and written by Greg Toppo, who references an Associated Press report that refers to a Boston, Massachusetts high court ruling stating that a "gay person may establish himself or herself as a child's presumptive parent even without a

biological relationship”(Toppo USA). This unanimous ruling, which overturned a lower court ruling, came from the same Massachusetts court that advocated same-sex marriage rights years earlier. The particular case in question revolves around two women who split up after a 13-year relationship. Conceived through artificial insemination, the two children’s biological mother was Julie Gallagher. After the couple parted, Gallagher’s former partner, Karen Partenen, wanted to be declared a full, legal parent. A family court judge dismissed Partenen’s request by deciding that because the two women were not married she did not meet adoption requirements under state law. Clearly, the four principals and the children cited in the above articles suffered a pain unknown to heterosexual couples facing similar relationship versus adoption crises.

Scholarly debates and public opinion surrounding positive and negative parenting patterns have been around for centuries. Understandably, single-sex orientation adds a new dimension to this timeless debate. On many fronts, the painful battles toward parenthood fought decades ago are becoming less oppressive. However, one glaring disparity between the notion of straight and gay couples as parents appears thus far to be moot: the question of sexual orientation vis a vis parenting only seems to matter if a couple is gay, unlike heterosexual peer couples who frequently get an easy “A” for parenting skills from society, simply for identifying as straight. Too often, public perception overrides personal realities.

Typically, the path toward adulthood is a volatile and often painful process for the whole family. In households where sexual orientation is an issue, the challenge is even greater. But consider this: in an ideal universe, everyone contemplating parenthood would share at least one common goal; to raise self-actualizing,

emotionally healthy, happy children. The sexual orientation of the parents would be very much beside the point.

While widely accepted cultural standards may sustain a community for generations, existing social mores cannot defend against progressive ideologies and technical advances. There is a pattern: societies develop, flourish, and either adapt to changing influences, or become historical markers. Unlike the gradual process of biological evolution that occurs in slow, incremental steps, discernable cultural evolution can take shape in mere decades. Typically, conflicting public opinion accompanies these transitional periods, often capturing prominent news space for weeks, months, even years. Clearly, the topic of gays as parents still qualifies as a media gold-mine, thereby encouraging continuing public debate about very personal decisions.

We live in a world where change is constant, yet counter-cultural changes within a society can produce varying degrees of anxiety. For many, living in the path of bold new ideas is frightening, and cultural adaptations are often fiercely resisted. Some, who are inclined to protest anything they do not understand, adhere to the mindset that nearly all dramatic social changes mark an irreversible descent into chaos; others, possessed of a sunnier nature, view change with a glass-half-full attitude, curious about the positive possibilities that may lie ahead.

Just such a dramatic, hotly debated series of cultural changes and challenges has marked the period between the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the present, as the profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> century American family moves in uncharted new directions. In today's world, your neighbor's mailbox may be filled with correspondence addressed to Ms. and Ms. or Mr. and Mr. and children.

During each phase of my research I discovered challenging (for me) and eye-opening articles informing my thesis. One superb illustration appears in the *American Sociological Review*, 2001, Vol. 66. Entitled “(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?”, co-authored by University of California professors, Judith Stacey and Timothy J. Biblarz, this work challenges opponents of lesbian and gay parental rights who claim that children of such single-sex couples are at risk for negative academic and social outcomes. Their analysis “challenges this defensive framework and analyzes how heterosexism has hampered intellectual progress in the field” (Stacey & Biblarz 59-183).

Summarizing my point about the changing picture of the American family, they wrote: “As the new millennium begins, struggles by nonheterosexuals to secure equal recognition and rights for the new family relationships they are now creating represent some of the most dramatic and fiercely contested developments in Western family patterns” (Stacey & Biblarz).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **SURVEY: RESEARCH MODALITIES ARRAY USED TO ASSESS COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL IMPACT UPON CHILDREN IN SINGLE-SEX FAMILIES**

##### **Research findings spark interdisciplinary disputes**

In Chapter Three, I will review research studies that examine the debate surrounding the educational and psycho-social outcomes for children who are raised in our contemporary social paradigm shift: single-sex families. In addition, I will survey multiple research modalities that have been used by researchers who study the cognitive and emotional development of children in traditional and single-sex families.

A topic of robust debate among social scientists is whether children growing up in single-sex families can realize their maximum educational and social potential, or will they suffer from major developmental deficits resulting from parental sexual identification? Although single-sex family structures have been examined for years, it is only recently that children growing up in these households have come under the research microscope.

Much on-going investigation focuses on comparing and contrasting diverse developmental stages between these children and those growing up raised by traditional same-sex couples. Considering the background differences of these combined groups of children, it seems an awesome task for scholars and journalists to untangle the interwoven issues regarding legal relationships and prevailing social, moral, and ethical considerations. The goal is to define and collate appropriate sample

groups reflecting a diverse population, including married/unmarried heterosexual parents; married/unmarried homosexual parents; and/or additional respective ethnic/economic/geographical factors. The demographic template has changed. I anticipate a flood of forthcoming research journal articles written by dedicated psychologists, sociologists and educators, traditionally charged with establishing criteria that evaluate the cognitive, social and psychological development of children.

