

Running Head: SAME SEX ADOPTION POLICY

Same Sex Adoption Policy

High School

Paper #2

Abstract

In the late 1970s there was much research done on children with lesbian and gay parents. In 1977, there was a ban on same-sex couples being able to adopt. The Adoption and Safe Families Act was enacted in 1997. This policy restricts some potential adoptive parents based on sexual orientation and relationship status. Senator John McCain made it clear that he opposed gay adoption, even in cases where children could not find another home. There is no evidence that shows that having gay parents is harmful to a child. Some argue that raising a heterosexual child in a gay home can give the child an unclear view of sexuality. There are not enough married straight couples that are interested in adopting or foster care. Should children be left in foster homes, or be able to have two devoted full-time parents?

Same Sex Adoption

There are currently over 520,000 children in foster homes. Twenty percent of children in foster care cannot return to their biological parents. Less than 50,000 children are successfully adopted each year. Many agencies allow gay couples to be foster parents, but not adopt. Sixty percent of the nation accepts gay couples' applications for adoption. Only 40% of the couples have had children placed with them (Kaye, 2006).

Policy Identification

The Adoption and Safe Families Act was enacted in 1997. Since this policy, some state legislatures and agencies have made more strict adoption requirements. The policy restricts some potential adoptive parents based on sexual orientation and relationship status. There are eleven states that do allow gays to adopt (California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Washington DC). These states guarantee the same rights when adopting for both gay and heterosexual couples. There are five states that do not allow gay or lesbian couples to adopt whether they are an individual or a couple (Florida, Mississippi, Michigan, Nebraska, Utah).

History/Background

In 1972, the first Gay Studies Program started at Sacramento State University in California. A year later the American Psychological Association (APA) removed homosexuality from "The Handbook of Disorders." In the late 1970s there was much research done on children with lesbian and gay parents.

Anita Bryant was a beauty queen and celebrity spokesperson. Bryant was best known for being an anti-homosexual activist. When Florida added an amendment to its human rights ordinance, Bryant got very involved. The amendment made it illegal to discriminate in housing, employment, loans, and public accommodations based on "affection or sexual preference" (The Stone Wall Library & Archives, 2007).

As this amendment was being looked over she announced, "I will lead such a crusade to stop it as this country has not seen before." Bryant founded "Save Our Children." She describes the organization: "[It was] established on the fear of children being molested or converted by gay perverts. As a mother, I know that homosexuals cannot biologically reproduce children; therefore, they must try and recruit our children." (The Stone Wall Library & Archives, 2007). The amendment was repealed in Florida a year later.

In 1984, California passed the "Domestic Partnership Bill." Two years later the first lesbian couple was granted legal joint adoption. In 1985, California was frequently granting joint, or "second parent" adoptions. Years later in 2001, San Diego Court in California ruled that no legal document had ever existed that allowed such adoptions. Since no such document existed, over 10,000 "legal" adoptions had to be reconsidered (Robinson, 2006).

The "Adoption and Safe Families Act" started in 1997, and was signed by President Clinton on November 19, 1997. The law requires that child safety be the first priority, next comes placement and permanency planning. Even with the federal efforts encouraging adoption, some states and agencies have tightened adoption requirements. They have restricted potential adoptive parents based on their sexual

orientation or relationship status (Kaye, S. 2006). Also in 1997, New Jersey became the first state to allow joint adoption by gay couples (Galluccio vs. New Jersey). In 2004, The Arkansas Supreme Court overturned the anti-gay foster care ban (Howard vs. Arkansas). A year later, in 2005, the United States Supreme Court refused to hear the courts decision dealing with Florida's ban on adoption by homosexuals (Lofton vs. Florida). That same year, Illinois became the fifteenth state to prevent sexual orientation discrimination. Illinois was also the fifth state to outlaw gender identity discrimination (Kaye, 2006).

Current Situation

In July, 2008, Senator John McCain said in an interview, "My position is not the reason why I'm running for president of the United States. I'm running for president of the United States because I want to help with family values. And I think that family values are important, when we have two-parent families that are of parents that are the traditional family" (Stephanopoulos, 2008). McCain made it clear earlier in the month that he opposed gay adoption, even in cases where children could not find another home. McCain's campaign later stated that he would not support any federal legislation that would ban gay couples from adopting (Stephanopoulos, 2008).