A general consensus among social scientists suggests that children who grow up in economically stable, happily married, two-parent families are most likely to enjoy the greatest life-long emotional advantages. Until recently, research studying childhood cognitive and social development, spanning economic, racial and geographical parameters, focused on criteria based on children who grew up in the traditional family structure of heterosexual households: one female mom, one male dad, and assorted kids.

What happens when the profile of the parent pool changes dramatically? The established and accepted concept of marriage in the United States was abruptly altered as a result of the culturally evolutionary 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling enabling homosexual couples throughout the nation to legally marry, advancing their rights and privileges far beyond those extended to domestic partnerships and civil unions in the past. This ruling pointed social scientists in a new direction, anticipating that this historic decision would provide a fertile source for exploring whether children raised by same-sex parents might present a range of developmental deficits, or compare favorably to similar studies of children raised in traditional households. Thus far, post-2015 data is limited but trends are evident, and surprising: marriage among homosexual couples is declining, and adoption within this cohort is rising

“Legal Issues for Gay and Lesbian Adoption,” *FindLaw*.

(<http://files.findlaw.com/pdf/family/family.findlaw.com/adoption/legal-issues-for-gay-and-lesbian-adoption.pdf>).

As my work progressed, I came to rely on several valuable electronic information resources. Among them is the Williams Institute, a think tank established in 2001 and affiliated with UCLA Law School. In 2012, the Institute introduced broad-based research and policy data gathered to provide important support when developing criteria to assess the academic and social status of children who are raised in same-sex families. The report’s analyses indicate that adoptive parenting clearly is increasing among a diverse portion of the gay and lesbian population. According to Dr. Gary Gates, Williams Distinguished Scholar,

The significant implications of the study’s findings will encourage further and broader research and policy-making revisions, especially for those couples living in states with little or no legal protection for their families. (Gates, Williams Institute).

As a reminder, this important work preceded the 2015 right-to-marry act. A brief overview of Gates’ study included the following details:

- There has been a decline in the overall percentage of same-sex couples who are raising children; in startling contrast, the same research revealed that report adoption figures almost double since 2006 (ibid). (As an explanation for this paradox, he suggests that more gay couples were reporting themselves than in earlier census bureau data. Further, he believes the proportional decrease may be due to a cohort of gay/lesbian individuals who had children while engaged in a prior relationship with a different-sex partner, a common path to parenthood among individuals who subsequently identify as homosexual.)
- Regionally, 26 % of same-sex couples live in the South; 24 % live in New England; and 21 % live in Pacific states.
- Racial/ethnic minorities are 2-4 times more likely to have children than their Caucasian counterparts.

- Same-sex couples who adopt children are likely to be white, have a higher level of education, and to have never been previously married.

Beyond simply being interesting statistics, the data sheds light on the geographic, racial and educational diversity of same-sex couples raising children. The study also calls for statistical agencies to “do a better job collecting data about LGBT individuals and their families” (Gates, Williams Institute).

Studies concerning the psychosocial development of children in single-sex households seem to lag behind available literature discussing gay and lesbian couples’ legal struggles to become parents. Factors contributing to this research imbalance include data that supports the following: many teen-age and young-adult children presently residing in same-sex households are not related, and were conceived or adopted by parents in prior relationships with heterosexual individuals. Thus, there is still a limited cohort of very young children who are born into, or adopted by, legally married, stable single-sex families, either via surrogate, IVF, or adoption (Lofquist, *American Community Survey Briefs*).

The traditional array of research methodologies used to assess children’s development includes case studies, personal interviews, small non-random samples, large population-based samples, and broad-based longitudinal studies. Researchers also rely heavily on U.S. Census data. As my own research progressed, my naivete about the internal idiosyncrasies of academic data-gathering became apparent. The arcane world of research statistics was a complete unknown to me beyond understanding the critical role sample sizes play when evaluating research results. I had never encountered language that included Bonferroni corrections, standard mean differences, power values, and type II errors. Additionally, I was not expecting to discover the diplomatic precision with which researchers deftly dissect the work of

their peers who might be of a different data-gathering mind-set. Fortunately, I came upon several readable and inclusive journal articles that helped guide me through the social science research maze. There were many names and many studies to consider, but some caught my attention more than others.

I learned that scholars who compare childhood development factors agree upon one major problem: the need for valid comparison groups that accurately reflect the body of knowledge at any given time. On the other hand, scholars frequently disagree with measurement tools colleagues use. Occasionally, an author initiates studies that place him or her squarely in the academic spotlight for quite some time. The process begins when a principal investigator publishes the results of a study in a prominent journal. Some support the findings, others do not. The next step for an author who is on the receiving end of multiple negative reviews might be to respond to critics with a follow-up article containing new commentary and analyses designed to address critics. In turn, these follow-up papers can generate a flurry of further unsolicited peer observations, either in support of or opposition to the study in question, effectively setting off a minor academic avalanche.

I tracked what I considered to be a fascinating and striking example of just such a situation. The heated back-and-forth widely covered academic conversation began in 2011 when an original study entitled the “New Family Structures Study (NFSS)” was published. The project was led by Dr. Mark Regnerus, a University of Texas sociology professor and national authority on same-sex relationships and their impact upon children. Paraphrasing an introductory university news release, the project team objective was to understand how young adults (ages 18-39) raised by same-sex parents fared on a variety of social, emotional and relational outcomes when

compared with a group raised in families led by married biological parents, those raised with a step-parent, and those raised by two adoptive parents. When gathered, this new data would be used to evaluate how much impact parental biological relationship and parental gender had upon the above-mentioned outcomes. Because self-identified single-sex families were rare and hard to locate, earlier studies used small samples that reflected the familiar conventional academic belief that children in single-sex families suffered no disadvantages when compared with children raised in traditional heterosexual families. Unlike previous methodologies, the NFSS created the first large-scale random sample study that was believed would yield more accurate, inclusive, and comprehensive information.

In fact, this prevailing positive opinion was reinforced by a 2005 American Psychological Association (APA) statement on lesbian and gay parenting, concluding that their research indicates “there is no evidence to suggest that lesbian women or gay men are unfit to be parents, or that psychosocial development among children of this group is compromised relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children to be disadvantaged in any way” (Amato 32,33).

Eventually, the NFSS conclusion soundly refuted earlier conventional wisdom. But within a year, the NFSS was attacked for methodology, funding and academic integrity. Most of the negative opinion came from conservative sources that were hostile to any advances made by the homosexual community and their advocates. Following a year of defending against his critics, Regnerus spoke out.

In an August 2012 *Social Science Research* journal article entitled “Parental Same-Sex Relationship, Family Instability, and Subsequent Life Outcomes for Adult Children: Answering Critics of the New Family Structures Study (NFSS) with

Additional Analyses,” Regnerus references the previous (July 2012) *Social Science Research* study he authored entitled, “How Different are the Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships?” He introduces his follow-up piece with these words: “The July 2012 publication of my study . . . created more criticism and scrutiny than have most sociological studies” (Regnerus). Paraphrasing, Regnerus goes on to say that he attributes the intense negative response largely to the fact that the results of this study were based on a large population-based sample. This represented a significant departure from his earlier research based largely on small, nonrandom samples of same-sex families.

In a related news release, Regnerus posits,

The results of that approach have often led family scholars to conclude that there are no differences between children raised in same-sex households and those raised in other types of families. But those earlier studies have inadvertently masked real diversity among gay and lesbian parenting experiences in America.

Apart from measurement or sampling criticisms, he discusses his peers’ concerns about “all manner of minutiae, as well as details about the publication process, the funding agencies, and even the data collection firm.

Regnerus includes a rather interesting footnote in the follow-up article’s introduction. He mentions that the original article was audited, “a rather uncommon and disturbing experience in social science research” (Regnerus). Also in the footnote, Regnerus notes that the unnamed author of the audit “has long harbored negative sentiment about me.”

Regnerus’s defenders far outweigh his critics. One excellent article provided a comprehensive overview of the clamor caused by conflicting interdisciplinary reactions to the NFSS and the APA study. Endorsing the NFSS, Co-authors, Jennifer

A. Marshall, Director of Domestic Policy Studies and Jason Richwine, Senior Policy Analyst for Empirical Studies in the Domestic Policy Studies Department at the Heritage Foundation, and Jennifer A. Marshall, Director of Domestic Policy Studies, wrote, "As Regnerus makes clear, these results establish an association among family structure, parental relationships, and adult outcomes -- not causation" (Marshall & Richwine).

Providing me with additional insight, Marshall and Richwine's work offered the following view of how important appropriately selected data support accurate research: "The quality of research involved, especially regarding the size and representativeness of datasets, helps social scientists to determine whether hypothesized effects are truly nonexistent or merely undetectable with the statistical tools at their disposal" (Marshall & Richwine).

Another supportive article referencing Regnerus appears in the August 2012 issue of *Social Science Research*. Entitled, "The Well-Being of Children with Gay and Lesbian Parents." Dr. Paul D. Amato, Pennsylvania State University sociology professor, reviews two significant peer articles, one written by Regnerus, the other authored by Dr. Loren Marks, Louisiana State University sociology professor. According to Amato, both articles assert that "conclusions are only as strong as the evidence on which they are based, and existing studies, as both Marks and Regnerus noted, have serious limitations" (Amato). Paraphrasing Amato's opinion, both articles raise two sets of issues: the scientific status of research on this topic (research on children in single-sex families, and law, social policy and civil rights regarding this topic.)

As cited earlier, Regnerus' August 2012 article defends the merits of the NFSS. Marks' critical article refers back the 2005 APA conclusions about scientific research, which Marks considers invalid and misleading. Addressing Marks' critique, Amato observes that "the APA statement would have been more accurate if it had read, "Studies overwhelmingly show that children of lesbian and gay parents are not disadvantaged . . ." (Amato, 40).