Miami, Florida's Frank Martin Gill has been a foster parent for two boys since December, 2004. In October, 2008, Gill tried to adopt the two boys. It was nothing but a battle because of his sexual preference. In 1977, Florida's state law banned gay couples from adopting children (Ruggeri, 2008).

On Tuesday, November 25, 2008, Frank Martin Gill was granted adoption rights over the two boys. Miami Judge Cindy Lederman stated "The 31 year-old law violates

equal protection rights for the children and their prospective gay parents, rejecting the state's argument that there is "a supposed dark cloud hovering over homes of homosexuals and their children" (Kaczor, 2008).

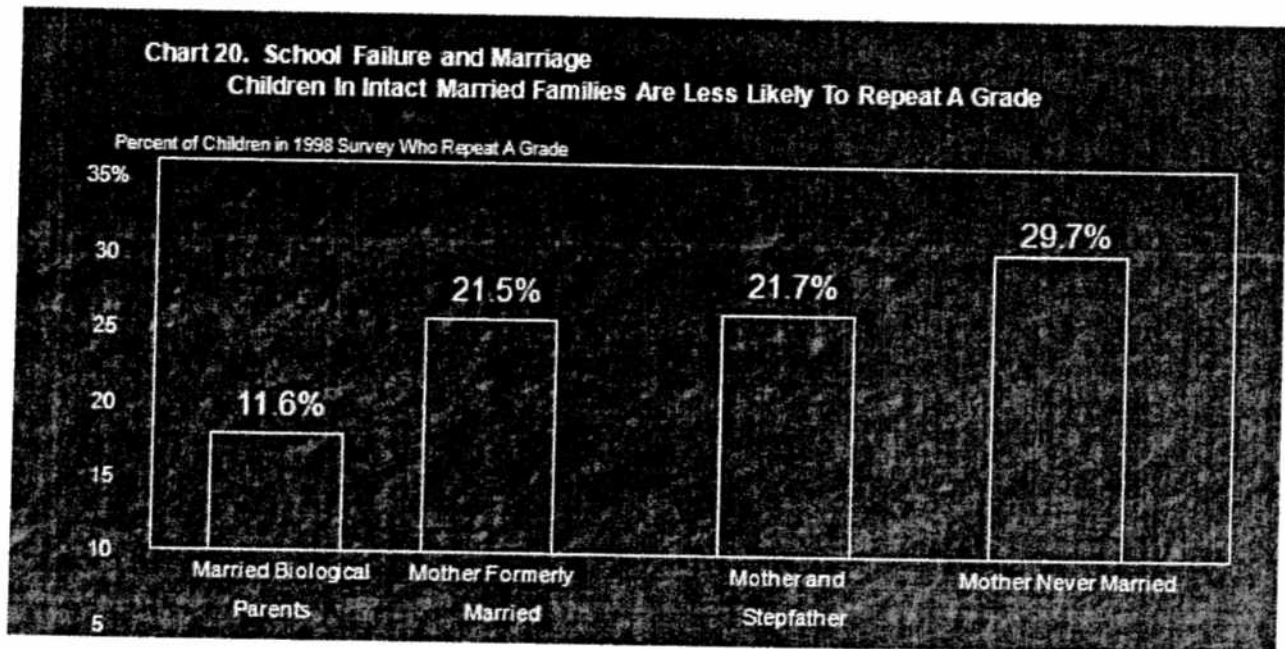
In October, 2008, Arkansas proposed an act that would put a stop to any couple who is not married from adopting or caring for a foster child. On November 4, 2008, the "Gay Adoption Ban" was quickly passed. The final vote was 57(forbid) to 43(allow) percent. Arkansas already has a ban on gay marriage (Broverman, 2008).

Janine Parry, a professor of political science at the University in Arkansas stated, "After looking at this issue for several years, it seems to me that many Arkansans- both liberals and conservatives, are uncomfortable dictating the family arrangements of others, whether they agree with them or not" (Broverman, 2008).

Differing Viewpoints

There is no "credible evidence" that shows that having gay parents is harmful to a child, and a ban only prevents the judge from putting the child's wellbeing first. Opponents say that it is in every child's best interest to have both parents. Many conservatives see gay couple's right to adopt as an unacceptable step closer to allowing same-sex marriage (Ruggeri, 2008). "Raising a heterosexual child in a gay home can give the child an unclear view of sexuality" (Jones, 2007). If a girl were to be adopted by two men, she would lack the feminine influence. The law should not punish homosexual relationships; it exists because the "ideal way to raise a child" is with a mother and father. "Placing a child too young to have an opinion of their own in the care of a gay couple exposes them to this prejudice, and subjects them to ridicule or violence" (Jones, 2007).