Continuing his review, Amato cites Marks' reference to several methodological problems with the studies summarized in the APA publication. Marks recommends large randomly-selected samples such as the one selected by the New Family Structures Study (NFSS), which screened 15,058 young adults, but found only 175 with lesbian mothers and 73 with gay fathers. Amato points out that screening a large number of people to locate a small number of cases is a costly exercise with respect to time and money, but he concedes that this type of study is probably the best that we can hope for, at least in the near future. "Of course," notes Amato, "some knowledge about a topic is better than no knowledge, and early research based on convenience studies played an important role in getting this field of study "off the ground""(Amato). In lukewarm defense of the APA statement Amato says, "I do not believe that the authors of the APA publication are guilty of serious misrepresentation. At the time the APA statement was published studies had provided little evidence that children raised by lesbian and gay parents differ statistically from children raised by heterosexual parents." He credits the NFSS with "adequate statistical power for most comparisons, and is better situated than virtually all other previous studies to detect differences between the groups in the population" (Amato).

Again paraphrasing, Amato contends that the debate over same-sex families is derived from general literature concerning the family structure's effect on children: typically, this body of knowledge generally focused on structural variations within heterosexual- parented families, contrasting married couples, remarried couples and single mothers. Using these variations usually led to a general observation that these studies and children's outcomes "nearly universally find at least a modest advantage for children raised by married biological parents" (Amato). Critiquing the literature further, he believes the sample sizes of the studies are too small to account for statistically powerful tests, and the family structures are too narrow. Most early scholarship didn't advance much beyond affirming that the American family was definitely in transition.

Another outspoken supporter of Regnerus and the NFSS is Peter Sprigg, Senior Fellow for Policy Studies at the *Family Research Council*. In a Family Research Council article entitled "New Study on Homosexual Parents Tops All Previous Research", Spriggs calls Regnerus's work "the most careful, rigorous, and methodologically sound study ever conducted on the issue found numerous and significant differences between these groups – with the outcomes for children of homosexuals rated suboptimal (Regnerus' word) in almost every category. . . . Unlike previous studies, he has put together a representative population-based sample that is large enough to draw scientifically and statistically valid conclusions. The NFSS deserves to be considered the gold standard in this field" (Sprigg ). In his article, Regnerus observes how household dynamics in LM (lesbian mother) and GF (gay father) family structures directly affect youth and young-adult outcomes, concluding

that children raised by same-sex parents are more likely to have social and emotional problems.

Less favorable words about Regnerus and his follow-up research popped up in a CBSNews.com article appearing on June 12, 2012. Reported by health editor, Ryan Jaslow, who notes that several experts and advocacy groups “have taken issue with the study’s methodology, saying that a comparison of children of a lesbian mother – who may have divorced the child’s biological father, or may not even identify as a lesbian since the survey only asked if a parent had ever been in a same-sex couple during their childhood – is an unfair, flawed comparison”. Jaslow’s article cites Cynthia Osborne, associate professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. Osborne writes, “Children of lesbian mothers might have lived in many different family structures, and it is impossible to isolate the effects of living with a lesbian mother from experiencing divorce, remarriage or living with a single parent ( Jaslow). Osborne believes that other determining factors might be “entirely derived from the stigma attached to such relationships and to the legal prohibitions that prevent same-sex couples from entering and maintaining ‘normal relationships’” (Jaslow).

Citing further criticisms of Regnerus’ study, Jaslow includes a joint statement from the Family Equality Council, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLADD), calling the study a “flawed, misleading, and scientifically unsound paper that seeks to disparage lesbian and gay parents” (Jaslow). Toning down the hyperbole, Gary Gates, Williams Institute researcher suggests that a more equitable comparison would have included children of heterosexual or same-sex couples who were raised in similar homes with no divorces,

or separations of foster care. Gates, who was not involved in the research, found that “any family instability is bad for children, and that’s hardly groundbreaking or new” ((Jaslow).

A less divisive article referencing multiple research methods appeared in the August 2010 issue of *Demography*. Entitled “Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress through School,” the journal article was written by Dr. Michael Rosenfeld, Stanford University sociology professor. Relying on U.S. Census data, Dr. Rosenfeld conducted the first large-sample nationally representative tests of outcomes for children raised by same-sex couples relative to children in other family structures. Studying normal progress versus grade retention, Dr. Rosenfeld concedes that “. . . heterosexual married couples are the family type whose children have the lowest rates of grade retention,” attributing the advantage to, “these family’s higher socioeconomic status” (Rosenfeld).

A major objective of Rosenfeld’s study was to address the heavily criticized former literature on the “methodological grounds that universally small-sample sizes prevent the studies from having the statistical power to identify differences that might actually exist” (Rosenfeld). Former research focused on contrasting structural variations within heterosexual-parented families, including married couples, remarried couples, and single mothers. Emphasizing the need for inclusion of same-sex couples, Rosenfeld argues:

Even though same-sex couples are a small minority of all couples (1 percent. According to U.S.2000 Census) . . . will provide researchers with more leverage over the key question of how family structure matters in general.

I responded favorably to Rosenfeld’s concise clarity and minimal use of

academic-speak.

As I moved through my own research learning curve, several experts and professional journals became familiar go-to resources. Examples include psychologist Dr. Charlotte Patterson, and the always provocative APA reports. In *Lesbian and Gay Parenting*, a resource publication supported by the APA, Dr. Patterson presents credible insights into the multiple factors that must be considered by research teams seeking to establish solid criteria regarding the well-being of children in single-sex families. Echoing the concern of other colleagues, Dr. Patterson addresses a variety of methodological challenges that overlook “. . . beliefs held generally in society about lesbians and gay men are often not based on personal experience, but are frequently culturally transmitted” (Patterson). Paraphrasing, she cites questions raised with regard to sampling issues, statistical power, and other technical matters. As examples, she notes research areas such as gender development and adolescence described by reviewers as understudied.

Reinforcing research criticisms of several other social scientists, Dr. Patterson observes that the tendency of earlier research in this field was to use “poorly matched or no control groups in designs that call for such controls” (Patterson). She also notes that the relevance of this criticism has been substantially reduced as research has expanded to include a wider array of lesbian mother and gay father families. Thus, writes Patterson, “Contemporary research on children . . . involves a wider array of research designs (and hence, control groups) than did earlier studies. In my opinion, this article provided a concise overview of the progression of research modalities designed to clarify the likely developmental outcomes for children in single-sex families” (Patterson). As an aside, the most distressing thing I learned from this article is that the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental

disorder in 1973, less than 50 years ago! For me, this startling fact becomes significant when evaluating public conversation and professional inquiry surrounding gay families and the fate of their children vis a vis the ability to children to flourish. Sadly, this image of homosexuals as mentally unstable, believed by so many for too long, continues to reinforce subconscious homophobic feelings.

Included among the more comprehensive and reliable resources I discovered is the *Journalist's Resource*, an excellent on-line research round-up service that reports on timely national news topics. Divining my needs, an article entitled "Same-Sex Marriage and Children's Well-Being" appeared June 26, 2015. This article listed several abstracts of scholarly research papers and studies on psychosocial and educational outcomes for children raised by same-sex parents. Each of the selected articles concludes that American children living in same-sex households fare just as well as children who reside within traditional families. Collectively, these articles agree that over-all well-being measures for this topic should include academic performance, cognitive development, social development, and psychological health. None of the abstracts included discussion of sample sizes used in the various studies. Overlaying all these indicators, a child's socioeconomic circumstances and family stability are the most fundamental building blocks for the future.

Obviously, many factors contributing to a positive journey through childhood are not measurable. With that caveat, in a collective well-intentioned effort to clarify critical social issues, countless researchers dedicate their lives to isolating, sorting, and connecting discrete fragments of information that inform and delineate a society's path forward. That is a good thing.

## **Chapter 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this thesis is two-fold: 1) to inform the reader about the inequitable history of judicial and cultural challenges experienced by homosexual couples who want to marry and build families, availing themselves of several daunting options to satisfy the visceral emotional need to parent healthy, happy children . . . just as their own parents did; and 2) to survey research modalities, and related articles debating whether or not this relatively new population cohort can reach its full cognitive and social potential. At the very least, I hoped to learn enough to confidently revise or uphold long-standing personal opinions. I did!

Originally, my intention for Part Two of the thesis was to focus on the behavioral plusses and minuses of young children raised in single-sex families. During their formative years, all children are unique beings, advancing at their own interior pace: some excel well past expectations; some mature and adjust below expectations, and some follow the text-book curve. One blueprint definitely does not fit all. Stigmatization and bullying, among other disruptive behaviors, are equal-opportunity tormentors. No different from their peers who might fall into the category of chubby, gawky, minority, divorced parents, and on and on, children of single-sex parents must, and will, build effective resiliency strategies as they cope with day-to-day slings and arrows of growing up.

As I studied and wrote, my focus shifted to the fascinating anomalies of social-science research. Unquestionably, statistics, tables and graphs provide critical

guidelines for academic exploration. But they should not subsume common sense. For example, consider one of the more resonant arguments against same-sex parenting: will children suffer gender-identification deficits by having two parents who are of one sex? Perhaps, but this argument weakens when common sense points out that a valuable life lesson is that it's okay for daddy to carpool, do the laundry, and plan birthday parties, and for mommy to retile the patio. Another common question: aren't gay parents very likely to raise gay children? Again, common sense should serve as a reminder that gay individuals are typically raised by heterosexual parents. Indeed, a classic conundrum.

The best predictor of success has nothing to do with the research numbers game: it is a growing child's sense of self and value, and feelings of being loved and respected by two parents who demonstrably love and respect each other. Under ideal circumstances, some days will be victories, some days less so. Do researchers ever address what kind of day it might be for children who participate in a host of important studies?