Today, single-parent families are very common. It has been proven that children with a single parent have lower grades and poor behavior.



(Dawson, 1998)

Children with divorced parents and step parents are almost twice as likely to fail in school and repeat a grade, compared to children with both parents (Dawson, 1998).

Gay couples being able to adopt would allow the child or children to have two full-time parents. Many other countries are starting to allow gay couples to adopt because they have recognized this. Some babies are born into homosexual families. There are no facts that show being raised by gay parents affect the child's sexual preference in later years (Jones, 2007).

Many gay couples also form very strong, stable relationships, which would give the child or children a safe and secure home. Not allowing gay couples to adopt children is discrimination based on sexual orientation, which is not allowed in employment. "Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA), and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), it is illegal to discriminate in any aspect of employment" ("The U.S. Equal," 2004).

There are more children in foster care than ever and there is a shortage of people adopting. A real "family," no matter what sexual preference, is better than leaving thousands of children in foster homes (The First Post, 2007).

All research to date has come to the same conclusion: children that have homosexual parents grow up just as well as children with heterosexual parents. The parent's ability to create a loving and safe environment does not depend on their sexual orientation. There is also no proof that children with gay parents are less clever, have more problems, or have less confidence (Kreisher, 2002). For this reason, The Child Welfare League of America, (one of the nation's oldest child support organizations) and the North American Council on Adoptable Children say "Gays and lesbians looking to adopt should be considered, just like any other adoptive applicant" (You Debate, 2007).

In contrast, a researcher from London realized that, "by creating a climate of acceptance or rejection of homosexuality within the family, parents may have some impact on their children's sexual experimentation as heterosexual, lesbian, or gay." This is because of the role model situation; the most significant role model in a child's life is usually the parents (You Debate, 2007).

Children who are in foster care do not get the choice of having married parents, or any kind of parents. There are not enough married heterosexual couples that are interested in adopting or foster care. When children are in foster care for a long period of time they have greater emotional problems, substance abuse problems, and academic problems (You Debate, 2007).

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Policy Recommendation

All agencies should allow qualified, gay couples to adopt children. Denying same-sex couples the right to adopt children is discrimination. Psychologist Armand R. Cerbone said, "Discrimination of all kinds takes a toll on people's health and psychological well being. In the context of the huge social and political debate that is currently going on, American Psychological Association (APA) and psychologists have had to grapple with the issue of what psychology believes is in the public interest in this controversy" (Willenz, 2004).

The current federal policy does not allow same-sex couples to adopt children. By eliminating this policy, all couples would have the opportunity to experience raising a family and more children would be taken out of foster care. This would ultimately benefit society in a positive way. Children that are raised in a two parent home, regardless of the parent's sexual preference, would benefit. In foster care, children are moved from home to home, and not in a stable situation. If more children were removed from foster care and put into a stable home with two parents, they would have a better life.

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Senior Project Paper Rubric Paper