Another fundamental question that weaves throughout this topic: should homosexuals have the right to marry? Of course! These couples have as much of a chance, as do heterosexual couples, to grow together, or to grow apart. In my opinion, and bolstered by my research - sexual orientation has very little to do with being a responsible, loving partner or parent.

In truth, my research generated more questions about the validity of research in general, specifically regarding the fluid developmental measurement guides for children raised in a broad range of family structures. At times, I was both baffled and captivated by the array of methods commonly used to investigate and unravel data,

which often becomes confused with and by facts. Like many people pondering timely issues, I was inclined to easily accept proffered tables and statistics, rather than engage my own decision-making machinery. This bad habit now tops my un-learned behavior list!

My change of heart was supported by *a* letter in the Opinion Pages of *New York Times* entitled “How Reliable are Psychological Studies?” The writer, Arthur Caplan, founding director of the Division of Medical Ethics, NYU Langone Medical Center, argues that “A valid science cannot have findings so frail as to collapse at a tiny change in a contextual variable.” Continuing, Caplan wryly suggests that turning to the humanities for sources of truth about human nature and behavior might be wise.

Another letter in this Opinion Pages article eloquent reflected my own thoughts. Dr. Leeat Granek, health psychologist and assistant professor in the Department of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev writes:

The doubts cast on numerous studies offer a reality check about the way psychological research is conducted. . . . psychology cannot capture “objective truth” about people that can be reproduced over time because no such thing exists. We are constantly changing, evolving, fluid beings, and no one data point in time can capture the complexity of our morality, emotions, thoughts and behaviors. This is not about the problem of reproducing results; it’s a problem of assuming we can make generalizations, objective, static statements about human behavior without regard to social context, culture, class, ethnicity and other variables that constantly change over time.

Legal decisions are capricious, subject to the prevailing mood of incumbent national and state governments. Americans have just ushered in an unprecedented administration. Among many unknowns, the current right-to-marry and right-to-adopt policies seem fragile and at the mercy of many factions that would like them to disappear. Gays and lesbians have fought and suffered for the right to express their

love in the most traditional of all Judeo-Christian ceremonies: marriage, and the right to raise a family if they so choose and to enjoy all of society's benefits and blessings. An individual's sexual identity should not preclude pursuing a life that includes personal fulfillment, dignity, and the basic human needs to love and to nurture.

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**Appendix A**

**AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS:  
SAME AND OPPOSITE SEX HOUSEHOLDS JULY 2014**

Table 1. Household Characteristics of Opposite-Sex and Same-sex Couple Households: ACS 2014

(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Household Characteristics	Married opposite-sex couples		Unmarried opposite-sex couples		Total same-sex couples		Total male-male couples		Total female-female couples	
	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error
<b>Total households (number)</b>	55,779,842	85,969	6,727,206	26,052	783,100	7,370	377,903	5,117	405,197	5,505
Age of householder										
15 to 24 years	1.3	0.02	12.0	0.15	4.1	0.26	2.7	0.29	5.4	0.37
25 to 34 years	13.3	0.04	35.3	0.19	17.3	0.40	15.5	0.49	18.9	0.65
35 to 44 years	20.0	0.04	21.5	0.16	19.7	0.42	19.6	0.62	19.9	0.57
45 to 54 years	22.2	0.03	15.9	0.14	26.6	0.45	28.8	0.67	24.5	0.58
55 to 64 years	21.3	0.04	9.5	0.11	17.1	0.34	18.1	0.52	16.2	0.48
65 years and over	21.9	0.03	5.8	0.07	15.2	0.30	15.3	0.45	15.1	0.45
Average age of householder (years)	51.9	0.02	39.0	0.05	48.4	0.15	49.2	0.21	47.7	0.22
Average age of spouse/partner (years)	51.2	0.02	38.1	0.05	46.5	0.16	46.7	0.23	46.4	0.22
Race of householder										
White	82.1	0.04	76.4	0.16	83.6	0.43	85.2	0.57	82.2	0.62
Black or African American	6.9	0.03	11.4	0.11	7.4	0.33	5.8	0.42	8.9	0.49
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6	0.01	1.1	0.04	0.7	0.09	0.6	0.09	0.9	0.15
Asian	5.6	0.02	2.4	0.06	3.1	0.20	3.6	0.28	2.7	0.25
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1	0.01	0.2	0.02	0.2	0.04	0.2	0.07	0.1	0.04
Some Other Race	3.2	0.02	5.6	0.09	2.5	0.17	2.4	0.24	2.6	0.23
Two or more races	1.5	0.02	2.8	0.06	2.5	0.15	2.4	0.26	2.6	0.22
Percent of couples interracial	6.8	0.04	13.4	0.14	14.8	0.34	17.3	0.57	12.4	0.44
Hispanic Origin of householder										
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	12.4	0.03	18.8	0.15	11.7	0.35	11.5	0.44	11.8	0.51
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	73.4	0.05	64.3	0.18	75.7	0.46	77.1	0.6	74.5	0.69
Educational Attainment										
Householder has at least a bachelor's degree	38.2	0.06	24.1	0.17	48.6	0.57	51.9	0.74	45.6	0.74
Both partners with at least a bachelor's degree	23.7	0.05	12.5	0.13	30.7	0.48	31.4	0.62	30.0	0.68
Employment Status <sup>1</sup>										
Householder employed	67.1	0.05	78.0	0.16	74.5	0.42	75.5	0.57	73.5	0.60
Both partners employed	47.8	0.06	59.4	0.16	59.5	0.48	60.5	0.62	58.5	0.71
Children in the household										
Children in the household <sup>2</sup>	39.6	0.05	41.0	0.20	17.3	0.46	10.4	0.47	23.7	0.72
Own children in the household	39.5	0.05	37.9	0.18	16.0	0.44	10.0	0.46	21.5	0.67
Household income										
Less than \$35,000	15.1	0.04	27.5	0.18	14.6	0.31	11.0	0.44	17.9	0.46
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.7	0.04	15.9	0.13	10.4	0.32	9.0	0.4	11.7	0.42
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.5	0.04	22.3	0.18	16.8	0.41	15.9	0.52	17.7	0.56
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16.1	0.04	14.0	0.13	15.0	0.40	14.7	0.55	15.4	0.53
\$100,000 or more	37.6	0.06	20.3	0.16	43.2	0.49	49.4	0.69	37.3	0.62
Average Household Income (dollars)	104,226	125	71,692	255	117,768	1,300	137,149	2,256	99,681	1,313
Home Tenure										
Own	79.1	0.06	41.4	0.19	66.9	0.52	68.3	0.78	65.5	0.72
Rent	20.9	0.06	58.6	0.19	33.1	0.52	31.7	0.78	34.5	0.72