#2	(10-9) Advanced	(8-7) Proficient	(6) Basic	(5) Below Basic (0 = missing criteria)	Points	
	Title Page and General Page Formatting: -Title page in APA format includes correct information -1-inch margins on all sides -Paper is double-spaced -Pages numbered consecutively and include an abbreviated title	-0-1 errors	-No more than 2 errors or repeated patterns of errors	-3 or more errors or repeated patterns of errors	-Information and formatting requirements ignored or inaccurate	1 10
Abstract: -100 to 150 word summary of content	-Succinct and complete summary	-Completely summarizes content Avoid question in abstract—instead include the answer to the question.	-Incomplete or disorganized summary or exceeds word limit	-Summary does not reflect content	1 8	8
Policy Identification -Explains key points of the policy	-Engaging, precise explanation of current policy	-Competent explanation of current policy Thorough explanation the major points of the act needed, organization could be improved.	-Incomplete or superficial explanation of current policy	-Unclear explanation of current policy	1 7	7
History/Background: -Explains why the policy exists -Explains the influence major political parties had on policy creation OR why the issue is non-partisan	-Thorough explanation of key factors of history/background	-Sufficient explanation of key factors of history/background Strong explanation of background, but discussion needs to address influence of political parties.	-Incomplete or superficial explanation of key factors of the history/background	-Little or unclear explanation of key factors of history/background policy	2 8	16
Current Situation: -Explains current policy situation including effects/outcomes -Identifies and analyzes factors that impact the policy -Analyzes and explains data used to support current situation	-Thorough explanation of current policy situation including effects/outcomes -Thorough explanation of changing factors -Thorough data analysis and explanation	-Sufficient explanation of current policy situation including effects/outcomes -Sufficient explanation of changing factors -Sufficient data analysis and explanation	-Insufficient explanation of current policy situation, the effects, and/or outcomes -Explanation of changing factors lacks development -Data analysis and explanation lack development Anecdotal information must be supported by data.	-Explanation of current policy situation is confusing or missing -Explanation of changing factors is confusing or missing -Data analysis and explanation is confusing or missing	2 6.5	13
Differing Viewpoints: -Explains and analyzes 2 or more viewpoints objectively -Compares and contrasts viewpoints	-Thorough, objective explanation and analysis of viewpoints -Well-developed and well-organized comparison/contrast	-Objective explanation and analysis of viewpoints -Sufficiently developed and organized comparison/contrast	-Explanation and analysis of viewpoints lacks objectivity or is superficial -Comparison/contrast is inconsistent, needing more development, or stronger organization	-Includes only 1 viewpoint -Explanation and analysis is insufficient or confusing -Comparison/contrast is insufficient, confusing or missing	2 9	18
Policy Recommendation: -Explains recommendation supported by valid research -Is politically feasible -Is economically feasible Should the current policy be eliminated (entirely) or just the part about same-sex couples?	-Thorough explanation of recommendation logically built upon valid research -Is both politically and economically feasible	-Sufficient explanation of recommendation built upon valid research -Is generally politically and economically feasible Explain why policy change will benefit society—make connection to social and economic reasons.	-Insufficient explanation of recommendation built upon research -The political or economic feasibility is weak	-Explanation of recommendation is confusing, missing or built upon invalid research -Not politically or economically feasible	2 7.5	15
Graphic Support: -Contains complete and accurate information to support text -Is legible	-Thorough, clear, accurate integration of text and graphics -Graphic support is legible Analyze graph in text for a higher grade. (Is data accurate since it is 10 years old?)	-Sufficient integration of text and graphics -Graphic support is legible	-Insufficient integration of text and graphics -Graphic support is legible	-No integration of text and graphic -Graphic support is not legible	1 9	9
Internal Citation: -Accurate APA internal citation including graphical support Note: Papers with no internal citation cannot be scored.	-Accurate APA citation content/format Graph needs full citation.	-Minimal errors in APA citation content/format	-Multiple errors in APA citation content/format	-Demonstrates little or no understanding of APA citation -Some citations are missing	1 9	9
Reference Page: -Correct APA formatting -Only sources cited in the paper are listed Note: Papers with no reference page cannot be scored	-Accurate APA format -Matches all internal citations	-Minimal errors in APA format (pattern of error) -Matches all internal citations Stephanopoulos citation?	-Multiple errors in APA format -Matches some internal citations	-Demonstrates little or no understanding of APA format -Matches few internal citations	1 8	8
Voice and Word Choice	-Voice is consistently professional -Word choice is mature, precise, and appropriate to	-Voice is consistently professional -Word choice is	-Inconsistent professional voice -Some inaccurate or inappropriate word	-Little or no professional voice -Multiple word choice errors that interfere with	1 10	10

	topic and audience	appropriate to topic and audience	choices	audience comprehension		
Sentence Fluency and Conventions	-Masterful sentence structure and conventions enhance audience comprehension -Few, if any, sentence or convention errors	-Sentence structure and conventions occasionally enhance audience comprehension. -Sentence or convention errors rarely interfere with audience comprehension	-Sentence structure and use of conventions is inconsistent -Errors in sentence fluency and conventions occasionally interfere with audience comprehension	-Sentence structure and use of conventions are ineffective or confusing. -Errors in sentence fluency and conventions interfere with audience comprehension	1	10
				Total Score	<u>133</u> 160	83%

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Introduction to paper helps set the stage and allows the numbers to do the persuading. In terms of policy identification, is the Adoption and Safe Families Act only about the sexual orientation and relationship status of adoption parents, or is this only one aspect of the policy?

Overall, a proficient paper with strong organization in most sections. To revise for an A, writer should explain the policy more thoroughly—is the entire policy flawed or just the section relating to sexual orientation? Use data to support current situation. Anecdotal information is helpful and persuasive, but data needs to support anecdotes.

Nicely written!