<sup>1</sup>Employed or in the Armed forces.<sup>2</sup>Includes own children and nonrelatives of the householder under 18 years

-- Represents zero or rounds to zero

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year data file

Table 2. Household Characteristics of Same-sex Couple Households by Relationship Type: ACS 2014  
(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Household Characteristics	Relationship Type											
	Spouses						Unmarried partners					
	Total		Male-Male		Female-Female		Total		Male-Male		Female-Female	
	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error	Percent	Std Error
<b>Total households (number)</b>	334,829	5,078	163,239	3,461	171,590	3,881	448,271	6,232	214,864	4,307	233,607	4,115
Age of householder												
15 to 24 years	1.3	0.21	0.9	0.27	1.8	0.31	6.1	0.40	4.1	0.47	8.0	0.55
25 to 34 years	12.2	0.44	9.5	0.53	14.8	0.77	21.1	0.62	20.1	0.77	22.0	0.92
35 to 44 years	18.4	0.55	17.7	0.90	19.2	0.72	20.7	0.56	21.1	0.83	20.4	0.79
45 to 54 years	25.6	0.65	28.4	1.07	23.0	0.85	27.3	0.54	29.1	0.74	25.6	0.78
55 to 64 years	18.9	0.55	20.1	0.79	17.8	0.72	15.8	0.44	16.5	0.67	15.1	0.59
65 years and over	23.5	0.62	23.4	0.89	23.5	0.90	9.0	0.30	9.1	0.49	9.0	0.44
Average age of householder (years)	52.8	0.23	53.5	0.32	52.1	0.33	45.1	0.19	45.9	0.26	44.4	0.27
Average age of spouse/partner (years)	51.2	0.26	51.0	0.40	51.4	0.33	43.0	0.18	43.4	0.26	42.7	0.26
Race of householder												
White	84.7	0.60	86.0	0.84	83.4	0.85	82.9	0.56	84.5	0.82	81.3	0.82
Black or African American	6.4	0.40	5.0	0.60	7.8	0.53	8.1	0.48	6.3	0.59	9.7	0.74
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5	0.13	0.5	0.14	0.5	0.21	0.9	0.14	0.6	0.13	1.2	0.23
Asian	3.7	0.30	4.5	0.46	2.9	0.34	2.7	0.26	2.9	0.33	2.5	0.38
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1	0.06	0.2	0.09	0.1	0.07	0.2	0.06	0.2	0.10	0.1	0.06
Some Other Race	2.3	0.26	2.2	0.37	2.4	0.34	2.6	0.23	2.5	0.29	2.8	0.34
Two or more races	2.2	0.23	1.6	0.25	2.7	0.37	2.7	0.21	3.0	0.38	2.4	0.27
Percent of couples interracial	12.1	0.53	13.9	0.84	10.3	0.61	16.8	0.47	19.9	0.79	14.0	0.66
Hispanic Origin of householder												
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	10.6	0.58	10.6	0.73	10.6	0.69	12.5	0.50	12.3	0.66	12.6	0.74
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	77.6	0.74	78.3	0.96	76.9	0.98	74.3	0.64	76.1	0.96	72.7	0.90
Educational Attainment												
Householder has at least a bachelor's degree	49.3	0.70	51.9	0.99	46.8	0.98	48.1	0.77	51.9	1.03	44.7	0.93
Both partners with at least a bachelor's degree	33.0	0.69	33.6	1.00	32.5	0.93	28.9	0.62	29.8	0.84	28.1	0.83
Employment Status <sup>1</sup>												
Householder employed	68.4	0.67	69.2	0.90	67.6	1.00	79.0	0.53	80.4	0.70	77.8	0.77
Both partners employed	51.9	0.75	52.1	1.10	51.7	1.05	65.1	0.66	67.0	0.89	63.4	0.95
Children in the household												
Children in the household <sup>2</sup>	21.3	0.76	16.2	0.85	26.2	1.06	14.3	0.54	6.0	0.49	21.9	0.92
Own children in the household	12.1	0.74	16.1	0.85	25.8	1.02	12.2	0.48	5.4	0.49	18.4	0.85
Household income												
Less than \$35,000	14.3	0.47	11.6	0.66	16.8	0.69	14.8	0.49	10.6	0.59	18.7	0.69
\$35,000 to \$49,999	9.8	0.38	8.5	0.53	11.0	0.60	10.8	0.44	9.4	0.57	12.2	0.59
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.4	0.53	14.1	0.72	14.6	0.70	18.7	0.54	17.2	0.65	20.0	0.75
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.5	0.61	14.1	0.77	14.9	0.81	15.4	0.48	15.1	0.70	15.7	0.70
\$100,000 or more	47.1	0.74	51.7	1.08	42.6	0.98	40.3	0.63	47.7	0.88	33.4	0.81
Average Household Income (dollars)	125,434	2,118	143,960	3,731	107,762	2,025	112,042	1,623	131,959	2,772	93,753	1,715
Home Tenure												
Own	75.5	0.69	76.0	1.00	74.9	0.96	60.5	0.74	62.5	1.01	58.6	0.92
Rent	24.5	0.69	24.0	1.00	25.1	0.96	39.5	0.74	37.5	1.01	41.6	0.92

<sup>1</sup>Employed or in the Armed forces.

<sup>2</sup>Includes own children and nonrelatives of the householder under 18 years.

-- Represents zero or rounds to zero

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year data file

**Table 3: Same-Sex Couple Households: 2014 American Community Survey**  
(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Area	Total same-sex households		Percent of all same-sex households who are same-sex spouses	
	Number	Std Err	Percent	Std Err
United States	783,100	7,370	42.8	0.5
Alabama	6,797	712	43.2	5.1
Alaska	1,816	357	27.4	8.6
Arizona	17,515	1,219	33.9	3.3
Arkansas	5,399	646	45.6	5.9
California	109,296	2,483	48.8	1.4
Colorado	15,402	1,020	36.2	3.0
Connecticut	9,701	765	60.9	4.4
Delaware	3,850	592	52.3	7.0
District of Columbia	5,224	637	45.7	6.1
Florida	55,372	1,849	33.2	1.9
Georgia	24,707	1,810	29.2	2.9
Hawaii	3,831	497	46.2	7.2
Idaho	2,599	451	28.2	6.7
Illinois	29,115	1,616	44.1	2.5
Indiana	15,431	1,150	36.9	3.1
Iowa	7,080	781	65.7	4.9
Kansas	5,674	573	44.8	6.0
Kentucky	8,310	751	34.2	4.2
Louisiana	8,906	817	35.8	4.4
Maine	5,442	566	45.5	5.6
Maryland	14,977	1,043	56.9	3.3
Massachusetts	24,461	1,337	56.5	3.2
Michigan	18,742	966	34.8	2.6
Minnesota	14,539	924	52.0	3.0
Mississippi	3,628	527	44.1	7.5
Missouri	12,371	869	39.9	3.9
Montana	1,235	254	43.7	11.2
Nebraska	3,349	511	28.7	7.5
Nevada	7,365	735	30.8	5.1
New Hampshire	4,166	594	60.9	7.0
New Jersey	20,061	1,187	47.9	2.9
New Mexico	6,838	777	35.3	5.5
New York	59,405	2,475	49.2	1.8
North Carolina	23,127	1,578	36.0	3.1
North Dakota	774	273	45.1	17.4
Ohio	26,021	1,178	34.5	2.2
Oklahoma	7,283	602	48.2	4.8
Oregon	13,380	1,047	46.0	3.9
Pennsylvania	28,654	1,328	40.7	2.6
Rhode Island	2,917	423	37.3	7.4
South Carolina	9,908	765	42.0	5.3
South Dakota	1,094	232	30.3	9.8
Tennessee	13,140	1,167	37.0	3.3
Texas	58,654	2,324	34.6	2.1
Utah	5,099	566	65.8	5.3
Vermont	2,433	401	66.8	8.2
Virginia	19,027	1,167	40.9	2.8
Washington	22,981	1,166	54.5	2.9
West Virginia	2,353	410	42.7	8.6
Wisconsin	12,706	715	36.5	2.9
Wyoming	945	266	39.4	13.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year data file